



Introduction: The case of the initial letter

In his *Autobiography*, published in 1951, William Carlos Williams looked back to the period immediately before the First World War, in 1913, when he was involved with the circle of painters and poets – including Marcel Duchamp and Mina Loy – grouped round Lawrence Krymborg’s journal, *The Others*. He describes how he would:

sneak away mostly on Sundays to join the gang, show what I had written and sometimes help Krymborg with the make-up. We’d have arguments over cubism which would fill an afternoon. There was a comparable whipping up of interest in the structure of the poem. It seemed daring to omit capitals at the head of each poetic line. Rhyme went by the board. We were, in short, “rebels,” and were so treated ... Impressionism, Dadaism, surrealism applied to both painting and the poem. What a battle we made of it merely getting rid of capitals at the beginning of every line! Literary allusions, save in very attenuated form, were unknown to us.¹

One hundred and thirty years earlier, in London in 1818, William Hazlitt published his *Lectures on the English Poets*, in one of which he looked back to the early work of the Lake School in the 1790s (he had William Wordsworth principally in mind). ‘This school of poetry’, he said:

had its origin in the French revolution, or rather in those sentiments and opinions which produced that revolution ... Nothing that was established was to be tolerated. All the common-place figures of poetry, tropes, allegories, personifications, with the whole heathen mythology, were instantly discarded; a classical allusion was considered a piece of antiquated foppery; capital letters were no more allowed in print, than letters-patent of nobility were permitted in real life; kings and queens were dethroned from their rank and station in legitimate tragedy or epic poetry, as they were

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decapitated elsewhere; rhyme was looked upon as a relic of the feudal system, and regular metre was abolished along with regular government ... The object was to reduce all things to an absolute level.²

The similarities between these statements are striking: the analogy between literary and political rebellion, the remarkably similar list of specific innovations. All the formal devices rejected by Williams and his group – rhyme, allusion, capital letters – were listed by Hazlitt too.

One feature of the two statements stands out as especially surprising: the hostility towards capital letters which they both record. My aim in this book is to demonstrate that typographic case – the conventions governing its use, and challenges to those conventions – does matter. I will argue that in Britain, in the period between the French revolution and the end of the nineteenth century, it matters particularly in three influential bodies of writing: the novels of Charles Dickens, and in the writing associated with revolutionary Marxism (discussed in Chapters 6 and 7) and suffragist feminism (discussed in Chapter 10). Dickens himself, whose work influenced both the suffragists and the Marxists, began to use the capital letter as a precision instrument in *Martin Chuzzlewit* in 1843–44, to express his disenchantment with the rhetoric of American republican patriotism following his American tour of 1840. This early experimentation is discussed in Chapter 3. In his later work, especially in *Dombey and Son* (1847–48), *Bleak House* (1852–53), *Little Dorrit* (1855–57) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), Dickens deployed the distinction between upper and lower case in increasingly subtle and inventive ways. He used it to dramatise the power relationships between individuals and between groups, as well as to bring about that ‘transposition of attributes’ between things and people, which Dorothy Van Ghent influentially identified as a central feature of his fiction.³ This more sophisticated work is discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. What I shall call the ‘expressive capital letter’ came to play a significant part in the unique combinations of humour, weirdness and social satire that we find in his fiction.

Dickens’s innovative work is at the centre of my argument. But whether the dual alphabet is used in innovative or conventional ways, it is always an important generator of meaning. The choice between upper and lower case, whether it is made by author, printer or publisher, or in the negotiations between them, can make an important difference to the meaning, and frequently to the political orientation, of texts.

Of course, very little that Hazlitt says in the passage quoted from the 1818 essay is literally true or intended to be taken as literally true. So

far as capitals are concerned, Hazlitt talks as though Wordsworth were EE Cummings, or as though *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) was printed at the Bauhaus in 1926 where the print-shop under Herbert Bayer did in fact start to print exclusively in lower case. Hazlitt's suggestion that capital letters were suddenly abolished is a provocative exaggeration of a real change, although it was not a sudden change and did not coincide with the French revolution or any other specific political event. What Hazlitt is most obviously referring to is a change in one function of the capital letter which had taken place over a period of about seventy years and which certainly resulted in a reduction of its overall use. The change had been formulated as early as 1755 by John Smith in his *Printer's Grammar*. Smith distinguished between 'the old way, with Capitals to Substantives, and Italic to proper names' and the 'more modern way', which he thought 'the more neat practice, all in Roman, and Capitals to proper names and Emphatical words'.⁴

There was neither a sudden nor a smooth transition between 'the old way' and 'the new way'. As Roger Lonsdale notes, 'there was a widespread tendency from about 1750 for printers to reduce or eliminate the initial capitalization of nouns'. However, as he also stresses, 'printing practice varied widely throughout the century'.⁵ By 1818, when Hazlitt gave his lecture, Smith's 'new way' – 'all in Roman, and Capitals to proper names and Emphatical words' – was in universal use. From about 1750 there had been nearly seventy years of typographic instability, with a number of hybrid systems in use and often what seems to be no system at all. Readers of texts published in this period, particularly readers of its poetry, are often puzzled to decide whether the scattering of capitals down a printed page is largely random or peculiarly deliberate. This is an issue that will be addressed in Chapter 2 in a detailed examination of poems by the poets Wordsworth and Crabbe, who wrote and published through this period of typographic instability and transformation. In these poems, as we will see, the question of whether nouns for positions in the social and kinship order – nouns such as 'Sister' and 'Servant' – should have initial capital letters can be particularly important, and it may be that it was the increased lower-casing of nouns of this kind that Hazlitt had most specifically in mind in his essay. In any event, Hazlitt generalised a reduction in the use of capitals into a rejection of all capitals, the more easily to politicise it, producing what amounts to a theory of typographic levelling. He puns implicitly on the link between decapitalisation and decapitation, as though, inspired by the French revolution, London printers set about guillotining the heads off capital letters.

William Carlos Williams is more explicitly specific about which function of the capital he and his 'gang' were rejecting: its use to mark the beginning of a line of verse. Yet he too associates this with a broader rebelliousness ('We were "rebels," and were so treated'). Indeed, when he refers, quite conventionally, to the beginning of the verse line as its 'head', he points us back to Hazlitt's regicidal word play.

