Life in London from Egan to Dickens:
Regency Innocence versus Victorian Experience.

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If you do not want to dwell with evil-doers, do not live in London.[1]

I. Innocence: Pierce Egan's *Life in London.*

When the Victorians wanted to attack an author, they would invariably draw comparisons with the Regency writer Pierce Egan (1772 – 1849). John Forster, for instance, in a damning *Examiner* review of W.H. Ainsworth's criminal romance *Jack Sheppard* in 1839, suggested that public decency had not been so threatened since 'the time of Tom and Jerry,'[2] in reference to Egan's most famous literary characters. Critics such as the formidable J. Hain Friswell were still keeping this tradition up as late as the 1860s.[3] Nowadays these names are synonymous with the ultra-violent MGM cat and mouse cartoons of the late-1930s, but to a nineteenth century reader, whether Regency or Victorian, they belonged to the rakish Corinthian Tom, and his cousin from the country, Jerry Hawthorne, who, along with their friend Bob Logic, roamed the streets of the capital in search of a good time in Egan's boisterous comic serial *Life in London* (1820 – 21). With the possible exception of the *Memoirs* of Harriette Wilson (1825), it is Egan's text, and its shifting critical responses, which most clearly demonstrate the way in which the early Victorian literary elite defined themselves against their immediate ancestors.

Egan was, of course, active in interesting times, a child of the Georgian period. Born in London in 1772, Egan was the son of an Irish road-mender and received little formal education. He became a printer's apprentice at the age of twelve, which may explain his love of the written word.[4] Egan achieved a certain amount of notoriety with a satire on the Prince Regent and Mrs Fitzherbert, *The Mistress of Royalty, or the Loves of Florizel and Perdita* (1814), but made his name as a sporting journalist, writing about boxing, the prize ring ('the fancy' or 'P.R.' to the initiated, illegal bare-knuckle fighting), the Turf, and the Chase for the *Weekly Despatch* from 1812, starting his own Sunday newspaper, *Pierce Egan's Life in London, And Sporting Guide*, in 1820. Egan was considered to be an authority on the Regency fight clubs by his readers, and his serial *Boxiana, or, Sketches of ancient and modern pugilism; from the days of the renowned Broughton and Slack, to the heroes of the present milling æra!* 'By One of the Fancy' which ran from 1812 to 1820, remains a fascinating account of what he termed the 'sweet science' before gloves, Queensbury Rules, and the foundation of the Amateur Athletic Club in the 1860s rendered it respectable. In Egan's day, fights could last for dozens of irregularly timed rounds until both gladiators collapsed from exhaustion and the referee declared a winner based on which group of supporters was least likely to give him a good beating if he declared against their man, or a 'maw-worm' (a magistrate or any other enemy of the fancy) broke up the gathering.[5] Egan was, by all accounts, well liked in boxing circles, and respected as an honest journalist covering an albeit often dishonest sport. He had also mastered the then rare skill of

shorthand, which gave his accounts of bouts an immediacy that still strikes the reader today, and he is still admired by boxing fans across the world who neither know nor care about English literature.

By hanging around with the clientele, working men, gypsies, whores, hard cases, head cases, swells, half-swells, bookies, buggers, bucks, bloods and thieves, Egan was gaining a privileged knowledge of the London underworld, and its language, that would serve him well, and he wrote several pamphlet accounts of the lives of criminals he encountered on the fringes of the Fancy, such as the murderers of William Weare: John Thurtell, William Probert and Joseph Hunt.[6] Egan's London was a colourful and dynamic place to be - the throbbing heart of a culture intoxicated with victory and basking in the glory of Waterloo, expanding, demographically in flux, no longer quite the bawdy Augustan adventure playground chronicled by James Boswell perhaps, but yet to evolve into the dark urban warrens of Henry Mayhew, G.W.M. Reynolds and, most notably, Charles Dickens. Londoners celebrated their city, and did not dwell overmuch on the social changes wrought by increasing Industrialisation that would so preoccupy the Victorian collective consciousness. In Egan's world, one might easily rub shoulders with the Prince Regent and his courtiers ringside, and as for the more dodgy geezers, they were not a collectively menacing underclass so much as characters to be cultivated, and with whom one might have a bit of a spree.

In 1820, Egan began the serial by which he is best known (outside the boxing fraternity), *Life in London*. The project began as the text accompanying a series of illustrations initiated by Isaac Robert Cruikshank, inspired after showing his brother-in-law, recently returned from India, the sights of the big city. Robert enlisted his elder brother, George Cruikshank, for a collaborative set of prints depicting London street life. Egan, with his unparalleled knowledge of the sporting set and the underworld, was recruited to provide the commentary. The series appeared in twenty parts at a shilling each, and in book form in 1821. Like Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* (1836 – 37), which it undoubtedly inspired, *Life in London* became the seismic literary event of the next decade.

Life in London, which is dedicated to George IV, chronicles the urban adventures of three friends and *flâneurs*: Corinthian Tom, his country cousin Jerry Hawthorne, and the Oxonian wag Bob Logic. Jerry is an easy-going provincial eager for excitement and adventure ('open-hearted, generous, and unsuspecting'[7]), Tom is a man of the world happy to oblige and show off his familiarity with the wild side of the street, and Bob is a cheerful middle-aged scholar with a razor-sharp wit and a taste for wine and women. Tom's epithet requires some explanation nowadays, although Egan's readers knew exactly what it meant. 'Corinth' was a synonym for an immoral city and/or a brothel, from the reputation of the Ancient Greek city as a centre of fashionable whoredom, the fornicating inhabitants of which were visited three times by the Apostle Paul and given a right telling off.[8] A 'Corinthian' was therefore originally a frequenter of brothels, although the word had become a generic term for rake by the Regency. The original Biblical meaning hangs around in subtext, however. Tom's name and habits link Corinth intrinsically with London, but as a fallen state to revel in rather than reproach.

