Victorian Literature and Culture (2009), **37**, 583–607. Printed in the United States of America.
Copyright © 2009 Cambridge University Press. 1060-1503/09 $15.00
doi:10.1017/S1060150309090354

POPULAR DICKENS

By Lisa Rodensky

WHY WAS CHARLES DICKENS SO POPULAR when he broke onto the scene in the late 1830s?[1] That's still a real question to ask, but so is another, related question: what did the terms "popular" and "popularity" mean when applied to this novelist at this signal moment in the development of the novel? Writing in the *National Magazine and Monthly Critic: A Journal of Philosophy, Science, Literature, Music, and the Drama* – a short-lived monthly designed to publish serious work on various subjects – G. H. Lewes begins his 1837 review of Dickens's *Sketches by Boz, Pickwick Papers*, and *Oliver Twist* with a paragraph that worries over the nature of popularity:

> It is a difficult thing to distinguish between popularity and fame; and the distinction, though it may be made during the present time, must still wait the corroboration of the future. Literature undergoes greater and more frequent changes than the geological view of the earth points out in our globe: strata after strata are embedded and lost amidst the rushing of new tides, both of popularity and caprice; and we see that men who were the idols of the day are scarcely mentioned in a succeeding age, and only known to the curious. This is ever the effect of popularity without true fame: the adventitious circumstances by which a man attains popularity are no longer in action in a succeeding age; and if his popularity in the main depended on them, he is naturally forgotten. ("Review" 445)

That "popularity" should appear five times in the opening paragraph marks it as a defining term for the review as a whole. Put immediately into relation with fame on one side and caprice on the other, popularity itself becomes embedded between the permanent and the ephemeral. Of course, Lewes has his doubts about fame too, a term which, when it appears for a second time in the paragraph, needs "true" to distinguish it from some lesser kind. The danger of coupling fame with popularity is that fame might be defamed. Imagining literature as ever-changing and naturally so – the invocation of the geological imputes to literature the irreversible laws of rock formation – he provocatively confuses natural and commercial forces as he works through questions about the relation between fame and popularity. One danger here is that the reviewer himself might get buried in the last and latest strata; Lewes tries to take a bird's-eye view of the literary landscape, and to discriminate between that which is of the moment (the "adventitious circumstances") and the true and lasting. As his argument unfolds, Lewes mounts a case for Dickens and his readership that claims popularity

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as a site at which intrinsic merit and marketplace success (where such success is measured by the range and extent of the readership) can meet.

Lewes's review is only one of a number that take up the task of investigating what makes Dickens popular. More than any other group of reviews for a novelist of the period, Dickens's early reviews explicitly analyze popularity. The major reviews of his early work – *Sketches by Boz, Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby* – explicitly ask questions about popularity, reflecting on its power, its causes, its relation to merit and to reading and readers. Exposed are the rich confusions at work in and around the terms "popular" and "popularity," and the way Dickens's work brings them to the surface. Popular registers more than large sales (the term "bestseller" is invented later in the century to identify a work whose value is measured by sales alone) or a cheap price (though editions marketed as "cheap" were also called "popular"). It conjures more than being well-liked or produced for amusement or instruction.[2] In the first half of the nineteenth century especially, and particularly in these reviews, political, economic, and aesthetic impulses converge in the term. Popular evokes the foundational and national, the shared and common, in their most positive senses – not that which is dumped on the people (a product of mass production for mass consumption, for example), but rather that which originates in the people themselves. Reviewers note – both to praise and to blame – that Dickens's novels reproduce the language of the lower classes, who become synonymous with the people at strategically interesting moments. Some early reviewers explain Dickens's popularity as the reading public's response to his representations of the shared experiences of his countrymen. Set against this cluster of meanings are those circulating in the reviews that relegate the popular to the lowest common denominator, a category of mass-produced novel and novelist that better classes of readers should resist for many reasons, among them the suspicion that a work which attracts so many readers will degrade them, make them a part of a manipulated and undifferentiated mass reading public.[3]

Not all people were part of the reading public in the nineteenth century, and yet the growing numbers of that literate public moved reviewers to use people and reading public interchangeably. The complexities at work in uses of "the people" necessarily enter into the popular. The people are at once all of humanity and a specific segment of it (common people, folk). They are mankind in general, but also a specific nation. Popularity most obviously and often problematically calls up the agency of the people, who make choices by and for themselves, and in the face of Dickens's sales, it appeared to reviewers that the people had the power to decide who should rule the literary landscape. At stake here is not only a literary hierarchy and Dickens's place in it but also the hierarchy's relation to a reading public. Would the public determine literary standing? The expansion of literacy into the working classes, the reinvigoration of the serial, the lowering of prices for periodicals, the increasing numbers of newspapers and periodicals, and, finally, the singular power of Dickens himself, distinguish what happens in the 1830s and early 40s from anything preceding it. I argue here that Dickens's reviewers are navigating in and around contradictory meanings of popular and popularity in response to these momentous developments. As Dickens and his reviewers enter the second half of the nineteenth century, certain meanings come to dominate. With the repeal of the so-called "taxes on knowledge," popular and popularity more consistently suggest an idle reading public manipulated by a market and work that caters to that public. One story of how those meanings come to power is written in Dickens's reviews.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The motives driving the production of literature identified as popular in the nineteenth century (and in our own) have been the subject of recent critical studies. These studies reexamine the relations between commercial and political impulses in persuasive and productive ways, and yet not enough attention has been paid to nineteenth-century uses of popular and popularity themselves. Ian Haywood's richly argued *The Revolution in Popular Literature* is one of several studies that investigates G. W. M. Reynolds's publications in the 40s and 50s, publications in which Haywood finds "the yoking together of radical political analysis, popular enlightenment or 'useful' knowledge, and literary pleasure" (2). By showing in detail how these elements are fused in the publications of Reynolds (and others), Haywood implicitly challenges the boundaries between the terms radical and popular; however, his explorations of the varieties of impulses at work in popular literature do not open up into a consideration of the varieties of impulses at work in the terms themselves. Haywood does consider Dickens in this context, positioning him as a middle-class, anti-radical author, "the most popular middle-class writer to date . . . [but] not truly popular in the sense that he was available directly to working-class readers," who could not afford the price of a monthly issue (163). Haywood's "popular but not truly popular" belies the complexities of the term. Sally Ledger, in contrast, seeks to recover what she claims was "blazingly clear to [Dickens's] contemporaries" – that Dickens was a "radical political writer on the side of the poor and dispossessed." Ledger puts forward "an altogether less respectable, more truly disruptive, more *popular* radical genealogy" (2). The specially emphasized "popular" suggests its importance to the argument, and yet, although Ledger adeptly and persuasively attends to different conceptions of the people (as political entity, as mass-market populace), her work as a whole does not engage the problematic uses of popular.

In chapter two of *Dickens and His Readers*, entitled "Popularities and Conventions," George Ford claims that Dickens never felt a moment's ambivalence about the size and diversity of his own readership, since he knew for a certainty that a popular author could be a great author (21). But if Dickens had no trouble reconciling these two categories of authorship, his attitudes towards the political and social movements associated with the popular were more contradictory. Dickens's love of his reading public has been well-documented (see Butt and Tillotson), but at the same time, scenes in the novels (*Oliver Twist*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *A Tale of Two Cities*) represent the repulsive behavior of the crowd. He was also critical of radical politics, Chartism in particular. In short, Dickens's politics remain the subject of scholarly disagreement. Critics have argued that Dickens's work owes much to radical traditions, and to such traditions as were embodied in certain forms identified as popular, such as the melodrama, adventure narratives, and certain types of satire. Though these topics are beyond the scope of this essay and have been taken up in other studies,[4] I recognize that the shifts between different meanings in popular (and in people and populace) come into Dickens's own writing.[5] When the people become a mob, Dickens establishes his distance from them and invites his readers to do the same.

He distanced himself in other ways as well. Examining the Daniel Maclise portrait of Dickens which became the "preliminary frontispiece of the last installment of *Nicholas Nickleby*," Gerard Curtis explains that the portrait was "a central piece in that subtle change from the popular writer of caricature sketches to cultural icon and writer of dignified novels . . . one showing poetic genius with the light of inspiration striking the eyes . . . the writer of artistic portraiture, versus, as some critics were wont to label him, 'Boz'" (238). The shift in Curtis's own terms – from "popular" to "cultural" to "artistic" – registers the shift

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

from uncultured to cultured, from Man of the People to Man of Letters, in Dickens's self-presentation as early as 1839. So too Dickens's complex attitudes towards class necessarily shaped his varied representations of the people. The unified brotherhood idealized in the works (Tiny Tim's "God bless us, Every One!") projects the inclusiveness which some reviewers identify as the element that makes Dickens's works popular and which leads them to conclude that Dickens's representations of the lower class are not vulgarities (as I discuss below). But Dickens's oft-cited desire for and promotion of middle-class respectability reasserts distinctions. Such tensions circulate in Dickens's work, in the responses of reviewers to that work, and in the culture itself.

