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NEW AGENDA

Henry Mayhew at 200 – the 'Other' Victorian Bicentenary[1]

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2012 marked the bicentenary of two prolific British authors' births. One was fêted with high-profile media events, exhibitions, festivals, performances and royal patronage.[2] The other received rather more humble homage: an enthusiast gathering in a London pub and a small symposium at the University of Manchester. 'Charles Dickens 2012' occupied the national and international stage for much of the year; 'Mayhew at 200' was positively modest. The celebrations for these two contemporaries remained firmly separate. Only the author Terry Pratchett troubled this polarization, bringing Henry Mayhew together with a character from Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) in his novel *Dodger* (2012).[3] If Dickens has become canonical, Henry Mayhew is the 'nearly man of Victorian letters' and his published surveys of London life the 'greatest Victorian novel never written'.[4] Mayhew and Dickens knew of each other and Mayhew featured in Dickens's play *Every Man in his Humour* in 1845.[5] Mayhew's work for the *Morning Chronicle* had in fact begun in a visit to the 'cholera district' of Jacob's Island in September 1849.[6] It is significant that this visit paid homage to Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838), which made Bill Sikes the most famous resident of Jacob's Island. Scholars have mused on the similarity of some of Mayhew's and Dickens's characters but, usually, from a perspective that is interested primarily in Dickens. Mayhew, it seems, would always be in the shadow of his contemporary.

When Mayhew is remembered, it is overwhelmingly for his 82 articles on 'Labour and the poor' that appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, 1849–1850, and his subsequent undertaking, *London Labour and the London Poor* (2 vols, 1851; reissued with additions, 1861, 1862, 1864 and 1865).[7] These collections were, and are, important

1. This work was supported by the ESRC, Grant ES/I031359/1.
2. 'Celebrating the 200th Birthday of Charles Dickens', <www.dickens2012.org> [accessed 8 August 2014].
3. Terry Pratchett, *Dodger* (London: Random House, 2012). Pratchett's afterword to the novel reflects on Mayhew's works of social reportage, pp. 351–55. Pratchett builds on a tradition of literary transpositions of Mayhew's work, see Chris Louttit, 'The Novelistic Afterlife of Henry Mayhew', *Philological Quarterly*, 85 (2006), 315–27.
4. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (ed.), *Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor: A Selected Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. xvi–xviii.
5. Reviewed in *Illustrated London News*, 29 November 1845, p. 348.
6. 'A Visit to the Cholera Districts of Bermondsey', *Morning Chronicle*, 24 September 1849, predates the commissioning of letters from 'our special correspondent' on the Metropolitan Districts. Henry Mayhew, *The Morning Chronicle Survey of Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts*, 3 vols (London: Caliban Books, 1980), I, 31–39.

texts on London, labour and plebeian people in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, excerpts from this vast corpus have regularly been reprinted in anthologies from 1947 to 2010,[8] and yet, Henry Mayhew's output totalled so much more: novels, children's literature, travel writing, plays, pedagogical texts; he was a hack, contributing multiple articles to the periodical press and, over his career, editing several publications, including *Punch*.

At a time when Pratchett has revelled in the wealth and richness of Mayhew's writings, the relative silence of Victorian scholars on Mayhew seems almost an admission of powerlessness when faced with the mountain of text Mayhew generated. This admission may also have been mixed with condescension towards things half-known. Despite a resurgence of interest in Mayhew's writing in the *Morning Chronicle* and *London Labour* in the 1970s and 1980s that claimed (and, indeed, declaimed) him as the 'first' sociologist of London poverty, Mayhew's writing on London labour is now treated largely as a quarry for detail on Victorian London, or else approached with suspicion. Undoubtedly, Mayhew's taste for melodrama, cutting and pasting, elaboration while proclaiming absolute veracity, made his 'reportage' rather too colourful for scholars working with an eye to reliability. Mostly used as a source of quotes and fragments of evidence, his work has only rarely been referenced creatively, for example, in the poetry of John Seed.[9] Getting to know Mayhew and his myriad publications requires hard work.