The serial's lengthy subtitle, *The Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, ESQ. and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis*, signals Egan's theme and his textual combination of two central tenets of eighteenth century London writing: the

uninitiated tourist following the sophisticated guide, and the *perpetuum mobile* of exhilarating urban experience. 'Seeing Life' is Egan's clarion call, life in all its social aspects, from the aristocratic exclusivity of the assembly rooms in St James's to the gin palaces of the East End. This is presented as a suitable sport for the young gentleman, and the city is laid out as a vast text containing all human knowledge available to those who are willing to learn how to decipher it. 'Indeed, The Metropolis is a complete CYCLOPÆDIA,' begins Egan, 'where every man of the most religious or moral habits, attached to any sect, may find something to please his palate, regulate his taste, suit his pocket, enlarge his mind, and make him happy and comfortable ... In fact, every SQUARE in the Metropolis is a sort of *map* well worthy of exploring, if riches and titles operate as a source of curiosity to the visitor. There is not a *street* also in London, but what may be compared to a large or small volume of intelligence, abounding with anecdote, incident, and peculiarities.'[9] The art of *reading* London is emphasised in the text by the inclusion of 'St Giles's Greek' (class-specific 'flash' slang and argot), and the acquirement of this previously unrecorded language (learned ringside by the author) offers the tantalising possibility of unlocking the secrets of the urban Other. This is the Enigma code of the underworld, and Egan made it fashionable, teaching his audience as Tom teaches Jerry:

> TOM: [Introducing Jerry to Bob Logic] He is now come to see life, and rub off a little of the rust. In effecting this desirable consummation you can materially assist; under so skilful a professor of the flash as you, Bob –
>
> JERRY: Flash! I'm at fault again, Tom.
>
> TOM: Explain, Bob.
>
> LOGIC: Flash, my young friend, or slang as others call it, is the classical language of the Holy Land; in other words, St Giles's Greek.
>
> JERRY: St Giles's Greek; that is a language, doctor, with which I am totally unacquainted, although I was brought up at a Grammar School.
>
> LOGIC: You are not particular in that respect; many great scholars, and better linguists than you, are quite ignorant of it, it being studied more in the Hammer Schools than the Grammar Schools. Flash, my young friend, or slang, as others call it, is a species of cant in which the knowing ones conceal their roguery from the flats; and it is one of the advantages of seeing Life in London, that you may learn to talk to a rogue in his own language, and fight him with his own weapons ... It's the blunt that does it – blunt makes the man, Jerry.
>
> JERRY: Blunt! I'm at fault again.
>
> TOM: Explain, Bob –
>
> LOGIC: Blunt, my dear boy, is – in short what is it not? It's everything now o' days – to be able to flash the screens – sport the rhino show the needful – post the pony – nap the rent – stump the pewter – tip the brads – and down with the dust, is to be once good, great, handsome, accomplished, and everything that's desirable – money, money, is your universal God, – only get into Tip Street, Jerry.[10]

The above taken for convenience (Jerry's linguistic education is considerably more evolutionary in Egan's original text) from one of the many theatrical adaptations rampant at the time. A similar extra-literary linguistic phenomenon would occur a decade later with the success of Ainsworth's *Rookwood* and the flash slang of a very romanticised Dick Turpin.[11]

Egan's easy-going, picaresque story, complete with long, discursive Shandyesque footnotes, bawdy illustrations and comic songs was an instantaneous success. Consequently, Tom and Jerry were quickly appropriated by the theatres in unlicensed adaptations such as W.T. Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry*

at the Adelphi, which is quoted above. The public craze, which included six highly successful plays (including one by Egan himself), and a bevy of copycat books and serials, lasted about four years at its height, between 1820 and 1823. During this period in particular flash slang became common cultural currency with the fashionable set, a trend later revived, as previously noted, by W.H. Ainsworth's popular Newgate novels *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839). *Life in London* was especially popular with young men who dreamed of a bit of flash and dash in their lives, and who saw Bob, Tom and Jerry as the pinnacle of cool. Even Thackeray admitted that in his youth he thought Egan's heroes 'to be types of the most elegant, fashionable young fellows the town afforded,' and their ribald behaviour that of 'all high-bred English gentleman.'[12] A generation later though, after he had led the critical campaign against the Newgate novel craze, Thackeray did not have a good word to say for *Life in London*.

The Victorians publicly denounced the Regency Egan as obscene, and his work was consigned to the same critical vacuum occupied by the Newgate novelists, only to be relatively recently reassessed, with Egan being increasingly read as a serious forerunner to the Victorian social investigators.[13] As admittedly playful social explorers, Egan and the brothers Cruikshank did actually visit many of the places they wrote about and illustrated, the rumour about town at the time being that Egan was Logic, George Cruikshank Tom, and his younger brother Jerry. Egan, in fact, at one point actually places himself within his own text. In an apology to his subscribers on failing to complete the January 1 1821 instalment in an article entitled 'The Author in Distress' wherein he explains that, while out on a late spree with Bob Logic at the *Albany*, 'Upon turning the corner of *Sydney's Alley*, into Leicester-Fields,' (somewhat the worse for the drink), 'we were assailed by some *troublesome customers*, and a *turn-up* was the result (as the plate most accurately represents). Bob got a *stinker*, and poor I received a *chancery-suit* upon the *nob*.'[14] As indicated by the author, there is also an accompanying illustration with the caption, 'Peep 'o Day Boys. A Street Row, the Author losing his "Reader," Tom and Jerry "showing fight," and Logic floored,' meaning Egan was mugged and lost his journalist's notebook. This is hardly 'On Duty with Inspector Field' (and the author's textual interaction with his own characters is positively postmodern), but there is still more than a shade here of the subsequent missionary/explorer travel narratives of Tristan, Dickens, Engels, Mayhew, and later still, Stead, Mearns, Booth and Roundtree. Egan, like his more po-faced successors, still offers the opportunity for a bourgeois audience to experience the underworld voyeuristically, without ever leaving the drawing room. 'The author, in consequence, has chosen for his readers a *Camera Obscura* View of London,' explains Egan in his introductory remarks, 'not only from its safety, but because it is so *snug*, and also possessing the invaluable advantage of SEEING and not being *seen*.'[15] Where Egan differs is that he goes native - he talks the talk (often descending into incomprehensible flash), and he walks the walk (mixing with an underclass that delights rather than appals him), and the city is presented as the young blood's playground (should they *dare* to enter), the image most often adopted being that of a colourful theatrical performance where 'the scene changed as often as pantomime.'[16]

In *Life in London*, the underworld is never represented by Egan as the menacing, or gothic, space it became to the Victorians. For Egan it is the jungle of the dandy on safari, the 'sport in view.'[17] If he does wander somewhere scary, he does not hang around. This is particularly apparent in the

inevitable Newgate Prison episode. Tom and Jerry have to visit Newgate, it being the intention of Jerry, and his author 'not to neglect visiting any place that might afford him information during his stay in London.' Egan knows his audience will not let him avoid the place, but he cannot quite handle it, being somewhat torn between his essentially upbeat approach to the sport of seeing and his own basic humanity when confronted with an execution. Like Thackeray, in 'Going to see a man hanged' (*Fraser's*, August, 1840), he turns away. First words fail him, which does not happen very often, 'It is a truly afflicting scene; and neither the PEN nor the PENCIL, however directed by talent, can do it adequate justice,' then he simply rejects the intolerable situation and returns his characters to the colourful ebb and flow of the city with 'Our heroes were offered a complete view of the prison from the top of it; but this offer was declined, in consequence of TOM'S urging the want of time, on account of having some business to transact in the City. The TRIO hastily quitted the gloomy falls of Newgate, once more to join the busy hum and life of society.'[18] Just this once, Egan has strayed too close to the awful reality of the underworld for comfort. You can feel his relief as he 'hastily' gets his actors away from somewhere where they have no right to be in the first place.