In this essay, I analyze examples from the major reviews of Dickens published in periodicals (weeklies, quarterlies, and monthlies) that offered more extensive examinations of Dickens's work. These periodicals include the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review*, the *London and Westminster Review*, the *London Quarterly Review, Fraser's Magazine*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Metropolitan Magazine*, the *National Magazine and Monthly Critic*, the *Examiner*, and the *Spectator*. Though I limit my study to these periodicals, Dickens's work received many more notices in other ones, as Kathryn Chittick has shown in her remarkable work of scholarly research *Dickens and the 1830s*, in which she examines all of Dickens's notices – in newspapers, weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies – during this decade.[6] In my analysis, I focus on the detailed discussions of Dickens's work presented in the periodicals positioning themselves as serious and selective. These reviews engage questions about the meanings of popular and popularity, particularly (though not only) in the late 30s and early 40s, and for good reason. Increasingly anxious about the expanding reading public and the literature it backed, reviewers could see that that public was not only getting bigger, but that it was also responding to work that the reviewers themselves excoriated.[7] This fact was celebrated in the Chartist newspaper the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, where the reviewer of Dickens's *The Chimes*, attacking "the critic-craft" who "voted the *Chimes trash*," proclaimed that "they [the critics] have discovered by this time that the public, and themselves, hold opinions directly the reverse of each other" (*CH* 157); however, such a topic was generating much more ambivalent responses in that very "critic-craft" which the *Northern Star* lampoons.[8]

Dickens's reviewers had to respond to an event that had already taken place, a phenomenon – as they occasionally called it – created by the reading public itself. What was left to reviewers was the task of explaining the Dickens phenomenon – its causes and effects – as if it were a force of nature, though it was pointedly identified with a most unnatural force: the newly developing steam technologies and their multiplying offspring, the serial. In her entry for the *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens* on "Reviews and Reviewing," Kathryn Chittick notes that in Charles Buller's review of Dickens's work in the *London and Westminster Review* (the first notice of Dickens's work in a quarterly), Buller makes plain that the review must be written "not because of literary merit, but because [Dickens] was a publishing phenomenon who cuts across the usual lines of literary decorum" (498). By 1844, Thackeray (writing as Michael Angelo Titmarsh) would exclaim in his review of *A Christmas Carol* that "it is so spread over England by this time, that no sceptic, no *Fraser's Magazine*, – no, not even the god-like and ancient *Quarterly* itself (venerable, Saturnian, big-wigged dynasty!) could review it down" (*CH* 148–49). Detectable in this satiric account is an animus against both the dynastic *Quarterly Review* and the democratic "spread" of popularity – a trope that will recur in Dickens's reviews.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

***

AND SO THE QUESTION IS ENGAGED: who or what was to determine the value of a work? The reviews – published anonymously until the second half of the century[9] – offered themselves up as more than the opinions of particular individuals. Exploring the ways periodicals attempted to inculcate certain reading practices, Kelly J. Mays notes that anonymously published Victorian reviews operated as institutionally authorized determinations of merit (167). But reviewers of the 1830s were in a signally different position from reviewers at the beginning of the century. By the time Dickens arrived on the scene, the power of the great quarterlies – the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* – had peaked, and though the rise of periodicals in the late eighteenth century had been in part a reaction to what would become a more established, larger and more diverse readership in the nineteenth century and an attempt to control its tastes, when that great public had finally found its feet, it was in no mood to heed the strictures of a couple of Scottish quarterly reviews. Nor were many of Dickens's readers likely even to know that those quarterlies existed. Readers knew what they liked: they liked Boz.

Language describing what the people like and are like is of particular interest to Raymond Williams, who began his exploration of the tensions in popular and popularity in *Culture and Society*, but focuses his attention most fully on the terms in *Keywords*. Williams registers the early and often pejorative meanings of preceding centuries, meanings that carry a strong "sense of calculation" (236) – that is to say, the sense that popular and popularity evoke successful efforts to manipulate the people into liking someone or something. The link between popularity and demagoguery is palpable. From here, Williams considers where and when popular and popularity were used to associate the people with autonomous choice, and where and when the terms evoked a people whose desires and choices were regulated by forces – commercial, social, political – over which it had no control. Tellingly, Williams situates an intensified instability in the words in the nineteenth century. Not only does Williams put into play the neutral nineteenth-century sense of popular as well-liked, but he also follows this sense with an illustration from the *Oxford English Dictionary* in which an American reviewer laments the use of popular as a term of critical approbation: "they have come . . . to take popular quite gravely and sincerely as a synonym for good." Though the *OED* identifies this use as an American dialect or slang usage, what draws Williams to it is that it gives evidence of a "shift in perspective. . . . Popular was being seen from the point of view of the people rather than from those seeking favour or power from them." Such uses align agency and legitimacy with popularity, and although Williams doesn't adduce more evidence to support his claim, his brief entry gestures towards this association in the nineteenth century. Against such impulses, Williams reintroduces those pressing against it – those that associate the popular with "inferior kinds of work," giving as his particular examples "popular literature" and "popular press" (237). Williams reduces "popular literature" to low or inferior literature that manipulates a reading public in order to turn a profit, creating certain base desires and then satisfying them, but here too – especially with literature – I would argue that popular evokes a range of meanings that Williams doesn't inspect. The term is a site of tension among a now powerful reading public (with a point of view), critics who are struggling to hold on to the power to determine good and bad, authors with a complex set of motives often connected with the professionalization of writing,[10] and a market that has interests of its own.[11]

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Williams tunes in to the moment in the nineteenth century when it wasn't clear whose point of view the popular represented, and he knows, as we do, that as "popular literature" and "popular novel" and "popularity" itself move into the late nineteenth and the twentieth century, the more demotic uses of the words predominate, so that popular becomes synonymous with a product that is mass-produced for a public that eats what it is fed, while popularity aligns itself with celebrity. The people are seen as increasingly indolent and passive, losing the power to determine what they want or like; so too popular loses its capacity to identify literature made by the people or derived from them. In his entry on popular, Williams distinguishes uses of popular culture in the nineteenth century from "the recent sense of popular culture as the culture actually made by people for themselves" (236). This last sense looks towards the folk – a term that plays a role in shaping nineteenth-century uses of popular. In his entry on folk, Williams more fully considers the "newly specific formation" of folk and folklore as against popular and observes that

> the formation belongs to a complex set of responses to the new industrial and urban society. Folksong came to be influentially specialized to the pre-industrial, pre-urban, pre-literate world, though popular songs, including new industrial work songs, were still being actively produced. Folk, in this period, had the effect of backdating [to the preindustrial period] all elements of popular culture, and was offered as a contrast with modern popular forms, either of a radical and working-class or of a commercial kind. (137)

Williams's description registers a distinction that the terms folk and popular begin to police, and his implicit point is that the distinction in terminology obscures the continuities between pre- and postindustrial culture. When in the first half of the century the terms popular and folk were newly in contact, popular was put into use to describe a wide range of texts, not just pre- and postindustrial, but also works that expressed a shared human (and particularly English) experience.

What plays out in Dickens's reviews are the conflicts within popular as the "newly specific formation" of folk comes on the scene in England. The reviewers use popular in contradictory ways that at once empower and disempower Dickens's audience, that imagine Dickens as at once creating a popular art (in Williams's preindustrial sense) and creating a product for mass consumption (exploiting the topicality that serial publication promotes, dumbing down his work for an inattentive audience, or, less pejoratively, creating works that instruct an audience in need of instruction). *Pickwick*'s Dingley Dell Christmas number recalls the ancient customs of the English while the mass-produced monthly part connects the work to the commercial venture of the serial. Folk absorbs the more affirmative meanings of popular by claiming the purity and even the sublimity of a pastoral, preliterate culture, while popular is left to register both the growth of an ignorant reading public (vulnerable to seduction) and the mastered art of market manipulation. The political impulses in uses of popular likewise suggest a public manipulated by demagogic leaders of the moment as against the spirit of community and nationality represented in folk. In Dickens's reviews, we recognize the movement between these meanings; reviewers connect Dickens's popularity and the popular novels he writes both to market forces promoting the serial and to his special capacity to unearth an underground world. This underground world of the masses offers itself up both as an unknown world and as a world that reveals to middle-class readers the sources of their own forms of humor and pathos. The urban lower classes – like the peasants

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of old – have preserved such forms. These elements surface in reviews to explain how it is that Dickens commands such a broad readership. Still in touch with impulses soon to be more fully appropriated by folk, uses of popular in Dickens's reviews negotiate between the permanent and the ephemeral, the foundational and the commercial, the sublime and the demotic.

Sir Walter Scott's 1830 introduction to *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (entitled "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry") offers the ballads exhumed there as "popular poetry" and goes on to employ the term popular to mean ancient and early and ballad; on a single page Scott speaks of "popular poetry," of the "ancient popular poetry" or simply of "ancient poetry" (24). Often he juxtaposes this poetry to the refined poetry of later ages (including his own), but at others he celebrates the great range of this poetry and its practitioners from low to high. Preceding Scott, J. G. Herder in Germany (and before him in England John Brand, author of *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, 1777) revived interest in ancient forms. Of Herder, Peter Burke explains, "What was new in the approach of Herder and his friends and followers, among whom were the brothers Grimm, was the idea that songs and stories, plays and proverbs, customs and ceremonies were all part of a whole, expressing the 'spirit' of a particular people" (216).

