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## "Takin' It to the Streets"

### *Henry Mayhew and the Language of the Underclass in Mid-Nineteenth-Century London*

#### A. L. Beier

Invoking the title of a popular song of the 1970s has a twofold signifi-cance. First, it is meant t o highlight the hostility that the jour nalist Henry Mayhew (1812–87) expressed toward popular speech, particu-larly of those elements of the London underclass of whom he disap-proved—street vendors, vagrants, and other criminals—and, thus, to whom he was arguably "takin' it" in his extensive publications about them between 1849 and 1861.[1] Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu would probably agree that Mayhew was "takin' it" to these groups in an attempt to control them—by exposing them to respectable society and by spurring the authorities to suppress them. Second, and con-trariwise, the phrase "takin' it to the streets" is intended to suggest that popular vocabularies may have acted as forms of resistance to author-ity, covers for illegal activities, and expressions of countercultures and popular solidarity.[2] Historians may wish to consider which, if any, of these two hypotheses is valid, because the answers may tell us something about social relations in the mid-nineteenth century.

But one might also question the premise of these two interpreta-tions of the song's title and consider whether a single popular dialect actually existed or whether there was a variety of vocabularies among

London's underclass. These questions are significant because contemporaries firmly believed that an underclass included criminal and dangerous elements that threatened the social order. Mayhew's documentation shows that there existed both unitary and diversified argots in the mid-nineteenth century, which raises doubts about theories of a united front of the criminal and dangerous. Yet criminality had huge symbolic significance for Mayhew, because it was the key to his vision of an underclass that, besides vagrants and other criminals, featured honest, displaced, and sweated workers, who were ultimately his greatest concern.

## Theories of the Underclass

There is currently something like consensus among historians that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the development of a concept of a criminal class that consisted of offenders drawn to crime, not by hardship, but by their moral failings. This criminal class included "the marginal people among the urban poor—the vagrants, street-folk, prostitutes, and thieves," who were perceived to represent "the main danger to the social and moral order" in the period. The concept of a criminal class was articulated by the socially respectable in a variety of forums, including parliamentary blue books, the reports of statistical societies, and in publications by magistrates, politicians, and even poets. The idea of a criminal class enjoyed such potency that it continued to flourish into the 1850s and 1860s.[3] A more general preoccupation with the urban poor and their potentially deleterious effects upon the empire—"by carrying the ideas of London to the Colonies"—persisted in the work of C. F. G. Masterman in 1901.[4]

Arguably the key figure in recent historiography was Foucault, who in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) writes, concerning early-nineteenth-century France, that "the myth of a barbaric, immoral and outlaw class . . . haunted the discourse of legislators, philanthropists and investigators into working-class life."[5] Foucault's main point in discussing what he terms "the social base" was the rise of the penitentiary and,

more broadly, what he considers a "closer penal mapping of the social body" than under the ancien régime. His view was that in the late eighteenth century there developed "penal interventions at once more premature and more numerous," particularly concerning economic infractions. These policies were accompanied by the belief in a permanent criminal class, which led in turn to the invention of the modern penal system and, more broadly, to a "carceral archipelago" that encompassed a host of public institutions associated with charity, education, housing, and health care.[6]

Recent British scholarship has affirmed the representation of a criminal class and the creation of new bodies to control it. In 1990 V. A. C. Gatrell contended that crime in Britain, as in France, was increasingly considered as a class phenomenon mainly involving the destitute and the working classes; that crime was an "artificial construct" created by a new "policeman-state" and by the development of centralized policing.[7] Still other scholars have observed that nineteenth-century rethinking of crime incorporated a new model of juvenile delinquency focusing on street crime, especially thieving, but that also included immoral acts, drunkenness, popular amusements, and bodily harm. The respectable feared that, as Britain underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization, a new breed of criminal threatened the social order. They perceived the source of the problem to lie in moral decrepitude, resulting from uncontrolled emotions and the demise of reason into "savagery," "instinctualism," and "moral insanity."[8]

Not many historians currently give much credence to the threat of a teeming, organized, and dangerous criminal element.[9] They doubt the accuracy of contemporary representations of a criminal class with special mores, a "world of its own," a subculture, or "culture of poverty," that threatened to turn the respectable world upside down.[10] It now appears that policing and prosecutions, not a crime wave, were actually key factors in upping convictions in the critical period from 1805 to 1842. Moreover, when "habitual offenders" were regularly listed from the 1870s, their overall numbers do not seem all that great.[11] There is also controversy about how great a menace the criminal classes were to public order. The evidence is varied,

with anxiety about criminals turning political and becoming "dangerous" at various times—in the 1790s, in the 1830s and 1840s, and in the 1860s and 1880s—but it remains to be shown how great these threats really were.[12]

Beyond these practical issues, there remains a normative issue regarding how reality was defined in nineteenth-century perceptions of crime. Although the criminal classes might have been imagined by the respectable, whose constructions stereotyped and inflated the enormity of the peril, the effects of their perceptions were no less true to those who invented them—and to those who felt the impact of the criminal justice process. As Martin Wiener perceptively states, "criticism of the early Victorians for failing to have twentieth-century notions of realism does not take us very far." It would be misleading, he adds, to assume that the respectable "had access to a reality free from moral or sensational characteristics," since for most of them social world "*was* moral, *was* sensational in its nature."[13]

Yet the contention that crime is socially imagined, that there exist no "facts of crime," but only a "judgmental process," tends to produce a top-down view with a number of potential traps. First, it may result in teleological interpretations, which in pursuing their theories may pay too little attention to historical events and contexts. For example, this way of thinking may treat crime and punishment as signs of the "onward march of surveillance and control" in which, as Foucault maintained, their histories are principally viewed as indicators of authority from above.[14] Another potential pitfall of this approach is that crime and policy responses may be presented as signs of a "civilizing process" in which misdeeds, especially homicide, are gradually checked by elite authority in advanced societies.[15]

Moreover, top-down models are preoccupied with makers of opinion and policy to the exclusion of the criminals themselves, their personal lives, and their encounters with the authorities.[16] Admittedly, respectable members of society actively took on crime in the churches, the press, and Parliament, and they indicted, judged, and sentenced criminals in order to remove them from the streets.[17] But we should not forget that, while the criminal classes were in some measure an imagined reality, it was one that had real consequences

for those at the receiving end of prosecutions and punishments. In reality, because of antagonistic testimony by the respectable, we receive a distorted view of criminals, whom we chiefly perceive through the eyes of their enemies, which leads to dehumanization. We also view criminals as objects without consciousness or culture. The upshot, seen in the work of Oscar Lewis, is to see criminals existing in a "culture of poverty," the most striking aspect of which is really a "poverty of culture" and abject hopelessness.[18] Ultimately, the great limitation of top-down models is that, whether they represent a criminal class as awful nuisances or just miserable victims, they are invariably important chiefly as objects, whether of social crises, penal systems, or civilizing improvements. A final point concerns the realities of the penal system. Foucault's thesis that new processes of incarceration assumed the reality of a new class of professional criminals, or "delinquents," was an inspired one, but his emphasis on reformers and their projects for reforming the criminal class overlooks how these projects worked in reality, how offenders actually experienced these institutions, and what convicts were like when they emerged from them. It is all right to hypothesize the invention of "a prison-machine," a system of "complete and austere institutions," but we need to know whether the machine actually produced the "docile bodies" it was supposed to.[19]