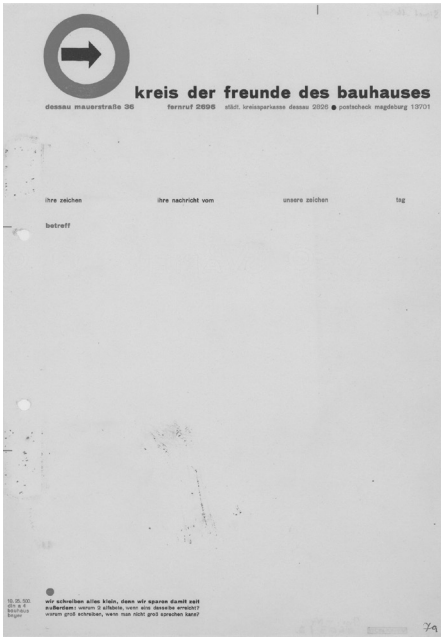
Williams and the modernists were successful. The capital letter, which since the late fifteenth century had been used to begin lines of verse in English, is now optional: printers and publishers respect the decisions of the poets in this respect. The initial capital letters which, outside of poetry, are still normally compulsory are those that begin sentences and proper names. In addition, and very curiously, the first-person pronoun 'I' continues to be written as a capital. In the context of digitisation there have been moves to loosen up the conventions further in favour of the lower case, but the movement has so far been intermittent.

Is there any truth at all in Hazlitt's notion of typographic levelling? An item which seems to support it appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper in 1999. The 'readers' editor' was defending, on egalitarian grounds, a change in the paper's house style, particularly as it affects the titles of social positions: 'The Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary are now the home secretary and the foreign secretary, the sort of people you might find standing next to you in the queue for the bus.'⁶

The lower-casing of the names of these offices of state does indeed modify their meaning in the manner suggested, for reasons I will examine shortly. But one thing that might make us nevertheless sceptical about the readers' editor's claim is that the difference between the 'Foreign Secretary' and the 'foreign secretary' is not readily audible. The extent to which the presence of capital letters can be communicated in speech varies, but it is certainly true that while case can be seen it cannot always be heard. The question of whether initial capital letters that are expressive in print can be made expressive, or expressive in the same way, in speech is one that, I will argue, increasingly preoccupied Dickens as he developed his own second career as a public reader of his own fiction. It is discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 8 and 9.

The presumed inaudibility of the dual alphabet was certainly one of the justifications for printing all in lower case offered by the Bauhaus print-shop under Herbert Bayer: 'why write capitals, if we cannot speak capitals?' (Figure 1). Capitalisation was – and is – much heavier in German than in English writing and printing. In German, all nouns, not just proper ones, are given an initial capital. For that reason, Bayer

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1 A Bauhaus letterhead, 1925, reproduced with permission of Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. The statement at the bottom reads: ‘wir schreiben alles klein, den wir sparen damit zeit ausserdem: warum 2 alfabete, wenn eins dasselbe erreicht? warum gross schreiben, wenn man nicht gross sprechen kann?’, ‘we only use small characters because it saves time. moreover, why have 2 alphabets when one will do? why write capitals if we cannot speak capitals?’

argued (in a passage originally published, in English, in an American exhibition catalogue) that: ‘dropping capitals would be a less radical reform in english. indeed the use of capital letters occurs so infrequently in english in comparison with german that it is difficult to understand why such a superfluous alphabet should still be considered necessary.’⁷

The claims made by Bayer here, and the claims made on the Bauhaus letterhead, each deserve careful consideration. First, Bayer is right to point to the difference between German and English usage but clearly mistaken in his belief that capitals are necessarily less significant where they are less frequent. It is rather that their significance changes. This is strikingly illustrated when German texts are translated into English and translators must adjust to the different functions of the initial capital letter in the two languages. Dickens, Marx and Marx’s English translators are discussed from this perspective in Chapters 6 and 7.

Even within the context of English, as distinct from European, cultural history it should be more common than it is to put the work of Dickens and Marx side by side. They were, after all, together with Darwin, the most globally influential writers working in England in

the nineteenth century (Walter Scott makes Scotland a different case). Marx was a Londoner, living and working in London from his exile in 1849 aged twenty-nine to his death in 1883. But he was a Londoner who was almost unknown in this country until after the fall of the Paris Commune in 1871. *The Civil War in France* published later the same year was the only one of his major works written in English, while the first English translation of *Das Kapital*, by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, did not appear until 1887. This combination of circumstances meant that Dickens, who died in 1870 and did not read German, did not read Marx and had probably never heard of him. By contrast, Marx was an enthusiastic reader of Dickens. As S. S. Prawer argued in his important 1976 study, *Karl Marx and World Literature*, Dickens 'increasingly joins Shakespeare in transforming, illuminating and caricaturing Marx's world.'⁸

As the work of campaigning writers, the texts of Marx and Dickens converge and diverge in interesting ways. There is clearly in both a vivid sense of what Dickens in *Bleak House* calls the 'great gulfs'⁹ that divided society, but fundamental differences in the way that they understood those gulfs and envisaged their removal. Dickens's radicalism was normally of a paternalistic kind and aimed at social reconciliation, while Marx as a revolutionary believed that 'the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself.'¹⁰ Nevertheless, when he described the forms of popular self-government pioneered by the Paris communards he borrowed from Dickens to do it, describing elected representatives 'doing their work publicly, simply ... acting in bright daylight, with no pretensions to infallibility, not hiding itself behind circumlocution office'.¹¹

Keston Sutherland is right to say that in *Capital* Marx 'is not just the theorist of capital and of social existence under capital, but also the author of an immensely daring and complicated satire on social existence under capital', and his writing owes as much, in this respect, to Swift as to Dickens.¹² Nevertheless, *Das Kapital* has been credited with a 'Dickensian texture',¹³ and Dorothy Van Ghent argued that Dickens and Marx both identified their society as one in which 'the qualities of things and people were reversed'.¹⁴ However, when Marx described the 'Personifizierung der Sache und Versachlichung der Personen,' he was clearly using the dual alphabet in a different way than its modern English translation as 'the personification of things and the reification of persons'.¹⁵ This is one of the things that makes the work of the Manchester lawyer Samuel Moore, the principal nineteenth-century translator of

both *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto*,¹⁶ so interesting, revealing as it does the influence of Dickens and of the historical analysis and idiosyncratic capitalisations of Thomas Carlyle, 'der Deutsch-Engländer' ('the half-German Englishman')¹⁷ as Engels admiringly called him. These translations, with their sometimes pointed use of the initial capital, need to be seen as important nineteenth-century texts in their own right.