One of the Grimms' own readers, the English antiquarian William Thoms, is credited with introducing the term "folk-lore" into English in an August 22, 1846 letter to the *Athenaeum*, in which Thoms, writing under the name Ambrose Merton, made his case for the collection of "what we in England designate as Popular Antiquities or Popular Literature" – that which he later describes as "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, &c. of the olden time." It is the parenthetical correction he then adds that gets Thoms into the *OED*, for in addition to wishing to preserve popular antiquities and popular literature, he wants to note that "by-the-bye" what is called "Popular Literature . . . is more a Lore than a Literature, and would be most aptly described by a good Saxon compound, Folk-Lore, the Lore of the People" ("Folk-Lore" 863).[12] Thoms later gives evidence for the intimate connections between the folklore of England and that of Germany (using the Grimms to support his claim), and, as other commentators (including Williams) have noted, it makes sense that Thoms prefers the germanic *volk* to the Latin *populus*.[13] But the argument gives evidence of more than a rejection of the classical and a turn towards Germanic philology. Thirty years later, in *Notes and Queries*, Thoms (recalling the beginnings of *Notes and Queries*, the periodical he established in 1849 and edited until 1872) frames his 1846 *Athenaeum* letter as issuing at just that time "when the railroad mania was at its height, and the iron horse was trampling under foot all our ancient landmarks, and putting to flight all the relics of our early popular mythology" ("Story" 42).[14] Alive in Thoms's recollection is a growing commercialism and industrialism that informed his recasting of what he wanted to preserve as folklore, and it's the particular combined form of popular with literature that he implicitly rejects as inapt, since both popular mythology and popular superstition come into his 1876 *Notes and Queries* piece. This putting into play of folklore as distinct from popular literature registers in the nineteenth century a distance between the oral and the written, the preindustrial and the industrial, such that in the second half of the century, popular literature refers less frequently to the literature that Scott exhumed at the century's beginning or that Thoms sought to save in 1846. Popular literature divided an urban and even mass-produced literature from a preindustrial, oral tradition.[15] By 1876, claims Thoms, the term folklore had become "household" (42).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

If indeed folklore had become a household word, popular continued to hold onto its sense of a literature originating in the people even at mid-century, when Dickens launched his own *Household Words*. In "Publisher's Circulars and Literary Advertisements for 1854"[16] (about which more anon), the critic David Masson, thinking about "the state of our popular literature" (178–79), refers to it in the same paragraph as "the home-made literature of the people" and as both "the literature of the people" and "the ancient minstrelsy continued into modern times." Masson contrasts this homemade literature with the "bastard literature" which was "purveyed for the masses by commercial firms" – the penny bloods, for instance (180). That Masson uses the label "home-made" suggests that by 1855 he distinguishes between this literature and "popular literature," though popular remains the term that frames this part of his discussion. The English share in the heritage of the ancient minstrelsy carried into modern times as against the bastard (and thus illegitimate) literature concocted for the masses by commercial firms.

***

REFERENCES TO A SHARED READING EXPERIENCE and to work that expresses the spirit of the people enter Dickens's reviews early and often – in the context of an explicit analysis of popularity – as reviewers grapple with not only the size of Dickens's audience but its range. Charles Buller begins his essay in the *London and Westminster Review* on *Sketches by Boz*, the first fifteen numbers of *Pickwick Papers*, and the early numbers of *Bentley's Miscellany* with a claim that he will "investigate the foundation of a popularity extraordinary on account of its sudden growth, its vast extent, and the recognition which it has received from persons of the most refined taste, as well as from the great mass of the reading public" (*CH* 52). This range of readership, among other elements, makes the popularity extraordinary, but at issue too is the sense of a "foundation" for the popularity: the suddenness of the growth is set against the firmness of the foundation. So too Lewes in his 1837 review – the piece with which this essay begins – makes particular mention of this remarkable range of readership:

> "Boz" has perhaps a wider popularity than any man has enjoyed for many years. Not alone are his delightful works confined to the young and old, the grave and gay, the witty, the intellectual, the moralist, and the thoughtless of both sexes in the reading circles, from the peer and judge to the merchant's clerk; but even the common people, both in town and country, are equally intense in their admiration. Frequently we have seen the butcher-boy, with his tray on his shoulder, reading with the greatest avidity the last "Pickwick;" the footman (whose fopperies are so inimitably laid bare), the maid-servant, the chimney-sweep, all classes, in fact, read "Boz." ("Review" 445–46)

The list Lewes adduces separates the upper- and upper-middle class from the "common people;" however, both his punctuation and his "equally" encourage the reader to see these groups as equal in their interest in the novels. Although "common" inscribes a distinction between high and low, the passage itself moves towards commonality; by the end of the passage, the peer and sweep are alike swept up into "all classes" that make up the readership. Differences surface, but they also submerge in his discussion of audience and popularity.

The conjunction of popularity and range of readership breeds particular dangers. Even favorable early reviews of Dickens's works step carefully around the power of this broad group with shared interests, and that power is registered in their uses of popularity. Reviewers

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

concede that popularity on such a scale takes out of the reviewer's hands the initial decision about whether or not Dickens's work deserves reviewing. It must be reviewed. So Thomas Henry Lister in his October 1838 review of *Sketches by Boz*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Nicholas Nickleby* borrows from the language of legal procedure to define popularity's place:

> Great popularity is doubtless to be accepted as presumptive evidence of merit – and should at least induce us to regard with attention the qualities of one who can exhibit so many suffrages in his favour. But even a cursory glance over literary history will teach its insufficiency as a proof of merit. We shall, therefore, regard it merely as a claim to notice – and treat Mr Dickens with no more favour than if he could count only hundreds instead of myriads, among his readers. (*CH* 71)

Lister's terms put him in touch with the action popular – one of the earliest uses of popular – which described a legal action available to any citizen. The action popular entitled any person to be heard. It registers the point of view of the people. But to bring a case is not to win it. Popularity is a form of evidence that makes a prima facie case but does not prove it. From the legal, Lister shifts to the political and to the more obvious sense of the popular as synonymous with democratic; clearly this is a limited form of democracy in which the "suffrages" don't decide elections – though they do determine which candidates get to vie for higher office. One can see how carefully Lister negotiates this terrain as he gives popularity the power of "doubtless," and yet the "doubtless" gives way to the doubt that enters through his recourse to the "cursory glance over literary history" and then to "merely," which demotes the acceptance of the "presumptive evidence of merit" to "a claim to notice."

Lister's careful navigations around the power of the people, which he registers in popularity, suggest the reviewers' difficult position at this juncture and the way popularity as a term brought these difficulties to the surface. A burden of proof has, it seems, shifted, but the legitimacy that popularity confers (here connected to the vote) is met with the reviewer's attempts to reassert his role as arbiter of merit. Nevertheless, the possibility that popular means good does enter. When Lewes in his 1837 review moves from his introductory paragraph to his review proper, he looks into whether Dickens "has attained his astonishing and extensive popularity" through fair or unfair means. This he names as a "fit subject of inquiry," and assumes as the first order of business that he should lay out some possibilities, including "the caprice of the moment, the patronage of the great, the puffing of booksellers" and finally Dickens's "own intrinsic merit" ("Review" 445). "Intrinsic" has a significant place in this last clause, since it separates the circumstantial from the essential. So popularity might still arise out of these various implicitly distorting market manipulations and have nothing to do with merit, but Lewes creates a competing narrative as well, one which brings the popular into contact with the intrinsic merit of the work. By asking "whether, in short, people have any reason (beyond the momentary impulse notoriety always creates) for their delight in perusing his works" (445), Lewes opens up the possibility that the answer is yes – the people, the popular voice, has reason.

Far from marking popularity as that which denotes the manipulation of the people by the market, Lewes exposes the varied meanings of the term and its accommodation of shifts in point of view – from a popularity that suggests market manipulation to one that gives agency to the people. Popularity might mean a legitimate or illegitimate success. If the word isn't necessarily demotic, then reviewers have the task of distinguishing one kind of popularity

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

from another. This is one of the tasks of Abraham Hayward's 1837 notice in the *Quarterly Review* of *Sketches by Boz*, the first seventeen numbers of *Pickwick Papers*, and the first numbers of *Oliver Twist*, where Hayward distinguishes Dickens's popularity from that of others:

> The popularity of this writer is one of the most remarkable literary phenomena of recent times, for it has been fairly earned without resorting to any of the means by which most other writers have succeeded in attracting the attention of their contemporaries. He has flattered no popular prejudice and profited by no passing folly: he has attempted no caricature sketches of the manners or conversations of the aristocracy; and there are very few political or personal allusions in his works. Moreover, his class of subjects are such as to expose him at the outset to the fatal objection of vulgarity; and, with the exception of occasional extracts in the newspapers, he has received little or no assistance from the press. (*CH* 56–57)

Hayward makes clear that it is not just the fact of Dickens's popularity that constitutes the "remarkable literary phenomena," but rather that such popularity has been "fairly earned." To invoke the "fairly earned" is, of course, to put us in mind of that which is unfairly earned. In "popular prejudice," he makes use of "popular" to introduce the sense of an easily exploitable and degraded set of beliefs. At the same time he introduces the vulgar or faddish ("passing folly") and puffing. The gaining of unfair popularity through the topical – the bad kind of popularity that conjures the mob-like behavior of the people as against that which is lasting – emerges here. Hayward likewise separates Dickens from other novelists who had found large audiences by exploiting particular political and / or personal scandals (Lewes in his 1837 review reiterates this claim, as does the *Fraser's* review "Charles Dickens and his Works" in 1840 [*CH* 86–90]). That Dickens does not exploit such methods credits him with a popularity fairly earned and credits the audience with responding to work without having been flattered or otherwise manipulated. Of the early numbers of *Pickwick*, Hayward announces that "the whole reading public were talking about them – the names of Winkle, Wardell, Weller, Snodgrass, Dodson and Fogg, had become familiar in our mouths as household terms" (*CH* 57). The shift from "the whole reading public" to "our" in a single sentence signals the readiness with which Hayward was willing to align himself with this public.