Yet crime can also be seen from below, and historians of executions have demonstrated the failings of a top-down perspective by showing the active roles taken by the condemned and the populace at hangings.[20] Henry Mayhew's publications in the *Morning Chronicle* (1849–50) and in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–61) provide another opportunity to see the underclass from below. Of course they are inevitably viewed through the filter of the author's lens, which censored their words and in volume four of *London Labour* produced caricatures drawn from the literature of roguery. Yet, in these texts we are able to see how Mayhew represented the underclass and the extent to which he endorsed the concepts of the criminal and dangerous classes. By examining, in particular, his recording of their speech, we can determine whether these groups really shared a common culture.

## Mayhew, the Criminal, and the Dangerous

There has been a tendency to exaggerate the extent to which the phrases *criminal classes* and *dangerous classes* appear in the *Morning Chronicle* and *London Labour*.[21] Certainly Peter Razzell's assertion that the "dangerous classes" "is a phrase which appears frequently" in the newspaper articles is an exaggeration.[22] In fact, a close reading of the texts shows that, considering the size of the Mayhew oeuvre, he made some use of these descriptors, which were borrowed from the French policeman Frégier's essay of 1840, without making them the main subjects of the work.[23] Crime and criminals *were* a significant part of the writer's opus, for they represented his worst fears for the fate of the underclass. But in Mayhew the terms *criminal class* and *dangerous class* were applied to specific groups, out-and-out criminals to be sure, including thieves and vagrants, as well as street vendors, all of whom he represented as presenting a threat to society. But his use of the vocabulary of social danger must also be seen as part of his broader social and economic theories, which focused on the problems of the skilled worker and low wages.

There is no doubt that Mayhew subscribed to the belief that members of the underclass were numerous, evil, and dangerous. On occasion there were no holds barred in his language. In several articles on vagrants in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1850 he sketched their failings and the threats they posed. Using some very creative mathematics, he reported that there were "no less than 47,669 individuals of the lowest, the filthiest, and most demoralized classes, continually wandering through the country" who represented "a stream of vice and disease—a tide of iniquity and fever, continually flowing." Vagrancy was the "nursery of crime"; "habitual tramps are first the beggars, then the thieves, and, finally, the convicts of the country."[24] According to the master of the Wandsworth and Clapham Poor Law Union, whom Mayhew quoted, vagrants "form one of the most restless, discontented, vicious, and dangerous elements of society." There were four thousand in London alone, and their numbers swelled "on the eve of any threatened disturbances or any large open-air meeting," such as the Chartist gathering of 1848 on Kennington Common.[25]

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The most strident and sensationalist descriptions of the dangerous and criminal classes came in *London Labour and the London Poor.* The advertisement at the beginning of the fourth volume states that "the class of individuals treated of in this volume are the Non-Workers, or in other words, the Dangerous Classes of the Metropolis." It went on to assert that the volume was a "thoughtful study of the habits and character of the 'outcast' class" that arose out of "an earnest desire to better the condition of the wretched social outcasts of whom I have now to treat." Then Mayhew produced an elaborate outline of "those who will not work"—a catalog of five main categories of crook, which was further subdivided into twenty different groups, who were broken down still more minutely into 113 types of offender. He described them as "the dishonest members of society . . . known more particularly as the criminal class."

Another of Mayhew's stated objectives played to the fear of organized crime that seemed to be growing in the early 1860s, for he promised to determine whether England was experiencing a crime wave, writing that his aim was "to ascertain whether crime pursued as a profession or business, is being augmented among us—to discover whether the criminal class, as a distinct portion of our people is, or is not, on the advance." Mayhew then regaled the reader with taxonomies of crimes and criminals supposed to have been derived from 1837 police reports, but which were garnished with slang titles added by the author and which had more than a whiff of literary invention. Although derived from contemporary cant, the result is fairly crude labeling and description that makes no bones about its literary debts.[26] Mayhew claimed that his taxonomy of offenders, whom he dubbed "voluntary non-workers," reflected the specialized crimes in which they engaged.[27]

The chapters in volume four of *London Labour* by John Binny on thieves and swindlers and Andrew Halliday on beggars reproduced stereotypes from low-life literature. Both authors were fairly open about drawing on this tradition, past and present. Out of concern for the young—"to neglect them or inadequately to attend to their welfare gives encouragement to the growth of this dangerous class"— Binny cited schools for young pickpockets, which had appeared in

sixteenth-century crime reports as well as in a contemporary one in *Oliver Twist;* he later compared someone to "Fagin the Jew." He described gangs of gypsies fifty to sixty strong and a King of the Gypsies, which are well-established (and misleading) literary stereotypes of Romanies. In a section on highwaymen he referred to Dick Turpin's "bold dash," while he cited a burglar led astray by seeing a theater version of *Oliver Twist* and (twice) attending a play about the escape artist Jack Sheppard. In his chapter on beggars Halliday produced one who threw epileptic fits using soap to simulate frothing at the mouth, a story as old as Thomas Harman, who wrote about such a case in the 1560s.[28] But looking beyond the obvious purloining and the caricaturing, these chapters reinforced the theory of the criminal classes. They cited the existence of "professional" crime, claiming that pickpockets knew one another and helped comrades in jail. His "pals" held collections for an injured burglar. There was a Captain Jack, who allegedly had a team of two hundred beggars working in Pye Street.[29]

Mayhew and company linked street sellers with the criminal and dangerous classes, the costermongers (fruit and vegetable hawkers) being the best known. Early in his discussion Mayhew quoted an informant, probably a police officer, who told him that "their ignorance, and their being impulsive, makes them a dangerous class," because they supported the Chartists and hated the police. Further on in the section on costers, Mayhew wrote that they were "a social pestilence in the very heart of our land" and "that the costermongers belong essentially to the dangerous classes none can doubt." They lived in sin and had their own slang, sure signs in the low-life literature of membership of the underworld.[30]

Another group of street traders whom Mayhew negatively represented were the patterers, or "street-sellers of stationery, literature and the fine arts" and formerly known as mountebanks. Mayhew did not specifically use the language of danger regarding patterers, but one of their own kind described them as outcasts. The journalist himself outlined a litany of their abuses—begging with false papers, selling broadsheets about executions before they occurred, concubinage (one philanderer claiming five hundred conquests), and speaking a slang.[31]