This 'New Agenda' seeks to put Mayhew back in the spotlight. In some respects, Mayhew's work shared characteristics with that of Dickens (memorable characters, melodrama and sympathy), but, in important ways, it differed. The essays here showcase new approaches to established debates on Mayhew's economics, locate Mayhew's work in the context of contemporary journalistic practice, demonstrate how new fields of scholarship, notably animal studies, can mine *London Labour* anew and, finally, highlight ways of reading Mayhew through accessing his lesser known work on education. In this introduction to 'Mayhew at 200', we

7. Deborah Vlock, 'Henry Mayhew (1812–1887)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <www.oxforddnb.com/templates/article.jsp?articleid=18434> [accessed 9August 2014].
8. Stanley Rubinstein and Dorothy George (eds), *The Street Trader's Lot* (London: Readers' Union, Sylvan Press, 1947); Peter Quennell (ed.), *Mayhew's London* (London: Spring Books, 1950); Peter Quennell (ed.), *London's Underworld; Being Selections from Those That Will Not Work, the Fourth Volume of London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Kimber, 1951); John Canning (ed.), *The Illustrated Mayhew's London: The Classic Account of London Street Life and Characters in the Time of Charles Dickens and Queen Victoria* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986); Anne Humphreys (ed.), *Voices of the Poor: Selections from the 'Morning Chronicle' 'Labour and the Poor' 1849–50* (London: Routledge, 1971); E. P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo (eds), *The Unknown Mayhew* (London: Penguin, 1971); Rosemary O'Day, and David Englander (eds), *Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor: A Selected Edition* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2010); Douglas-Fairhurst, *Henry Mayhew.*
9. John Seed, The Argotist Online, <http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Seed%20poem.htm> [accessed 4 August 2014].

establish who Henry Mayhew was, why he matters, then and now, and suggest future research directions.

Mayhew and his brothers: nineteenth-century journalists

Though Mayhew was an active journalist and writer for over 50 years, current Mayhew scholarship is devoted, overwhelmingly, to his social journalism between 1849 and 1852. Few have attempted any kind of intertextual reading of his work and there are remarkably few analyses of any of his novels published after 1851.[10] In terms of periodization, his work straddled several fields throughout his life: journalism, 1832–1881; comedic pieces, 1834 and 1857. He submitted journalistic pieces on a range of contemporary events, such as 'The Great Exhibition', written for the *Edinburgh News and Literary Chronicle* in May–July 1851. His theatre career was in farce. As an occasional amateur performer, Mayhew left few records, even in the Lord Chamberlain's office. His last public performance was a 'conversazione' that took place in 1857 and staged some of the characters from *London Labour and the London Poor*.[11] His last play *Mont Blanc*, adapted from the French, was co-authored with his son, Athol Mayhew in 1881. *London Labour and the London Poor* and a subsequent endeavour, *The Great World of London*, were written between 1849 and 1856. He wrote children's stories between 1854 (*The Stories of the Peasant Boy Philosopher*) and 1863 (*The Boyhood of Martin Luther*), but his short treatise on education was published in 1842. His travel narratives appeared from 1856 (*The Lower Rhine and its Picturesque Scenery*) until 1864 (*The German Life and Manners as Seen in Saxony*).[12] While his output was prodigious in terms of volume and often very original in its politics and insights, contemporaries and historians have tended to describe him as indolent and sometimes even *jejune*.[13]

In spite of his many publications, Mayhew the man remains relatively elusive. The few attempts at biography have been relatively unsuccessful. Even with E. P. Thompson's pioneering essay on Mayhew's political education, which introduced the full Chartist and radical context surrounding the publication of his early *Morning Chronicle* articles, the biography amounts to little more than a rough sketch of Mayhew's life, with minor differences in detail and interpretation.[14] Anne Humphreys'

10. Henry Mayhew, *1851: Or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family, Who Came Up to London to 'Enjoy Themselves,' and to See the Great Exhibition* (London: David Bogue, 1851); Peter Gurney, 'An Appropriated Space: The Crystal Palace and the Working Class', in *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. by Louise Purbrick (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 114–45; Thomas Prasch, 'Eating the World: London in 1851', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 36 (2008), 587–602.
11. Henry Mayhew, *A Few Odd Characters out of the London Streets, as Represented in Mr. Mayhew's Curious Conversazione* (London: R. S. Francis, 1857).
12. *The Mormons; or Latter Day Saints: A Contemporary History* (New York: AMS Press, 1971), published in 1851, is sometimes attributed to Mayhew but this is denied by his biographer Anne Humphreys, *Henry Mayhew* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1984).
13. George Woodcock, 'Henry Mayhew and the Undiscovered Country of the Poor', *Sewanee Review*, 92 (1984), 556–73 (p. 566).