This power to produce the shared experience becomes, in a review of *Nicholas Nickleby* written by John Forster, an early and stalwart supporter of Dickens and later his biographer, one of "the causes of so remarkable a popularity":

> Thousands read the book because it places them in the midst of scenes and characters with which they are already themselves acquainted; and thousands read it with no less avidity because it introduces them to passages in nature and life of which they before knew nothing, but of the truth of which their own habits and senses suffice to assure them. This is a test which only a man of genius could bear. It is only in the presence of a writer of genius that the affinities and sympathies of high and low, in regard to the customs and usages of life, are so revealed. For it is not more by the bonds of a common humanity, than by the alliances of common habits, that we are all linked together. The highest and the lowest in these respects most nearly approximate each other. Like effects must always more or less result from being either above or below a dependence on other people's opinions. (677)

Although Forster preserves the distinctions between high and low among Dickens's readers, the immediate assertion of equality (as in Lewes's earlier review) undercuts the difference

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Forster first identifies, and produces an image of the whole readership as a people. Dickens reveals the affinities, sympathies, and bonds between the highest and the lowest, and he does so by representing "the customs and usages of life." Forster's phrasing in this context expands popularity to signify the common heritage from which all Dickens's readers have arisen. Forster works hard to exclude any sense of the common as low or base; "common" enters (twice) in its Wordsworthian sense as shared experience and engages positive meanings for popularity. To produce this shared experience is a form of genius. More to the point, the elevation of Dickens to the status of genius is not at odds with Dickens's commercial success.

Implicit in Forster's review are the demotic meanings of popularity that he no doubt registered in other reviews and that he anticipates by resisting. But where Forster resists such meanings, Hayward in the *Quarterly Review* finds himself tangled up in the complex impulses in the term that simultaneously elevate and demote Dickens and his work. Describing the effect of *Pickwick*, Hayward explains that

> Pickwick chintzes figured in linendrapers' windows, and Weller corduroys in breeches-makers' advertisements; Boz cabs might be seen rattling through the streets, and the portrait of the author of *Pelham* or *Crichton* was scraped down or pasted over to make room for that of the new popular favourite in the omnibusses. This is only to be accounted for on the supposition that a fresh vein of humour had been opened; that a new and decidedly original genius had sprung up; and the most cursory reference to preceding English writers of the comic order will show, that, in his own peculiar walk, Mr Dickens is not simply the most distinguished, but the first. (*CH* 57)

The "new popular favourite" necessarily recalls the old popular favorites, while the movement of cabs and omnibuses enacts the ceaseless but predictable movement from the old to the new. We are in the world of middle- and lower-middle-class fashion here – of chintzes and corduroys – and of value determined by the extrinsic manipulations of the market as against the intrinsic worth of the goods. What circulates here is not the work but the portraits of the author; in "Dickens in the Visual Market," Gerard Curtis describes the Victorian "portrait marketplace" (235) in which Dickens's likeness is as much a product for sale as is his text. The "new popular favourite" connects the popular not with merit but with a market-driven celebrity. It doesn't take much to imagine the scraping down of Dickens's portrait in the not-too-distant future (a possibility that Hayward later makes more explicit), so it is all the more unexpected when Hayward identifies the public's turn to Dickens from Bulwer and Ainsworth – the old popular favorites – as signaling the possible arrival of "a new and decidedly original genius." How did we get from Pickwick chintzes to genius? Hayward's paragraph ends by implying a connection between popularity and merit. The shift that empowers the readers seems to be occurring without notice between sentences. By the end of the paragraph, popular and popularity don't signify vulgarity or faddish commercialism but instead originality and genius that the largest and broadest readership has itself promoted.

What distinguishes Dickens from Bulwer and Ainsworth – what gives him "his own peculiar walk" – is his use of the speech and stories of London's lower classes: "The primary cause, then, of this author's success, we take to be his felicity in working up the genuine mother-wit and unadulterated vernacular idioms of the lower classes of London" (*CH* 60). While Herder and others in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries looked to the rural populations as sources of pure forms of popular literature, Hayward solicits regard for this "genuine mother-wit," these "unadulterated vernacular idioms of the lower classes

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of London." Elsewhere Dickens's slang provokes reviewers to condescend, and yet even in those instances they give the sense that Dickens has tapped into the foundational and that this capacity to speak the people's language aligns him with the popular as folk. In an 1840 *British and Foreign Review* notice of Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* and Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong* entitled "Popular Literature of the Day," the reviewer loses no time in attacking the novelists' use of slang and representations of low life, but in so doing he finds himself quoting Herder as he concedes that novelists rightly introduce some aspects of "the gross, horrible, and cruel" (232). A similar tension arises in Richard Ford's 1839 notice in the *Quarterly Review*, where Ford, with obvious irony, names Dickens the "regius professor of slang." Even as he denigrates slang as "that expression of the mother-wit, the low humour of the lower classes, their Sanskrit, their hitherto unknown tongue" (*CH* 83), he implies that Dickens has discovered that primitive language and is speaking it. Ford explicitly worries over the effect of this slang on proper English (as others do after him) and he may attempt to contain its power; nonetheless, he makes it foundational.

Dickens becomes the "new popular favourite" not because he manipulates his audience or is vulgar (Hayward tells us earlier and in no uncertain terms that he is not vulgar) but because he mines this language and this wit, a mother-wit that conceives a family of readers. Hayward (who was himself from an "old but rather humble Wiltshire family" and was a "self-made man of letters" [Harling]) identifies the incorporation of that language as the "talent or quality that has procured [Dickens] so unprecedented a share of popularity." Whereas elsewhere that language "has been hitherto condemned as a poor, bald, disjointed, unadorned, and nearly unintelligible *slang*, utterly destitute of feeling, fancy or force," Dickens has given us "the rich and varied stores of wit and humour discoverable amongst the lower classes of the metropolis" (*CH* 60). The sense of discovery, then, allows Dickens to take his place among antiquarians of the time who were likewise discovering and anthologizing the language and stories and humor of the people. Dickens has, in short, made it possible for a range of readers to get access to these stories and to find their filial connection with them. In his 1855 article on the state of literature for the *British Quarterly Review* (introduced above), Masson remarks of "our home-made literature" that "there is a rich vein of force and humour" in it which he connects to the "national literature" (180). Likely he has Scott in mind, but this language owes something to Dickens's reviews.

Still, submerged in Hayward's praise are the impulses that bring the popular and popularity back into the world of the ephemeral and the commercially driven:

> Having made up our minds as to the origin of Mr Dickens's popularity, it remains to add a word or two as to its durability, of which many warm admirers are already beginning to doubt – not, it must be owned, without reason; for the last three or four numbers are certainly much inferior to the former ones, and indications are not wanting that the particular vein of humour which has hitherto yielded so much attractive metal, is worked out. This, indeed, from its very nature, must have been anticipated by any clear-sighted and calculating observer from the first, and we fear that the quantity of alloy mixed up with the genuine ore to fit it for immediate use, will materially impair its lustre when the polish of novelty has worn off. (*CH* 61)

First Hayward reiterates his claims about origins, recalling that Dickens's popularity originates in the people themselves, their stories and humor, but the "fresh vein of humour" having been opened, it might just as quickly peter out, like a mineral discovery that may be

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

worked up until it is "worked out." Though Dickens has hit the mother lode of mother-wit in the stories of the lower class, something impure must be mixed in, it seems, so that he can present it for immediate use. By the end of the paragraph, the humor becomes a novelty, and Hayward denigrates what makes Dickens popular. The "genuine ore" is contaminated by Dickens's mediation.

Comparing Hayward's review to Lewes's review in the *National Magazine and Monthly Critic*, one can identify a provocative difference in the ways Hayward and Lewes analyze the popularity of Dickens's work. As I indicate above, Hayward puts Dickens in touch with the elements ("the genuine ore") we now associate with folk. Lewes, in contrast, associates the causes of Dickens's popularity with his capacity to combine "the nicety of observation, the fineness of tact, the exquisite humour, the wit, heartiness, sympathy with all things good and beautiful in human nature" that have "a deep and subtle philosophy in them" ("Review" 446). This language elevates the popular by associating it with serious work (not merely for amusement), effectively erasing the boundaries between high and low, learned and popular work. Indeed, Lewes goes so far as to dismiss Hayward's *Quarterly Review* notice (which he calls a "blundering article" [445]) as one that mistakenly identifies Dickens's discovery of slang and the humor of the lower class as that which makes him popular. More provocatively, a *Metropolitan Magazine* reviewer of 1840 joins these two strands of argument. The reviewer begins by declaiming that "Mr. Dickens has created a new era in our popular literature," and distinguishes Dickens as a writer of popular literature in this new era because he has "opened the inexhaustible mine of the domestic life of the masses." From that mine, Dickens creates "publications [that] are decidedly literature. They have their own species of eloquence – they are natural, humourous, witty in their general character; and when the occasion calls for it, they rise into pathos, and sometimes, accompanying the immortal soul of man in its loftiest flights, become really sublime" ("*Master Humphrey's Clock*" 51). The publications are at once decidedly literature and decidedly popular literature. The explicit thinking about this "new era in our popular literature" evokes literature intended to amuse, but then links that literature both to Hayward's sense of material mined from the people and Lewes's sense that Dickens's texts join high and low. These reviews realize the convergence of meanings in popular.