By denying any such nasty realities, such as the Bloody Code, while similarly caring little about the honest poor, Egan puts forward the belief that it is the underclass of society that has all the fun. 'It is,' says Bob to Tom, 'I am quite satisfied in my mind, the LOWER ORDERS of society who really ENJOY themselves.'[19] This is of course the type of sentiment that later made William Acton's medical text *Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects* of 1857 a best-seller amongst the middle classes. Bob Logic is here reacting to the most important 'Flash Ken' in Egan's text, the 'All-Max' in East Smithfield (which Egan juxtaposes with the high citadel of Regency power, Almack's of St James's, which Jerry finds less interesting than its shadow and Bob Logic avoids altogether). The appeal is in the social freedom - gender, race and class are meaningless here, being all part of the same merry dance. 'ALL-MAX was compared by the sailors, something after the old adage of "any port in a storm." It required no patronage; – a card of admission was not necessary; – no inquiries were made; – and every *cove* that put in his appearance was quite welcome; colour or country considered no obstacle; and *dress* and ADDRESS completely out of the question,' explains Egan. So, 'The parties *paired off* according to *fancy*; the eye was pleased in the choice, and nothing thought of about birth and distinction. All was *happiness*, every body free and easy, and freedom of expression allowed to the very echo. The group motley indeed; – Lascars, blacks, jack tars, coal-heavers, dustmen, women of colour, old and young, and a sprinkling of the remnants of once fine girls, &c., were all *jigging* together.'[20]

Class-exclusivity surfaces only briefly here. When Egan's trio enters the All-Max, the music stops like a scene from an Italian Western (they are assumed to be 'beaks'), until a young tart reassures the clientele (in flash, naturally), that, 'the *gemmen* had only dropped in for to have a *bit of a spree*.'[21] This subculture remains, most importantly, *exotic*, particularly sexually. Playing MacHeath, Bob Logic has a woman on each arm in the All-Max episode (Flashy Nance and Black Sall), and is crossing all the social boundaries with his polygamous dalliance outside his own class and racial group, before finally surrendering to the place completely and disappearing into the kaleidoscopic background. When Tom

and Jerry decide enough is enough, Logic is nowhere to be found, a sailor 'about *three sheets in the wind*' (pissed) explaining that 'if it was the gentleman in the *green barnacles* their honours wanted, as it was very likely he had taken a voyage to *Africa*, in the *Sally*, or else he was out on a cruise with the *Flashy Nance*.'[22] In *Life in London* the characters are all members of the same cast in the same theatre. The City is the drama - a comic, bawdy, burlesque of a production, and the readers its audience.

Simply put, Egan *likes* the lower classes, who are presented as individuals in *Life in London*, this being a very different approach to his Victorian descendants. The 'low life' as seen by Egan are flamboyant, colourful characters (including the wrong'uns), with equally flamboyant, colourful names and occupations. In the All-Max episode, for example, Corinthian Tom asks the '*covess* of the *ken*' (Mrs Mace, the landlady, whose name is 'robbery' in 'the flash tongue') to name the dancers for him:

> '*Vy*, Sir', replied Mrs *Mace*, 'that *are* black *voman*, who you *sees* dancing with *nasty Bob*, the coal-*vhipper*, is called *African Sall*, because she comes from foreign parts; and that little *mungo* in the corner, holding his arms out, is her child; yet I *doesn't* think *as how*, for all that, SALL has got any husband: but, *La!* sir, it's a poor heart that never rejoices, *an't* it, sir?'[23]

In Egan's underworld, everyone has a name and a history, and it is an exuberant, unrestrained, ultimately unclassifiable social space where *beau monde* meets *demi monde*. In Egan, to be 'down-and-out' can be 'down-and-*in*,' and the bare-knuckle fighter and the daring criminal are people with whom to be *seen*. This *risqué* sense of underworld *chic* is not carried over into the discourse of the Victorian social explorers. To them, the *demi-monde* became the simply demographic. There is rarely, if ever, room for the individual in the rhetoric of the earnest Victorian select committees, journalists, novelists, sociologists and moral crusaders, intent as they were on recording and solving societal problems, transforming the chaotic city into a social text which, unlike Egan's, was not to be celebrated in its diversity but quantified and ordered.

In canonical views and for most Victorians, the mid-nineteenth century was the age of *Mary Barton* and *Bleak House* rather than *Life in London*, and the emergence of the new industrial working class, a culturally displaced group with, seemingly, no identifiably traditional norms and values, confused, appalled and sometimes terrified the middle-class commentators. 'As a stranger passes through masses of human beings which have accumulated round the mills and print works,' W. Cooke Taylor famously wrote of Manchester in 1842, 'he cannot contemplate these "crowded hives" without feelings of anxiety and apprehension amounting to dismay. The population, like the system to which it belongs, is NEW; but it is hourly increasing in breadth and strength. It is an aggregate of masses, our conceptions of which clothe themselves in terms that express something portentous and fearful.'[24] Here, the distinctive faces of the pantomime dance are now rewritten as an amorphous 'mass,' with differentiated individuals no longer in view. The Victorian city is a 'hive' not a pantomime, and the population an insect collective, only much bigger. In this new climate of fear and curiosity, the urban underclass becomes a problem in need of a solution, with research becoming increasingly quantitative and statistical. Any text, therefore, which with was seen to romanticise the underworld, such as the Newgate novels, became transgressive and outlaw, hence the damning comparisons between the Newgate novelists and Egan by the Victorian literary establishment. In returning to the city of Egan,

writers such as Lytton and, especially, Ainsworth, were hugely out of step with emergent Victorian values. One might well meet George IV at a bare-knuckle bout, but it would be inconceivable to bump into Victoria and Albert ringside.

By the end of the decade, Egan seemed to have moderated his opinions. In his 1828 sequel to *Life in London*, entitled *The Finish to the Adventures of Tom, Jerry and Logic, in Their Pursuits through Life in and out of London*, he breaks poor old Tom's neck in a riding accident, while his mistress, Corinthian Kate, dies of the drink. Logic similarly succumbs to his excesses, while Jerry settles down to a quiet life in the country. It is unclear whether Egan understood early that times, and values, were a-changing, or was just reclaiming his text from the plagiarists and taking it in an unexpected direction – he does note in *The Finish* that there were at least sixty-five knock-offs of the original *Life in London* in print. Either way, the *Life in London* craze had run its course. Tom and Jerry moved to the New York stage and had a lethal cocktail named after them, the names finally appropriated by William Hanna for his famous animated characters a century later, keeping, in some small way, the innocence and anarchy of Egan alive and kicking.