Henry Mayhew (1984), an attempt at producing a psychological portrait, which stressed Mayhew's high intellectual aspirations and profound underlying conformism, lacked real depth.[15] Mayhew emerges from the morass of 'Grub Street' only through a handful of anecdotes offered in the memoirs of his contemporaries and scant obituaries. If Henry Mayhew corrected his entry to the *Griffin Dictionary of Contemporary Biography* (1860), there are few manuscript sources for the final 27 years of his life.[16] Estranged from much of his family, including his wife, Jane (they married in 1844) and her father, the playwright and journalist, Douglas Jerrold, Mayhew left few archival sources apart from a handful of lawsuits in the 1850s. His most important achievement for his contemporaries was, arguably, his role in founding *Punch* in 1841 but his involvement in this venture was short-lived: by 1842, Mark Lemon was the sole editor and Mayhew's contributions ceased by the mid 1840s (apparently owing to a change in editorial policy).[17] Mark Lemon's version of the founding of the journal highlighted his role as founder at the expense of Mayhew, although Mayhew's son, Athol, did stake a claim for his father's involvement in 1895.[18]

To understand Henry Mayhew as a complex author with a long and relatively successful career, one has to recast his work in the early and mid-Victorian period. Mayhew's father, Joshua Dorset Joseph Mayhew, was a prominent solicitor.[19] Of seven sons, only one followed their father into law; five of the others became journalists or writers: Thomas (1810–1834), Henry (1812–1887), Edward (1813–1868), who was a dramatist, sporting journalist and veterinary author, Horace (1816–1872) and Augustus (1826–1875).[20] Among these siblings, three in particular became known as the 'Brothers Mayhew'. Henry and Augustus regularly published together under this collective fraternal identity, with occasional contributions by Horace. Thomas Mayhew was briefly the co-editor of Henry Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian* (1831–1832) with the Chartist James Brontere O'Brien (1805–1864). His contribution to the unstamped (illegal) radical press was a disastrous venture that

14. E. P. Thompson, 'The Political Education of Henry Mayhew', *Victorian Studies*, 11 (1967), 41–62. See also Bertrand Taithe (ed.), *The Essential Mayhew: Representing and Communicating the Poor* (London: Rivers Oram, 1996).
15. Humphreys, *Henry Mayhew*; Anne Humphreys, *Travels into the Poor Man's Country: The Work of Henry Mayhew* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1977).
16. The proofs are in the manuscript department of the British Library. See Taithe, *Essential Mayhew*, p. 3.
17. M. H. Spielmann, *The History of Punch* (London: Punch & Cassell, 1895); John Bush Jones and Priscilla Shaw, 'Artists and "Suggestors": The Punch Cartoons 1843–1848', Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, 11 (1978), 2–15.
18. Arthur A. Adrian, *Mark Lemon: First Editor of "Punch"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); Mark Lemon, *Mr. Punch: His Origin and Career. With a Facsimile of His Original Prospectus, in the Handwriting of Mark Lemon* (London: J. Wade, 1870); Athol Mayhew, *A Jorum of Punch* (London: Downey, 1895).
19. Vlock, 'Henry Mayhew'.
20. S. C. Hall, William Howitt, Augustus Mayhew, Thomas Miller and G. A. Sala, *The Boy's Birthday Book; A Collection of Tales, Essays, Narratives of Adventure* (London: Houlston & Wright, 1859).

