

ARTICULATING CLASS:
LANGUAGE AND CONFLICT IN ENGLISH LITERATURE
FROM GASKELL TO TRESSELL

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Thesis presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of English
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
JANUARY 1992

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ABSTRACT

ARTICULATING CLASS: LANGUAGE AND CONFLICT IN ENGLISH LITERATURE, FROM GASKELL TO TRESSELL

Concentrating on English literary texts written between the 1830s and 1914 and which have the working class as their central focus, the thesis examines various ways in which class conflict inheres within the textual language, particularly as far as the representation of working-class speech is concerned. The study is made largely within V. N. Voloshinov's understanding of language.

Chapter 1 examines the social role of "standard English" (including accent) and its relationship to forms of English stigmatised as inadequate, and argues that the phoneticisation of working-class speech in novels like those of William Pett Ridge is to indicate its inadequacy within a situation where use of the "standard language" is regarded as a mark of all kinds of superiority, and where the language of narrative prose has, essentially, the "accent" of "standard English". The periodisation of the thesis is discussed: the "industrial reformist" novels of the Chartist years and the "slum literature" of the 1880s and '90s were bourgeois responses to working-class struggle.

Chapter 2 argues that the frequent charges of "silence" and "inarticulateness" against the working-class in this literature should be understood as an ideological attempt to silence that class's voice (understood synecdochally to represent its socio-political claims). That "voice" is shown in, e.g., the writings of Thomas Carlyle, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Reade, Arthur Morrison, George Gissing, Edwin Pugh and Walter Besant as speaking revolutionary violence. Generally, the working-class is shown as safely silent and apathetic, with the articulateness of "agitators" shown as dangerous and contemptible. Censorship of swearing is considered in this context. Representation of the working-class as inarticulate or silent also acts as reassurance that only the bourgeois voice is proper to power, workers' language being fundamentally mangled, inadequate and invalid. Interpretations of proletarian silence in the writings of C.F.G. Masterman are discussed; their contradictions reveal that the perceived "silence" is reflective of an ideological inability to hear what is said, and silence is feared because it continues to represent a revolutionary threat.

Chapter 3 glances at the history of the phoneticisation of working-class speech in literature, and shows that it became important in the late 19th century when a more "accurate" "knowledge" of the working class demanded a higher degree of naturalism. The influential work of Rudyard Kipling is discussed. His phoneticisation is shown to be not "accurate", but in accordance with a new set of conventions which was coming to replace the old. Inconsistency, a concern for linguistically meaningless display, and inaccuracy can be

found in probably all of the slum fiction of the 1880s and '90s. G.B. Shaw is considered in this context, as a writer with some linguistic education and as supposedly sympathetic to the working class. His work, however, reveals similar prejudices.

Chapter 4 looks at the significance of "standard" English in relation to contemporary concerns with "culture" and "education", which were particularly relevant in debates over the extension of the franchise and in the self-definition of the petty bourgeoisie. Close analysis is made of writings by, particularly, Gissing, revealing the textual clash between the language of the working class and the consciously educated (frequently highly Latinate) language of the narrator.

Chapter 5 considers the representation of workers as writers, and shows the tendency to represent their "written" speech as, rather, spoken. In works by Edith Ostlere, Annie Wakeman, Clarence Rook and Edwin Pugh, writing is reserved as a particular form of control over language and the author-narrator uses various means, including phoneticisation of workers' words to retain this control as part of bourgeois social power.

Chapter 6 turns to Robert Tressell's Ragged Trousered Philanthropists and Henry Nevinson's Neighbours of Ours, to examine the implications of the use of established literary forms and conventions by socialist writers. Tressell maintains the convention of using phoneticised "dialect" to represent stupidity and political inadequacy while "standard" English remains the language of the narrator and of the hero: but now the class distribution of these languages is reversed. This is argued to be an inadequate, because temporary, response to the social disparagement of the language of the workers. Nevinson's narrator "speaks" phoneticised Cockney but this important innovation, too, leaves unchallenged the literary and social systems of class disparagement. Working-class language is still represented as divergent from the norm.

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January 1992

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Formalist school represents an abortive idealism applied to the questions of art. The Formalists show a fast ripening religiousness. They are followers of St. John. They believe that "In the beginning was the word". But we believe that in the beginning was the deed. The word followed, as its phonetic shadow.

- Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution

In rematerialising the sign, we are in imminent danger of de-materialising the referent.

- Terry Eagleton, "Aesthetics and Politics"

An Essay Toward Proving that the Immorality, Ignorance and False Trust, which so Generally Prevail, are the Natural and Necessary Consequences of the Present Defective System of Education. With an Attempt to show that a Revival of the Art of Speaking and the Study of our Own Language might contribute in A Great Measure to the Cure of Those Evils.

- Thomas Sheridan, British Education

Why care for grammar as long as we are good?

- Artemus Ward, Pyrotechny

A piece of academic work which announces in its title a central concern with language is far from rare: in the fields of social history, sociology, political philosophy and literature -- to mention only those to which the present work has affiliations -- there is, it might be said, a fixation with language. The nature and origins (in theory and socially) of that fixation are such as to make my other indicated focus -- class, and class conflict -- increasingly rare. Linguistic structuralism, post-structuralism, discourse theory, striving to comprehend all aspects of social life

within language, have, typically, little use for Marxist categories like class. Although there is sometimes reference to Marxism, these philosophers could not live with Marx's thesis that the task is not merely one of understanding the world, but of changing it. For language constructs being and is a tyrant, it would seem, which cannot be challenged; and we cannot even understand fully, beyond understanding the linguistic limits of our understanding. The affiliation of so many of the French structuralists and their successors to the Communist Party which seems to find that capitalism cannot be challenged either, is not really surprising. The case of Althusser has made this clear: he presided over the theoreticisation of de-Stalinised Stalinism's finally definitive abandonment of the goal of a revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat; he gave crucial theoretical impetus to that materialisation of the sign and dematerialisation of the referent against which Terry Eagleton warns. He adapted the concept of ideology, as Bryan Palmer points out, "to the dictates of reified language by stripping it of any relationship to the political practices of the working class" (p. 24). For the discourse-theorists there is no hope against language, and no hope against capitalism; their tendency to reify language, seeing it as immutably and dictatorially unmediated is, in fact, merely to theorise in accord with the reifying tendencies of bourgeois society.

It will be clear that the investigation I pursue in this work will be susceptible to denunciation as "reductionist", as "vulgar Marxism" from those I, in turn, call reformists, pessimists, idealists. The investigation itself is theorised,

though not theoretical; that is, there is no continuing attempt to theoreticise or to theoretically elaborate on, the positions and understandings after which I strive. It is for this reason that I wish to make clear, here, the body of theory and practice from which it derives, and to which it is offered. As opposed to the social linguistic theories in the tradition of Saussure, with their idealist readings of all those discourses, I operate within the framework of the Marxist linguistics of V. N. Voloshinov, whose materialist understanding of language has made it possible for me to begin to comprehend the social significance of a minor convention in English literature -- the representation of working-class language as defective within a system where, as Voloshinov argues in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language:

The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgements which occurs in it, to make the sign unaccentual. (p. 23)

For, this "eternal character", this "driving inward" is surely what we find in the most resolute conceptions of the determination of discourse, as when Michel Foucault, in his Archaeology of Knowledge, speaks of the "emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practices" which define "the ordering of objects ... practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (pp. 48-9). Elsewhere Foucault says:

Expressing their thoughts in words of which they are not the masters, enclosing them in verbal forms whose historical dimensions they are unaware of, men believe that their speech is their servant and

do not realize that they are submitting themselves to its demands. (Quoted in Palmer, pp. 25-6)

Above all I try to show, with regard to the aspect on which I focus, that language usage acquires significance socially, and that it is socially used. The practices I examine did not exist before, after or beyond the concrete historical actions of the women and men engaged in social struggles, they were a part of those struggles, expressive of them, and part of them. Politically, I cannot accept that the struggle fought by those people and their descendants and fellows around the world is doomed, nor that the language practices that were developing as a part of their oppression will not be changed -- by them.

There are texts and "texts" other than Marxism which I wish to acknowledge here: first, Peter Keating's The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, which is present to some degree in every chapter of this thesis. In one way it was the starting point of my own investigations, because of some of its silences as well as the basis it gives for further exploration of the field it charts so well. Although some of what I argue is argued directly against Keating, his work has been indispensable as a basis for mine. Another basis is the work on the history of "standard English" by Tony Crowley. His The Politics of Discourse appeared when I was struggling to cover some of the ground he covers so well there, and

allowed me to rely for some of my arguments on his research and the arguments he provides.

Sometimes, it must be admitted, in moments when academic pursuits seemed even more of a game than at others, it was difficult to remain dourly opposed to some of the pleasanter obsessions of deconstructionism. Kipling's Cockney soldier Stanley Ortheris is significant in the development of techniques of phoneticising working-class speech. My supervisor, Nick Visser, pointed out, with some trepidation that I might take up his suggestion, that the surname could be taken as a mutation of "other is". Considering the deconstructionist potential of this, I realised further that "Ortheris" is further mediated by a phoneticised rendering of "author", and that, in a culture where the investigation of a class was frequently conducted in the discourse of imperialist exploration, "Stanley" is also deeply significant. I must thank Nick Visser for this, and for all his (more substantial) contributions to the progress of my research and my writing.

And, in an academic environment where research is generally a solitary pleasure (or vice) I must also thank Brenda Cooper, John Higgins, Kay McCormick and David Schalkwyk for their interest and assistance. Numerous librarians of the University of Cape Town Libraries, particularly in the Inter-Library Loans and Special Collections Departments, and of the British Library have been indispensibly helpful.

The financial assistance of the Institute for Research Development towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this work, or conclusions arrived at,

are those of the author and are not to be attributed to the Institute for Research Development. The financial assistance of the University of Cape Town is also acknowledged, with similar reservations as to authorial responsibility.

Some sort of thanks are also due to J. G., who has vitally helped me to the prejudices I brought to this thesis, who has been startlingly unhelpful about it, but without whom I would find little worth attempting.

Dedications can be pretentious, especially when offered to a generality who will remain unaware of it. If I were to succumb to the temptation, I would dedicate this to all those who do not speak "properly" and to those, like myself, who have, at times, wished desperately that they did not.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: STANDARD LANGUAGES IN LITERATURE

Class does not coincide with the sign community.... Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle.

- V. N. Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language

Vivant au dix-neuvième siècle, dans un temps de suffrage universel, de démocratie, de libéralisme, nous nous sommes demandé si ce qu'on appelle "les basses-classes" n'avait pas droit au Roman; si ce monde sous un monde, le peuple, devait rester sous le coup de l'interdit littéraire et des dédains d'auteurs qui ont fait jusqu'ici le silence sur l'âme et le coeur qu'il peut avoir.

- Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Preface to Germinie Lacerteux

A language is a dialect that has an army and a navy.
- Max Weinreich

[T]here is a mastery of the sentence which is very close to power: to be strong is first of all to finish one's sentences. Does not grammar itself describe the sentence in terms of power, of hierarchy: subject, subordinate, complement, etc.?
- Roland Barthes, "The War of Languages"

[W]hen a particular set of men, in exalted stations, undertake to say, "We are the standards of propriety and elegance, and if all men do not conform to our practice, they shall be accounted vulgar and ignorant", they take a very great liberty with the rules of the language and the rights of civility.

- Noah Webster, Dissertations on the English Language (1789)

When the eponymous heroine of William Pett Ridge's novel Mord Em'ly arrives at the house where she is to become a domestic servant, she is immediately confronted with the inadequacy of the way she speaks:

"Is this number 'i'teen?" asked Mord Em'ly, panting.

"Number eighteen," said the young lady at the door correctly. "You shouldn't say 'i'teen."

"I've come after a place," said Mord Em'ly; "place as servant. My mother told me to. I'm firteen."

"No, no," said the young lady; "not firteen. Say thirteen. The word begins with th."

"I know!" said Mord Em'ly. (pp. 31-2)

The struggle over language continues when Mord Em'ly is told to wait in the hall:

"Where's the 'all, then?" asked Mord Em'ly, with some curiosity.

"You're in it now, my girl."

"This a 'all," said Mord Em'ly contemptuously.

"This is what I call a passage." (p. 32)

And, it soon emerges, Mord Em'ly is expected to give up not only her way of speaking but also her own name: "'We always call our maids Laura,' explained the eldest of the ladies complacently" (p. 33). But the struggle over language, a battle of cultures, does not seem to be presented as a doomed one for the servant-girl although she must obey orders, for there is a strong element of gentle satire directed at the respectability of the ladies, and a great deal of sympathy for the heroine and for the culture of the slums.¹

This novel was published in 1898 and was not notably unusual, at that time, for focussing on the working class and the London slums. In a study of Social Ideals in English

Letters, published in the same year as Mord Em'ly, Vida

Scudder writes that:

Between Wordsworth's day and ours lies a long development in the literary treatment of the producing class. Today, to reveal this class, soul, body and conditions, is one of the chief quests of modern romance. (p. 297)

For about twenty years there had been a great many contributions to the genre of "slum fiction". The genre itself had emerged in the years of Chartist agitation -- to virtually disappear, temporarily, with the defeat of Chartism by 1850. The reason for its re-emergence in the closing decades of the century is basically the same as that which stimulated its first appearance: the growth of a strong and visible social challenge from the working class. By the time Mord Em'ly was written its subject-matter would have aroused no great surprise; Pett Ridge was writing within an established tradition.

The tradition had come to include the semi-phoneticisation of working-class speech to indicate its divergences from the standard. Ridge was more sparing than many other writers in his deployment of what Raymond Williams has called "the orthography of the uneducated": "all that torturing of the already tortured nature of English spelling, to indicate that somebody's pronunciation is not standard".² Apart from indicating the absent "h" in Mord Em'ly's way of pronouncing "hall", her mispronunciation of "eighteen" and her substitution of "f" for "th", a more rigorous phoneticiser could have deleted the "h" from "where", could have spelled "place" as "plice" (to be consistent with the

pronunciation of "eighteen") and "this" as "vis" (which a careful observer would have noticed as consistent with the pronunciation of "thirteen" as "firteen"). The scrupulous phoneticiser with any understanding of linguistics would have written "an 'all" rather than suggesting a strong hiatus with the unlikely "a 'all". By the end of the nineteenth century probably few writers would have spelled "come" as "kum", though they might have done so, and certainly many had made that kind of alteration in their concern to indicate that a speaker was using a debased form of English, even if the resultant orthography suggested no divergence of pronunciation.

There is an interesting example in George Gissing's The Town Traveller (published in 1898, the same year as Mord Em'ly) of the stress to which the literary conventions of phoneticising Cockney speech can be put in such situations. A chapter entitled "The Missing Word" tells of a newspaper competition:

Readers of adequate culture were invited to exercise their learning and their wit in the conjectural completion of a sentence -- no quotation, but an original apophthegm -- whereof one word was represented by a blank. (p. 287)

The "cultural adequacy" of some of the characters in the novel is very dubious. Christopher Parish decides that, in a particular competition, the missing word must be that one which his parents use obsessively; it is represented frequently in the novel as "hyjene", suggesting general linguistic deficiency rather than any specifically "deviant" pronunciation. Christopher wonders: "'Hyjene.' By-the-bye,

how did one spell the word? H-y -- he grew uncertain at the third letter" (p. 291). An obliging "gentleman" on a train, when asked about the spelling, points to it in his newspaper: "'H-y-g-i-e-n-e.'" So Christopher learns how to spell the word and thus he writes it down. But his "culture" remains "inadequate", and when he is subsequently represented as speaking the word (which he does often, because he wins the competition) it remains "hyjene", in defiance of meaningful phoneticisation and of the proven ability of the speaker to spell the word correctly. "'Hooray! Hyjene for ever! Hoor-ay-ay!'" (p. 306).

In Ridge's novel, Mord Em'ly's speech is lightly treated and there is even, perhaps, the suggestion that she is to be given some credit for "knowing" that "the word [thirteen] begins with th". But what about her "'i'teen"? The apostrophes indicate that the speaker has omitted the initial "e" as well as the "gh" -- those letters are present in the correction given her. But there can be few words in the English language less immediately translatable from ("standard") spelling to ("standard" or "Received") speech than "eighteen", few pronunciations less apparently rational than "eigh" as Received Pronunciation (RP) has it. What is the point, particularly, of leaving out the anyway-silent "gh"? The point is, of course, to indicate that one of the speakers in the passage is pronouncing the word "correctly", and the other is mangling it, distorting and damaging it: this "incorrect" pronunciation finds its equivalent in the orthographical distortion. It is apparent from even this single example that there is no serious quest in Mord Em'ly for an accurate or linguistically meaningful representation

of accent: what is sought is a sufficiency of markers to indicate a generally distorted speech and thus serve the author's purpose.

His purpose is not Ridge's alone, of course; it is a social one, and must be examined more fully as such. At this point, though, we should realise that very few readers of Mord Em'ly and similar works would notice the inconsistencies and irrationalities percurrent in the phoneticising of working-class speech. We should also remember that, even before her employers re-name her, Mord Em'ly has had her name taken from her, and the reader has connived at this; her name as entered on her Birth Certificate would undoubtedly be "Maud Emily". When she tells her name to the women employing her, it is "interpreted by the youngest sister", and she is told that she "should say Maud, and then wait for a moment and then say Em-ily" (p. 33). Her name as invariably given in the novel is as she would pronounce it, perhaps, but not as she would spell it. She also knows that "thirteen" begins with "th", not "f", but a Cockney can pronounce "th" as "f" without changing the spelling, and could adduce the word "eighteen" as clear evidence that English pronunciation -- even RP -- is not dependent on spelling. This recasting of names by the narrator-author, even where there is no question of quasi-direct discourse involved (that is, the words are the narrator's alone in these cases, although their form ultimately results from the interference of another's speech), is a widespread practice in the period,³ and it points to the central truth behind the textual surface: the power of naming, the control over language, is at issue.

The conflict over language when Mord Em'ly takes her employment is shown, humorously, as between her and her employers, and it is one in which it seems she can hold her own. But the contrast between Mord Em'ly's language and her employers' is not the only one that is operative: Mord Em'ly's language is shown, through the diacritical marks, elisions, and irregular spelling, as different from the language, English, the language which is not normally written in such a way. The purpose, clearly, is to show the way Mord Em'ly pronounces her words: we realise, if we "know" how Cockneys speak (and how we come to "know" this is another matter), that she is speaking Cockney. And the "we" who recognise the patterns of Cockney? We are presumably not speakers of Cockney ourselves, for if we were we would not need to be told how a Cockney pronounces words; if we were Cockneys and we read the word "eighteen" we would surely read it as "'i'teen" (if, indeed, this is how a Cockney would pronounce it) -- how a Cockney would pronounce "'i'teen" has probably never been tested, but it would presumably not be in the way that "we" would, for the orthography is that of "standard English" and would be differently pronounced in Cockney. The obverse of Mord Em'ly's knowledge of how "thirteen" is spelt is that she knows that a written "th" is pronounced "f".⁴ The simple implication of this -- simple, though it is a vital point seldom taken into account by students of literature -- is that this novel was written for, and probably by, speakers of "standard English"; and this conclusion, generally valid for novel-readers and novel-writers at the end of the nineteenth century, could have been reached from "without" the text rather than from

within, through empirical historical research into reading practices of the time.⁵ The point, though, is that the factor of the class conditions of the production and consumption of literature is, in fact, an integral part of the experiencing, of the full realisation, of the text.

To further an understanding of this matter of the linguistic practices of writer and reader, it is worth looking at an earlier conflict over language in Mord Em'ly, where Ridge is gently mocking the philanthropic slum-visitors that were such a feature of the 1880s and '90s in England. It is, in fact, a mark of the lateness within that period at which the novel is written that Ridge presents the culture of the slums as, in some ways, a valid alternative to bourgeois culture and not merely an inadequate and degraded version of it. To understand certain facts, says Ridge, "it was necessary to become an inhabitant in Pandora [Buildings], and not merely to come down on a hurried visit, as lady philanthropists did, and sniff, and look sympathetic and tell each other that it was all quite too dreadful" (p. 24). The quasi-direct discourse in that last phrase, appropriated by the narrator from the lady philanthropists, precedes a much fuller three-way conflict between languages in the text (the languages of the narrator, the philanthropists and Mord Em'ly), where the inhabitants of Pandora Buildings are amused by the philanthropic attentions they receive, and Mord Em'ly gives them a "very faithful imitation of one of these visitors":

"Oh, the poor, dear creatures!" Mord Em'ly would look at the diverted women on the landing with half-closed eyes and a glance of condescension. "How do you do, my poor women? What do your poor

husbands do for a living, pray? Dear, dear! what dreadful occupations, to be sure! I'd really never heard of them before. And the poor, dear children -- I do so hope you look after them." (p. 25)

As well as the incident being a reminder of the fairly wide range of sympathies that slum literature encompasses, this is successful and amusing writing. As the audience tell Mord Em'ly, "You can take the toffs off to a T". Her language is that of the toffs -- most notably in referential content, lexical choice, speech-rhythms and emphases. It is unmarked by the phoneticisations which normally distinguish Mord Em'ly's speech. The only comparatively unusual marker is the emphasis given to "do" in the final sentence. From this lack of marking alone the reader could assume that it is not spoken in Cockney.

Unmarked words, then, in quoted speech, are proper to the language of toffs as they are to the language of narration; Cockney pronunciations are marked as divergences from "standard" pronunciation by means of divergences from standard orthography. There is a complication here, though, which makes a simple identification between the language of toffs and the language of narration, on this basis, not immediately possible: there is, after all, some guidance from the narrator that the reader is to join in Mord Emily's mockery of the lady philanthropists' language. So there is present in the novel a suggestion of a marking of language as deviant in a socially upwards direction, as well as the prevailing downwards marking. The upward marking does not manipulate orthography, but there are scattered examples in nineteenth-century literature of orthographic distortions

marking an "aristocratic" language as deviant. In Charlotte Bronte's Shirley,⁶ for example, phonetic distortion is an important part of her satire against the vulgar curate Donne: he laments that "you scarsley ever see a family where a propa carriage or a reg'la butla is kep" (p. 322). The narrator interpolates:

You must excuse Mr. Donne's pronunciation, reader; it was very choice; he considered it genteel, and prided himself on his southern accent; northern ears received with singular sensations his utterance of certain words. (p. 322)

Dickens occasionally phoneticises aristocratic speech, such as Verisopht's in Nicholas Nickleby (where the substitution of the "ph" for "f" in his lordship's name indicates, perhaps, Dickens' observation of an unnecessary but possibly decorative excrescence) and Sir Leicester Dedlock's in Bleak House. Usually, however, the marking of speech as "affected" is, as in Mord Em'ly, conveyed through lexical choice as well as grammatical peculiarities (which are often "deviations"). Sometimes a conventional lisp is added, like that of Lord Viscount Cinqbars in Thackeray's Shabby Genteel Story, who also old-fashionedly pronounces words containing "er" with the sound [a:]:

"Cuth me if I didn't meet the infarnal old family dwag, with my mother, thithterth and all, ath I wath dwiving a hack-cab." (Chapter 8)

In his study of Dickens, Edwin Pugh (author of many contributions to the slum literature of the 1890s) strangely ignores examples of upward-marking in Dickens and Thackeray, and comments that:

it is demonstrable that the Cockney accent is not a whit more inaccurate than the University accent; and that the West End speaks with about the same disregard of the mother-tongue as the East End. Mr. H. G. Wells is the only author with whom I am acquainted who seems to realize this. His public-school men talk of "i'on bahs," meaning "iron bars," -- in each case transgressing the laws of pronunciation in an equal degree. But the rest of the novelists observe the old convention still, as they have always observed it. (pp. 279-80)

More recently, N. F. Blake, too, ignores nineteenth-century marking of "affected" speech, claiming that: "It is only in the twentieth century that upper-class speech which deviates from the standard has been introduced into literature" (p. 13).

The distancing of narratorial language from "aristocratic" speech and a suggestion that the latter is divergent from "standard English" or what Pugh calls "the mother-tongue", is comparatively unusual, however, and almost never carried through with any rigour; there is no need to consider it in detail here, although it interestingly complicates the vision of textual language as a site of class struggle. The usual practice, as Pugh observes, is to orthographically indicate only sub-"standard" English; normally, as in Mord Em'ly, standard orthography is used to represent accents that may be in other ways suggested as non-"standard". (This is an equivalent, perhaps, of the class structure of nineteenth-century England, where the new bi-polarisation of society implied a cluster of classes or castes at either end: the ruling class increasingly comprised both upper-bourgeoisie and (ex-)aristocracy, with an admixture of the professional petty-bourgeoisie.)

So it is typical that in Mord Em'ly we have the conflation of two standards, the written and the spoken; the conflation itself is an important matter to which I will return shortly. But, if the equation between "standard" pronunciation and English orthographic norms applies to the quoted speech of characters, how does it relate to the language through which the narration is conducted? In the description of Mord Em'ly's actions "diverted women" and "glance of condescension" are clearly words alien to the normal linguistic habits of Cockneys in literature, and they, like all of the narrator's own words, are not marked as divergent from "standard" written English. Apart from the specific words which indicate peculiarities in the lady philanthropists' vocabulary, the narrator's language is continuous with that of the toffs (although it is written while the toffs' language is represented as spoken).

The normal practice in English literature, since the fixing of standard spellings in the eighteenth century, is for all writing to be written in -- inevitably -- "standard written English". And the "spoken" words in literature are, by definition, precisely words which are not spoken but written. There is no speech in literature, there is only the representation of speech. In Mord Em'ly there is the represented speech of people -- members of the working class -- who were not much represented as speaking (or doing anything else) in what we know as "literature" before the middle of the nineteenth century; the speech of such characters is represented differently from the way the speech of the upper-class characters is represented. The equation of the written and spoken standards is important: speakers of

"dialect" (that is, speakers of all regional and class dialects other than the dialect, or dialects, of the dominant classes) have their pronunciations indicated, through an amateur, impressionistic semi-phoneticisation, while the standard written forms are reserved for the speakers of "non-dialect", "standard" English. Simply from this it should be obvious that the "standard English" of the narrator (of Middlemarch as of Mord Em'ly) also has an "accent" -- the accent of "standard English".

That this is so should meet with little dispute, for it is clear that novelists and readers have always written and read in terms of this understanding; if they had not, there could be no valid grounds for distinguishing "non-standard" speech by orthographic contortions -- or even by a grammar diverging from that shared by the narrator and the "standard English"-speaking characters, given the substantial differences that exist between fictional dialogue and real speech. If the written standard were simply an accent- or class-neutral form, if it were a standard discrete from the spoken standard, it would be entirely as appropriate a means for representing "non-standard" as for "standard" speech -- which is how it is now generally now used by novelists, like David Storey and Alan Sillitoe, representing the speech of working-class characters. Yet if it is seldom argued that written language has an accent, this is because it is almost univerrally unquestioned that the language (if not the content) of narratorial prose is transparent, neutral and accent-free. Ann Banfield is one of few theorists I know of who explicitly deals with this. In her Unspeakable Sentences she asserts that "all speech has an accent. It is only in

writing that ... transparency really exists" (p. 249). "The language of narration ... is a classless language not achievable in actual speech". But, Banfield argues, "it is normally the case that standard orthography is taken to represent the 'standard' dialect" (p. 250). Against the apparent, or potential, accentlessness of narrative, she argues that, "if, from the point of view of its structure, the language of the novel is a classless one, it is really certain socially preferred dialects which masquerade in the guise of this classless, abstract and universal language" (p. 252).

If the narratorial language must be interrogated as to its accent, so too must represented speech. The ease with which Mord Em'ly's readers no doubt accepted the Cockney accent offered them is part of the dangerous power of fictional realism. But, as Bruce Robbins points out in his discussion of the role of servants in English fiction:

If representation is not to be conceived as a mirror held up to nature, but as a signifying practice, then it and not nature is responsible for its statements, and political questions can be addressed to it. Indeed, they must be addressed to it, for when the sense of representation as "making present to the mind" is discarded, as Raymond Williams notes in Keywords, the more visible difficulties of the political sense of the word become unavoidable, difficulties of "standing for something that is not present". (p. 7)

A vital part of realism, after all, is that (in some complex way) we are induced, persuaded, to accept temporarily what we are offered as the adequate equivalent of something absent -- here, the living speech of a person. There must be social significance in the fact that some characters in fiction are

represented as sharing the language used by the narrator who guides, in so many ways and with such authority, our reading of the represented speech, and that other characters are systematically represented as using a speech differing from that of the narrator as well as that of other characters.

Characters' speech is represented speech, and as soon as we begin to probe the surface of realism we can, of course, easily see its differences from real living speech. The narrator in a recent novel, Martin Amis's London Fields, remarks: "All this damned romance. In fiction (rightly so called) people become coherent and intelligible -- and they aren't like that. We all know they aren't" (p. 285). These differences between literary and living speech have been well documented -- such things as sentence length, ellipsis, general grammar, hesitations, the incompleteness of the utterance without the vital components of the phatic and gestural moments of speech acts.⁷ Modern fiction has to some degree extended, perhaps, the mimetic accuracy with which living speech is represented, but the principle remains (and, interestingly, while the "living" quality of the Joycean interior monologue is replete with plausible indications of the true quality of speech, novels making use of this comparative "incoherence" frequently do not extend the technique to exterior dialogue). As we have observed in terms of "accent" so too we can see that in terms of grammar and lexis the speech of "standard English"-speaking characters is largely continuous with the narratorial flow of literary prose. In Mord Em'ly and other slum fiction of the 1880s and '90s, precisely because of its concern with plausibly differentiating between class languages, we can see a

tendency towards asserting and representing the genuinely oral characteristics of dialogue. In representing the Cockney speech of working-class characters these oral, non-"literary", qualities of speech receive far greater attention than is the case with middle-class characters. Lennard J. Davis, discussing the texture of fictional dialogue, argues that, in the usual fictional elimination of the most disharmonious elements of speech, speech "thus becomes not an occasion for what is said, but for how it is said". Speech, Davis says, "becomes display -- but a display of education and civilisation" (p. 182), for the middle-class characters, at least:

In novels, conversation is essentially a literary form. It signifies -- completely aside from the topics being discussed -- that the speakers are literate, civilized, and cultured and particularly that they are part of a reading culture that knows the rules of its own language. In addition to intuitively knowing the rules, these "civilized" speakers are aware that there is a body of rules to be mastered. If speakers in novels are not literate and civilized, then their speech will be signified in ways that appear non-literary -- that is, paradoxically closer to actual speech. (p. 164)

We have a somewhat curious and complex situation with regard to "standard English" in the literature dealing with the working class: generally, the narratorial prose is in "standard written English" and speaks with the accent of "standard spoken English", and these "standards" are also applied to middle-class characters; working-class characters are represented, through the orthographic medium of "standard written English", as speaking a language divergent from both

"standards". Through language, working-class characters are continuously represented as different -- from other characters and, more significantly, from "us", the powerful determining nexus of writer and reader. In subsequent chapters I will explore some of the techniques and implications of the establishment of this difference. First, though, it is necessary to say something about the social origins and meanings of the two linguistic "standards" which are so heavily implicated in marking the difference, and about their functions in the nineteenth century, with which this study will be particularly concerned.

There has been, and remains, it should be stressed, some confusion regarding the term "standard English", even amongst professional linguists. For some it excludes any reference to accent although it includes the spoken form. Peter Trudgill says in Accent, Dialect and the School that "standard English has nothing to do with pronunciation" (p. 19). However, in a later book (co-authored with Jean Hannah), International English, Trudgill qualifies this to some extent, defining standard English as:

the variety of the English language which is normally employed in writing and normally spoken by "educated" speakers of the language.... The term Standard English often refers to grammar and vocabulary (dialect) but not to pronunciation (accent). (p. 1)

The word "often" reveals the possible ambiguity of the term and the potential it contains for shifting and slippage. The

discussion in International English continues immediately with reference to "those accents of English that are normally used by speakers of Standard English and are therefore most closely associated with this variety". Other grammarians and phoneticians clearly include accent within their concept of "standard English". Daniel Jones, author of numerous works on English pronunciation, says in an early book that "[t]he pronunciation given is Standard English" (quoted in Crowley, The Politics of Discourse, p. 168⁸); and he continues with this practice in his subsequent work, including the very successful English Pronouncing Dictionary. G. L. Brook, for a more recent example, writes in English Dialects of "Standard English pronunciation" (p. 170 and elsewhere), and begins the work with a genial illustrative joke about "the man who announces in a rich regional accent that he used to speak a dialect himself before he abandoned it for Standard English" (p. 17). Although Brook does write of other aspects of dialect, pronunciation is generally the central characteristic examined. In Varieties of English Brook makes it explicit that he considers it "better to take dialect to include differences of pronunciation and to avoid the word 'accent' as far as possible" (p. 29). Such a usage has the added advantage for conservative theorists and historians of language that it appears to be "scientific" and allows for an avoidance of confronting the class issues which a discussion of English "accents" should immediately evoke.

In most discussions of the subject, "standard English" refers to a conceptual unity of, first, a written form of the language, secondly, a spoken form and, thirdly, the accent "appropriate" to both those forms. Although many late

twentieth-century linguists would probably prefer to restrict the application of the term "standard English" to the written form of the language, its extended application corresponds so closely to a wider social reality of experience that in non-specialist analyses it is generally dominant: so, for example, Raymond Williams uses it in the definition of the "orthography of the uneducated" which I quoted earlier; so Norman Page in Speech in the English Novel can discuss the representation of "non-standard pronunciation, even where the spelling ... is a crude phonetic version of the standard pronunciation" (p. 54); so a recent book by John Honey on the continuing social significance of accent, Does Accent Matter?, continually opposes "non-standard accents" to "standard English". And N. F. Blake in his Non-standard Language in English Literature does not even discuss whether pronunciation should be a factor in the definition of the terms of his title. Blake does remark that the "standard language is a written language" (p. 11), but he goes on to claim that the "most important aspect of non-standard language in literature is the use of spelling to suggest a deviant pronunciation", and generally tends to comprehend accent within the package that makes up "standard English".

Clearly this is how the writer of Mord Em'ly, and other slum novelists of the late nineteenth century, understood the orthographic and orthoepic aspects of English to be inextricably intertwined in one "standard" containing both. And it is the dominant understanding of language-theorists of that period. Tony Crowley quotes A. J. Ellis ("the most prodigious of the nineteenth-century phoneticians") as seeking a definition of "a standard of spoken English" in

"the theoretically received pronunciation of literary English" (p. 135). And Henry Sweet, discussing in his History of English Sounds (1888) the need "in M[odern]E[n]glish] to recognize a standard E[n]glish] (stE) as distinguished from dialectal E[n]glish]" (p. 200), is able to comment, for example, that "even now educated Scotch has a sound-system which is wholly distinct from that of stE" (p. 201), making it evident that for him, too, the concept of "standard English" comprehends accent.

In looking at the linguistic writings of Henry Wyld we can get close to the social implications of this fusion of "standards" and we are reminded that the fusion is paralleled, even perhaps to an extent actuated, by the fusion of the two senses of "standard" itself: first, as a fixed set of rules and norms; secondly as a model or mark of excellence. There is no doubt that, for Wyld, accent is included within "standard English". He finds the answer to his question as to "Which is the best variety?" in Lord Chesterfield's definition of it as "pronouncing properly, that is according to the manner of the best companies". Although, Wyld says, "Standard English is just a dialect like the others", it

has had the advantage of being spoken by refined and educated people with cultivated voices, and is therefore more pleasant to the ear of those accustomed to it than the humbler forms of English which are often uttered with voices that are ill-controlled, harsh, or otherwise unpleasant. (Evolution in English Pronunciation, p. 15)

In his History of Modern Colloquial English, published in 1920, some five years after that pronouncement, Wyld writes

of "the common literary type of the written language" (p. 5) and of "Literary English", restricting the "standard" to spoken forms, though finding it advisable to subdivide it into the "Received Standard" and the "Modified Standard" -- the former being the equivalent of what many writers refer to as "Standard English" or "Received Pronunciation", the latter including various forms influenced by "Regional Dialect". These various forms are also "Class Dialects" (as, indeed, is the "Received Standard") which Wyld characterises in terms of a "social scale"; "much below" the "educated" forms of this "Modified Standard" are "various other Class Dialects which we should not hesitate to describe as vulgar. The London Cockney of the streets is an example of this genre" (p. 7) We are, incidently, left to assume that "of the streets" is not a scientifically linguistic category leaving space for some other variety of Cockney.

One of the advantages of Wyld's work is his unembarrassed retention of class terms, which allows him a far greater clarity of definition than is possible for the majority of twentieth-century grammarians, who seek to use "scientific" terminology and who work within an ideology that must obfuscate class division. Wyld is not untypical in conflating "Received Standard English" with the language itself, though he apparently distances himself to an extent from this position by invoking class: this type of English, he says, is that "which most well-bred people think of when they speak of 'English'" (p. 2). "As regards its name," Wyld continues, "it may be called Good English, Well-bred English, Upper-Class English and it is sometimes, too vaguely, referred to as Standard English." To which list Wyld proceeds

to add "Public School English", in using which term "we should not be far wrong" (p. 3).

It should really be unnecessary to stress the association of the preferred form of English accent with social division, with class power, although many linguists have sought to dissociate them. The reluctance to accept that social structures include class division, let alone that this might have implications for the study of language, leads to occasional strangenesses -- as when A. C. Gimson comments that, even in "these days when class distinctions are becoming more and more blurred ... [b]arristers and bus-conductors both tend to have accents appropriate to their situation in society" (p. 308). Gimson probably means that each of his alliterating alternatives tends to have just one appropriate accent -- but the analysis behind "appropriate" remains, unfortunately, hidden from the reader.

The association of accent and power has a very long history. In a crucial social period, the avidity with which the rising political power in the eighteenth century, and the earlier nineteenth, consumed proscriptive and prescriptive guides to pronunciation in order to avoid "vulgarity" shows the social significance of accent: John Walker, one of the foremost elocution guides of the period, noted that "our shops swarm with books whose titles announce a standard for pronunciation" (quoted in Crowley, p. 126). At this time, says Dick Leith: "Notions of correct pronunciation are formulated against a background of what to avoid; and it becomes increasingly clear that it is lower-class pronunciations that must be avoided" (p. 55). Liberal twentieth-century linguists have retained the substance of

the earlier, franker recognition of the social power associated with certain forms of English but have, in accordance with the universalising and naturalising task of bourgeois ideology, sought to deny, as far as possible, the class content of language standardisation. "Standard English", they assert, in both its written and spoken forms, is not "upper-class" English or "public-school" English, or any such formulation explicitly acknowledging its development within class-society -- it is "educated" English. "Received pronunciation", writes Simeon Potter in Changing English, "is the term used by linguists to denote the way of speaking adopted by intelligent and educated people in good conversation" (p. 13); and he is correct that that is how many linguists conceive of it, though few would now implicitly dismiss so easily such vast numbers of people as unintelligent and uneducated simply on the grounds of their non-RP accent. It has been a pervasive attitude, though. George Sampson, one of the authors of the Newbolt Report of 1921, a crucial text in the establishment of social attitudes to English language and literature,⁹ dismissed non-"standard" speakers not only from the ranks of the "intelligent and educated", but from articulate humanity itself. Such users of "debased idiom" and "mis-shapen and untaught speech" are "suffering from a disease of language", says Sampson in English for the English (pp. 70-1):

Surely, the first healthy impulse of any kindly person confronted with a class of poor, inarticulate children should be to say ... "I must teach you how to speak like human beings". (p. 71)

Human beings, kindly persons, speak "standard English", "the normal national speech". "We", of course, are such persons:

There is no need to define standard English speech. We know what it is and there's an end on't.... If any one wants a definite example of standard English we can tell him that it is the kind of English spoken by a simple unaffected young Englishman like the Prince of Wales.
(pp. 63-4, my emphasis)

Simeon Potter and other modern theorists would probably strive to restyle the Prince of Wales, for their purposes, as "intelligent and educated" (disregarding his royal title as irrelevant to a democratic age and stressing his Britishness so as not to irritate Welsh nationalists), in order to account for his linguistic practices. Within an ideological system where a vital weapon of class struggle is the denial of the reality of that struggle, and where "education" is putatively free of class values, conflict can be mystified in modern "scientific" linguistics by replacing a class term with one apparently free of class implications. Randolph Quirk, in The Uses of English, is one of countless such theorists; he searches the terminology of bourgeois sociology and finds the usefully evasive concept of "social groups":

It is ... beyond question that linguistic features which can be identified as the markers of real or fancied social classes are few in number.... But if language habits do not represent classes, a social stratification into something as bygone as "aristocracy" and "commons", they do still serve to identify social groups. (pp. 72-3)

Note the deftness with which Quirk slides into his argument an implication that the only possible classes are those of

"bygone" feudalism; nowadays the world is divided into those two great camps, the "educated" and the "uneducated":

It is reasonable to make the term "Standard English" cover not only the grammar that is common to all kinds of English but also the grammar used in the speech and writing of educated people: in other words, we should exclude grammar which is peculiar to dialectal or uneducated use. (p. 99)

The use of "educated" as a kind of synecdochic subterfuge for "ruling class" has especial significance, as I shall discuss in Chapter 4, where I shall be looking at the nexus of "culture", education and language in political and aesthetic representation in the late nineteenth century.

If equating "standard English" with the most prestigious spoken dialect is clearly a matter of class power in origin and intent, it seems, at first glance, to be comparatively unproblematical and uncontentious to accept the neutrality of "standard English" as written language. This is, however, not the case. The conditions resulting from the establishment of a written standard can be seen in a comment by the late-nineteenth-century linguist Thomas Elworthy:

The Education Act has forced the knowledge of the three Rs upon the population, and thereby an acquaintance in all parts of the country with the same literary form of English, which it has been the aim and object of all elementary teachers to make their pupils consider to be the only correct one. The result is already becoming manifest.... There is one written language understood by all, while the inhabitants of distant parts may be quite unintelligible to each other viva voce. (Quoted in Crowley, p. 102)

So, by the end of the nineteenth century, with formal education spreading to the mass of the population through the Education Acts of the time, the written standard is becoming relevant on a national level, thus reaching a significant nodal point in the history of the development of a defined standard literary language. This developmental process dates back to the sixteenth century at least, with its most notable period of growth being the eighteenth century which saw, amongst other things, the fixing of spelling and the codification of many linguistic forms. The advantages for nation-building in the codification process are clear,¹⁰ and most modern linguists and grammarians see no significant political content, let alone a problematical one, in the process: the growth of the literary standard seems to be an organic, natural one, quite removed from arenas of social conflict. Yet, of course, the growth of the literary standard involved the initial selection of the regional/class dialect that was to grow into the standard, a selection squarely based on the social power of the users of the preferred dialect.

Further, Elworthy's statement reminds us of the continuing level of power and coercion involved in the process whereby the standard becomes truly national. Parliamentary Acts, says Elworthy, have "forced" certain skills upon the population; elementary teachers are the immediate agents who "make" their pupils recognise a single "correct" form of written English: what is only partly obscured here is that it is necessary to impose the standard, through processes including formal education. In 1920 Wyld

discusses the "diffusion of some form of Standard English" in similar terms:

In all the schools, in no matter what geographical area, or among what social grade, an attempt is made to eliminate the most marked provincialisms and vulgarisms. Thus gradually the Regional dialects are being extirpated, the coarser features of the vulgarer forms of Class Dialect are being softened and the speech of the rising generation is being brought up to a certain pitch of refinement. (Colloquial English, p. 6)

The necessity for an imposition of "standard" written forms and the "elimination" of unacceptable others arises within the disparity between the spoken dialects used by the majority of people and the written form of the standard. This disparity must affect all people, for few can speak with the degree of formality and discipline they are called upon to use in any form of writing (which has its own linguistic registers). As far as the representation of a speaker's accent in the standard orthography is concerned, all are equally disadvantaged by the spelling of English. But grammatical forms are another matter: the main features of the written standard are much more closely related to one dialect than to any of the others, would be much more recognisable and un-alien to the speakers of spoken "standard English" than to the speakers of other, so-called "regional", dialects. Speakers of the socially subordinate dialects may not treat the written standard as the orthographic realisation of their dialect, in terms of grammar; they must learn also the grammatical forms appropriate to the written standard, and these are, essentially, the grammatical forms of the spoken standard. In the late nineteenth century we can

find in Thomas Hardy's *Tess Durbeyfield* a useful expression of the resultant bi-dialectism: Tess, "who had passed the Sixth Standard in the National School under a London-trained mistress, spoke two languages: the dialect at home, more or less; ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality" (ch. 3).¹¹ The blur between the written and spoken forms of the standard is not surprising.

If the written standard seems much less problematical than does the spoken standard, in a society which continues to use spoken speech as a highly important marker of social status, it is not because it is somehow a socially neutral, national and natural development, formed by some process free of conflict: rather, it is precisely because it is a conflict that has been, unlike the struggle over accent, largely resolved, a battle that has been won. A vital factor in the victory has been the fact that writing, unlike speech, is a matter of formal education and hence within the control of the literati who were the enforcers, as Elworthy indicates, of the written standard; such control is furthered by the tendency to class monopoly of the means of public dissemination of writing through the publication of books, newspapers, journals. Control over pronunciation and other elements of spoken speech, which are the result of an educative process very different from the teaching of written language, is very much less easy to achieve -- as George Sampson and countless other educators and "kindly persons" have found.

It is within this partial victory that the present study of one aspect of the struggle is possible, for the phenomena I shall be examining in subsequent chapters are all part of

the establishing of "standard English" as the form of the language indissolubly associated with power, social prestige, intelligence and education -- with "culture". And the concomitant part of this process of the valorisation of one dialect is the simultaneous devaluation (to different degrees perhaps, and in different ways) of all the others -- although the concentration in the literature I shall be looking at is on Cockney, the archetype of a language associated with the industrial working class in England.

A particular dialect, in its written form, attained a recognised status as a national standard (the international implications for English of British and American imperialism, which have resulted in the establishment of a number of "standard Englishes", are beyond the scope of this study); for the literary language, prescription could now easily merge with, even disguise itself as, description. The publishing of the New English Dictionary, between 1888 and 1933, is perhaps the crucial symbolic event in the fixing of the standard, and the process of its preparation was fully in accord with the scientific, descriptive character within which nineteenth and twentieth century linguistic historians saw themselves operating, in contradistinction to the practices of the eighteenth century. It is somewhat surprising to realise the lateness of this development; yet the latter half of the nineteenth century was a vital time in the fixing of modern notions about "standard English": it was a period which, as Crowley says, "saw the full development of interest in the 'standard' language at the expense of the dialects" (p. 107). Further, "the nineteenth century did not drop the cultural project of imposing a particular form of

speech as the 'standard' to which others had to rise. In fact the opposite was true" (p. 129).¹⁰

This, very briefly, is the situation of linguistic "standards" within which writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were working when they came to represent the speech of working-class characters. The conflict which is observable between "standard" and "non-standard" forms of speech can be seen, it should be noted, in two importantly different ways, ways connected by the very concept of a "standard" and by the fact of conflict. It can be argued that a standard implies a state to which all should aspire; this accords with the equation between "standard English" and (real, proper) English itself, and with the drive to "monoglossia" by a ruling class striving "to extinguish or exhaust the struggle of class relations that obtains within [the ideological sign], to make it the expression of only one, solid and immutable view" (Voloshinov, "The Word and its Social Function", p. 147).

But, as I shall be arguing, the expression of class conflict in literature through the struggle of languages functions within class conflict on a wider social terrain, and it does not seem to be a question of driving towards the elimination of subordinated "non-standard" forms of speech. Rather, there is concern with the naturalising of a situation in which one language is regarded as the mark of all kinds of superiority, to the concomitant detriment of all the varieties of language which are not the "standard". There is

a paradox here, of course: asserting the desirability of a uniform, genuinely "standard" language must be made (in the name of the democratic, unified nation), but even if such a goal were plausible, actually achieving it would do away with a marker of social class that is interpreted as a marker of inherent inferiority. Class conflict is "driven inward", in these circumstances, in a way different from that suggested by Vološinov: it becomes a transparent, though vital, part of the sign, through which classes can establish and experience their superior or inferior identity.