Pierce Egan's Life in London, And Sporting Guide was purchased by Bell in 1827 and merged with *Bell's Life in London*. Egan remained a prolific writer, although separating his works from his imitators is often difficult. His other works may or may not include *Real Life in Ireland; or, the Day and night scenes, rovings, rambles and sprees, bulls, blunders, bodderation and blarney of Brian Boru, Esq. and his elegant friend Sir Shawn O'Dogherty* 'By a real Paddy' (1821), which runs in intriguing parallel with *Life in London* and which Joyce affectionately sends up in *Finnegan's Wake* ('Compost of Dufblin by Pierce Egan with the baugh of Baughkley of Fino Ralli. Explain why there is such a number of orders of religion in Asea!'[25]); *Life of an* Actor (1824); *Pierce Egan's Book of Sports and Mirror of Life* (1832); and *The Pilgrims of the Thames in Search of the National* (1838), the latter being very *Pickwickesque* and dedicated to Queen Victoria. Egan died at his home in Pentonville on August 3, 1849. His son, also Pierce Egan (1814 – 80), was a prolific serial-novelist and pioneer of cheap popular literature – his most notable works being *Wat Tyler* (1841); *Paul Jones* (1842); *The Snake in the Grass* (1858); Love *Me, Leave Me Not* (1860); *The Poor Girl* (1863); and *Eve, or, The Angel of Innocence* (1867).

Pierce Egan the Elder is something of a cult figure in English Literature, a subject now for cultural archaeology, and his writing is difficult to find outside of special collections. He remains, however, a prominent Regency voice and a significant antecedent of the Victorian social investigators and London novelists. He is also very much the father of modern sporting journalism. His cheerful, coarse and generally over the top writing deserves more critical and historical attention than it often receives (with the notable exception of the work of Louis James, Deborah Epstein Nord, Donald Low, J.C. Reid, Roger Sales, and J.C. Marriot), as a fascinating and detailed picture of an age in transition, of Regency sensibilities, the sporting life, and the vocabulary of the urban underworld.

II. Experience: Dickens' early writing.

Dickens' city was also London, and the London – and, indeed, England - of 'Boz' the young *Morning Chronicle* journalist was still very much in a state of cultural transition: no longer Regency, but not yet quite Victorian. Unlike Egan however, Dickens was not so much a product of the Regency as the tumultuous period which followed it (the brief reign of William IV), and immediately preceding Victoria's accession, of the first fully industrial nation on the planet, with all the attendant social and political upheavals.[26] As previously noted, Egan's London was not so far away from Boswell's, with an added charge of post-Waterloo optimism thrown into the mosh. Dickens' London, conversely, was always going to be a more complex urban space. Dickens' London had doubled in size since 1800, with a population of over 1.5 million. By the mid century (and the height of Dickens' creative powers), it had grown by another million, and our continuing perception of London, of this first and historically unique industrial capital, owes much, as Raymond Williams has written, to 'Dickens' particular creative achievement.'[27]

Nonetheless, it is worth beginning by noting that the young Dickens (*not* Dickens the canonical national author he was to become, but Dickens the struggling, ambitious, anonymous, twenty-something journalist), considered Egan to be a popular writer of the preceding age whom was well worth emulating. His original *Morning Chronicle Sketches by Boz* (1833 – 1836) therefore, and the serial which made his name, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836 – 1837), can, at least initially, be designated *Eganesque*, a feature not lost on early reviewers: the *Athenaeum* for example describing the first half of *Pickwick* as composed of 'two pounds of Smollett, three ounces of Sterne, a handful of Hook, a dash of grammatical Pierce Egan.'[28] Both the *Sketches* and *Pickwick* (which overlap in production) are certainly operating within a tradition of urban writing, and the wandering observer a textual device already deployed successfully by Egan, although his 'sketches' are united by the Tom/Bob/Jerry narrative, in combination with an eye for the fashionably low, while Dickens' vision, at least in the *Sketches*, appears at once more random yet considerably more sociologically detailed.

In his preface to the first edition of the *Sketches*, published by John Macrone in 1836, with the telling subtitle *Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People*, Boz sets out his purpose:

> His object has been to present little pictures of life and manners as they really are; and should they be approved of, he hopes to repeat his experiment with increased confidence, and on a more extensive scale.[29]

He does, of course, go on to repeat and refine the experiment for the rest of his life. Egan had begun his exploration of London with:

> Then, the grand object of this work is an attempt to portray what is termed 'SEEING LIFE' in all its various bearings upon society, from the *high-mettled* CORINTHIAN of St James's, *swaddled* in luxury, down to the *needy* FLUE-FAKER of Wapping, *born without a shirt*, and not a *bit of scran* in his cup to allay his piteous cravings.[30]

Dickens' *Sketches* are also about 'seeing life,' but is his agenda is already asserting its originality, despite the notional similarity to the techniques of Egan. Dickens' 'little pictures of life and manners

as they really are' already hints at a level of social realism which would be a complete bore to Egan, who obviously much prefers the flamboyant to the ordinary, and tends to ignore honest working, middle and, indeed, upper class folk (including flue-fakers funnily enough) in favour of rakes and underworld celebrities. Dickens certainly reports on the doings of the criminal classes in the *Sketches*, (for example in 'Criminal Courts,' 'A Visit to Newgate,' 'The Hospital Patient,' and 'The Prisoners' Van'), but they are not cool, and absolutely not 'high mettled.'

Contemporary commentary on the *Sketches* tends to repeatedly focus upon Dickens' realism as something very original. 'The observation shown throughout is nothing short of wonderful' wrote John Forster, continuing that 'Things are painted literally as they are ... it was a picture of everyday London at its best and worst,'[31] while Walter Bagehot said of Dickens that he wrote of London 'like a special correspondent for posterity.'[32] Dickens is also, already, demonstrating an emotional and observational range which far outstrips the bawdy humour of Egan. As London is comprised of a diversity of cultures, classes, conditions and, well, *stories*, so must be the *Sketches*, which therefore offer humour, drama (and melodrama), but also at time pathos bordering on the classically tragic, always accompanied by the most startling accuracy. As Dennis Walder rightly asserts in his introduction to the current Penguin Classic edition of the *Sketches* 'He misses nothing.'[33]

An indication that Dickens was, indeed, a very new broom, can be seen in his depiction of Newgate Prison in the *Sketches*, a place upon which Egan, as noted above, cannot bear to look. Dickens does not flinch:

> The deep bell of St Paul's strikes – one! He heard it; it has roused him. Seven hours left! He paces the narrow limits of his cell with rapid strides, cold drops of terror starting on his forehead, and every muscle of his frame quivering with agony. Seven hours! He falls upon his knees and clasps his hands to pray. Hush! what sound was that? He starts upon his feet. It cannot be two yet. Hark! Two quarters have struck; – the third – the fourth. It is! Six hours left ... A period of unconsciousness succeeds. He wakes, cold and wretched ... He is the condemned felon again, guilty and despairing; and in two hours more he will be dead.[34]

In a sketch which anticipates 'Fagin's last night alive,' Dickens may already have *Oliver Twist* in view, a novel he began before the conclusion of *Pickwick*. Similarly, Sikes and Nancy are present in 'The Hospital Patient,' the Artful Dodger can be heard in 'Criminal Courts,' and the character of Mr Bumble the Beadle is already forming in 'The Election for Beadle.' There are also, of course, perfectly cheery, and it that sense Eganesque, sketches, such as 'The River,' 'Astley's,' 'Greenwich Fair,' 'Private Theatres,' and 'The Steam Excursion,' yet there is also always a certain irony in Dickens' prose, a measured sadness even, which is notably absent from Egan. In Dickens' London, as in his own personal experience, life can be very fragile, and the streets at night are disturbingly different from those same streets in the morning:

> The crowds which have been passing to and fro during the whole day, are rapidly dwindling away; and the noise of shouting and quarrelling which issues from the public-houses, is almost the only sound that breaks the melancholy stillness of the night.
>
> There was another, but it has ceased. That wretched woman with the infant in her arms; round whose meagre form the remnant of her own scanty shawl is carefully wrapped, has been attempting to sing some popular ballad, in the hope of wringing a few pence from the compassionate passer-by. A brutal laugh at her weak voice is all she has gained. The tears fall thick and fast down her own pale face;

> the child is cold and hungry, and its low half-stifled wailing adds to the misery of its wretched mother, as she moans aloud, and sinks despairingly down, on a cold damp door-step.
>
> Singing! How few of those who pass such a miserable creature as this, think of the anguish of heart, the sinking of soul and spirit, which the very effort of singing produces. Bitter mockery! Disease, neglect, and starvation, faintly articulating the words of the joyous ditty, that has enlivened your hours of feasting and merriment, God knows how often! It is no subject of jeering. The weak tremulous voice tells a fearful tale of want and famishing; and the feeble singer of this roaring song may turn away, only to die of cold and hunger.[35]

'The Streets – Morning' and the companion piece quoted above, 'The Streets – Night,' demonstrates both the thematic and narrative innovation of the *Sketches.* As previously stated, the moral issues that will soon inform *Oliver Twist* are already forming here, in images of new mercantile middle class prosperity juxtaposed with a very new kind of urban deprivation, of a criminal class forced into existence by the dictates of the marketplace, their black economy mirroring that of the bourgeoisie, as the Miltonic hell mirrors heaven, and as the streets at night mirror the streets at morning. There is also here what Deborah Nord has described as Dickens' 'interest in process,' of a use of time which distinguishes the *Sketches* from the more static descriptions of the traditional sketch form. 'Boz's representation of time,' argues Nord, 'gives his sketches a narrative quality that subverts the tableaulike image of the city we have seen in Egan and De Quincey.'[36]

Ever the perfectionist, Dickens certainly regarded the *Sketches* as juvenilia, writing in his preface to the 1850 edition that

> The whole of these sketches were written and published, one by one, when I was a very young man.[37] They were collected and republished while I was still a very young man; and sent into the world with all their imperfections (a good many) on their heads ... I am conscious of their often being extremely crude and ill-considered, and bearing obvious marks of haste and inexperience.[38]

He consequently revised the original sketches heavily, apparently unaware even as a mature novelist of the impact they had made on the development of the nineteenth century novel – a form far from stable after the death of Scott in 1832. In many ways, high Victorian realism begins with the *Sketches.*

The first novel was, of course, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, inaugurated when the publishers Chapman and Hall approached the young author of the *Sketches* with a view to him providing the text for a serial on a gentlemen's sporting club based around the drawings of the caricaturist Robert Seymour in the spring of 1836. Seymour, down on his luck and in need of a hit, had in mind a monthly illustrated serial specifically modelled on *Life in London*, which still remained the benchmark for such writing, as can be seen immediately from the subtitle: *Containing a Faithful Record of the Perambulations, Perils, Travels, Adventures, and Sporting Transactions of the Corresponding Members.*[39] So is *Pickwick* Eganesque? Well, yes and no – at least, as the innocent Samuel Pickwick and his companions go about their travels, the author and, indeed, the English novel, embark upon a similar journey to return, like Mr. Pickwick himself, changed by the experience. In *Pickwick*, Dickens was able to draw upon the urban insights he had developed in the *Sketches*, and the novel, aptly described by Mark Wormald as 'a singularly messy masterpiece'[40] combines the often complex realism of the *Sketches* with the more safe traditions of previous urban writing such as *Life in London* and, more recently, Robert Surtees' *Jorrock's Jaunts and Jollities* (1831 – 34), as initially intended by Seymour.

In common with Egan's Jerry Hawthorne, Pickwick, and his companions Tracy Tupman, Augustus Snodgrass, and Nathaniel Winkle are all innocents at, alternately, the mercy, or under the protection, of a more experienced guide – first the cynical and manipulative actor Alfred Jingle, then the good-hearted and streetwise Cockney Sam Weller. Unlike the contemporary *mise-en-scene* of the *Sketches*, *Pickwick* is also set in a rather prelapsarian 1827, a world seemingly much closer to that of Egan's heroes. As Mary Russell Mitford explained to her friend Emily Jephson, while recommending the serial, 'It is fun – London life – but without any thing unpleasant ... he (Dickens) takes a far more cheerful view, a Shakespearean view, of humanity.'[41] Despite this, and beneath the general feeling of conviviality which made *Pickwick* such a popular novel, Dickens does make it obvious, especially in the later parts of the novel, that however armour-plated innocence might appear, it cannot protect a seemingly harmonious existence from the inevitable fall, with the text and the Edenic Dingley Dell first invaded by the reptilian Jingle, followed by the corrupt politicians Slumkey and Fizkin, the evangelical hypocrite Mr. Stiggins and, finally, the Law in the form of Serjeant Buzfuz, and the 'Freeman Court Sharks' Dodson and Fogg.[42]

After various assaults on the nice, starting with Jingle's elopement with Rachel Wardle, solely for her money, the moment of aporia once more takes place in jail, this time the Fleet, a notorious London debtors' prison, Mr. Pickwick's comic adventures having led to a charge of breach of promise, lodged by Mrs. Bardell but trumped up by the lawyers Dodson and Fogg, whose litigious livelihoods demonstrate that there is a great difference between Justice and Law. Dickens knew of such things from bitter experience – as is well-known, although not public knowledge at the time he was writing *Pickwick*, Dickens' father spent three months in Marshalsea Debtors' Prison in 1824, the change in family circumstances bringing Charles' childhood to a shockingly abrupt end.