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Mayhew's tendency to criminalize is also evident at the beginning of the second volume of *London Labour,* where he summarized his views on the dangers posed by street traders. In a broad rhetorical sweep he described "thousands . . . ready to rush forth, on the least evidence of a rising of the people, to commit the most savage and revolting excesses." These people "have neither religious nor moral principles to restrain the exercise of their grossest passions . . . [and are] men who . . . are necessarily and essentially the dangerous classes."[32] But contrary to Gertrude Himmelfarb, Mayhew left no doubt that working people should not be confused with vagrants, who were different from the "hard-working, men of England." The "non-working" were "the very opposite to the industrious classes, with whom they are too often confounded."[33]

## Language among the Underclass

One test of Mayhew's criminalization of London's underclass in the mid-nineteenth century is an analysis of the slang they spoke in their interviews with him, for one of the many rich bodies of data to be mined from the Mayhew treasure trove is popular language, which he diligently recorded. He had a sharp eye for the racy quotation and was fascinated with the slang of the underclass, which he no doubt thought added rhetorical force and credibility to his reporting. Like other men of letters, he may have found having access to underworld argot glamorous. By Mayhew's time cant's captivation of the literary world was many centuries old, tracing its earliest roots to tenth-century Islam and with later variants covering virtually the entire world.[34] Mayhew's recording of language was not confined to the slang of criminals, which is what makes it so valuable and of potential interest for the study of the underclass as a whole.

There are a number of questions one might pose concerning popular language. Was speech possibly a unifying signifier among the underclass? That would support Himmelfarb's contention that Mayhew blurred the differences between the criminal and the honest poor. Or were people's words segmented into specialist vocabularies that

were peculiar to particular trades and criminal groups? What proportion of the recorded vocabulary was shared between criminals and non-criminals? For centuries writers about crime had asserted that English criminals spoke a secret slang called cant. The use of this argot was assumed to signify membership in an underworld. The language question is also of wider importance in the cultural history of the period, in which there was brewing something of a language war concerned with issues such as the incorporation of "flash" vocabulary of the underworld by the respectable and the accenting of speech, with the "rude" or lower-class accent being associated with London Cockney.[35]

From the outset of *London Labour and the London Poor,* Mayhew indicated that language was a key element. Introducing the term *street-folk* in volume one, he reported, citing ethnological studies, that society was divided into two camps—wanderers and settlers—and that each group had distinctive physiological, social, and linguistic characteristics. Nomads were differentiated from "civilized man" by their refusal to engage in regular work, their inability to plan for the future, their "passion for stupefying herbs and roots" and alcohol, insensitivity to pain, love of gambling, "love of libidinous dances" and warfare, cruelty to animals, loose concepts of property, lack of chastity among their women and "disregard of female honor," and a "vague sense of religion." Their chief and abiding sin was that they preyed on the settled population to make a living. In England wanderers ranged from the "habitual vagrant—half-beggar, half-thief—to the mechanic on tramp." In between were a great variety of criminals and street traders, of which, as stated, there were said to be five categories in London and numerous subcategories.[36] Linguistically, Mayhew reported, the "wandering hordes have frequently a different language from the more civilized portion of the community" and "a secret language of their own." They were known to "vary their speech designedly, and adopt new words, with the intent of rendering their ideas unintelligible to all but the members of their own community."[37]

Although Mayhew asserted that there was a single language used among the underclass of the mid-nineteenth century, his own evidence shows that the situation was more complex than that. This is

because in the course of his many interviews Mayhew recorded the speech of representatives of many groups—ethnicities (e.g., the French, Germans, the Irish, and Italians), a variety of trades, as well as the vagrant and criminal. The record is incomplete, because a single interview would be unlikely to reproduce a person's entire vocabulary. We have also to contend with the journalist's censorship, which excluded mentions of sexual acts and which sanitized foul language.

In all, Mayhew and his collaborators recorded 3,001 instances of popular slang in the *Morning Chronicle* articles of 1849–50 and in *London Labour and the London Poor.* Slang is defined here, following the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English,* as "words and phrases in common colloquial use, but generally considered in some or all of their senses to be outside of standard English; words and phrases either entirely peculiar to or used in special senses by some class or profession, cant." As examples, the *Concise Oxford* refers to the slang of artists, the racing community, schoolboys, and thieves. The dictionary's second definition of "abusive language" is less useful in discussing Mayhew, because he tended to bowdlerize rude words, substituting "h__l" for *hell,* "b____y" for *bloody,* and "d__n" for *damn.* Even though he and his coauthors spent a great deal of time on the subject of prostitution, particularly in volume four of *London Labour,* details of sexual acts were never discussed.[38]

A further limitation of the evidence is that the authors themselves used slang terms, sometimes with quotation marks, but at other times without. On occasion this means that the sole source for a term is the author, which must raise doubts about the authenticity of the record. For example, a burglar recounted how *starring the glass* was a phrase for breaking a window, but he did not use the noun *star-glazer* produced by Mayhew in his taxonomy of crooks and by Binny in his account of thieves.[39] In the case of another kind of thief, the *area-diver* or *area-sneak,* who were described as stealing from areas below stairs, no members of the underclass used the term, which was seemingly the work, once again, of Mayhew and Binny.[40] Of course, we cannot be certain that these terms were never used in popular speech, since the Mayhew record is unlikely to be a complete glossary. Moreover, it is conceivable that an author's invented slang term may later enter

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popular speech, as apparently did *pork pies* and *porkies,* a form of Cockney rhyming slang that meant lies and w hich first appeared in the comedy-drama series *Minder* on the British television network ITV in the 1980s.[41]

The author's influence, however, may be overestimated. Of the 3,001 uses of slang in the Mayhew oeuvre on the underclass, there were 227 instances (7.6 percent) in which the author and his collaborators did the speaking. On one occasion a police sergeant who informed Mayhew's collaborator Hemyng about prostitutes used the slang expression *slick off* to describe a woman who drank herself to death.[42] This evidence suggests minimal dir ect authorial intervention and g oes some way toward exploding the thesis that cant was a fab rication of popular literati. But we should really not be surprised by the inclusion of argots in the writings of the respectable. Contributors to discussions of U (upper-class) and non-U speech have observed that the slang of criminals, while most definitely non-U, was still infectious. For example, in the 1970s terms like *lolly* (money), *nick* (to steal), and *I've been conned* entered the popular vocabulary through the medium of television. As one authority noted of this tendency to adopt and popularize argot, "we pick up the b rightest new slang, Broadway, Yiddish, Cockney, and from other fertile sources of new language, to decorate our discourse with for a while."[43]