Beyond the pale of the ideologically naturalised, universalised centre are all the "others". At that centre, constituting the norm, is not just the bourgeois, but more specifically the bourgeois male. Specific consideration of gender is a notable and regrettable omission in much of the investigation that follows. Patriarchy is essential to the formation of "standard English". Language, to the majority of language theorists, is something spoken by men -- as a glance at their work reveals. Wyld, for example, goes far beyond the use of the generic "he" in discussing the users of language, whether referring to superior or subordinate forms; "speakers" are definitely male, as he reveals when discussing the vulgarity of certain "shopwalker" words: "there are many speakers", he writes in Colloquial English, "who would as soon think of uttering horrible oaths before ladies, as of using such words seriously" (p. 17). To look at the specifics of the representation of the speech of women in the slum

literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would enrich and productively complicate an examination of the class issues involved. Gill Davies, in a valuable essay which examines class and gender issues in relation to language and history in this period claims that the "new woman" in fiction about the working class is "a figure whose power in the texts can only be accounted for if we see gender as an extreme way of constituting class difference for middle class readers" (p. 75). She states that "[w]hen a (male, middle class) writer looks for the most horrifying, degraded image of the working class, he chooses a woman". This seems to me untrue, although it is perhaps the case that "[t]he colourful cockney, tough, witty, but above all comprehensible and safe, is almost always male" -- although this is only one of the literary types of Cockney, and many of them are seen as far from being safe, and their society far from comprehensible.¹² The question of gender is, as Davies shows, not insignificant for slum-literature, but in the historical period and the type of literature which are at the centre of this study the class definition of working-class women seems to me to override their gender definition -- perhaps because the literature is specifically directed at an examination of class, as is this reading of it.

That "historical period" is indicated in my title by reference to writers rather than to dates. Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton is one of the earliest novels to deal with the industrial working class; Robert Tressell's Ragged

Trousered Philanthropists marks a generally-recognised point at which such subject-matter is successfully dealt with in a novel by a working-class writer for the first time. Its date of publication, 1913, coincides closely with the closing of a period often marked as a social epoch, with the imperialist war of 1914-1918 seen as a watershed in the development of modern capitalist-industrial society. The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists appeared one year after the writing of George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion, which dealt so centrally with questions of accent and class, and some years after the rash of middle-class novels dealing with the London working class which are at the centre of my study; as I suggested, Mord Em'ly came fairly late in the tradition which dates back to the early 1880s. Between Gaskell's second industrial-reformist novel, North and South (1855) and the group of novels of approximately the last two decades of the century, there appeared very few works of fiction with the working class as the focus. I refer generically to the novels of the 1880s and 1890s as "slum fiction", a rather unsatisfactorily reductive term, but one which has the advantage of corresponding to a fairly common contemporary practice,¹³ and also usefully distinguishes that fiction from the "industrial-reformist" novels of the 1840s and early 1850s. Despite elements of continuity between the earlier literature and the later, in "slum-fiction" there is a change in emphasis from the earlier pleas for reform of conditions affecting the newly-established urban industrial working class, to an emphasis on a literary examination -- drawing on anthropological and sociological modes -- of particularly the

physical conditions of life of a class being seen and understood in a new way.

Tressell's novel enables us to see the implications, for "genuine" working-class-originated literature, of literary conventions and ideologically hegemonic attitudes to language. Apart from The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, by far the larger part of the literature I shall be examining represents a response to social issues by writers from the socially powerful classes of England. Most were expressly hostile to the political aspirations of the working class, although sympathetic, to some degree, to its sufferings. Generally, their writings can be seen to be -- in part, at least -- an investigation of the meaning of class-divided England, a contribution to the ruling class's "knowledge" of the class that was coming to threaten bourgeois rule even before that rule was fully established. As such, these writings were more than an expression of aspects of social life: they were a part of the establishment of bourgeois ideology, playing a part in their readership's understanding of both the working class and of the bourgeoisie itself. It is within this conception of the literature that I shall be looking at the representation of working-class speech and its significance.

The two main periods of production of this literature which concentrated on working-class life were crucial historical moments demanding such exploration and such acquisition of "knowledge". The Chartist decades witnessed, for the first time, some of the implications of the development of an industrial urban working-class. If this working class could often be seen in the 1830s and '40s as,

to some extent, merely a new and newly-threatening form of the "poor" (who are always with us), and if the main social struggle could be understood, as Disraeli in Sybil famously understood it, as being between the "two nations" of "rich and poor", then, by the 1880s it was becoming clear that such categories were no longer useful. G. K. Chesterton characterises "the change from Dickens to Gissing" as "amongst other things an economic or at least a sociological change. It marks the difference between the men who built the industrial town and the men who were born in it" ("From Dickens to Gissing", p. 132). By the 1880s the rule of industrial capital was firmly established economically and this was having increasing political expression -- for example, as Harold Perkin points out: "The Parliament elected in 1880 was the last in which the landowners had a clear majority, that elected in 1885 the first in which they were outnumbered" (The Rise of Professional Society, p. 41). The role of the petty bourgeoisie, placed between the ruling and the working classes, within the social, political and economic conditions of a matured industrial capitalism, became of increasing importance generally, and of increasing importance for categories such as "culture" and "education" which themselves increased the social significance of linguistic "standards". Questions of self-definition for the petty-bourgeoisie and for the class whose rule it defended ideologically become indistinguishable from questions of definition of the working-class -- the social "other": Eric Hobsbawm argues in his essay on "The Making of the English Working Class 1870-1914" that "the so-called 'traditional' working class with its specific patterns of life and views of

life did not emerge much before the 1880s and took shape in the next couple of decades". Hobsbawm adds:

this was also the the period of the emergence of the "middle class" as we know it, which is very different indeed from its early and mid-Victorian predecessors and from the upper bourgeoisie of "the Establishment". The sudden rise of the cap [as a significant item of male working-class dress] is paralleled by the equally rapid rise of the old school tie and the even more rapid rise of the golf club. (Workers: Worlds of Labour, p. 200)

Language functions in this situation as an identifying sign, one even more significant than the cloth cap or the old school tie. Within the new understanding of a society bi-polarised into classes that see themselves and the other as fundamentally opposed and essentially antagonistic (with the petty bourgeoisie having to align itself in relation to the poles) the linguistic practices of the working-class come to be seen by the "educated" as a factor indicating unity within their alterity: "they" all speak "dialect" of one kind or another, while "we" all speak "standard English". "Cultural" and linguistic refinement are to be a factor binding the middle and ruling classes within a dominant centre, assuring the centre of its superiority as well as acting as a weapon against the class challenging it for power.

That challenge manifested itself in all the signs of a working class perceiving itself for the first time (just as it was perceived by the ruling class) as a class. The period of the 1880s and '90s has long been seen and discussed by historians of the English working-class as vitally significant.¹⁴ In his well-known letter of 1888 to the author Margaret Harkness (who wrote under the name of John Law),

Engels had criticised her novel A City Girl for showing the working class as a "passive mass, unable to help itself and not even showing (making) any attempt at striving to help itself" (p. 379); but Engels also admitted in the letter "that nowhere in the civilised world are the working people less actively resistant, more passively submitting to fate, more hébétés than in the East End of London" (p. 381) Some four years later, in his 1892 Preface to The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844, Engels registered the East End's "revival":

That immense haunt of misery is no longer the stagnant pool it was six years ago. It has shaken off its torpid despair, has returned to life, and has become the home of what is called the "New Unionism;" that is to say, of the organisation of the great mass of "unskilled workers". (p. xviii)

"From the 1880s", says Richard Price in Labour in British Society, "the language and alignments of class override the categories that had previously defined political identification such as religion or paternal loyalty" (p. 93). The language of the working class in the period was expressed, in addition to the wider "substantial transformation" discussed by Hobsbawm, primarily in its political and trade-union organisation. Stephen Yeo indicates the outstanding dates of political developments in the 1880s and '90s:

1883 the Democratic Federation became socialist; by 1888 more than 40 branches started in England and Scotland; 1884 the Fabian Society began; 1888 Scottish Labour Party formed; 1889-92 massive escalation of trade union membership; 1889 the Second International convened; 1890 the first May

Day celebrations; 1892-3 the Independent Labour Party formed. (p. 8)

The "massive" growth of union membership includes qualitative changes in British trade unionism: first, extending unionism to whole new layers of hitherto unorganised workers, within transformed unions with political and organisational strategies very different from the "old" labour-aristocratic trade unionism; secondly, the conscious coupling of economic struggles with political ones to produce, as Hobsbawm suggests in "The 'New Unionism' in Perspective", "a more radical social and political stance ... in the context of the rise of a socialist labour movement" (p. 152).

What Marx and Engels had observed in The Communist Manifesto of 1848 was becoming more directly relevant in the Britain of the last decades of the century:

Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. (p. 35)

The response of the ruling class and allied stratas to the vital developments in the workers' social challenge included a many-levelled investigation of the nature of the working-class and its conditions of life. In terms of gathering statistics and the like the main burden fell upon the sociologists, now developing new techniques of investigation and analysis. Social "exploration" of "unknown England" -- a dominant pattern of metaphor in the period -- was nothing new in itself; looking only at the most notable examples, its history can be traced back via Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor, published in 1861,

numerous Parliamentary "Blue Books", Engels's The Condition of the Working Class in England of 1845, William Cobbett's Rural Rides of 1830, even as far, perhaps as Daniel Defoe's Tour. But there was a quantitative and qualitative change in such literature towards the end of the nineteenth century. The investigative journalism of George Sims (How the Poor Live) and Andrew Mearns (The Bitter Cry of Outcast London), both of 1883, was seminal, but only a part of the increasing volume of articles and tracts in the 1880s and 1890s. On a more self-consciously "sociological" plane, the first volume of Charles Booth's Life and Labour of the People in London appeared in 1889 and dealt with the East End; Volume II (1891) covered poverty in London as a whole. There were nine volumes by 1897 and seventeen by 1903. B. S. Rowtree's Poverty: A Study of Town Life was published in 1901 and immediately acclaimed as pioneering new investigative methods. Raymond Williams, comparing the investigations of Mayhew and Booth, in The Country and the City, notes that:

Booth's deliberate impersonality -- mapping and grading before visiting; systematic tabulation -- is less readable and less attractive, but it belongs to a way of seeing which the new society itself was producing: that empirical version of the sociological imagination which was to be developed by Rowntree, by the Webbs and by the social investigators of our own time. (p. 222)

Williams points to one of the deficiencies of the new sociological approach as being, in general, its depersonalisation of the objects of its study. This had been, of course, the approach that Dickens satirised in Hard Times, and the role of fiction in supplementing the "facts" of

investigation was frequently recognised in the 1880s and '90s. Edwin Pugh suggested, for example, in his essay on "The Novelist as Expert" that he was "quite sure that Mr. Pett Ridge or Mr. Richard Whiteing knows infinitely more about the effects of pauperism upon the poor than any dry-as-dust, statistic-ridden sociologist" (Slings and Arrows, p. 215); and the "Hon. and Rev. James Granville Adderly, M. A." in his introduction to Arthur St John Adcock's East End Idylls welcomed, in similar terms, the fact that "Mr. Charles Booth and the Charity Organisation are not to have it all their own way after all" (n. p.): fiction, it increasingly came to be claimed, has its own access to elements of truth, which sociology cannot comprehend. Of course, the fiction that thus supplemented the sociology was infected by some of the latter's "scientific" procedures, as I shall discuss at various points, for both were concerned with discovering and conveying "truth": a real, valid and useful "knowledge" of the working class. The "knowledge", though, of these texts, largely written for and largely read by, the socially dominant forces in society, was not only about the working class, though that was its subject; it cannot be forgotten that the "new" class structure being experienced in England included those dominant forces too, and that the processes of investigation, identification and coming to a social understanding were also directly inwardly: constructing a "knowledge" of the "other" was indissolubly involved with the construction of the social "self". Insofar as language is concerned this implied building universal acceptance of the existing language of power, in much wider terms than, but also including, "standard English" which became increasingly

a symbolic as well as a real site of struggle. The language of the working class, concomitantly, had to be accepted as deficient: working-class dialects as defective English, the working-class political voice as speaking only meaningless babble, which is silence.

Chapter Two

"WORDS THAT SMELL OF BLOOD AND GUNPOWDER": THE SILENCE AND INARTICULATENESS OF THE WORKING CLASS

An horrid stillness first invades the ear,
And in that silence we the tempest fear.
- John Dryden, Astraea Redux

We bear the wrong in silence,
We store it in our brain;
They think us dull, they think us dead,
But we shall rise again:
- Ernest Jones "The Song of the Wage-slave"

We craved to speak to tell our woeful learning:
We come back speechless, bearing back our bread.
- William Morris, "A Death Song"

A riot is at bottom the language of the unheard.
- Martin Luther King, Chaos and Community

People fancy that when all's quiet that all's
stagnating. Propagandism is going on for all that.
It's when all's quiet that the seeds a-growing.
Republicans and Socialists are pressing their
doctrines.
- A costermonger quoted by Henry Mayhew, London
Labour and the London Poor

[S]ilence is often the language of non-power, the
only possible way when the contradictions are
insurmountable; concrete violence is the only
language to signify the refusal of concrete and
ideological domination.
- Noëlle Bissleret, Education, Class Language and
Ideology

The problem of how to interpret and represent the industrial working class in fiction did not really arise until the 1840s -- the Hungry Forties. George Orwell's claim that "[i]f you look for the working classes in English fiction, all you find is a hole" (p. 415) is not strictly true, unless the search is confined to the academic canon of approved texts; but it is largely valid for the period until the mid nineteenth-century and the appearance of the group of industrial-reformist novels.¹ What emerged in these novels was not the voice of the working class.² It was the voice of an anxious bourgeoisie, itself still fighting landed interests for the complete political power which would complement its economic ascendancy, and now immediately confronted, in "physical force" Chartism, with a real threat from below. The industrial-reformist novels can best be understood as an attempt to understand the force that was being born in the burgeoning slums and factories of the Industrial Revolution, within an unsettled society which was new and disturbing even to its rulers. In the literature responsive to Chartism we catch, as a commentator on English "social fiction" wrote in 1898, "the appalled surprise with which intelligent England first heard the cry of the dispossessed" (Vida Scudder, p. 125); "Every five years, every ten", she writes, surveying the rest of the century, "into a civilization feverishly and helplessly developing a competitive system, ignorant of its own tendencies, comes a cry of protest and fear" (p. 173).

Immediately, Chartism seemed to threaten revolution and chaos. Thomas Carlyle's Chartism (1839), considering the "Condition-of-England Question", opens with the observation that:

A feeling very generally exists that the condition and disposition of the Working Classes is a rather ominous matter at present; that something ought to be said, something ought to be done, in regard to it. (p. 165)

For Carlyle, Chartism meant "the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition therefore or the wrong disposition, of the Working Classes of England". (pp. 165-6)
In regard to this "most ominous of all practical matters":

The time is verily come for acting in it; how much more for consultation about acting in it, for speech and articulate inquiry about it! (p. 165)

It was not in Carlyle's mind that the agents of what ought to be said and done would include members of the "Working Classes" themselves, of course; he is directing his recommendation to those whose rule seemed threatened. Part of the "articulate" response to the situation was the writing of novels, all of which share a perceptible fear of working-class unity (in political and trade-union organisations), a belief in the social benefits of mutual understanding and tolerance between the classes, and a plea to their middle-class readers for reformist generosity. The novels were sympathetic to the sufferings they described with more or less honesty and accuracy; they were pleas for an understanding of the working class, as well as warnings of the dire consequences of a refusal to reform. Their authors seem to have consciously taken on themselves the task of speaking for those who, they felt, could not speak for themselves. Elizabeth Gaskell tells us in the Preface to Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life (1848) that the novel

originated in her anxiety "to give some utterance to the agony which, from time to time, convulses this dumb people" (pp. 37-8). Carlyle had earlier also insisted on this dumbness. He interprets "all popular commotions" as:

Bellowings, inarticulate cries as of a dumb creature in rage and pain; to the ear of wisdom they are inarticulate prayers: "Guide me, govern me! I am mad and miserable, and cannot guide myself!" (p. 199)

Parliamentarians ought, he says "to interpret and articulate the dumb deep want of the people" (p. 168). And he calls for:

a clear interpretation of the thought which at heart torments these wild inarticulate souls struggling there, with inarticulate uproar, like dumb creatures in pain, unable to speak what is in them. Something they do mean; some true thing withal, in the centre of their confused hearts. (p. 169)

Why does Carlyle translate the Six Points of the Charter, with their demands for a more democratic representation, as a plea to be guided and governed? As a movement, Chartism was an attempt by the working masses to assume control over their lives, as Martha Vicinus says: "Chartists wanted to transform England into a representative democracy where the working-class voice would be heard" ("Chartist Fiction", p. 7), and it was the manifestation of class-assertion that initiated the bourgeois panic. Why do we have in Carlyle and elsewhere this general insistence on the inarticulateness or dumbness of the working class? What is the voice of the working class that is silent or inarticulate?

First, it is clear that, in the novels at least, it is not individual workers that we feel to be silent, for we are

getting for the first time, in some of the novels, an attempt to seriously suggest a more or less authentic reproduction of words as they might have been pronounced by working-class people. In that restricted sense the voice of the working-class has entered the mainstream of English fiction. In the larger sense, where "voice" and "utterance" are used synecdochally to represent, say, the whole politics or social attitudes and aspirations of a class, we are not given the working-class voice at all. It is in this larger sense of voice that we must look for the meaning of the silence attributed to the class. And we must consider too the political sense of "representation" the arrogating to oneself the right to speak for, to represent, others.

These writings offer a representation of the voice of the working class, in both senses -- political and aesthetic -- of representation. But the authors are of a different class from their worker subjects. Mostly they are petty-bourgeois, self-declared representatives (spokespeople) and representors (writers). Their discourse, the language of their society and therefore of their fiction, is their discourse, their language. The function of their words is, normally, to speak the perceived silence of the working class, its lack of discourse, of language. The working class is silent for them or, at best, inarticulate, requiring representation and interpretation, because it seems not to share their language. Understanding the authorial function in this way tacitly recognises two languages, precisely class languages: one we can see as replete with signifying and social power, one as linguistically and socially obscure. It is apparently the premiss of these writers that the other

language, a foreign babble, has ultimately no meaning, not even an esoteric one. Their literary representation of the alien and inarticulate class clearly includes the political act of representative substitution: they speak on behalf of those who cannot speak their animal pain. But some sound -- the "uproar" -- is there and, as we shall see, Carlyle's "inarticulate uproar" means the same thing as silence means in many other writings, in that both are negatively related to the articulate speech of the ruling class.

Working-class language is here politically interpreted as silence; there is no real silence. The authorial act is not speaking a silent void, but occupying a space which has been declared empty, offering language where silence, or inarticulateness, has been wilfully asserted. The point about silence is that it leaves a space to be filled by the power-full voice. The users of the valid language will then pose questions and provide answers. As controllers of the Word and its literary representation they will interpret, and also censor, the voice of the ruled.

Throughout the nineteenth century there is to be great stress on the silence or inarticulateness of the working class. This urgency itself hints at some uneasiness and already in Carlyle we can observe a contradiction of which that unease is the expression. Alongside his stress on silence and inarticulateness we find Carlyle writing of Chartism as "an answer" to questions posed by the new Poor-Law Bill; and, in response to "our grand question as to the condition of these working men [which] would be: Is it just?", he says: "The words they promulgate are notable by way of answer; their actions are still more notable"

(p. 191). There are answers given, appararently, by the "great dumb toiling class which cannot speak" (p. 168). For Carlyle the "inarticulate uproar" that requires interpretation is the force that prompts the articulate intervention cum interpretation; the "bellowings, inarticulate cries" clearly do contain meaning: they signify, simply, Chartist violence. Gillian Beer has pointed out that Carlyle "uses the word 'utterance' to cover acts as well as language" (p. 243),³ so that at some points he is reacting to the utterance, the voice, the language of the Chartists, and at others he insists that it is, in fact, no valid human language but, rather, one that must be interpreted by those in control of language. Language thus comes to mean "valid political discourse", thereby excluding from reality any revolutionary threat. The language of revolution is no language at all: it is "inarticulate bellowing" and it is silence. Carlyle's strategy, which is not necessarily disingenuous, is to proceed from a fear of the utterance, or anticipated utterance, to the presentation of a different interpretation: that the Chartist threat, clear enough in itself, is only the sign of something else. Chartism becomes understood as a call for bourgeois "speech and articulate enquiry", rather than as a substantive act of proletarian "utterance" in itself.

The bourgeois hearing of silence or of babble is a refusal to acknowledge the voice of the working class as speaking meaningful language; that is, in a synecdochal understanding, it is a refusal, or inability, to accept a hostile world-view. All that the bourgeoisie can hear in

silence is social threat, chaos and violence: disordered social syntax.

Yet the bourgeoisie, too, when it was a revolutionary social force, had had to fight for its voice to be heard and acknowledged as speaking a valid language. In its struggle for political power, for ideological supremacy, the revolutionary bourgeoisie had to fight for the control of language, had to fight for its voice to be heard, speaking a language that was adequate to its socio-economic function.⁴ As the bourgeoisie increasingly gained hegemonic control (with victories over, and compromises with, the aristocracy that could continue to wield substantial ideological as well as economic power -- particularly prior to the industrial revolution), so too the target of linguistic attack increasingly changed, from the bourgeoisie to the working class.

The unreformed British Parliament had on occasions refused to even consider radical bourgeois petitions because they were not couched in suitable language, that is, the language of aristocratic power (see Olivia Smith, pp. 30-4). Censorship could also be enforced by taxes on newspapers (the dissemination of the radical bourgeois voice) or by straightforward prohibition. Later, the universalising ideology of the bourgeoisie in power and its rhetoric of freedom made desirable, if not always essential, subtler means of silencing the voice of the only real challenger to its power. And if it could not absolutely silence that challenge, ideology must effectively devalue it. (I am not suggesting that the process was conspiratorial but that it was conducted socially in accordance with social needs.) The

ineluctable insistence of the voice of social challenge was reflected in its increased presence in the forms of fiction. But the entry of the working class into fiction is not a simple and automatic reflection of an increase in its social weight: it is part of a social process of class struggle. As with the entry into the parliamentary franchise it was a partial victory of assertion by the workers, but one which was made on bourgeois terrain and hence within the ambit of bourgeois power and control. It is sufficient here to note, though, that giving words to workers in novels has something of a concessionary nature about it: it is an admission that they do have words to speak.

What the bourgeoisie fears is the power of utterance of the working class. What it must do is translate and interpret and devalue that utterance within a compelling ideology. Ultimately its universalising project will demand that the working class itself absorb and experience the negation of its language, ensuring that, as far as possible, all classes agree that there is only one language proper to power, to the articulation of valid aspirations to power: the language of the existing power of the bourgeoisie. If the proletariat must speak, as bourgeois democracy says it may (for all are formally equal, and class division is a chimera), then it must be taught to speak the language of the ruling class, for that language, and that language only, can encompass the articulate expression of all that is useful to society. Simultaneously with this, the class nature of the language must be denied.

Carlyle does not make use of the phoneticised speech that writers were already learning to use to mark

working-class language as inadequate. Beer notes that "[w]hen he describes members of the working class he describes them as silent" (p. 243), and his disbelief in their articulateness seems to determine his avoidance of attempts to reproduce their actual speech syntactically or in terms of accent. When their imputed thoughts are put into quoted speech it is in a Biblical language that transcends class,⁵ although this too is a language of authority towards which they can only aspire:

Dirty dumb millions ... stood around these men [Parliamentary Radicals], saying, or struggling as they could to say: "Behold, our lot is unfair; our life is not whole but sick; we cannot live under injustice; go ye and get us justice!" (p. 224, emphasis added)

The struggle over language, which was always a struggle for power, took, in fiction, what forms could be made available to it. An accent represented phonetically could be a sign allowing the linguistic occasioning of class-enmity. Various aspects of phoneticisation are dealt with in other sections of this work, but we must note here that this literary practice is a part of the larger ideological strategy. The inability to speak "proper English" must be seen in large social terms. It is, in a real way, in some contexts, a signifier of revolution and violence.

This seems a harsh analysis to apply to Gaskell's Mary Barton, for we are not dealing with a world in which "bourgeois ideology" is a single and rigid set of pre-determined forms prohibitive of both individual and

social mediations; such mediations produce important differences in the understandings of writers, and Gaskell is the most humane and generous of the mid-century industrial-reformist novelists. But Carlyle, quoted on the novel's title page, is never far distant from it. Certainly Gaskell is consciously concerned to break the association of "dialect"-usage with humour and ridicule and to assert its dignity. She treated the Lancashire dialect with a respect unusual at the time and was concerned that her readers should do likewise.⁶ She provided footnotes to the novel glossing the meanings of some dialect usages and, frequently, giving respectability to them by citing similar grammatical forms or lexical items in such sources as Chaucer and the Bible. Despite this concern it is not insignificant that the speech of Mary Barton is less marked than that of other characters as being divergent from the "standard English" that a readership would identify as proper to a sympathetic heroine. And, in larger terms, we have already noted from the Preface that for Gaskell the working class in the novel is essentially "dumb", that the voice we hear is that of the reformist middle-class, not that of the working class. In Carlylean manner the novel interprets Chartism as an inarticulate cry of pain, an appeal for charity rather than a considerable claim. The "them" and "us" antinomy of Carlyle is also present, as in this interpolation:

The actions of the uneducated seem to me typified in those of Frankenstein, that monster of many human qualities, ungifted with a soul, a knowledge of the difference between good and evil.

The people rise up to life; they irritate us, they terrify us, and we become their enemies. Then, in the sorrowful moment of our triumphant power,

their eyes gaze on us with a mute reproach.
(pp. 219-20)

John Barton, "a Chartist, a Communist, all that is commonly called wild and visionary" (p. 220), was one of "many such whose lives are tragic poems which cannot take formal language", Gaskell wrote (Letters, p. 74). The crucial stage in the degradation of the Chartist and trade unionist is his abortive trip to London to present a Chartist petition. On his return, working-class words having proved futile, he is virtually reduced to genuine silence. He arrives home "with no word to Mary in return for her ... greeting" (p. 140), and he continues in the same way: "He seldom spoke" (p. 161). Barton explains his despair by commenting on the futility of addressing political power in a language that will go unheard: "'Mary, we mun speak to our God to hear us, for man will not hearken; no, not now, when we weep tears o' blood'" (p. 141).

If we take the "voice" of the working class to include its growing economic and political challenge, it is not surprising to find trade unionism vilified in novels about the industrial working class, even in those, like Mary Barton, most humanistically sympathetic to its sufferings. Beyond the challenge posed by trade unionism to the dogmas of laissez-faire capitalism, according to which interference in the market could mean national disaster, there is the fear of working-class unity and its implicit threat of violence. What is of particular relevance to the present argument is the presentation of union leaders (and working-class politicians) in many of the industrial-reformist novels, as well as in

later works, as demagogic agitators, as dangerously articulate. The quality of their articulateness is frequently sneered at but, as articulateness, it is to be deplored and feared. For, if the silence or inarticulateness of the mass of the poor was a reassurance to the ruling class that the ruling voice alone was coherent, cogent and valid, then the emergence of an undeniable articulateness in and through political and trade-union organisation was the audible approach of the Marxian "spectre haunting Europe".

Articulateness obliged its opponents to begin to recognise it and, from that half-conscious recognition, to devalue it and show it as illegitimate discourse; articulateness had to be counterposed to the reassuring babble of the masses at the same time as it was shown to embody the potential violence of the class as a whole.

Barton's experience shows working-class speaking as inevitably useless; its language is invalid in the political arena and therefore mere painful inarticulateness. But there is a notable scene of working-class eloquence in the novel, in the meeting called to hear and respond to the cotton-masters' ultimatum:

They took their seats on benches, and awaited the deputation. The latter, gloomily and ferociously, delivered the masters' ultimatum, adding thereunto not one word of their own....

Then the "gentleman from London" (who had been previously informed of the masters' decision) entered. You would have been puzzled to define his exact position, or what was the state of his mind as regarded education.... The impression he would have given you would have been unfavourable, and yet there was much about him that could only be characterized as doubtful.

He smirked in acknowledgement of their uncouth greetings, and sat down. (p. 236)

After a fuller description of the union leader designed to discredit in advance anything he might say, we are given a brief report of his speech (after he has softened and suborned his audience with "tobacco and drink"):

They were now ready to listen to him with approbation. He felt it; and rising like a great orator, with his right arm outstretched, his left in the breast of his waistcoat, he began to declaim, with a forced theatrical voice.

After a burst of eloquence, in which he blended the deeds of the elder and the younger Brutus, and magnified the resistless might of the "millions of Manchester", the Londoner descended to matter-of-fact business, and in his capacity this way did not belie the good judgment of those who had sent him as delegate. Masses of people when left to their own free choice, seem to have discretion in distinguishing men of natural talent; it is a pity they so little regard temper and principles. He rapidly dictated resolutions, and suggested measures. He wrote out a stirring placards for the walls. ... After he had drawn up some letters, and spoken a few more stirring words, the gentleman from London withdrew. (p. 237)

Despite his limited knowledge of the Classics, the agitator clearly has some (malign) power over the written as well as the spoken word. He is a user of language hostile to, and here directly aimed at, constituted power. This is the real object of Gaskell's fear: while herself controlling and manipulating the linguistic medium of fiction, she knows that a deployment of working-class words, such as the agitator's, threatens revolutionary violence. So, the foreignness (geographical as well as conceptual) of the eloquence to the audience is then stressed, and we are reminded of the true "uncouth" inadequacy of real ("natural") working-class speech. This is not to suggest in any way a cynicism in

Gaskell but to understand her writing within a complex and, at times, contradictory reality which effects complexities, simplicities and contradictions in her text. She has a genuine, if patronising, affection for these ordinary people:

The newly-appointed delegates, and one or two others, remained behind to talk over their respective mission, and to give and exchange opinions in more homely and natural language than they dared to use before the London orator.

"He's a rare chap, yon," began one, indicating the departed delegate by a jerk of his thumb towards the door. "He's gotten the gift of the gab, anyhow!" (p. 237)

Gaskell's distrust of organisations like trade unions is focussed on this "gift of the gab". Working-class language for Gaskell, when she cannot contain it within a pastoralist conception of a pre-capitalist, pre-industrial working class, is tragic, because it means violence. The norm -- silence and inarticulateness -- contains some reassurance in providing a perceived space for reformism. The language that fills the silence must be that of the (Christian, reformist) bourgeoisie. But the reassurance is limited. And silence for Gaskell is also tragic, because it is essentially the same as working-class language, in equally being a sign of potential violence. Her claim is that class conflict could be overcome if the antagonistic parties strove for mutual understanding using the same language (in the same language-world). Her inevitable idealist mistake is that she considers such a monolingual dialogue possible and is even confident what the language will be. The language that is the medium of the symbolic but individualising reconciliation at the end of the novel between Carson (the capitalist) and John Barton (the

violent Chartist) is that of Non-Conformist Christianity -- historically a language that has been, in fact, notably imposed on the English working class. But in Mary Barton it is revealed, through the radical discontinuities and contradictions within the work, as inadequate for this function. The triumph of her novel is that it contains elements challenging this arrogation to herself (and her class) of all power of "utterance".⁷

The rhetorical tricks of Mary Barton are, of course, not uncommon in literature or in today's newspapers and police reports. Charles Dickens does something similar in Hard Times (1855) to discredit the union agitator Slackbridge, another figure whose dangerous articulateness is directed at imposing a foreign course of action -- class conflict, even violence -- upon an essentially peace-loving and reasonable audience (Book 2, Chapter 4). In his interesting application of Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of novelistic heteroglossia to Hard Times, Roger Fowler says that Slackbridge's language is "a generalized bombast which might inhabit the pulpit, the House of Lords, or any kind of political meeting", a language which conventionally "connotes vacuousness and insincerity" (p. 82). Fowler here seems to be ignoring Slackbridge's vocabulary, which is specifically not a neutral bombast but a "socialist" one. But it seems to me that the most important thing about the bombast of the "professional leader" is its contrast with the markedly "homely" speech of Stephen Blackpool's fellow-workers and of the "quiet silent man" himself. The formal similarity between Slackbridge's rhetoric and other political and religious rhetorics is subordinate to the understanding of its articulateness as dangerous when it

supplants the "homespun" language and the silence of working-class quietism. George Gissing perceptively remarks in his study of Dickens (a work which provides considerable insight into both writers) that "Dickens, for all his sympathy, could not look with entire approval on the poor grown articulate about their wrongs" (p. 206).

What we observe in Mary Barton, though, is one of the earliest fictional instances of this rhetorical tactic directed at the working class, and one which reveals the close connexion between social power and control over language. We are already in the presence of an awareness of the danger of working-class expression, of the need to "correct" it, to fill the threatening silence with bourgeois language. The awareness grew, as did the sophistication of its literary expression, with the maturing of bourgeois rule.

The connexion between distinctively working-class linguistic practice (or what is intended to be seen as such) and working-class villainy and violence is drawn with a usefully crude clarity in Charles Reade's anti-trade union novel of 1870, Put Yourself in his Place. A newspaper editor in the novel writes of the epistolary practice of trade unions in pursuing some villainous strategy of class hostility:

"THE LITERATURE OF OUTRAGE

"First of all comes a letter to the master, intimating that he is doing something objectionable.... This letter has three features. It is signed with a real name. It is polite. It is grammatical.

"If disregarded, it is speedily followed by another. No. 2 is grammatical, or thereabouts; but, under a feigned politeness, the insolence of a vulgar mind shows itself pretty plainly.... This letter is sometimes anonymous, generally pseudonymous.

"If this reminder of the past and intimation of the future is disregarded, the refractory master gets a missive which begins with an affectation of coarse familiarity, and then rises, with a ludicrous bound, into brutal and contemptuous insolence. In this letter grammar is flung to the winds, along with good manners; but spelling survives, by a miracle. Next comes a short letter, full of sanguinary threats, and written in what we beg leave to christen the dash dialect; because, though used by at least three million people in England, and three thousand in Hillsborough, it can only be printed with blanks, the reason being simply this, that every sentence is measled with oaths and indecencies. These letters are also written phonetically, and, as the pronunciation, which directs the spelling, is all wrong, the double result is prodigious."

Having established the extent to which working-class language is grammatically and morally deviant, the editor can expand on the connexion with violence at which he has hinted:

"When the correspondence has once descended to the dash dialect, written phonetically, it never remounts towards grammar, spelling, or civilization; and the next step in the business is rattening, or else beating, or shooting, or blowing up the obnoxious individual.... Here is a crime first gently foreshadowed, then grimly intimated, then directly threatened, then threatened in words that smell of blood and gunpowder, and then done."
(Part 1, pp. 109-10)

The unknown of the mass working class (the increasing approach of anonymity in the letters) is clearly linked to the violence which is equally at its centre.

Reade does not as a rule display working-class speech phonetically, concentrating on negatively displaying working-class blasphemy and indecency via the censoring "dash dialect" of which his fictional newspaper editor writes. But it is clear from this description that he makes the links between accent, orthography and education underpinning that convention. When he reproduces a final warning letter to the hero, the aristocrat-artisan Henry Little, the orthography is, we must believe, as threatening as the editor describes, with Reade's censorship suggestively replacing what we assume to be swearwords:

This knifs wun of too made ekspres t'other is
for thy hart if thou dosent harken Trade and leve
Chetm. is thy skin thiks dore thinks thou if not
turn up and back to Lundon or I cum again and rip
thy carkiss with feloe blade to this thou cokny.

SLIPER JACK

(Part 1, p. 38)

The narrator's comment follows, drawing the conclusion which was to become such a central motif in fiction about the working class, and such a central motive in the education policy of the bourgeois state:

Any one who reads it by the fireside may smile at the incongruous mixture of a sanguinary menace with bad spelling. But deeds of blood had often followed these scrawls in Hillsborough, and Henry knew it; and, indeed, he who cannot spell his own name correctly, is the very man to take his neighbour's life without compunction; since mercy is a fruit of knowledge, and cruelty of ignorance.
(Part 1, p. 39)

The progressive "descent" of grammar and spelling through the three letters is rather bizarre as an exposure of

"the very man to take his neighbour's life". Are we intended to take the letters as coming from three separate but co-ordinated sources, with the last one coming from the most illiterate and therefore the most bloodthirsty? Surely not; the source is single: the trade union or, more specifically, its villainous leader, and there is no indication that we are meant to believe that he delegated the writing of the letters to increasingly "ignorant" others. The most likely explanation, in realist-fictional terms, would be that an imitation of either "knowledge" or "ignorance" accounts for the changes, based on an understanding that the progressive "descent" would be taken as a formal equivalent of the progressively pointed threat. But we do not in fact need to seek plausibility. The equation, in the minds of Reade and his reader, between ignorance of "standard English" and a working-class threat of violence is sufficient explanation. Where language does not recognise the authority of law, no more will its user.

Reade makes it clear that swearing -- the working-class "measling" of language with "oaths and indecencies" -- is a part of the "sanguinary threat" inherent in the language. The "dash-dialect" is employed not only by the fictional newspaper editor but also by Reade throughout the novel. A workman hostile to Henry Little (with a "degenerate face ... more canine than human" and a "forehead villainously low") thus expresses his opposition to working with Little:

"--- me, if I grind cockney blades!" said he.

This challenge fired a sympathetic handle-maker. "Grinders are right," said he. "We must be a --- mean lot and all, to handle his --- work."

(Part 1, pp. 58-9)

The use of dashes is not an uncommon resort of the censor in novels. Rudyard Kipling, for example, uses it effectively in his one story of the London slums, "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot" (1893): "That's a --- lie, an' you know it", says Tom (Many Inventions, p. 414), and W. Somerset Maugham also has recourse to it in Liza of Lambeth (1897): "'I don't care 'oo knows it, you're a --- you are!'" (p. 143). Gissing, in The Nether World (1889), has Clem Peckover say: "'It's a --- lie!'", and comments that her "epithet was too vigorous for reproduction" (p. 35). Later in the novel he goes to the limit of the practice, reducing a sentence to a virtually meaningless series of dashes:

"You're a --- liar...!
 "You! You're a --- --- ---! I'll --- your --- in
 arf a --- second! (p. 338)

The lack of meaning that is indicated to the reader is inseparable from the presence of violence. Elsewhere in The Nether World Gissing comments on the "peculiarly violent" language of the ironically named Mr Hope, and compares it to bourgeois equivalents:

[W]here the nurse or mother in the upper world cries, "I shall scold you!" in the nether the phrase is, "I'll knock yer 'ed orff!" To "I shall be very angry with you" in the one sphere, corresponds in the other, "I'll murder you!" (p. 249)

Gissing then comments that "These are conventions -- matters of no importance", but the close concern he everywhere pays to language as an expression of social being makes it clear

that to him, as to other writers, the violence in working-class language was of direct importance.

Fiction towards the end of the nineteenth century was concerned to achieve an authentic-seeming working-class speech, and one uninterrupted by the overt comments on the unpubliahability and moral unacceptability of working-class oaths that are characteristic of fictional narration even as late as Gissing:

[Clem], coming forward in the attitude of an enraged fishwife, for a few moments made the room ring with foul abuse, that vituperative vernacular of the nether world, which has never yet been exhibited by typography, and presumably never will be. (The Nether World, p. 158)

Frankly acknowledged censorship continued, though, like this comment from Katherine Douglas King's "Lil: An Idyll of the Borough" (1899): "He spoke in the language of Redhill Road, so his speech cannot be given as he delivered it" (The Child who will Never Grow Old, p. 156).

There grew a more urgent need to convey this aspect of the violence suggested in the speech itself. Arthur Morrison goes about as far as was possible at the time, as in this passage from "Lizerunt" (1894), in reproducing the obscenities and blasphemies associated with working-class speech and violence:

"Two bob? Wot for?["] Lizer asked.
 "Cos I want it. None o' yer lip."
 "Ain't got it," said Lizer sulkily.
 "That's a bleed'n' lie."
 "Lie yerself."
 "I'll break y'in arves, ye blasted 'eifer!" He ran at her throat and forced her back over a chair.
 "I'll pull yer face auf! If y'don't give me the

money, gawblimey, I'll do for you!"
 (Tales of Mean Streets, p. 29)

But Robert Blatchford, discussing Morrison in his essay "On Realism", pointed to what he somewhat ironically calls Morrison's "stern artistic reticence" in A Child of the Jago:

Let anyone who knows the slums consider how the truth is toned down or evaded in A Child of the Jago. What are the two commonest adjectives of low-life Cockney? No publisher dare print them: yet in "Jago" conversation hardly a sentence is spoken without their use. (My Favourite Books, p. 226)

The question of fixing the limits of swearing allowable in print and deciding what had to be censored was not an issue for the writers alone or even for their publishers, in a society whose ruling class operated in terms of great public prudishness. It must be remembered that in 1889 Henry Vizitelly was sent to prison for three months for publishing "obscene" books by Zola, Maupassant and others;⁸ Zola's presentation of swearing was much franker than that of any published English writers, and was certainly one of the facets of his novels which enraged the National Vigilance Association. But this climate would have made even more real fiction's connexion of violence with working-class language, as fiction represented with increasing naturalism what Gissing called "disgusting language, the terrific threats which are such common flowers of rhetoric in that world" (Nether World, p. 40). The association of the working class with swearing, the psychology and politics of swearing, are matters beyond the scope of the present work, but the remarks of J. Sharman, trying in 1884 to account for the prevalence

of swearing "in the sinks and hiding-places of a great city", are not irrelevant to the connexions between language and violence:

Among the denizens of these holes and crannies humanity has been driven very hard.... The possibility of possessing is very faint, that of enjoying still more remote.... [Swearing] can give a man an eloquence where none would otherwise belong to him.... He can assail authorities, and they dare not answer. He can drown the voice of missionaries, and they are halting in reproof. There are beings so dejected -- so penurious -- that this swearing constitutes their whole store of worldly opulence. (A Cursory History of Swearing, quoted in Ashley Montagu, pp. 332-3)

Montagu comments that:

Sharman points to the reason why it is among the lowest classes that swearing has flourished in such grim earnest: those who have been most frustrated in life can, by the magic omnipotence of words, achieve something of the power that in all other respects has been denied them. (p. 333)

Reade's Put Yourself in His Place is a novel specifically directed against trade unionism and what he saw as its concomitant violence, and rose immediately from the hysteria built up around the "Sheffield outrages" of 1866. There were few other novels dealing extensively with the working class in the three decades following the defeat of the Chartist challenge. This was a period of relative ebb in the history of the British workers' struggle. The mid-century industrial-reformist novels were, as I suggested, responsive to this struggle, and the virtual avoidance of the subject,

between Gaskell's North and South (which, in 1855, already reflects the reduction in the social challenge) and the huge efflorescence of slum-novels in the 1880s and '90s, is equally a response. The problem of the working class seemed, if not to have gone away entirely, then, at least, to be lacking in urgency. Trade unionism for a time became confined to an elite of workers; the beginnings of mass unionism that had begun with the growth of unions in the 1820s and '30s (the enormous Grand National Consolidated Trades Union was founded in 1833), and had continued through the Chartist period, now withered. Political aspirations were directed through the Radical wing of the Liberal Party, and there was little attempt to build grassroots political organisation in the working class.

By the 1880s this situation was beginning to change, as I suggested in Chapter One. There was more real cause for bourgeois alarm, perhaps, than there had been in the 1840s. In the literary response to this new phase of workers' struggle we continue to find many of the themes observable in the response to Chartism. There are the analyses of the working class as inarticulate and silent, and the embodiment of revolutionary worker articulateness is still to be found in malign agitators. It would be possible, perhaps, to find some historical justification in the 1840s for Carlyle's translation of worker militancy as an appeal for reform, for the governing class to act.⁹ But there can be no justification for the continued accusations of silence/inarticulateness in the closing decades of the century; yet we find there the Carlylean paradigm hugely extended. This was a period when, to persist with the synecdoche, the voice of the working

class became louder. What it had to say was menacing to bourgeois ears, although they frequently strove to continue hearing it as an as yet inarticulate appeal. The vocal synecdoche is not my imposition; it is percurrent in the period. In 1883, for example, Andrew Mearns entitled his sensational revelation of East End conditions "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London". A responsive leading article in the Pall Mall Gazette, entitled "Is it not time?", spoke of the "exceedingly bitter cry of the disinherited [which] has come to be as familiar in the ears of men as the dull roar of the streets or as the moaning of the wind through the trees". Continuing the traditional idea that these politically meaningless sounds require interpretation, the article welcomed the "rare occasions, such as the present, when some clear voice is heard giving more articulate utterance to the miseries of miserable men" (Mearns, p. 81). Joseph Chamberlain, also in 1883, fearing an uprising against landlords, asked:

Is it wonderful that from time to time are heard murmurs of discontent and even of impatient anger? ... The cry of distress is as yet almost inarticulate, but it will not always remain so. (Mearns, pp. 137-8)

And the threat of the inarticulateness of the working class ultimately revealing its meaning as revolutionary violence is clear in the Rev. Brooke Lambert's article "The Outcast Poor, Esau's Cry":

The cry may soon become a howl -- the howl of a crowd of injured brothers -- and the East London Esau may advance not with 400 but with 400,000 men to meet us. (Quoted in Jones, Outcast London, p. 224).

The reference here to "us" makes explicit the radical division that is present, sometimes only tacitly, in all this literature, between "us" and "them". Primarily these are class placings; within the texts they represent the alliance between the author-narrator and the reader against the (non-reading) other.

Chamberlain's "murmurs of discontent", Mearns's "bitter cry" and Lambert's "howl" of working-class London reverberate throughout the early novels of George Gissing. In Demos (1886), subtitled "A Story of English Socialism", Gissing has turned from the idealistic hopes for the possibility of "educating" and "civilising" workers that were present in Workers in the Dawn (1880) and, to an extent, in The Unclassed (1884). The "voice of Demos", in this novel, is "something to be fled from, something which excited thoughts of horrible possibilities, ... a sound of fear" (p. 445). The socialist meetings we are shown in Demos are occasions for exhibiting Gissing's scorn of the politics expressed there and, inextricably interwoven with this, scorn at the socialists' "inarticulateness". These people are, as the aristocratic hero of the novel Hubert Eldon asserts, "our enemies, yours as well as mine; they are the enemies of every man who speaks the pure English tongue and does not earn a living with his hands" (p. 376) -- the priorities of categorisation here are typical of Gissing, with the socio-economic relationships between labour and capital secondary to the matter of the use of language.

Workers' meetings as shown in Gissing's novels are places of noise. In The Nether World, after a bitterly ironical introduction to "that modern Agora" where someone "might have stood ... listening to the eloquence, the wit, the wisdom, that give proud distinction to the name of Clerkenwell Green" (p. 181), we have a description of John Hewett's denunciation of rent:

Though it was evident that he spoke often at these meetings, he had no command of his voice and no coherence of style; after the first few words he seemed to be overcome by rage that was little short of frenzy. Inarticulate screams and yells interrupted the torrent of his invective; he raised both hands above his head and clenched them in a gesture of frantic passion; his visage was frightfully distorted, and in a few minutes there actually fell drops of blood from his bitten lip. (p. 182)

Thus workers' political discussion in The Nether World.

And even more so in Demos. For Daniel Dabbs "economic agitation was a mode of passing a few hours amid congenial uproar. Whenever stamping and shouting were called for, Daniel was your man" (p. 35). The main grouping of the socialists had, at least, the "cultured tones" (p. 236) of Mr Westlake (a character probably based on William Morris) to uplift them -- though socialist politics has caused even Westlake's language to deteriorate, says Hubert Eldon: "His very style has abandoned him, his English smacks of the street corners, of radical clubs'" (p. 381). But the meetings of the extremist group of socialists, broken away from the main body led by Westlake, are places of linguistic chaos:¹⁰

There, upon Comrade Roodhouse's harangue, followed a debate more stirring than any on the records of

the Islington and Hoxton branch. The room was thoroughly full; the roof rang with tempestuous acclamations. Messrs. Cowes and Cullen were in their glory; they roared with delight at each depreciatory epithet applied to Mr. Westlake and his henchmen, and prompted the speakers with words and phrases of a rich vernacular. If anything, Comrade Roodhouse fell a little short of what was expected of him. His friends had come together prepared for gory language. (p. 237)

We are told very little of the content of the speech; the way it was received by the audience, and the language of its delivery are of primary concern to Gissing:

[T]he heresiarch had a mighty flow of vituperative speech. Aspirates troubled him, so that for the most part he cast them away, and the syntax of his periods was often anacoluthic. (p. 237)

Surely even Gissing must have hesitated about including that last item of linguistic analysis.¹¹ But he could have reflected that, while few of his readers would understand the terms of the criticism, they would realise that this was a speaker using language which had no validity. Roodhouse is nonetheless dangerous; in fact, the danger inheres precisely in his inarticulate articulateness for, despite his eschewal of aspirates, "[t]here was not a little art in the heresiarch's modes of speech" (p. 239).