Although Herbert Bayer was wrong to suggest that the less frequent use of capital letters in English than in German made it less important, the two reasons for dispensing with upper case offered on the Bauhaus letterhead – that it 'saves time' and that capitals have no equivalent in speech – are more substantial. Whatever the semantic and ideological effects of the reduction in the use of capitals in Britain after 1750, its principal cause was indeed probably to do with 'saving time' and reducing labour costs. Any reduction in the use of capital letters means that the compositor does not have to reach so frequently for the actual 'upper case'.

The second justification for moving to a single alphabet offered on the Bauhaus letterhead is in the form of a question: 'why write capitals if we cannot speak capitals?' This is a rhetorical question which deserves an unrhetorical answer; or rather, two answers, since there are two different assumptions being made. One assumption is that the dual alphabet has no equivalent in speech – 'we cannot speak capitals' – and the other is that we can therefore dispense with them in print. The former is broadly true, although with caveats that will be explored in future chapters; but the second claim – that we can therefore dispense with them in print without any loss – does not follow from the first.

Both issues are illuminated by the effect brought about by the change from 'the Foreign Secretary' to 'the foreign secretary'. The change to lower case in this instance is certainly inaudible but, equally certainly, it does result in a change of meaning. What this demonstrates is that writing and printing are not simply transcriptions of speech. They can do certain things that speech cannot do, just as speech can do things that writing and printing cannot do. The phonocentric assumption embodied by the rhetorical question – 'why print capitals if we cannot speak capitals?' – has, however, been influential and helps to explain the failure of literary critics and cultural historians to accord the dual alphabet the attention that it deserves. While a number of important and innovative studies have advanced a more complex understanding of the interactions between print and speech in nineteenth-century culture, the part played by the dual alphabet in this relationship has not been recognised.¹⁸

If the lower-casing of ‘the Foreign Secretary’ to ‘the foreign secretary’ does have a ‘levelling’ effect, why does it do so? Part of the answer can be found in the first of the Printers’ Grammars, Joseph Moxon’s *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* (1683–84). Advising compositors on the use of roman, italic and capitals, Moxon writes that:

when he meets with proper Names of Persons or Places he Sets them in Italick, if the Series of his Matter be Set in Roman; or in Roman if the Series of his Matter be Set in Italick, and Sets the first Letter with a Capital, or as the Person or Place he finds the purpose of the Author to dignifie, all Capitals; but then, if conveniently he can, he will Set a Space between every Letter, and two or three before and after that Name, to make it shew more Graceful and Stately. For Capitals express Dignity wherever they are Set, and Space and Distance also implies stateliness.¹⁹

Printers’ Grammars always suggest that capitals express dignity and stateliness. John Smith, for instance, talks about ‘words graced with a capital’.²⁰ It is important to note that, for Moxon, the distinction between upper and lower case is quite different in this respect from the distinction between italic and roman. Italic distinguishes the proper name if ‘the series of the matter’ is in roman, while roman does so if the series of the matter is in italic. Upper and lower case are not reversible in this way. The distinction between upper and lower case is – to use more recent terminology – iconic. The relative height of capitals on the page is indeed similar to the literal and metaphoric height of God in Heaven and the King on his throne.

There is of course no necessary connection between what comes first and what is at the top: the King and Queen usually take their seats at the banquet last. Nevertheless, English, like most written languages, is written and read from the top of the page – or other writing surface – downwards, rather than upwards from the bottom. As Michael Rosen puts it, ‘using capital letters to begin things started out in the fourth century where they were used at the start of a page’,²¹ while Moxon suggests, on the basis of an analogy between the page and the human body, that it is proper to speak about the beginning of a page or a line of verse as its ‘head’. These links between capitals, beginnings and heads suggest that you could no more reverse the meaning of upper and lower case than you can wear a cap on your feet. In English and some other Latin-influenced languages, puns on words deriving from ‘caput’ can therefore be genuinely illuminating. Typographic case functions on metaphorical principles from start to finish: it works – unlike other

aspects of language – on the basis of similarity. Deprived of their initial capitals, the home secretary and the foreign secretary do seem less like dignitaries or high state functionaries, and more like us.

Of course, we must distinguish, as Moxon does, between the capitalisation of whole words and the capitalisation of initial letters; although he is talking about both kinds of capitalisation in the passage that I have quoted. Both kinds, he argues, ‘dignifie’. In this book, I will also talk about both kinds of capitalisation and aim to be clear about how they differ as well as what they have in common. The levelling effect produced by decapitalising the initial letter of the titles of offices of state results in part from the fact that it is specifically the initial letters that have been lower-cased. Since we now distinguish proper names by means of an initial capital letter, the titles of these offices of state, deprived of their capitals, seem less like proper names and more like common nouns.

One feature of proper names is that we do not necessarily need to know their meaning in order to use or understand them.²² Thus, you can read about Hazlitt without asking yourself what ‘hazlitt’ is; but if you were to read about hazlitt you would certainly want to find out what, if anything, it was. In a less extreme form, this is what happens when the Secretaries of State lose their capitals. We are more likely to think of ‘the foreign secretary’ as a kind of secretary. Furthermore, we are likely to call to mind secretaries in the normal modern sense rather than their more socially elevated forebears.

The egalitarian effect identified by the *Guardian*’s readers’ editor is therefore produced by a combination of factors: the loss of dignity produced by the removal of any capital, the shift towards the common noun, and the altered social status of people called ‘secretaries’. A piece of evidence which seemed to support Hazlitt’s notion of typographic levelling turns out to at least complicate it. And this should not surprise us. After all, in the wake of the American and French revolutions, democrats and radicals – political levellers – looked very favourably on certain capital letters, such as those which, in English, usually began words such as Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and the People. Two examples in particular – one from the women’s suffrage movement, the other from Dickens – confirm that the identification of political with typographic levelling is too simple an equation to express the complex and variable relationships that can exist between politics and letters.