As Hayward moves from originality to novelty, he also moves from popular as a term identifying a work that draws out shared impulses recognizable to a wide-range of readers and towards the sense of the popular as ephemeral. This is also a movement one traces in a March 1838 *Spectator* review of *Nicholas Nickleby*, where the reviewer categorizes Dickens's "Cockney pronunciation, the cant words, the slang expressions interwoven in his pages" as elements that "will lose their zest as soon as they are superseded by others" ("Boz and His *Nicholas Nickleby*" 304). These are also elements the *Spectator* reviewer names as "causes" of Dickens popularity, but, tellingly, he cannot separate them from elements out of which Dickens creates art:

> he has a kind of conventional Cockney humour, best described by a phrase from its own dialect, "*werry funny*." But, mingled with such qualifications for mob-pleasing, are powers of a higher order. He has much of the most electric spirit for operating upon the vulgar, where no appeal can be made to their interests or their prejudices – the real spirit of humanity, which spoke in Terence's "homo sum; nil humanum a me alienum puto." Boz also has touches of pathos, and of tragic sadness: he sometimes utters, sometimes suggests, penetrating reflections; and he has often points of universal

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> truth. These things have not only contributed to give Boz part of his popularity, but have redeemed his literalness from the meanness and dryness of the inventorial style, and raised his productions above the mere ephemera of the day; whilst the quaint and homely manner in which his best thoughts are mostly expressed, add to his present popularity, whatever may be their future effect. (304)

The confusion of terms that brings into play commercial forces as well as those that recognize artistic accomplishment animates the whole of the *Spectator* review and illuminates the contradictory impulses that popular and popularity produced. Even as the reviewer attempts to demote Dickensian superficiality, naming the "first quality" of Dickensian popularity as his "perfect plainness, the common-life character of his subjects, and the art with which he imparts vitality to the literal and whatsoever lies on the surface" (304), the language of that which is first in quality – "perfect," "art," "vitality" – enters nonetheless. "Mingled" seems to me the key verb here and signals the difficulty of separating common as low ("common-life character") and common as universal ("points of universal truth"), echoing too Hayward's sense of "the quantity of alloy mixed up with the genuine ore to fit it for immediate use." Indeed, in a November notice of *Oliver Twist* in the *Spectator*, this same reviewer (he refers back to his March 1838 review of *Nickleby*) quotes Hayward's praise of Dickens's discovery of the language and wit of the lower classes as he considers the "sources" of Dickens's popularity ("Boz's *Oliver Twist*" 1115). Like Forster, the *Spectator* reviewer makes the case that Dickens's work creates a shared human experience, not for a mob but for a people ("the real spirit of humanity"). Dickens's literalness – that which qualified him for mob-pleasing – is literally redeemed and is made into a higher form ("above the mere ephemera of the day"), though it firmly remains as an element that makes his work popular.

This mingling requires the *Spectator* reviewer to reflect self-consciously on his inability to police his own responses. Taking up Dickens's slang and cant words in particular, the reviewer confesses that "as long as they are current, they produce an effect, even upon those who can analyze their nature and detect their worthlessness" ("Boz and His *Nicholas Nickleby* 304). As if to explain the inability to resist by those who should know better, the reviewer throws up his hands, conceding that at the end of the day he cannot really name the reasons for Dickens's popularity: "After all, something must be allowed for inappreciable influences. The air induces an epidemic, we know not why; and the mind is similarly affected" (304). The connections between novel-reading and disease would not have been unusual in the 1830s (though more usual in the 1850s and 60s),[17] but more telling here is the connection between the popular and the epidemic. Where popularity could earlier be associated with those powers of the higher order through which an audience might have access to the universal, this paragraph's use of popularity puts us in mind of the transmission of disease through a vulnerable readership. What we share is nothing better than the flu. Here the *Spectator* reaches back to a strain of meaning for popular current in the eighteenth century and called up by Johnson in his *Dictionary*, where he gives as his fifth and last entry under popular that which is "prevailing or raging among the populace: as a popular distemper" (301).[18] The association of the popular with epidemic and disease evokes all the anxieties attendant on mob behavior.

Questions about the causes of popularity – like the causes of disease – necessarily open up into questions about transmission. Here we locate a critique of the serial form as a mechanical circumstance that produces popularity. In his November 1838 review of *Oliver Twist*, the *Spectator* reviewer explains that serial publication allows Dickens to exploit very

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

current topics: "When his matter is not sufficiently attractive in itself, he has no objection to paint up to the flaring tastes of the vulgar great and small; nor does he scruple to avail himself of any current prejudice, whether popular or *feel*osophical, without much regard to critical exactness" ("Boz's *Oliver Twist*" 1115). The reviewer's point is that Dickens readily exploits the prejudices of both the high and the low ("the vulgar great and small"), thus shrinking the distance between "popular" and "*feel*osophical" (both are vulgar, both harbor prejudices). So many of the demotic uses of popular enter here – the vulgar, the prejudicial, the ephemeral. The power to induce anticipation in the public – to control their appetite by serving a part that is "just enough to serve as a meal to the mob of readers" ("Boz and His *Nicholas Nickleby*" 304) – makes popularity a function of the market. Referring back to his March 1838 review of *Nickleby*, the reviewer explicitly identifies such "extrinsic circumstances" as having created Dickens's popularity: "Appearing in parts, each of which contained something striking and readable for all ranks, his works were the very thing for 'the press' to fasten upon, as furnishing a ready means of filling up blank space" ("Boz's *Oliver Twist*" 1115).

The *Spectator* reviewer thus connects serialization and popularity, terms that Forster also names in his *Nicholas Nickleby* review (introduced above), but unlike the *Spectator* reviewer, Forster uses the serial form to reclaim popularity as a confirmation of Dickens's intrinsic value and truthfulness, turning to *Clarissa* to mount an argument that Dickens's popularity is a sign of merit:

> Since Richardson published in successive portions his famous story of *Clarissa Harlowe*, . . . no characters of an unfinished work of fiction have excited anything like the interest manifested by large classes of persons in all ranks for the fate of the various actors in the tale of *Nicholas Nickleby*. . . . This shows us, at the outset, a great secret of the popularity of the author. He seizes the eager attention of his readers by the strong power of reality. Our sympathies are never left to wander off, into quarters vague or undefined, from the flesh and blood to which he allies them. (*CH* 47–48)

Dickens's power to sustain interest in his characters as if they were real people over the span required by the serial reveals the "secret of his popularity." Forster disengages popularity from caricature and sentimentality (aspects of Dickens's work that critics disparaged while recognizing their appeal to readers) by introducing sympathy, the universal impulse, which replaces the raging prejudices infecting the *Spectator* reviewer's argument. The serial becomes a form that tests the causes of an author's popularity and again links popularity with truthfulness. Had Dickens been unable to create truthful characters in whom "large classes of persons in all ranks" could take an active and sustained interest, he would not be popular (or he would be popular because he lowered himself by representing vulgarity). Forster reframes the successful serial as a form with a respectable history, such that its popularity may justly determine an author's literary standing. So where Forster gives serial publication a respectable history consistent with a popularity arising out of merit (and allows the reader to associate popularity with genius), the *Spectator* reviewer yokes the serial to commercial manipulation and the needs of the press.

***

NEGOTIATING BETWEEN MEANINGS of popular which describe literature as at once universal – the highest and the best – and as merely manufactured and of the moment is what

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dickens's reviews do, and those reviews exert their influence on the way later critics deploy popular. One registers this influence in Masson's 1855 article for the *North British Review*, "Publisher's Circulars and Literary Advertisements for 1854." Masson is a figure who often comes into discussions of Dickens's reviews because he wrote an extended comparison of Dickens and Thackeray for the *North British Review* in 1851 (later included in his book *British Novelists and Their Styles*, 1859). This 1855 essay puts questions about popular literature at its center.

Like plenty of other reviewers before him, Masson begins by bemoaning the avalanche of printed material that descends daily on the British public, including the critics called upon to respond to it. So he sets himself the daunting task of looking at what he calls the "national Parnassus" – that mountain of writing piling high to the English sky – and creating three "zones" for it: "true or high literature," "wholesome popular literature," and "trash and garbage" (159). Each of these zones he takes in turn. When Masson examines the high imaginative literature (he attends first to the "literature of speculation" – that is, "work of disquisition, exposition, or thought" [159] – and then to history), we find that the authors he names – Goldsmith, Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens, for instance – inhabit both the highest zone and the zone of wholesome popular literature. What distinguishes the "high" from the "popular" is that the former "is literature interesting to the select and most cultured minds of the nation – addressed to them generally in the first place, and by them appropriated and appreciated" (165). But Masson anticipates his readers' potential objections:

> Let us not be mistaken; we do not mean that the highest and best national authorship does not find its way down among the people, and command the popular interest. . . . We do find poems and prose-fictions at once admired by the refined and highly educated, and relished to the uttermost by all ranks of the people. Perhaps, indeed, those poems which thrill the universal emotions, which touch the general pulses of humanity, and are, therefore, popular at once with all, are in their nature the greatest. At all events, we see many instances in which poems and fictions, while they delight the most fastidious and strong minds, command the widest popularity. Such are the songs and poems of Burns; such is Goldsmith's masterpiece; such are the novels of Scott; and if Shakespeare himself is not equally appreciable by all, all find something in him that they can appreciate. Thackeray requires a rather select audience to do him justice, but even he has elements of general popularity; and while there is no man so high as not to find something truly poetic and delicious in the imaginations of Dickens, his novels circulate at all firesides, and promote mirth and morality everywhere. (165–66)

As Masson moves down the mountain in this passage, he puts into play the "popular interest" to distinguish high from low. The "refined and highly educated" are cordoned off from both the popular and the people, but as the passage unfolds and the popular engages the shared experience ("universal," the "pulses of humanity"), it suddenly aligns itself with the greatest. Though Masson is thinking of poems when he observes that the greatest works are those that are "popular at once with all," the observation applies equally to the prose he identifies. He pushes the idea aside with "at all events," but there it is nonetheless. Scott and Shakespeare and Dickens occupy two zones simultaneously; it is useless to talk about them as high literature or popular literature. Now the popular associates itself with the highest and best expression because of its associations with the universal. Tellingly, Masson isolates elements as either popular or poetic. The distinction between Thackeray and Dickens is pertinent here. While only a few elements of Thackeray's work contribute to his popularity, Dickens's work is full of elements that appeal to all firesides, though the cultivated reader can "find

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

something truly poetic and delicious" in it. In the end certain texts occupy the highest zone because the "best minds make [them] classic by their approbation" (166) while the "mass of the people" can admire them as well (165).