Mayhew's interviews show that p opular speech had many more distinguishing features than he observed. It could be varied to suit the circumstances and to keep one's meaning from the authorities. Mayhew hinted at its se crecy in referring to the variation of speech "designedly" and for "the intent of concealing their designs and exploits," and some of his narratives confirm the point.[44] In addition, the speakers could alter their w ords according to circumstances. The costermongers, Mayhew reported, had a specialized slang of their own, and "if any strangers are present, the conversation is still further clothed in slang, so as to be unintelligible even to the partially initiated."[45] A young pickpocket told Mayhew that in g atherings in lo w lodging houses "there's people there talk backward—for one they say *eno,* for two *owt,* for three *eerht,* for four *ruof,* for five *evif,* for six *exis.*" He could count no higher, he said, because "I don't know any higher. I

can neither read nor write." There is good reason to think that this form of linguistic subterfuge was not unprecedented, since the coster-mongers used the same ploy.[46] One of Mayhew's informants about the casual wards of workhouses reported that when "cadgers saw a stranger, they used their slang."[47]

Canting was a mutable and moveable feast. Boy crossing-sweepers-cum-tumblers did not "make no slang of our own," one of them reported, "but uses the regular one." They had nicknames for each of the police officers in their neighborhood, and when one was nearby they would shout, for instance, "Phillup," as a signal not to be seen asking for money. When one of the constables discovered the meaning of this warning, "we had to change the word."[48] A beggar also reported that they altered their cant to avoid detection: "You see the flats [short for *flatty,* or policeman] got awake to it, so in course we had to alter the patter." They changed it to a rhyming slang: "The new style of cadgers' cant," the beggars stated, "is nothing like the thieves' cant, and is done all on the rhyming principle. This way's the caper." If a cadger wanted to ask a friend to visit him, smoke a pipe of tobacco, drink a glass of rum, and play a game of cards, and if "flats" were present, he would say: "'Splodger, will you have a Jack-surp*ass* of finger-and-*thumb,* and blow your yards of *tripe* of nosey me *knacker,* and have a touch of the *broads* with me and the other heaps of *coke* at my *drum.*'"[49] Speakers could also pick up the slang and drop it when the occasion demanded. A prostitute reported to Hemyng that she sometimes used the "old slang" when she was forced to beg.[50]

In examining Mayhew's opus on the underclass, it is relevant to ask who did *not* use cant or other types of slang, for this may tell us something about the circumstances of those who *did.* Foreigners, persons with even the most tenuous claims to respectability, and solitary workers did not use much cant. Mayhew delighted in attempting to capture the accented English of foreign members of the underclass, but their usage of English slang was very limited and very likely a testimony to their limited cultural assimilation.[51] It is therefore likely that the slang of London's native underclass was unique to itself, although of course foreigners might well have used argots in their own languages.

A second group who used limited amounts of jargon came from respectable backgrounds but had "gone bad," or suffered declining economic situations. Girls from good families who became prostitutes employed very little slang. Hemyng even noted that one spoke "in a superior manner."[52] But literacy alone was not the key. A girl's social background counted for more, judging by the example of a young typographer who claimed to have read Robert Owen, and who unleashed a tirade of cant about her father, whom she described as a "macing-cove [professional cheat] what robs'" and "a well-known swell of capers gay, who cut his last fling with great applause" (i.e., he was hanged). She described herself as a *mot,* probably a corruption of the old cant term *mort* (woman) and described how she "hooked many a man by showing my ankle on a wet day."[53] But the respectable poor—according to Mayhew the "reduced" gentlepersons and tradesmen, the unemployed through no fault of their own, the low paid, and the disabled—did not speak cant much.[54]

A third group who eschewed cant were solitary workers or those who worked indoors in small numbers and whose labors only exceptionally took them into public spaces; groups like the Spitalfields weavers and the many sweated workers or "slop-workers." Needlewomen, tailors, and shoemakers used the language of private, personal experience in their interviews with Mayhew. Apart from some technical terms connected with their trades, they spoke mainly of families, of their labors, and of poverty.[55]

It is important to answer the question about possible linguistic confluence between criminal and noncriminal cultures to determine whether there was any indication of a unified popular culture. In conducting an analysis of the data, some basic parameters must be laid down. The 227 examples of words used by Mayhew and his fellow authors must be excluded, so that we are certain of actually dealing with popular speech. Of the 2,774 remaining examples, there were 1,356 (48.9 percent) that were spoken and recorded just once. Of course, the slimness of this record does not mean that the words were never uttered by other parties, just that the evidence is incomplete.

The remaining 1,418 uses of slang are interesting on the issue of confluence of groups, because they show a decidedly exogenous

pattern in which more than one group of persons used a given vocabulary word. All told, 1,178 (83.1 percent), of terms spoken more than once fall into the exogenous category, that is they were used by persons beyond the immediate "tribe" (criminal group, trade, etc.) to which they belonged according to Mayhew. In contrast, just 16.9 percent were used in an endogenous manner. Frequently the latter were terms of art belonging to a particular trade, and the costermongers were striking in their specialist slang. They allegedly reversed the spelling of words so they could "shield their bargainings at market" in the fruit and vegetable trades from their Irish and Jewish competitors and other "uninitiated fellow traders." Some were said to converse in it "by the hour"; it was said to be essential to be brought up in the trade to learn the vernacular, although one lad from the country claimed to have mastered it in just three months. Communication among the costers was not confined to the actual words; it was as much by "inflection of the voice, the emphasis, the tone, the look, the shrug, the nod, the wink as by the words spoken." Mayhew thought the costers' slang was lacking in humor and was mainly about business and survival in the streets. They may even have been responsible for the much abused neologism *cool,* at least in the form of *cool it,* because they substituted it for *look* to alert one another to the presence of the police.[56]

The patterers who sold fiction on street corners also had their own special argot, which one of Mayhew's gentleman-in-decline informants reported "is not the cant of the costermonger, but a system of their own." Like that of the costers, it was incomprehensible because "it is so interlarded with their general remarks, while their ordinary language is so smothered and subdued, that unless when they are professionally engaged and talking of their wares, they might almost pass for foreigners." He gave extensive examples that he claimed to have culled from a group in a low lodging house. In a manner typical of low-life literature, the gentleman insinuated himself into their company by using a patterer's cant word. He asked them how they knew of the place, and one responded, using terms that still survive in rap music today, "We drop the main toper (go off the main road) and slink into the crib (house) in the back drum (street)." The scan-

dalous stories they circulated were called cocks, which has an impeccable pedigree in English in signifying an incredible tale.[57] Again in the fashion of low-life literature, Mayhew's informant reported that patterers, although vagrants, were not disorganized, because "there is a telegraphic dispatch between them, through the length and breadth of the land." They communicated verbally, but also through chalking on doors of houses certain signs to show whether the denizens were friendly or hostile to wayfarers. They also carved messages on the walls of lodging houses and jails, as in "Razor George and his moll slept here the day afore Christmas; just out of 'stir' (jail), for 'muzzling a peeler' [hitting a policeman]."[58]