In 1884 Millicent Garrett Fawcett published an essay on ‘Women’s Suffrage in England’ in which she compared the English movement favourably with the movement in other countries. She was writing in

the context of the campaign to win the vote for women ratepayers and one purpose of her essay was to defend the pragmatism of the Women's Suffrage Society in its pursuit of limited aims of this sort. She argued that:

the character of practical moderation and rather humdrum common sense has prevented a good deal of what strikes us as rather comic about the movement in other countries. We talk about 'women' and 'women's suffrage', we do not talk about Woman with a capital 'W'. We leave that to our enemies ... The studied moderation of the societies, the absence of tall talk, is one great secret of the progress the women's movement has made in England ... The words Man, Woman, Humanity, etc. send a cold shudder through the average Briton, but talk to him of John and Elizabeth and he is ready to be interested and, up to his lights, just.²³

In literalising the metaphor of 'tall talk' – which, like 'talking big', had an American origin – Fawcett draws our attention to the metaphorical and visual way in which capitals themselves work. Furthermore, she generalises her preference for the lower-case plural 'women' over the upper-case singular 'Woman' into a systematic nominalism: that is, a belief that only unique, individual things or people are real, while categories that group them together are at best convenient mental constructs, at worst 'abstractions' in the pejorative sense.²⁴ Differences of opinion and practice about the capitalisation of abstract nouns frequently, as we shall see, express or entail philosophical differences between nominalism and essentialism, but seldom so explicitly as in Fawcett's hostility to 'tall talk'.

Fawcett's nominalism is associated with a reformist and pragmatist politics rather than with 'levelling'. Political levelling, in this context, is the enemy of typographic levelling. And more radical campaigners for women's rights – those in 'other countries' perhaps – might well have objected that the abstract universalism which merges all women together into a single essential 'Woman' had the advantage of including all women equally and not just, for instance, women ratepayers. Furthermore, Fawcett's objections to the essentialism of 'tall talk' stops short of national identity. While a national identity such as 'Briton' would normally have an initial capital, it stands out here – particularly as 'the average Briton' – as itself a species of tall talk. National identity acquires some of the essentialism denied to gender identity.

However, while the British (or perhaps we should say, in the light of the given names that she chooses, the English) are differentiated from – and elevated above – the people of other countries by her commitment to what she sees as the lower-case values of individualism, pragmatism and

nominalism, part of Fawcett's hostility to 'tall talk' derives from its use in England itself by 'our enemies'. We get a sense of what she would have had in mind by that from a pamphlet published a few years previously by the Women's Suffrage Union in which the author imagines the kind of debate in Parliament that a Women Ratepayers bill would probably provoke: 'In a little while one member of Parliament will, in opposition to the bill, defend marriage, another the Bible, another the right of Man to have his dinner cooked by Woman.'²⁵

By combining the upper-case 'Man' and 'Woman' with the lower-case 'right', the author neatly suggests that the supposed universalism of the 'Rights of Man' often in practice means the rights of males; while also implying that many men do indeed behave as though they are personifications of the abstraction 'Man'. This wonderfully acerbic pamphlet is especially interesting because its author, Augusta Webster, was principally known – and has in recent years again become known – as a poet; and because her work as a poet and literary critic as well as a pamphleteer suggests that she had thought more systematically about the literary and ideological effects of typographic case than anyone else. In 1870 Webster published her fifth volume of poems, *Portraits*, a collection of dramatic monologues or soliloquies, in which, forty years before William Carlos Williams and the modernists, the capital letter has been removed from the head of the verse line. In Chapter 10, I examine Webster's work and her understanding of the various functions of the initial capital letter, and I suggest that it may have been the milieu of writing, publishing and campaigning which she shared with Fawcett in late-1860s Cambridge that made her brief experiment in proto-modernism possible. None of her later volumes of poetry, including the new edition of *Portraits* published in 1896, repeated the typographic experimentation, for reasons which may have had as much to do with the loss of a personal connection with the publisher and the printer as with any change of view on her part.

Prior to digitisation, the story of capital letters was always a story about the relationship between writers and printers, handwriting and print. At the start of the story, in the early 1450s, Gutenberg took over the practice of beginning all sentences with capitals from an increasingly widespread scribal practice, and by the sixteenth century it was a rule followed by the majority of printers: as Michael Rosen puts it, 'it is not grammarians or scholars who are deciding this. It is inky-handed sons of toil.'²⁶ Joseph Moxon assumes in his *Mechanic Exercises* that decisions about case are the province of the compositor.

The development of the typewriter – or ‘type-writer’ as it was originally called – in the late nineteenth century, shifted the relationship between writing and printing in ways that no doubt influenced the development of literary modernism, especially in poetry. ‘Typing’ allowed, indeed required, the writer to make clear decisions between upper and lower case and about the spacing of words and letters on the page in a way that word-processing later extended. Nevertheless, such decisions are often still constrained, at least in broad terms, by a publisher’s house style, exemplified by the change at the *Guardian* in 1999: the paper’s reporters and columnists have their copy edited in line with the new rules.

Throughout the nineteenth century, those writers who most successfully controlled what bibliographers used to call the ‘accidentals’ in their published work – including the capitalisation – were often closely involved in the production process, as William Carlos Williams and his literary gang were when they helped Lawrence Krymborg with the ‘make-up’ of *The Others*. For the same reason – that decisions about capitals were usually taken by publishers and printers rather than by writers – the dual alphabet has usually been taken more seriously by bibliographers and scholarly editors than by literary critics. This division of intellectual labour, often sustained by the phonocentric assumptions that we have identified in the Bauhaus letterhead, has been successfully challenged by the development of ‘book history’, ‘print culture’ and the history of reading as fields of enquiry, notably in the pioneering work of D. F. McKenzie, Gérard Genette and Jerome McGann. In this context, it should be easier to establish the cultural importance of the dual alphabet and of attempts to modify or abolish it.

Charles Dickens, whose use of the capital letter as a precision instrument is the principal subject of this book, was something of an exception in the degree to which, as a writer rather than a printer, he was able to control the capitalisation of his published texts. There were a number of reasons why he was able to do so. For one, by 1843 – when he really started to use capital letters in an innovative way in *Martin Chuzzlewit* – he was already making so much money for his publishers and printers that he was in an unusually strong position to call the shots on this and other matters. Moreover, his innovations presented less of a challenge to established typographic convention than the innovations of Augusta Webster or William Carlos Williams.