It is not hard to see how Masson reasserts his authority here.[19] It may be that the greatest works are the most widely read – thus making the popular the greatest – and yet only the "best minds" can make them "classic by their approbation." Popular literature is necessarily inclusive, but the critic reinscribes the exclusivity of certain reading practices. Everyone reads the same book, but not in the same way. The popular is both conterminous with the "greatest" (the most universal) and separate from the "classic," a shift that I will return to briefly at the end of my essay, when I consider reviews at the turn of the century. Within popular a set of distinctions is reintroduced that protects self-identified refined readers from being lumped in with the unrefined. This sense is already in evidence in an 1838 *Edinburgh Review* notice of Dickens's work, where the reviewer Thomas Henry Lister, having established that Dickens's popularity entitles him to a review, testifies that

> He has put them [his works] forth in a form attractive, it is true, to that vast majority, the *idle* readers – but one not indicative of high literary pretensions, or calculated to inspire a belief of probable permanence of reputation. They seem, at first sight, to be among the most evanescent of the literary ephemeræ of their day – mere humorous specimens of the lightest kind of light reading, expressly calculated to be much sought and soon forgotten – fit companions for the portfolio of caricatures – "good nonsense," – and nothing more. This is the view which many persons will take of Mr Dickens's writings – but this is not our deliberate view of them. We think him a very original writer – well entitled to his popularity – and not likely to lose it – and the truest and most spirited delineator of English life, amongst the middle and lower classes, since the days of Smollett and Fielding. (*CH* 72)

Popularity is associated with merit but it is a merit that cannot be fully appreciated by "that vast majority, the *idle* readers." Lister contrasts the idle reading of the majority from his deliberate one, and his reading makes Dickens worthy of popularity, even as his readers seem unworthy of him. Witness the paradox: Dickens deserves his popularity; however, the readers who have made him popular appear quite undeserving. Lister preserves the positive impulses of the popular by asserting Dickens's power to attract readers of all kinds. Unfortunately, those readers cannot appreciate what it is that makes Dickens popular. Dickens's popularity happens in spite of readers and not because of them.

That Lister should connect the popular with the "idle" reader anticipates reviews of the sensation novels of the 1850s and 60s (and is already in evidence in an 1845 *North British Review* notice of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, where the reviewer raises with due caution the possibility that "the vast popularity of these works may, perhaps, in some degree be owing to the indolence of the reading public" [*CH* 190]). Dominant here are the pejorative meanings of popularity: a readership looking to be entertained during its expanding leisure hours responds to novelists who don't ask their readers to think too hard. Idle and easily bored, this readership needs the constant stimulation of plots and characters that appeal directly to the nerves (no thought required). *Fraser's Magazine*'s August 1863 review "The Popular Novels of the Year" takes up *East Lynne*, *Aurora Floyd*, and *Lady Audley's Secret* as representative "popular novels," a subgenre calculated to serve the "perverted and vitiated taste" (262) of the public, who require more and more excitement. The nervous systems of the reader are worked upon, as are the desires of the authors, who produce this material for magazines

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

because "they are paid, and often exorbitantly paid, so much a page for their productions" (263). But Dickens continued to present special complications for the terms popular and popularity for the reviewers who used them. For one thing, the Dickens novel wasn't here today and gone tomorrow. How could a term that was starting to narrow its scope account for his work? This is a problem for an 1850 *Fraser's* reviewer of *David Copperfield* who struggles with the use of the term as applied to Dickens, given that the popular necessarily evokes "the fickleness of public favour" (*CH* 243). The reviewer casts the popular as a force that moves from one man of the moment to the next, and yet Dickens seems to be the novelist of every moment. What intensifies in this review is the tension between the meanings of popular and popularity that are coming to dominate in the 1850s, and the fact of Dickens.

The review begins by articulating Dickens's cultural significance: "Probably there is no single individual who, during the last fourteen years, has occupied so large a space in the thoughts of English folk as Charles Dickens." The invocation of folk as against people makes a difference here, as it separates Dickens from the meanings of popular dominant at mid-century. The reviewer follows this claim with a quick summary of the otherwise turbulent 40s, a decade whose turbulence had been in no small part generated by the popular, a seducible force and an unfaithful one: "ministers have been ousted and reinstalled; demagogues have been carried on the popular shoulders, and then trampled under the popular feet." Here writ large is the conservative attack on populism.[20] And what of Dickens? "His wheel of fortune has a spoke in it, and his *popularis aura* is a trade wind. Almost on his first appearance his own countrymen unanimously voted him a prophet" (243).[21] The popular enters, but behaves unnaturally, unaccountably, so "how," asks the reviewer, "are we to account for this wide-spread popularity?" By "his genial humour and exquisite comprehension of the national character and manners" and his "deep reverence for the household sanctities, his enthusiastic worship of the household gods." The conjunction of the national and the domestic comes as no surprise, since the Victorian home had by then become synonymous with the nation itself, but the conjunction of the national, the reverential, and the pantheistic returns us to a sense of popular as traditional and permanent. Dickens "is so thoroughly English, and is now part and parcel of that mighty aggregate of national fame which we feel bound to defend on all points against every attack" (244). Part of the national mythology, Dickens inhabits the realm of popular as folk. Although the *Fraser's* reviewer exempts Dickens at every turn, keeping his popularity in touch with the folk, this exemption is for Dickens only. And we come to see that the exemption proves the rule, and reaffirms popular as evoking the ephemeral and the market-driven. The key move here is to at once defend Dickens's popularity as exceptional while implicitly demoting the ignorant and fickle reading public. Seemingly preempted from criticizing Dickens ("He had penetrated into the very heart of public opinion, and carried it by storm before the advanced forts of criticism had had time to open their fire upon him" [244]), the reviewer nevertheless undermines the force that backs him.

Dickens is the exception in more ways than one, and his exceptional status – what later marks him as an eccentric writer – enables the deployment of the more demotic meanings of "popular" against him. Trollope most famously satirizes him in *The Warden* (1855) as "Mr. Popular Sentiment," a figure whose exaggerations obscure truths. In Walter Bagehot's 1858 review of the Cheap Edition of Dickens's works, Bagehot begins by establishing the range of Dickens's audience and identifying it as exceptional ("there is no contemporary English writer whose works are read so generally through the whole house, who can give pleasure to the servants as well as to the mistress, to the children as well as to the master"

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

[*CH* 390]). He then names the (now familiar) question that will animate the review as a whole ("it cannot be amiss to take this opportunity of investigating, even slightly, the causes of so great a popularity" [390]). Having laid this groundwork, Bagehot quickly explains that popularity "is a *datum* for literary investigation, that books which have been thus *tried* upon mankind and have thus succeeded, must be books of immense genius" (390–91), but inspecting the kind of "genius" Dickens is ("the nature and the limits of that genius" [391]) opens up the opportunity to make his popularity a mark of his "*bizarrerie*" (393). Dickens's exceptional popularity is itself created by an exceptional genius – a genius irregular, eccentric, unskillful.[22] It may well be that Dickens's audience is large and moves from head of house to servant, from master to mistress, and yet the more significant distinction Bagehot seeks to make is not between classes but between the cultivated and the uncultivated reader. Bagehot makes clear that "a great many cultivated people will scarcely concede that [Dickens] has any taste at all," though no doubt "a still larger number of fervent admirers point . . . to a hundred felicitous descriptions" (399). "Fervent" these admirers may be; however, their fervor suggests the heated prejudices of the crowd and Dickens's demagogic influence over them. Fervor is not cultivation, nor are "a hundred felicitous descriptions" much of a basis for "genius." The fact of their greater numbers now works against them.

By 1871, it was far from scandalous for the *London Quarterly Review* to announce that "though Dickens's works are still by far the most popular of the age, we have never met a single man of high cultivation who regarded Dickens in the light of an artist at all, or looked upon his books as greatly worth the attention of persons capable of appreciating better things" (*CH* 556). This snide remark – one that erects a barrier between the cultured and the popular – is of a piece with others culled from reviews in the 70s and beyond in which popularity is put into service to demote Dickens. Common enough was this that Leslie Stephen famously announces in his 1888 *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Dickens that "if literary fame could be safely measured by popularity with the half-educated, Dickens must claim the highest position among English novelists." Popularity goes far to prove the inferiority of the work.