But colorful hucksters—and no doubt these tales lost nothing in the telling by Mayhew—were not alone in having a jargon. Mainstream trades also used argots. According to rubbish carters, there were different kinds of dirt that they removed, including "soft dirt" and "hard dirt" or "hard core," consisting of bricks, chimney pots, and slates. They characterized their masters as either "good" or "scurfs."[59] Those who caught and sold wild birds used a different jargon to describe their methods. They used a net about twelve yards on a side, which they secured to the ground by four "stars" (iron pins), which held the "wings" or "flats" (sides). A trained "call-bird" was installed in the net, which by singing loudly attracted wild ones, and the trapper drew a "pull-line" to close the trap.[60] Strolling players were also observed to "have got a slang of their own"—"mummers' slang" or a "compound of broken Italian and French" and Romany. Among the examples Mayhew gives are: "'I have got no money' is, 'My nabs has nanti dinali.'"[61] Toymakers cited a "Bristol toy maker," which meant a worker in green wood; "to planish," which was to polish by hammering; and a "head" that was steel-faced on which one planished.[62] Sailors variously described working in rigging as "dandy work," "grafting," "splicing," and "knotting." A ship's carpenter who had gone whaling described his share of whale oil as "on the lay," securing a whale before killing it as "drags," the death motion of a whale as "flurries," and boiling blubber for oil as "trying out."[63] Boot and shoemakers used the term "by-strokes" to describe the taking on of extra work, often in nonunion shops, and called those who cut out the leather "clickers."[64] For their

parts, sawyers referred to a certain type of stave as "doublets," while for some reason hatters dubbed low-end hat sellers "four-and-nines."[65]

Far more numerous, though, are the 1,178 terms that people shared and that suggest a culture that went beyond particular trades. Sometimes groups would borrow from one another. The boys who became chimney sweeps, Mayhew wrote, borrowed the slang of the costers, because the sweeps were uneducated and "often betray their want of education, and are in no way particular as to their expressions, their language being made up, in a great measure, of the terms peculiar to the costermongers, especially the denominations of the various sorts of money."[66] Similar borrowers were the Italian penny-ice sellers and also a street photographer and a former banjo busker, who used the "mummers' slang."[67] There was even a possible case of social crossover through speech, for in one of his shows Punch introduced himself to the audience as "'Your most obedient, most humble, and dutiful servant, Mr. Punch.'" He concluded that "ye see I can talk as affluent as can be with the call in my mouth."[68]

As examples of cultural confluence, one may also cite examples from the vocabularies recorded by Mayhew. Take, for instance, the term *cove* or person (usually male), which originated in sixteenth-century cant.[69] By the mid-nineteenth century, as the following table indicates, the word had entered popular speech among a variety of groups and venues. Leaving aside the possibly exceptional "poet/author" as not being "of the people," here was a wide range of speakers. They tended, however, to have some specific characteristics. They were chiefly people who worked in the streets, including many costers and patterers. They also inhabited the poorer venues, such as "low lodging-houses," country lodging houses, and Rosemary Lane in the East End. Largely missing were members of respectable trades that Mayhew had interviewed for the *Morning Chronicle* articles in 1849–50, and noticeably absent were the criminals among whom the term *cove* had allegedly originated several centuries earlier. Here, then, there was blurring of the distinction between the "respectable" and "unrespectable" poor.

But clustering appears in other pieces of slang among the underclass. Where terms are used to describe the police and magistrates, it

## Table 3.1. Exogenous Uses of Cant: The Term Cove

| Word Reference | Source | Definition | Group/ Venue | Page | Volume |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| cove | street lad | person | child street sellers | 474a | 1 |
| cove | coster boy | person | child street sellers | 482a | 1 |
| cove | stupid runaway boy | person | child street sellers | 484b | 1 |
| cove | coster? | person | costers | 36 | 1 |
| cove | coster? | person | costers | 36 | 1 |
| cove | coster? | person | costers | 39 | 1 |
| cove | chaunter | person | paper workers | 227 | 1 |
| cove | ballad singer | person: in ballad | paper workers | 276 | 1 |
| cove | costers | person | costers | 143 | 1 |
| cove | muffin seller | person | muffin sellers | 202 | 1 |
| cove | sewer hunter | person | sewer hunters | 154a | 2 |
| cove | rubbish carter | person | rubbish carters | 293a | 2 |
| cove | used clothes seller | person | Rosemary Lane | 41a | 2 |
| cove | Silly Billy clown | person | street exhibitors | 137a | 3 |
| cove, dry bread | patterer | poor; dry toast | paper workers | 271 | 1 |
| cove, first-rate | lodging-house habitué | excellent patterer | lodging houses | 423 | 1 |
| cove, lushy | poet/author | in ballad | paper workers | 279 | 1 |
| cove, lushy | coster/coalshedder | drinking man | street sellers coal | 85a | 2 |
| cove, missionary | whelk dealer | missionary | whelk sellers | 164 | 1 |
| cove, 'riginal | coster | person | costers | 22 | 1 |
| cove, windmill | male beggar one | sold windmills in st. | low lodging houses | 417 | 1 |
| coves | patterer | men | low lodging houses | 259 | 1 |
| coves | gallows singer | person | paper workers | 283 | 1 |
| coves, corner | false reference giver | chaff at people | reference sellers | 445 | 4 |
| coves, shallow | patterer/ beggar | phoney shipwrecks | paper workers | 244 | 1 |
| coves, shallow | name given to | beg half-clad | shallow coves | 435 | 4 |
| coves, square | street campaigner | honest people | street campaigner | 419 | 4 |

*Source:* Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor,* ed. John D. Rosenberg, 4 vols (London: 1851–61; repr. New York: Dover, 1968).

was overwhelmingly street vendors who used them. As the following table shows, the terms *beak, bobby, crusher,* and *peeler* were all used to indicate the authorities, and the majority of speakers (sixteen of twenty-six) were street vendors who frequently came into conflict with the police. So even when those uttering slang appear to be exogenous, there were also actually endogenous subgroups involving particular trades that had cognate qualities.

**Table 3.2. Endogenous Uses of Cant: Designating the Police**

| Word Reference | Source | Definition | Group/ Venue | Page | Volume |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| beak | cheap-john | magistrate | cheap-john | 337 | 1 |
| beak | street lad | magistrate | child street sellers | 474b | 1 |
| beak | sharp youth | policeman? | low lodging houses | 255 | 1 |
| beak | patterer | police | low lodging houses | 260 | 1 |
| beak | patterer | policeman? | paper workers | 236 | 1 |
| beak | former "professional" | magistrate | thieving patterers | 315 | 1 |
| beak | sewer hunter | magistrate | sewer hunters | 154a | 2 |
| beak | bunter | police/magistrate | prostitutes | 223 | 4 |
| beaks | male beggar one | police | low lodging houses | 415 | 1 |
| bobbies | coster | police | costers | 14 | 1 |
| bobbies | coster | police | costers | 36 | 1 |
| bobbies | man in workhouse | police | workhouse inmate | 250a | 2 |
| bobbies | soldiers' prostitute | police | prostitutes | 246 | 4 |
| bobby | cracker seller | police constable | cracker sellers | 431a | 1 |
| bobby | running patterer | policeman | paper workers | 228 | 1 |
| bobbys | coster | police | costers | 25 | 1 |
| crusher | coster | policeman | costers | 123 | 1 |
| crushers | street lad | police | child street sellers | 474b | 1 |
| crushers | coster | police? | costers | 25 | 1 |
| crushers | coster | police? | costers | 29 | 1 |
| crushers | coster | police? | costers | 30 | 1 |
| crushers | costermonger | police? | rubbish carters | 287b | 2 |
| peeler | author? | police | costers | 20 | 1 |
| peeler | author? | police | costers | 35 | 1 |
| peeler | stationery seller | policeman | paper workers | 268 | 1 |
| peelers | soldier's woman | police | prostitutes | 236 | 4 |

*Source:* Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor,* ed. John D. Rosenberg, 4 vols (London: 1851–61; repr. New York: Dover, 1968).