"Messrs. Cowes and Cullen" are intended to be representatives rather than individualised characters, and are present only at the meetings in Demos, as exemplars of proletarian stupidity, mangled loquacity and political menace. Very clearly, they are enemies of Hubert Eldon and all others who speak the pure English tongue. Mr Cullen has earlier in the novel been upbraided for saying "'strattum,'

-- usually spelt and pronounced with but one t midway"

(p. 62); while Mr Cowes, in a speech to a meeting:

prides himself on his grammar, goes back to correct a concord, emphasises eccentricities of pronunciation; for instance, he accents "capitalist" on the second syllable, and repeats the word with grave challenge to all and sundry. Speaking of something which he wishes to stigmatise as a misnomer, he exclaims: "It's what I call a misnomy!" (p. 63)

Et cetera. At the meeting of the breakaway extremists, Mr Cullen:

got the ear of the meeting.... In his voice of quiet malice, with his frequent deliberate pauses, with his wonted emphasis on absurd pronunciations, he spoke somewhat thus:--

"In the course of his address ... our Comrade has said not a few 'ard things about certain individooals who put themselves forward as perractical Socialists.... And the question I wish to put to our Comrade is this: Is he, or is he not, aweer of certain scandalous doin's on the part of these said individooals...? (pp. 237-8)

A mistrust of working-class debate, a contempt for what workers have to say, is a theme which keeps emerging in Gissing's novels. When Samuel Barmby, in In the Year of Jubilee (1894), delivers a speech to "a society of mutual improvement at Pentonville" the characteristic comment is that: "There followed a tedious debate, a muddy flow of gabble and balderdash" (p. 308). For Gissing all congregations of working-class people, not only those at political meetings, are "mobs" threatening violence. In, for example, The Town Traveller (1898), one of Gissing's more genial novels, the masses make a brief appearance in the

crowd which is welcoming the New Year but predictably begins fighting, which leads to police intervention. The masses are characteristically described in terms of inarticulate and animalistic noise: "St Paul's struck the first note of twelve, and from all the bestial mob arose a howl and roar" (p. 253). In fact, the animalistic imagery so frequently used by Gissing and others in describing the "mob" is there as a part of the same denial of human articulateness; frequently the auditory aspects of the bestial mob are made explicit, as in, to give another example, Kipling's "One View of the Question", where an Indian visiting London sees "that this town, London, ... is accursed, being dark and unclean, devoid of sun, and full of low-born, who are perpetually drunk, and howl in the streets like jackals, men and women together" (Many Inventions, p. 81).

The real meaning of the working-class voice, for Gissing, emerges perhaps most clearly in the description of the last meeting we are shown in Demos, when the socialist leader Mutimer is attempting to give an explanation of the disappearance of certain funds. It is a situation of "utter confusion" with a "hundred voices ... trying to make themselves heard" (p. 452). The hostility of organised socialist workers to "cultured language", as they replace it with their inarticulate "hubbub", reaches its logical conclusion when two hostile meetings "crash", and all the latent violence emerges at last:

Demos was roused, was tired of listening to mere articulate speech; it was time for a good wild-beast roar, for a taste of bloodshed. ... On all sides was the thud of blows, the indignant shouting of the few who desired to preserve order mingled with the clamour of those who combated.

Demos was having its way; civilisation was blotted out, and club law proclaimed. (pp. 453-4)

We see the working class as the destroyer of bourgeois culture, and of the bourgeois law and order which aims to protect it. The voice of Demos speaks revolutionary violence.

A rather more benign surface than Gissing's, though covering a not-dissimilar fear of working-class articulateness, is present in the two novels of Walter Besant which deal with working-class London: All Sorts and Conditions of Men, published in 1882, two years after Gissing's first published novel, Workers in the Dawn, and Children of Gibeon, published in 1886, the same year as Demos. Although it would be difficult to find a pair of authors more contrasting in many ways -- in terms of popular success, personal anguish, seriousness about the role and nature of art, for example -- they have in common a position as being amongst the first writers to deal with the slums of London and their populace. In the Preface to All Sorts and Conditions of Men Besant speaks of his "many wanderings" in 1881 "in Stepney, Whitechapel, Poplar, St-Georges-in-the-East, Limehouse, Bow, Stratford, Shadwell, and all that great and marvellous country which we call East London" (p. vii) ("great and marvellous" point immediately to Besant's difference from Gissing). The rhetoric of this unknownness and of discovery was to be, for a few decades yet, a continuing feature of writers describing life in working-class London; so

frequently is the rhetoric employed that it clearly refers, in the later literature at least, to a politico-social discovery rather than the topographical one. Expeditions to "unknown England" and reports from philanthropic, religious and sociological settlements and forays were to make the areas not so plausibly strange to the "metropolitan" bourgeoisie by the end of the 1880s.¹² Among other landmarks of missionary activity we can note that the Universities' Settlement Association had been registered in 1884, Toynbee Hall was officially opened in 1885; Charles Booth inaugurated his survey in 1886, and in 1887 the Salvation army declared its mission to be necessarily social as well as soul-saving. P. J. Keating comments that:

In the wake of this three-pronged invasion (the Settlements, Salvation Army and social analysts), came religious missions, philanthropic laymen, university graduates, fashionable slummers and journalists, in such numbers that by 1896 an international survey of urban poverty reached the conclusion: "Awakening is not needed. Every thinking man has thoughts upon this matter. And along with this realization has come practical experiment, in many places and on an immense scale, towards a solution." (The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, p. 110)

In 1887, too, the Queen opened the People's Palace in Whitechapel. This was the project for which All Sorts and Conditions of Men had been such potent propaganda and which is realised in its final chapter five years before the Queen's real journey to the East. The Palace was to bring, in Besant's projection, culture and joy to the slum-dwellers, and this was to replace their political aims, as is made

clear in the novel's final speech, by Besant's main spokesperson, Harry Goslett:

"It is not by setting poor against rich, or by hardening the heart of rich against poor, that you will succeed: it is by independence and by knowledge. All sorts and conditions of men are alike. As are the vices of the rich, so are your own; as are your virtues, so are theirs. But, hitherto, the rich have had things which you could not get. Now all that is altered: in the Palace of Delight we are equal to the richest.... In this Palace, as in the outer world, remember that you have the Power. The time for envy, hatred and accusations has gone by: because we working men have, at last, all the Power there is to have. Let us use it well. But the Palace will be for joy and happiness, not for political wrangles." (p. 330)

This is as clear an illustration as any of what Herbert Marcuse speaks of in his essay on "The Affirmative Character of Culture" -- the substitution of "spiritual" joys for a sensual satisfaction made impossible for the majority by the society which produces "affirmative culture".

Besant is contemptuous and fearful of the political voice of the working-class. Goslett in his speech to the joyful masses at the opening of the "Palace of Delight" addresses them as "you", but this modulates to "we" as he declares finis to the political aspirations they had previously been led to entertain. He is, in fact, of working-class origin himself, but was brought up amongst the aristocracy, returning to the East End when he is told of his ancestry. This device is useful to Besant in two ways (it is so useful that he uses a variant of it in Children of Gibeon as well): he can lay claim to being "democratic" by asserting that class is a matter of trivial surface phenomena; but he

can also substitute for a proletarian-bred spokesperson a "worker" who naturally speaks the language of the ruling-class -- "naturally", because the hero (or heroine, in Children of Gibeon) has come to see the truth of the invalidity of class struggle through acquaintance with the "culture" of the "rich". Variations on this tactic can also be found in the best known working-class romance of the 1880s, Henry James's The Princess Casamassima.

It is probably, in part at least, because Besant wishes to further his argument that "all sorts and conditions of men are alike" (and, therefore, that politics is essentially superfluous and should be left to the governing classes), that he does not mark differences in patterns of speech and accent with any determination. He is not unaware of these differences as a matter of class, though, as some narratorial interjections make clear. Of a soap-box orator in the Mile End Road, the narrator says: "He was not ridiculous, though his grammar was defective and his pronunciation had the cockney twang, and his aspirates were wanting" (p. 96). This sounds rather like Gissing, though Gissing would not have concluded with the expressed opinion that "nothing is ridiculous that is in earnest". More like Gissing is the judgement in Children of Gibeon:

[Valentine] stopped [Mr. Lane] and offered him her hand. He did not take it, but he made as if he would take off his hat. This habit, as has been already remarked, is an indestructible proof of good breeding. Another sign is the handling of the knife and fork. A third is the pronunciation of the English language. (p. 187)

The principal political target in All Sorts and Conditions of Men would probably fail on all three of these counts, and certainly does on that of pronunciation. "Dick the Radical" has ambitions to become a spokesperson for his class, but Besant points to his unreadiness:

"I don't tell them outside," he jerked his thumb over his shoulder to indicate the Advanced Club, "but I mean to get into the 'Ouse -- I mean the House." One of his little troubles was the correction of certain peculiarities of speech common among his class. It was his cousin who first directed his attention to this point. (p. 241)

The cousinly attention is not surprising, for it comes from the working-class-substitute hero, Harry, who is to compete with Dick in giving leadership to the workers. Wim Neetens in "Problems of a 'Democratic Text'" comments on this passage that: "It is clear how these "little troubles" are strategically -- though perhaps unconsciously -- mobilized to reinforce a social stratification that surreptitiously invalidates the narrative's manifest democratic program" (p. 254). "Culture", including the "correction" of unacceptable linguistic practices, is the answer to the problem being posed by the working class. The female working-class-substitute figure in the novel, Angela, the brewery heiress who goes to live in the East End when she realises that it is the source of her income, founds and directs a sewing co-operative, but the provision of decent working conditions and the like is merely a tactic in her strategy. She writes to a friend that "'What I have attempted is, in short, nothing less than the introduction of a love of what we call culture'" (p. 104). One of the benefits -- or is

it the whole content? -- of what we call culture is that "While they are with me my girls can talk without angry snapping of the lips, and without the "sezi" and "sezee" and "sezshee" of the omnibus. This is surely a great gain for them'" (p. 105). Sez Besant, without irony.

Dick the Radical, with his "little troubles" of accent, is first routed by Harry at a meeting of the Stepney Advanced Club, the place where "Dick Coppin thundered, and burning questions were discussed, and debates held on high political points" (p. 190). This characterisation is to be taken ironically, we learn, as Besant reveals his contempt for working-class political activity. The audience comes to the club "to get these little emotions, and not for any personal or critical interest in the matter discussed" (p. 237). In the great debate between Dick and Harry on the House of Lords (bourgeois novelists seem to have had trouble thinking of political matters for the working class to discuss; the burning issue is almost invariably given as the abolition of the House of Lords) speakers from the floor have little to offer: "None of them made a point, or said a good thing, or went outside the crude theories of untaught, if generous, youth; and their ignorance was such as to make Angela almost weep" (p. 193). Dick's oratorical skill is not denied by the Besant: he delivers his "harangue" with "fluent speech and strong words and a ringing voice" (p. 194), and we are given a summary of its contents in an almost-neutral quasi-direct mode. Harry's speech, on the other hand, is given in full in the first person, over some five pages of small print; it is Besant's own patronising vision of liberal self-help that is

given here, directing the workers away from the political activity for which Dick is the spokesperson.

In the slum-literature of the last decades of the nineteenth century, the representation of the mass of the working class -- as opposed to the agitators -- as silent or inarticulate works simultaneously with the understanding of its potential as violence and revolution. When the potential threat within the silence is revealed, explicitly or implicitly, the ideological message is that the working class, as a class, is a potentially dangerous enemy (to society, civilisation, culture) and its political "language" is the expression of this danger. Literary observations of autochthonous breaking loose from the fetters of inarticulateness and silence are, as we have seen, generally accompanied by an observation of the meaninglessness, the fundamental invalidity, of the workers' language. When the inarticulate element is stressed and the potential violence is apparently ignored, the ideological message is directed more at the sense of power-full security of the middle-class reader, whose confidence in the superiority of bourgeois language is thus strengthened, while the troublesome claims and challenges of the working class are comfortingly reduced to the inarticulate cry of the ever-present (past and future) "poor". It is important to remember that we are dealing with the discursive construction of an understanding of two classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie itself.

Silence and its counterpart, inarticulateness, remain a reassurance for the bourgeoisie, though a comfort fraught with contradiction and unease. Gill Davies has observed in Morrison's Tales of Mean Streets that the characters:

fall into two distinct groups: those who remain silent and those who speak out. The silent, dignified poor are effectively a reassurance to middle class readers that the working class are not to be feared and are deserving of sympathy. And the oppositional voice, from within the class, is trivialised and made marginal. (p. 73).

When other, oppositional voices surface, they are, as Davies points out, "dismissed by parody, sentimentality or overt political criticism" (p. 73).¹³ Morrison's Tales, in fact, contain a telling contradiction. In the Introduction to the collection the stress is all on the "monotony" (which is a linguistic image) of these mean streets, the quiescent suffering of its inhabitants; whereas the stories themselves, as commentators on them have noted,¹⁴ evidence something quite different going on -- violence, brutality, degradation.

The domestic violence of stories like "Lizerunt" is paralleled by a political violence in others. In these, Morrison's alienation from, and contempt and fear for, independent working-class politics and organisation is manifest. The description of East London during "the autumn of the Great Strikes", in the story "Without Visible Means", is not far from Carlyle and Gaskell in these terms, nor in the association of disorder and violence with agitation, nor in the repeated references to linguistic acts:

One army of men, having been prepared, was ordered to strike -- and struck. Other smaller armies of men, with no preparation, were ordered to strike to

express sympathy -- and struck. Other armies still were ordered to strike because it was the fashion -- and struck. Then many hands were discharged because the strikes in other trades left them no work. Many others came from other parts in regiments to work, but remained to loaf in gangs; taught by the example of earlier regiments, which, the situation being explained (an expression devised to include mobbings and kickings and flinging into docks), had returned whence they came. So that East London was very noisy. (p. 43, emphasis added)

The "expression" of sympathy and the "explanation" to scab-workers of the situation are either the result of, or are constituted by, violence against the apathy that Morrison is determined to see as the norm of East End life.

In the same story, the most unattractive character (a thief, scrounger and work-avoider) is given the political speeches, heavily marked with the "orthography of the uneducated" and clearly indicated as empty rhetoric:

"An' when workin' men stand idle an' 'ungry in the midst o' the wealth an' the luks hry an' the igstravagance they've produced with the sweat of their brow, why, then, feller-workmen, it's time to act. It's time to bring the nigger-drivin' bloated capitalists to their knees."

"'Ear, 'ear," applauded Joey Clayton; tamely, perhaps, for the words were not new.... Newman had a habit of practising this sort of thing in snatches whenever he saw the chance. He had learned the trick in a debating society.... Newman tried a different passage of his harangue. (pp. 45-6)

Morrison does not admire working-class oratory, and ridicules it in all contexts. When Brother Spyers prays publicly in "A Conversion", this is the description:

The man prayed with his every faculty. He was a sturdy, red-necked artisan, great of hand and wiry of beard: a smith, perhaps, or a bricklayer. He

spread his arms wide, and, his head thrown back, brought forth, with passion and pain, his fervid, disordered sentences. As he went on, his throat swelled and convulsed in desperate knots, and the sweat hung thick on his face.... And, as he flung together, with clumsy travail, his endless, formless, unconsidered vehemences of uttermost Cockney, the man stood transfigured, admirable. (p. 168)

The progress here, from the physical description and class placing, through the references to the disordered language and accent, culminating in the final sarcasm (in a sentence which could be by Gissing), is far from the generosity of Gaskell, and even from the patronising sympathy of Carlyle. But the same basic attitude to working-class speech is there in all cases. And it is strange, when confronted, as the reader frequently is, by passages like this, that Keating should be able to speak of "an air of authorial disinterest" (p. 170) in connexion with Morrison and suggest that, in the Tales of Mean Streets, the author "sits by, noting behaviour patterns but passing no comparative judgement" (p. 177).

It is perhaps in the story "The Red Cow Group" that we can see most clearly Morrison's contempt for workers' political articulateness and for the association of workers' language with violence. Before the arrival of the anarchist agitator Sotcher, the Red Cow Group lived in the silent apathy which, Morrison declares, characterises the Mean streets: "night after night they drank their beer and smoked their pipes, sunk in a stagnant ignorance of their manifold wrongs" (p. 111). The phrase "manifold wrongs" reflects the agitator's judgment of their position, and is included by the

narrator to conflict with the "stagnancy", which is certainly his own judgement. It was to this group that the "revolutionary appeared ... with his message of enlightenment".

"Wy are we pore?" asked Sotcher "I ask you straight, wy are we pore? Why [sic] is it, my frien's, that awften and awften you find you ain't got a penny in yer pocket, not for to git a crust o'bread or 'alf a pint o' reasonable refreshment? 'Ow is it that 'appens? Agin I ask, ow' [sic]?" (p. 113)

We are given many paragraphs of Sotcher's "lectures", his "discourse", in direct speech, and some summaries in quasi-direct discourse, as when he is attempting to persuade the Group to blow up the gas-works:

Jerry Shand hazarded a remark about the lives of the men in the gas-works; but Sotcher explained that that was a trivial matter. Revolutions were never accomplished without bloodshed, and a few casual lives were not to be weighed in the balance against the glorious consummation of the social upheaval. He repeated his contention, when some weaker comrade spoke of the chance of danger to the operator, and repeated it with a proper scorn of the soft-handed pusillanimity that shrank from danger to life and limb in the cause. Look at the glory, and consider the hundred-fold vengeance on the enemy in the day to come! The martyr's crown was his who should die at the post of duty.

His eloquence prevailed. (p. 118)

The final sentence directly indicates the dangerous, violence-laden nature of working-class eloquence. What is notable in the quasi-direct discourse here, and we shall have to examine the issue in more detail later, is that, although the language is that of oratorical rhetoric, it is not the language of this orator in terms of grammatical complexity

and conformity to the "standard" language and in terms of vocabulary -- Sotcher would not, we must know, have used items like "pusillanimity" and "shrinking from danger" and "hundred-fold vengeance". Sarcasm inheres in the juxtaposition of the two languages -- Sotcher's, which is incoherent, mangled and inadequate, and the narrator's (and reader's) which here reaches a level of Latinate and polysyllabic complexity unusual for Morrison.

The story ends, ineluctably, with the humiliation and imprisonment of the agitator. The Red Cow Group, we must assume, returns to the stagnant apathy which is proper to the Mean Streets of East London and which has triumphed over political agitation. But the threat of anarchist violence has been shown as a lurking presence in London. It is interesting in this connexion to note what Barbara Arnett Melchiori in her study, Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel, has called the "tendency by English novelists to identify and confuse socialists and anarchists" (p. 9). It was part of a wider "media" and official effort in the response to the London dynamitings of the early- and mid-1880s, an effort made firstly to downplay the Irish question -- "All the major dynamite outrages in England were traced to the Fenians" (p. 5). And clearly it was intended to discredit socialism.¹⁵ But more than this, the unexpected and spectacular explosions at which anarchists and Fenians aimed can be seen as a peculiarly vivid expression of the violence felt by the middle class to be an ever-present potential within contemporary society. Henry James, in his dynamite romance The Princess Casamassima, which makes the confusion between

socialism and anarchism, has Hyacinth Robinson speak of this fear of the content of silence:

"Nothing of it appears above the surface; but there's an immense underworld peopled with a thousand forms of revolutionary passion and devotion.... In silence, in darkness, but under the feet of each one of us, the revolution lives and works." (p. 276)

Richard Whiteing's No. 5 John Street (1899) is one of the few texts of the period to distinguish between anarchists and socialists: "The Blacks of Anarchy scream their rage against the Reds of Social Democracy as sneaking poltroons who ... shrink from the journey's end" (p. 271) -- that end being, of course, the destructive and useless violence that, through a struggle over possession of a bomb, ends Whiteing's story. The anarchist leader in No. 5 John Street is a Russian exile, and explicitly related by the author to language: Azrael is a teacher of languages, though ironically lacking complete mastery of English. The narrator hears him give a speech: "That gruesome address the more gruesome in its effect for the botchy English! There is everything in it one does not want to hear" (p. 215). At a later meeting, there is the usual outcome to political gatherings in slum fiction: the participants "maim and mutilate each other's speeches with discordant yells. ... Azrael fulminates with foaming mouth", and, "The meeting has broken to pieces in hideous riot" (p. 271). It leads to the accident with the bomb.

For Morrison, as Keating points out, "[a]bove all else, what interested [him] about working-class life was the way that this predominantly dreary world could suddenly explode into physical violence" (p. 177). In A Child of the Jago (1896), "Violence of various kinds and degrees dominates the novel" (p. 182). The "Cockney School" of slum-writers avoids the violence of the Morrison School, to which Whiteing also belongs. The denizens of their pages conform more to the patronising and reassuring stereotype of the ignorant and ultimately inarticulate Cockney, who might display verbal ingenuity, but whose language never attains real meaningfulness and, therefore, never threatens. This is clear in the case of Edwin Pugh. Pugh was probably born a Cockney and expresses a measure of respect for the people of the London slums. But his stories repeatedly reveal his perception of the emptiness of their speech. The narrator of the stories of working-class community life in A Street in Suburbia is a character within the stories, though a subsidiary one. He is obviously of a different class from the people he lives among and speaks about, speaking apparently "standard English", and referred to once as "the young writing gentleman". "A Small Talk Exchange" is a naturalistic account of the social functions of the "Marsh Street Provision Stores"; the narrator hears a group of "dirty and unwholesome" women talking:

They talked. How they talked! In what a ceaseless flow of slipshod syllables the words poured forth. And not one single gleam of wit or appreciation of humour, not one spark of wisdom or even an original phrase, relieved the dreariness of the whole output. (p. 89)

In the Introduction to his collection of working-class stories of the 1890s Keating remarks of this story that "the pretensions of the characters ... are mocked, but gently and with an affection on Pugh's part that is all too obvious" (p. xvi). This is an unlikely judgement to make about a story that can be so dismissive of the manner and matter of the characters' conversation.

In A Street in Suburbia, the acronym in the title of "The First and Last Meeting of the M.S.H.D.S" refers to the "Marsh Street Hall Debating Society" which the local cleric is establishing for the young men of the district. The real subject of the story is the risible inability of the men to speak with any degree of sense on political questions, to participate in the valid discourse of political matters (the subject of the debate is -- again -- the abolition of the House of Lords). Unlike the narrator, controlling the tale, and the minister who is doing his best to control the meeting, most of the contributors to the chaotic proceedings speak words heavily distorted by phoneticisation, signalling their political ineptitude. It is worth looking at a substantial piece of the description of the meeting:

Mr Bannin rose with a weak smile. "Now, if there is any serious opposition," he said.

At first there was not. Then a red-headed man rose with the air of an iconoclast and addressed the chair.

"Concernin' wot the lawst speaker said," he began. "Ez fur ez I could mike art 'e wuz on'y atryin' it on. Nar, I arst yer, mates all, is thet fair pl'y? We come 'ere ter be elevated, an a bloke gits up an' talks a lot o' bloomin' rot." ...

"Gentlemen, please," cried Mr Bannin. "This will never do!" ...

There was a lull. At last a young man in a fur waistcoat rose.

"Mister Chairman, lydies and gen'l'men," he began. "Leastways there ain't no lyedies, but you know wot I mean. I got up ter s'y -- I got up ter s'y. ... [sic] I s'y, Bill, wot did I git up ter s'y?" Bill whispers in his ear. "Ho, yuss. Er. The 'Ouse o' Lords is a institootion as I ain't partial to meself I -- I -- "

"Sussussussussussus?" whispered Bill.

"I didn't ketch it, ole man," said the fur waistcoat. "Tell yer wot, mates, as my pel knows s'much abart it, I'll give in, an' let 'im 'ave a go. 'E's all roight, you take my tip."

At this point the chair of the meeting feels obliged once more to attempt to assert the rules proper to political discourse:

Mr Bannin rose wearily. "I really must insist," he said, "on some little order being maintained. It is not usual for speakers at debates to speak twice in one evening. And they do not, as a rule, rise when they have nothing to say. I throw out these suggestions merely for your guidance, as I know that most of you are enjoying a new experience tonight."

"Brayvo!" yelled the audience.

He sat down. There was a tense silence. For five minutes we sat looking at one another, and nobody spoke above a whisper. At last Mr Bannin said, "What! is there no one?" (pp. 67-8)

To a readership troubled by working-class opposition to the workings of the British Parliament, it would be comforting to be reassured that, in Marsh Street, at least, those not "partial" to the House of Lords are incapable of expressing their opposition in the only appropriate language, that of "standard English" within the rules of decorous debate. (And these ignorant illiterates had recently been given the vote!) The silence imposed on the would-be speakers by the imposition of rules of debate and the authority of

those who know the appropriate language, is a comforting silence, lacking threat. It is one part of the general bourgeois understanding of working-class language that we find in stories like Pugh's. It remained the task of other texts to suggest fully the inarticulate violence that inhabited that inarticulateness and silence.

Even an observer politically sympathetic to the working class, like Robert Blatchford, used the imagery of silence to describe workers. In Dismal England (1899), during a walk in the East End, he sees:

more impressive and eerie than all, in its spectral strangeness, the unending, undiminishing, dim procession of human shadow-shapes hurrying on and on -- in ghostly silence.

There is something creepy and terrible in the awful silence of the hurrying crowd (p. 28)

But we must go to the writings of C. F. G. Masterman for the fullest and most fascinating interpretations of proletarian silence. There can be no doubt of Masterman's view that the working-class required someone from without the class to interpret their inarticulateness. In his best-known work, The Condition of England (published in 1909, while the author was a Liberal MP), Masterman writes of:

the people of England: that eighty per cent (say) of the present inhabitants of these islands who never express their own grievances, who rarely become articulate, who can only be observed from outside and very far away.... You must learn of them today, as I have said, from the outside: from the few observers who have lived amongst them and

recorded their experience; from the very few representative men, with articulate utterance, which they have flung up from amongst themselves. (p. 77)

There is a breathtaking bourgeois-centrism here, a certainty of identity between himself and his readers ("us"), and a real sense of alienation from "the people" who are "[l]iving amongst us and around us, never becoming articulate, finding even in their own, directly elected representatives types remote from their own" (p. 89). Despite this attitude, Masterman's earlier work, From the Abyss (1902), which was published anonymously, claims misleadingly (untruthfully, in fact) in its subtitle to be "Of the Inhabitants by One of Them" -- his brief slum-dwelling descent to Camberwell, South London, scarcely qualifies Masterman to be "one of them" except in the arrogant terms of a particular concept of "representation". The work's introductory chapter, though, uses the first person plural as a mark of identification between the writer and the reader, set in opposition to a "weird and uncanny" other which is the object of investigation and representation. Subsequently, Masterman re-emerges as the spokesperson for "these denizens of another universe of being", with the "we" and "us" changing their references -- it is his articulateness which emerges as the voice from the abyss.

Again and again Masterman makes his central claim: "We are many, and we are struggling, and we are silent" (p. 10). Yet, again and again, he describes cacophony; in just one page of the introductory chapter, in a description of a day of mafficking, the people are "hoarsely cheering", "singing",

"laughing genially and boisterously", "howling"; they "shouted", "blew trumpets", in their "bizarre and barbaric revelry" (p. 3). The sounds of the people are invalid, though, as we learn in the chapter entitled "Of the Silence of Us":

But, always noisy, we rarely speak; always resonant with the din of many-voiced existence, we never reach the level of ordered articulate utterance; never attain a language that the world beyond can hear. We boast no leaders, no interpreters, no recognised channels of expression. (p. 20, emphasis added)

This last assertion is strange, given the level of political and trade union organisation that had been, and was in the process of being, achieved at this time. The clue is, perhaps, in the half-recognition that there is a language being used, but that it is not one that the ("civilised", bourgeois) "world beyond" can hear -- that is, can understand. Noise becomes, effectively, silence.

Masterman cannot understand the language, but divines its purport, for, clearly, he fears the noise it makes. The fear of social upheaval is everywhere, and its unknowable and alien content produces the fantastic strain in the book:

In some forms of disturbed dream a crowded panorama occupies the scene; each figure acts his part in dumb show; there is apparent activity and motion, but no sound discernible. And the terror of the situation is somehow interwoven with this silence.... A similar feeling is experienced in the contemplation of the moving crowds of the abyss; could they but in a moment of illumination be stimulated to a united utterance, one feels that strange events would follow. (p. 19)

The writer speaks of "a cloud on men's minds, and a half-stifled recognition of the presence of a new force hitherto unreckoned; the creeping into conscious existence of the quaint and innumerable populations bred in the Abyss" (p. 4); they have "surged through our streets, turbulent, cheerful, indifferent to our assumed proprietorship; their sound has been in all ways, their going and coming in all men's ears" (p. 2). The "mammoth of gigantic and unknown possibility" has "hitherto ... failed to realize its power" (p. 7). Now, however:

It has crept out into the daylight. At first it has moved painfully in the unaccustomed glare, as a cave bear emerging from his dark den. Now it is straightening itself and learning to gambol with heavy and grotesque antics in the sunshine. ... How long before, in a fit of ill-temper, it suddenly realizes its tremendous unconquerable might?
(pp. 7-8)

Although that might is presented as an unknown and alien Other, irrational, animalistic and grotesque, it is to be all the more feared as potentially tremendous and unconquerable.

Masterman's stress on the inarticulateness and silence of the masses is a part of a characteristic animalistic imagery, and it is given with a measure of anxious relief; to deny the validity of the language is to deny the validity of the challenge, to represent it as silent is to hope that it remains so. To present to the bourgeoisie and the working class alike a world in which there is only one valid discourse is part of the materiality of ideology, and so an active gesture in the class struggle, as Frederic Jameson has reminded us:

It is an often-taught and often-forgotten lesson that ideology is designed to promote the human dignity and clear conscience of a given class at the same time that it discredits their adversaries; indeed these two operations are one and the same, and as a cultural or intellectual object ideology may be defined as just such a reversible structure, a complex of ideas which appears either systematic or functional depending on the side from which it is approached. (Marxism and Form, p. 380)

In the representations of working-class inarticulateness and silence in Masterman and others we have an intervention in this struggle; it is, as well as a genuine problem of comprehending an alien language, a will to silence.

Masterman's comments on noise and silence are interpreted somewhat differently from this in Tony Crowley's article on "Bakhtin and the History of the Language". Crowley points out that the monoglossic "standard" form of English (whose nineteenth-century development he has traced):

did not exclude differences but hierarchised them: posited as the central form, it then ranged around it dialectal, class, gender and race-related differences in an inferior relation to its own powerful status. It was not blind to, but in a keen dialogical relation with, the heteroglot reality of the languages of a modernised society.... The silencing which certain observers perceive does not in fact take place; what occurs rather is the production of hesitancy, a faltering with words felt to be alien and difficult, and a sense of shame and inferiority when meeting with social and linguistic "superiors". (p. 81)

But while Crowley's last point, particularly, is undoubtedly true on a personal level, it is less so socially. The analysis here tends to being historically static, although potentially "synchronically" dynamic through the concept of diglossic conflict; the social challenge involved in the

assertion of its voice by the working class, and bourgeois fear are absent. What is being ignored is the way that the "certain observers" are not so much observing silence and inarticulateness as creating it, interpreting as silence the sounds they hear. The contradictions in Masterman are best explained in this way.

Crowley's comment on Masterman's description of the mafficking, the working class's "entry into the forbidden territory", is that:

It is not silencing which has taken place, as this observer had previously claimed, but a denial of forms of discourse and power which would permit anything other than carnivalesque mayhem. (p. 82)

Whether an unlicensed "eruption" which caused so much anxiety to conservative observers¹⁶ is usefully considered within Bakhtin's rather abstract notions of carnival is debatable. But what is important to note, in this example of Masterman's observation and in others, is that while there is here no literal silencing of the working class, it is an interpretation of the "noise" as disordered, inarticulate utterance that we are given. We are surely not obliged to accept the validity of hostile descriptions of riot. The point is that the voice of the working class is unheard by the ruling class except as an inarticulate threat to its power. That voice, though, can communicate the tale of struggle and revolutionary challenge to those who understand the language. What we are given by Masterman and others is a representation of the working class as silent or inarticulate, and this representation is part of a struggle to socially achieve that silence in the face of the

development of the language of the oppressed to a position where it was fundamentally challenging the domination of the ruling language and of the class whose socio-economic position had empowered its language.

Masterman knew "the terror of the situation", that "strange events" would follow the "united utterance" of the working class. For there is sometimes in Masterman, as in many other writers sharing his perceptions, a dim and contradictory perception of the truth: that the "silence" and "inarticulateness" of the working class is less reflective of that class than of the inadequate interpretative powers of the bourgeoisie itself, necessarily disabled by ideology from properly hearing and comprehending its own death sentence. In a real sense, the working class was silent, was inarticulate: it could not speak the language of the bourgeoisie which was the only real political language permitted by the ideology of the ruling class. And, then, the bourgeois perception of working-class silence as denoting a violence which threatens its power can be understood as firmly founded in social reality. From the other side too, on occasion, comes the same interpretation of silence as the coming to revolutionary utterance, but with a note of triumph, as in Ernest Jones's "We are Silent", written in the early 1850's, after the defeat of Chartism:

We are dead, and we are buried!
 Revolution's soul is tame!
 They are merry o'er our ashes,
 And our tyrants rule the same!
 But the Resurrection's coming,
 As the Resurrection came.

All in silence glides the lava
 Thro' its veins of red-hot ore;

All in silence lightnings gather
Round the mountain's glacier hoar;
Weight on Weight, and all in silence
Swells the avalanche's snow,
Till a scarce-heard whisper hurls it
Crushing on the world below;

Drop by drop, and all in silence,
At their round the waters grow,
Till the last wave proves too heavy,
And away the barriers go!
(Opening stanzas; quoted in Beer, p. 248)¹⁷

A central ideological task of the ruling class was to show, in all possible situations, the validity of the voice of established power and the inadequacy of the voice of the claimants to power. In this, as we shall see, fiction's phoneticisation of working-class language plays a not unimportant role.

Chapter Three

THE ORTHOGRAPHY OF THE UNEDUCATED, FROM KIPLING TO SHAW

All the characters are made to discourse in the appropriate language of their respective classes.
- Edinburgh Review, 1938

"O wot 'orrid langwidge!"

"Go t'ell!"

- Arthur Morrison, A Child of the Jago

"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 [AS] into RP, Received Pronunciation, please believe [AS] your speech is in the hands of the Receivers."
"We say [AS] 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!
- Tony Harrison, "Them and Uz"

Ah! what avails the classic bent
And what the cultured word
Against the undoctored incident
That actually occurred?
- Rudyard Kipling, "The Betrothed"

The journalist comes to tell other people how different the poor man is from everyone else.
- G. K. Chesterton, "Slum Novelists and the Slums"

The social process of silencing the working class did not prevent its words from entering bourgeois literature. Frequently, the form in which working-class speech was represented -- functioning together with a different set of conventions for representing bourgeois speech -- was a vital part of the silencing. It is important to stress that the silencing of the class was an ideological and political process. A more or less simple act of censorship -- Reade's "dash dialect" extending beyond some words to the whole -- which could thus render silence became increasingly impossible during the nineteenth century. In the first place, the impossibility was directly one of political plausibility: the working class was socially not silent; it was this very factor which required that silence be imposed on it. That working class speech is interpreted as, essentially, silence is only apparently paradoxical. Gender-sensitive analysis of language reveals, similarly, that the silencing of women has been entirely compatible with a social insistence on the (empty) volubility of women and an ideal of the strong and silent male -- whose strength is partly in the unchallengeable power of and behind his few words: so volubility becomes a sign of women's subordination to a language in which they can only search for meaning. Edwin Pugh, one of the most interesting of the slum novelists and whose attitudes towards Cockney will be examined later, wrote an essay on "The Silence of Women" which not only expresses specifically patriarchal attitudes but also echoes some of the perceptions of working-class silence we have already looked at:

I know, of course, that the tongue is called the woman's weapon; yet, even so, it is the feeblest in her armoury.... But that mystery which stands for the power of sex is compact of silence and secrecy.... I never see a barmaid or a tea-shop girl ... but I seem to see behind the simpering mask she wears, and to hear, sounding through the flat, hollow cadences of her lip-talk, the scornful weary soul and the inarticulate mind of the woman. (Slings and Arrows, p. 160)

In relation to the working class in the nineteenth century simple censorship was ideologically impossible because of the need to confront and defeat the volume and meaningfulness of working-class speech. It was socially necessary that the language of coherent opposition to bourgeois society be devalued (into babble, into silence), while bourgeois speech was concomitantly and relatedly valorised and empowered. One aspect of this process was the physical way in which working-class speech was represented in print -- always in relation to the "standards" of written and spoken English. It is possible here to do little more than trace some aspects of the history of the motives and techniques of the "orthography of the uneducated" before dealing with the particularly significant and revealing developments of the last decades of the nineteenth century. Rudyard Kipling in fiction and Andrew Tuer in something approaching scientific linguistics were the harbingers of these developments. George Bernard Shaw, towards the end of the main period of slum literature, ignores Kipling while acknowledging the role of Tuer (together with some others) as forerunners of the "scientific analysis" that, he congratulates himself, marks his own representations of Cockney. As a Fabian socialist, presumably politically

sympathic to the working class, and as a writer claiming some expertise in phonetics Shaw's attitudes to non-"Standard" English and its representation are worth examining.

The literary representation of "deviant" language is certainly not a factor newly arising in the nineteenth century although it seems to acquire an unprecedented currency and urgency in the confrontation of the "educated" classes with the burgeoning urban proletariat. Particularly in relation to the crucial aspect of accent such representation obviously depends, as a device, upon the widespread social acceptance (among writers, printers and readers) of the standard forms from which deviated are made. In the linguistically freer Middle Ages such representation was more problematical; Dick Leith points out in regard to Chaucer's depiction of northern speech in The Reeve's Tale that:

When the manuscript was copied in the north midlands, the language was changed to such an extent that the linguistic differences between the speech of the north country students and the rest of the poem were ironed out. Chaucer's norm was not the norm elsewhere, so his copyists could not appreciate his attempt at deviation. (p. 41)

It was the development of an accepted written standard, well advanced by the end of the sixteenth century, together with the concomitant pattern of prestigious and denigrated speech forms, that allowed the inauguration of a definite tradition which brought class struggle into the linguistic texture of

English literature in a new way. Shakespeare's stage Kentish in King Lear is only one of the best known of early dramatic mockeries of disparaged speech. And "Kentish is only the first [dialect] to be stigmatised. In the course of the following centuries, the dialects of other parts of England are labelled variously as 'offensive', 'disgusting', 'barbarous' and 'cant'" (Leith, p. 43).

Perhaps inevitably, as bourgeois society developed in its urban centres, the speech of the working class of London was singled out with increasing frequency for particular attention as the growing social power sought to distantiate itself in all ways from the other great part of the "commons" of England. (The name "Cockney" itself has always been a term of derision and contempt: it implied, at a crucial stage of its semantic development, the "softness" of the townspeople compared with the tougher people of the countryside; thence it became particularly applied to Londoners, from where the transference of the source of contempt was gradually adapted to the point where it referred to only lower-class Londoners and, by extension, to the dialect they spoke -- more precisely, usually, to their accent.) An interesting index, perhaps, of the particular interest of the bourgeoisie (as opposed to the aristocracy) in stigmatising certain forms of speech, can be found in the absence of the practice in that most aristocratic of genres, the drama of the Restoration: here the language of the servants, who frequently play an important role, is generally indistinguishable from that of the aristocratic central characters. And it was those most specifically bourgeois of literary forms, the novel and the family magazine, that were to provide the main arenas for the

phonetic representation of "deviant" and disparaged dialects and their accents.

There is a direct line from the techniques used occasionally in the novels of, for example, Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding, to those which reached their most extensive development in the nineteenth century in the pages of Punch and of writers like Thackeray and Dickens and which, in turn, continued, to an extent, through the major reformation of the relevant conventions in the last decades of the century. The letter of the great Jonathan Wild to Miss Tishy in Fielding's novel is one of the earliest fictional representations of something which is meant to be Cockney; it makes no apparent claim to any real accuracy in representing Jonathan's accent -- that this was not Fielding's intention is suggested by the fact that the character's spoken words bear no stigmata of denigration. In his letter, features not related to pronunciation are perfectly "standard", and the main point of the exercise seems to be to burlesque the writing practices of an age before the "educated" submitted to standardised spelling, as well as to make some puns revelatory of Jonathan's attitude (Tishy is "adwhorable") and some largely visual jokes; after a challenge from the narrator to "all the beaus of our time to excel [it] either in matter or spelling", the letter begins:

"MOST DEVINE AND ADWHORABLE CREETURE,-- I doubt not but those IIs, briter than the son, which have kindled such a flam in my hart, have likewise the faculty of seeing it. It would be the hiest preassumption to imagin you eggnorant of my loav. No, madam, I sollemly purtest, that of all the butys in the unaversal glob, there is none kapable of hateracting my IIs like you." (p. 163)

The metathesis that transforms "protest" into "purtest", the aspiration of the initial sound of "attracting" ("hateracting"), the replacement of "k" for the hard "c" of "capable" (meaningless in terms of indicating pronunciation diverging from the "standard") are tricks that will continue to mark phoneticised Cockney. The puns travel into the class-based humourous sneering of Punch and Thackeray's Yellowplush Papers but are avoided in more serious representations of Cockney, although the related category of malapropism is always plundered. Smollett makes perhaps the greatest meaningful use of equivocations as in, for example, the opening of the final letter in The Expedition of Humphry Clinker:

Providinch hath been pleased to make great halteration in the pasture of our affairs. We were yesterday three kiple chined, by the grease of God, in the holy bands of mattermoney. (p. 283)¹

The whimsical use of devices like Fielding's "IIs" for "eyes" (or, possibly, "two eyes") became important for Punch's early Cockney. The verse letters of "Mr. John Thomas of Belgravia" to his fellow servant and cousin "Mr. Robert Snaffles" (published in 1856) are full of it, as well as of a rich admixture of phoneticised Cockney pronunciations and numerous arbitrary orthographic perversions, all to the end of providing Punch's readers with examples of the particular and amusing ridiculousness of servants; scarcely a word is left unmolested if it gives any possible room for alteration:

Since ritink of my larst, Deer Bob, ive hardly ad a
hower
As i cood kaul my own, for we've been makin of a
tower:

Phrom plaice to plaice thay've urrid me, in whether
 phine or wet,
 And ive scacely ad a momink, xep at meeltime, down
 to set.
 Y even now its ony in my bed-room i can find
 Suffisht peace & qviet to compoje my arrissed mind;
 And its reether under diphyculties as i ave to
 right,
 For their aint no tabel in the room on wich to
 stand a lite:
 But i've set our big portmanter, witch its mT, on
 its end,
 And so uppon the Mewses i in humbelness attend.
 (Punch, 11 October 1856, p. 143)

This brand of wit descends immediately, though somewhat exaggeratedly, from Thackeray's Yellowplush Papers (1837-40) which, being much more lengthy than the verse letters in Punch could probably not contain the same density of orthographic trickery without trying its readers too hard. Charles Yellowplush observes in his leavetaking "Ajew" that:

It's impossbill for me to continyow, however, a writin, as I have done -- violetting the rules of authography, and trampling upon the fust princepills of English grammar. When I began, I knew no better: when I'd carrid on these papers a little further, and grew accustomd to writin, I began to smel out somethink quear in my style.
 (p. 300)

Plenty of fictional Cockneys remained, however, with "somethink quear" in their styles.

Dickens differed from the Thackeray-Punch tradition mostly in that his exuberant indications of non-"standard" syntax and pronunciation are directed less towards inviting the reader

to share in the delights of superiority than towards a much more genial and generous humour and a celebration of individualistic plurality. I have already briefly discussed Dickens's attitude to the workers' language in Hard Times, and his fictional language has been so widely discussed elsewhere² that here I wish to do no more than indicate some of the main features of his represented Cockney. It is, first, noticeable that a serious pathetic heroine like Little Nell for whom Dickens wanted the total sympathy of his readers is not shown as being a Cockney speaker, although her background and environment would suggest that this would be eminently plausible. But it is precisely the power and point of the tradition we are looking at that representation of a character as linguistically non-"standard" is generally intended to direct the reader's sympathy away from the character. At its most generous, as frequently in Dickens, the largest sympathy allowed for such a character is that of humour. The nation would have undoubtedly been less eager to join in the mourning at Nell's death if she had died with the accent of Sairey Gamp or Sam Weller on her lips.

Where Dickens does represent Cockney speech, the dialect is usually subordinated to idiolectal characteristics, although, as Matthews points out, "his command of the Cockney idiom was certain" (p. 51) despite the conventionality of his techniques in conveying it. The ways of speaking of Mrs Gamp, Sam Weller and Jo (in Bleak House) share many features, but each way plays a significant part in characterising the individual. What most directly links Dickens's representation of Cockney speech to established conventions and traditions are the basic inconsistency of approach; the fairly arbitrary

and idiosyncratic choice of linguistic items to be phoneticised within a generally "Standard English" pattern of orthography, lexis and syntax; phoneticisation of words indicating no difference in pronunciation but only some vaguer kind of inadequacy. All of these are present in the nineteenth century's most famous fictional Cockney, Sam Weller. Dickens's approach to Jo is somewhat more radical, but even for Jo, as P. J. Keating points out:

It would be impossible for someone reading [his speeches] aloud to convey the sound of Jo's voice as being lower-class cockney simply by pronouncing the words as spelt by Dickens. He would need to bring to his reading knowledge of how Cockney is spoken outside Bleak House, and adjust Dickens's spelling accordingly. (The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, p. 253)

Accuracy of representation was what the slum novelists of the 1880s and '90s were aiming at when they overturned the earlier conventions of representing working-class speech -- to replace them with orthographic patterns and attitudes which prove, on examination, to be less accurate and rather more conventional than was, or is, frequently acknowledged. But that there was a substantial difference between the language of Dickens's working-class characters and their end-of-century descendants was clear to all. Novelists seem to have been welcomed as instructors about at least this aspect of the working-class; such a welcome is notable in Jane Findlater's comment, written in 1904, on the revolution in representation; the passage is worth quoting at length:

Have you read Oliver lately? or do you remember him distinctly enough to establish comparisons between him and his grandchildren of the "nineties"? Such comparisons are laughable enough. How the whole presentation of low life has been turned round about since the publication of Oliver Twist! And to notice particulars first, how the speech differs.... [W]e can scarcely forbear a smile when we read the grammatical periods of Nance:- "Thank Heaven upon your knees, dear lady (cries Nance in one of those admirably composed exclamatory passages), that you had friends to care for you and keep you in your childhood, and that you were never in the midst of cold and hunger and riot and drunkenness, and -- and something worse than all -- as I have been from my cradle. I may use the word, for the alley and the gutter were mine, as they will be my deathbed!" Now (I know nothing of Cockney dialect but what the novelists have taught me) the lady would be exclaiming more to this effect:--

"Thank yer bloomin' stars, lydie, as you 'ad pals a-lookin' arter yer wen you was a bloomin' kid, an' wa'nt clemmed with 'unger an' goin' on the booze, an maybe street-walkin', like I've been since I was a kid," &c., &c., &c. (pp. 70-1)

When Findlater made her updated version of Nancy's speech she made use of at least one indicated pronunciation that according to Matthews was introduced (by Tuer) into the new conventions of representing Cockney: the long "i" substituted for the long "a" in "lady" ("lydie" for Findlater).³ This was one of the pronunciations that E. J. Milliken defended himself for not using, in his introduction to the collected 'Arry Ballads. Through the letters printed in Punch for over a decade from 1877 'Arry became, like Sam Weller, an archetypal fictional Cockney. In some ways he represents a transitional phase in the fictional portrayal of Cockney: basically Milliken continues with the old conventions in the sneering tradition of Thackeray, but

significantly abandons the interchange of "w" and "v" that had been the most noticeable feature of Sam Weller's pronunciation and which Tuer's anathema, and perhaps also some writers' direct observation of Cockney speech, were to render virtually obsolete by the 1890s. Milliken also introduced some Americanisms into the slangy speech of 'Arry -- who is not necessarily particularly working-class in anything other than his stressed vulgarity. The following extract from 'Arry's description of his skating adventures shows the essential continuity with the old conventions:

"Old hup Miss," I sez; "no 'arm done: it's all
right hup to now don'tcher know,"
And she tipped me a look from her lamps, as was
sparklers and fair in a glow:
If she didn't admire me -- well there, 'Arry don't
want to gas, but 'Em Bates
Got the needle tremenjuss, I tell yer, and
threatened to take orf the skates.
(Punch, 23 February 1889, p. 85)

It was these conventions, as exemplified most famously in *Yellowplush*, Sam Weller and 'Arry, against which the new generation of writers reacted in their search for something more clearly "authentic". Writers of the 1880s and '90s were seeking, as I have suggested, a more "truthful" appraisal, a greater "knowledge" of the working-class than had hitherto been socially required. The blatant conventionality of the older traditions became more apparent and more important, and had to be challenged. The obviously partisan attitudes towards working-class language needed to be subordinated to something which could lay some claim to being the result of empirical and "neutral" observation. That the observation and the representation were not neutral is central to what I am

arguing. But there can be no doubt that the new techniques and conventions of representing working-class speech, produced within a body of writing often closely adjacent to sociological and anthropological genres, testified to observation of the kind which perhaps only Gaskell had already evidenced and which was far from Thackeray or even Dickens. Writers went to the slums to see and hear for themselves; they went, too, to the music halls where Cockney was being rather more accurately presented to an audience that was, initially at least, itself largely Cockney in composition.⁴

Keating's useful descriptive account in The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction of the phonetic representation of Cockney suggests that the changes to traditional practices were inaugurated primarily by Andrew Tuer and Rudyard Kipling in the 1880s. Keating notes the development in Kipling's stories: in the early soldier tales "the Cockney dialect is a mixture of old and new", while later stories reveal "several important points about Kipling's use of Cockney":

First, it is not treated as corrupt Standard English, but as a dialect in its own right. In the soldier stories, Ortheris's dialect is placed on a par with those of the Irishman and the Yorkshireman. Secondly, it is not phoneticized in order to make the reader laugh.... Thirdly, the transliteration is consistent throughout. And fourthly, by concentrating on a consistent use of only one or two important cockney characteristics and largely eschewing the transliteration of diphthongs and vowel sounds, Kipling succeeded both in capturing the sound of a cockney voice and in making it comprehensible to the general public.
(p. 261)

Keating's discussion is characterised by respect and

generosity, and his claims for Kipling are large. Along with the more theoretical Tuer, Kipling the writer of fiction and ballads "challenged the traditional means of representing Cockney"; further, he "provided the slum novelists who were to follow with a working-class archetype which was predominantly 'realistic'" (p. 164). Keating is also generous to Kipling as substitute spokesperson for the working class:

Unlike many of the novelists who came before him, Kipling did not feel that before a working man could have anything to say he had to be educated.... On the contrary, Kipling fully understood the necessity for the working man to express himself in his own language. (p. 165)

But to understand Kipling's attitude to the working class and to working-class speech in the light of what has been argued thus far, we need to question these judgements. For a significant point that Keating makes is his conclusion that "Kipling was the first important Victorian writer who was not scared of the working classes" (p. 166); and, further, his "work is both intensely personal and sociologically objective" (p. 165). These judgements tend to go against the general analysis which I have presented of the writers of the 1880s and '90s: I have suggested that class fear, class hostility, or at least an awareness that some kind of class collaboration is necessary, is at the basis of the emergence of the genre; and "sociological objectivity", the claim has been, is merely the ideological mask for a class-based attempt to describe society in such a way as to reduce the potential, or desire, for changing it.