Of signal importance to understanding late-century views of the popular and its connection to Dickens's work is G. H. Lewes's 1872 *Fortnightly Review* article, entitled "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," which was offered to the public as a review of the first volume of Forster's *Life*. As in 1837, Lewes makes Dickens's popularity a centerpiece of this article, provoked perhaps by the opening of Forster's book ("Charles Dickens, the most popular novelist of the century and one of the greatest humourists that England has produced . . . " [1: 1]). Lewes begins by framing the perennial battle, "the old feud between authors and critics," caused when the latter "thrust between [the author's work] and the public some vague conception of what they required" (141). This old feud brings Lewes to a "noticeable fact" (then duly noticed) that "there probably never was a writer of so vast a popularity whose genius was so little appreciated by the critics." Lewes sets up his argument so that we expect him to offer his own critical appreciation of this genius, an expectation that rises all the more when Lewes endorses Dickens as the author who "impressed a new direction on popular writing, and modified the Literature of his age, in its spirit no less than in its form" (143). The form no doubt refers to the serial. And the spirit? That is less clear, but if we know Lewes's 1837 review, we bring to mind the universal impulses celebrated by him along with other early reviewers. In 1872 Lewes again identifies the source of Dickens's popularity as his capacity to engage a shared reading experience that cuts across class ("Dickens delighted

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

thousands . . . his admirers were found in all classes, and in all countries . . . he stirred the sympathy of masses not easily reached through Literature. . . . Dickens has proved his power by a popularity almost unexampled, embracing all classes" ["Dickens" 143]). But mark a change: Lewes offers Dickens's work not as that which combines "the nicety of observation, the fineness of tact, the exquisite humour, the wit, heartiness, sympathy with all things good and beautiful in human nature" that "have a deep and subtle philosophy in them" as he had in 1837 ("Review" 446); now Dickens speaks with the "mother-tongue of the heart" (as against Hayward's "mother-wit") which "was always sure of ready listeners" ("Dickens" 147). Where the earlier review associates that which makes Dickens popular with both the intellectual and emotional (head and heart), this later "mother-tongue of the heart" with its confidence in the "ready listeners" speaks only the language of sentimentality to an unthinking ready-made audience. And when Lewes fleshes out this shared experience which underpins Dickens's popularity, we register a significant difference in how the experience is imagined:

> Dr Johnson explained the popularity of some writer by saying, "Sir, his nonsense suited their nonsense;" let us add "and his sense suited their sense," and it will explain the popularity of Dickens. Readers to whom all the refinements of Art and Literature are as meaningless hieroglyphs, were at once laid hold of by the reproduction of their own feelings, their own experiences, their own prejudices, in the irradiating splendour of his imagination; while readers whose cultivated sensibilities were alive to the most delicate and evanescent touches were, by virtue of their common nature, ready to be moved and delighted at his pictures and suggestions. The cultivated and uncultivated alike were affected by his admirable mise en scene, his fertile invention, his striking selection of incident, his intense vision of physical details. Only the cultivated who are made fastidious by cultivation paused to consider the pervading commonness of the works, and remarked that they are wholly without glimpses of a nobler life; and that the writer presents an almost unique example of a mind of singular force in which, so to speak, sensations never passed into ideas. ("Dickens" 151)

Not for nothing does Lewes call upon Johnson, whose *Dictionary* entries for popular and popularity emphasize the debasing impulses Lewes engages in this passage. It doesn't take long to see that lurking within this praise is something aggressively negating. While Lewes converts Johnson's nonsense into Dickens's sense, soon enough the "sense" becomes "sensation," a term that necessarily evokes the sensation novel as an inferior genre and one that sells itself as a cheap thrill, a form that makes no intellectual demands on its readers. Those most susceptible to Dickens are the uncultivated readers who are shut out from sacred writing – like the writing of the ancient Egyptians – of Art and Literature, though there is a kind of childish word picture they can decipher. Lest we think Lewes places himself and others like him beyond the reach of Dickens's appeal, we find that the cultivated, "by virtue of their common nature," are likewise moved, and moved by Dickens's "pictures." "Common nature" seems to assert some positively unifying force (as "sense" earlier might introduce common sense), but as the passage unfolds, the meaning tellingly shifts, as Lewes adduces "the pervading commonness of the works" that excludes the "nobler life," markedly altering our sense of "common nature." The unifying impulse is debasing. The cultivated sensibilities, once "alive to the most delicate and evanescent touches," are deadened. The readership becomes a lazy, childlike, picture-watching, sensation-driven passive mass to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which the novel and novelist cater (in an 1888 piece on "Popular Authors," R. L. Stevenson makes the same case against the forgotten novelist Stephen Hayward and his childlike readership). Lewes also matches author and audience. As with Dickens in whom "sensations never passed into ideas," the readership itself is made up of a "mass of men" whose "minds are for the most part occupied with sensations rather than ideas" (146). The repeated language emphasizes that which connects Dickens to his readership and that which connect both author and reader to demotic meanings of popular. But if Dickens is a figure in whom sensation never passed into ideas, he was, according to Lewes's implicit argument, savvy enough to know that much of his readership could handle no more than that. The novelist garners popularity by mastering this childlike readership: "Just as the wooden horse is brought within the range of the child's emotions . . . so Dickens's figures are brought within the range of the reader's interests" (146). "Range" puts us in mind of the range of Dickens's readership – his popularity – and though the passive voice hides the agent, "brought within the range" targets the man pulling the wooden horse's string.

***

"POPULAR? HOW COULD IT BE POPULAR?" asks the narrator of Henry James's 1895 short story "The Next Time" as he describes the failed attempts of the writer Ray Limbert to produce a popular novel (510). Limbert is desperate to be "vulgar," "rudimentary," "atrocious" (507) – the required elements of a popular novel – but try as he might to make his serial a "vulgarity" (508), he generates something "charming with all his charm and powerful with all his power" (510). Not, assuredly not, popular. The popular is what Limbert's sister-in-law puts out as a "morsel" for "her fond consumers, bless them" who "wagged their great collective tail artlessly for more" (488). The narrator, like Limbert, also fails to provoke "a tremor in the public tail" (488) with his too-subtle work. The lines drawn in James's story between what is popular and what is good are as clear as they can be (they are the clearest thing in the story), and although James's own attitudes towards sales and towards Dickens in particular are, of course, complex (and beyond the scope of this essay), there's no doubt that "The Next Time" dramatizes what have become the predominant meanings of popular by 1895. Like many other signal terms, popular and popularity seem to provide a stable island of consensus, but the appearance of consensus is achieved by an implicit agreement not to look too closely at the meanings the words stir up. Indeed, James's story is by no means the end of the story. Six years after "The Next Time" – at the turn of the century (1901) – a *Quarterly Review* essay entitled "The Popular Novel" continues to insist that the general rule is that "the greatest literature of all, whilst appealing to the best judges, appeals to the mass of ordinary readers also, and shows its degree of greatness by the extent to which it does so" and is rightly called "popular" (245). This claim the *Quarterly* maintains even in the face of its own main argument: that the "popular novels" of the day (and the article speaks specifically of the novels of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli) are, in fact, the very worst and that the gap between the critics and the people is at its widest. And where does Dickens's work stand in the *Quarterly Review*'s argument? The novels are popular, but they have become something more and other – they are now "classics" (246) – a term that evokes the timelessness of popular in its folk sense and yet fends off the populace. The popular, in all its complicated

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and messy glory, keeps in touch with Dickens's own complicated and messy glory, from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, and on into our own.[23]

Wellesley College

NOTES

1. I am indebted to the work of Philip Collins, whose collection of reviews *Dickens: The Critical Heritage* has been indispensable to my essay. Although limitations of space prevent Collins from reproducing many of the reviews in full, time and again he selects the most crucial passages for the collection. Since most readers will have access to Collins's volume and not to the original reviews, my citations are to that volume, except where I have quoted a passage not reprinted there; all such citations have been abbreviated to "*CH*" and a page number. On Dickens's popularity generally, see Collins's introduction to the *Critical Heritage* volume, as well as "The Popularity of Dickens" and his entry on "Popularity" in the *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*.
2. In a work that acutely examines reactions of Evangelical Christians in the mid-nineteenth century to mass-produced scientific publications, Fyfe briefly considers popular and popularize as terms that mean more than a cheap price. She further notes that "the common usage" of popular was one that signaled "the intended audience envisaged by writers and publishers" and not "a description of the reception of a work." Fyfe adds that "a 'popular' work was one intended for 'the people,' which by the middle of the nineteenth century increasingly included the working classes" (56). I agree that popular very often meant "intended for 'the people'" (as my own examples will show). At the same time, an example that Fyfe adduces from an 1859 volume of the *British Quarterly Review* ("Cheap Literature") suggests fertile shifts in meaning. The *British Quarterly Review* passage worries over the challenges of "conveying useful information through a medium of an essentially popular character, without risking its popularity" (qtd. in Fyfe 56). "Popular" suggests the work's intended audience (the people), but "popularity," it seems to me, describes both audience and reception. Introducing "popularity" here alters the meanings of "popular" and keeps alive in the term the sense of well-liked.
3. "Popular" doesn't come into the late-eighteenth- or early-nineteenth-century review with the frequency that one finds it in Dickens's reviews. This explains why, when Ferris examines late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century reviews of novels by women, she finds that such novels were classed as "ordinary," meaning worthless, or "proper," meaning morally enlightening (79). "Common" also comes into Ferris's examination of reviews, arising as it does in John Morritt's letter to Walter Scott, which distinguishes Scott's *Waverley* "from the slipshod sauntering verbiage of common novels" (qtd. in Ferris 79). The term "popular" doesn't appear in Ferris's discussion; it isn't a term that critics deploy either to demote women authors or to promote male favorites. On common as the term used in the eighteenth century (as against popular), see Garside.
4. See Ledger and Dentith for different considerations of Dickens's uses of such forms. On popular culture and melodrama, see John. See Peyrouton, Sanders, Goldberg, McCalman, and Magnet for considerations of Dickens's political views.
5. To take one instance: during the riots represented in *Barnaby Rudge*, members of Parliament fall into the hands of a group described as both the "mob" and the "populace" (453).
6. On the early notices of *Sketches by Boz* in newspapers, see Schlicke.
7. See, for instance, "Popular Literature of the Day."
8. In a January 1847 review of *The Battle of Life*, the *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* reviewer articulates this claim a bit more diplomatically: "book-buyers and reviewers do not always entertain similar opinions" (*CH* 176). Later in the century, Wilkie Collins would note (with pleasure) in a 11 July 1868 letter to William Tinsley that resistant lending libraries had to take *The Woman in White* "just as the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

public forced them." And yet, when in the same letter he expresses his optimism about the sale of *The Moonstone* as a text which has "a much stronger element of 'popularity' in it" (2: 309), his own inverted commas around the key term suggest his discomfort about that "stronger element."