By 1820, the modern convention governing the use of initial capital letters for nouns was firmly established: writers, printers and readers knew that the initial capital was now normally used only to begin sentences,

lines of verse and proper names. What Dickens realised – prompted by his encounter with the elevated rhetoric of the ‘Land of Liberty’ on his American tour – was that he could produce powerful and subtle effects by sometimes moving words backwards and forwards across the line that now distinguished proper names from common nouns. His effects depend on our sense that he is intermittently playing with a convention that he normally accepts and which he knows that his readers will take for granted. By contrast, when Augusta Webster and William Carlos Williams removed the capital from the head of the poetic line, they were rejecting a convention. They therefore presented a more fundamental challenge to the authority of printers and publishers.

Neither was the relationship between Dickens and the compositors all one way so far as decisions on capitalisation were concerned. If Dickens always had the last word it was not always the same as his first word, the word he had written in his manuscript. There are two reasons for this: one is that handwritten capitals are sometimes quite different in form from their printed equivalents, the other is that the distinction between upper and lower case is less strictly enforced in handwriting than it can be in print.

The difference in form between handwritten and printed capitals is remarked upon by Esther Summerson when she describes her visit to the rag-and-bottle merchant Krook in *Bleak House*. Krook has acquired the bundle of correspondence between Captain Hawdon and Lady Dedlock, which is at the centre of the detective-story element of the novel. It is a potentially valuable acquisition, which he cannot make use of because he is illiterate and unable to read the correspondence. In an attempt to circumvent this problem, he memorises the shape of the individual letters in the name ‘Jarndyce’, a process described later in the novel by Guppy. When Esther visits him in his shop, he draws each letter-shape of the word on the wall and then erases it before writing the next. As Esther recalls, ‘he chalked the letter J upon the wall ... It was a capital letter, not a printed one, but just such a letter as any clerk in Mssrs Kenge and Carboy’s office would have made’ (p. 68).

There is a play here on two meanings of the word ‘printed’: the metaphorical sense intended by Esther (defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘to write in imitation of typography; to form letters in the style of printed letters’) and the literal sense that the word necessarily also has here by virtue of being a letter printed in a book. Clearly, Dickens cannot, in this printed book, reproduce a capital letter that is ‘not a printed one’ in this literal sense. On the other hand, it seems that he does

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want to show us what this handwritten capital 'J' looked like. He does this in two ways. In an earlier chapter of the book he had included a letter to Esther from Kenge and Carboy about the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case, printed in a font designed to reproduce some of the visual features of legal shorthand. And he now gives us a visual representation of Krook's 'J' in an illustration by Hablot Brown ('Phiz'), entitled 'The Lord Chancellor copies from memory', placed immediately opposite this part of Esther's narrative in the 1853 edition (Figure 2).

It is also interesting that the 'J' shown in the illustration is very similar to the 'J' that Dickens had himself written in his manuscript. The surviving corrected proof then shows us that the compositor, presumably with a view to approximating Krook's handwritten letter, has presented Dickens with a printed italic 'J', which Dickens has then rejected, writing 'not ital' in the margin of the proof.

Dickens was negotiating with the compositor and illustrator across the border between handwriting and print, to represent the illiterate Krook negotiating with the literate Esther across the gap between language seen



2 'The Lord Chancellor copies from memory'

and language heard. As I argue in later chapters, Dickens was increasingly conscious of this kind of interaction between the social relations in his fiction and the social relations in the production of his fiction and that, as with Krook's 'J', the capital letter is often a central character in these two interacting dramas.

If the difference between handwritten and printed capitals is one reason why decisions about them were often made at the proof stage, another is that the distinction between upper and lower case does indeed, as these printing terms suggest, belong more strictly to printed than to handwritten language. It is true, of course, that the use of large and small letters in combination preceded the introduction of printing with movable type. In the eighth century, scribes in Charlemagne's court developed Europe's first agreed standardised handwriting – 'Carolingian minuscule' – and combined it with Roman capitals (or 'majuscules') in the systematic way that we now identify as a dual alphabet. Nevertheless, in everyday handwriting – in Dickens's handwriting, for instance – the distinction between upper and lower case can easily be fudged, whereas in print a choice is compulsory. The survival of so many of Dickens's manuscripts and corrected proofs allows us to watch the negotiation between the writer and the compositor at close quarters, and what we sometimes see is Dickens responding to the promptings offered by the printed proof and making decisions about capitalisation at the proof stage.

What also survive in the Dickens archive, in addition to manuscripts and corrected proofs, are some of the so-called 'prompt copies' for his public Readings. Looking at first glance like corrected proofs, these are specially printed versions of parts of his novels or short stories, marked up in ink by Dickens as scripts for public performance by himself. As such, they allow us to see, among other things, how Dickens deals with the fact – insofar as it is a fact – that 'we don't speak capitals'. If the distinction between upper and lower case is less clear-cut in handwriting than in print, its presence is certainly even harder to suggest when a written text is read aloud or performed, as the example of the change from 'the Home Secretary' to 'the home secretary' suggests. In the Preface to his study of Dickens's public Readings, *Charles Dickens and his Performing Selves*, Malcolm Andrews tells us that he has 'capitalized "Reading"' to distinguish the public recitation from the private act of "reading",²⁷ and I have followed the same convention in this book. However, in the unlikely event of either Malcolm Andrews's book or my own being read aloud, the distinction might not always be audible.

Taken together, the materials in the Dickens archive – manuscripts, corrected proofs, published editions, prompt copies – allow us to see what happens to case, and to the meanings which case can produce, as a text moves from one textual condition to another; at the thresholds of print, where handwriting meets print and print meets speech, and where the work of the author, the printer and the performer come into contact.²⁸

Increasingly, from the mid-nineteenth century, as he developed his second career as a public Reader of his own fiction, Dickens's experience of moving his text from one textual condition to another is reflected in the fiction itself. The 'great gulfs' which Dickens explores in *Bleak House* include the gulf between those, like Esther Summerson, who can read and those, like Krook and Jo the crossing sweeper, who cannot. But it is not only poverty and class which can separate people in this way. Dickens also explores the gulf between the blind and the sighted and between those who can speak and hear and those who cannot, as he does in his late story *Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions* and its Reading version, *Doctor Marigold*. Dickens was alert to all of those dimensions of social relationship which were determined by the degree of access people had to verbal language in its handwritten, printed and spoken forms and, as the example of Krook's 'J' suggests, it is often the capital letter which marks the border between these textual and human conditions.