Keating points out, correctly, that Kipling's Cockney "is not phoneticized in order to make the reader laugh", in

the traditional manner. But he does not tell us just why the non-"standard" speech is, then, phoneticised. It is clear that one of the purposes is a more accurate mimesis, but why should this have been a desideratum? Perhaps because of "the necessity for the working man to express himself in his own language"? There is some slackness in the conception of literary realism here, for what we have is specifically not the worker expressing him/herself in any language; we have Kipling expressing the worker in a language chosen by the writer, and marking it as very different from his (the writer's and the narrator's) own language. What we have, in fact, is a realist or naturalist attempt to persuade the reader of the accuracy of what is "spoken", in order to convince that reader of the "sociological objectivity" of the representation, with evidence that this is "the working man" expressing himself in his own language. It is possible that we are in the presence of nothing radically different from earlier attempts to speak on behalf of, to politically represent as it were, the worker.

In one of his early soldier stories, "In the Matter of a Private", Kipling wrote that "[t]here is nobody to speak for Thomas except people who have theories to work off on him; and nobody understands Thomas except Thomas, and he does not always know what is the matter with himself" (Soldiers Three, p. 88). Keating comments with regard to this passage that "[t]he Barrack Room Ballads attempted to put this situation right" (p. 165). The Ballads differ significantly from the soldier stories and from "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot" (Kipling's only story about the slums of London) in that in them there is no standard English-speaking narrator, and we

shall have to deal with them separately. But, clearly, Kipling is generally offering himself as an objective though sympathetic spokesperson, free of "theories", for the generic private soldier Thomas Atkins. Nowhere in the stories does their narrator seem at a loss for an explanation of the minds and motives of "Thomas Atkins whom I love in general" (Plain Tales from the Hills, p. 383).

In his Introduction to his collection of Working-Class Stories of the 1890s Keating repeats, more briefly, the understanding of Kipling he gave elsewhere. He claims further, in this Introduction, that Kipling "dispens[es] with the traditional kind of class comparison", which thus "allow[s] his working-class characters to establish their own pattern of behaviour" (p. xi) (again there is the curious suggestion of an autochthonous text). Keating takes Kipling's determination "to learn how to speak for the inarticulate working man" as the reason for, amongst other things "the absence of middle- and upper-class characters, ... and the elaborate phonetics which were employed in an attempt to capture the actual sound of London working-class voices" (p. xi). In fact, Keating is ignoring three important structures of class comparison which operate in the stories: first, the fact that the tales of working-class soldiers are scattered among stories about the officers and their wives; secondly, the presence and role of a narrator addressed by his soldier-"friends" as "Sir" (or the dialectal equivalents, like "Sorr"); thirdly, the presentation of the narrator as speaking a very different sort of language from the working-class characters, the "standard" language of literature and of the ruling class, which ineluctably reveals

the presence of "class comparison", as I shall discuss more fully in the next chapter. It would be rather more valid to claim that Kipling employs his "elaborate phonetics" in order to establish, and to naturalise, class comparison rather than in order to accurately "capture" working-class voices.

Like so many of his contemporaries, Kipling put his voice forward to fill the silence and inarticulateness which he found in the working class. But he is unusual in that he contemplated a time when an articulate authentic voice would emerge from the East End to "write the Songs of the People"; in Abaft the Funnel he has this vision:

Some day a man will rise up from Bermondsey,
Battersea or Bow, and he will be coarse, but
clear-sighted, hard but infinitely and tenderly
humorous, speaking the People's tongue, steeped in
their lives and telling them in swinging, urging,
clinging verse what it is their inarticulate lips
would express. He will make them songs. Such songs!
And all the little poets who pretend to sing to the
People will scuttle away like rabbits. (Uncollected
Prose, pp. 266-7)

That time had not yet arrived, and the singer of the songs must, for the time being, be Kipling -- someone whose respect and affection for the "common soldier", and whose admiration for a few aspects of working-class life, is embedded within an attitude not always dissimilar to that of other slum-writers of the time. "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot" does indeed show an awareness of working-class culture as a genuine alternative to middle-class culture, as Keating suggests, but it also shows love and kindness and decency to be rare there, and to be much more associated with the (admittedly somewhat irrelevant) religious middle-class

philanthropists. "Badalia Herodsfoot" is, after all, a founding text of the school of fiction which revels in showing violence and brutality to be endemic to, and characteristic of, the slums. The unity of disgust and desire in Kipling is not, in itself, particularly unusual; it marks many petty-bourgeois literary encounters with the working class and is present most markedly in Gissing, perhaps.

But Kipling justifying himself as Tommy Atkins's spokesperson on the grounds that Thomas "does not always know what is the matter with himself" is Kipling joining the chorus of those who find the working class inarticulate; and Keating does admit that "there is more than a little condescension in Kipling's admiration for Tommy Atkins", and that it is there in the dedication of the Barrack Room Ballads⁵ (p. 165):

I have made for you a song,
And it may be right or wrong,
But only you can tell me if its true;
I have tried for to explain
Both your pleasure and your pain,
And, Thomas, here's my best respects to you!

The full implication, in these terms, of this poem can only be comprehended when it is taken in its original conjunction with the other (primary) dedication of the Ballads⁵. This consists of a fairly lengthy poem whose first stanza runs as follows:

Beyond the path of the outmost sun through utter
darkness hurled
Further than ever comet flared or vagrant star-dust
swirled
Live such as fought and sailed and ruled and loved
and made our world.

Robert Buchanan, in a hostile article on Kipling written in 1899, reacted strongly to the dissonance between the register of the dedication and that of the ballads themselves:

This dedication, with its false feeling and utterly unsuitable imagery, suggests the remark en passant that Mr. Kipling's music alternates between two extremes -- the lowest Cockney vulgarity and the very heights of what Americans call "high-falutin'" -- so that when it is not setting the teeth on edge with the vocabulary of the London Hooligan, it is raving in capital letters about the Seraphim and the Pit and the Maidens Nine and the Planets.
(p. 238)

It is apparent that this dedicatory poem is not from Thomas's mouth, nor is it for Thomas's eyes or ears; it is from the superior writer to the superior reader for whom, in fact, the Ballads are intended, and for whom this is the appropriate register. It suggests that the other dedicatory poem, the condescending one to "Thomas Atkins" from a coyly intimate "R. K.", with its simple rhythms and rhymes and its preponderance of monosyllabic words, is as much intended for the superior reader as are the ballads themselves: it is equally an object intended to present a particular relationship with, and understanding of, the common soldier, and to show a particular language as proper to such a class of people.

We must look more closely at the soldier stories and ballads, which were so hugely successful at the time of their publication and apparently so important for subsequent

representations of working-class speech. It is odd, perhaps, that stories of the British Army in India should have been taken up as relevant for the representation of the slums of London, but the reasons are significant. Briefly put, the Army was, as Ann Parry suggests, "an institution that made the middle-class conscious of its dependence on the working-class" (p. 258). The development of a world imperialist system, and developing challenges to the Empire from both subject nations and rival imperialist powers, had made the British upper classes aware of how much they depended on the armed services. Parry quotes a historian of the Army to the effect that in the 1880s and '90s "both the output of books and the market demand for writing upon military or quasi-military themes reached new heights" (p. 258). Yet it would seem that the "common soldier", unlike the common seaman, had received little literary attention (see Carrington, p. 5). At this time the Indian Army alone needed 60,000 such soldiers, and they were overwhelmingly drawn from the unemployed, and from the "lowest" levels of the metropolitan working class:

Here, surely, was the reason why the middle-class required to be reassured that the army was loyal and obedient -- it was comprised of the "submerged tenth", that section of the working-class who were brought to public attention as never before in the 1890s by the social investigators, and who became for many a frightening spectre of savagery, debauchery and indolence. (Parry, p. 259)

That the Empire depended so clearly upon any section of the working class would be enough to elicit a welcome for anyone who ventured some explanation of how the soldier

thought and behaved. This attitude was an aspect of the desire to "know" -- to understand ideologically, to place and to fix -- the working class. And Kipling presented the soldier with a good deal of respect for his fighting qualities, with a benevolently contemptuous affection, with an admission of his roughness, conveyed with all the tricks of realism to make it convincing, but always with a reassurance that the soldier was properly and contentedly cognisant of his superior officers -- that order reigned among the forces of law and order. "'E's a gentleman, 'e is", says Otheris in "His Private Honour" after resolving in manly fashion an attack on his soldierly honour; "'E's an orf'cer too'" (Many Inventions, p. 249). Otheris had the right to have the officer cashiered, but scorns the notion of rights: "'I ain't a recruity to go whining about my rights to this an' my rights to that.... My rights! Strewth A'mighty! I'm a man'" (p. 254). These notes of opposition between a demand for democratic rights and the individualistic self-assertion as "a man" (reminding us of the ongoing construction of gender which is part of the construction of class) are repeated frequently in Kipling. In his article on Kipling in Heretics G. K. Chesterton accutely noted that "what attracts Mr. Kipling to militarism is not the idea of courage, but the idea of discipline" (p. 45). What attracted readers to Mr Kipling was, in part, his representation of the "soldiers three" as, ultimately, disciplined within the class system that was common to the Army and society at home, fundamentally contented and not likely to revolt.

To this motive must be added the fact that the idea of the "nation", which developed (with no little assistance from

Kipling) as a part of the ineluctable movement towards imperialist war, meant that somehow class differences had to be maintained within an ideology that simultaneously denied and confirmed them. Linguistic practice played, as we have seen, an important role in this: the sharing of a common tongue was stressed by some ideologues as signifying national unity; the differences within the common language were also, and simultaneously, markers of levels of "cultural" and social adequacy.

Perhaps it is in this context that we should look at Keating's interpretation of Kipling's new and rigorous use of phoneticisation as establishing Cockney "not ... as corrupt Standard English, but as a dialect in its own right", placing Ortheris's dialect "on a par with those of the Irishman and the Yorkshireman" (p. 261). This could, of course, be immediately translated as ensuring that the inferior language will remain inferior to the language of the writing and ruling class, but it will be so in specifically regional rather than class terms -- although the distance between region and class can be small, as has been pointed out by, amongst others, Raymond Williams.⁶ The interpretation of Cockney as a "valid" dialect (for the little that was worth in terms of prestige) was certainly not universally held; most of the "educated class" still treated Cockney as a debased form of English. John Ruskin was fairly typical in his opinion that "provincial dialect is not vulgar, but cockney dialect, the corruption, by blunted sense, of a finer language continually heard, is so in a deep degree" (Modern Painters, p. 354). Gissing, in his study of Dickens, refers approvingly to Ruskin's judgement to support his own remarks

about "the broad distinction between this London jargon and anything worthy of being called a dialect" (p. 142). And it has been pointed out that "[a]s late as 1896, Dr Joseph Wright, in his great Dialect Dictionary did not allow the existence of a London dialect" (Carrington, p. 16). What Gill Davies says about the East End, as region, can be applied to its language, as regional "dialect":

The East End (and, by extension, all working class London) was perceived as foreign, in terms of the territory and the population. It constituted a "region" in Raymond Williams's sense of the term, with similar status to other marginalised fictional and documentary locations. Its "otherness" was measured against an assumed norm: metropolitan, middle class (male) culture. In the East End, a concept of regional otherness (alien territory) came together with a new sense of class difference (foreign tribes) as a direct result of the realization that here was a working class which was "not simply without culture or morality, but in fact possessed a 'culture' of its own". (p. 67, quoting G. S. Jones).

It is debatable whether there is any real opposition between, on the one hand, treating a dialect as a "respectable" dialect while at the same time retaining an implicit reference to a supposed "norm" which is not considered a dialect and, on the other, treating it as a debased form of the "standard". The linguistic and social relations remain unaltered. And, to an important extent, it is merely a matter of labelling whether we see Kipling's orthographic contortions as representations of a regional/class dialect or of a regional/class distortion of language. For, undoubtedly, by the very fact of being what they are -- contortions of the "normal", in terms of

orthography -- they must be understood as contortions of the normal in other ways too. For Keating what is "really new" is "the way that Cockney is placed on a par with regional dialects. It is the total pattern rather than the individual parts that is important" (p. 258). But the "totality" goes beyond the point at which Keating rests, and the placing of Cockney as a dialect rather than a mere corruption does not deal with the implications that inhere in a system that declares one dialect to be the "standard" and other dialects to be more- or less-acceptable fallings away from it, with a quasi-pastoral quaint charm the only positive value available. As early as 1900 Richard le Gallienne in Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism considered the question of Cockney as a dialect; he accepts that it is one, though he adds that while "what we call 'Irish' and 'Scotch' ... have managed to win recognition for themselves as literary media ... it remains to be seen whether Mr. Kipling will be able to win like permanent recognition for 'Cockney'" (p. 99). Le Gallienne points out the dangers of marginalised status inherent in "dialect"-writing, citing William Barnes and Edwin Waugh to show that "[t]here are English dialects for which so far even conspicuous literary talent has failed to win permanent acceptance in serious literature" (pp. 99-100).

Keating is aware of some of the problems inherent in his interpretation of the new rigorous use of Cockney as a "dialect" of achieved recognition. He notes that despite the urban novelists' achievement in making Cockney "take its place in fiction as a distinct, instantly recognisable dialect ... Cockney continued to differ from other dialects in that its use depended, almost exclusively, on the class of

the speaker" (p. 266). This has some validity but Keating's own respect for "dialect" (and his apparent acceptance of the "standard" as being other than a dialect) seems to blind him to the facts that, certainly regarding speech, the categories of class and regionality are almost always inextricably intertwined in the nineteenth century (if not always before then), and that most "dialect" writing of the nineteenth century is class-based, and tends to be limited to the expression of (urban or rural) working-class thoughts, and to descriptions of working-class lives. "Dialect" writing is almost always either pastoral or specifically working-class in nature;⁷ it is connected to subordinate classes or castes by the fact that they share a displacement from the socio-cultural centre. Keating also notes that the motives for transcribing Cockney in literature are different from the motives actuating more traditional "dialect" literature:

It divides rather than unites the classes; it serves to heighten social divisions rather than lessen them; it indicates a type of speech common in a specific area, but shows a lack of "culture" on the part of the speaker. (p. 247)

What, then, is the meaningfulness of treating Cockney as a regional rather than a class dialect, when it is bound to be interpreted in class terms? Keating shows some unclarity and confusion here. What he characterises as a "general rule", that normally "a regional dialect symbolizes a whole way of life, and may be spoken by all classes of a given society, save usually the very highest", is questionable. The class issues are, for Keating, matters to be put in parentheses, as it were. But they are, in fact, the crucial

and determining matters. What does it really matter if Cockney can now be labelled a "dialect", if the relations between the "dialect" and the "standard" remain the same -- if Cockney, "dialect" or "debased language", remains a mark of inferiority?

Certainly, a number of contemporary critics reacted strongly to Kipling's use of Cockney, especially in the Barrack Room Ballads: this was not always felt to be a language suitable for poetry, nor was the common soldier a suitable subject. Le Gallienne writes of "Mandalay" that its "magic is made of the very refuse of language" (p. 30); a reviewer says that Kipling writing "in dialect ... is nearly always an artist" (despite his inadequacy in writing "English") although "the material is of the vilest -- is the very dregs of language" (Henley, p. 55). Robert Buchanan spoke of "the voice of the hooligan" and "the lowest Cockney vulgarity" (p. 238). Another reviewer claimed that "[w]ords and phrases have one value in life, another in literature, and it is the artist's business to translate, not to transcribe"; but this reviewer admitted, as did most, the ultimate value of the transcription, for "his characters, though their accent is not always irreproachable, have the blood and bone of reality" (Whibley, p. 61).

The realism is, of course, the point. Edmund Gosse valued Kipling's soldier stories as being so convincingly about "these men -- to whom, though we so often forget it, we owe the maintenance of our Empire in the East -- an absolutely

silent section of the community" (p. 265). The voice that replaces this embarrassing silence must convince by embodying evidence of its "authenticity". Precisely because the voice, here, was Kipling's, it must mimic the sound of what readers knew to be the sound of the voice in order to make what it said equally plausible to those seeking to "know". And, as John Bayley comments in a study of some aspects of artifice, truth and illusion in Kipling: "Authenticity is in the look of the thing" (p. 144). Kipling's realism was widely noticed and praised by his contemporaries. Walter Besant, for example, whose own novels of working-class life are comparatively inept in this regard, recognised that Kipling dealt with "reality", which is "the first essential in fiction": "The story must be real; the dialogue must be real; the action must spring naturally from the situation" ("Is it the voice of the Hooligan?", p. 251). But George Moore, who knew quite a bit about naturalism, was sour about Kipling's effects, and correct about their motivation:

Local colour is proof of education -- it proves the painter has travelled: truth of effect raises him almost to the level of the scientist.... Great and small, every critic is duped; the artist has only to find out some particular part of the country and to bring back some curious notes of travel to dupe every one.... His stories are filled with hookahs and elephants, parakeets and crocodiles; ... All the dialects are there -- Irish, Scots and Cockney. (pp. 286-7)

The signs of "proof", of which a phonetically-indicated spelling is one, are crucial in the literature about the working class. There is a great deal to indicate that the fiction was seen by writers and readers as a clear

counterpart to the sociological investigations being made of the same subject. Henry Nevinson, looking back from 1923, was proud that his Neighbours of Ours (1895) was "heartily welcomed by people of serious knowledge such as Samuel Barnett, Octavia Hill, Ernest Aves, and Charles Gore.... For many years, too, the book was recommended, and perhaps still is, to the students at the London School of Economics" (Changes and Chances, pp. 117-8). And Charles Booth was not unusual in recommending Gissing as a novelist remarkably truthful to life (cited in Chapple, p. 95); Gissing was typical in his concern to actually investigate the East End before writing his novels, and in his observation of socialist meetings and strike rallies. Plekhanov's concept of the "sociological equivalent" to the fictional text was not very different from some of the criteria applied to these novels and stories, and contemporary reviews usually considered carefully their "truth" content. Annie Wakeman's The Autobiography of a Charwoman (1900) was enthusiastically welcomed by the reviewer in The Leeds Mercury as "the unerringly true record of the inner life of a woman of that enormous class -- the working people of England", and by The World as "A work to rank with Mr Morrison's 'Mean Streets' and Mr Whiteing's 'No. 5 John Street,' as a contribution to our knowledge of the ways of life among the working poor of London" (both puffs quoted on the endpapers of the second impression of the novel). Richard Whiteing, cited here as a standard of knowledge-bringing, sets out in the Preface to later editions of the popular No. 5 John Street (1899) to answer some of the many questions raised by the "realism" of the novel:

The questions of general interest, as I find them in the reviews, and in the letters of correspondents, turn mainly on three points. How much of the book is "real" -- in the sense, I take it, of mere photographic verisimilitude? Why was it written? What should we do? (p. i)

There was, for an extreme example of the way this type fiction was expected to provide "knowledge", a substantial public debate over the accuracy of Morrison's A Child of the Jago (1896) (and, incidentally, over the extent of its plagiarism of the Reverend A. Osborne Jay's Life in Darkest London).⁸ A significant contributor to the debate, H. D. Traill, concluded that A Child of the Jago was passable as "an imaginative picture of life at the East End", but that it was not "a realistic history of any community of human beings that ever existed on the earth" (pp. 14-15). Traill asked of the "New Realism", as he called it: "how are we to trust its dealings with those hideous and revolting aspects of the truth, which are matters of special inquiry and expert information?" (pp. 23-4). Normally, critics did not attempt to adduce outside evidence for their appraisals of the "truth" in these novels but, inevitably, responded more or less favourably to the writers' more or less successful use of the "local colour" disparaged by Moore. Robert Blatchford in his article "On Realism" suggested that "an author is often reproached as a Realist when he indulges in a superfluity of detail, ... or when he sacrifices the spirit of his subject to a slavish and laboured delineation of externals", but pointed out that Morrison, in A Child of the Jago, had actually "exercised a stern artistic reticence" in censoring Cockney swearing (p. 226).

Chesterton's penetrating discussion of "Slum Novelists and the Slums", discussing the "obstacles" standing in the way of such fiction's "actuality", points out, like Moore, that "[t]he slum novelist gains his whole effect by the fact that some detail is strange to the reader". Chesterton is unusual in realising that "that detail by the nature of the case cannot be strange in itself" (pp. 280-1). He connects this to the representation of speech:

[T]he fact that it is the life as the refined man sees it proves that it cannot be the life as the unrefined man lives it. Rich men write stories about poor men, and describe them as speaking with a coarse, or heavy, or husky enunciation. But if poor men wrote novels about you or me they would describe us as speaking with some absurd shrill and affected voice, such as we only hear from a duchess in a three-act farce. (p. 280)

Most critics, in both the 1880s and the 1980s, seem to accept that, so far as phoneticisation is concerned, the goal of "accuracy" is an end in itself. The truth, rather, is that it is the persuasive appearance of accuracy which is important. Within a wider quest for "knowledge" of the newly-apparent and newly-problematical nature of contemporary society, particularly of the threatening working class, there is a necessity to deploy convincingly some apparently "scientific" signs of reliability.

Blatchford, who spoke of the ambiguities and dangers of "Realism", is actually a useful case-study in the significance for realism of the phonetic transcription of the speech of "low-life Cockney" In his novel Julie: A Study of a Girl he goes to some distance in delineating linguistic externals, as here:

"Get out o' me sight, yer spongin' loafer. Get out o' me 'ouse as I slaves to pay rent for. Gow, yer pore swine, 'fore I does yer a mischief. Gow!"
(p. 5)

However, Blatchford's quotations from working-class speakers are treated differently in his non-fiction works. In, for example, a dialogue with a chemical worker in Dismal England, the worker's terse replies, given verbatim, are not phoneticised (p. 112). This points to the essence of the situation: that the use of phonetic transcriptions with some claim to accuracy was a part of staking a larger claim to what was felt to be a deeper, more reliable, more "sociologically scientific" truth. There is, of course, the paradox that, while slum literature was bolstering its claims to truth-telling by appropriating and adapting some elements of sociological and anthropological writing, the mystique of artistic knowledge (what Lukacs was later to celebrate as "the aesthetic mode of perception") was simultaneously growing, even in relation to slum fiction; hence the celebration of the particular qualities of knowledge provided by fiction, as opposed to other forms of writing, which I noted at the end of Chapter One. Non-fictional genres came to rely on conventions other than the "accurate" representation of speech to signal their truth -- although it should be noted that one of the earliest, quasi-sociological explorers of slum life, Henry Mayhew in his London Labour and the London Poor of 1861, presented his subjects in what he claimed was "their own 'unvarnished' language", with a great deal of "colourful" slang and some Dickensian indications.⁹ George Sims's fairly extensive use of phonetics in How the

Poor Live of 1883, a more immediate precursor of the sociological outpourings of the 1880s and '90s, is already almost outdated in its year of publication, and notably more mocking than either Mayhew or Dickens.

Phoneticisation used primarily for purposes of humour and aiming at an "artistic" and vague indication of the linguistic practices of their characters became quite unacceptable in a situation where novelists were looked to as providers of "genuine" knowledge about the working class. The development of Gissing's rendering of working-class speech is a case in point, from the inconsistent and obviously approximate gestures in Workers in the Dawn (1880) to the more detailed, consistent and "accurate" representations of The Nether World (1889) and further in that direction in Born in Exile (1892) and his rare slum stories of the 1890s. By 1899, when Richard Whiteing published No 5. John Street, it would have been virtually impossible to have expected to be taken seriously with a novel about the slums of London making use of the sub-Dickensian efforts of his 1867 novel, Mr. Sprouts: His Opinions:

"And afore I could say Jack Robinson the old party with the hook nose and the eyeglass puts her harm in mine and in this here stoopid fashion we galliwanted downstairs." (Quoted in Keating, p. 263)

Returning to Kipling from the Cockney speech as rendered only some twenty years earlier reminds us of the significance of those two decades for society and for the literature which expresses it. An interesting aspect of Kipling's use of local

colour as far as language goes is that when he represents the native Indian speech he "translates" it into English (sometimes indicating specifically that it is a translation), an English that is notably elegant and elaborate, Biblical and formal. This applies whether the speaker is an upper-caste Indian sending a report from London to his royal employer, as constitutes the entire story "One View of the Question", or is a mere elephant-keeper in "My Lord the Elephant":

"It cost a year and the life of a man to break him to burden. They of the Artillery put him in the gun-team because one of their base-born brutes had gone lame. No wonder that he was, and is wroth."

"Rummy! Most unusual rum," said Ortheris. "Gawd, 'e is in a temper, though! S'pose 'e got loose!"
(Many Inventions, p. 52)

Kipling is known to be not untouched by racism, but here the Englishman comes off second-best as far as language is concerned. There could be many reasons for this: perhaps the Indian savage is treated with a Rousseauist benevolence and his language regarded respectfully as a rather quaint equivalent of an uncorrupt English; perhaps the status of the Indian is so clear to Kipling that he needs not find a speech equivalent for it.¹⁰ Perhaps, simply, the task is now to provide "knowledge" of the common English soldier, not of the Indians; it is the Cockney's complexities and corruptions that need investigation.

But to what extent is Kipling's Cockney "accurate", or even rigorous, and what meaning does "accuracy" have in this context? There are numerous common Cockney practices which are not included in his representation: the pervasive glottal

stop, the substitution of "f" or "v" for "th", for example. There are aspects of Kipling's phoneticisation which immediately link him to traditional techniques. The dropping of the aspirate and its insertion before vowels relates more to convention than observation, and has been probably the most bedevilling element whenever class pronunciation is at issue. Henry Alford in 1864 was typical in his view (and in his dubious logic) that "nothing so surely stamps a man as below the mark in intelligence, self-respect and energy as this unfortunate habit"; for T. L. Kington-Oliphant adding or dropping "the fatal letter" was simply a "revolting habit" (both quotations from Crowley, The Politics of Discourse, p. 153). But William Matthews, in his study of various aspects of the Cockney, allowing the "general agreement among Cockneys to neglect initial h", says that the "aspiration of normally initial vowels, although it is commonly represented in literature ... is not a rule of Cockney and is, indeed, rather rare" (pp. 80-1). And Tuer had already dismissed the practice, stating that "the popular idea as to the average Cockney indiscriminately scattering his H's is a delusion, and that he settles the difficulty by ignoring them" (p. vii). Keating, commenting on this statement, says that "Tuer is obviously referring here to the Yellowplush-'Arry tradition.... The addition of aspirates is justifiable in certain circumstances; when, for instance, the cockney is embarrassed, trying to impress, being pompous or mocking the upper classes" (p. 289, n. 27). Keating claims that Kipling understood this, although Thackeray had not, and cites in support of his claim a passage from "The Three Musketeers":

''E sez, 'You har my noble preservers,' sez 'e.
 'You har a honour to the British Harmacy,' sez 'e"
 (Plain Tales, p. 101, emphasis in original, though
 not indicated by Keating).

This is a convincing argument, until we notice that in the two sentences immediately following those quoted by Keating we get "hawful" and "hoverpowered", in a context where Keating's justification is without validity. In the same story "up" becomes "hup", "if" becomes "hif" and "I" frequently turns into "Hi". Kipling's treatment of the aspirate, in the earlier stories at least, is as indiscriminating and cavalier as anyone's.

Generally, Kipling is not really as far from the older traditions as Keating claims. Kipling's universal spelling of "says" as "sez" for all three "dialect"-speakers (Yorkshire, Irish and Cockney) serves no descriptive purpose: it is purely a visual sign of difference, without reference to any auditory phenomenon of linguistic peculiarity. The same applies to the transliteration of Ortheris's "Colonel" as "Kernul" and "parade" as "p'raid" (again in "The Three Musketeers"), and to words like "tremendous" being variously phoneticised as "tremenjus" and "tremengus". Similarly with "wot" for "what"; this, as well as the extra "h", occurs in, amongst numerous other places, "Mandalay":

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty
 pavin'-stones
 An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the fever in
 my bones
 Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea to
 the Strand,
 An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do they
 understand?
 (Departmental Ditties and Barrack-Room Ballads,
 pp. 211-2)

Although we have "Henglish", other words in the ballad like "east" and "elephints" -- a dubiously justified phoneticisation -- remain unaspirated. "What" becomes "wot", but the similar sound in "where" is not similarly treated: "Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst" (p. 66). This sound is dealt with even more erratically in "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot":

"Don't I know 'ow you've been goin on while I was away, yah!" [Tom said.]

"Arsk about!" said Badalia indignantly, drawing herself together. "'Oo sez anythink agin me 'ere?"

"'Oo sez? W'y, everbody. I ain't come back more'n a minute 'fore I finds out you've been with the curick Gawd knows where. Wot curick was 'e?"
(Many Inventions, p. 415)

It is difficult to justify, in this passage, the close co-existence of the unaltered "while" and "where" with the conventional "wot", and the rather curious "w'y". The deletion of the "h" from such words was a common feature of literary phoneticisation although, as C. Stoffel pointed out in 1894 in his study of the "'Arryese" of Punch, "Wy for 'why' ... [and] wot for 'what' ... is no longer a mark of vulgarity" (p. 189), in a linguistic world where "[v]ulgarisms are constantly being raised to the superior rank of colloquialisms" (p. 197).

And the intrusive "r" in Cockney "arsk" is surely confusing in terms of phoneticisation, unless we accept that it is there merely to indicate that the pronunciation is somehow "deviant". Kipling is no different from most of the writers who succeeded him (or from earlier writers like Gaskell who aimed at some accuracy) in arbitrarily selecting

only some of the features of Cockney pronunciation for exhibition. As a practice this can be seen in the earlier tradition as well, given that in the earlier case the selected features were less likely to correspond to empirical fact. It is the basic technical rule which links the older forms of phoneticisation to the newer, and it is probably of more significance than the quantitative differences in terms of "scientific" accuracy between them. As with all the fiction writers who indulge in phonetics, Kipling's aim is to give only sufficient indicators of the sound of the speech. And not even that, frequently: the aim is to indicate difference and deviation from the "standard", so that even where there is no real sound difference -- "arsk", "wot" -- there is an indication of deviation. It is difficult to credit Kipling with respectfully treating Cockney as a neutrally and closely observed "regional" dialect. He certainly enriched and improved the tradition of phoneticisation and gave it a much greater degree of accuracy, but he is reforming and not revolutionising the tradition and its basic ground-rules and conventions.

There are two considerations that emerge from, and qualify, this argument. First, Kipling's greater efforts can be seen as going into "dialectal" speech rhythms and grammatical forms rather than into accurate phonetics, and he does produce effective displays on this level. Further, it can be objected that in Kipling we are dealing with fiction rather than formal linguistic study, and that it would be unreasonable to expect total consistency and a complete and accurate coverage of Cockney sounds. This is undeniable; but my intention has been precisely to point out that the fiction

writers' goals were ideological rather than "objectively" linguistic, and that the phoneticisation is mystified when it is dealt with within the terms of either literary realism or linguistic dialect-study. Complete accuracy would be impossible, for, as Eva Sivertsen has pointed out in her study of George Bernard Shaw's phonetics, a "normal orthography can never unambiguously represent the pronunciation, unless the phonetic value of the letters is indicated" (p. 164). The phonetic values of the slum-writers' orthography, we should note, are not in any way genuinely scientific, for they are the sound-values of "standard English", and to read the phoneticised words in any accent other than that of "standard English" would not convey the sound intended: an English dialect which voices the "r" would not pronounce Kipling's "arsk" in the way he did.

On a different level, any attempt to provide a full and accurate transliteration of a "dialect", taking the "standard" written language as the representation of the "standard" spoken language, would certainly result in an unreadable text; this is why most writers of the period selected only a few of the possible phoneticisations, using them more or less consistently and relying on them, as well as on some conventional and meaningless visual markers, to suggest the general pattern of deviation. Roger Fowler notes in his discussion of Hard Times, the novel where Dickens comes closest to using a sociolect, "two simple points to grasp" when considering the different notational devices of different writers:

First, these are not to be judged as realistic transcriptions where fidelity might be an issue --

they are simply conventional signals of sociolinguistic difference. Second, only a very slight deviance ... is needed to persuade middle-class readers that they are in the presence of a social group below their own. (p. 86)

While such practices generally drew praise from contemporary reviewers there was, on occasion, criticism that even this level of phoneticisation made Kipling's stories, for example, difficult to read.¹¹

When E. J. Milliken published in 1892 his collection of "'Arry Ballads", a selection of the Cockney rhymes which had been appearing in Punch for fifteen years, his introduction is careful to give the difficulty of reading "scientific" dialect as one of the reasons for his own practices:

As to 'Arry's slang, it makes no pretensions to be scientific. It is easily and hospitably eclectic. The slang I have used I have, for the most part, heard....

As regards 'Arry's diction, his pronunciation, his orthography, it is hardly needful, perhaps, to observe that no attempt has been made to be accurately phonetic. No possible combinations of letters will really render 'Arry's pronunciation of such words as "lady", "game", "Charlie", "daisy", "down", and "trousers". To besprinkle these pages with such orthographic combinations as "lidy", "goime", "Choarlee", "doisy", "daoun", or "trarsers", would (in my opinion) make them a perplexing, eye-wearying, phonetic puzzle without attaining orthoepical accuracy. It would, of course, be quite possible to approximate more closely to 'Arry's actual pronunciation, but only, I think, at the cost of making my verses hideous to look at and hard to read. Rightly or wrongly, I have deliberately abstained from the attempt. (p. 2)

This smacks of the defensive and is an assertion by Milliken of the validity of his own system which, in the light of developments by Kipling, Tuer, and even Gissing, could have

been seen as unacceptably old-fashioned and inadequate for the 1890s. As Keating points out, the slum novelists would have denied that one system was as good as another, even given the impossibility of achieving exactitude: "the best of the slum novelists could at least say that their modifications were based on personal research and an intimate knowledge of the way of life they were describing" (p. 259).

The problem of the readability of anything even approaching "orthoepical accuracy" remains. George Eliot, referring to her representation of "regional" accents in the period before slum literature made the practice so much more common in non-"regional" novels, wrote to the secretary of the English Dialect Society that her "rendering of dialect, both in words and spelling, was constantly checked by the artistic duty of being generally intelligible", for "[i]t is a just demand that art should keep clear of such specialities as would make it a puzzle for the larger part of its public" (quoted in Crowley, p. 140). To a much greater degree than did writers of straightforward fiction, Andrew Tuer aimed at accuracy, and the fictional claims of Thenks Awf'ully are slight, subordinated to the display of the language. His phoneticisations of Cockney are accompanied by a "standard English" translation in smaller type below, as in this extract from "Th'innercent Yeng Middy" (translated by Tuer as "The Innocent Young Middy"):

The poor fellow pulled out a battered old silver watch of the frying pan variety, and continued:

"I pawned the paw roul gevner's prisint fer ten
 "I pawned the poor old governors present for ten
 paounds, en' I bought this fer 'arf a sovryn,
 pounds, and I bought this for half-a-sovereign,

jist ter 'ev a watch uv sem sort, down't tcher
 just to have a watch of some sort, don't you
 'now."
 know."

(Thenks Awf'llly, p. 14)

Tuer's laborious display would not be acceptable in a realist fictional text which aims at both exhibiting and naturalising (in fictional terms) the deviations from the standard, and Tuer's purpose is clearly largely instructional. But it is not to minimise Kipling's story-telling skills, nor the ideological importance of his subject-matter and its treatment, to note a very real connection between some of his soldier stories and the semi-socio-linguistic motive actuating Tuer. The Irish, Yorkshire and Cockney dialects used by Kipling for such long stretches in some tales are not simply a literary medium -- the issue with which so many contemporaries, as well as more recent critics like Keating, deal. Rather, the dialect is in a real sense the object of the stories. Kipling is "explaining", "revealing", this "hitherto silent" social group. Their language, no less than their manners and mode of being, is presented to the reader as revelatory and explanatory. In a real sense, the stories are a vehicle for the display of their language.

Much of what has been said about Kipling's use of dialect can be applied to his successors. There were, naturally, some who took the task less seriously and treated it less honestly

than others, while Kipling can stand as an example of the best. Virtually all slum writers of the 1890s felt obliged to render Cockney phonetically. Richard Whiteing has already been instanced in this regard, and it is worth looking more closely at his techniques of representing working-class speech, as someone who was obliged to consciously reshape his technique to meet the standards of the last decades of the century. In No. 5 John Street he interpolates his regret at not being able to be completely accurate (which, as noted, he had scarcely attempted in his work of thirty years earlier):

Our alphabet, I regret to say, is not rich enough for the notation of [Low Covey's] Cockney dialect. This is no more to be written phonetically than a foreign tongue. I can but indicate his speech system from time to time by a stray word which, if there is anything in the theory of the correspondence between sounds and colours, should have the effect of a stain of London mud. It is as much as I can promise, and, as I hope, my reader will endure. (p. 19)

Whiteing knows the social significance of accent and occasionally remarks on it, as in this Besant-like aside:

And, ah, how little separates [Tilda] in essentials from the smartest and the best bred! -- the Cockney aspirate, the Cockney vowel, a tendency to eat jam with a knife. (p. 247)

In fact, though Whiteing does not ask his reader to "endure" as much phoneticisation as does Kipling, his indications are much more than "stray" and are fairly typical of what was being done by his contemporaries in this regard. Many of these indications can be regarded as simply signs of difference, divergence and degradation rather than any

serious attempt to show particularities of the sounds of the "Cockney dialect". So we have, for example, "langwidge" for "language" and "bizness" for "business"; "larf" for "laugh", "foriners" for "foreigners", "charikter" for "character" -- none of which orthographic distortions would, surely, lead a "standard English" reader to pronounce the word in a manner notably different from that prescribed by Received Pronunciation. Whiteing's scattering of aspirates and of indicated abandonings of aspirates is fairly random and arbitrary, as in Low Covey's remark about an athletic curate:

"He ain't much of a 'and with the gloves, though he fancies 'isself a bit in that line. I'd rather talk to 'im any day than spar with 'im. Yer see, 'e's such a good sort, yer don't care to land."
(p. 62)

The overall impression is what is required, and probably few readers would notice that "he" becomes "'e" only once out of three occurrences in this speech, or would remember that Covey's unaspirated version of "himself" was, some twenty pages earlier, given as "hisself", or would consider that to drop the leading aspirate of a word like "hand" would be most unlikely to be unaccompanied by a compensatory changing of the preceding article to "an". Undoubtedly Whiteing's representation of Cockney grammar and vocabulary in No. 5 John Street is much more "accurate" than it had been in Mr. Sprouts: His Opinions and he knowingly deploys a great deal of slang, but it is evident that, as far as indicating pronunciation goes, he has simply abandoned one set of conventions for another on the basis of the conventions' social significance. If Low Covey had been shown as speaking

like Mr Sprouts it is most unlikely that the reader mentioned in the Preface to the novel, accustomed to the new conventions and their claims to authenticity, would have written to the author offering Covey a "situation". But to look at phonetic schemes like Whiteing's and invoke a "scientific approach", and to assume that their motivation is a quest for accuracy, is simply misleading. Whiteing may not be an example of the best or most accurate phoneticisers, but he is not untypical. Radical inconsistency, a concern for linguistically meaningless display, and downright inaccuracy can be found in most, probably all, of the slum fiction of the 1880s and '90s.

At the lower end of this continuum would be, for example, Annie Wakeman's Autobiography of a Charwoman (1900). Wakeman particularly specialises in redistributing aspirates, and flourishes phrases like "Covint Garden Hopera 'Ouse"; though "hear", almost alone among words with an aspirated "h", always becomes "year". There are numerous whimsical pseudo-phoneticisations which indicate no peculiarity of pronunciation: "r" creeps into "arsk", "carn't" and "charnce", "k" replaces "ch" in "harkitec'" (architect), "accessory" becomes "axcessory" (unaspirated), "inoffensive" becomes "inerfensive", "said" and "says" are inevitably rendered as "sed" and "sez". There is a general reliance in the "Autobiography" on such devices to give the appearance of an accurate rendering of Cockney. Unlike writers like Kipling and Morrison, Wakeman relies directly on the superficialities of the new convention for, precisely, an effect: to speak of a genuine attempt at accuracy in her case would be totally inappropriate.

Kipling's "Record of Badalia Herodsfoot" stands near the start of the slum-writing of the decades around 1900, and his phoneticisation of working-class speech in that story and in some of his soldier stories is better than most, in terms of attitude and technique. Perhaps the best-known work dealing with Cockney speech -- in fact Cockney and the social significance of accent is its central concern -- came after the slum-literature genre had largely subsided, with Shaw's Pygmalion (1912), and Shaw himself had no doubt of his own superiority in the matter of understanding Cockney.

Some distinction between Shaw and his contemporary writers, on the level of comprehending and representing non-"standard" speech, might be expected: first, because Shaw supposedly knew something about linguistics and, particularly, phonetics (he undoubtedly supposed this knowledge), and reflected consciously on and discussed his views; secondly, because his Fabian politics included an announced sympathy with the class normally subjected to the phoneticising weapon. We might expect the voice of the working class to be heard somewhat differently. But, as Raymond Williams suggests, the voice we hear in Shaw's writing is always Shaw's:

The bright, entertaining and useful challenge ... comes not only to harden into a party trick, but takes over, as a whole way of experiencing others and the world, in which people and objects shrink to fixed appearances, and nothing is left but, playing entertainingly over them, a single confident voice. ("Notes on English Prose", p. 113)

What we find in Shaw is the relative conventionality of his literary technique in regard to phoneticisation, and also that the confident voice is not simply that entertaining Shavian arrogance, but is the echo of the same sense of class superiority and sedulous proving thereof that is noticeable elsewhere in the tradition we are looking at.

Shaw made use of phonetically represented Cockney speech in some of his early novels, particularly in An Unsocial Socialist, where the upper-class hero referred to in the title poses as a "working man" and adopts, along with the appropriate clothes, the requisite accent (as indicated by Shaw). In the plays, Drinkwater in Captain Brassbound's Conversion has his Cockney essence thus indicated throughout, to accompany the sneers of the other characters; several characters in Major Barbara are treated similarly, and there are scatterings of Cockney phoneticising in Candida, Widowers' Houses, Man and Superman and John Bull's Other Island. And there is Pygmalion.

Shaw explains his interest in phonetics, and acknowledges his own superiority vis-à-vis contemporary fiction-writers, thus:

The late James Lecky ... was one of my friends at that time [1879].... Through him I got ... [if] not a knowledge of phonetics, at least an interest in it (a permanent protection against such superficial catchpenny stuff as the reformed spellings that are invented every six months by faddists); ... and finally some acquaintance with men like the late Alexander Ellis, and one which I greatly value with Henry Sweet.... This is the explanation of the fact that the Cockney dialect which so astonishes readers of Captain Brassbound's Conversion is so much more scientific in its analysis of London Coster lingo than anything that had previously appeared in fiction. (Quoted in Franklyn, pp. 227-8)

In a note written in 1900 to follow Captain Brassbound's Conversion he had already made claim of his superiority:

I have taken the liberty of making a special example of [Felix Drinkwater], as far as that can be done without a phonetic alphabet, for the benefit of the mass of readers outside London who still form their notions of Cockney dialect on Sam Weller. (pp. 291-2)

He continues:

When I came to London in 1876, the Sam Weller dialect had passed away so completely that I should have given it up as a literary fiction if I had not discovered it surviving in a Middlesex village, and heard of it from an Essex one. Some time in the eighties the late Andrew Tuer called attention in the Pall Mall Gazette to several peculiarities of modern cockney, and to the obsolescence of the Dickens dialect that was still being copied from book to book by authors who never dreamt of using their ears, much less of training them to listen. Then came Mr Anstey's cockney dialogues in Punch, a great advance, and Mr Chevalier's coster songs and patter. The Tompkins verses contributed by Mr Barry Pain to the London Daily Chronicle also did something to bring the literary convention for cockney English up to date. (p. 292)¹²

Shaw is clearly claiming a specialist knowledge as the basis of his Cockney representations. He cites some earlier practitioners, but what is notable, as Keating has pointed out, is Shaw's omission of a number of writers -- Kipling, Morrison, Whiteing, Pugh, Ridge and many others -- who had long abandoned the Thackeray/Punch/Dickens conventions in favour of systems based, precisely, on the close observation recommended by Shaw (p. 256). This seems more likely to be intellectual dishonesty or forgetfulness on his part than ignorance, for which he can have had no excuse, given the

critical attention generally paid to this aspect of these writers.

His claim to originality and "scientific analysis" is one which has been taken notice of by some linguists who evidence little acquaintance with other fictional practitioners. Eva Sivertsen, in Cockney Phonology, takes Shaw as her exemplary fiction writer, suggesting that "he has indicated Cockney pronunciation more consistently and more extensively than any other serious writer I know of" (p. 158). Joseph Saxe, in Bernard Shaw's Phonetics, uses Shaw's works in comparison with some earlier Punch verses, in an attempt to gauge from these two sources a supposed development of some significance in Cockney pronunciation during the nineteenth century.¹³ In his introduction Saxe, too, refers only to those writers cited by Shaw in speaking of the post-Dickensian tradition. Both Saxe and Sivertsen reveal the essentially literary nature, the conventional core, of Shaw's Cockney phonetics. Saxe instances many examples where Shaw merely continues established literary practices which an educated observation and "scientific analysis" should have revealed to be such. Sivertsen notes a number of inconsistencies and ambiguities in Shaw; for example that:

the spelling "gorden" and "gording" (i.e. garden, [Candida]) occur three lines apart, and "gowin" and "gowing" (going, [Major Barbara]) are found in the same paragraph. We must assume that both "ow" and "aow" are meant to suggest /[?]w/ in "gow an shaow" (go and show, [Major Barbara]), and that "oi" and "aw" both indicate /aj/ in "Oi should lawk" (I should like), [John Bull's Other Island]. (p. 164)

However, Sivertsen's conclusion is that:

These inconsistencies and ambiguities in Shaw's works are probably no greater than those we find with other writers. I am inclined to believe that Shaw is a rather better observer than most other literary men. (p. 164)

William Matthews agrees that, despite some "blunders in his transcription, ... Shaw was on the whole a careful and original observer" (p. 69). But other critics have been less generous. Julian Franklyn commends Shaw's revolt against the Dickensian convention but convicts him of having studied Cockney dialect in an "obnoxious and superior manner". Franklyn finds confusions between "distinct brands of cockney" in Pygmalion, as well as inconsistencies. However, in Captain Brassbound's Conversion:

Drinkwater is more consistent as far as his cockney is concerned, notwithstanding his author's misrendering of it; but upon analysis it is revealed that his words are watered down with many that no speaker of "coster lingo" either could or would employ; and the cockney dialect which so astonishes readers of Captain Brassbound's Conversion, does so, not through its being "more scientific in its analysis of London coster lingo than anything that had previously appeared", but solely on account of Shaw's method of phonetic spelling being unduly hard upon the eye. (p. 234)

Franklyn's distaste for Shaw's class arrogance is, rather winningly, behind some of his unfairness to the latter's phonetic system, but his central criticism is important and returns us to Williams's observation of the "single confident voice" in Shaw:

It is useless for an author to set down sentences in phonetic spelling, no matter how excellently his

system represents the sounds emitted by a speaker, if he fails to embody peculiarities of syntax, and the other grammatical errors [sic] that are an integral part of the idiom normally used by persons of the particular class to which his fictitious character is supposed to belong.