Pickwick refuses to pay the extortionate damages awarded against him, and finds himself thrust into a world very different from Dingley Dell and which, as his guardian angel and manservant Sam Weller is well aware, he is ill-equipped to deal with:

> There is no disguising the fact that Mr. Pickwick felt very low-spirited and uncomfortable - not for lack of society, for the prison was very full, and a bottle of wine would at once have purchased the utmost good-fellowship of a few choice spirits, without any more formal ceremony of introduction; but he was alone in the coarse, vulgar crowd, and felt the depression of spirits and sinking of heart, naturally consequent on the reflection that he was cooped and caged up, without a prospect of liberation. As to the idea of releasing himself by ministering to the sharpness of Dodson & Fogg, it never for an instant entered his thoughts.
>
> In this frame of mind he turned again into the coffee-room gallery, and walked slowly to and fro. The place was intolerably dirty, and the smell of tobacco smoke perfectly suffocating. There was a perpetual slamming and banging of doors as the people went in and out; and the noise of their voices and footsteps echoed and re-echoed through the passages constantly. A young woman, with a child in her arms, who seemed scarcely able to crawl, from emaciation and misery, was walking up and down the passage in conversation with her husband, who had no other place to see her in. As they passed Mr. Pickwick, he could hear the female sob bitterly; and once she burst into such a passion of grief, that she was compelled to lean against the wall for support, while the man took the child in his arms, and tried to soothe her.
>
> Mr. Pickwick's heart was really too full to bear it, and he went upstairs to bed.[43]

Sam cannily gets his father to have him arrested for debt, in order to enter the Fleet and protect Pickwick, who is ultimately exonerated. Along the way, Pickwick meets Jingle in prison, forgives him his trespasses and arranges for his attorney to help him, finally getting the chance to give Dodson and

Fogg a piece of his mind, which offers him some sort of closure. He has also, however, witnessed all the horrors of the Fleet, of men broken and unfriended by debt and, finally, killed by it:

> There was a short silence, during which the two spectators approached the bed. The sick man drew a hand of his old fellow- prisoner towards him, and pressing it affectionately between both his own, retained it in his grasp.
>
> 'I hope,' he gasped after a while, so faintly that they bent their ears close over the bed to catch the half-formed sounds his pale lips gave vent to – 'I hope my merciful Judge will bear in mind my heavy punishment on earth. Twenty years, my friend, twenty years in this hideous grave! My heart broke when my child died, and I could not even kiss him in his little coffin. My loneliness since then, in all this noise and riot, has been very dreadful. May God forgive me! He has seen my solitary, lingering death.'
>
> He folded his hands, and murmuring something more they could not hear, fell into a sleep - only a sleep at first, for they saw him smile.
>
> They whispered together for a little time, and the turnkey, stooping over the pillow, drew hastily back. 'He has got his discharge, by G - !' said the man.
>
> He had. But he had grown so like death in life, that they knew not when he died.[44]

Sam may crack a joke as the two friends leave the Fleet but, despite a final chapter where 'everything concluded to the satisfaction of everybody,'[45] the harsh reality of the Fleet stays with Pickwick, and with the reader, all the more powerful for being at odds with the general good humour of the text. The Wellers may come into money, Pickwick's fortunes may be restored, even Jingle may be rehabilitated, but the Fleet remains full to overflowing with those who were not so lucky.

Nonetheless, the moral of *Pickwick* is a simple one, at least on the surface, expressed quite clearly by the author in his concluding chapter:

> Let us leave our old friend in one of those moments of unmixed happiness, of which, if we seek them, there are ever some, to cheer our transitory existence here. There are dark shadows on the earth, but its lights are stronger in the contrast. Some men, like bats or owls, have better eyes for the darkness than for the light. We, who have no such optical powers, are better pleased to take our last parting look at the visionary companions of many solitary hours, when the brief sunshine of the world is blazing full upon them.[46]

In other words, one should know and understand the dark side of life (and for all his stylish underworld posturing, Egan never did) – as the Christian collective consciousness accepts human evil as an inevitable consequence of free will – but one should never allow it to overwhelm one's world view entirely, to do so would only spread the darkness. How far Dickens actually believes this himself, however, is somewhat more difficult to fathom.

While he was concluding *Pickwick*, Dickens was already working on the quintessential London novel of the 1830s, however, *Oliver Twist; or, The Parish Boy's Progress* – a project he may well have had in mind since the *Sketches*. In many ways, this was truly the first novel: it appeared under Dickens' own name, it was literary fiction as opposed to journalism and, unlike *Pickwick*, was originated solely by the author. If the author's lighter side was always present as a counter-balance to the dark side in the journalism and sketches however, *Oliver Twist* is very much a product of the shadows. There is, of course, a happy, Christian bourgeois conclusion, but it fails to convince.

The unbelievable character of Oliver himself is a symbol of innocence, and any attempt to read him otherwise does tend to irritate. In this sense, he is another aspect of both Jerry Hawthorne and Samuel Pickwick, only with no Corinthian Tom or Sam Weller to guide him through the labyrinth. Jack Dawkins, the Artful Dodger, who initially appears to adopt Oliver ('recruit' may be a better word),

turns against him in the hue and cry out of naked self-interest, while Fagin only cares about Oliver's value, first as a house breaker with angelic looks, then as the sought after half-brother of the avaricious Monks. In comparison with the underworld denizens of Shoreditch and Saffron Hill, Oliver's saviours, Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies, are mere idealised ciphers - a feature emphasised by the near-complete removal from all the subsequent film and television adaptations of the text of Brownlow, while the Maylies are always utterly excised.[47] Simply put, it is not the good guys that have guaranteed *Oliver Twist's* permanent place in English culture, but the bad. The contemporary London underworld represented here (unlike *Pickwick*, the novel is set in the 1830s) is as real and persuasive as the over-idealised alternative is not:

> They crossed from the Angel into St John's Road; struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler's Wells Theatre; through Exmouth Street and Copice Row; down the little court by the side of the workhouse; across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-Hole; thence into Little Saffron Hill; and so into Saffron Hill the Great, along which the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels.
>
> Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way, as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside. The sole places that seemed to prosper amid the general blight of the place, were the public houses; and in them, the lowest orders of Irish were wrangling with might and main. Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth; and from several of the door-ways, great ill-looking fellows were cautiously emerging, bound, to all appearance, on no very well-disposed or harmless errands.[48]