ended with his suicide. Both Thomas and Henry faced bankruptcy at crucial moments in their lives.[21] Henry and his younger siblings became part of the London 'Bohemian' scene and were associated with more successful authors such as Charles Dickens (1812–1870), Douglas Jerrold (1803–1857) and William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863). Their closest friends became dominant figures in British publishing: Gilbert Abott à'Beckett (1811–1856), George Augustus Sala (1828–1895), Edmund Yates (1831–1894), Henry Vizetelly (1820–1894) and William Tinsley (1831–1902). It is through their memoirs that one gets a sense of who Henry Mayhew may have been. Although most of these memoirs mythologize the Bohemian days of Fleet Street, they testify to the vitality and irreverence of mid-Victorian journalism.[22] The Mayhew brothers belonged to a generation that embraced the democratization of print culture, producing cheap, popular texts and newspapers. As 'the brothers Mayhew', they collaborated on several ventures. Often associated with the caricaturist and illustrator George Cruikshank (1792–1878), they were regarded as 'wits'.

Among his peers, Henry stood closest to his younger and better loved brother, Augustus, who was an uncredited contributor to *London Labour*. Augustus was a prolific author and, with the other Mayhew brothers, undoubtedly more popular than Henry during their lifetime.[23] Many memoirs of the mid-Victorian literary world fondly recollect Horace and Augustus although they lack specific details. Augustus's novel, *Paved with Gold* (1858) provided a template for the transliteration of *London Labour and the London Poor* into fiction, which may or may not have been followed up by Dickens.[24]

Both Augustus and Henry published material for the fast expanding juvenile literary market. Henry Mayhew's main contribution to didactic literature was published in 1842 under the title *What to Teach and How to Teach It*, which Carolyn Steedman analyses in her essay here. This pamphlet was promised as the first part of a

21. *The Times*, 12 February 1847, p. 8.
22. Henry Vizetelly, *Glances Back Through Seventy Years* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1893); George Augustus Sala, *Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known,* 2 vols (London: Cassell and Co, 1894); William Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher* (London: Simpskin, Marshall & Co., 1900).
23. Augustus Mayhew (ed.), *Blow Hot–Blow Cold: A Love Story* (London: [n. pub.], 1862); Augustus Mayhew, *Paved with Gold: Or, the Romance and Reality of the London Streets. An Unfashionable Novel* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858); *Paved with Gold* was initially written by Augustus and Henry Mayhew but completed by Augustus alone; reprinted by Ward, Lock & Co. in 1884, and Frank Cass in 1971; Augustus Mayhew, *Kitty Lamere: Or, A Dark Page in London Life. A Tale* (London: [n. pub.], 1855) sold 5,000 copies; Augustus Mayhew, *The Finest Girl in Bloomsbury: A Serio-comic Tale of Ambitious Love* (London: 1861), reprinted in 1863; Augustus Mayhew and H. S. Edwards (Henry Sutherland), *The Goose with the Golden Eggs. A Farce in One Act [And in Prose]* (London: S. French, 1859?).
24. Augustus Mayhew, *Paved with Gold*, ed. by Anne Humphreys (London: Frank Cass, 1971); D. Paget, 'Paved with Gold: The Real World as Literary Enterprise', Worcester Papers in English and Cultural Studies, 1997, <eprints.worc.ac.uk> [accessed 6 June, 2014]. Harland S. Nelson, 'Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* and Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 20 (1965), 207–22; Harvey Peter Sucksmith, 'Dickens and Mayhew: A Further Note', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 24 (1969), 345–49; Richard J. Dunn, 'Dickens and Mayhew Once More', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 25 (1970), 348–53.

lengthier volume that never materialized but its pedagogical ideas recur throughout Mayhew's didactic novels and social exploration. The historiography has tended to neglect this dimension of Mayhew's work, in the same way that the intratextual dimensions of Mayhew's output have been neglected.[25] In the 1970s, when historians posed as arbiters of what was 'worthy' Mayhew, the juvenile books were dismissed as potboilers compared with his social investigations. In their own terms, Mayhew's didactic books were well received with many copies awarded as school prizes. *The Story of the Peasant Boy* (1854) brought to life the theories of *What to Teach* (1842); *The Wonders of Science* (1855) focused on experiments and could be used as a science textbook; while *Young Benjamin Franklin* (1861) and *Boyhood of Martin Luther* (1863) attempted to corner the religious and moral market for children's literature.[26]