A striking example of this is provided by Dickens's association with the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston which he visited in 1840; a visit he describes at length in *American Notes* (1842). Three decades later, in 1869, he financed the publication by the Perkins Institution of an edition of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41). The Institution's press, following their usual practice, employed a single alphabet of embossed lower-case Roman letters. One effect of this method of printing was to reduce, for 'the feeling reader',²⁹ the allegorical force and emotional temperature of the death of little Nell. In Dickens's novels, 'Death' almost always had a capital 'D', and intensive capitalisation had always, even before *Martin Chuzzlewit*, been characteristic of his death-scenes. In the Perkins edition, however, 'Death ... the Destroyer' becomes 'death ... the destroyer' and 'Heaven' becomes 'heaven'.³⁰

Such effects were no doubt unintended and we do not know what Dickens thought of the Perkins edition. His later work continued to reveal the importance that he attached to the difference between upper and lower-case letters and the complex, and sometimes paradoxical,

effects which his deployment of them could produce. Two examples stand out: his last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, and his Address to the Birmingham and Midland Institute in 1869.

Our Mutual Friend is both the novel in which Dickens focuses most consistently on the relationship between different kinds and degrees of literacy and the novel in which he employs the expressive capital letter most systematically. It is also a story in which the more literate read aloud to the less literate: Silas Wegg to Mr Boffin, Sloppy to Betty Higden. In this novel, social class is substantially recast in terms of degrees of literacy. However, on the other hand, the expressive capital letters combine with other visual features of the text, such as the diagrammatic representation of Silas Wegg's noticeboard, to suggest that the novel itself is very much designed for readers rather than for listeners.

While it is difficult to define literacy and to accurately establish its extent at any one time, there is general agreement that in England 'the move towards near-universal literacy' was 'a process which was beginning in 1800 and was all but complete by 1900'.³¹ In this context, we can give a tentative historical explanation for the features of Dickens's work that I have described. Increasingly conscious of writing specifically for readers, and doing so in an increasingly and predominantly literate society, he is for the same reason more conscious than before of the situation of an increasingly isolated illiterate minority, particularly in the big city where walls and vehicles, as well as pages, were covered in print. Dickens wanted to write about this minority but also, through his Readings, to communicate his fictions to them as well. He wanted to write about and communicate with every kind of person, with 'the people', or rather with what he often insisted on calling 'the People'.

The part played by the dual alphabet in this complex set of circumstances is vividly illustrated by a speech he gave to the Birmingham and Midland Institute in 1869, the year before he died. The speech demonstrates both his determination to use the dual alphabet to make a fundamental political point and the difficulties that could be involved in doing so.

The Birmingham and Midland Institute had been founded by Act of Parliament in 1854 for 'the Diffusion and Advancement of Science, Literature and Art amongst all Classes of Persons resident in Birmingham and the Midland Counties'. Dickens had been a strong supporter from the outset. In 1853 he had given his first public Readings (of *A Christmas Carol*) to raise money for the establishment of the Institute, and he was one of its early Presidents. He concluded his 1869 Address with a

statement of his 'political creed', in language which accords with the aims of the Institute itself. However, since no recording technology yet existed and no speaking notes survive, we only know about what Dickens actually said in his Address from subsequently published printed versions of the speech. These published versions certainly give us an insight into his politics, but they also demonstrate the difficulties that could be involved in trying to communicate his meaning to listeners and to printers. In the version subsequently published by the Birmingham Institute, the Address concludes as follows: 'I will now discharge my conscience of my political creed, which is contained in two articles and has no reference to any party or persons. My faith in the people governing, is, on the whole, infinitesimal. My faith in The People, governed, is, on the whole, illimitable.'³²

Dickens's friend and biographer John Forster tells us, however, that when Dickens had originally delivered the Address the concluding statement had caused some confusion. The audience had not been sure what political position Dickens was in fact adopting. Consequently, when he came to read the proofs of the pamphlet Dickens had – in Forster's words – 'carefully corrected the capitalisation and punctuation so that there should be no further doubt'.³³ It seems that despite the success of his numerous Readings he had not been able to perform the difference between 'the people' and 'The People'.

In fact, even after the publication of the *Address*, Dickens clearly felt that there might still be some doubt as to his meaning. When he addressed the Institute's Prize Giving the following January, he made another attempt to spell the meaning out – by literally spelling it out. This is how Dickens's remarks are represented in *The Speeches of Charles Dickens* (1988), on the basis of reports in *The Birmingham Daily Post* and *Illustrated Midland News*:

When I was here last autumn I made ... a short confession of my political faith [*applause*], or perhaps I should better say, want of faith. [*Laughter*]. It imported that I have very little faith in the people who govern us – please to observe 'people' there will be with a small 'p' [*laughter*], but that I have great confidence in the People whom they govern: please to observe People there with a large 'P' [*Renewed laughter*].³⁴

However, the editor of *The Speeches* has evidently had to correct the report in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, which referred not to "People" with a large "P" but to "people" with a large "P".³⁵ Dickens, who could usually control the details of the published texts of his novels, was not

in a position to protect his expressive capital 'P' in its passage through the production process at the *Birmingham Daily Post*.

The relationship between politics and typographic case are particularly interesting in the Birmingham statement of 'political creed'. The metaphor of typographic levelling certainly does not apply here. On the contrary, political levelling is expressed by the typographic elevation of 'The People'. The idea of 'The People' had been an important one in English radical history, from the Levellers to the Chartists, from the 'Agreement of the People' of 1647–49 to 'The People's Charter' of 1842. Its importance in nineteenth-century radical discourse has been widely recognised and discussed,³⁶ as has its importance in Dickens's conceptualisation of his own work as novelist, journalist, Reader and campaigner on social issues.³⁷

'The People' is an entity with a certain life of its own, greater than the sum of its parts; the parts being all the people and groups of people who together constitute it. The term is normally used within a national context, and within that context it normally includes every class except the ruling class or ruling elite ('the people governing', as Dickens calls them). Dickens uses the word in this way in *Bleak House* in the context of his diatribe against the Boodles and the Coodles, the Buffies and the Cuffies, those perfectly interchangeable members of the aristocratic governing elite who see themselves as:

the great actors for whom the stage is reserved. A People there are, no doubt – a certain large number of supernumeraries, who are to be occasionally addressed, and relied upon for shouts and choruses, as on the theatrical stage; but Boodle and Buffy, their followers and families, their heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, are the born first-actors, managers and leaders, and no others can appear on the scene for ever and ever. (p. 174)

One of the reasons why Dickens felt the need to make a typographic distinction between 'people' and 'People' in his speech to the Birmingham Institute is that in English the two concepts share the same word. This is not so in French, for instance, where 'the people who govern' would be translated as 'ceux qui gouvernent' – or possibly, 'les gens qui gouvernent' – while 'The People' would be translated as 'le peuple'. In fact, Dickens's knowledge of French and of French political culture may be a factor here in making him alert to the frequent need in English to call on typography to make up for an English lexical deficiency.