Part of Shaw's failure as a writer of cockney dialect is his disregard of this axiom. Drinkwater is not making cockney remarks in cockney tones; he is as often as not making Shavian remarks in Shaw's phonetics. (p. 236)

The dialect indicated in An Unsocial Socialist (1887) is not specifically Cockney -- it is not specifically anything, perhaps: Shaw's interest in rendering non-"standard" speech was not yet developed to the pitch it reached in some of his plays. In fact it is of the kind that preceeded the major developments in this field in the last decades of the century. When the hero, the bourgeois revolutionary Sidney Trefusis, adopts the guise of the workman Smilash he necessarily adopts, too, the phoneticised speech of the working class, in a fairly muted version. It might be suspected, from the very (old-fashioned) conventionality of Shaw's practice that he is poking fun at the literary conventions themselves, just as he pokes fun at the moral ones:

"Three cheers for moral science!" cried Smilash, ecstatically breaking into the outrageous dialect he had forgotten in his wrath. "Wot was my words to you, neighbour, when I said we should bring your missus to the college, and you said, ironical-like, 'Aye, and bloomin' glad they'll be to see us there.' Did I not say to you that the lady had a noble 'art, and would show it when put to the test by sech a calamity as this?" (p. 127)

But it is unlikely that the description of the dialect as

"outrageous" refers to Smilash's inadequacy in speaking it or to its manner of representation.¹⁴ Shaw uses the same techniques for the speech of genuine workers in the novel, and there is only too much evidence elsewhere that Shaw found working-class accents to be "outrageous".

The remarks on Felix Drinkwater's Cockney in Captain Brassbound's Conversion (1899) make this clear, and show how Shaw's attitudes to Cockney are intimately bound up with his class arrogance. The obnoxious Drinkwater is introduced in a stage direction at the beginning of the play, thus:

A Londoner would recognize him at once as an extreme but hardy specimen of the abortion produced by nurture in a city slum. His utterance, affectedly pumped and hearty, and naturally vulgar and nasal, is ready and fluent.... His dialect, apart from its base nasal delivery, is not unlike that of smart London society in its tendency to replace diphthongs by vowels ... and to shuffle all the traditional vowel pronunciations. (p. 208)

Then comes a brief description of Drinkwater's accent, concluding with the statement that the accent "amazing to all but cockneys" cannot be adequately indicated in the play "without the aid of a phonetic alphabet". In the note which follows the play, on "English and American Dialects", Shaw continues this theme: "The fact that English is spelt conventionally and not phonetically makes the art of recording speech almost impossible" (p. 290). Remarking on the fact that he indicates American pronunciations within the play and not that of the upper-class Lady Cicely he admits that he has "absolutely no defence" for this practice. At this point the comparison is between American English" and "English English" and Shaw "disclaim(s) any intention of

suggesting that English pronunciation is authoritative and correct"; besides, he says, "there is no standard English pronunciation", and proceeds to take up his earlier point about the relations between the Cockney accent and that of "smart London society". It is clear, though, that Shaw is operating with some idea of a standard pronunciation of English -- there is something against which "replace[ment of] diphthongs by vowels" and suchlike can be measured, though he remains silent about this. His defence of phoneticising Drinkwater's accent while not that of Lady Cicely is a recognition of the power of the classes they represent, but it is a recognition hiding behind a joke:

[I]f I were to attempt to represent current "smart" Cockney speech as I have attempted to represent Drinkwater's, without the niceties of Mr Sweet's Romic alphabets ... this would give such offence that I should have to leave the country.... And so I am compelled to hide Lady Cicely's speech under the veil of conventional orthography. (p. 291)

As for Drinkwater, his claims can be ignored; he needs no shielding "because he will never read my book".

Although Shaw suggests in his Note that "to ridicule an Englishman for dropping [the initial aspirated h] is as absurd as to ridicule the whole French and Italian nation [sic] for doing the same" (pp. 292-3), and that "he who bothers about his hs is a fool and he who ridicules a dropped h a snob", this does not prevent him from indicating Drinkwater's dropped and interpolated aspirates as assiduously as any snob might have done: "Hever ear o Jadge Ellam?", Drinkwater asks Rankin (who makes it clear that "Ellam" is for "Hallam") "-- enginist jadge in Hingland!"

(p. 209). Given English orthographical laws it is not immediately easy for the reader to understand that "enginist" is given as the Cockney for "hangingest"; the obvious pronunciation of what Shaw gives would be related, surely, to the usual pronunciation of "engine". It is likely that it was to Drinkwater he was referring when Shaw commented that: "A well-known actor, when studying one of my Cockney parts, had to copy it in ordinary spelling before he could learn it" (quoted in Franklyn, p. 234). And it is hardly surprising. Occasionally in the play, Shaw himself includes a translation "in ordinary spelling", but the speech remains not easy to read; and Shaw's reluctance to use diacritical marks to indicate elisions does not help the reader who is accustomed to the profusion of apostrophes usually found in slum literature:

Wot abaht them! Waw, theyre eah. Lannid aht of a steam yacht in Mogador awber not twenty minnits agow. Gorn to the British cornsl's. E'll send em orn to you: e ynt got naowheres to put em. Sor em awr (hire) a Harab an two Krooboyes to kerry their laggige. Thort awd cam an teoll yer. (p. 209)

Certainly this is more intensive phoneticisation than was usually attempted by the slum writers, and Shaw's acquaintance with the works of Tuer is apparent. So intensive is it that words given in "standard" English, like "steam yacht" look very strange and there is probably a general tendency for all readers, concentrating on reading phonetically, to attempt to do the same with these -- to an odd effect presumably not intended by Shaw. Strangely, "twenty" also is unaltered, though Shaw's "scientific analysis" should have easily led him to realise that

Cockney's tendency to progressive assimilation would rather lead to "twenny". And without wishing to initiate an exhaustive critique of the "scientific analysis", it can be pointed out further that, while "what" becomes "wot", "naowheres" inconsistently retains its "h".¹⁵

In Pygmalion there is to be no pleasant claim of impartiality about accents to accompany the vicious ridiculing of Cockney, and this is in full accord with most of Shaw's comments on Cockney in this play and elsewhere (and his general silence about any inadequacies in upper-class speech). The opening scene of Pygmalion shows Higgins taking notes on the speech sounds of a small group of people sheltering from the rain; it becomes clear that he can place people socially and, with great accuracy, pinpoint their geographical origins on the basis of their accents. Shaw shows us, however, only two types of speech: the Cockney spoken by Eliza Doolittle and a few bystanders, which is rendered phonetically, and that of the upper-class characters, which is rendered in "standard English", with Shaw's usual omission of apostrophes within conventionally elided words like "dont" and "aint". That the text is somewhat "novelised" and intended for reading as well as for acting is clear from the stage directions which are fuller than drama requires; it is clear, too from the way, in this scene at least, the Cockney is given phonetically, rather than being merely indicated as an instruction to the actors. This is how Eliza's first substantial speech is given:

Ow, eez y(e)-ooa san is e? Wal, fewd dan y'd(e)ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them? (p. 16)

At this point the stage directions indicate, "with apologies", that "this desperate attempt to render her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London" (p. 16). It would certainly have made for an unreadable play, in or out of London, if the "desperate attempt" had been persevered in. The rest of Pygmalion makes little use of phoneticisation, following the practice of most texts (those intended exclusively for reading) by concentrating on the grammatical patterns of Cockney, with occasional indications of Cockney pronunciation. In his Note to the reader of the play Shaw is confronting the problem of trying, in a written text, to convey visually the totality of a pattern of pronunciation while yet retaining a text that is readable. Like other authors he realises its impossibility, whatever means are available. The expressed regret at not being able to make use of the phonetic alphabets discussed in the Preface to the play is rather beside the point.

But the significant thing is that it is only for Cockney speech that Shaw really feels the need of phoneticisation. The word "should", in Liza's speech, is presumably pronounced in a manner indistinguishable from the "standard" pronunciation and is therefore shown undistorted. And notwithstanding Higgins's proclaimed ability to distinguish between the accents of the other, upper-class, speakers, there is no attempt to phonetically represent their ways of speaking. Shaw implicitly accepts the consonance between the "standard" written language and socially acceptable, or simply socially powerful, varieties of the "standard" spoken language, as he had in Captain Brassbound's Conversion.

His concern, of course, is with the "dialect"-speaker, Liza, and there is no reason to dissociate the author from the opinions of Higgins regarding the value of the Cockney dialect. When Liza, "with feeble defiance", defends her right to remaining within the shelter, Higgins responds with a vehemence that is largely intended by the author to be humorous, but has a real class content: "A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere -- no right to live" (p. 26). He continues with a judgment based on a presumed equation between written and spoken forms of speech and on a belief in the singleness of the English language:

Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespear and Milton and The Bible; and dont sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon. (pp. 26-7)

Liza is an "incarnate insult to the English language" (p. 27). Her speech must be changed, not in order to enable her to be a duchess or to keep a flower-shop, or simply to prove the efficacy of Higgins's teaching methods, but because, for Shaw, deviation from the "standard" is proof of inadequacy, is degeneration. For Shaw there is only one pattern of English that is acceptable; others can only approach it to some degree. It is intended as ironical that Neppomuck, who can supposedly place "any man in Europe" geographically and socially (p. 93), gets it wrong in Liza's case, denying Higgins's accurate suggestion of her real background and being confident that she is a Hungarian princess precisely because he agrees with Higgins that

"[s]he speaks English perfectly":

Too perfectly. Can you shew me any English woman who speaks English as it should be spoken? Only foreigners who have been taught to speak it speak it well. (p. 97)

The education of Liza, to the point where she can pass herself off as a "lady" will go much wider than accent -- Higgins himself reminds her, with regard to wiping her face, that she should use her handkerchief rather than her sleeve: "Dont mistake the one for the other if you wish to become a lady in a shop" (p. 40). But accent is the central symbolic site of class transformation.

In the Preface, Shaw points to the significance of accent in English social life when he suggests that "it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him" (p. 5). There is a neutral reciprocity in this formulation which is rather disingenuous in avoiding the question of the power which is so differentially attached to the way "Englishmen" speak; and it is a reciprocity seldom evidenced in Pygmalion itself, where the despatch is all on one side. Alfred Doolittle, though, does assert the validity of his own language, and puts it in a class context. Speaking with humorous despair of the social pressures on him to become a "gentleman" and to succumb to "middle class morality", he indicates Higgins's role in the process of transformation:

And the next one to touch me will be you, Enry Iggins. I'll have to learn to speak middle class language from you, instead of speaking proper English. (p. 121)

The recognition of the class nature of linguistic practices is, obviously, the basis of the play: the whole point is to re-create Eliza as a "lady". In an early lesson, she herself "cant hear no difference cep that it sounds more genteel-like" when Higgins corrects her pronunciation (p. 66). But this recognition of the the class nature of language is mystified by Shaw's insistence on the superiority, in absolute terms rather than class ones, of the language of one class over the language of the other. Class is, certainly, shown as an impermanent and changeable factor, though there is mystification, too, in suggesting that it is largely a matter of superficial phenomena like matters of etiquette and dress and manner of speech. Inadequate speech is not for Shaw, as it is for Gissing, a revelation of the inherent superiority of the "cultured class". For Shaw calls himself a socialist. In many respects his approach is not easily distinguishable from Walter Besant's motivations in his novels, where the aim is to show the underlying indivisibility of society and that the superficial class differences of England are things that can be dealt with on that level, without recourse to changing economic and political relationships. Besant does not even indicate very different patterns of speech, and makes little use of phoneticisation of Cockney, in All Sorts and Conditions of Men and Children of Gibeon. The point for Besant, and it is the same point for Shaw, is that class conflict is undesirable and unnecessary -- the fundamental unity of society make it quite possible for all people to become bourgeois, in their manners at least -- which is what seems to count. Between the Cockney flower-girl and the duchess and

the respectable shop-keeper there is no essential difference; so let them all speak like the duchess, for that is -- obviously -- the proper way to speak.

Shaw frequently accompanies his professions of awareness of the lack of a standard English pronunciation with a counter-point regarding the social power of RP. In a letter to Henry Sweet in 1911 Shaw asserted clearly that "[t]here is no such thing as a standard pronunciation. There is no such thing as an ideal pronunciation". "Nevertheless", he continues characteristically:

it is perfectly easy to find a speaker whose speech will be accepted in every part of the English speaking world as valid 18-carat currency ... all you have to do is to write down the best practicable representation of the part of Hamlet as spoken by Forbes Robinson, and publish it with a certificate signed by half a dozen persons of satisfactory social standing, NOT that the pronunciation represented is the standard pronunciation or ideal pronunciation, or correct pronunciation, or in any way binding on any human being or morally superior to Hackney cockney or Idaho american, but solely that if a man pronounces in that way he will be eligible as far as speech is concerned for the post of Lord Chief Justice, Chancellor at Oxford, Archbishop of Canterbury, Emperor, President, or Toast Master at the Mansion House. (Quoted in Holroyd, p. 326)

This is not much more than a recognition of the obvious social power associated with one kind of accent. But, given the distaste that Shaw generally reveals for "Hackney cockney", it is not surprising that his usual conclusion is not to challenge the roots of social power but to adapt to it. Generally his argument is that, given the social situation, RP should become the standard. In a letter to the

Morning Leader in 1901, Shaw pleaded for "the nationalisation of the existing class monopoly of orthodox English speech" (p. 83), and this is clearly just a radical-sounding version of the thinking behind Pygmalion: "orthodox" English is undoubtedly used by Shaw as a direct equivalent of "standard" English, and its "nationalisation" means its imposition on those who do not already have it; "standard" English is asserted as a valuable resource denied to the working class by a system of private property. Thus the universalising claims of bourgeois society will be met, with the universal recognition of the superiority of "genteel language", with the absorption of all into the structures of bourgeois society. (Whether Doolittle and others will be able in the process to escape "middle class morality" is something that Pygmalion perhaps suggests as a problem.)

The flower girl in particular and the working class in general will receive instruction from the expert propagators -- Higgins, Shaw. "Refuse to teach the Board School legions your pronunciation", Shaw warned in his newspaper letter, "and they will force theirs on you by mere force of numbers" (p. 83).

The reactionary nature of much of Shaw's thinking about language is what makes Pygmalion rest somewhat uneasily alongside the large number of his plays which are genuinely challenging to the ruling ideas of bourgeois society. It is no doubt this, together with the play's celebration of the possibilities of social mobility, which has allowed it to become so successful in its translation into a musical comedy. It is interesting to note, though, one aspect of the "democratising" effects of the demands of "mass culture" into

transforming Pygmalion into My Fair Lady: the reference to the Classical myth of Galatea and Pygmalion in Shaw's original title, while being of no significance in the matter of the play itself, is an indication of the class context and content of the play. It placed the play securely within the conceptual framework of the class to which a Classical education was given; only those with such an education could recognise the title's significance, as it is not explained in the course of the play. Classical reference, as I shall discuss further in Chapter Four, is historically connected with the variety of English that receives such affirmation in the play. Shaw does have a good joke at the expense of Classical education when he speaks of the uselessness to the running of a flower-shop of Freddy's "power of stating in Latin that Balbus built a wall and that Gaul was divided into three parts (p. 152), but it would have been Freddy and his kind, rather than the "Board School legions" who would have recognised the origins of the play's title. Professor Higgins could have conceived of himself as Pygmalion; the flower-girl's education would have excluded her from the meaningfulness of comparing her to Galatea. When a popular and substantial audience was sought for the musical versions the dictates of mass culture required that it should not be alienated from the box-office by a title which implicitly excluded them.

In terms of its attitude to language and the social implications of that attitude, Pygmalion is closer to the majority of slum novels than it is to "Shaw" in general, though revealing the class arrogance and contempt that was characteristic of the Fabians. The essential continuity

between the politics of Kipling and the politics of Shaw are paralleled, and find expression, in the continuity of their representations of working-class speech. Shaw's lack of respect for the "Board School legions" possibly even exceeded Kipling's, but the two writers shared the general bourgeois fear of the "mere force of numbers" overwhelming the claims of "education" and "culture".

Chapter Four

CULTURE, EDUCATION AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE WORKING CLASS: GISSING

Culture says: "Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come out of their mouths.

- Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy

The importance of the professions and the professional classes can hardly be overrated, they form the head of the great English middle class, maintain its tone of independence, keep up to the mark its standard of morality, and direct its intelligence.

- H. B. Thompson, The Choice of Profession (1857)

And those people should not be listened to who keep saying the voice of the people is the voice of God

- Alcuin, Letter to Charlemagne

In appearance, speech may well be of little account, but the prohibitions surrounding it soon reveal its links with desire and power.

- Michel Foucault, "The discourse on Language"

Before the Socialist state is possible, the masses must be taught what they really need, why they need it, and how they must act to obtain it; in other words, it is not enough to agitate them with vague ideals; they must be in every sense of the word, educated to progress.

- George Gissing, Notes on Social Democracy

Some decades before Shaw, in the Preface to Pygmalion, remarked on the impossibility for an English speaker to say anything without evoking contempt, George Gissing had provided perhaps the most notable literary evidence of the extensive possibilities for despising working-class linguistic practice. Beyond his evident concern with the connexions of class and language, which will be the focus here, Gissing is crucial to any examination of literary representation of the English working class: his initial idealistic sympathy for the downtrodden poor, his subsequent development towards a position of hatred, contempt and fear, but one always mediated by his understanding of the essential class struggle in which the workers were, for the time being, the victimised, the brutalised and the suffering -- all this allowed Gissing to reach a level of complexity and even a pregnant contradiction which distinguish him from most of his writer-contemporaries. The same man who made no attempt to disguise his contempt and hatred for the "uneducated" workers, who feared their overthrow of the "culture" with which he identified so closely and so anxiously, could also write in his Commonplace Book that

I do not love the people -- true. But my passion of sympathy for the suffering poor.

I cannot look at the hands of a toiling man or woman without feeling deeply wretched. To compare my own with them, shames me. (p. 54)

Too often, in the growing body of academic criticism of Gissing, these characteristics are over-personalised, are "explained" through reference to his neuroses and tragedies, which are treated as unmediated by his social existence.¹ But

the mingling of disgust and desire in Gissing is social as much as it is personal. I want here to approach Gissing's texts from "without", connecting his (and others') attitudes towards language to, particularly, the social significance of Classical studies and, generally, the mystified notions of "culture" and "education" that were becoming established in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is clear that, in a society which still continues to refer frequently to the socially-dominant form of linguistic practice as "cultured" or "educated" English (and to the subordinated forms as "uncultured", "uneducated"), these are important meta-linguistic categories. But these categories must be connected with late-nineteenth-century debates over the political representation of the working-class, an issue which can stand, as organically expressive of strategies of class-rule, for the context in which the slum literature of the time was produced and consumed.

The "Classical" aspect of contemporary bourgeois ideas of "liberal education" will be central to this chapter: first, because it stood in a synecdochic position for Gissing (as for many others) as a sufficient and significant indication of the valued nexus of "culture" and "education"; secondly, because it proves useful to a study of linguistic practice and representation to look at the workings of the elements of mock-heroic and pastoral not infrequently encountered in the slum literature of the time. In the body of late nineteenth-century fiction dealing with the working class, we can find traces of these two inter-related genres, which are associated with a highly "cultivated" audience in their connexion to Classical education. Such education, which

is the immediate context in which particularly the mock-heroic is meaningful, continues to have clear class implications. In the nineteenth-century debates over mass education and the appropriateness of various syllabi, the role of the Classics in the making and marking of a "gentleman" (women, like the working class, not being suitable subjects for its study) was seized upon by the bourgeoisie, along with the very concept of "gentleman" and became one of its educational preserves. The dependence of mock-heroic and pastoral on a class-based linguistic register relates them directly to the way varieties of English are represented in writing. Beyond the invoking of what was a range of reference alien to the working class itself, the way they operate is similar to a conflict between languages that can frequently be observed in the writing I am examining, and which I shall explore more fully in some of Gissing's novels.

There is a fairly lengthy passage of pastoral cum mock heroic in W. Somerset Maugham's novella of 1897, Liza of Lambeth. A group of East End workers on a Bank Holiday "beeno" break their journey to Chingford at a pub. "The bar was besieged, and potmen and barmaids were quickly busily drawing beer and handing it over to the eager folk outside." But then pastoral enters, announced by a sub-title:

THE IDYLL OF CORYDON AND PHYLLIS

Gallantry ordered that the faithful swain and the amorous shepherdess should drink out of one and the same pot.

"'Urry up an' 'ave your whack," said Corydon, politely handing the foaming bowl for his fair one to drink from.

Phyllis, without replying, raised it to her lips and drank deep. The swain watched anxiously.

"'Ere, give us a chanst!" he said.... (p. 45)

After a few pages of this, a spitting competition begins, "and in this idyllic contest they remained till the tootling horn warned them to take their places". The "idyll" ends unceremoniously, and the interrupted narrative continues, Corydon and Phyllis becoming, once more, mere Tom and Liza.

The essential function of the pastoral mode here is to contrast the bucolic innocence evoked by that tradition with the crude physicality of two London workers at an early stage of their adulterous relationship. The narrator avoids explicit judgemental commentary on the described events: Liza of Lambeth was written at a time and in a tradition where the ideals of positivist sociology, seeing itself as value-free investigation and description, had a clear literary counterpart. In the "idyll", as elsewhere in the novella, no moral is explicitly drawn; that is the function of the reference to the pastoral. The humour of the "idyll" consists in the contradiction between the current action and what the reader knows of the characters already (and, importantly, what broader "knowledge" of the working-class Londoner is imported into the text by the reader): the central rhetorical dependence is upon a perceived cultural gap. Corydon, in the "idyll", is described as drinking "with courtly grace", pointing to the unity here of the bucolic and aristocratic moments of pastoral. Whether Corydon is swain or courtier, both belong to a very different world from that of Tom. And,

crucially, the language spoken by the characters is of neither shepherds nor courtiers, but specifically the language that fiction, as much as anything, had identified as that of the industrial working class. The humour, as well as the burden of the value contrast, is in the linkage of pastoral conventions with dialogue represented by the established orthographical conventions of late nineteenth-century naturalism:

"Go' lumme!" remarked the shepherdess, smacking her lips, "that was somethin' like!" (p. 45)

This movement between two worlds (of culture, of language) is characteristic of the mock-heroic, whereby the trivial or the "low" are revealed as such by their removal to the Classical world via an associated (usually Latinate, frequently euphuistic) language. In the slum-fiction of the 1880s and '90s this mock-heroic movement is generally the definitive aspect of pastoral references, the pastoral becoming a part of the Classical world to which the mock-heroic makes appeal. Subordinated as a genre, it becomes an echo of itself within other generic practices, carrying into the mock-heroic, apart from its status as a classical and aristocratic genre, little more than its association with pre-industrial, pre-urban, pre-proletarian innocence and peace. But this is not insignificant in the specific context of 1897.

Mock-heroic moments, even if we do not include pastoral conventions within the category, frequently erupt into late nineteenth-century fictional representations of the working class. A small but characteristic example can be seen in

Morrison's Tales of Mean Streets, which played a major part in shaping the prevalent bourgeois perception of endemic working-class violence. Its function is unambiguous, continuing that noble tradition of English literature which invokes the Classical past to belittle and ridicule the "uneducated" -- that is, the class historically denied access to education in the languages and culture declared valuable by the ruling class. In "Lizerunt" ("Somewhere in the register was written the name Elizabeth Hunt...") Morrison describes the heroine's reaction to a brawl between her two admirers:

Four days before, she had no bloke; and here she stood with two, and those two fighting for her! Here in the public gaze, on the Flats! For almost five minutes she was Helen of Troy. (p. 24)

The allusion ironically marks the distance between the world of Helen and the Trojan Wars and the world of Lizerunt and the brawlers.² The reference, then, occupies a different horizon from Lizerunt's. It is a comparison which she herself could scarcely have made, given what we are told of her background. A character is thus excluded in a specific way from the very terms of her own description -- which passes over her head in an arrogant exchange between a narrator and a reader celebrating their shared and exclusive superiority.

This example from Morrison is a minor one, and relatively rare in that author. Richard Whiteing's No. 5 John Street is perhaps the novel most replete in the provision of Classical parallels for its characters: the main male working-class character, Low Covey, is introduced to the reader as a "pocket Hercules", and his female equivalent,

usually referred to in the narration as "the Amazon", is given, at various points, a wide range of Classical reference: she is, amongst others, "an Antiope of the slums" and "Hera, the furious and proud".

The implications of the association of the Classical with ruling-class education will have to be considered further, but the general point can be made here: conventions such as pastoral and mock-heroic rely on the reader's recognition of the allusions. Any reader of Liza of Lambeth would perhaps feel the signifying alienness of the inflated and archaising language ("amorous", "foaming bowl", "swain", etc.); but a lack of the appropriate information would render invisible the significance of reference to swain and shepherdess, let alone of the renaming of characters. Why Corydon? Why Phyllis? Why, indeed, unless the references can be expected to act as signs; and that expectation, as well as the possibility, occurs in a situation where knowledge of the Classical was an attribute of (class-based) formal education. As literary signs, the references of mock-heroic belong to the vocabulary of a specific class.

Before returning to the questions of mock-heroic and of Classical influences generally, in discussing aspects of the work of Gissing, we must understand more fully the general role of "culture" in late nineteenth-century England, and how it was able to become so central to Gissing. To this end I want, first, to look at another aspect of working class representation in the latter nineteenth century -- not aesthetic representation, but political.

Disraeli's "leap in the dark" of 1867 -- the Second Reform Bill -- enfranchised large new sections of the British working class. By the mid 1880s the leap was revealed as one towards the dawn of modern bourgeois parliamentary democracy: Acts of 1884 and 1885 enfranchised the main body of (male) workers living outside parliamentary boroughs. In 1866 the total electorate of England and Wales was approximately one million; twenty years later it was nearly four and a half million (Cole and Postgate, p. 400), though all women and many men remained excluded from the right to vote. The fears of a Parliament controlled in any way by the class which now provided the greatest number of voters were proved groundless: there were few men of working-class origin in Parliament and, for the most part, proletarian Parliamentary ambitions were channelled through the Liberal Party, particularly through its Radical section. Labour Representation Leagues, under various names, attempted to promote, with not a great deal of success, working-class Parliamentary candidates. It was not until the growth of working-class consciousness in the 1880s and 1890s produced an independent mass trade union movement, and a political party linked to it, that MPs of working-class origin were present in any numbers; the Labour Party gained 29 seats in 1906 and 42 in 1910, with the majority of the working-class electorate continuing to vote for the traditional parties, particularly the Liberals. In Liberal Cabinets from 1900-19 only 2.3 per cent were of working-class origin, in Conservative Cabinets of the same period only 1.9 per cent were; but more revealing than those figures is that the percentage in Labour Cabinets from 1920-39 was only 24 per

cent, rising to 31.4 per cent in the period from 1960-70 (Perkin, "Who runs Britain?", p. 165).

It must be recognised, though, that the achievement of building an admittedly not independent working-class Party was a great one, made against conservative working-class forces as well as "sympathetic" petty-bourgeois organisations such as the Fabians. Regarding the latter's "intellectual arrogance" and "scarcely disguised contempt for the working-class leaders they had to deal with", Harold Perkin adduces "their rejection until 1900 and half-hearted acceptance thereafter of a separate working-class party in favour of their own permeation of the two parties whose possession of power they admired and wished to manipulate" (Professional Society, p. 50). Parliament remained a place where, in the most immediate sense, the working class was largely unrepresented. In the political spaces produced by imperialist economic and social development, the working class was "represented" by members of the bourgeoisie and, particularly, the petty bourgeoisie. In contemporary literature, as the working class became increasingly the object of direct aesthetic observation, the situation could be expressed in similar terms: the workers were represented by writers from a class which had become, as a class, predominantly hostile.

Disraeli's leap was feasible and successful because "the dark" concealed all those socio-political and economic structures supporting ruling-class dominance: it was not so much a leap as a tentative, albeit bold, movement among those structures. To assert this is not to suggest that the ruling class simply chose freely to enfranchise the working class,

any more than the previous ruling class had freely chosen to enfranchise the bourgeoisie: to the extent that the bourgeoisie leapt, it leapt because it was pushed. The contradictions of its rule, both ideologically and as expressed by increasing working-class demands, dictated movement in the direction taken. No less was the permanent entry of the working class into literature (as literary object, at least) the spontaneous choice of the hegemonists: although that entry was on the terms of the ruling hegemony, it was a victory of a kind, the result of the working class's political self-assertion in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

"Culture" and "education" became significant categories in the widening of the franchise. There was in the latter half of the nineteenth century a growing normative, universalising, conceptualisation of "culture" as that set of values held by the ruling class (including the aristocracy with which the bourgeoisie had entered into a kind of ideological-hegemonic compromise). Noëlle Bisseret's comments a propos of French history are also relevant in an English context:

[A]s soon as the bourgeoisie had to protect its political power from the people, demanding equality de facto, it began to secrete an ideology based on the concrete relations it had established between possessors and dispossessed.... As it could no longer claim that its power derived from divine right, the bourgeoisie sanctified the elements in whose name it had seized power from the nobility (knowledge, merit, ability, etc.). It transformed them into intrinsic qualities which defined it alone, in order to legitimize its domination.
(p. 70)

"Culture", this body of norms, values and prejudices, became, as far as the literature about the working class was concerned, the standard against which working-class culture was found to be inadequate. The discovery that the working class had, indeed, its own culture, and was not simply failing to achieve that standard, was part of the bourgeoisie's discovery of itself, as well as of the working class, as a class. But the class reality of industrialised capitalist Britain had to be systematically denied at the same time as, and precisely because, it became more apparent; the unity of the nation had to be insisted upon, and the standard had to be the universalised "culture" of the ruling class. It was a standard which included, as we shall see, "standard English" for, to quote Bisseret once more, the bourgeoisie "set up its own language habits (sign of its supposed natural superiority) as an absolute standard" (p. 67).

The connexion between "culture" and politics became clear in the debates surrounding the widening of the parliamentary franchise. Looking back to the time of the First Reform Bill of 1832, with the bourgeoisie still struggling to achieve political power, we can see that the universalising movement had not yet become an appropriate motif for the disguising of class rule. Macaulay, addressing the House of Commons, appealed for a system of representation based straightforwardly on social power:

I support this plan because I am sure that it is our best security against revolution.... That we may exclude those whom it is necessary to exclude, we must admit those whom it may be safe to admit.... We say, and we say justly, that it is not by mere numbers, but by property and intelligence,

that the nation ought to be governed. (Quoted in
Supple, p. 97)

"Property and intelligence" here are clearly to be understood as conceptually united. Thirty and forty years later, capitalist property was substantially the basis of political power, and the enormous fear among many of the powerful was that "mere numbers" (that is, the numerically predominant working class) were to be represented in Parliament as such, as a class force, as (in appropriately Aristotelian language) an ochlocracy. The universalising ideology was growing to include the necessity for universal (adult male) franchise, as the bourgeoisie found it increasingly difficult to exclude the majority of the population from the freedoms it had won for itself under the banner of universal freedom. (Women were still largely excluded from consideration by most quarters.) The elections following the franchise extensions resulted in little change, revealing the groundlessness of these fears of working-class political domination in Parliament -- though it is a false ex post facto judgment that declares them groundless: the Acts of 1867 and 1884 were part of the process that were to make the fears irrelevant rather than groundless. But the thinking of some ideologists of the period, as they struggled to justify and further bourgeois rule while denying the existence of class struggle in general, is a part of the same process, and of relevance to that other (literary) part of the process. In essence, this strand of the debate demanded that representation should not be simply descriptive of the social forces invoked by adult male enfranchisement. Rather, class interests must be denied,

and representation must be representation of national, universal, non-class interests. Those non-class interests were best represented by "culture" -- that is, the mystified category comprising the universalised interests and values of the ruling class.

But even those, such as John Bright and the elder Mill, who adhered to a more descriptive understanding of representation invoked "culture" to an extent. They believed that parliamentary representation of the working class would reduce class antagonism by transforming the working class, by inviting it to share in political idealism, a "higher morality" -- that is, by incorporating it within "culture". The theme of bringing "culture" to the masses in "Darkest England" is encountered again and again in the slum literature of the 1880s and '90s. For present purposes the most revealing element of the debate is that which confronted the inevitability of a universal franchise by seeking explicitly to have all classes represented by those who would not invoke mere class prejudices but would rather operate in accord with the loftier, transcendent dictates of "culture". John Stuart Mill's "plurality scheme" was designed to ensure the disproportionately high representation of the "learned class". In "Considerations on Representative Government" (1861) he insists that: "The distinction in favour of education, right in itself, is further and strongly recommended by its preserving the educated from the class legislation of the uneducated" (p. 477). By giving plural votes to "instructed minds" universal suffrage could overcome its double danger, that of "a low grade of intelligence in the representative body, and in the popular opinion which

controls it, and the danger of class legislation on the part of the numerical majority" (p. 448). In her insightful discussion of aspects of political representation at this time, Catherine Gallagher comments:

Mill wanted to give plural votes to the "mentally superior" because he thought they were the least likely to vote their personal or class interest, or more precisely, he thought their selves were less likely to be determined by narrow, partial, or, to use his word, "sinister" interests. Thus the disproportionate representation of the mentally superior not only teaches the population to value learning and, therefore, over time, transforms them, but also immediately insures that political discourse will be more than the reiteration of a social discourse; it will instead be the articulation of disinterested reason. (p. 232)

While an undefined "education" is the given criterion for Mill's envisaged political leadership, for Matthew Arnold it is "culture". In Culture and Anarchy (1869), his concept of culture ("a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know ... the best which has been thought and said in the world" (p. 168)), and his stress on the Classical models, involve necessarily a degree and type of education available only to the upper classes. His idea of the nature and role of "culture" is clearly a response to his frequently penetrating understanding of his society, but even more to a visceral fear of the working-class threat. The "riot" for the franchise in Hyde Park in 1866, when 200,000 people called to a rally by the Reform League stormed the gates which had been closed against them, may not have been the simple unmediated origins of Culture and Anarchy, but it is a present spirit throughout the work, and a potent symbol of the second part

of the antinomy of its title. The class system of developed industrial capitalism frightens Arnold, not only because he sees a threat to "culture" from the bourgeois "Philistines" who have, as he sees, established themselves as the dominant class, but also because he can see the (brute) force of a newly-threatening class. Hence his pleading for a State that is above class loyalty, that will be representative of a "pure", "disinterested", classless "culture". The legislators of, if not mankind, then at least of England, will be the "cultured" -- the educated.

The fear of working-class political power which is such a potent force behind Culture and Anarchy, and Arnold's recognition of the political demise of the aristocracy, together with his distaste for the capitalists, lead him to celebrate a non-class caste of persons embodying those transcendent values which should propel government and which are excluded by a system of representation which encourages the exercise of class interest:

Therefore, when we speak of ourselves as divided into Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, we must be understood always to imply that within each of these classes there are a certain number of aliens, if we may so call them -- persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection.
(p. 207)

It is "culture", this "inward condition of the mind and spirit" (p. 169), which can remove from society the class identities of the agglomeration of individuals which Arnold saw society as essentially being: for "culture ... seeks to do away with classes" (p. 183). And Arnold's vision was

speaking the deepest dreams and fears of a matured bourgeoisie as it confronted the contradiction of needing to represent its (class) rule as universal, while its rise to ascendancy had ineluctably created the conditions and forces for its overthrow.

Arnold's cultural leadership caste are as clearly descendents of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "clerisy" -- "that permanent, nationalised, learned order" -- as they are progenitors of T. S. Eliot's. The "aliens", the "clerisy", had always been learned, had always had language and literature at the centre of their concerns. Coleridge prefigures Arnold in his view of the role of literature (for Arnold, "culture") as a means to a universal vision, independent of the pull of class forces: "For, nowhere but intelligible everywhere, only the lingua communis of literature can lift men above their contingent, partial lives and bring them into communion with the higher life" (Dowling, p. 28). In his early radicalism Coleridge had collaborated with Wordsworth in "experimentation ... which proves to be one of many and diverse experiments concerning the relation of language to class" (Olivia Smith, p. vii) at a time of intense ideological struggle between the rising bourgeoisie and an ideologically-dominant aristocracy, when questions of language, and language theories generally, were intimately and frequently explicitly concerned with class division. But, Linda Dowling points out, "even as early as the Biographia, Coleridge's great effort is visibly to resist the downward levelling tendencies he felt were implicit in Wordsworth's championing of rustic speech over the 'proud writing' of the English literary tradition" (p. 30).

If Coleridge changed his position with regard to the politics of language it is at least partly because the class to which he was allied was already achieving substantial power. The united struggle of the bourgeoisie and the labouring classes against aristocratic dominance was not simply united: it had to involve the subordination of the lower classes, and assert the demands of the bourgeoisie as universal. In the latter part of the nineteenth century bourgeois economic and political power was unquestionably established, and its stability questioned only by the proletariat. While reaching for power the bourgeoisie had been able to be more candid about the class nature of its struggle; the bourgeoisie in power, at the start of the major phase of its own struggle against a rising class, had to deny the class nature of its rule and present its beliefs as natural, had to present its own culture as the only "Culture", "culture" as opposed to anarchy, "culture" as a universally valid given, the mystified legitimate source of power. The "cultured" should legislate and enforce (Arnold never forgets the forcible putting down of anarchy). No matter that not only are "culture" and "education" susceptible to class-based definition but are, according to such a definition, available to only a certain class -- in practice, if not in theory. By adopting a category other than unmediated class, and denying the class basis of the categorisation, the splendid overarching ideological project of declaring the end of class history and the fundamental identity and universality of interest can be furthered.

It is not difficult to identify Coleridge's "clerisy" of secular intellectuals, Arnold's "aliens" and Mill's "learned class": to that group belonged Shelley's poets, the "unacknowledged legislators of the world", Carlyle's "aristocracy of talent", and Hodgskin's "mental labourers, litterati, men of science". For Arnold, again, they are "the professional class, brought up on the first plane, with fine and governing qualities". They were the burgeoning intellectual petty bourgeoisie of imperialist Britain, a part of what Marx saw Ricardo as ignoring: "the growing number of the middle classes, those who stand between the workman on the one hand and the capitalist and the landlord on the other. The middle classes ... are a burden on the working base and increase the social security of the upper ten thousand" (quoted in Perkin, Professional Society, p. 83).

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century this caste was growing enormously, seeking to define its social position as far as possible above the masses and earning its privileges by functioning as the ideological force of the ruling class. The number of (male) authors and journalists, both of which categories are important in the transmission of ideology, grew from 5,627 in 1880 to 9,807 in 1901, with an increase between 1880 and 1911 of 113 per cent; the total increase of eight non-governmental professions between 1880 and 1901 was from 127,354 to 169,871, with an increase between 1880 and 1911 of 50.3 per cent (Perkin, Professional Society, p. 80).

The obvious offsetting feature of the intelligentsia, as the distinction between intellectual and manual labour acquired a new and more powerful role, was formal education:

"culture", perhaps, in brief, in which learning was to be coupled with the notions of refinement largely taken over from the still important aristocratic code. Because the bourgeoisie was set on behaving, at least superficially, on the old aristocratic terms, the anxiety of its ambitions was obliged to demand a codified set of practices -- precisely, a learnable code, a language of recognizable signs. How else can one tell who is what? The "standard" must be a reachable target, not, as it had been for the aristocracy in an age of minimal social mobility, merely the assertion that the "natural" behaviour of one's own class was "naturally", by definition, correct. Lady Wentworth in the eighteenth century, secure and unquestioned in her social place, was free to be slipshod in her language (making a different point, Ernest Weekley has shown that she must have pronounced her words in a similar way to Mrs Gamp (pp. 145-6)). And Bulwer Lytton was still able to reveal an equal patrician assurance when he said: "I am free to confess that I don't know grammar. Lady Blessington, do you know grammar?" (quoted in Quirk, p. 73).

The sedulous bourgeoisie did need to know grammar, which it was to learn in the grammar schools as much as at Eton and Harrow. "Correctness" was to be a means to inclusion within the ruling class, and of exclusion of the working class. This meant that "correctness", the standard, had to be imposed as such upon the working class, but that, at the same time as it was to be universally understood as the superior, the "real" language, it also had to be one that was in practice alien to the masses. Or else, again, how could one know the difference? As Dick Leith suggests:

Codification could be said to have become a weapon of class. What the codifiers had done, ultimately, was to propose and cultivate a code of linguistic forms which were in some degree different from those in use among the vast majority of the population. By analysing "correct" usage in terms that only a tiny minority of educated people could command, the codifiers ensured that correctness remained the preserve of an elite. The usage of most people was wrong, precisely because it was the usage of the majority. The worst aspects of the codification process were institutionalised in the compulsory state education system introduced after 1870. (p. 56)

One of the indispensable refinements of polite society was a "cultured" use of language. It is important to remember how "cultured" became increasingly interchangeable with "educated" in the notional formulation. In the late nineteenth century formal education became more available to the working class. It was a means of social control as well as a necessary measure enabling workers to fulfil the demands put upon them by increasing mechanisation. The qualities, rather than quantities, of middle-class education became, therefore, more important as a means of distinction. The Liberal MP Robert Lowe, three years before the Education Act of 1870, was clear about the political role of formal education in defining and furthering relations of class dominance; he wrote in his Primary and Classical Education that the lower classes should "be educated that they may appreciate and defer to a higher cultivation when they meet it; and the higher classes ought to be educated in a very different manner, in order that they may exhibit to the lower classes that higher education to which, if it were shown them, they would bow down and defer" (quoted in Simon,

p. 356). Echoing Macaulay's phrase, Lowe spoke of the dangers of "transfer[ring] power from the hands of property and intelligence" into the uneducated hands of those who would, as Brian Simon paraphrases, "swamp and obliterate not only property but intelligence, culture, toleration, patriotism" (p. 355). It was Lowe who famously told Parliament, on the passing of the 1867 Reform Bill, that it would be "absolutely necessary that you should prevail on our future masters to learn their letters".

Given the educational model of the older upper-class schools with their origins in gentry education, and given the remaining dominance of aristocratic patterns within hegemonic ideas of "culture", refinement and manners, study of the Classical languages developed further as a central constituent of the education divide. In 1865 only about 25,000 children in England were learning the Classics (Stone, p. 134). Martin Wiener has commented on how even people like the Hammonds, Toynbee and Tawney sought "cultural ideals" in Classical Greece and Rome (p. 85); and, generally, "educational ideology" involved the "exaltation of the Greek and Roman classics as the basis of any liberal education"; knowledge of the Classics was "a mark of social class" (p. 18). Matthew Arnold felt obliged to distinguish his Hellenising "culture" from that "smattering of Greek and Latin" valued "as an engine of social and class distinction, separating its holder, like a badge or title, from other people who have not got it (p. 165). As the Taunton Schools Inquiry Commission Report of 1868 suggested, the great majority of "professional men" and "poor gentry" "value these [the Classics] highly for their own sake, and perhaps

even more for the value at present assigned to them in English Society. They have nothing to look to but education to keep their sons on a high social level" (quoted in Stone, p. 72). Patricia Alden has argued that the ruling class, "determined to protect its interests, maintained a throttlehold on the education system, using the touchstone of 'culture' to legitimate its privileges and to debar the lower classes from sharing them" (p. 7). It was within this situation that the use of the English language became a sign of such great importance. The implications for individuals or for a caste (the professional petty bourgeoisie) seeking to move into the realm of privilege are clear.

The inevitable insecurity of such people in a system of class mobility, we shall observe, along with its crucial self-definition and self-justification as "the educated". One of the most valuable literary explorations of a man who felt himself to be one of Arnold's "aliens" and to be entitled to power and privilege as such is Gissing's Born in Exile, the title of which we come to understand as containing much of the significance of Arnold's formulation, and which refers as much to Gissing himself as to the novel's hero Godwin Peak. "Peak is myself -- one phase of myself", wrote Gissing in a letter to Edouard Bertz; 'Born in Exile' was a book I had to write" (p. 153). Although the novel concentrates on an intellectual "alien" who is rising from the lower levels of the petty bourgeoisie, it is particularly revealing in its continual reference to the two great classes pressing on the

alien -- threateningly from below and enticingly from above. The problematical nature of ascent is pointed to by Patricia Alden, for whom Born in Exile is "the clearest paradigm of the double bind faced by the upwardly mobile petty bourgeois" who, identifying with the stratum above, is required to "compromise his integrity" and is estranged and alienated from the stratum below as much as from the stratum above (p. 20).

Gissing reveals himself in his writings as a particularly vulnerable individual within this climate of social mobility. At a time when the petty bourgeoisie was having its role defined, this is the basis of the vast significance he, and others, attached to social refinements as class markers. His concentration on, particularly, linguistic differences between the upper classes and the working class is an index of his own neuroticism and insecurity, based on the insecurity of his caste, but also a significant social phenomenon in the development of bourgeois ideology. The dominant late-nineteenth and twentieth century attitudes to "standard English", and the ideological role they play, were forged in the system which Gissing, suffering horribly, helped to build.

Gissing's class position is an important consideration, and one which, when linked to contemporary attitudes to education and "standard English", will explain the motor force of his novels, particularly those dealing specifically with the position and conditions of classes. It is generally accepted that Gissing's personal life-tragedies (his expulsion from college, his neurotic drive towards sexual involvement with working-class women, his poverty) are of

immediate relevance to his fiction. But it is necessary to discover the social connexions of the personal: these tragedies, together with the overwhelming disadvantage of having been born into the vulgar shop-owning class, only take their meaning from the wider social situation. Gissing was writing at a time when, as I have argued, very real developments in social organisation were taking place and, particularly relevantly, when these tendencies were being newly perceived. The bourgeoisie had achieved total political power, to the extent that its confidence now allowed the spread of formal democracy. England's economy was thoroughly capitalist and the feudal classes only existed insofar as they were no longer feudal: the aristocracy were become capitalist landowners or industrial magnates; the peasantry had long been rural proletarians. The industrial working class was, in the 1880s and '90s, understanding itself as a class for the first time, recognising its extent, permanence and power. The class structure of industrial capitalist society was being experienced by all (though denied by many) as an established and ongoing fact, not as some temporary aberration in which, for example, the working class could be simply understood as "the poor". Hence, the emergence of all those fictional and non-fictional explorations of working-class life: positivist sociology was developing that (necessarily static) understanding of society and social class which was to serve bourgeois democracy.

Of particular relevance to Gissing was the huge growth at this time of the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, especially of the professional classes, and their social claims. Within the organicist aristocratic system whose

decline we are shown in George Eliot's Middlemarch, for example, Lydgate and his type had been immeasurably lower than the landed gentry, closer to the class below them than to that above by the mere fact of earning an income from their own efforts or engaging in the vulgarity of "business". As a class doomed to vacillation between the two major classes of capitalist society, the petty bourgeoisie felt obliged, and was able at this time, to assert its claim to a privileged position well above that of the working class. Gissing was one of those who, in exchange for privilege, were to carry out the ideological project of the bourgeoisie.