And so Oliver Twist enters London. In language that anticipates Engels's famous description of Allen's Court in Manchester, Oliver is Dante to the Artful Dodger's Virgil, although what separates this inferno from the realm of the virtuous Mr Brownlow, not to mention Dickens' bourgeois audience, is a single turn:

> The coach rattled away, over nearly the same ground as that which Oliver had traversed when he first entered London in company with the Dodger; and, turning a different way when it reached the Angel at Islington, stopped at length before a neat house, in a quiet shady street near Pentonville.[49]

Equally, because of this proximity to urban Other, and the constant menace of its inhabitants, the security of Brownlow and his Pentonville home is quite false, just as the Maylie's country residence will later be, so easily violated as it is by Monks and Fagin. Note, also, the attention to typographical detail here, a true sign of a Londoner writing of London. The problem is, if 'problem' it be, is that such verisimilitude, while an obvious product of young Charles, the debtor's son and factory worker, and Boz the journalist, rather undermines the purpose of Dickens the moralist, set on attacking the Poor Law Amendment Act, *laissez-faire* capitalism, and the criminal justice system.

What Dickens has created here is a *gothic* London, in the manner of the Paris of Victor Hugo and Eugene Sue, and this image, rather than the innocent, Eganesque playground, is the one that has stuck in the national psyche. The foundations of this are already present in the melodramatic underworld fables of the *Sketches*, as well as in the mostly macabre short stories inserted into *Pickwick*, such as 'A Madman's Manuscript' and 'The Story of a Convict's Return.' In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens

begins to build his city in earnest, a project that would occupy him for the rest of his life as a novelist. Fagin's symbolic charge should leave us in no doubt as to authorial vision: his name a product of Dickens' experiences in the hated Warren's Blacking Warehouse (Bob Fagin was a co-worker), his criminal (and racial) credentials based upon the notorious London fence Ikey Solomons, and oft referred to in the text as the 'merry old gentleman,'[50] the latter term being a common epithet for the devil.[51] As if we were ever really in any doubt, the 'cold wet shelterless midnight streets of London' have become hell.[52]

Once again, prison is a principle symbol of unification between *Oliver Twist* and the other texts under consideration here. This time in the accusation that Dickens had produced a 'Newgate novel,' a genre of criminal romance prosecuted most successfully by Lytton and Ainsworth and named for the notorious London jail,[53] with Thackeray, the most ardent critic of Newgate writing, suggesting that the 'moral' of *Oliver Twist* was only present to moderate the underlying fascination with criminality:

> *The ingredients of Oliver Twist and Jack Sheppard:-*
>
> Take a small boy, charity, factory, carpenter's apprentice, or otherwise, as occasion may serve – stew him well down in vice – garnish largely with oaths and flash songs – boil him in a cauldron of crime and improbabilities. Season equally with good and bad qualities – infuse petty larceny, affection, benevolence and burglary, honour and housebreaking, amiability and arson – boil all gently. Stew down a mad mother – a gang of robbers – several pistols – a bloody knife. Serve up with a couple of murders – and season with a hanging-match.
>
> N.B. Alter the ingredients to a beadle and a workhouse – the scenes may be the same, but the whole flavour of vice will be lost, and the boy will turn out a perfect pattern – strongly recommended for weak stomachs.[54]

Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* is cited as the most popular Newgate narrative, damningly linked to *Oliver Twist* not only thematically, but because both texts ran near-concurrently as serials in *Bentley's Miscellany* (worst, both were illustrated by George Cruikshank). And, to conclude where we began, where did Victorian critics of Newgate writing, most notably Thackeray, Forster, R.H. Horne, and J. Hain Friswell, go for a correlative? To Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, despite, rather ironically, that author's utter horror of Newgate itself.

Comparing Dickens to the Newgate writers was hardly fair, and his own public defence, the preface to the 1841 edition of *Oliver Twist*, cites his own realism as the principal difference:

> I have read of thieves by the score; seductive fellows (amiable for the most part), faultless in dress, plump in pocket, choice in horse-flesh, bold in bearing, fortunate in gallantry, great at a song, a bottle, a pack of cards or dice-box, and fit companions for the bravest. But I had never met (except in HOGARTH) with the miserable reality.[55]

He continues even more forcibly when explaining Sikes and Nancy: 'IT IS TRUE. Every man who has watched these melancholy shades of life, must know it to be so. Suggested to my mind long ago, *by what I often saw and read of, in actual life around me*.'[56] And surely we must allow him this, at least in comparison with the urban romps of his predecessors and near-contemporaries who, for the most part, had much less experience of the real city than did Dickens. Both Lytton and Ainsworth admitted

that their sources were literary, not based upon experience. In an interview given to Edmund Yates of *The World* magazine in 1878, Ainsworth answered the question, 'Did you interview thieves and Gypsies to gain authentic knowledge of "flash patter"?' (underworld slang) by admitting that:

> [I] Never had anything to do with the scoundrels in my life. I got my slang in a much easier way. I picked up the Memoirs of one James Hardy Vaux a returned transport. The book was full of adventures, and had at the end a kind of slang dictionary. Out of this I got all my 'patter'.[57]

Egan conversely, as we have seen, had much the same urban experience as did Dickens (against the safe distancing of the upper class authors Lytton and Ainsworth). Both men were also journalists; despite such notional similarities, however, their urban visions could not have been more different and, of the two, it is Dickens' that has endured, with Egan nowadays even more of an obscure figure in English literary history than the Newgate novelists, despite his stellar popularity in the 1820s.

Dickens, of course, had much more to write after *Oliver Twist*, and his three primary texts of the 1830s can all be designated as juvenilia when compared to the maturity of *Dombey and Son* and beyond. Yet the world of *Oliver Twist* never really left him, as shown by his passionate public readings of 'Sikes and Nancy,' which he continued to his death. Some, indeed, believe that the emotional energy invested in the readings greatly accelerated his demise.[58]

Just as the Thatcherites of the 1980s utterly rejected the left wing exuberance of Britain in the 1960s, the Victorians wanted nothing whatsoever to do with the perceived excesses of the Regency. Whether by luck, judgement, or genius (and probably all three), Dickens understood early just how much the country and culture was changing, and rightly deserves his place in history as a result, as the voice and visionary of the New Age. Dickens is now such a canonical author that his vision has become absolute, his narratives somehow eternal. This is a major reason why, in the words of Kellow Chesney, 'much of the fascination of the Victorian age derives from its strange familiarity.'[59] Their visions are still our visions. Their stories are still our stories. Dickens' London, not Egan's or Ainsworth's, the nightmare urban labyrinth of poverty, injustice and human suffering endures in the public consciousness to this day, in a fascinating muddle of pride and anxiety, in the novels of Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair, the tourist recreations of the London Dungeon, hard boiled TV cop shows, and the quirky Cockney gangster movies of Guy Ritchie. As Graham Greene has argued, whether Dickens intended it or not, *Oliver Twist* and the subsequent novels, despite the veneer of the happy ending, are essentially Manichaean: 'with its simple and terrible explanation of our plight, how the world was made by Satan and not by God, lulling us with the music of despair.'[60] Dickens' nightmare of experience over innocence haunts us still. The labyrinth would seem to have no end.