Similarly with the term *quod,* which was used for *jail* and was frequently employed by persons who had been imprisoned or whose lives put them at risk for incarceration. Seven of thirteen instances of the word's usage included persons from these groups (see table 3.3).

### Table 3.3. Further Endogenous Uses of Cant: Describing Jail Time

| Word Reference | Source | Definition | Group/ Venue | Page | Volume |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| quod | ring seller | jail | ring sellers | 351a–b | 1 |
| quod | coster | jail | costers | 36 | 1 |
| quod | author? | in jail | paper workers | 250 | 1 |
| quod | thief | prison | meeting of thieves | 420 | 1 |
| quod | female vagrant | jail | London vagrants | 405 | 3 |
| quod | whistling/dancing boy | jail | street musicians | 201b | 3 |
| quod | ticket-of-leave man | jail | ticket of leave men | 435a | 3 |
| quod, in | old street showman | in jail | street exhibitors | 73a | 3 |
| quod, in | male vagrant | jail | London vagrants | 381 | 3 |
| quodded | coster | jailed in workhouse | costers | 125 | 1 |
| quodded | former "professional" | imprisoned | thieving patterers | 315 | 1 |
| quodded | low lodging prostitute | jailed | prostitutes | 223 | 4 |
| quodded | soldier's woman | jailed | prostitutes | 236 | 4 |

*Source:* Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor,* ed. John D. Rosenberg, 4 vols. (London: 1851–61; repr. New York: Dover, 1968).

A final example of the inside-outside dichotomy and its limitations occurs in the use of the term *slaughter* for cheap and inferior forms of production. Again, despite the variety of voices, these forms showed definite similarities among the speakers: cabinetmakers, Spitalfields weavers, boot- and shoemakers, and retailers of the *slaughterhouse,* or cheap production, knew about the sweated trades that produced them. There should be no surprise that these groups shared a jargon (see table 3.4).

The evidence I have presented suggests that there *were* confluences of vocabularies among the underclass of mid-nineteenth-century London, but that they were limited in extent. That almost half of the examples culled from Mayhew involved just a single occupational or criminal group should give one pause about accepting theories about the existence of linguistically unified criminal and dangerous classes with a wider reach into popular culture. If Mayhew's exposure of the

**Table 3.4. Yet Further Endogenous Uses of Cant:**
*Slaughterhouses* **and** *Slaughterers*

| Word Reference | Source | Definition | Group/ Venue | Page | Volume |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| slaughter-house | author quotes | cheap production | street seller coal | 81a | 2 |
| slaughter-house | better chairmaker | cheap middleman | cabinetmakers | 150 | V |
| slaughter-house | Spitalfields weaver | making cheap goods | Spitalfields weaver | 60 | I |
| slaughter-houses | women's man | produce junk | boot/shoemakers | 159 | III |
| slaughter houses | poor workmen call | retailers in swag shops | swag shops | 333 | 1 |
| slaughter houses | author quotes | cheap producers | boot/shoemakers | 154 | III |
| slaughterers | poor workmen call | retailers in swag shops | swag shops | 333 | 1 |
| slaughterers | garret master | wholesalers | casual workers | 302a | 2 |
| slaughterers | author quotes | furniture warehouses | furniture sellers | 22b | 2 |
| slaughterers | cabinetmaker | cheap employers | poor cabinetmakers | 192 | V |

*Source:* Henry Mayhew, The *Morning Chronicle* *Survey of Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts,* ed. Peter Razzell, 6 vols. (London, 1849–50; repr., Firle, Sussex: Caliban Books, 1980); Mayhew, *London Labour and the L ondon Poor,* ed. John D. Rosenberg, 4 vols. (London, 1851–61; repr., New York: Dover, 1968).

*Note:* Roman numerals for volumes refer to the *Survey.* Arabic numerals for volumes refer to *London Labour and the London Poor.*

speech of the underclass was an att empt to "take it to" them, he was in considerable measure erecting and attacking a straw man. For centuries English and continental writers had "documented" the speech of a supposed underworld of vagrants, thieves, and prostitutes, and part of the work of Mayhew and company evidently belonged to that tradition.[70] To the extent that these journalists incorporated cant into a stereotyped view of the underclass as degenerate, threatening, and a coherent class, they were "taking it to" their subjects.

Yet the Mayhew record shows that speech clusters actually existed among cognate occupations, especially those w ith relationships to the streets and p risons of the public sphere. These clusters suggest that a common slang did exist in varied and possibly numerous groups

among the underclass. At the level of respectable fears, the existence of such argots should not b e underestimated, because they clearly frightened the respectable, drove public debate, inspired legislation, and influenced policies of policing and the judicial system. To some, after all, departures from standard language can be frightening and contentious. The issue of people's speech can also b e contentious: witness recent debates in the United States about "Ebonics" and hostility to Spanish-speaking immigrants, which have sparked efforts to take it to them by making English the official national language.

It remains to be seen whether the slang of the underclass in mid-nineteenth-century London fostered popular solidarity and empowerment. Specialized vocabularies may have maximized success in running street businesses and committing crimes, but their speech may also have alerted the authorities to their presence there. Where then were the points of solidarity? Physically, the underclass were scattered around London in the ne ighborhoods that journalists and novelists called rookeries, and reformers like Masterman as lat e as 1901 described as "these unknown regions."[71] Mayhew and company, besides recording popular speech, captured in print and pictures a vibrant portrait street life, including the people, the work they did (or did not), gathering places, housing, and popular entertainments. The scenes of Saturday night in the market in the New-cut suggest an animated community of stallholders, street sellers, their customers, and people from the neighborhood.[72] Similarly lively, according to Mayhew, was the Jewish neighborhood in Pettycoat Lane:

> The savor of the place is . . . peculiar. There is fresh fish, and dried fish, and fish being fried in a style peculiar to the Jews; there is the fustiness of old clothes; there is the o dor from the pans o n which (still in the J ewish fashion) frizzle and hiss pie ces of meat and onions; puddings are boiling and e nveloped in st eam; cakes with strange names are hot from the oven; tubs of big pickled cucumbers give a sort of acidity to the atmosphere; lemons and oranges abound; and al-together the scene is not o nly such as can o nly be seen in London, but only such as can be seen in this o ne part of the metropolis.[73]