Gissing dealt specifically with the social position of the writer in New Grub Street, which is basically, as John Goode claims in George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction, "a novel about the payment of the writer" (p. 119): "the mark offered to the writer is his secure insertion into the middle class for whom he writes" (pp. 113-4).³ It is also a novel about the rise and the power and social mobility of a new generation of literary ideologues in the burgeoning mass culture of mature capitalist society, a situation in which literature has become a trade. Gissing's characteristic bitterness is, in New Grub Street, focussed particularly on the contradiction between the ideological claims of bourgeois culture and its reality: that the new importance of the printed word, of literature in its many forms, not only arises from, but is in accord with, the marketing needs of a debasing mass culture. It is not an Arnoldian sweetness and light that is purchased in that market; which means, crucially, that manufacturing sweetness and light is seldom a well-paying job. The writers of low journalism and of low

novels get the money and the house in Wimbledon, and Gissing must always operate with an uncomfortable and nagging awareness, which he had to a greater degree than most of his colleagues, that money is the root of all classes. His idealist protest is that the money is going to the wrong people. The contradiction between mass culture and the "genuine", "higher" culture is felt by Gissing in class terms: he, like Reardon in the novel, is an "aristocrat" of educated culture; like Godwin Peak in Born in Exile, he belongs to the upper orders "by right of intellect" and "by right of nature". His association of higher culture is, like Arnold's, with the social aristocracy; his sense of the smallness and superiority of the group involved in the production of sweetness and light allows for the imaginative conflation of these two aristocracies, and this is what is at the basis of his sympathy with the aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie -- it is not a feudal nostalgia with the same basis as that of the early Romantics or even of Disraeli, but precisely marks the social developments that have taken place between the bewildering rise of industrial capitalism and its maturation as a sine qua non of society. For Gissing the journey is to the future rather than to the past; his is not the Romantic vision of an organic peaceful society with an integrated aristocracy (though he plays with that idea in Demos). Gissing knows that the nature of the social world is struggle, and he quickly came to realise the foolish idealism of such projects as Besant's Palace of Delight. He was convinced, as he says in a letter to Eduard Bertz, that:

the gulf between the really refined and the masses grows, and will grow, constantly wider. Before

long, we shall have an Aristocracy of mind and manners more distinct from the vast majority of the population than Aristocracy has ever been in England. It will not be a fighting aristocracy, but a retiring and reticent; scornful, hopeless. (pp. 151-2)

In an earlier chapter I looked briefly at some aspects of Gissing's attitude towards working-class speech. His explicit comments on the signs (particularly linguistic ones) of upper-class "refinement" are, in all his novels, numerous and egregious. Even those of his "rediscoverers" whose central reference to Gissing has been, covertly, to a proof of the ontological inferiority of the working class, have been embarrassed by such un-ironical passages as this one from Born in Exile:

Peak, after each of his short remarks, made comparison of his tone and phraseology with those of the other speakers. Had he still any marks of the ignoble world from which he sprang? Any defect of pronunciation, any native awkwardness of utterance? Impossible to judge himself infallibly, but he was conscious of no vulgar mannerism. Though it was so long since he left Whitelaw, the accent of certain of the Professors still remained with him as an example.... More recently he had been observant of Christian Moxey's speech, which had a languid elegance worth imitating in certain particulars. Buckland Warricombe was rather a careless talker, but it was the carelessness of a man who had never needed to reflect on such a matter, the refinement of whose enunciation was assured to him from the nursery. (p. 155)

(Here it is clear that "ignoble" and "vulgar" -- both words that Gissing uses remarkably frequently -- retain their full weight as terms of class distinction.)

The boy Godwin Peak had been specific about the speech of the working class and its connexion with education:

"I hate low, uneducated people! I hate them worse than the filthiest vermin.... They ought to be swept off the face of the earth!... All the grown-up creatures, who can't speak proper English and don't know how to behave themselves, I'd transport them to the Falkland Islands.... The children should be sent to school and purified, if possible; if not, they too should be got rid of."
(p. 40)

As an adult his opinion is unchanged, although he can allow for pastoral charm:

Now, I by no means hate all orders of uneducated people. A hedger, a fisherman, a country mason, -- people of that kind I rather like to talk with. I could live a good deal with them. But the London vulgar I abominate, root and branch. The mere sound of their voices nauseates me; their vilely grotesque accent and pronunciation -- bah! I could write a paper to show that they are essentially the basest of English mortals. (p. 135)

Virtually every character in Born in Exile is introduced with an analysis of his or her accent. Whether the viewpoint is indicated as Peak's or the narrator's the standards remain the same. So we are told regarding Peak's parents, who are minor characters in the novel, that his father "had taught himself the English language, so far as grammar went, but could not cast off the London accent; Mrs. Peak was fortunate enough to speak with nothing worse than the note of the Midlands" (p. 30). Even when a voice cannot be heard its status, and therefore its qualities, can be extrapolated from other class signs. Peak observes two women driving in Hyde Park:

[W]ithin reach of his hand reposed those two ladies, in Olympian calm, seeming unaware even of the distance of the throng. Now they exchanged a word; now they smiled to each other. How delicate

was the moving of their lips! How fine must be their enunciation!... They were his equals, those ladies; merely his equals. With such as they he should by right of nature associate. (p. 129)

The cumulative effect of such remarks in Born in Exile is large. Because it is novel precisely about social mobility, they are probably more frequent than in other Gissing novels, but the difference is quantitative, not qualitative. One of the choicest, in its arrogance, occurs in Demos, where there can be no doubt that we are invited, expected, to share Gissing's comment on 'Arry's speech:

He pronounced the word "clerk" as it is spelt. It made him seem yet more ignoble. (p. 407)

Many more such comments could be extracted from Gissing's novels. There are two aspects of these reflections on speech that should be noted. First, as well as the clear contempt for lower-class patterns of speech, there is frequently an element of anxious resentment (as in Peak's observations of Moxey and Warricombe) of the difficulty for the social climber of attaining the venerated upper-class manner of speaking. Anxiety is an obvious subjective frustration inherent in the structures of social mobility. A distinguishing feature must not be easily copied: the point of the original "shibboleth", after all, was that it was difficult for the Ephraimites to pronounce.

The second aspect is more historically restricted: the origins of linguistic patterns are sometimes ascribed by Gissing to class, and sometimes to education (or its absence). The connexion between access to what Gissing means by "education" and social class, should be unremarkable, yet

it is one which continues to obfuscate the majority of discussions of "standard English". As I suggested in Chapter One, liberal grammarians, uncomfortable describing "standard English" in class terms, declare their scientific value-freedom by explicitly denying that class basis of linguistic practice which had in earlier years been unquestioningly assumed. "Standard English", they assert, in both its written and spoken forms, is not "upper-class" English or "public-school" English, or any such formulation explicitly acknowledging its development within class-society -- it is "educated" English. In an ideological system where a central weapon of class struggle is the denial of the reality of that struggle, and where "education" is officially free of class values, conflict can be mystified in modern "scientific" linguistics by replacing a class term with one apparently free of class implications.

"Education" generally and specifically education in "English language and literature" were of central importance in the years around Forster's Education Act of 1870. This matter has received much recent attention, with a general concentration on the new social role of English literary education as a unifying and "spiritualising" (in the Arnoldian sense) influence. The Newbolt Report of 1921, as the clearest expression of this project since its implicit announcement in Arnold's Culture and Anarchy (1869), has been extensively commented on.⁵ Less discussed, however, has been an earlier Report, published by the London County Council in 1909, deriving from A Conference on the Teaching of English in Elementary Schools. A passage of this Report under the subheading "Special Responsibility of London for Maintaining

a Correct Standard of Speech" dealt with class accents, particularly Cockney:

And it must not be forgotten that London has a special responsibility for the maintenance of a satisfactory standard of English as a spoken or a literary medium. Many of the so-called provincial dialects are ... survivals of older forms of the language, and are thus historically and phonetically justified. When a boy or girl in Devonshire, Lincolnshire, or Yorkshire is taught to acquire the constructions of the King's English at the expense of his native forms of speech, there is a balance of loss and gain in the process. But with the pupil in the London elementary school this is not the case. There is no London dialect of reputable antecedents and origin which is a heritage for him to surrender in school. The Cockney mode of speech, with its unpleasant twang, is a modern corruption without legitimate credentials, and is unworthy of being the speech of any person in the capital city of the Empire. There, if anywhere, the endeavour should be made to diffuse as widely as possible the standard English which, as the result of a long process of development, has become the normal national means of expression. (Quoted in Franklyn, pp. 221-2)

There can be little doubt that Gissing would have approved of the sentiment here (though probably deploring the invocation of Empire). What we can see in Gissing's ambiguities about the origins of socially desirable linguistic patterns (whether they lie in education or in class) is one expression of the fundamental contemporary ideological project of the bourgeoisie: to deny the value, even the reality, of class struggle -- precisely because it had now attained power -- by universalising its own class values and interests. Education, culture, refinement, (these concepts formulated according to the values and needs of the ruling class) must be accepted as universal values, uniting

the nation. But "standard English" at this time attains its full stature, doing what standards are always there to do: marking a point of exclusion according to the criteria of those in power. Whereas Cobbett, Paine and other bourgeois radicals, in their struggles over language at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had been fully aware of the class nature of languages, now, towards the end of the century, with the bourgeoisie in power, its language (to some extent taken over from the aristocracy) was become the language of power. The proper language of a bourgeois-democratic power hiding its economic basis beneath and within cultural forms had to be presented as a standard, a universal value. Roland Barthes speaks of such language as "enocratic", and locates its operative power in its seeming naturalness: "enocratic language is both (a contradiction which constitutes its strength) clandestine (it is not easily recognizable) and triumphant (it is inescapable)" (p. 108). There is a malign elegance in the manoeuvre: the working class must be taught to recognise, admire and desire to attain this "universal" standard. At the same time, it must not succeed, its reach must exceed its grasp (or what's a heaven for?). For language-usage remains useful as an important sign of class-based power -- and, in fact, the working class cannot succeed until it is prepared to adopt all the values of an antagonistic class as its own.

The educative project went, of course, beyond the public schoolrooms. Much of the late nineteenth-century literature dealing with the working class had at its narrative centre the upper-class hero or heroine entering "Darkest England" as a teacher -- a provider and harbinger of bourgeois morality,

knowledge, education, and language. This was the literary reflection of a real entry into working-class districts, felt to be dangerously separated geographically (as well as culturally alienated) from the new bourgeois suburbs. The philanthropist Samuel Smith was typical in his uniting of the pressing need for reform with the need to re-establish moral and cultural influence over the working class -- whose misery was inevitably seen in moral and cultural, rather than simply economic, terms:

I am deeply convinced that the time is approaching when this seething mass of human misery will shake the social fabric, unless we grapple more earnestly with it than we have yet done.... The proletariat may strangle us unless we teach it the same virtues which have elevated the other classes of society. (Quoted in Jones, Outcast London, p. 291)

"Culture", it was widely felt, would be a useful antidote to politics. The idea was, as we have seen, a basic one in the slum novels of Gissing's contemporary, Walter Besant. At one point in All Sorts and Conditions of Men Besant expresses this belief particularly clearly -- though somewhat lightly and aphoristically, but Harry Goslett's programme for the "tamingy" of Dick the Radical should be taken as symbolic, and not an ironical view of the value of culture:

"He is the reddest of red-hot Rads, and the most advanced of Republicans.... You shall tame him, Miss Kennedy."

Angela said she would try.

"He shall learn to waltz," Harry went on. "This will convert him from a fierce Republican to a merely enthusiastic Radical. Then he shall learn to sing in parts: this will drop him down into advanced Liberalism. And if you persuade him to attend your evenings, talk with the girls, or engage him in some Art, say painting, he will

become, quite naturally, a mere Conservative."
 (p. 139)⁶

The most visible social expression of the programme was probably Besant's People's Palace, fictionally built by the end of All Sorts and Conditions of Men and rising in reality in 1887.

Gissing's first novels were among the earliest to deal with this theme intensively: the enthusiasm of his cultural missionaries to the slums is part of a belief in the possibilities of an upliftment conceived according to bourgeois values. Gissing's growing hatred of, and contempt for, democracy and the working class was to a large extent expressed, in Demos (1886) and Thyrza (1887), as a reaction to that class's indifference and resistance to the culture thus offered. His hatred and fear of independent working-class politics was frequently expressed as a fear of the destruction threatened to "culture" by "democracy". This conclusion of Gissing's was widespread in the last decades of the century -- Henry James, for example, makes a similar analysis in The Princess Casamassima (published in the same year as Demos), where Hyacinth Robinson's exposure to "culture" leads to his conversion from "anarchist" violence; he commits suicide to escape his commitment to the assassination of a Duke.

In connexion with the increasing ideological significance of English language and literature, we should place Gissing's denunciations of working-class language within the context of a more general defence of the English language in its ideologically preferred form. That political

and social democracy could be seen as the origins of what was widely felt to be the debasement of English and the need for its defence is clear from statements like this one of Henry Reeve:

[A] corrupt and decaying language is an infallible sign of a corrupt and decaying civilization. It is one of the gates by which barbarism may invade and overpower the traditions of a great race. (Quoted in Dowling, p. 87)

The defence against barbarism, easily interpretable as an attack on democracy, was linked by Gissing to language; but it is significant that the link is inescapably present in a writer of a very different tradition, with different immediate concerns: Walter Pater. In a situation where the voice of the working class was increasingly to be heard, and also where a new generation of linguists was laying the basis of modern linguistics, primarily on the basis of a recognition of the primacy of the spoken language, a reactionary tendency emerged, centred on Pater, and diffused among the "aesthetes" of the 1880s and '90s. As Linda Dowling argues in Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siecle it invoked "culture" and "civilisation", in a way that was intimately connected with language, as ideological weapons in the class struggle:

Pater's writing, both in itself and as it was to set in motion the forces that would converge in literary Decadence, is best understood as an attempt to rescue from the assaults of scientific philology and linguistic relativism an ideal, however diminished and fugitive, of literature and literary culture. (p. 104)

But to these assaults we must add the assault of the working class, the dominant bourgeois fear of the time. This fear accounts for much of Pater's attitude towards language, as it does for Gissing's, though with different effects. Both writers were deeply attached to the concept of Latin's authority, a privilege denied as reason and logic were deposed from their perceived position as language dictators, to be replaced by (deplorably democratic) linguistic laws. The Latinity observable in Gissing's and Pater's writings, and generally in nineteenth and twentieth century reactionary linguistic and social thought, continues older defences of linguistic integrity and social stratification. The association of English's Latinity with notions of (liberal) education and class-status was clear from the eighteenth century: so the author of the first comprehensive English Grammar, Robert Lowth, in 1762, insisted that the only ways to acquire "correct" English were to have a knowledge of the classical languages and to be well-read in the "ancient authors" and to move in "polite society". In the epoch of formal democracy the appeal to polite society has been increasingly suppressed, with the apparently classless appeal to "education" taking the whole burden of an elitist project. The power of the tradition in the nineteenth century is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the success of Lindley Murray's Grammar (1795), which sold millions of copies throughout the century: Murray was based on Lowth which in turn acknowledged the dicta of Quintilian and Varro. (Gissing would perhaps not have agreed with Mrs Garth, in Middlemarch, that "pronunciation is the least part of grammar", but would have surely approved that "Mrs Garth, like more celebrated

educators, had her favourite ancient paths, and in a general wreck of society would have tried to hold her 'Lindley Murray' above the waves" (Middlemarch: Ch. 24).)

Pater's highly Latinate style in itself constitutes a political statement about the need to defend the language, as he makes clear in his comments on "Euphuism" in Marius the Epicurean (Part I, Ch. VI). Again, we must remember that increasingly, as Dowling puts it, "English literature was widely prescribed to the newly literate as an antidote to the febrile infections likely to be spawned by the spread of industrial democracy" (p. 105). Language, in its various forms, was continuing to bear the ideological weight it had long borne; its sacerdotal "defenders" were still its defenders against democratisation. Their first great figure of the century was Coleridge, who early identified the political threat in "democratic" education generally and specifically in Wordsworth's Romantic valorisation of rustic speech over Literature's tradition of "proud writing". Coleridge's guardians of the "lingua communis" were, revealingly, not specifically the aristocracy, a waning social force, but a potentially meritocratic "clerisy" -- that "permanent, nationalised, learned order" nowadays generally known as the "highly educated". Both Pater and Gissing, in their different ways, felt themselves part of this clerisy, expressing their defence of "culture" against democracy at least partly through their deployment of language.

It is inevitable that "literary language" is inherently political, in being the language of the ruling class and in precisely excluding the languages of the ruled. It is

prominently so when informed by the conscious attitudes towards it of people like Pater and Gissing, however much they might wish to distance themselves from politico-economic categories. Gissing did not seek that distance; conflict between classes, between the "cultured" and the "mob" is always present in some form in his writings. The form in which it is perhaps most obvious, at least in his earlier novels, is in the clash between languages, a clash which does not always, as I shall argue, require the presence of a working-class character "speaking" a language distinguished from "literary language" by the "orthography of the uneducated".

Gissing did make use of phoneticised speech, as we have seen. It would have been strange if he had kept phoneticisation to the minimum, as did Besant, for Gissing by no means shared Besant's perception of the essential brotherhood of "all sorts and conditions of men". But, compared with the rigorous systems of phonetic transcription of non-"standard Englishy" encountered in the later 1880s and 1890s, Gissing's earliest novels can be seen to conform rather more to the less rigorous, impressionistic and arbitrary practices of an older realism, such as are found in Dickens. In Workers in the Dawn (1880), for example, sympathetic working-class characters go unphoneticised -- none of the speakers at Will Noble's "working-man's club", all devoted to earnest self-improvement, show much room for "improvement" in their use of English. Where phoneticisation is used at its fullest it shows little evidence of the closer observation and greater consistency and attention to detail that was to become fairly usual in the fiction of a decade on:

"Father come 'ome this mornin drunker than ever," said the girl, in a matter of fact way, continuing her stitching as she spoke. "Mother got up, and they begun to 'ave words; an' then father 'it her on the 'ead with his boot-heel, as he'd just took horfff. And mother's 'ead bleded -- my! how it did bleed! (Vol. 1, pp. 270-1)

Gissing's uncertainty in Workers in the Dawn as to how to deal with the "orthography of the uneducated" is evidenced in a narratorial comment following a (censored) speech by the unpleasant landlady Mrs Pettindund, which concludes: "'I'll have no --- i' my 'ouse, an' so you 'ave it straight'". Later readers would not have been baffled had the final word been phoneticised, but Gissing leaves it unaltered, adding the sarcastic observation (gentle by his later standards) that "Mrs. Pettindund, exercising her discretionary powers in the matter of English orthoepy, pronounced the last word 'stright'" (Vol. 2, p. 60).

By the time of writing The Nether World (1889) his naturalism has greatly advanced in this respect. It is to this novel, the only one by Gissing which deals almost exclusively with the proletariat and lumpen-proletariat (as opposed to the upper-artisanate or petty bourgeoisie), that I want to turn now, to locate the class conflict inhering in its linguistic fibres. It will be useful to first return to the presence of pastoral and mock-heroic elements in Gissing's work.

Gissing's attachment to an aristocratic ideal did not lead him to make extensive use of the pastoral. There are examples which anticipate common gestures of the 1890s: the chapter of Workers in the Dawn entitled "A Town Idyl", dealing with the hero's passions and suggesting the incompatibility of their "noble" origins with the sordid exigencies of working-class London, finds echoes in later writings by other authors.⁷ For Gissing the countryside has an acknowledged class significance as the domain of the gentry: a world of grace and culture (founded, he knows, on money), far distant from working-class urbanisation, though contiguous upon Grosvenor Square. It is revulsion from the industrial working class which leads Gissing to infuse the country house and the country estate with feudal nostalgia -- as when, in Demos, the Owenite factory is obliterated by the aristocrat who finally discovers the will enabling him to reclaim his heritage from the socialist worker who had mistakenly inherited it. Samuel Vogt Gapp suggests in his study of the "Influence of the Classics on Gissing's Novels of Modern Life" that, unlike his slum description, Gissing's "nature description is often in the classic mode; it is an attempt to transfer to the English countryside feelings and categories of thought which seem to have come to him from the Georgics" (p. 88).

Mock-heroic, though, is more characteristic of Gissing than pastoral. Its appeal to him is primarily as an invocation of that "culture", synecdochally represented by a Classical education, which he sees as an attribute of the upper classes and also as his entrance ticket to their world. In the late nineteenth-century system of social mobility,

increasingly organised ideologically around "educatedness", to be able to refer to the Classical is for Gissing a sign which is the literary equivalent of speaking with an upper-class accent.

The very title of The Nether World invokes the Classical. We are prepared by it to descend into the hell of Clerkenwell and working-class culture, with Gissing our Virgilian guide. Of one of the central characters we are told, with ironical pedantry:

Pennyloaf's legal name was Penelope, which, being pronounced as a trisyllable, transformed itself by further corruption into a sound at all events conveying some meaning. (p. 72)

"Conveying some meaning", that is, to working-class corrupters of language. A different meaning is conveyed to the "educated" reader, who is tacitly credited by Gissing with joyously knowing that the name "is" tetrasyllabic. That reader will, too, observe the ironic parallels drawn in the novel between Pennyloaf Candy and the faithful wife of Odysseus. Again we find this disturbing process of alienating a character from her own description, as it is made in terms quite foreign to her.

In Chapter XII of The Nether World a more specific episode of mock-heroic is announced by its title: "Io Saturnalia!" The flocking of the proletariat to the Crystal Palace on August Bank holiday is to be compared to the Roman festival most notable for the liberty granted, on that day, to the slaves. And Gissing's bitterly sardonic vision, his pity and his hatred, is also to be released:

To-day will the slaves of industrialism don the pileus. It is high summertime. With joy does the awakening publican look forth upon the blue-misty heavens, and address his adorations to the Sun-god, inspirer of thirst. Throw wide the doors of the temple of alcohol! Behold, we come in our thousands, jingling the coins that shall purchase us this one day of tragical mirth.... Io Saturnalia! (p. 104)

The mock-heroic is not sustained at this level, though there are occasional allusions to it in the chapter, as elsewhere in the book. The Classical seems to be for Gissing an indispensable source of ironic reference. So, Clerkenwell Green is referred to as "that modern Agora", where Sidney Kirkwood could listen to "the wit, the wisdom, that give proud distinction to the name of Clerkenwell Green ...; not a subject which modernism has thrown out to the multitude but here received its sufficient mauling" (p. 181). Clem Peckover's mother kept a small beer-shop, through which "ran a beery Pactolus" (p. 42); Clem herself, a central target of Gissing's hatred in the novel, has "cruel lips [such as] may be seen on certain fine antique busts" (p. 8) and "her shoulders spread like those of a caryatid" (p. 120). In Chapter 12 we can have no doubt about Gissing's view of the vulgarity, made in terms of the mock-heroic, of Clem Peckover's attire: "Depend upon it, Clem was gorgeously arrayed; amid her satellites she swept on 'like a stately ship of Tarsus, bound for the isles of Javan or Gadire'" (p. 106). Other allusions to mock-heroic and pastoral in this chapter are made mostly through the occasional adoption of a stylised language: "Ho for the bottle of muddy ale, passed round in genial fellowship from mouth to mouth!" (p. 106).

The point here is that geniality and fellowship are not what Gissing sees as the consequence of liquor for the multitudes. Nor is ale the chosen drink; as in Hogarth's engraving, the horror is that gin has replaced ale as the chosen beverage. Ale is redolent of agricultural Old England, of bucolic good cheer; and this pastoralism also serves its turn for Gissing, in much the same way as does the mock-heroic, by setting up as a standard another culture, in relation to which the present is purely epigonal. Thus, the description of the fair being held outside the Crystal Palace:

Bob and Pennyloaf bent their steps to the fair.
 Here already was gathered much goodly company....
 Swing-boats and merry-go-rounds are from of old the
 chief features of these rural festivities; they
 soared and dipped and circled to the joyous music
 of organs which played the same tune automatically
 for any number of hours, whilst raucous voices
 invited all and sundry to take their turn. Should
 this delight pall, behold on every hand such sports
 as are dearest to the Briton.... (p. 106)

Here we have fragmentary echoes of the mock-heroic united with the pastoral: the inflated epic tones of "bent their steps" and "behold on every hand", mingling with the medievalising "was gathered much goodly company" and reference to "rural festivities" and "the Briton". As tactics they are equivalent, contrasting the degraded present of urban industrial culture with the richness of another culture. The means to this end, too, are similar: a language recognisable to the reader as that proper to one kind of experience is applied with equally recognisable inappropriateness to a contrasting other experience, and contrasted, as linguistic usage, with the language of the

degraded experience. This shifting of register is familiar, a traditional tool of the satirist, the source of much class humour.

But Gissing's most characteristic contrast at the level of language, one percurrent in his work and particularly clear in this chapter of The Nether World, is to bring into dynamic conflict not the linguistic patterns and practices of historically discrete cultures, but those of contemporaneous class dialects. One of the ways in which the mock-heroic works as a statement of class attitudes has already been suggested, and the analysis can be extended beyond that figure, by looking at some of Gissing's techniques in producing this clash.

Gissing was acutely aware of status distinctions within the working class; the result of his empiricist "knowledge" of the class he had observed so closely and so bitterly (searching, as the petty bourgeoisie so often does, for those qualities it demands of the working class, and feeling betrayed on not finding them). After his ironic invocation of the Saturnalia, there is occasion to sardonically display his knowledge of caste when discussing Bob Hewett's marriage to Pennyloaf Candy:

For certain friends of ours this morning brought an event of importance. At a church in Clerkenwell were joined together in holy matrimony Robert Hewett and Penelope (otherwise Pennyloaf) Candy, the former aged nineteen, the latter less than that by nearly three years. John Hewett [Bob's father] would have nothing to do with an alliance so disreputable; Mrs. Hewett had in vain besought her stepson not to marry so unworthily. Even as a young man of good birth has been known to enjoy a subtle self-flattery in the thought that he graciously bestows his name upon a maiden who, to all intents

and purposes, may be said never to have been born at all, so did Bob Hewett feel when he put a ring upon the scrubby finger of Pennyloaf. Proudly conscious was Bob that he had "married beneath him" -- conscious also that Clem Peckover was gnawing her lips in rage. (p. 104)

This is clearly the narrator speaking, although it is unusual for him to invite the complicity of the reader as explicitly as he does in sarcastically referring to "friends of ours". But the paragraph contains a variety of antagonistic voices whose conflict is the real source of its effects, of its irony and pitying contempt.

We can first note that the second sentence embeds in a straightforwardly referential frame a quotation from the Church of England marriage service. And, up to this point "Robert" has always been "Bob", and "Pennyloaf" has sufficed -- but there can be no doubt of the tetrasyllable in this sentence. The role of the formal nomenclature and of the Church's language is to indicate the essential incompatibility of "our friends" with the dignity of the marriage service embodied in its wording: the dignity of the language is actively and hostilely in contradistinction to its subject. The language used to describe Bob's parents' reactions to the marriage is similarly in conflict with the situation. We must be aware that John Hewett could not have conceived of his response in words such as "an alliance so disreputable"; that to describe Mrs Hewett's presumed arguments with her son as "beseeching" ("in vain", too!) is to impose on her behaviour an interpretative language quite alien. Had this sentence appeared in a novel by, say, Trollope, to describe the reactions of upper-middle-class

Trollopian parents, its significance would have been different. It is presented here as quasi-direct discourse, whereas it could not be so, for the language used is specifically not that of the speaking subjects. Later in the paragraph, the fragment of direct discourse "married beneath him" is ascribed to Bob -- though we are surely obliged to feel that the phrase is not one that he would use. The suggestion is that the snobbery, or sense of social distinction, is not valid in the situation -- social discrimination is valuable to us, writer and reader, but ridiculous when applied within a class sufficiently characterised, from without, qua class, in a lump. The effect achieved through the manipulation of different voices here is similar to that achieved by the specific and explicit comparison made between Bob's feelings and those of "a young man of good birth": the inappropriateness of (desirable) middle-class feelings and discriminations to people such as the Hewetts. The well-bred man "graciously bestows his name upon a maiden" (the language, probably deriving from pastoral convention, is pretentious and novelettish, but not ludicrously inappropriate), whereas Bob "put[s] a ring upon the scrubby finger of Pennyloaf". The shock of "scrubby", after the grander resonances of the preceding sentences, points to the truth, which is linguistic as well as social: "scrubby" is of the language, as well as of the nature, of Pennyloaf and her class.

The effects of an explicit comparison and of the conflictual dialogue of two voices are similar in immediate cognitive and analytical terms. But to make the comparison in a way that draws as little attention to itself as possible,

that enfolds it in the naturalness of language, is to have a different real effect on the reader. It is to oblige the reader to share the concept, to make it impossible to escape the thought, because it inheres so in the language. A direct comparison may be evaluated and judged by the reader; evaluation is even, perhaps, invited. But when the comparison is transparently, invisibly, embedded in the very language used, the possibility of conscious evaluation is greatly limited. This is, after all, what ideology involves -- the creation of what Lukacs called a "second-nature", as "natural" and inescapable and part of reality as real reality itself.

There are other examples of dynamic conflict between class voices in this chapter of The Nether World which will further reveal the significance of working-class speech for Gissing. We may note in the following passage a complex use of different voices:

"Have a drink, Suke!" cried Bob, when he heard her acrimonious charges against Clem and Jack. A pretty girl, Suke, and with a hat which made itself proudly manifest a quarter of a mile away. Drink! of course she would drink; that thirsty she could almost drop! Bob enjoyed this secession from the enemy. He knew Suke's old fondness for him, and he began to play upon it. Elated with beer and vanity, he no longer paid the least attention to Pennyloaf's remonstrances; nay, he at length bade her "hold her bloomin' row!" Pennyloaf had a tear in her eye; she looked fiercely at Miss Jollop.
(p. 107)

Suke's response, in quasi-direct discourse, is signified as of working-class origin through ellipsis and "vulgar" expression, not to mention the air of enthusiasm; despite the

lack of markers of direct speech or of reported speech, these are not the words of the narrator only. In the denotative phrases of this passage, though, it is entirely characteristic that the narrator makes use of "educated" polysyllables like "manifest" and "secession"; in his references to the speech acts of the women we have, similarly, "acrimonious charges" and "remonstrances". Gissing's irony is, of course, that such language is not the language of the speakers whose speech-acts are here referred to. His narratorial language is formulated through conflict with the very different language of the characters. It is continuously sending a "sideways glance" (to use Mikhail Bakhtin's metaphor) at working-class language. Similar ironies occur in the lines following this passage: "Pennyloaf was constrained to beg that they might go into the 'Paliss' and find a shadowed seat"; Bob "promised that ... Suke Jollop, with all her like, might go to perdition". Gissing is evidencing his attitude to the working class stylistically, as he does throughout his early novels.

There are two general points arising from these considerations. First, it might be objected that it is simply a question of Gissing's habitual style to make use of polysyllables and of Latinate grammatical constructions; that he is not necessarily implying a constant commentary on working-class speech when he does so; that demonstrably, for example, he employs the same formal linguistic entities (words, grammatical forms) when writing of the upper classes. But the point is precisely that Gissing's linguistic practice is a fundamentally ideological choice. To argue that the lexical items are things-in-themselves with an unchanging

significance is to miss their dynamic and dialogic quality. When Gissing Latinates over the upper classes it is a showering of approbation, a mark of mutual congratulation between himself and his characters. "Style" is something that always needs to be closely interrogated. A fundamental strategy of Gissing's "style" is to define, to establish, to demonstrate, to constitute, a radical class divide (apportioning value to the classes in so doing).

This point, to which I shall return, is connected to my second, which concerns aspects of irony in the text. Irony, it is clear, involves the connivance of author and reader: it depends on shared horizons of knowledge and value. So, too, does experiencing the class significance of Gissing's language. The pattern which has been pointed to would be invisible to a reader not sharing Gissing's awareness of the formal synonymy of "hell" and "perdition" and that Bob Hewett would probably not have known the latter word, and certainly would not have used it. A reader who did not understand that John Hewett could never have spoken of "an alliance so disreputable" could not participate adequately in the dynamic relationship inaugurated by the text. What this means is that the person for whom the text was written was of the "educated class" so venerated by Gissing. It means that Gissing is defining, in terms of language (at least in part) the middle-class (himself and the reader) as well as the working class. Linguistic usage has become an ideological signifier of primary importance. And if, in ideological terms, Gissing is constituting the working class, for the bourgeoisie, then no less is he constituting the bourgeoisie, for itself.

We have seen that Gissing usually transcribes working-class speech phonetically; further, that he frequently accompanies such practice with remarks explicitly indicating distaste or, more frequently, with an irony that sufficiently conveys his contempt. I want to suggest now that, even where manipulations of quasi-direct and indirect speech do not occur and are not used as the literary basis for his irony, the very contrast between narratorial language and the "orthography of the uneducated" performs a function that is similar, but more pervasive, and more persuasive because it is less easily perceptible. This transparent presence, informing despite its invisibility, takes its power from the united authorities of the narratorial position (in control, apparently, of the Word) and of the narratorial (literary, socially powerful) language.

In looking at the languages of Gissing's texts, we have to remember that Gissing was a Classical scholar, deeply committed to the values of nineteenth-century "liberal education" and its attachment to Classicism. As we have seen, this was a time when "education" was become of increasing significance as both a real and a mystificatory marker of class-lines. It would seem that, for Gissing, upward mobility was -- or should have been -- consequent upon possession of a certificate expressed in "standard English" and replete with Classical allusion. He certainly bears neither his English accent nor his (associated) Classicism lightly. The latter has one of its expressions in the Latinate grammar and lexis of his prose -- that is, the prose of the narrators of his novels, as well as of the non-working-class speakers and of the directly authorial interjections. Gapp has discussed this

matter of "style" descriptively, and takes as representative the opening paragraph of Chapter XXVIII of The Nether World, "The Soup Kitchen". This chapter is, as the paragraph evidences, notably different in feeling from the earlier description of the Crystal Palace: the satire is directed against philanthropic ladies indignant at not receiving gratitude from the people of "this nether world [which] has been made by those who belong to the sphere above it" (p. 252); here, Gissing's harsh pity and anger is on the side of the victims:

With the first breath of winter there passes a voice half-menacing, half-mournful, through all the barren ways and phantom-haunted refuges of the nether world. Too quickly has vanished the brief season when the sky is clement, when a little food suffices, and the chances of earning that little are more numerous than at other times; this wind that gives utterance to its familiar warning is the vaunt-courier of cold and hunger and solicitude that knows not sleep. Will the winter be a hard one? It is the question that concerns this world before all others, that occupies alike the patient workfolk who have yet their home unbroken, the strugglers foredoomed to loss of such scant needments as the summer gifted them withal, the hopeless and the self-abandoned and the lurking creatures of prey. To all of them the first chill breath from a lowering sky has its voice of admonition; they set their faces; they sigh, or whisper a prayer, or fling out a curse, each according to his nature. (p. 247)

Gapp comments that:

Most of the typical Gissing style is there -- the careful, well-rounded, thoughtful sentences, the unusual compound words, the preponderance of Latin derivatives, the coined word like "needments", the really remarkable slow and sad rhythm. (p. 93)

But it is certainly not the style of the typical Gissing working-class character. It is important that we recognise that there is a reciprocal heightening effect when such language is contiguous upon a passage of direct working-class speech. In the passages of The Nether World I have already quoted the polysyllables seem more imposingly polysyllabic, the "vulgarisms" more downright "ignoble", in their mutual contrast. And it is not always just a question of seeming: it is noticeable that Gissing's Latinity often becomes more marked when he is particularly concerned to make commentary on his characters' manner of speech. Born in Exile provides a good example:

They had crossed the open space in front of the College buildings, and were issuing into the highway, when a voice very unlike those that were wont to sound within the academic precincts (or indeed in the streets of Kingsmill) made sudden demand upon Peak's attention.

"Thet you, Godwin? Thoughts I, it must be 'im! 'Ow goes it, my bo-oy? You 'ardly reckonise me, I dessay, and I couldn't be sure as it was you till I'd 'ed a good squint at yer. I've jest called round at your lodgin's, and they towld me as you was at the Collige."

He who thus accosted the student, with the most offensive purity of Cockney accent, was a man of five-and-forty, dressed in a new suit of ready-made tweeds, the folding crease strongly marked down the front of the trousers and the coat sleeves rather too long. His face bore a strong impress of vulgarity. (p. 24)

(Those who do not know Born in Exile should be told that this unfortunate bearer of so many stigmata of social inferiority is Peak's uncle; the hell through which the sensitive hero has to go in the rest of the novel can then be more sympathetically appreciated.)

It seems apparent that the contrast between the narratorial prose and the direct speech of the vulgar uncle has a significance of its own, beyond the sense of the description, which is clear enough. Together with the precise implications of the two patterns of speech, established as inherent, it is the difference between them that operates fundamentally. This difference is an operative one occurring throughout Gissing's novels and, probably, wherever such representations of working-class speech occur. Such speech is inevitably presented as a deviation from the norm established by the narrator -- whose authority is exercised within a social context where the norm is formulated, valorised and universalised as "standard English", and thus empowered. The social, empowering context is basic. Not simply the nexus in which the text is produced, but that in which it is consumed, for production is only consummated in consumption: the text is only realised in the process of communicating itself, its meaning only achieved in that process. This applies to the language ("style") used, as much as to the referential significance of the language. In this case, the phonetic transcription of working-class speech depends on, and it elicits, all the social significance of a class-based diglossia.

In works operating this diglossia, even in more or less extensive passages where the different languages are not intermingled, as they have been in the examples given so far, the words summon up to the reader's sense the language that is not being used. The language is recognizable as deviant (or as "standard"), and so in inevitable conflict with the negatively invoked norm (or with the a-normal). The

phenomenon is perhaps a pervading extension of what Mikhail Bakhtin in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics calls "hidden dialogicality":

Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second person are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation, although only one person is speaking, and it is a conversation of the most intense kind, for each present, uttered word responds and reacts with its every fibre to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person. (p. 197)

The use of an inappropriate register is a common tactic in slum literature. Mock-heroic is one specific form of it, but its use goes much beyond mock-heroic, in Gissing as well as other writers. Just as mock-heroic depends for the realisation of the intended irony on the reader's recognition of the inappropriateness of allusion and language there is a crucial dependence on recognition in the application of different levels of register in the slum novels. This is primarily enabled by the intensification of difference between the language of the narrator and that of the working-class characters, by means of contrasted syntax, vocabulary and indicated pronunciation. And once a pattern of association has been established between working-class speech and supposed working-class attributes -- violence, stupidity, cruelty, etc -- the "standard English" of the narrator becomes a political weapon in itself as it comments on the behaviour of a character. An individual character can become

thus representative by its association with language, and we (writer and reader), associated with the conflicting, and dominant, language are equally constituted, in opposition.

Looking beyond Gissing, we can note some useful examples of this widespread process in Arthur St John Adcock's East End Idylls (1897). The title of Adcock's collection of stories is significant here; and there is one entitled "Helen of Bow" whose title makes a further gesture towards the mock-heroic. Adcock's phoneticisation of working-class speech is fairly intensive and fairly consistent and successful, and the effort that clearly went into it and the attention required in reading it go some way to disguising the unnaturalness of the rhythms:

"Look 'ere, 'Elen," he remonstrated; "who's this yer bloke what's a-foolin' abart rhand yer lately, eh? What yer bin a-goin' out wiv 'im for, eh?"
(p. 117)

"Remonstrated" is polysyllabically typical of Adcock's narratorial language. In "An Interrupted Romance" in the same collection, a sentimental story of conjugal violence, the expression of Amos Crapp's consciousness through such language results in the kind of irony I have been looking at. Amos Crapp cannot afford to feed his family once he has "paid for the inordinate beer supply he felt to be essential to his personal sustenance":

It was a harrowing circumstance to a man of his sensitive disposition, and the sight of his wife's pinched face and his children's neglected looks naturally irritated him, so that he spent as little of his time at home as possible. (p. 171)

When, one day, he comes home to find his children hungry and his wife in tears, his thoughts and reactions are related by the narrator in a language that we must immediately feel to be alien to Crapp's own language; the words used are consciously elegant and educated, which compounds the reader's sense of the wrongness of his response:

His feelings were considerably lacerated; indeed, her reception of him betrayed such a wholly unsympathetic attitude of mind that, in the first bitterness of his resentment, he punched her and blacked her eye. (p. 172)

This use of language as class assertion and as a weapon, discernible in much slum literature, is one that always shapes the experience of reading Gissing.⁸ And, within oppressive social structures in which language is fully implicated, it is possible that it is ineluctably present in reading any work that is written in the standard literary language -- that is, the written equivalent of spoken "standard English".

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NARRATED AS NARRATOR: WORKERS REPRESENTED AS WRITERS

Reading will help to mend people's morals, but writing is not necessary.

- Jonas Hanway

But, always noisy, we rarely speak; always resonant with the din of many-voiced existence, we never reach the level of ordered articulate utterance; never attain a language that the world beyond can hear.

- C.F.G. Masterman, From the Abyss

The oppressed masses, even when they rise to the very heights of creative action, tell little of themselves and write less.

- Leon Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution

In the nature of the case, the self-expression of the laboring classes can never be so copious nor so complete as that of the leisure class and the well-to-do. ... But to listen to them is more important on the whole than to air one's own theories, or even to record one's own observations.

- Vida Scudder, Social Ideals in English Letters

Sir, I Ham a very Bad Hand at Righting.

- Richard Tidd (the Cato Street conspirator)

If workers in Gissing, and by far the larger part of slum fiction in the 1880s and 1890s, "speak" a language that comes into conflict with the bourgeois narrator's, what happens when fictional workers venture to compete with the author and the narrator -- when they write, when their letters are presented in the text, or when the narrator is one of the working-class objects of the text? For reasons of power, this seldom happens; when on rare occasions a working-class character is "given" a substantial stretch of narration that narrator's power is controlled and restricted in various ways. Language is intimately connected with power, and control over the written word has been a site of conflict in all literate societies. In many cultures, says Robert Pattison:

Writing becomes a tool of authoritarianism, and its dissemination is rigorously controlled by those in power, who fear for their positions if the skill should become commonplace. The authoritarian assumes that, once they have learned to read and write, his subjects will therefore become critical and competitive. He guards the skill of writing as he guards his power. (p. 63)

The fear of subjects who can write is not restricted to ancient or "primitive cultures". Passive reading skills can be useful in the propagation of ideological views, but writing sets up an unacceptable competition, perhaps, and can tend to encourage the development of the belief that anybody is capable of producing literature. Lawrence Stone writes that:

When at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Anglican Church set up its National Society for the fostering of elementary education, it was careful to point out that "it is not proposed that the

children of the poor be ... taught to write and cipher", while the Wesleyan Methodists banned writing altogether from their schools. (p. 89)

And Hannah More, says Stone, "placated opposition to her school in the Mendips by the firm promise that 'I allow of no writing'" (p. 89). Societies whose economic development relies on the spread of such skills as writing, as did England's in the late nineteenth century, must seek to ideologically diffuse the challenge they seem to imply.

We have seen that in slum fiction the controlling narratorial voice allows any "dialect"-speaker entrance to the text only on the narrator's terms, the "dialect" measured always against the grammar and pronunciation of an authority which is no less social than fictional. Reproducing the writing (letters, for example) of a character must come under identical sway. A major difference will be that the need to differentiate between the "standard" and the non-"standard", in such cases, results in a greater revelation of the conventionalities of the process; for written English by the late nineteenth century is subject to a widely-accepted standard (ultimately a class-based one), at least as far as orthography goes, and even to a great extent in terms of grammar. The skills implied in the ability to scribe a letter carry the implication of some competence in writing "Standard" English. Perhaps this is one reason why there are so few reproduced letters in slum fiction -- and why even the narrators we shall be looking at are presented as speaking voices, (with or without the use of quotation marks), rather than as writing voices. "Writing voices" are what we usually feel narrators to be within realist fiction, leading

frequently to a hazy and unformulated elision in the reader's mind between author and narrator. The social power of writing connects with the power of the writing author-narrator. In such social and literary circumstances, to allow any entry into fiction of working-class characters, speaking working-class language (or what is claimed to be such) is a double-edged victory for that class: it is the establishment of its claim to fictional representation, while the way it is allowed entry constitutes a stage in the struggle for the ideological supremacy of the language-controlling class. But to allow the working class entry as putative author (letter-writer, but especially narrator), even where the other controls over representation remain, is to go a step further in allowing the working class recognition as a controlling subject, allowing it new access to an important level of control over the representation of itself and over the powerful force that language is.

Before looking at working-class narration as such, it is useful to consider ways in which unspoken working class grammar and accent-patterns are presented in such things as letters -- half-way stages, perhaps, to the presentation of a working-class narrator, in that a small stretch of text, which is in the first person and is not quoted or reported speech, is surrendered in an apparently unmediated way to its fictional working-class author. For the typical reader in the ideologically crucial periods of the nineteenth century which produced the texts examined here, working-class language is,

as I argued earlier, tantamount to the assertion of a coherent working-class power of political challenge -- which is a threat to bourgeois power and must be seen as incoherence and violence. The role of the letters in Reade's Put Yourself in His Place has already been discussed in these terms in Chapter Two. In that novel, the increasing "illiteracy" of the warning letters accompanies, and is an index of, increasingly "villainous" threats to order.

Reade, like Shaw, simply accepted that "pronunciation ... directs the spelling" (p. 109), at least in the case of a "low, uneducated brute of a workman" (p. 134), and this seems to provide the basic convention in most cases where the letters of the "uneducated" are represented. It is there when Arthur Morrison includes some passages of working-class writing ("written with many faults and smudges") in his story "In Business". What makes the "legle dockermert" and the accompanying letter convincing is that they are not shown simply as "written" forms of represented Cockney speech. The spelling is mostly derived, it is clear, from Cockney pronunciation, but it is the character's phoneticisation rather than that of the story's author-narrator, and it is, as such, marked with spellings that do not occur when Morrison represents speech; most common words are correctly spelled:

"my dear wife i have done this legle dockermert after thinking it out it will make you alrite having all made over and me still oawe the detts not you as you can pull round the bisness as you said with time and if you do not see me again will you pay the detts when it is pull round as we have been allways honnest and straght." (Tales of Mean Streets, p. 107)

Of course, the categories of "illiteracy" and general "uneducatedness" would be the most meaningful ones for Morrison and his readers in the case of this writing as in the case of phoneticised speech; the nature of the "writing" is such as to produce the same ideological effect as the phonetic reproduction of speech. Gissing's narrator in The Nether World offers the reader a letter "indited" by Pennyloaf Candy which is more typical of late nineteenth century techniques than is Morrison's, in that it shows more clearly the lurking presence of the author-narrator; "It ran thus:"

"DEAR MOTHER, The old feller has gawn of it apened at jest after six e'clock if you want to now I shall come and sea you at ten 'clock to-morow moning and I beleve hes got the will but hes a beest and theers a game up you may take your hothe so I remain C. S." (p. 326)

In terms of the conventions of representing "deviant" language, what primarily shows this to be written, as opposed to spoken, language is the lack of punctuation and marks of elision. This was the case in Morrison's letter, too, and it can serve to remind us of one of those obvious facts that tend to be ignored by analysts: that the syntactical marking of reported speech is not that of the fictional speaker but of the fiction's author. In Pennyloaf's letter the apostrophes in "six e'clock" and "ten 'clock" are probably inconsistent with their general absence from the letter. The spelling in the letter is much what Gissing could be expected to use for showing her speech. As an example of how Pennyloaf might be expected to write it seems convincing, until we interrogate it. Even if, for example, we accept for the

moment the convention whereby a represented Cockney would inevitably place an aspirate before a word like "oath" and deny one to "happened", is it really likely that anyone, even someone as uneducated as Pennyloaf, would continue the practice when writing? Perhaps. But it is surely not likely that a Cockney would spell basic words like "gone" and "just" as "gawn" and "jest", simply because this is the way she pronounces them. And it is equally unlikely that the "r" would disappear from "morning" -- though to ignore the "i" in "believe" is more convincing. But one is left to wonder why Gissing has left "come" untampered with, an eminently unreasonable spelling in terms of any pronunciation.

Edith Ostlere, a writer with less rigour (and less of most things) than Gissing, cannot resist the temptation to have her letter-writer in "Any Fla-ars or Po-t Ferns?" spell "come" as "kum" -- twice: this is the full note from Nell to Bill:

"DERE BILL, i am goin ome to mother's for a week
 abart don't kum arter Me wen i kum ome Praps i
 shall av Sumthink 2 sho yew
 yure lovin Wife
 NELL
 P.S. yure Bloter is on the ob And yure dri sox is
 airin on the ors an don't fourgit 2 putt them hon."
 (From Seven Dials, p. 12)

As with Pennyloaf's letter there are no full-stops -- except for the abbreviated "P.S.", a bit of somewhat surprising and inconsistent punctiliousness. But why is "mother" not

"muther" (let alone "muvver") if "come" is "kum"? But we should not expect consistency from Ostlere. There is much in Nell's letter that derives from the Punch tradition rather than the comparatively serious phonetic investigations of the 1880s and '90s: "2" for "to" is mere whimsy. So also is "fourgit" for "forget" -- and surely "four" is rather too complicated and unphonetic a way of spelling "for"; clearly the purpose is the visual joke of transposing the spelling of homophones. Aspirates are, of course, absent from the letter, though we are apparently to accept that Nell is careful about inserting the possessive apostrophe in "mother's" and when she elides "don't". Nell is also careful to denote her postscript as such, without forgetting the full stops proper to the standard abbreviation. But consistency and plausibility are not the point; Ostlere's readers would not have needed such things in order to be able to share her patronising ridicule of the character. It can be noted, though, that Ostlere does not always trust her reader to catch the joke unaided: in another story, "'Ayer Up!'" (meaning "Higher Up!") a Kilburn omnibus-driver tells a gentleman passenger that his wife is "'a tough 'un. Jest bin down with bronchitis' (he called it brown-koitus), 'an' doctor, 'e give 'er up'" (p. 133). The joke might not have been clear if bronchitis had been phoneticised in the first place (and how fortunate for the author that the wife didn't merely have influenza, and how lucky for Ostlere that a "k" was available for "koitus", or the chances of a post-structuralist revelation of her attitudes to miscegenation or, perhaps, sodomy would probably have increased).