NOTES

[1] Richard of Devizes, *Chronicle*, *c.*1180 – 90. Quoted from Paul Bailey ed, *The Oxford Book of London* (Oxford: OUP, 1995) 4.

[2] John Forster, *The Examiner*, November 3 1839.

[3] See the chapter on W.H. Ainsworth in J. Hain Friswell, *Modern Men of Letters Honestly Criticised* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1870).

[4] What little we know of Egan's biography can be directly attributed to the research of J.C. Reid in the only book to date devoted to him. See J.C. Reid, *Bucks and Bruisers: Pierce Egan and Regency England* (London: Routledge 1971).

[5] In addition to Egan's contemporary journalism, an excellent account of the bare-knuckle ring can be found in Kellow Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld* (London: Penguin 1970).

[6] Egan covered the sensational trial of Thurtell, Probert and Hunt, which also attracted the interest of George Borrow, William Hazlitt, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Walter Scott, Thomas Carlyle and Thomas De Quincey. Thurtell was executed, while Hunt was transported. Probert was acquitted, but was hanged the following year for horse-stealing.

[7] Pierce Egan, *Life in London or The Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, ESQ. and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis* (1821 London: John Camden Hotten, 1869) 135.

[8] See the First and Second Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians.

[9] Egan 51 – 52.

[10] From W.T. Moncrieff's version of *Tom and Jerry* at the Adelphi, quoted from Donald A. Low, *The Regency Underworld* (London: J.M. Dent, 1982) 119–20.

[11] See Stephen James Carver, 'William Harrison Ainsworth: The Life and Adventures of the Lancashire Novelist.' *Fukui Daigaku Kyouiku Chiiki Kagakubu no Kenkyu Kiyou* vol I, 59 (2003). Richard 'Dick' Turpin was a famous Georgian highwayman, executed at York in 1737.

[12] William Makepeace Thackeray, 'De Juventate,' *Roundabout Papers*, Works (London: Caxton, 1920) 55.

[13] See Roger Sales, 'Pierce Egan and the Representation of London', *Reviewing Romanticism*, ed. Philip Martin and Robin Jarvis (London, Macmillan, 1992).

[14] Egan 311.

[15] Egan 46.

[16] Egan 321.

[17] Egan 52.

[18] Egan 317.

[19] Egan 320.

[20] Egan 320.

[21] Egan 320.

[22] Egan 324.

[23] Egan 324.

[24] W. Cooke Taylor, *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire*, (1842), quoted from E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Pelican, 1968) 208–209.

[25] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber 1939) 447. J.C. Reid does not attribute this text to Egan in his biography of 1971, although a copy now held by the British Library is listed as written by Egan.

[26] As a parliamentary reporter, Dickens personally witnessed the passage of the First Reform Bill of 1832, a seismic political event heralding the concerns of the soon-to-be Victorian era.

[27] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1985) 153.

[28] Unsigned review, *Athenaeum* December 3 1836. Theodore Hook was another comic urban novelist of the 1820s. Thackeray based Mr Wagg upon him in *The History of Pendennis.*

[29] Charles Dickens, preface, *Sketches by Boz* (London: John Macrone 1836).

[30] Egan, 51–2.

[31] John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (1872 London: Cecil Palmer 1928) 76 – 77.

[32] Walter Bagehot, 'Charles Dickens' *National Review* vol 7 (October 1858).

[33] Dennis Walder, introduction, Charles Dickens *Sketches by Boz* (1839 London: Penguin 1995) xix.

[34] Dickens, 'A Visit to Newgate' (1836), *Sketches by Boz*, Works, 136.

[35] Dickens, 'The Streets - Night' (1836), *Sketches by Boz*, Works, 36.

[36] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets* (London: Cornhill University Press, 1995) 57 – 58.

[37] Dickens was twenty-four when Macrone published the collected *Sketches* in 1836.

[38] Dickens, preface to the first cheap edition of *Sketches by Boz*, 1850, Works 1. This preface was reprinted, unchanged, in all subsequent editions.

[39] As is well documented elsewhere, Dickens and Seymour did not see eye-to-eye on the direction of the project, and the notoriously sensitive, near-bankrupt artist committed suicide after revising the illustrations for the second issue (Dickens had rejected the originals).

[40] Mark Wormald, introduction, Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (1837 London: Penguin 1999) xv.

[41] Mary Russell Mitford, letter to Emily Jephson, 1837, quoted from Robert L. Pattern, introduction, Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (London: Penguin 1972) 17 – 18.

[42] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, Works 625.

[43] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, Works 549 – 550.

[44] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, Works 594.

[45] The title of the final chapter, 56: 'In which the Pickwick Club is finally dissolved, and everything concluded to the satisfaction of everybody.'

[46] Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, Works 752.

[47] This is true of David Lean's definitive British film version of 1948, Lionel Bart's musical *Oliver!* Of 1968, and Clive Donner's TV movie of 1982. Alan Bleasedale chose to extend the role of Monks in his ITV version of the novel in the mid-90s, but all but ignored the Maylies. It is likely this trend will continue in Roman Polanski's film version, which is presently in production.

[48] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Works 44.

[49] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Works 59.

[50] Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Works 106.

[51] 'Don't you know the devil when he's got a great-coat on?' Bill Sikes barks at his dog at one point, when Fagin enters his house in Bethnal Green. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, Works 187.

[52] Dickens, preface, *Oliver Twist.*

[53] For more detail on Newgate novels, see Stephen James Carver, *The Life and Works of The Lancashire Novelist William Harrison Ainsworth, 1805 – 1882* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press 2003).

[54] 'Mr. Punch's Literary Recipes', *Punch* August 7 1841. Probably written by Thackeray.

[55] Dickens, preface, *Oliver Twist.*

[56] Dickens, preface, *Oliver Twist.* The italics are mine, the capitals the author's.

[57] Edmund Yates, 'Celebrities at Home. No. LXXXXIV. Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth at Little Rockley', *The World*, March 27 1878.

[58] See John Harrison Stonehouse's introduction to Charles Dickens, *Sikes and Nancy: A Reading* (London: Henry Sotheran & Co, 1921).

[59] Kellow Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld*, (London: Penguin 1970) 1.

[60] Graham Greene, introduction, Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950) xiv.

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