Even in English it is often of course perfectly clear, from the subject matter and grammar of the writing, which meaning of the word is intended, without needing to clarify the distinction by means of typographic case. Dickens, like other writers, often uses the lower-case version of the word when it is quite clear that it is 'le peuple' he has in mind rather than merely a collection of 'gens'. His important essay in *Household Words* on 'The Amusements Of The People' (1850) is a case in point: the word has an initial capital in the essay's title because it is part of a title, but it is lower case in the essay itself. Nevertheless, it is clear that Dickens has not forgotten that the word has two meanings, as in this passage where he describes a visit to a theatrical venue called 'The People's Theatre': 'The outer avenues and passages of the People's Theatre bore abundant testimony to the fact of its being frequented by very dirty people.'³⁸

The frequent need felt by writers and speakers of English to clarify which meaning of the word is intended, either by means of the initial capital or – more frequently nowadays – by quotation marks ('the people') or, in speech, by giving the word a strong emphasis and making scare quotes in the air, easily produces irony, the sense of a gap between the ideal collective and the ordinary people who are supposed to constitute it. Irony of this sort would no doubt, for Millicent Garrett Fawcett, identify 'The People' as 'tall talk' along with 'Woman, Man, Humanity, etc.' Dickens's ironic juxtaposition of the two forms of the word in 'the Amusements of The People' produces a gentler irony, quite compatible with his continued commitment to 'The People'. 'The People' is not for Dickens, as it probably would be for Fawcett, an empty or a dangerous abstraction. It signifies a collective that is potentially real and which it is Dickens's purpose to encourage into existence, to speak on behalf of, and – we may sometimes feel – to orchestrate. This is in contrast to other occasions in Dickens's work where the actual or implied juxtaposition of upper and lower-case forms of widely used nouns produces a harsher irony than the juxtaposition of 'The People's Theatre' and 'dirty people'. It does not take us long to realise, for instance, in *Bleak House*, that the form of law known as 'Equity' has nothing at all to do with equity or that 'Society' is only a tiny, self-important, segment of society.

If there can be a problematic relationship between the People and the people who constitute it, there can equally be a problematic relationship between the People and the classes who constitute it. One of Dickens's purposes in all his work was to encourage mutual respect and understanding between what the Birmingham Institute referred to as 'all Classes of Persons'. When he was arranging his three Readings of

A Christmas Carol on behalf of the Institute, he had stipulated that one of the Readings should be reserved for 'the working classes'. His reading public may have been a predominantly middle-class one, but it was nevertheless a cross-class readership, and the public for his Readings possibly even more so. Nevertheless, his conception of 'The People' can sometimes be unstable where social class is concerned. This is notably the case in the essay 'To Working Men', the leading article in the 7 October 1854 issue of *Household Words*, an essay which is, as Sally Ledger argues, 'what must be the most anti-paternalist piece of non-fiction writing ever to have been inked by Dickens'.³⁹

Written in the aftermath of the 1854 cholera epidemic in London, in which more than 10,000 people died, the essay is a call to arms (though 'peaceful' arms), addressed specifically, as the title suggests, to working men, urging them to initiate a 'movement' which, 'to be irresistible, must originate with themselves, the suffering many':

The noble lord, and the right honourable baronet, and the honourable gentlemen, and the honourable and learned gentlemen, and the honourable and gallant gentlemen, and the whole of the honourable circle, have, in their contests for place, power and patronage, loaves and fishes, distracted the working-man's attention from his first necessities quite as much as the broken creature – once a popular Misleader – who is now sunk in hopeless idiocy in a madhouse. To whatsoever shadows these may offer in lieu of substances, it is now the first duty of The People to be resolutely blind and deaf; firmly insisting, above all things, on their and their children's right to every means of life and health that Providence has afforded for all, and firmly refusing to allow their name to be taken in vain for any purpose, by any party, until their homes are purified and the amplest means of cleanliness and decency are secured to them.⁴⁰

While this appears to echo the distinction between 'The People' and 'the people governing', 'The People' here – as the group which the essay is both about and addressed to (rhetorically addressed to and to some extent actually addressed to) – refers specifically to the working class, 'the suffering many' (indeed, to the male working class, though he later urges them to act together with 'their dependents'). That this is so is underlined by a move which nevertheless also throws that identification into doubt: while 'working people' are urged to 'take the initiative' they should 'take the initiative and call the middle class to unite with them: which they will do, heart and soul'. The effect of this united force will be twofold. In the short term ('by Christmas', Dickens suggests), 'they shall find a government in Downing-street and a House of Commons within hail of

it, possessing not the faintest family resemblance to the Indifferents and Incapables last heard of in that slumberous neighbourhood'. What would then follow would be a:

better understanding between the two great divisions of society, a habit of kinder and nearer approach, an increased respect and trustfulness on both sides, a gently corrected method in each of considering the views of the other, would lead to such blessed improvements and interchanges among us ... In the plainest sincerity, in affectionate sympathy, in the ardent desire of our heart to do them some service, and to see them take their place in the system which should bind us all together, and bring home, to us all, the happiness of which our necessarily varied conditions are all susceptible, we submit these few words to the working men.⁴¹

By this stage of the essay – but not before – the whole of society, with the exception of the aristocracy, has effectively become, partly in anticipation of the activity which Dickens is urging upon his working-class readers, 'The People'. In this sense, Sally Ledger is right to say that Dickens 'urges upon working men that they must take the initiative and lead the middle classes in an uprising of 'the People' against the inertia of government'.⁴² However, that expression has only been used, and used very specifically, earlier in the essay, in connection with one social class, the working class, 'the suffering many'. And this should remind us that an important feature of the idea of 'The People', and a part of the key to its continuing power in the twenty-first century, is its chameleon character, its capacity to slip unnoticed from one more specific social referent to another. It is frequently used in the context of attempts to humanise or transcend social differences – including class differences – without abolishing them. It was always Dickens's aim, in his novels and journalism and campaigning, to help bring 'The People' into substantial existence from the different classes which, in his view, would continue to constitute it.