Ostlere's story "All Allonger 'Liza" contains transcriptions of the texts of two Valentine cards, an examination of which can further an understanding how and why Cockney writing is phoneticised in the same way as Cockney speech; the texts are given thus (with the inverted commas in the original):

"'Liza you're my valentine,
O don't despise this hart of mine."

and

"'Liza -- 'Liza!
'Evings, 'ow I prize 'er,
That sugar is sweet is certingly true,
But 'Liza -- it ain't as sweet as you.
More it ain't."
(From Seven Dials, p. 149)

This is really rather curious. So many textual elements are directed straight at the reader in order to make the sense comprehensible. As is usual in reproduced non-"standard" speech, the structure of the sentences is "normal", as are the syntactical punctuation marks (which was not the case in Nell's letter). Elisions are indicated here, as they are by the narrator-author in the case of reproduced speech: those regular ones like "you're" and "don't", as well as those which mark deviations from the "correct" pronunciation -- "'Liza", for example, and the many dropped aitches. Presumably to avoid ambiguity and to make the sense of the word immediately clear, but at further cost to consistency, the aitch is retained in the misspelled "hart". That misspelling is plausible for a writer with little formal education. But to misspell "Heavens" as "'Evings" and

"certainly" as "certingly" is surely not so, unless the principle of uneducated accent "directing" uneducated spelling is taken as a universal truth. According to that crude rule the initial "c" in "certingly", would be an "s" -- but this would presumably result in too much of a puzzle for the reader (of the fiction, if not the fictional reader of the letter).

The combination of orthodox syntax and syntactic markers with the usual phoneticising conventions reveal that these fragments are mimetic not of written prose but of spoken Cockney. A functionally literate Cockney might well have written "hart", but not so grossly misspelled a common word like "heavens". The fictional Cockney (of the older kind, at least) always drops his aitches (and inserts the aspirate where it should not be); but here, again, we apparently have a literate Cockney who apparently does not know that they exist in the written version of the language. Either that or he is so confused that his resolute vulgarity dictates that he will omit the aitches, while some other and more respectable force demands that he be careful to indicate the omissions by means of standard elision markers.

But so what? It is almost too easy to turn Ostlere's contempt back on herself in this way. The point is surely this: the use of any system of phoneticising speech to indicate "deviations" of pronunciation depends on an understanding that the "standard" written form is inextricably linked with the "standard" spoken form -- that the former belongs to the latter. If, according to the dominant pattern of understanding amongst serious linguists, it is recognised that pronunciation can be non-"standard"

while spelling is "standard", the way is logically open for the recognition that the phoneticisation of only one particular accent is ultimately illegitimate. For, then, all accents are equally attached to the same written root-form, which is the written realisation of all accents, however "deviant" from the "standard", and that pronunciation is simply a question of pronunciation and not a signifier of an inherent inferiority. But to demonstrate such inferiority is a primary function of the kind of literature Ostlere produced.

The use of the letters of the "uneducated" is uncommon in slum literature. It has already been shown, though, that some of the earliest phoneticisation of Cockney in novels were letters (in Fielding and Smollett); and letters continued to be important for the extended jokes of Punch. Always, though, the use of letters is clearly within the power of the controlling (personal or impersonal) narrator who, as it were, quotes them -- a kind of control which would be hidden in epistolary novels, of course. Letters are hard evidence and, being already unmediatedly in the same medium as the written narration, perhaps have a greater tinge of realist truth than does quoted speech. And the conveying of a sense of veracity is, I have argued, a significant element of slum fiction. Particularly with reference to the portrayal of working-class speech, I have already discussed elements of sociological discourse in the fictional appropriation of working-class life, and the role and importance of such categories as "truthfulness" "conviction" and "accuracy" in

fictional naturalism. With this blurring of boundaries between "fiction" and fact it would be surprising if there were not to be found works which advanced their pretensions to accuracy by claiming a greater degree of fact than is allowed for by reference to the "essential" accuracy of their fictional presentations. Fictional autobiography, long intertwined with the novel, would be the most obvious form that such "truth" could take, particularly as autobiography was one of the most common forms used by working-class writers: David Vincent remarks that autobiography "was attractive to the few, inexperienced working class novelists who found in its structure an acceptable solution to the considerable technical difficulty of constructing a novel" (p. 2). In the years of Chartism Charles Kingsley had exploited the mode for his Alton Locke, which was originally offered in 1850 as "An Autobiography" of "Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet", without the real author's name or role, or any indication of the work's fictional status, appearing.

So it is, perhaps, surprising to find such a small number of works in the late nineteenth century availing themselves of this resource. The reason for this is surely that it would be implausible to present a worker-as-writer, given the conception of the working class that was inherent in the ideological project of which the fiction was a component. Workers, according to this conception, cannot speak for themselves; they are inarticulate; they are silent; they require the mediation of the "educated" word-possessing class; the working class cannot narrate but can only be narrated. The language of Kingsley's novel had been much more that of a "Poet" than of a "Tailor"; the presentation of a

worker totally in command of language, as a poet is generally presumed to be, would be a problematical thing, given the late nineteenth-century fear of the significance of workers' language.

Clarence Rook's The Hooligan Nights (1899) is as interesting for the reasons which made it not an autobiography as it is for its incorporation of a working-class character as a teller of parts of its story. It is an episodic work, virtually a collection of connected short stories, and clearly in the tradition of the picaresque novel of roguery. The full title of the work, though, already attempts to put in doubt its status as fiction and claims a closer connexion to "real life": The Hooligan Nights: Being the Life and Opinions of a Young and Impenitent Criminal Recounted by Himself and Set Forth by Clarence Rook. The vaguely humorous suggestiveness of this title comes from its eighteenth century literary form, while the reference to so many similar full titles of novels of picaresque adventures tends to undercut the claim it makes. As P. J. Keating notes in The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, "the considerable skill [Rook] exhibits in telling the story of Alf the burglar owes more to the techniques of fiction than sociology" (p. 210). Paradoxically, though, it seems likely that the story is, in fact, based on the recounted experiences of a real-life Lambeth thief. According to William Matthews (p. 72) the author was introduced to the thief by the publisher Grant Richards, to whom "Alf" had sent a manuscript of confessions. Rook's text then, while using a fictional form to convey "a study in reality", is actually a substitution for the original text which was a genuine piece

of working-class writing. Rook has, it seems, appropriated a working-class text and has then given parts of it back to its real author, while retaining control of the whole. The motives of the publisher's original censorship of that writing are unclear; certainly it was deemed unacceptable, and the voice of the working-class thief passed into the control of the bourgeois forces of publisher and professional writer.

The Introduction to The Hooligan Nights does not account for the suppression of the original text, although it refers to the "own words" of the hero. The Introduction pursues the non-fictional claims of what it calls "a study in reality" (although, again, the authorial disclaimer is not untypical of the early picaresque novel):

This is neither a novel, nor in any sense a work of imagination. Whatever value or interest the following chapters possess must come from the fact that their hero has a real existence. I have tried to set forth, as far as possible in his own words, certain scenes from the life of a young criminal with whom I chanced to make acquaintance, a boy who has grown up in the midst of those who gain their living on the crooked, who takes life and its belongings as he finds them, and is not in the least ashamed of himself. (p. v)

The self-assertion of the hero implied in this lack of shame is important, as it connects to the reasons I suggested for the under-representation of first-person narrative forms in this field: for the bourgeois writer and reader, the working class character should be, must be, always on the edge of being "ashamed of himself". The sense of shame should derive from being inadequate in relation to the norm represented so ably by the author-narrator and the reader. The penitent and

the properly modest must be silent; the unashamed will speak forth. In fact, the lack of shame in The Hooligan Nights is, again, connected with its insertion into a particular fictional tradition: here, of the self-assertive and dangerously attractive "Young and Impenitent Criminal", (a category that accomodates the petty-bourgeois mixture of disgust and desire vis-à-vis the working-class in a more conventional and much less complex way than we can find in, for example, Gissing). In Rook's work, the hero is not so much a working-class character who happens to be a thief as a rogue who is nurtured within a working-class environment. Although the social environment in The Hooligan Nights frequently has the literary texture of the "low", a category as literary and as "ageless" as that of the "rogue", it is made more precise by the sociological imagination of the 1890s. This latter reveals itself in many ways in the text, not least in the representation of a language now regarded as sociologically interesting; and one short chapter "Concerning Hooligans" gives a quasi-sociological account of "Hooliganism".

So, at the outset Rook informs the reader that elements of autobiography are to be accomodated with the work: Young Alf is to be allowed to present his story in "his own words". Alf is, indeed, given some fairly long stretches of narration, though the organising presence of the author is felt to a degree which militates against the Introduction's suggestion that the work is mere reportage. Clarence Rook as the "setter forth" performs a larger role than that formulation implies and is in many ways a fairly orthodox narrator; Alf's words are given within quotation marks, the narrator's are not.

Rook is the "reporter", selector, contextualiser, implicitly the censor, of Alf's stories, and provides descriptions of the Lambeth milieux in which he meets Alf; conforming to the naturalist tradition there is a minimum of moral comment within this narration. There are, though, occasional explicit reminders of the reporter/reported relationship:

I would not spoil young Alf's artless story; it must be given in his own words, as he told it to me in that pleasant room behind the bar of the public house off Lambeth Walk (p. 63)

Alf's "own words", in contradistinction to those of the "setter forth", are a rather successful application of the developments of the 1890s in phoneticising Cockney, with a raciness and exoticism partly dependent on the substantial use made of slang -- both common Cockney slang, rhyming and otherwise, and what we are given to believe is the argot of the criminal underworld. As an example of Rook's technique, we can take the beginning of one of Alf's stories:

"There was one butcher there that I tumbled was a stranger soon as I ketch sight of 'is dial. He wasn't selling 'is meat over-quick, 'cos 'alf the time he was necking four-ale in the pub 'cross the way. He'd got is joints laid out beautiful on a sort of barrer. Well, we 'ung about, watchin' 'im go 'cross the road and come back again, and presently I says to the uvvers, 'That bloke don't seem to be doin' no trade worf mentionin'. Let's 'elp 'im.'" (p. 12)

The dependence is on lexis and grammar and a symbolic use of phoneticisation. The representation of accent is not entirely consistent: for example, the aspirate, throughout the book, is generally dropped for "his" and retained for "he"; in this

passage we have "about", while on the following page the same speaker is shown as saying "abart". Although Rook is unusual in the period for indicating the Cockney pronunciation of "standard" English "th" as "v" or "f", depending on whether it is voiced or not, ("uvver" for other, "worf" for "worth"), he tends to restrict this phoneticisation to the longer and less commonly-used words -- to have mutilated "that", "those", "the", etc., would probably have seriously limited the readability of long speeches. Rook seldom makes use of the cheaper tricks relied on by writers like Edith Ostlere, using spellings which do not indicate any sound difference from Received Pronunciation, like "'arf" for "half" or "kum" for "come".

The distinction between Alf's pattern of speech and that of the author-reporter is clearly marked, though the reporter is not immune to infection from the other language, and even seems to delight in the intersection of the two voices. When the reporter takes on the task of telling the story, Alf's voice frequently comes to dominate:

"It's very kind of you to symperfize wiv us, boss," said Young Alf, finishing his ginger-beer.

"Now you 'ave one with me," said the bung, looking at the empty glasses.

The missus said she would have another of the same. But young Alf, noting the sudden absence of the can, concluded that he had gone for a cop. It was clear that the bung was having some of his own swank. (p. 61)

Alf's "conclusion" is represented much as quasi-direct discourse would be (although it does not seem to be that), so infected is the narrator's language. The Cockney-criminal voice is present in the last paragraph only through

vocabulary: "missus", "can", "bung" and "having some of his own swank". These are the words of Alf, the ultimate teller of the tale, as we have been informed. The feeling we get from a passage such as this is utterly different from what a similar conflict of voices as written by Gissing would have produced, and it is difficult to account, in comparing it with Gissing, for the felt lack of hatred and contemptuous arrogance by analysis of the Rook passage in itself, isolating it from other literary and linguistic elements in the book. Rather, we must refer to the contract proposed on the title page -- to accord to Alf some authority as originator of the text, with some measure of respect for his powers of language. Further, we have been encouraged to recognise the coherence, if not the moral acceptability, of his culture (and so too, to some extent, of the working-class Cockney's in general). The sense of exoticism, of the display of a strange language to be marvelled at (primarily the slang) is one we understand to be shared between the "reporter" and the reader. In this passage there is certainly a clash between Alf's words, beyond the infective echoes of his normal linguistic practice, and the formality of the narrator's connective phrases ("noting the sudden absence of", "concluded that"). The effect, though, is primarily mildly humorous; Gissing's depth and range, and Gissing's agonised and guilty hatred, are absent.

In fact, the politics and ideology behind a great deal of writing about the working class in the 1890s are a liberal version of the more directly expressed class-antagonism in Gissing. There is generally an assertion of difference, but it is a benevolent assertion that attempts to deny conflict

through according a formal recognition of the validity of the "other" language. At the same time the texts generally work to ensure that it remains "other", that it is presented to the already-constituted consumer as deviant from a norm established in society, in fiction generally, and in any present text. It is a benign recognition of an alternative, but ultimately inferior, culture. The benignity is what distinguishes such writing from Gissing. Gissing, a declared and bitter partisan, lays bare and encourages the conflict of languages; Rook, in common with most other writers of the 1890s, seeks to deny it, or at least to mitigate it, in the interests of a linguistic and social harmony within bourgeois hegemonic control. For the conflict remains operative within the text and the society and language system in which it exists.

On a different level of consciousness we can see this placatory process in, for example, Rook's description of Alf's girlfriend (whom he refers to throughout, borrowing his own transcription of Alf's pronunciation, as "Emmamarier"):

Rough and coarse, if you please, and foul of tongue when the fit seizes her; but we may call the roughness honesty, and the foulness slang, without being far wrong. (p. 176)

This is an instructive remark, as it demonstrates in precisely linguistic terms the class control behind the liberal movement: the power over language remains with "us" -- the reporter and his readers, the readers of novels, the educated, sociologically sensitive bourgeoisie; "we may call" things whatever seems appropriate to us; "we" have the Adamic power of naming and, thus, of controlling. "Emmamarier", who

would most likely not have written her own name in this fashion, nor considered that she pronounced it out of accordance with its usual written form, is not to be consulted as to the epithets she would give to her own "roughness" and "foulness". Emmamarier would be unlikely to thank her chronicler for his concession.

As far as language goes Rook, despite his liberal attitudes, at one point reveals his opinion of Cockney, when describing Alf's "manner of speech":

[H]e exhibits curious variations. Sometimes he will talk for ten minutes together, with no more trace of accent or slang than disfigure the speech of the ordinary Londoner of the wage-earning class. Then, on a sudden, he will become almost unintelligible to one unfamiliar with the Walk and its ways.
(p. 19, emphasis added)

This observation of shifts in register, of the existence of patterns of speech peculiar to social groups within classes, is unusual in the period. It occurs, appropriately, in the chapter which describes in semi-sociological terms the Hooligan in general and Alf in particular.

The geniality of Rook's condescension even allows for some self-directed humour deriving from the reporter's own incomprehension of the Cockney's accent; in a passage which mocks the slumming "missionaries" and alludes to the processes of information-gathering by philanthropists and writers, (reflecting on the origins of The Hooligan Nights), the victory is perhaps shared:

"There's toffs come down Lambef way, an' I've showed 'em round. One night two of 'em came an' arst me an' Maggots to show 'em round. Show 'em everyfink, they said. One of 'em was a orfer.'
"A -- what?"

"Orfer, wrote about fings in the papers."
 "Ah, of course." (pp. 189-90)

The fascination with Cockney slang and the liveliness of Cockney speech and Cockney wit, so apparent in The Hooligan Nights, had by the late 1890s crystallised into the cliché which endures yet. The superficial glitter accorded Cockney speech is often explicitly remarked upon in fiction, as here in Harry the Cockney (1913) by Edwin Pugh, who was notably sympathetic to the Cockney as a social figure, if not politically sympathetic to the working class:

[T]he average Cockney is ... often witty; he is sometimes eloquent; he has a notable gift of phrase-making. (p. 2)

Harry the Cockney is unusual as an example of the fictional Cockney autobiography; but the opening chapter, from which this extract is taken, indicates that the attribute given in the title is less simple than it appears to be. Although the title suggests that Harry is a Cockney, the story is basically of how he becomes not a Cockney. The autobiographer is different from other Cockneys from the outset; the story told is the story of Harry Weaver's distantiation from "the average Cockney". This movement is towards becoming "more or less articulate": his social progress in terms of specific achievement -- he becomes "a K.C. and a Member of Parliament" -- is subordinated to his progress in acquiring "culture". The early remarks on the linguistic powers of the Cockney are actually placed in a context which creates a paradox:

And yet ... I was different from the rest of my kind in that I have become more or less articulate. For the average Cockney is not articulate. He is often witty; he is sometimes eloquent; he has a notable gift of phrase-making.... 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.

Because this is so it has been thought that these fragments of autobiography may have an historical value and interest that does not inherently belong to them perhaps. (p. 2)

What Pugh means by the "average Cockney's" dumbness of soul is not initially apparent and is even puzzling, counterposed as this quality is to the list of linguistic gifts. But it becomes clear that Pugh is suggesting that the working-class Londoner is virtually deprived of a "soul" in that the "soul" has never learned (or been given the chance to learn) to "articulate" its own potential. That potential is, we learn, the potential to take on the ruling social values; the ideal is that of "the gentleman", something to be striven for against all difficulties -- and the difficulties are enormous for the working-class person, as Harry's Uncle Algernon points out (and he should know, as a successful class-defector):

[G]entlehood is made comparatively easy to the public-school boy trained in certain traditions, but desperately difficult to the lad of humble birth and lowly antecedents, bred and reared as you have been. (p. 257)

Algernon's lengthy eulogy of the gentleman could have been written by Thackeray, apart from this reference to the sociology of "gentlehood", but even this latter element is

submerged in a laudatory universalising of middle-class values. There is no indication of any ironical intent on the author's part, and Harry's progress, as he "began to realise what civilisation really meant", is treated with sympathy. His shame about his humble antecedents, particularly of his mother, is to be criticised and deplored, but he overcomes this. After his mother's death at the end of the novel, however, in a judgment which begins to explain what is meant by the "dumbness" of the Cockney's soul, Harry says:

I also inherit something of her poverty --
 something of the poverty of her mind and soul --
 which makes me poor indeed, which forms a barrier
 that sets me apart from my familiars. (p. 286)

Because the mother has been understood as a representative of the inarticulate type from which Harry has striven to escape, the suggestion here is of inherent working-class inferiority, genetically transmitted. As such it is reminiscent of Gissing, and Harry the Cockney particularly recalls the life-story of Godwin Peak in Born in Exile. But Harry had said at the beginning of his "fragments of autobiography" that he had undergone a "metamorphosis", had "become more or less articulate". We have learned that he became a member of the ruling class ("a K. C. and a Member of Parliament") and a gentleman. What we must recognise is that the linguistic metaphor chosen by Pugh to express the inadequacy of the "often witty ... sometimes eloquent" Cockney -- the soul's "dumbness", the Londoner's "inarticulateness" -- is only apparently paradoxical: the essential motif of Harry's "metamorphosis" is his transformation into, precisely, an autobiographer, a writer, the author of his own words, a

controller of the full resources of language. The transformation into a writer is contingent upon, and inseparable from, the class transformation. The incompleteness of Harry's transformation is ideologically secondary from this point of view -- its direction is what is important, a movement from working-class soullessness and inability to write, towards the fully-souled, fully articulate writing bourgeoisie.

Little is known of Pugh's own life; he did work as a clerk in the City for nine years and possibly shared other experiences, including a working-class background, with Harry Weaver. The latter's story is, perhaps, the story of Pugh himself; it is certainly the story of many class metamorphoses of the late nineteenth century.

It is worth noting that in the few mainstream nineteenth-century works of fiction which make some use of narrators who are not middle-class, those narrators are usually domestic servants: Betteredge in Wilkie Collins's The Moonstone and Nellie Dean in Wuthering Heights are probably the best-known examples. In fiction domestic servants cannot normally be considered in the same way as industrial workers, for two main reasons: first there is a long, relatively autonomous literary tradition of using servants as observant "outsiders"; secondly, the mode of connexion between domestic servants and the larger working class is problematical in class terms -- socially, as well as within the literary tradition, the servant is to an extent integrated into

bourgeois society and an outsider to the employing class only to a limited degree.¹ This is continually revealed even in twentieth-century English fiction: most famously, perhaps, in P. G. Wodehouse's novels about Jeeves the butler and, more recently, in ***** Isiguro's Remains of the Day. The Autobiography of a Charwoman (1900) by Annie Wakeman certainly shows a working-class character who does not, in herself, embody a social challenge, but the book as a whole relates in its concerns much more to the slum fiction of which it is a part than to older-established conventions and genres. The charwoman's tale is more of herself and of her own class than it is of the people in the class employing her.

It is a very different fictional autobiography from Pugh's, both in its techniques and in its tale of a servant ultimately content with her social position. It is narrated by the charwoman, as we would expect from the work's title, but with continuing indications of oral speech and in implied inverted commas throughout: the author announces on the title page that the autobiography is "As Chronicled by Annie Wakeman". Already terms are offered for the reading of what is to follow. How differently the reader might approach the work if it were entitled The Autobiography of Elizabeth Dobbs, as Chronicled by a Hack Writer! The expected class position and class control are reassuringly indicated: the interest-value of the autobiography of a nameless "class-type" is guaranteed by the mediation of the possessor of both a personal name and the power of writing, of chronicling, of making the story meaningful. The charwoman's words will be passed through the mediating sieve of Annie Wakeman.

The language of the charwoman is, as was discussed in Chapter Three, a rather outdated version of the conventional representation of Cockney speech, but as it is presented as a transcription of the charwoman's story by a "chronicler" and not as written by the author, there is no contradiction in it being given as reported speech; we merely must notice that, again, the written language, and thus "literature", remains in the control of the language-owning class. The convention of the "chronicler" of another's story enables the author to retain her controlling presence. Paradoxically, the authenticity of the autobiography, according to the ideology and the literary conventions we are examining, is guaranteed by what is, in fact, the real sign of its inauthenticity. For, the majority of working-class biographers strove to write in a language as close to the "standard" as possible, and, as David Vincent states in his study of nineteenth-century working-class autobiography, only in the small body of self-consciously "dialect" literature are they at pains to indicate grammatical, lexical and accentual divergences from "standard English" (p. 193). But, in the fiction market at least, who would accept, or want to accept, an autobiography in which the "author" presented herself as linguistically so different from the model which had by now become so well-established, with the concomitant danger that the socio-political model might also be challenged?

In fact, the "autobiography" does not stand alone, without the more direct presence of the "chronicler". A fictional autobiographer's death is inevitably something of a problem, but necessary for the sentimental pathos of

Wakeman's charwoman. The final chapter, "Until the Day Breaks", consists of the following paragraph:

On Sunday morning, at 4a Amwell Mews, of bronchitis, Elizabeth Dobbs, in her 55th year. Thy will be done. (p. 304)

This movement back from the first-person narration to the voice of the chronicler (or to the intervention of the chronicler quoting from the formal language of a death-announcement) does not come as a surprise, however. We had been told, after all, of the presence of a "chronicler". And the final chapter merely completes the non-autobiographical framing initiated by the Preface which the "chronicler" offered. This Preface is crucial to the experience of reading the "autobiography": it indicates to the "kind reader" how the work is to be read, and also makes explicit the expectation of the class-nature of the readership, from whom collusion is invited:

Do not expect the daughter of a dissipated mother and a cruel father to picture a life as beautiful as, with all its advantages, yours has doubtless been; nor hope that this patient struggler of the mews can fashion her words into a style as glittering as yours would surely be. (p. vii)

Or as glittering as Annie Wakeman's own style, is the clear implication behind this gentle irony so "literarily" expressed. The contrast between the "style" of the Preface and that of the autobiography of "this gentlewoman of the slums" is one of the immediate controlling influences on the work's reception. This is the opening of Chapter II, which also evidences the continuing presence of the "chronicler":

Good evenin'm. It's a treat to be arsked out to 'ave a cup o' tea, and me and the maid 'as enjoyed it proper. I never was a gad-a-bout, and wot with work and one thing and the other I don't git much time fur visitin'. Thanks'm, I will sit down, and wile I'm talkin', if you don't mind, I'll jest mend young Dick's stockin's. 'Ee takes after 'is father.... Now where did I leave off? Oh! to be sure! At pore mother's death, wen I was nine and a 'arf. (p. 16)

The social relationship of Elizabeth Dobbs to the "chronicler" and to the reader (the other component of the "we" that is always explicitly or implicitly present in texts like this) is clear. The conservatism that is the origin of the novel, of its revelation of the harshness of slum-life and its moments of ironic accusation, is surely at the basis of its welcome by the press (as quoted on the endpapers of later impressions):

The story is full of dramatic interest and points many morals in a way the most eloquent preachers might envy.... We are introduced intimately to classes whose intimacy we rarely win in real life; we meet with a conventional code which differs from our own; but [!] we receive many lessons in self-sacrifice, patience, courage and enthusiasm.... Altogether this is a wonderful book, and we recommend it as cordially to those who crave for new sensations as to those who aspire to be numbered among the philanthropists. (Saturday Review)

The cheerful patience of the poor is cleverly indicated. (Spectator)

The security of the gender placing within the novel is also appreciated, along with its comforting politics:

"The humour and the pathos of life are abundantly in evidence all through the book, and the charm of womanliness, even [!] in a Cockney charwoman, graces every page." (The Leeds Mercury)

In The Hooligan Nights the working-class narrator-"author" is granted some respect and a measure of autonomy for a page or so at a time, with the conflict of languages, though, still present within the text. In The Autobiography of a Charwoman, although the conflicting languages are not placed in the pattern of continuous juxtaposition which invites continuous comparison, the distortion of the narratorial words by phoneticisation marks its deviance not only from the spoken "standard" but even more from the written "standard". Such linguistic practices accentuate the contentual stress on the class difference between the supposed autobiographer and the bourgeois nexus of writer-"chronicler" and reader -- a nexus which cannot restrain itself from asserting its presence straightforwardly in the framing passages of the work, as well as more subtly by occasional reference to the supposed origins of the text. The role of represented spoken speech (which replaces written language, as we have seen) is crucial, as a primary sign of an inferior otherness.

A comparison between Rook's novel and Wakeman's, though, does reveal that the reader's reception of the marking of language as deviant is significantly affected by other textual elements which direct the reader's attitude. In The Hooligan Nights the measure of socio-political respect towards an alien but (to some extent) valued culture exists together with, and influences, the perception of that culture's linguistic practices as deviant. In The Autobiography of a Charwoman the deviant language -- deviant in relation to the framing text and to the hegemonic language

-- is unqualified by elements challenging the full burden of its power as indicative of inferiority.

What primarily links the two works is that bourgeois control over language is retained: the East End rogue and the charwoman may speak, so long as their speech may be shown, partly through phoneticisation, as different from what Shaw called "valid 18-carat oral currency". But they may not write their own stories, for to write one's own story is to claim power over one's own life.

Chapter Six

DIALOGUE WITHIN THE WORKING CLASS: TRESSELL AND NEVINSON

I fear that when I begin to write, since I am without learning in rhetoric and the art of grammar, the learned will say to me, "Uncouth and ignorant man, what makes you think that this gives you a place among writers?"

- Gregory of Tours

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine.... His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words.

- Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,
For learning me your language!

- Shakespeare, The Tempest

The victory of one reigning language (dialect) over the others, the supplanting of languages, their enslavement, the process of illuminating them with the True Word, the incorporation of barbarian and lower social strata into a unitary language of culture and truth, the canonisation of ideological systems.

- Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogical Imagination

For centuries the witlings have been telling him his accent is "vile", and he believes that it is vile.

- Edwin Pugh, The City of the World

The way in which the dominant define themselves cannot be contradictory, but for the dominated things are more complicated since the dominant practices situate them at the heart of contradiction.

- Noëlle Bisseret, Education, Class Language and Ideology

In the writing I have been looking at thus far, the working class is, generally, very much "other" -- an object to be observed and "known" by the scrutinising writer and reader, who exist together in the realm of hegemonic socio-cultural values. The textual situating of the reader within the normative centre beyond which the investigated objects exist, and the establishment of a writer-reader nexus within the normative centre, is, I have tried to show, achieved not least by the representation and manipulation of the class varieties of the English language. Most of this writing can be seen as fundamentally hostile -- sometimes overtly hostile -- to the culture, politics and aspirations of the class it is concerned with. This is not to deny the individualising sympathy for working-class suffering shown by writers like Gaskell, or the depth of Gissing's pessimistic, passionate but cynical anger at a society which produces an exploited and dehumanised proletariat; it is simply to assert the political identification that is there.

I have been looking, then, at one developing use of the English language in relation to bourgeois literature, and have not considered anything that could really be called "working-class literature". But perhaps in bourgeois society there is not, in one sense, any literature that is not bourgeois, in that bourgeois society sets up the terms for its production and consumption, and contains the values that can be either supported or attacked; the opposing term to "bourgeois" would be "proletarian-revolutionary" rather than an immediate class-term like "proletarian" or "working-class". "Working-class literature" could refer to the literature that a bourgeois society's cultural industry

offers to a specific sector of its market, and here we would be foolish to expect to find any subversion of dominant social values; or it could refer to the literature produced by and for the working class itself and containing some expression of that class's opposition to existing social structures and values. In this latter case we will usually need to confront the problems created when the ideological content of a literary work is contained within a form developed by the alien and hostile bourgeoisie and written in the hegemonic language. In this chapter I shall look at two novels which seem to contain, in different ways, challenges to the established strategies of representing working-class speech within the "placing" of the working class beyond the normative centre, linguistically and otherwise. The novels are Henry Nevinson's Neighbours of Ours, published in 1895 -- only a week after Morrison's Tales of Mean Streets ("with the result that mine was praised, and his was bought", Nevinson complained in Changes and Chances (p. 117)), and Robert Tressell's The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, written by 1910 but not published until 1914 and then only in expurgated form. Unlike the latter book, Nevinson's has no generally-recognised status as a "working-class novel" in the political sense I mentioned -- in fact it has no generally recognised status at all. And they are different in many ways: Tressell's is more directly didactic and interventionist into political practice, Nevinson's close to the traditions of the Cockney School slum fiction of the 1890s in its concentration on community life and avoidance of directly political issues. But both were written by socialists. Tressell, it seems, did not originate in the

class with which he so closely associated himself in his work and his politics, as is frequently presumed.¹ Nevinson was from the middle-class, and remained there, but was an early member of the Social Democratic Federation. He wrote in his autobiography, Changes and Chances, that "during those years (1885-1897) my shamed sympathy with working people became an irresistible torment, so that I could hardly endure to live in the ordinary comfort of my surroundings" (p. 121).

There were other novels by middle-class socialists in the 1880s and 1890s: apart from Shaw's (the disquisition on the labour theory of value in The Unsocial Socialist is a rather surprising precursor of the longer didactic parts of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists),² there were those of John Law (Margaret Harkness) and Allen Clarke, and isolated examples such as Constance Howells's A More Excellent Way, Clementina Black's An Agitator, arguably W. E. Tirebuck's Miss Grace of All Souls and Carrie and the novels of Mark Rutherford (William Hale White). There had been novels by workers, going back at least as far as Thomas Martin Wheeler's Sunshine and Shadows produced in the Chartist years. But, although research is increasingly uncovering and reclaiming more novels, the novel was a form that few worker-writers favoured, for whatever reasons.³ The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists is, famously, generally seen both as the first "good" or "successful" socialist novel in English and as the first "good" or "successful" novel by a working-class writer (this latter despite the non-proletarian origins of Tressell, the pseudonym of Robert Noonan).

It is useful to look at the representation of working-class speech in Nevinson's and Tressell's novels

precisely because both are politically sympathetic to that class, yet both make use of linguistic devices, including phoneticised speech, which I have argued to be bourgeois strategies in the expression of class conflict in literary representations of the working class.

Despite decades of coherent political and trade union activity in England, despite a not-insubstantial amount of working-class writing, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists was still welcomed, in 1914, in the terms of silence and inarticulateness which had, as I have discussed, long been such a percurrent feature of bourgeois responses to working-class action and writing. Fred Ball cites a contemporary review:

In Books and Bookmen, James Douglas saw the book's publication as a portent, a sign that "the long silence of the poor is about to be broken". "Slowly the workers are becoming articulate," he wrote. (p. 173)

The difference between this judgment of Douglas's and most earlier responses in these terms is that now articulateness does seem to be admitted as a portended possibility. It seems that the working-class can produce an acceptable novel, the great bourgeois literary form.

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, while it may not have entered the received canon of mainstream English literary studies, is secure in its place as a vital contribution to English working-class culture in general and

to English working-class politics in particular (and it is probably much happier there). Many discussions of working-class literature refer with certainty to Tressell's novel as some kind of fixed mark, although the status it seemed once to hold as virtually unique for its time has been challenged as research reveals numerous novels of analogous political content and of proletarian authorship, to complement the forms long recognised as having contained most working-class literary interventions. Graham Holderness in "Miners and the Novel" refers warningly to The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists as one among "a handful of texts which already seem doomed to canonization as the great tradition of proletarian fiction" (p. 19). For Alan Sillitoe, who uses Arthur Morrison's writing as a counter-example in his Introduction to a modern edition, it is "the first good novel of English working-class life" (p. 8). Jack Mitchell begins his essay "Early Harvest: Three Anti-Capitalist Novels Published in 1914" by referring to something he calls "the British proletarian and revolutionary democratic novel", but later seems content to claim Tressell's as "our first great working-class novel" (p. 73). Rather more modestly, Brian Mayne calls it "the first realistic novel of working-class life by a member of the working classes" (p. 73). Raymond Williams, in his warm "celebration" of the novel, describes The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists as "the first socialist working-class novel in English" and also as "this first successful working-class novel" ("The Ragged-Arsed Philanthropists", pp. 246-7).

Some of these appraisals seem to work in categories perilously close to those of Stalinist "socialist realism",

and perhaps the primacy they accord Tressell is because his novel is, in its didacticism and overt partisanship, susceptible to such categories; many assume, incorrectly, that Tressell was born into the class to which he certainly later belonged and with which he identified. The notable, if unsurprising, thing in all these appraisals of the novel is the manner in which they unite political and literary categories -- or, at least, strive after such a unity. On the more directly political side, Tressell is not always well-received by socialists. James Young, in his discussion of the hostility to ordinary workers of much of the leadership of socialist movements in the late nineteenth century, finds that "[i]n The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Robert Tressell articulated the anti-working-class prejudices of the S[ocial] D[emocratic] F[ederation] with great brilliance" (p. 25). Young also quotes Stuart Macintyre's statement that: "Indeed, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists only elaborated and improved the literary quality of ... pessimistic proletarian fiction" (p. 26). Ross McKibbin sardonically remarks in a footnote that: "Since this is one of the few Leninist tracts in British socialist literature and is so unsympathetic to the working class the novel's popularity is almost inexplicable" (pp. 34-5).

The novel's harsh criticism of those sections of the working class which it sees as the dupes of bourgeois ideology does not particularly trouble Raymond Williams, though he points out that:

Indeed there are parts of this book which, taken on their own -- which is quite wrong to do, but

analytically you can hypothesize it -- have such savage things to say about so many working-class people, about the general conditions of ignorance and misunderstanding and cruelty, that there is hardly a line between them and a certain kind of reactionary rendering of the working class and working people as irredeemably incapable of improving their own condition. (p. 249)

And Mitchell interprets the fierce satire directed at the working class by a committed socialist as "uncompromising honesty and courage of the criticism levelled at the illusions hampering his class in fulfilling its historical responsibility", and suggests that it is a marker of a new kind of realism:

This approach demonstrates that the exploited workers are strategically no longer on the moral defensive, no longer feel obliged to gloss over their weaknesses and "justify" their class and cause at some abstract court of appeal against the slanders of their enemies. They are now in dialogue with themselves only. (p. 69)

McKibbin's hostile judgment is clearly broadly political in that it convicts Tressell of a reprehensible "Leninism" (identified with vanguardism and anti-workerist politics), and he is not concerned to fully justify it in his note; the judgment, though, is particularly relevant here, as it emerges from a context which is specifically concerned with class attitudes to language. McKibbin's footnote is to a remark that "the change in status of many a Labour leader can be measured by the transformation of his literary style", and he says:

In Robert Tressell's Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, the socialist hero and Tressell-figure "Owen" (notoriously) speaks

received standard English while his non-socialist workmates communicate in various forms of a debased demotic. It is plain, furthermore, that Tressell regarded such speech as a sign of a political incompetent. (p. 34)

In the circumstances it is somewhat ironical that McKibbin seems to accept uncritically that non-"standard" forms of communication can be adequately characterised as "debased demotic", and it is unclear why the novel's differentiation of speech along these lines should be called "notorious" -- I have found no other reference to it outside of Raymond Williams's essay and a remark by H. G. Klaus.⁴ Wim Neetens, in his essay on The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, "Politics, Poetics and the Popular Text", even "presumes", rather hopefully and incorrectly, that "its rendering of working-class speech is ... closer to the linguistic reality than what, for example, Gissing offers us" (p. 87). However, the differentiation is there, and should be looked at in the light of the social significance of the practice in the other literature I have looked at so far -- little of which is, or could be claimed to be, "working-class literature" let alone "socialist" or, portentously, "proletarian revolutionary-democratic".

It is undoubtedly the case that the socialist "hero" of the novel, Owen, shares with the (impersonal) narrator a pattern of English usage which largely conforms to the "standard", although he is an "ordinary" worker, it would seem, in terms of background and life-experience. So too does the other important socialist figure, Barrington, who is specifically shown to be from the upper-middle class. Their fellow-workers, however, have their language represented in a

(not very thorough or consistent) version of the kinds of phonetic and grammatical systems of representation that had been evolved in the 1880s and '90s. We can find these languages clashing in, for example, the descriptions of the impromptu lectures given by Owen and Barrington to the men they work with. Sometimes, with the references to the noise made by an audience that we are shown as being ignorant and in many ways contemptible, such meetings can be seen as representations hardly different in construction from similar situations in Gaskell, Dickens and Gissing. The language of the sympathetic hero is formal, polysyllabic and "standard"; it is the language that conveys the truths Tressell is concerned to express, and stands in contradistinction to the debased and noisily invalid voice of the "philanthropists" which on occasion overwhelms the voice of reason:

Cries of "'Ear, 'ear," and expressions of dissent from the views expressed by the lecturer resounded through the room, nearly everyone speaking at the same time. After a while, when the row had in some measure subsided, Owen resumed:...

"The next division ... stands for those who are engaged in really useful work -- the production of the benefits of civilization -- the necessaries, refinements and comforts of life."

"Hooray!" shouted Philpot, leading off a cheer which was taken up enthusiastically by the crowd, "Hooray! this is where we comes in," he added, nodding his head and winking his goggle eyes at the meeting.

"I wish to call the chairman to horder," said the man on the pail. (pp. 270-1)

Later in the book, at a public meeting called by the Socialists, we are presented with a "mob" which silences the reasonable voice: "when the Socialists came they found the

field ... in the possession of a furious, hostile mob, who refused to allow them to speak" (p. 430).

Clearly the rhetorical strategies here relate closely to those in some undeniably bourgeois fiction we have looked at, and their target is apparently the same -- an ignorant and incoherent working class. The vital difference in the way the text will be received is that socialist theory and propaganda are receiving the benefit of the authorial strategic manipulation rather than being the target. There are two voices of the working class here: one is authoritative in that it uses the received language of social authority, and is related to the language of the narration just as its message is continuous with the narrator's. This voice, traditionally empowered in society and its literature to convey a conservative politics, in this case paradoxically speaks revolutionary socialism. The other working-class voice is essentially the same as that found in Gaskell and Dickens, Gissing and Morrison: it speaks the ignorance and incoherence of the "uneducated" and socially unempowered. It is the opposition and the clash of these voices that give some political critics of the novel the grounds for their accusations that it reveals elitism and contempt for the ordinary worker (that is, it seems, "Leninism"); and this linguistic aspect works in conjunction with the explicit content of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, which is precisely Tressell's anger at substantial sections of the working-class first submitting to an imposed ignorance and then adopting the political language (in the wider sense of language as a synecdoche for political ideas) of their exploiters. We can see, though, that while they adopt the

wider, political language of oppression, it is the proletarian-revolutionary socialists who speak the oppressor's language in its restricted sense.

It is a dangerous procedure, clearly, to use the words of the enemy: recent feminist theory has been obliged to debate this problem in relation to the need to challenge an inherently phallogentric and patriarchal language if oppressed women are to attain to any level of articulate coherence; and even the least idealist strains of discourse theory point convincingly to an inevitable concomitant importation of values accompanying the use of a particular language. We shall have to return to this problem. It is perhaps relevant to note here, though, that Fred Ball in his biography of Tressell, One of the Damned, comments on how Tressell was accepted by his fellow workers in Hastings where he worked as a sign-painter. Ball claims that:

working men ... recognized his superior education and accepted him without any self-consciousness. This is more extraordinary than those who don't know their working classes and who imagine they are uncritically impressed by superior education realize, for they, especially the Tory or apolitical working men, are normally impressed only when the educated mouth the conventional platitudes, and, preferably, speak with educated accents. (p. 118)

If this observation is correct and if Tressell was convinced of its inevitable social truth, his real-life experience of trying to convert his fellow workers might have motivated the language strategies of his novel.

On the descriptive level Tressell can be seen as using most of the devices which, it has been argued, are associated

with a contemptuous denial of the validity of working-class linguistic practices. The attitude to swearing, for example, is close to that of bourgeois writers. Although there is the frequent use of unexpurgated "bloody", other swearwords are censored: "'The next b-r wot interrupts,' cried Philpot, ... 'goes out through the bloody winder!'" (p. 264). To an extent, obviously, censorship is beyond the control of the author and in the hands of publishers and the state. Fred Ball, discussing the publishing history of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, says that in the original abridged edition the editor had "rendered his dialogue more 'illiterate' by adding or omitting aitches. She also cut out a lot of the swearing." (p. 209). (Ball says that he corrected inconsistencies in the phoneticisation as well as general spelling mistakes for his later edition.) But the suggestion that censorship of swearing is at least connived at by Tressell is supported by the presence of that ironical technique that was used by Gissing to such strong effect, where the reporting of a speech containing swearwords is made by the narratorial voice in a heightened, Latinised language which clashes with, discredits and replaces the original voice. Here, for example, Tressell's ironical thrust at the "sacred rights of property" calls upon the resources of a notably "educated" English to strengthen it. Tressell points to the inadequacy of the words used to defend those capitalist rights by replacing the swearwords with a polysyllabic paraphrase:

Nearly everyone had something to say in reprobation of the views suggested by Owen. Harlow, in a brief but powerful speech, bristling with numerous sanguinary references to the bottomless pit,

protested against any interference with the sacred rights of property. (p. 150)

We can retranslate the "sanguinary references to the bottomless pit", of course, as "bloody hell". The coy pedantry is less consistent with Tressell's general tone than it is with Gissing's.

Also, in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, transcription of "uneducated" writing is reminiscent of some of the examples found in bourgeois slum fiction, where the forms of at least some of the "written" words refer directly to spoken speech and are given with the standard narratorial syntactic markers. The joke letter written by the workers to one of their fellows who thought the manager should treat him with civility also points, with intended irony, to the mastery of formal epistolary conventions lacked by the worker-writers:

This note was properly worded, written in a manner suitable for a gentleman like him [i.e., the recipient, Harlow], neatly folded and addressed:

Mr. Harlow Esq.,
c/o Macoroni's Royal Café
till called for.

Mister Harlow,

Dear Sir: Wood you kinely oblige me bi cummin to the paint shop as soon as you can make it convenient as there is a sealin' to be wite-washed hopping this is not trubbling you to much

I remane

Yours respeckfully

Pontius Pilate

(pp. 410-11)

With such deplorable ignorance evident, would the authors of the letter have been able to correctly spell the most

difficult words of the letter -- "Pontius Pilate"? When misspelling "ceiling" would they have remembered to include the apostrophe when they omitted the final "g"? -- the "g" that is also absent from "cummin" but is not forgotten in "trubbling", or remembered the accute accent on "Café" while ignoring so many other punctuation marks?. Would they have coped so well with "convenient" and yet not have been able to manage "by"? This is really rather poor and unconvincing stuff of Tressell's, rather than of the represented workers, and should be acknowledged as such. The narrator's introductory reference to "gentleman" is revealing of the problem Tressell is confronting: he is objecting to the fact that workers will not make a claim to be treated with courtesy, and the irony he uses depends on a perception of the validity of the worker in question being politically correct in demanding to be treated as a "gentleman". Yet, of all social concepts, that of "gentleman" is as far as any from Tressell's socialism, given the centuries of ruling-class accretions to a term originally and always denoting class superiority.

The novel also contains the same phoneticisation of quasi-direct discourse which we have seen in bourgeois literature. In the speech of Grinder at the workers' beano, the marks of distortion, rather strangely, increase markedly over the thirty or so lines given to the report:

Grinder rose to reply on behalf of those included in the toast. He said that it gave him much pleasure to be there and take part in such pleasant proceedings.... That was what he (Grinder) liked to see -- master and men pulling together -- doing their best, and realizing that their interests was identical. (Cheers.) ... They could take it from

him that, if ever the Socialists got the upper hand there would be just a few of the hateful dodgers who would get all the cream, and there would be nothing left but 'ard work for the rest. (Hear, hear.) That's wot hall those hagitators was after: they wanted them (his hearers) to work and keep 'em in idleness. (p. 441)

The progressive distortion here follows the increase in the political offensiveness of the speech, and perhaps the concomitant swelling of Tressell's anger as he writes on. It might simply reflect Tressell's undeniable inconsistency and a lack of rigour in his use of this technique. Undoubtedly, though, we have here all the marks of contempt for a language shown as debased and divergent from what is admirable. But the contemned language is not, in political terms, that of the working class voice: here it is spoken by Grinder, whose name bespeaks his role in the social division of labour. It is not only Grinder who is subjected to this treatment; other employers and exploiters in the novel are shown as speaking in much the same way as Grinder: Owen's rich employer, Rushton, for example, is shown as intellectually contemptible, with an accent that is, according to the by now established conventions, appropriate to intellectual and spiritual inadequacy. In response to a "grave" suggestion from Mr Sweater that "Science is a wonderful thing", Rushton responds:

"Yes: but a lot of it is mere theory, you know," observed Rushton. "Take this idear that the world is round, for instance; I fail to see it! And then they say as Hawstralia is on the other side of the globe, underneath our feet. In my opinion it's ridiculous, because if it was true, wot's to prevent the people droppin' orf?" (pp. 352-3)

Quite apart from the orthographic distortions, this is effective satire, perhaps, but hardly subtle or even very convincing. The other "Brigands", the political and economic rulers of Mugsborough, are all treated in this way, are all shown as speaking with the same inadequate, divergent non-"standard" English -- and all are appallingly ignorant (though notably competent at making money). In looking for "realist" justification for Tressell representing the ruling class in this way, it would be plausible to argue that these are self-made men, with origins in the working class, although there is no evidence in the novel that the author wants to make a substantial political point about the social origins of the employers. But counter-arguments as to plausibility could be advanced, and it would be unlikely to be a profitable search for an adequate account in terms of naturalism. We must accept that the representatives of the ruling class we are shown believe in such things as the flatness of the earth, and express their beliefs in the "appropriate" language of the "uneducated".

The line of linguistic division in the novel is clear: it is only the socialist revolutionaries, whether from a working-class or a bourgeois background, who speak the language that almost all other novels of the time accept as the language proper to the ruling class and restrict to the narrator and upper-class characters. Is this a revolutionary procedure? It is undoubtedly an unusual one and, to my knowledge, virtually unprecedented, although there is a small instance in Constance Howell's A More Excellent Way (1888) which somewhat similarly reveals the "ignorance" of the ruling class through a word shown to be mispronounced: Howell

is clearly sympathetic to socialism and hostile to religion as a reactionary social force, and in this passage she adds to the disparagement of the claims of a lecturer by expressing his ignorance of genuine socialism through his faulty (but not specifically class-linked) pronunciation:

The title of the lecture was "Christianity and Socialism," and the speaker -- a very young man -- endeavoured to prove that Jesus Christ was the best Socialist (which, by the way, he pronounced Soshualist) the world had ever known. (p. 240)

The few workers who appear in A More Excellent Way have their speech phoneticised only to a very small degree, but this is not uncommon for many writers who are politically sympathetic to the working class: Margaret Harkness, for example, the author (under the pseudonym John Law) of A City Girl and a few other novels around the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, does similarly.