*"Takin' It to the Streets"* | 109

That Mayhew had a remarkable sense of places and the people that occupied them is apparent from the scene he described in Church Lane, Bloomsbury, in a section of his book innocuously entitled "street-sellers of salt." He observed a neighborhood in which

> Stretching across the narrow street, from all the upper windows, might be seen lines crossing and recrossing each other, on which hung yellow-looking shirts, stockings, women's caps, and handkerchiefs looking like soiled and torn paper, and throwing the whole lane into shade. Beneath this ragged canopy, the street literally swarmed with human beings—young and old, men and women, boys and girls, wandering about amidst all kinds of discordant sounds. The foot-paths on both sides of the narrow street were occupied here and there by groups of men and boys, some sitting on the flags and others leaning against the wall, while their feet, in most instances bare, dabbled in the black channel alongside the kerb, which being disturbed sent up a sickening stench. Some of these groups were playing cards for money, which lay on the ground near them. Men and women at intervals lay stretched out in sleep on the pathway; over these the passengers were obliged to jump; in some instances they stood on their backs as they stepped over them, and then the sleeper languidly raised his head, growled out a drowsy oath, and slept again.[74]

Mayhew also described in grim detail the world of the bone-grubber and pure-finder between the London and St. Katherine's docks and Rosemary Lane. There he found, a "wretched locality . . . , redolent of filth and pregnant with pestilential diseases" to which "all the out-casts of the metropolitan population" were drawn. There they found both the positive and negative sides of takin' it to the streets. On the one hand they experienced solidarity by "finding fitting associates and companions in their wretchedness (for there is doubtlessly something attractive and agreeable to them in such companionship)." But they also went there because the authorities were takin' it to them: "for the purpose of hiding themselves and their shifts and struggles for existence from the world."[75]

It also remains to be seen whether the popular culture reported by Mayhew deserves the position accorded it in accounts of the Victorian

underworld; that is, as a narrative of crime tout court. Rather, I believe that within Mayhew's overall oeuvre that culture, to be understood, must be contextualized. His concern about criminality and his hostility to the jargons of the underclass should be considered in the light of their symbolic significance for him. For, with the exception of the fourth volume of *London Labour,* Mayhew was principally concerned to highlight three issues concerning London's underclass, only one of which concerned the dangerous and criminal. First, he sought to underscore the hardships of the low paid, which he systematically and—for the most part sympathetically—chronicled. Second, he wanted to link their difficulties to a labor system he perceived to be in decline—that of the society man or the skilled, independent artisan. Third, his narrative, while often disjointed and rhetorical, targeted street vending and crime as the fate of the low-paid craft workers. There never seemed a doubt in his mind that the street vendors and criminals were the dishonorable, while the poorly remunerated and desperate artisans were the honorable. If the two groups sometimes blurred into one another, it was because the harsh reality, in Mayhew's view, was that skilled craft workers were rapidly joining the ranks of the underclass.

## Notes

1. Henry Mayhew, *The* Morning Chronicle *Survey of Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts,* ed. Peter Razzell, 6 vols. (London, 1849–50; repr., Firle, Sussex: Caliban Books, 1980); Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor,* ed. John D. Rosenberg, 4 vols. (London, 1851–61; repr., New York: Dover, 1968).

2. Peter Burke, introduction to *The Social History of Language,* ed. Peter Burke and Roy Porter, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, no. 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 11–13.

3. Victor Bailey, "The Fabrication of Deviance: 'Dangerous Classes' and 'Criminal Classes' in Victorian England," in *Protest and Survival: Essays for E. P. Thompson,* ed. John Rule and Robert Malcolmson (London: Merlin Press, 1993), 232–35, 239–42. This section of this chapter is reprinted, with some changes, from "Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian 'Criminal Class': Mayhew's Convict Revisited," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 3 (2005): 499–502.

4. Charles F. G. Masterman, ed., *The Heart of the Empire: Discussions of Problems of Modern City Life in England* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901; repr., New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973, ed. Bentley B. Gilbert), preface, viii–ix. I owe this reference to Paul Ocobock.

5. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979; orig. pub. as *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* [Paris: Gallimard, 1975]), 275. Foucault's work was anticipated in considerable measure by Louis Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1958).

6. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 78–82, 296–98.

7. V. A. C. Gatrell, "Crime, Authority and the Policeman-State," in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain,* ed. F. M. L. Thompson, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3:250, 278, 287.

8. For youth, see Heather Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1999; repr., 2002), 7, 17, 29–31, 34; also see Gatrell, "Policeman-state," 278–79. Quotations are from Martin J. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law, and Policy in England, 1830–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14–27.

9. Bailey cites various authorities that separated the working and criminal poor. Bailey, "Fabrication of Deviance," 223, 232, 234. Cf. Shore, *Artful Dodgers,* 53, 151; David Philips, *Crime and Authority in Victorian England: The Black Country, 1835–1860* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 126–27, 287; Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750–1900,* 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 173. For more recent evidence of the blurring of lines between working and crime, criminals and the police, see Dick Hobbs, *Doing the Business: Entrepreneurship, the Working Class, and Detectives in the East End of London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 117, 149–50.

10. Quotations from Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal,* 20; G. Himmelfarb, "The 'Culture of Poverty,'" in *The Victorian City: Images and Realities,* ed. H. J. Dyos and M. Wolff 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 2:711, 730. But for doubts about a subculture, see Gatrell, "Policeman-state," 303 (while stating on p. 299 that "professional" crime certainly existed); Emsley, *Crime and Society,* 173.

11. Shore, *Artful Dodgers,* 17, 29–32; Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal,* 14, 17; S. J. Stevenson, "The 'Habitual Criminal' in Nineteenth-Century England: Some Observations on the Figures," *Urban History Yearbook,* 1986, 48–49. Stevenson notes that lower levels of policing tended to produce fewer registrations of offenders (44).

12. Bailey, "Fabrication of Deviance," 224–25, 236–37, 250.

13. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal,* 29 (emphasis in original).

14. Ibid., 6–8. There is the further difficulty with the Foucault model that it tends to treat the authorities as monolithic. See the evidence of police resistance to the enforcement of middle-class morals on the London working classes gathered by Stephen Inwood, "Policing London's Morals: The Metropolitan Police and Popular Culture, 1829–1850," *London Journal* 15, no. 2 (1990): 135, 137, 142.

15. Eric A. Johnson and Eric H. Monkonnen discuss the Norbert Elias paradigm. Johnson and Monkonnen, eds., *The Civilization of Crime: Violence in Town and Country since the Middle Ages* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 1–13.