Notes

- 1 William Carlos Williams, *Autobiography* [1951] (New York: New Directions, 1967), pp. 136, 148.
- 2 William Hazlitt, 'On the Living Poets', *Lectures on the English Poets* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1818), in *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), vol. 2, pp. 298–320 (314–15).

- 3 Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), pp. 125–38 (129).
- 4 John Smith, *The Printer's Grammar* (London, 1755), pp. 201–2.
- 5 *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. xl. See also N. E. Osselton, 'Spelling-Book Rules and the Capitalization of Nouns in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Mary-Jo Arn and Hanneke Wirtjes with Hans Jansen (eds), *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English, for John Gerritsen* (Groningen: Wolters-Nordhoff, 1985), pp. 49–61.
- 6 *Guardian*, 9 October 1999, p. 7.
- 7 Herbert Bayer, 'typography', in Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Ise Gropius (eds), *Bauhaus 1919–1926* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), pp. 148–53 (147).
- 8 S. S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 86–102.
- 9 Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 235. Unless otherwise stated, quotations from *Bleak House* are from this edition and are given in the text.
- 10 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Circular Letter to August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Wilhelm Bracke and Others', *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works (MECW)*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), vol. 24, pp. 253–69 (269). Unless otherwise stated, texts by Marx and Engels originally written in English, or translated into English, are taken from *MECW*; 'Die Befreiung der Arbeiterklasse muss das Werk der Arbeiterklasse selbst sein': Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Zirkularbrief an Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke u.a.', *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1973), pp. 15–63 (164).
- 11 Marx, 'The Civil War in France' (First Draft), *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975), 1: 22, 58.
- 12 Keston Sutherland, *Stupefaction: A Radical Anatomy of Phantoms* (London: Seagull Books, 2011), p. 36.
- 13 Francis Wheen, *Marx's 'Das Kapital': A Biography* (London: Allen and Unwin, 2006), p. 6.
- 14 Van Ghent, *The English Novel*, p. 129.
- 15 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, in *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975), 2:8, 136; Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 209. Unless otherwise stated, *Das Kapital* and *Capital* are quoted from these editions.

- 16 'The present translation [of the *Manifesto*] is by Mr Samuel Moore, the translator of the greater portion of Marx's *Capital*. We have revised it in common, and I have added a few notes explanatory of historical allusions.' Friedrich Engels, Preface to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* [1848, trans. 1888], trans. Samuel Moore, introduced by A. J. P. Taylor (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967 p. 67.
- 17 Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (Leipzig, 1845), in *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA) (Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1975), 1:4, 278; *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1840* (MECW), vol. 4, pp. 578–9.
- 18 See, in particular, Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Matthew Bevis, *The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 19 Joseph Moxon, *Mechanic Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* [1683–41], ed. H. Davies and H. Carter (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 217.
- 20 Smith, *Printer's Grammar*, p. 202.
- 21 Michael Rosen, *Alphabetical: How every Letter tells a Story* (London: John Murray, 2013), p. 83.
- 22 Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972).
- 23 Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 'England', in *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays*, ed. Theodore Stanton (London: Putnam, 1884), pp. 5–6, 6–7.
- 24 See, in particular, M. H. Carré, *Realists and Nominalists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946); Terry Eagleton, *The Event of Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 1–18.
- 25 Anon [Augusta Webster], *Parliamentary Franchise for Women Ratepayers* (London, undated), reprinted in Augusta Webster, *A Housewife's Opinions* (London: Macmillan, 1879). Quoted here from 'Portraits' and *Other Poems*, ed. Christine Sutphin (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 399.
- 26 Rosen, *Alphabetical*, p. 84.
- 27 Malcolm Andrews, *Charles Dickens and his Performing Selves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. ix.
- 28 For the important notions of a 'textual condition,' and of a 'threshold' of print see, respectively, Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991) and Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) [originally published as *Seuils* (Paris, 1987)].

- 29 On Dickens and 'the feeling reader', see Heather Tilley, *Blindness and Writing: Wordsworth to Gissing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 152–81; and 'The Sentimental Touch: Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop* and the Feeling Reader', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16.2 (2011), 226–41.
- 30 Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 543. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the novel are from this edition and are given in the text.
- 31 John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, rev. 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2006 [1988]), p. 108. Steven Fischer estimates that by 1850 'England and Wales were 65% to 70% literate' and that by 1900 England was 'around 90% literate': Fischer, *A History of Reading* (London: Reaktion, 2003), pp. 291, 299.
- 32 Charles Dickens, *Address delivered at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, on the 27th September 1869* (Birmingham, 1869), p. 15; reprinted in *The Speeches of Charles Dickens: A Complete Edition*, ed. K. J. Fielding (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), pp. 397–408 (407).
- 33 John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. J. Hoppe (London: Dent, 1969), vol. 2, p. 408.
- 34 *Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. Fielding, pp. 409–12 (411), based on reports in the *Birmingham Daily Post* of 7 January 1870, and the *Illustrated Midland News* of 15 January 1870.
- 35 'Birmingham and District Institute: Distribution of Prizes by Charles Dickens', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 January 1870.
- 36 See, in particular, Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Language of Chartism', in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830–1860* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 3–58; Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- 37 See, in particular, Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Juliet John, *Dickens and Mass Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 38 Charles Dickens, 'The Amusements of the People. 2', *Household Words* 1 (13 April 1850), 57–60 (57); in *Dickens' Journalism*, vol. 2, *'The Amusements of the People' and Other Papers: Reports, Essays and Reviews, 1834–51*, ed. Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1996), pp. 193–201 (195).
- 39 Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 216.
- 40 Charles Dickens, 'To Working Men', *Household Words* 10 (7 October 1854), 169–70, in *Dickens' Journalism*, vol. 3, *'Gone Astray' and Other*

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Papers from 'Household Words', 1851–59, ed. Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1998), pp. 225–9 (226–7).

- 41 Dickens, 'To Working Men', pp. 228–9. Dickens's remarks about 'the Boodles and the Coodles' in *Bleak House* should remind us that he probably has the literal as well as metaphorical sense of 'family resemblance' in mind.
- 42 Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, pp. 216–17.