The pattern in Tressell's case, however, is much more developed than these earlier hints in its direction. Again, is it a procedure that is revolutionary on a social level as well as on a literary one? Do we have in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists a subversive overturning of literary conventions to mirror the wished-for overthrow of exploitative social practices? Whether or not this is the case, it is important to keep in mind Williams's warning against the abstraction of only certain elements from the novel with the effect of revealing a reactionary rendering of working-class people. Abstractly analysed, Tressell's linguistic satire is reactionary, or conservative at least,

linking directly as it does to the bourgeois tradition I have been examining.

Williams does deal briefly with the use of the "orthography of the uneducated" in the novel. He seems to some extent disturbed by it, although he begins his discussion of the question by claiming, with wider reference than just orthography, that "there is no finer representation, anywhere in English writing, of a certain rough-edged, mocking, give-and-take conversation between workmen and mates" (p. 254). After showing generally some of the significance of orthographic contortions, Williams points out that Tressell uses this technique for the Brigands -- the town councillors and small employers -- in order to demonstrate their ignorance, and that

he uses it also in a kind of counterpoint between people who have got some sense and people who haven't.... Compare, for example, the way Owen and his family speak to each other, usually in standard orthography, and the way the men speak to each other at work, in ways carefully indicated by the distorted spelling. (p. 255)

Williams illustrates this with a (slightly misquoted) example from the chapter "The Great Oration", where the following exchange (here quoted from the novel) occurs between Barrington and the sycophantic "philanthropist" Crass:

"And there's another thing I objects to," said Crass. "And that's all this 'ere talk about hignorance: wot about all the money wots spent every year for edication?"

"You should rather say -- 'What about all the money that's wasted on education?' What can be more brutal and senseless than trying to 'educate' a poor little, hungry, ill-clad child?" (p. 475)

It is, in orthographic terms, the sort of exchange seen frequently in the slum novels, with the content of a proposition reproved not only by a counter-proposition but also by the counter-proposition implicitly "correcting" the linguistic "inadequacies" of the original. So that, in this extract, "wot" becomes "what", "wots" becomes "that's", and "edication" becomes "education" in Barrington's parallel response. The "what"/"wot" opposition, to which Williams draws attention, is also almost completely a purely visual, literary, sign. As Williams says:

In fact everyone says W O T, but this is a device for distinction between someone who knows what he is talking about, and for him you spell W H A T, and someone who doesn't know what he's talking about, and for him you spell W O T. (p. 255)

Williams is clearly correct in stressing that the distinction between the two dominant speech-patterns of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists is one intended primarily in terms of knowledge and ignorance rather than terms of class. The novel leaves no doubt as to where its class-sympathies lie -- however its "Leninism" may be interpreted. There are no characters in the novel who should unquestionably be represented as speaking "standard" English on purely class grounds -- the priests, capitalists and politicians represented could, as I suggested, have plausibly come originally from the working class and retained the accents marking those origins. What unites the speakers of "ungrammatical", non-"standard" English is their stupidity and cupidity. Those who are politically sympathetic to the author's political beliefs speak the language we are usually

expected to see as proper to the "educated class", to the "cultured", the "civilised" -- to everything that the working class is generally supposed not to be. If there had been examples of the unquestionably "cultivated" and "educated" bourgeoisie represented (those who didn't doubt, for example, that the world is not flat, and there probably are some) Tressell's scheme of distinction would surely have failed, unless he introduced a third pattern of speech into his novel, indicating a divergence in another direction from the "standard", which represents intelligence and decency. (Marking language "upward" to show a particularly upper-class accent is, as I suggested in Chapter One, rarely used in novels.

We are left with a problem, surely, if we do not wish to condemn Tressell's use of phoneticisation to show a degraded intelligence and political consciousness. If other, bourgeois, writers are condemned for it, it should not be sufficient for socialists to allow Tressell's political acceptability (if they do accept his politics) to justify the practice. For those who do not accept the politics, like Young and McKibbin, the practice can show Tressell to be accepting the hierarchies, prejudices and arrogance of the ruling class and condemning the working class in those terms -- which is included in the politics they seem to be miscalling "Leninism". Williams does not really get out of the problem. After establishing that the contrast presented in the novel is made in terms of ignorance, on the one hand, and of intelligent awareness, on the other, his comment is brief:

This kind of contrast is entwined with the challenge of the book. It is part of a textual strategy which is not necessarily entirely conscious but which is so regular that it can't be accidental. It is in one sense repeating a standard prejudice of English middle-class writing, but within a broader strategy which is the whole point of the book.... It is terrible ... to be vulnerable not only to propaganda and the self-justifications of others who have an interest in perpetuating ignorance, but to an ignorance that gets built in, inside people themselves; an ignorance that becomes their commonsense. (pp. 255-6)

The built-in ignorance seems to be represented by the "orthography of the uneducated" for Williams. This would make one particular kind of sense if understood in the terms of an understanding of language and society different from that generally advanced by Williams (most fully and explicitly in Marxism and Literature). For it seems implicitly and uncritically to accept that there is a fixity of meaning attached to speech-patterns -- and attached, moreover, by the ruling class: "standard" language represents good sense; languages that "deviate" from the "standard" represent deviation from good sense. Then all one can do is re-distribute the labels among their objects. The "real", intelligent, class-conscious, socialist workers should be represented as speaking the "standard"; conservative forces should be represented as speaking "dialect".

But a comprehension of language as dynamically related to history suggests that politics and life do not happen like that, in an abstract world. Tressell's strategy can be interpreted as subversive in its intention. His patterns of speech corresponding to sense and nonsense are attached to social forces in a way that reverses the usual prejudices.

But it is these usual prejudices -- overwhelmingly dominant socially -- that give the structural possibility for Tressell's strategy of subversion. The ruling class had given its own language the universalised status of culture, civilisation, intelligence, education, in contradistinction to the "deviant" language of the working class, which it stigmatised and showed as proper to ignorance, violence and political irresponsibility. Tressell's is at best a compromised half-victory over the pattern, one which is made essentially in ruling-class terms and which leaves the superior forces available to the ruling class intact to obliterate his temporary subversion. For it leaves intact the "standard" language's status as the universal language of political and social validity. The "broader strategy" of which Williams speaks is undoubtedly important for the way the book is read. We saw that, even in regard to the liberalism of Rook's Hooligan Nights compared with the politics of Gissing, the politics expressed through various means in a novel can affect the way a particular tactic -- like phoneticisation -- is received. But a text does not exist alone with its readers; it cannot easily achieve a victory over well-established social and literary conventions and prejudices. Demonstrably, in the real world, the "standard" language is the language of the ruling class, just as what Tressell has endorsed as the language of ignorance remains concretely the language of all those men and women who, as he so passionately demanded, should seek their own liberation.

In this respect The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists contains a fault-line that is ultimately profoundly

conservative. It has been argued by some critics that this is a work which in some ways breaks the bounds of the novel form as it was when Tressell appropriated it for his political purposes.⁵ But perhaps the form of the novel is, or some aspects of it are, more tenaciously compelling than at first appears likely in such an amorphous package as "the novel". Perhaps those aspects are fully implicated in wider ideologically saturated structures -- like language. Jack Mitchell declares, without evidencing consciousness of a need to justify his statement, that "[c]onquest of the longer imaginative prose genres is part and parcel of the general coming of age of the working class" (p. 67). Tressell's novel, he says, "is the most profound and universal incarnation in our literature of [the] new self-assurance, new Humanism, new sensibility, new aesthetic" of the working class (p. 68). The danger in the Stalinist-reformist politics which underlie Mitchell's rhetoric and his commitment to "socialist realism" is that, too easily, "conquest" of bourgeois structures becomes a dishonest shorthand for "incorporation within"; it is a politics which actually seeks, in literature as in society, only contentual change and not a comprehensive revolution in form. Then we are perhaps left with Ross McKibbin's conclusion to his accusation that Tressell is participating in a pessimistic appraisal of the working class. It is a bitter and rather vicious suggestion made by McKibbin which deserves refutation, but it is not unfair to raise it in connexion with The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists: "The apparently necessary expression of working-class politics through bourgeois forms of speech has, of course, always preoccupied

Marxist leaders" (p. 35). Expressing a consciously revolutionary politics through bourgeois forms (of language and of literature) is precisely what The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists does. It does, perhaps, successfully challenge the novel form in ways I have not discussed, but at least one of the conventions Tressell inherited, adopted or "conquered" -- the representation of working-class speech -- is one with extensive roots in a total system of exploitation and degradation. And the novel leaves those roots intact.

The conflict of languages in The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists is a marker of the class conflict the novel is concerned to elucidate. Working-class control of meaning is made ambiguous, though, through the simple appropriation in one strictly delimited space -- this novel itself -- of the language and structures of bourgeois power; there is no wider revolutionary transformation guaranteeing the gesture. The two class languages remain in conflict, though the conflict, in linguistic terms, is somewhat confused by Tressell's reattribution of the values to be attached to the adversaries. In Nevinson's Neighbours of Ours there seems to be no struggle between class languages: uniquely, for its time (as far as I have been able to ascertain) it is offered as an account of everyday life in the working-class London slums by a member of the community it describes, who is not distinguished in any significant way from that community. The narrator is a minor character, and only present as an important participant in a few of the tales he tells. The

language of the narration is the language of the characters: narrator and subjects are all represented as Cockney speakers most markedly through the use of the orthographic distortions that for Tressell, and for bourgeois writers, had signified a generalised inadequacy and ignorance. Where some other writers had given substantial narrative tasks to a working-class character, the usual purpose was precisely to reveal ignorance and inadequacy, and there was a "standard"-English-speaking narrator (either personal or universal) in ultimate control of the presented text. In Neighbours of Ours this is not the case, and the result is a remarkable coherence, and a genuine sense that the community is speaking for itself, without the aid of a sympathetic (or otherwise) interpreter, even without the anonymous, apparently neutral narrator -- in contrasting "standard" English -- that an earlier naturalism had deployed. (Nevinson did not repeat this practice in his second work of fiction, In the Valley of Tophet (1896), which is concerned with working-class life in the Midlands. This further collection of short stories has the usual "standard"-English narrator, with the characters' speech phoneticised, though not as intensively marked as in Neighbours of Ours.)

In Neighbours of Ours the sense of the community speaking for itself begins to be conveyed by the first word of the novel, in which the narrator subsumes himself in the first-person plural which marks collective possession.⁶ These are the opening lines:

We used to call 'im Victoria Park, or just Parky for short, 'cos 'e was real fond of the country, was Tom Brier. 'E was bigger nor what I was, as was likely, being older; but some'ow 'e'd took a

wonderful fancy for me, through me givin' nuts to 'is next youngest sister, as was a natural, and was called by some the Innercent and by others the Imbercyle, just accordin' to their ways of lookin' at 'er, whether agreeable or not. (p. 1)

It is clear already, though, that this should be taken as spoken, rather than written, language. Apart from the indications of accent, the rhythms, lengthy sentences, colloquialisms and general lack of any kind of formality of presentation mark it as a representation of oral speech. There is therefore a close unity between the narration and the passages of quoted speech:

I was just spittin' on the pavement to make a block-'ole for a game o' cricket with my little brother, 'e 'avin' nicked a ball from somewhere, and made a bat out of a bit o' palin', when up comes Parky, and 'e says to me:

"What, Jacko! What price a bit of 'oppin'?"
 "Ger on!" says I, "d'yer think I'm goin' to demean myself?" that bein' what old Spotter always says when 'e gets an offer of reg'lar work. (p. 6)

Generally, as can be seen here, the orthographic distortions are meaningful, and successful, in conveying the sounds and rhythms of the language. There are no whimsical or arbitrary perversions there merely to assert a difference which does not exist in the sound: so that "what" and "when" are allowed to retain their aitches, and "says" is not meaninglessly transcribed as "sez". There are, certainly, inconsistencies in Nevinson's phonetic system. For example, "of" usually loses its final consonant, but sometimes does not in identical phonic circumstances. The final "d" of some words is fairly randomly scattered: "and" is usually untampered with, but the narrator speaks of "gran'fathers and

gran'mothers". P. J. Keating remarks, in his discussion of the novel in The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, that "while the Cockney dialect [is] successful in small bursts, [it] is not handled with sufficient imagination to carry the more ambitious spells of narrative" (p. 205), but it is difficult to argue with Keating against this judgment, as I would wish to do, as he does not expand on or justify this assertion.

The structure of the stories also fits in with the idea of orality. After the opening paragraph, for example, there is a paragraph which is clearly a digression, and the main story is resumed with: "Well, now, as I was sayin'..." (p. 2). One of the chapters -- "The St. George of Rochester" -- is largely given over to the narration of another character, who relates the tale of his memories to his sick-bed visitors. And if we accept for the moment, hypothetically, that "standard" written English possesses a genuine status as neutral, there is little alternative other than to move in the direction of transcribed speech when the authorial aim is to insist upon showing the working-class unity of narrator and fictional subjects. In terms of representation here, we have something structurally similar to what was seen in Wakeman's Autobiography of a Charwoman, except for the crucial framing passages in that novel; the defining characteristic of Neighbours of Ours is the independence of the narrator from the cultural centre -- including independence from "standard" English. Even where quoted speakers in the novel would undoubtedly use "standard" English speech, such as the magistrate in "In the Spring", they are "quoted" by the narrator in the narrator's own

accent, although the polysyllables and grammar of a language proper to the "educated" magistracy are retained.

The Cockney linguistic unity seems to me to contribute in a major way to what Keating calls the "sense of a culturally integrated community life" in Neighbours of Ours (p. 202). But Keating's admiration for the book is limited, and he says that it "would be a mistake to make too much of [it]" (p. 206), treating it merely as an example of the writings of the Cockney School, which is primarily characterised by the sense of community and of "cockneyism". He writes that:

Nevinson's characters are first and foremost cockneys. They are not defined in terms of debased qualities or even of class (although they do, of course, all belong to the same class), and their speech and behaviour patterns are not automatically compared with some absolute standard determined by the author. While making allowance for the natural expression of individuality, Nevinson's characters speak the same dialect, share a similar sense of humour, understand, though not necessarily approve of, their friends' behaviour, and exhibit a common attitude to life in general and English society in particular. The cockney is no longer a stock comic character (as he is in most early and mid-Victorian fiction) nor a tragic type (as he is in Gissing and Morrison) but a regional type with personal and group characteristics as pronounced as those of the Scotchman, Irishman or Welshman. (p. 206)

This analysis contains much which is perceptive. But why should Keating decide that the Cockney is shown as a "regional type" (in contradistinction to the earlier stock types) rather than a class type, even though he has noted that the characters are, "of course", from one class? When the boundaries of class and region coincide, as they do in

the case of Cockney, this decision is plausible, if not convincing or useful. With language usage, however, being such a crucial determinant of both region and class (even if we -- wrongly -- abstract class considerations from an understanding of regionality) it is a useful corrective to remember that it is precisely the shared Cockney accent that has placed the Cockney on a social class scale, rather than a regional one. That "the Scotchman" or the Cockney has regional attributes divorced from class position is unlikely.

But, more importantly, Keating effectively brushes aside the most radical innovation in Neighbours of Ours: the narrator whose language is one with that of the other characters. If one is alert to the realities of class division expressed in linguistic terms this can be recognised as a vitally fundamental and far-reaching difference between Neighbours of Ours and the works of other Cockney School writers like Pugh, Rook and Pett Ridge. Noting that all of the stories "are narrated by one of the cockney participants", Keating merely remarks that: "This method enabled Nevinson to establish a central working-class viewpoint just as Kipling had done in Barrack Room Ballads" (p. 200). The comparison with Kipling is misleading. First, we should remember, the linguistic strategy in Kipling is frequently concerned to present the Cockney as, certainly someone with an independent viewpoint, but also as divergent in the direction of "uneducatedness"; the controlling viewpoint is that of a "standard English" speaker who introduces the collection of poems with a poem in a heightened, Latinised, "extreme" version of "standard English", and who establishes a central purpose of his

contorted orthography by such phonetically meaningless and conventional phoneticisations as "wot" and the typical manipulation of aspirates. Secondly, Kipling's poems are fairly short lyrics, the lyric being a genre which has always allowed for a statement from an alternative fictive viewpoint, a speaker clearly distinct from the poet; each of Kipling's poems has a single speaker, and there is no language-controlling narrator outside of that speaker. To an extent Kipling does "establish a central working-class viewpoint" in his Ballads, certainly more than in any of his short stories, but it is of a different kind from that in Neighbours of Ours, much more temporary and less deeply-rooted than what Nevinson achieves.

Nevinson's book is probably unique for its time in its working-class single-voicedness. But it cannot be said to have solved the problem of presenting the voice of the working class as valid and articulate in a society in which that voice is seen as neither of those things. This is because the problem is a social one, not simply a literary one. Despite the huge achievement of the book in presenting a working-class community seen with a working-class consciousness the use of phonetic transcription of non-"standard" speech acts against it, and points directly to the central problem: that the total context of a literary work is operative, with its full meaning achieved only in the social process of which the empirical text is a part. Although the narrator's speech in Neighbours of Ours is not set against that of any character, working-class speech as such is marked off as deviant, is recognised as requiring orthographic alteration. The systems remain unchallenged;

"standard English" retains its place, and so does the class structure which gives it meaning. Although the working class has won its small place in fiction and has, in an even smaller way, become the originating subject of fiction, its language remains alien, a foreign presence within fiction.

This, it seems to me, is the simple conclusion to the observation of the phonetic aspect of the representation of the working class in bourgeois literature -- remembering that all the literature of bourgeois society, even literature like The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists which aims to participate in building the revolution, is marked by that society: so long as language remains part of a wider class struggle, and so long as the bourgeoisie is the ruling class, the language of the working class will be understood and experienced as deviant and defective. Which is certainly not to say that there should be no struggle to insist that it is not so: the working class must combat the direct ideological usefulness to structures of oppression of liberal linguists asserting the superiority of "educated" English; and it must confront other more insidious, though better-intentioned, pessimistic views on the inadequacies of workers' language.⁷ More importantly, it must reclaim its history and its very identity from those who steal it, seeking to deny that there is a language of class.

Defending the notion of class language against those like Gareth Steadman Jones who deny it and adduce press accounts of Chartist meetings as evidence, Dorothy Thompson

makes a point about the representation of working-class language in Chartist times, which is relevant to the conclusions of this study:

The radical journals made innovations in style and content, but they rewrote speeches and contributions from demotic into standard English, for example, and for reasons of style or to avoid persecution, ironed out militant, local, blasphemous and overtly idiomatic references -- as can occasionally be seen by comparing police reports of speeches with those printed in Chartist journals. (pp. 238-9)

The representation of Chartist political language, Thompson is suggesting, depoliticised it in a very real way which allows historians to deny that it ever was possessed of a real political class content.

Clearly, to deny the language of the working class its representation as such, to convert it into the language of the ruling class -- "standard English" -- does not solve the problem arising when, represented with some degree of mimetic accuracy, it necessarily appears as deviant and deficient. A work such as Neighbours of Ours would not convey the truths it does if it did not also carry, as I have argued, the implied reference to a central linguistic norm from which it must deviate to tell those truths. Admittedly it is important to most of the literature I have examined that its readership was, overwhelmingly, not from the working class, and imported this norm directly and at least semi-consciously into the text -- as it was invited to do by the author. But, as The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists reveals, and as the novel's anti-"Leninist" critics affirm, social norms are impossible to ignore, and difficult to confront. Writers of fiction

about the working class, and working-class autobiographers, (leaving aside directly political genres of writing), have a difficult choice in representing working-class language: most serious writers nowadays tend not to use the phonetic systems developed in the 1880s and 1890s: writers like David Storey and Alan Sillitoe generally indicate the non-"standard" grammar of working-class characters, but do not suggest that standard orthography is not a proper means of representing non-"standard" accents. In Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, for example, Sillitoe uses very little phonetic representation of non-"standard" pronunciation, though the narration occasionally refers to a character's accent:

[Arthur] would yell back at the top of his voice: "I'm going downtown to get Robboe's rubbers!" -- in his broad, deliberately brutalised Robin Hood accent that brought screams of laughter from the women, and guffaws from the men. (p. 41)

It is possible that the lack of accent indicators imposes a limitation on the representation of characters, who will tend to be absorbed into whatever accent the reader reads in.

In the nineteenth century the problem of "choosing" a language in which to write also obtained for working-class autobiographers. David Vincent's study of these writers, Bread, Knowledge and Freedom, recognises the significance of the language-choice they make:

In general, the autobiographies of the working-class readers are weakened by their author's hesitancy about language. Almost all were written in standard English and very few succeeded in conveying the vitality of the speech forms which contained so much of their experience.... There is a major division between the handful of dialect manuscript memoirs of men who had read very little,

and the majority of published works by self-educated men, who, with a few notable exceptions, kept the speech forms of their communities very much at arm's length. The dialect autobiographies gain in vigour and directness of expression, but lack the range of experience and insight which the readers possess. (p. 193)

There is here, perhaps, as Alf Louvre suggests, "a kind of pastoral longing -- for the use of the colloquial, the regional (the dialect?) language of the working-class community, for the inherited 'oral tradition'" (p. 26). But it is also, surely, a genuine recognition that something is lost when a class is forced to speak in a language that is not its own; and this is not necessarily a pessimistic conclusion. It is a recognition that language is a social phenomenon, experienced socially.

Not all modern novelists have come to terms with the conflict of languages in the way that Sillitoe and Storey have (and poets frequently feel free to use "dialect" in their poems). Some fiction-writers confront the problem in a way that is close to Nevinson's in Neighbours of Ours -- and which, like Nevinson's, inevitably leave the language of narration marked as "dialect". Earl Lovelace, for example, in The Wine of our Astonishment has his character-narrator using the same Trinidadian dialect as the other characters; here it is primarily a question of grammar and, to a lesser extent, lexis being used in such a way as to affirm the speech-rhythms of Trinidadian English. And, in an interview with Living Marxism, James Kelman makes it clear that his desire in The Burn to resist the claims of "standard English"

to be superior to working-class Scottish English is a political decision:

Allowing working-class speech, taken out of inverted commas, to dominate the prose is Kelman's response to the unspoken traditions of English literature, where the power of everyday speech is always subordinate to an omniscient narrator. "There's not a judgment from within the narrative form itself, whereas in most English literature there's a judgment from within the narrative, in terms of language for instance -- that this person's language isn't as good as this person's and therefore that person's culture is inferior to this culture, which is the culture of the authorial God-voice, 'standard English', which is usually the counterpoint for everything to be evaluated from." (p. 41)

In fact, however, the short stories of Kelman's collection do contain both "standard" and non-"standard" variants. "Real Stories", for example, contains no direct speech and the narration, though notably close to "everyday speech", is basically in "standard English": whereas frequently the narration of the stories uses formations like "couldni", "wouldni" and "wasni", here we have "couldnt", "wouldnt" and "wasnt" (p. 157) (like Shaw, Kelman makes little use of apostrophes to mark elisions). In many of Kelman's stories omniscient narration, which is vestigially there in "Real Stories" and "Unlucky", for example, tends to disappear and be replaced or overwhelmed by the quasi-direct discourse of a central character. The lack of quotation marks for direct speech means that the boundaries between direct and quasi-direct speech get blurred as much as those between quasi-direct and the narration. In the last few pages of

"Unlucky" the "external" narration and the quasi-direct discourse are almost inextricably intertwined:

Lecky had crouched and now he stood perfectly still and there were footsteps. It was a polis standing in from the front doorway wearing one of these big fucking black coats; funny how they always fucking wore them. Lecky flashed the sliver of glass in his right hand. Dont come fucking near, he said, or I'll cut your face.

The polis watched him. Then disappeared. Away for handers. Them and their fucking handers they always had fucking handers, you never knew how many there were going to be, dirty bastards.

There is, it will be observed, no longer any need for censorship of working-class swearing. Kelman does not try, as Nevinson did, to indicate as many "peculiarities" of pronunciation as readability would permit; he does, though, achieve an equally remarkable degree of unity of language in a prose that uses many tactics and much skill to avoid "a judgement from within the narrative" and assert the powers of "everyday speech". But to an extent the problem remains: the example of Kelman, and it is true of Lovelace too, suggests that it is only by giving the task of narration to a character within the fiction, and by hugely developing the "oral" qualities of the whole, that the heavy weight of "standard written English" can be avoided. It is a text-bound, and a temporary, solution to a problem that remains social, demanding a political and social realignment of the power relations within language, as within society.

Language is not a prison house; it is a part of the prison's fabric, socially constructed and subject to social destruction and reconstruction. It has been the theoretical underpinning of these chapters that language usage acquires its significance socially; there is a social struggle over signifiers and signifieds. The practices I have examined did not exist before, beyond, after or in any way outside of the concrete historical actions of the women and men engaged in social struggle. They were a part of that struggle, expressive of it and engaged in it.

I have tried to show the marks of class struggle as evidenced in one aspect of literary representation of the working class. But to speak of class struggle (represented by class languages) within any single text is probably misleading. A remark of Bakhtin's, made in a different context, is relevant here:

Every struggle between two voices within a single discourse for possession or dominance in that discourse is decided in advance, it only appears to be a struggle; all fully signifying authorial interpretations are sooner or later gathered together in a single speech center and a single consciousness; all accents are gathered together in a single voice. (p. 204)

We have, everywhere in bourgeois fiction, the marks of class struggle, but they are only the signs of power, the challenge to which is being made elsewhere.

NOTES

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Ridge is part of what P. J. Keating usefully distinguishes as the "Cockney School". As opposed to writers influenced by Kipling's "Record of Badalia Herodsfoot", who "painted a spiritually cramped, narrow, and one-sided picture of working-class life", the Cockney School writers gave "a more optimistic, happy and culturally inclusive portrait" (The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, p. 199)

2. "The Ragged-Arsed Philanthropists", p. 254. In The Long Revolution, where Williams first used the phrase, he says:

It has been one of the principal amusements of the English middle-class to record the hideousness of people who say orf, or wot, even though these can spell the standard pronunciations. The error consists in supposing that the ordinary spelling indicates how proper people speak. (p. 245)

3. For example, Arthur St John Adcock's story "In the Image of God" (East End Idylls) refers in the narration to the characters as "'Melia" and "Enry" (the latter without the usual apostrophe to replace the missing aspirate); Clarence Rook's The Hooligan Nights has "Emmamarier"; one of Morrison's characters "Lizerunt" (Elizabeth Hunt) gives her names to one of the Tales of Mean Streets. Walter Besant, uses little phoneticisation in Children of Gibeon but the working-class characters are invariably shown as calling Rhoda "Rhoder".

4. Thomas Hardy was aware of the problem of the reader's accent intervening, though with regard to a different accent. In the Preface to The Mayor of Casterbridge he writes that:

Objections have been raised to the Scotch language of Mr. Farfrae, the second character; and one of his fellowcountrymen went so far as to declare that men beyond the Tweed did not and never would say "warrld," "cannet," "advairrtisement," and so on. As this gentleman's pronunciation in correcting me seemed to my Southern ear an exact repetition of what my spelling implied, I was not struck with the truth of his remark, and somehow we did not get any forwarder in the matter. It must be remembered that

the Scotchmen of the tale is represented not as he would appear to other Scotchmen, but as he would appear to people of outer regions. Moreover, no attempt is made herein to reproduce his entire pronunciation phonetically, any more than that of the Wessex speakers. (p. vi)

And Charlotte Bronte wished to revise the proofs for the second edition of her sister's Wuthering Heights because "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 Southerners must find it unintelligible; and thus one of the most graphic characters in the book is lost on them" (quoted by Susan B. Smith, n. 3, p. 645).

5. See, for example, Darko Suvin's "The Social Addressees of Victorian Fiction", which includes a bibliography of other significant discussions of the subject.

6. For a discussion of Bronte's representation of speech in Shirley see the article by Susan B. Smith. Smith remarks that the novel's characters:

can be easily grouped according to the particular kind of dialect they use. There are minor characters ... whose accents suggest a provincialism that sets them apart as outsiders who cannot come to terms with the idiosyncracies of Yorkshire society. A second group, primarily made up of native Yorkshire speakers, uses a broad West Yorkshire dialect that reflects their honest, hard-working approach to life. A third group is composed of middle-class characters whose dialect is not consistently represented orthographically; frequently the narrator offers us commentary about the sound of their voices and their style of language. A fourth group is bidialectal. These characters ... speak Yorkshire when the occasion demands it, but use a generalized middle-class dialect when placed with middle-class peers. The narrator belongs to this last group, and as such, she crosses all of the dialect boundaries of the novel. By turns she uses Yorkshire words and phrases, French expressions, and of course, her educated middle-class voice. (p. 638)

7. See, for example, G. L. Brook, Varieties of English, especially pp. 18-25, and Norman Page, pp. 6-22. Page's

discussion includes a look at some contrary views on the closeness of fictional and real speech, views which he dismisses.

8. Unless indicated otherwise all references to Crowley are to this very useful account of the rise and role of "standard English".

9. The "Newbolt Report" refers to a British Government publication of 1921, The Teaching of English in England: Being the Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the President of the Board of Education to Enquire into the Position of English in the Educational system. Brian Doyle's English and Englishness and Noel King's "The Teacher must Exist before the Pupil" both contain useful discussions of the Report as well as references to other contributions to the recent debate over its significance.

10. In Crowley's "Bakhtin and the History of the Language" he discusses this question in relation to the theories of both Mikhail Bakhtin and Antonio Gramsci. Crowley suggests that "Gramsci's stress on the importance of language in the formation of cultural hegemony is essentially a political theorisation of Bakhtin's more elliptical assertions" (p. 83).

11. Hardy's use of working-class/regional dialects is interesting, as is the effect of formal education on his own use of language: he tends to use language with the conspicuous consumption of the newly rich. See Williams's discussion of this in the chapter on Hardy in The Country and the City. Another useful discussion of Hardy's use of language is G. Glen Wickens's "Victorian Theories of Language and Tess of the d'Urbervilles".

12. Davies's insight is a valuable one in accounting for such characters as Lizerunt and Clem Peckover (in Gissing's The Nether World) and the numerous degraded women in slum fiction, but as a general rule it is inadequate. The number of women that are victims of male violence (Kipling's Badalia Herodsfoot and Pennyloaf Candy in The Nether World, for example) can surely not be read as embodiments of bourgeois anxiety about the working class, but relate more complexly to gender and class discourses. Further, Badalia is not unique as a working class female character who is neither silent nor passive and yet receives a great deal of the author's sympathy. (This is certainly not to assert that she is not the product of a gendered and class-based discourse.)

13. G. K. Chesterton in "Slum Novelists and the Slums" and Jane Findlater in "The Slum Movement in Fiction", for

example, use this epithet. H. D. Traill speaks of the fiction as "New Realism", in "The New Fiction".

14. Some of the works referred to covering this period in British working-class history are: Cole and Postgate's The Common People, Carol Dyhouse's "The Condition of England 1860-1900", Eric Hobsbawm's Industry and Empire and various essays in Workers: Worlds of Labour, Eric Hopkins's A Social History of the English Working Classes, G. S. Jones's Outcast London and Languages of Class, Ross McKibbin's The Ideologies of Class, Henry Pelling's The Origins of the Labour Party, Richard Price's Labour in British Society and James Young's Socialism and the English Working Class.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. These are the novels which Raymond Williams in Culture and Society calls the "industrial novels", and which some critics refer to as the "condition-of-England novels": Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life (1848) and North and South (1855) (together with some comparable short stories), Charles Dickens's Hard Times (1854), Charles Kingsley's Alton Locke: Tailor and Poet (1850), Benjamin Disraeli's Coningsby (1844) and Sybil (1845). Williams includes George Eliot's Felix Holt, the Radical, although it was published significantly later, in 1866, and would be better considered separately. Prior to this group of novels, the industrial working class appears in some of Hannah More's fictional Cheap Repository Tracts, dating from the end of the eighteenth century, and in some short narratives by Harriet Martineau, such as "The Rioters" (1827) and "A Manchester Strike" (1832); also some short fiction by Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna as well as her Helen Fleetwood (1839-40) which Ivanka Kovacevic describes as "the first English novel to be entirely concerned with the lives of industrial workers" (p. 303).

2. The Chartist movement did, in fact, produce, according to Martha Vicinus, "an outpouring of speeches, essays, prison letters, dialogues, short stories, novels, songs, lyrical poems, epics" ("Chartist Fiction and the Development of a Class-Based Literature", p. 7). The exclusion of this material evidence of the working-class voice from the tradition of English writing, its problems, characteristics, relationships with bourgeois forms, successes and failures, are part of a large subject which cannot be treated here, where we are looking at the dominant tradition.

3. In "Carlyle and Mary Barton: Problems of Utterance", Gillian Beer discusses some aspects of the question of silence. The emphasis of her paper is different from mine, but I am indebted to it at some points in this chapter.

4. See the excellent discussion of this struggle of the bourgeois radicals in Olivia Smith's The Politics of Language 1791-1819, especially Chapter 1, "The Problem". Class struggle was explicitly at the centre of linguistic theorization in the decades around 1800. In the 1790s, says Smith:

Radicals had the difficult task of not only justifying the capabilities of the disenfranchised, but also of redefining the nature of language. The literary experimentation of Thomas Paine, William Cobbett, and lesser-known writers accompanied the writing of new theories of language and new grammars. These writers recognized the centrality of language to their political arguments. Thomas Spense, a self-educated writer often considered to be the first socialist, devised a phonetic alphabet and wrote a dictionary for his new variant of English. William Cobbett wrote a grammar to teach the self-educated how to participate in public life. William Hone, in his self-defence for blasphemous libel, argued with his judge about the nature of language. (p. vii)

5. Interestingly, Smith shows how the "seemingly neutral, moral language of scripture" had played an important role in the bourgeois radicals' assertion of their ability to speak and write, and how it influenced their own writings, and how they attempted to derive authority for the vernacular from this invocation.

6. As Norman Page notes, Gaskell's "use of dialect drew on the experience of many years. Not only had she lived for more than twenty years in Manchester, but her husband had a scholarly interest in dialectology and had written two lectures on the Lancashire dialect which were subsequently reprinted in the fifth edition of Mary Barton" (p. 64).

7. For analyses of these aspects of Mary Barton, which cannot be dealt with here in any detail, see, for example, Gallagher's The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction, Stephen Gill's introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel and Angus Easson's Elizabeth Gaskell.

8. On this issue and on the influence of French naturalism in England see William C. Frierson's The English Novel in Transition 1885-1940.

9. See Gareth Steadman Jones's devaluation of Chartism as a working-class political movement, in his essay on "The Language of Chartism" in Languages of Class.

10. It is not my intention to argue about the noise levels of socialist meetings in the 1880s and 90s, or whether Gissing was "historically justified" in his representations of them as such and was reflecting the reality of the meetings he observed. But it should be noted that there are accounts of such meetings which speak of the silence there -- a silence connoting the absorption of revolutionary teaching rather than the absence of political language: Stephen Yeo quotes a contemporary account from the Workman's Times of a reading of Morris's News from Nowhere:

Quite a religious feeling seemed to pervade the hall, and you could have heard the proverbial pin drop while Comrade Glasier was reading some of the passages from the book. Not that the meetings have been noisy hitherto, but the silence at the last one was so still and death-like that it shows a wonderful power in the book. (p. 32)

11. There is a variation of such analysis in The Town Traveller:

It was a habit of hers to imply a weighty opinion by suddenly breaking off; a form of speech known to the grammarians by a name which would have astonished Mrs. Clover. Few women of her class are prone to this kind of emphasis. (p. 18)

12. The use in this context of imagery drawn from the British colonizing experience is frequent. William Booth's In Darkest England and the Way Out (1890) fully exploits the comparison between the East End and 'Darkest Africa'. It seems likely that the comparison worked in both directions though, that a common discourse of 'otherness' was used in coming to 'understand' and constitute both the metropolitan working-class and the colonized peoples. The co-extensiveness of London and Africa in Conrad's Heart of Darkness is perhaps even more significant than is generally realized.

13. Davies' article, "Foreign Bodies: Images of the London Working Class at the End of the 19th Century"

considers the silence of the represented working class within an investigation of the fictional "disgust for the (working class) body and the sounds which emanate from it" (p. 74) The representation of "uneducated speech" as a part of "monstrous bodily imagery":

Open mouths, whether eating, drinking or speaking "rough" are important signifiers in the construction of the working class; images of greed and appetite (rather than of hunger), of noisy, truculent, or "deficient" voices (rather than of speech as communication) are very revealing in these texts. (p. 73)

14. There is not a great deal of substantial published material on Morrison; see, for example, Keating's Introduction to A Child of the Jago and his Working Classes in Victorian Fiction, the section on Morrison in Vincent Brome's Four Realist Novelists and V. S. Pritchett's article, "An East End Novelist".

15. Apart from Melchiori, see also Haia Shpayer-Makov, "Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880-1914", and Graham Holderness, "Anarchism and Fiction", on these matters.

16. See Gareth Stedman Jones's Languages of Class, p. 179ff., for an account of this anxiety.

17. A modern parallel to Jones's view of silence can be found in William McIllvanney's Docherty. When Mick draws revolutionary conclusions from his situation, his "voice had emerged as the strongest.... [H]is silence had been a gathering of speech. His silence had been making bombs." (p. 320)

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Bruce Robbins comments on this passage:

This secularizing and materializing of divine providence, with the marriage altar as a halter in which couples are chained like kine (or conscripted into armed bands?) and matter/money is the truth of God's grace in the oiling of human affairs -- this is very far from the easy ridicule of haphazard aspirates. (p. 84)

2. See, for example, Robert Golding's Idiolects in Dickens and The Language of Dickens by G. L. Brook. The general studies of language in literature by Norman Page and by N. F. Blake discuss at least some aspects of Dickens in this context.

3. Matthews says that the new sounds introduced by Tuer's phonetic spellings also include:

Long i pronounced ah or oi: tahm, quaht, nahn, mah, bah; or noight, loike, moine, foine, toime.

Long o pronounced ow: owm (home), Jowve, now (no), sowp, down't, bouth, stoun.

Ow pronounced ah or aow: flahs (flowers), paonds, naow, abaout, craown.

Short u pronounced like short e: entil, eother, kentry, seppers, inselt, etc. (p. 65)

4. The influence of the music halls on his writing was acknowledged by Kipling, and the specific influence has been discussed by, amongst others, Keating in The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction and Jacqueline S. Bratton in "Kipling's Magic Art". For more general discussions of the music hall and its relation to contemporary literature see the relevant chapters in Matthews and in Martha Vicinus's The Industrial Muse.

5. The first edition of the Ballads (published by Methuen in 1892) and many later editions have the dedication to Thomas Atkins ("T. A.") rather ambiguously placed: it is listed and presented as the first poem of the collection, printed in the type and format of the other poems, though on an unnumbered page, while the dedication to Balestier is clearly indicated as such by its placing and its italic type. The Sussex Edition of 1937-39, supervised by Kipling, has the two dedications undifferentiated except that the one to Balestier, which comes first, is untitled. In this edition the title of the second dedication is written in full -- "To Thomas Atkins" -- rather than abbreviated. The arrangement of the first edition makes it clearer that the dedication to "T. A." and the "dedication" itself are somewhat disingenuous in that they are offered to the bourgeois reader as evidence of Kipling's close acquaintance with the "common soldier", who thus becomes as much the object of this poem as of any of the ballads proper.

6. See, for example, Williams's "Region and Class in the Novel", in Writing in Society.

7. See the chapter "An Appropriate Voice: Dialect Literature of the Industrial North" in Vicinus's The Industrial Muse for some relevant discussions.

8. There is a discussion of this debate in Keating's biographical study of Morrison which appears in his 1969 edition of A Child of the Jago.

9. Mayhew's use of phonetics is discussed briefly by Anne Humpherys in Travels into the Poor Man's Country. She notes that he adopts Thackeray's style, used "to make fun of the vulgarity of working-class speech" in reporting the conversation with Bilberry the English clown in German Life and Manners, "exactly because he wanted to mock him":

When a few pages later in that work he reported the speech of an illiterate circus-player towards who he felt more sympathy, he dropped the comic Cockney and returned to the first [Dickensian] mode of rendering lower-class speech, the one he used in London Labour. (pp. 151-2)

10. David H. Stewart has noticed this treatment of Indian speech in Kipling's Kim:

the constant "translation" from the vernacular ... creates an unusual aural medium.... Such diction is incompatible with these characters' vocabularies in English, but here in "translation" it seems normal, therefore doubly suggestive. (p. 120)

11. Lionel Johnson's review of the Barrack-Room Ballads, for example, noted that: "Certain criticisms which I have read of these Ballads have dwelt upon the technical difficulty of the dialect" (p. 99). More recently, Charles Carrington, in his Introduction to a complete edition of the ballads, suggested that "some [of them] like 'Oonts' are put in the mouth of a speaker so illiterate as to be almost unintelligible; others ... are merely colloquial and not far from standard English" (p. 14). It can be noted that Carrington's curious and inappropriate use of "illiterate" here, apparently presuming that a strongly marked "dialect" is the same as the inability to write, is indicative of the confusions that prevail in discussing this matter. Of course, it takes a high degree of literacy to twist orthography as Kipling does.

12. It seems possible that there is a link between Gissing and Shaw indicated in this passage: perhaps Shaw

"heard of" the continuing confusion of "v" and "w" in Essex from Gissing's book on Dickens, where Gissing remarks that "the dialect on which London has exercised its deforming influence is that of Essex, where a confusion of v and w, no longer heard in town, may still be noticed" (p. 142).

13. Saxe's work is an extraordinary bit of empiricism, fundamentally naive in its supposition that either body of work was reliable enough as a foundation for such a study, or even that, particularly in the case of the satirical Punch verses, the aim of the authors was to produce a precisely accurate representation of speech. The supposed shift in Cockney pronunciation was fairly widely accepted, largely on the basis of literary evidence: it is very much more likely that the shift in Cockney pronunciation was minimal and normal (this is, in fact, Saxe's conclusion), and that the major development was in the changing social significance of working class London and its literary presentation. Saxe's account of Shaw's phoneticising of Cockney is remarkably detailed, thorough and comprehensive.

14. Kiernan Ryan, though, seems to feel differently about this. In his "Citizens of Centuries to Come" he says:

Trefusis' protean fooling creates valuable opportunities to burlesque the stereotyped postures lying in wait to trasp the otherwise progressive mind in bourgeois illusions. Thus Trefusis' attempt to conceal himself behind the ludicrous persona and stage-rustic's dialect of the "sham-labourer", Jeff Smilash, humorously underlines the distance which separates the upper classes from the actual labouring man, and the absurdity of disaffected members of those classes trying to turn themselves into proletarians. (p. 9)

15. Fuller accounts of Shaw's inconsistencies can be found in the works of Matthews, Sivertsen and, most exhaustively, Saxe.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Among the critics whom I have found most useful in developing a materialist understanding of Gissing have been John Goode, Adrian Poole and Charles Swann. Critics who tend to unmediatedly refer most of Gissing's complexities and contradictions to his biography include John Halperin, David Grylls, Jacob Korg and Pierre Coustillas.

2. This passage from Morrison could be contrasted with a similar scene in Clarence Rook's The Hooligan Nights, where Emmamarier's experience of the situation is clearly much the same as Lizerunt's. In both cases the heroine's name is stolen from her by the narrator, but in Rook's novel we are given a more convincing representation of her own experience unmediated by the Classical comparison:

[Y]oung Alf and Maggots stripped to the waist, while Emmamarier, the prize, sat proudly on a rung of the ladder which led to the loft, and waited for the victor to claim her. (p. 111)

Classical reference used more appropriately than by Morrison can be found in, for example, Henry Nevinson's In the Valley of Tophet where, in the story "An Autumn Crocus", the allusion is presented as coming from an "educated" character, and does not form part of a process of sneering at the subject it is applied to, a chain-maker:

"I suppose you've had your bans [sic] published, then?" said the doctor, with a sickening feeling that he was like a churchwarden giving good advice to Artemis and Endymion. (p. 159)

3. New Grub Street is Gissing's fullest record of the struggles of the petty bourgeois intellectual faced with the exigencies of the market, but Born in Exile, with its infusion of autobiographical motifs, is probably the most revealing of how Gissing perceived the struggles of those claiming social privilege "by right of intellect". John Goode has, perhaps, dealt most fully with Gissing's relationship to the emerging intellectual petty bourgeoisie in this crucial period in the development of bourgeois hegemony. Harold Perkin's recent history of England since 1880, The Rise of Professional Society, is also useful in this context, as it takes the huge growth of the "professional middle class" as a central motif.

4. Perhaps Pierre Coustillas, a prominent Gissing scholar, should be excused the accusation of embarrassment. In his introduction to The Town Traveller he comments on that novel's disparagements of the working class:

Eighty years after the book's publication these manifold notations offend the idealists who think that the people is always right and that it is unethical to point to its shortcomings, but there

are readers even in our age who find Gissing's candour and courage refreshing. (p. xxvii)

5. See note 9 to Chapter One for references to discussion of the Newbolt Report. See Chris Baldick's The Social Mission of English Criticism for a particularly good discussion of the ideological role of English studies.

6. See Wim Neetens' "Problem of a 'Democratic Text'", pp. 258-9, for a brief discussion of "culture" as "the feminized discursive zone" in All Sorts and Conditions of Men.

7. For example, W. J. Dawson's London Idylls (1895) and A. St J. Adcock's East End Idylls (1897).

8. Fredric Jameson, in his chapter on Gissing in The Political Unconscious, has reached very different conclusions about the significance of Gissing's "narrative style". Jameson diagnoses a "linguistic practice [which] seeks through radical depersonalization -- as though through a kind of preventive suicide -- to neutralize the social conflicts immediately evoked and regenerated by any living use of speech" (pp. 203-204). Amongst other problems in his analysis, Jameson ignores the social significance of Gissing's Latinate English, and is able to conclude that Gissing is "working with linguistic material that is extinct" (p. 203).

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Bruce Robbins deals fully with the role of domestic servants in fiction, making clear that here, too, we are dealing with generic conventions. He is able to find some subversiveness in the use of servants as narrators: "In a sense ... this line of masterful expositors could be said to give power to the people" (p. 97). His identification of domestic servants with "the people" is not convincing, however, in his attempt to deal with George Orwell's complaint about the omission of the working class from the English novel.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. See Fred Ball's discussion of Tressell's origins in his biography of Tressell, One of the Damned.

2. It is worth noting that Shaw wrote in response to a letter from Tressell's biographer in 1948: "I have never heard of Robert Tressell and am not interested in him" (quoted by Ball, p. 186).

3. Paul Salvesson, for example, says:

It is common to regard Tressell's great work ... as the only novel of any importance written by a working-class socialist before the First World War. The purpose of this article is to show that there did in fact exist both a cohesive group of working-class novelists in the years between 1890 and 1914, and that they possessed a mass readership. They were based in Lancashire, and much of their writing reflects a strong regional, as well as class awareness. The central figure in this group was Allen Clarke. (p.172)

On the Chartist novel see Martha Vicinus, "Chartist Fiction and the Development of a Class-based Literature" and The Industrial Muse, and Jack Mitchell, "Aesthetic Problems of the Development of the Proletarian-Revolutionary Novel in Nineteenth-Century Britain".

4. Comparing The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists to Allen Clarke's The Knobstick: A Story of Love and Labour (1893) Klaus writes:

Other common features include ... the exemption of the socialist from idiomatic speech. Belton is, of course, a Londoner, but he does not speak Cockney either. Rather, as in a host of working-class novels to follow, his greater (self-)erudition and political awareness are seen to necessitate the use of Standard English as well as a solemn outlook. ("The strike novel", p. 83)

Klaus does not instance examples of the "host" of novels.

5. See, for example, Neetens' "Politics, Poetics and the Popular Text", as well as the essays by Williams, Miles and Mitchell, which all argue, to some extent, the radicalism of the novel's form.

6. In her chapter on "Language and Class Identity", Noëlle Bissereet includes a discussion of the tendency (she is writing about the French language and French society) of the collective possessive pronoun to disappear under the pressure

of bourgeois ideology, denoting the process of individualisation.

7. I am thinking here particularly of the work of Basil Bernstein and his followers (as well as, or including, his mis-representors). Excellent critiques of Bernstein's theories from a position similar to my own can be found in, amongst other places, Bissret's Education, Class Language and Ideology and in Harold Rosen's Language and Class: A Critical Look at the Theories of Basil Bernstein, Bristol, Falling Wall Press, 1972.

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