16. An outstanding exception to this statement is Shore, *Artful Dodgers.*

17. For an early example of elite involvement in the reform of policing and punishment, see A. L. Beier, "Foucault *Redux?* The Roles of Humanism, Protestantism, and an Urban Elite in Creating the London Bridewell, 1500–1560," in *Crime, Gender, and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecutions,* ed. Louis A. Knafla, Criminal Justice History, no. 17 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002).

18. For a powerful attack on Oscar Lewis's formulation and evidence, see Charles A. Valentine, *Culture and Poverty: Critique and Counter-proposals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), ch. 3.

19. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 135, 249, 251. Foucault did cite resistance to some forms of forced labor and efforts by workers' newspapers to resist the isolation of delinquents from the urban working classes (241, 286–87). Cf. Gatrell, "Policeman-state," 302–3, for a statement that professional criminals were "usually conceived within and sheltered by the urban poor."

20. Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); V. A. C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770–1868* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); but esp. Thomas W. Laqueur, "Crowds, Carnival and the State in English Executions, 1604–1868," in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone,* ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 332.

21. This chapter will not consider Mayhew and Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life* (London: Griffin, Bohn, 1862; repr., London: F. Cass, 1968), which focuses on prisons and whether they reformed criminals.

22. P. Razzell, introduction, *Morning Chronicle,* 1:2. Admittedly the author adds, "Mayhew only used it to rebut the assumptions and fears which it concealed."

23. Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty,* 393; but somewhat contradictorily, she did not believe the dangerous classes of England posed the same threat as their counterparts in France or Germany (395–97).

24. Mayhew, *Survey,* 3:47.

25. Ibid., 3:47, 50, 69, 74.

26. Mayhew, *London Labour,* IV, v, 1, 23–27, 29–30, 33. For differing views of the 1860s, see Jennifer Davis, "The London Garrotting Panic of 1862: A Moral Panic and the Creation of a Criminal Class in Mid-Victorian London," in *Crime and the Law: The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500,* ed. V. A. C. Gatrell, B. Lenman, and G. Parker (London: Europa, 1980), 190ff.; S. J. Stevenson, "The 'Habitual Criminal' in Nineteenth-Century England: Some Observations on the Figures," *Urban History Yearbook,* 1986, 37–60.

27. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 4:30–31.

28. Ibid., 4:33, 275, 302, 304, 314, 326, 347, 376, 434–35. For early modern examples, fictional and real, see ch. 7 in Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640* (London: Methuen, 1985).

29. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 4:255–56, 324, 352, 432.

30. Ibid., 1:11, 20, 101 (which includes some remarks by Mayhew defending the costers).

31. Ibid., 1:213–23.

32. Ibid., 2:5. The hyperbole was qualified when he stated that these were "men who have no knowledge of the government of the country but as an armed despotism, preventing their earning their living, and who hate all law, because it is made to appear to them merely as an organized tyranny," presumably a reference to restrictions on street-traders' rights. He added an explanation if not a defense of their dangerousness, which he said arose "from our very neglect of them," so that we "rail at or deplore" their existences.

33. Ibid. 3:45, 50. Cf. ibid., 410–29, esp. 428–29. But Mayhew's stories of immoral, criminal behavior among vagrants were tempered in *London Labour* by a series of lengthy autobiographies, which with great humanity spelled out how sweated labor, unemployment, and family crises led to mendicancy, and which ended with one of his occasional attacks on the rich in which he told them to "get down from your moral stilts."

34. Peter Burke, introduction to *Languages and Jargons: Contributions to a Social History of Language,* ed. Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 5; C. E. Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld,* 2 vols.

(Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 1:153; A. Dauzat, *Les argots: Caractères, evolution, influence* (Paris: Delagrave, 1956), cited by Bosworth, 1:152.

35. A. L. Beier, "Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian 'Criminal Class': Mayhew's Convict Revisited," *Journal of British Studies,* 44, no. 3 (2005): 512–14, and the sources cited there.

36. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 1:2–3.

37. Ibid., 1:2.

38. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, eds., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English,* 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); Mayhew, *London Labour,* 1:16, 21, 25, 31, 33, 46, 69, 100.

39. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 4:25, 281, 293, 339.

40. Ibid. 4:25, 291.

41. The etymology of these terms, which are presumably substitutes for "dirty lies" or some such equivalent, is a matter of dispute between myself and my friend Professor Clive Emsley of the Open University. Although Emsley, as a Londoner and a historian of crime, has excellent credentials in this area, it seems that that he is mistaken in thinking that "porkies" was in common parlance before *Minder.*

42. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 4:237; cf. Hemyng's use of the terms "legged" and "bullies" without quotation marks, ibid., 4:252, 264.

43. Richard Buckle, *U and Non-U Revisited* (London: Viking, 1978), 38, 42–43.

44. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 1:321.

45. Ibid., 1:11.

46. Ibid., 1:411 (emphasis in original); for the costers, see ibid., 1:23–24.

47. Ibid., 3:396.

48. Ibid., 2:496, 498.

49. Ibid., 1:418 (emphasis in original).

50. Ibid., 4:245.

51. Ibid., 1:94, 2:8, 337, 3:414 (Irish); 2:8 (Jewish), 2:454 (Moroccan); Mayhew, *Survey,* 3:190 (German), 77, 192 (French), 245; Mayhew, *London Labour,* 3:77, 139 (Italian).

52. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 4:243–44, 260–62, 269–71.

53. Ibid., 4:256.

54. Ibid. 1:91, 269–70, 3:414–16

55. Mayhew, *Survey,* 1:57–8, 60–61, 62–63, 112, 115, 121, 135, 138–39, 141, 144, 148–49, 149–50, 155–56, 157–59.

56. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 1:23–4.

57. Ibid., 1:218, 222, 234, 292; *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English,* s.v. *cock.* Note that Mayhew put a negative spin on the term when he associated it with phony love letters. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 1:238.

58. Ibid., 1:218–19.

59. Ibid., 2:281, 289.

60. Ibid., 2:58.

61. Ibid., 3:139.

62. Ibid., 3:217, 230.

63. Ibid., 4:92, 12.

64. Mayhew, *Survey,* 3:121, 125, 155, 156.

65. Ibid., 5:63–64, 74; 6:154, 159.

66. Ibid., 2:364. Mayhew adds, however, that he has met with sweepers "whose language was that in ordinary use, and their manners not vulgar."

67. Ibid., 2:139, 364; 3:206.

68. Ibid., 3:54. The call may refer to a "signaling-whistle." *Concise Oxford Dictionary.*

69. *Concise Oxford Dictionary.*

70. Lee Beier, "Anti-language or Jargon? Canting in the English Underworld in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Languages and Jargons: Contributions to a Social History of Language,* ed. Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 1995), 64–69.

71. Masterman, "Realities at Home," in *Heart of the Empire,* 15.

72. Mayhew, *London Labour,* 1:9–10.

73. Ibid., 2:10–11.

74. Ibid., 2:89–90.

75. Ibid., 2:143–44.