9. In 1859, *Macmillan's* reviewers began signing their reviews. Other periodicals – the *Academy* and the *Contemporary*, to name two – also inaugurated this practice. On anonymous reviewing and its ramifications, see Brake 106–16.
10. On the professionalization of authors (novelists, poets, men of letters), see Hack, Ruth, Shattock, and Patten.
11. Publishers, as Patten illuminates, were targeting particular audiences as they marketed their editions, "each designed to attract its own class of customers, to work its special segment of the market" (326).
12. On the history of the term folklore in England and Ireland, see Blyn-LaDrew.
13. Under the entry for "folk" in *Keywords*, Williams argues that Thoms's coinage "belongs to the same cultural tendency as the suggestion by a correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1830 that lore should be substituted for Greek endings in the names of the sciences" (136). Blyn-LaDrew likewise notes that Thoms's change in terminology is "in keeping with a growing movement to revive Anglo-Saxon aspects of British heritage and to downplay classical influences" (6).
14. Maidment notes that Thomas Hardy dated the disappearance of "traditional music" and other forms of "rural self-expression" to the 1840s (3–4). The narrator-cum-ethnographer in *Tess* takes special notice of the contrast between Joan Durbeyfield's "fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads" and Tess's "trained National teachings and Standard knowledge" (14).
15. In their introduction, Rodway and Pinto point an accusing finger at the Victorians, who insisted on differentiating between "traditional" and "street" ballads. While eighteenth-century poets like Cowper could appreciate ballads "without any attempt to distinguish the 'literary' from 'popular', 'traditional' or 'folk' from 'street' ballads," nineteenth-century critics (while elevating the "folk") scorned the vulgarity of their own street ballads, which were not only contemporary but "a product of the 'lower classes'" (2). Nineteenth-century critics enter here as the snobs who (following Coleridge) disconnect the popular from the literary, but as I argue below, Dickens's reviews suggest how much more complex this relation was. Indeed, Gummere attends to the complexities as he attempts to articulate a satisfactory definition of both popular and ballad: "We still have the adjective, that equivocal word 'popular,'" he notes, "and on the meaning of 'popular' centres the main dispute" (14).
16. In the *Wellesley Index*, this article is listed under the title "Present Aspects and Tendencies of Literature" (the article's header on the first recto page and all proceeding verso pages).
17. See Mays.
18. The latest, online version of the *OED* gives as its first definition of the adjective "popular": "Of belief, attitude etc.: prevalent or current among the general public; generally accepted, commonly known. Also (of a disease): epidemic (obs.)."
19. On the marked self-confidence of mid-Victorian reviewers, see Shattock.
20. On the association of radical politics, demagoguery, sensation fiction, and commercialism, see Haywood 140.
21. Compare Margaret Oliphant's comment on *East Lynne*: "We have just laid down a clever novel, called *East Lynne*, which some inscrutable breath of popular liking has blown into momentary celebrity" (qtd. in Page 113).
22. This language is echoed in George Stott's 1869 *Contemporary Review* essay on Dickens's works, where Stott, having kicked off his essay by suggesting the impossibility of determining "whether or not Mr Dickens will be popular a century hence," goes on to pin Dickens down as "one of the great literary facts of the age" (*CH* 492). Dickens and his popularity are facts – or datum, to use Bagehot's term – and the reference to the "age" limits Dickens's success to the present. Associating popularity with these ideas from the start allows Stott to put into play a set of expectations about the kind of "genius" Dickens is – the kind that is "akin to that of the caricaturist and the farce-writer" and the kind that "fails in higher efforts" of the "higher school of art" (495–96).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

23. The *OED* entry on "popular" has undergone significant revisions, and those interested might compare the most recent, online version (December 2007) to the one in the second edition (1989). The confusions at work in these revisions illuminate the difficulties this term perennially presents. See also the attempts of Hall, sociologist and founding editor of the *New Left Review*, to disentangle meanings of "popular."

WORKS CITED

Blyn-LaDrew, Roslyn. "Geoffrey Keating, William Thoms, Raymond Williams, and the Terminology of Folklore: 'Béaloideas' as a 'Keyword.'" *Folklore Forum* 27 (1996): 5–37.

"Boz and His *Nicholas Nickleby*." *Spectator* 31 Mar. 1838: 304–05.

"Boz's *Oliver Twist*." *Spectator* 9 Nov. 1838: 1114–16.

Brake, Laurel. "Literary Criticism and the Victorian Periodicals." *Yearbook of English Studies* 16 (1986): 92–116.

Brand, John. *Observations on Popular Antiquities: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of Our Vulgar Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions*. Ed. Henry Ellis. London: Chatto, 1900.

Burke, Peter. "The 'Discovery' of Popular Culture." *People's History and Socialist Theory*. Ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge, 1981. 216–26.

Butt, John, and Kathleen Tillotson. *Dickens at Work*. Fair Lawn: Essential, 1958.

Chittick, Kathryn. *Dickens and the 1830s*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

———. "Reviews and Reviewing." *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*. Ed. Paul Schlicke. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. 497–500.

Collins Philip, ed. *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1986.

———. "Popularity." *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*. Ed. Paul Schlicke. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. 459–62.

———. "The Popularity of Dickens." *Dickensian* 70 (1974): 5–20.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*. Ed. William Baker and William M. Clarke. 2 vols. New York: St. Martin's, 1999.

Curtis, Gerard. "Dickens in the Visual Market." *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*. Ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. 213–49.

Dentith, Simon. "How Popular was *Dombey and Son*?" *Dickensian* 88 (1992): 69–81.

Dickens, Charles. *Barnaby Rudge*. 1841. Ed. Gordon Spence. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Ferris, Ina. *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.

Ford, George H. Dickens and His Readers: Aspects of *Novel-Criticism since 1836*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1955.

Forster, John. "*The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*." *Examiner* 27 Oct. 1839: 677–78.

———. *The Life of Charles Dickens*. 1872–74. 2 vols. London: Chapman, 1904.

Fyfe, Aileen. *Science and Salvation: Evangelical Popular Science Publishing in Victorian Britain*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004.

Garside, Peter. "Walter Scott and the 'Common' Novel, 1808–1819." Cardiff Corvey 3 (1999). <http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc03_n02.html>. Web. 11 July 2006.

Goldberg, Michael. "From Bentham to Carlyle: Dickens's Political Development." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33 (1972): 61–76.

Gummere, Francis Barton. *The Popular Ballad*. Boston: Houghton, 1907.

Hack, Daniel. *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2005.

Hall, Stuart. "Notes on Deconstructing the 'Popular.'" *People's History and Socialist Theory*. Ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge, 1981. 227–40.

Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. 1891. Ed. Scott Elledge. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 1991.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Harling, Philip. "Hayward, Abraham (1801–1884)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>. Web. 19 January 2007.

Haywood, Ian. *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics, and the People, 1790–1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.

James, Henry. *Complete Stories, 1892–1898*. New York: Library of America, 1996.

John, Juliet. *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

Johnson, Samuel. *Johnson's Dictionary: A Modern Selection*. 1755. Ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr. and George Milne. New York: Pantheon, 1963.

Ledger, Sally. *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

Lewes, G. H. "Dickens in Relation to Criticism." *Fortnightly Review* ns 11 (1872): 141–54.

———. "Review of Books." *National Magazine* Dec. 1837: 445–49.

Magnet, Myron. *Dickens and the Social Order*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1985.

Maidment, B. E. "Hardy's Fiction and English Traditional Music." *Thomas Hardy Annual* 4 (1986): 3–18.

Masson, David. "Publisher's Circulars and Literary Advertisements for 1854." *British Quarterly Review* 21 (1855): 157–81.

"*Master Humphrey's Clock*." *Metropolitan Magazine* June 1840: 51–52.

Mays, Kelly J. "The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals." *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*. Ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. 165–94.

McCalman, Iain. "Controlling the Riots: Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* and Romantic Revolution." *History* 84 (1999): 458–76.

Page Norman, ed. *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1974.

Patten, Robert L. *Dickens and His Publishers*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1978.

Peyrouton, N. C. "Dickens and the Chartists." *Dickensian* 60 (1964): 78–88, 152–61.

"Popular Literature of the Day." *British and Foreign Review* 10 (1840): 223–46.

"The Popular Novel." *Quarterly Review* 194 (1901): 244–73.

"The Popular Novels of the Year." *Fraser's Magazine* 68 (1863): 253–69.

Rodway Allan Edwin, and Vivian de Sola Pinto, eds. *The Common Muse: An Anthology of Popular British Ballad Poetry, XVth – XXth Century*. London: Chatto, 1957.

Ruth, Jennifer. *Novel Professions: Interested Disinterest and the Making of the Professional in the Victorian Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006.

Sanders, Andrew. *Dickens and the Spirit of the Age*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1999.

Schlicke, Paul. "'Risen Like a Rocket': The Impact of *Sketches by Boz*." *Dickens Quarterly* 22 (2005): 3–18.

Scott, Walter. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. 1830. Ed. T. F. Henderson. 4 vols. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1902.

Shattock, Joanne. "Reviewing Generations: Professionalism and the Mid-Victorian Reviewer." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 35 (2002): 384–400.

Sherbo, Arthur. "Thoms, William John (1803–1885)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>.Web. 19 Jan. 2007.

Stephen, Leslie. "Charles Dickens." *The Dictionary of National Biography*. 1st ser. 1885–1900.

Stevenson, R. L. "Popular Authors." *Scribner's Magazine* July 1888: 122–28.

Thoms, William. "Folk-Lore." *Athenaeum* 22 August 1846: 862–63.

———. "The Story of 'Notes and Queries.'" *Notes and Queries* 5th ser. 6 (1876): 1–2, 41–42, 101–02.

Trollope, Anthony. *The Warden*. 1855. Ed. David Skilton. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*. London: Chatto, 1958.

———. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1983.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150309090354 Published online by Cambridge University Press