The Mayhew brothers' contribution to the canon of Victorian comic literature was more innovative and made a lasting contribution to the Victorian periodical press. Henry Mayhew was a co-founder of two periodicals, both based on French satirical journals: *Figaro in London*, which ran for 7 years and *Punch*, which ran for 151 years and was the most successful comic periodical of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century.[27] In her essay, below, Catherine Feely suggests that Mayhew's comic journalism in the 1830s, which most scholars have dismissed as inconsequential hack work, should be read in the context of a mid-nineteenth-century radical politics of print. Feely argues that the 'throwaway' quality of Mayhew's early periodical, *The Thief*, also based on a French satirical magazine, *Le Voleur*, advanced a critique of liberal values associated with knowledge and free trade. Augustus and Henry were

25. Alan Cedric Thomas, 'Henry Mayhew's Rhetoric: A Study of His Presentation of Social "Facts"' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, PhD, 1970); Angela M. Hookham, 'The Literary Career of Henry Mayhew' (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 1962).
26. Henry Mayhew, *The Story of the Peasant Boy Philosopher or a Child Gathering Pebbles on the Sea Shore* (London: David Bogue, 1854) contains a lengthy preface on education. Clearly based on the life of Ferguson, it is not a biography but an educational treatise on clock making, engineering, geography and astronomy. It was reprinted by George Routledge, 1868. Henry Mayhew, *The Wonders of Science or Young Humphry Davy, Written for Boys* (London: David Bogue, 1855) was a book devoted to natural philosophy and the science of chemistry for children rather than a biography. Henry Mayhew, *Young Benjamin Franklin or the Right Road Through Life, A Boy's Book on a Boy's Own Subject* (London: James Blackwood, 1861). In this volume of 561 pages, Mayhew exposes his pedagogical ideas and the purpose of his book that he sets against the conventional literature for children and books devoted to 'fighting and fagging'. Henry Mayhew, *The Boyhood of Martin Luther or the Sufferings of the Heroic Little Beggar Boy Who Later Became the Great German Reformer* (London: Sampson Law, 1863). This novel contains footnotes and asides which make it an interesting text to correlate with the rest of Henry Mayhew's work. It relates in particular to Mayhew's travel narratives and Mayhew claims to have conducted archival research and interviews in Möhra. Heavily footnoted and written in archaic English the book seems to have been aimed at the religious education market. Reprinted by Thomas Wittaker in 1892.
27. Fig*aro in London 1832–39*, edited by Henry Mayhew and Gilbert à Beckett. This periodical copied the formula of the French *Figaro* launched in 1826 and contained reviews, jokes and satires.

closely associated with the dominant cartoonist of their day, George Cruikshank, the last, perhaps, of cartoonists working in the Gillray tradition.[28] The brothers edited and led contributions by Thackeray, Albert Smith and Gilbert à Beckett to George Cruikshank's Christmas *Comic Almanack* (published annually from 1835 until 1853). The *Comic Almanack* has been described as the final moment of Victorian satire while the scholarly debate on the Mayhew brothers' participation in *Punch* relates to the shift from an irreverent to a more conservative form of humour following their departure.[29]

The Mayhews' comic novels and farces for adults have received virtually no scholarly attention. These represent the bulk of the publications authored under a collective moniker. While most of these books have been mentioned by biographers, only Humphreys endeavoured to read deeper psychological meanings in a few of them, in particular *Whom to Marry* (1848), which almost coincided with Henry Mayhew's marriage, and the *Image of his Father* (1848), which seemed to be a barely veiled mocking of the curmudgeon Joshua Mayhew.[30] Many of these books seem to correspond to the financial difficulties of Henry Mayhew following his bankruptcy in February 1847. Because of the focus on the Great Exhibition in *The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family* (1851), this picaresque satire grounded in acute social observation, has received more attention than any other work of fiction by the Mayhew brothers. The novel could be read in dialogue with Henry Mayhew's critique of the rationale and opening hours of the exhibition published in the introduction to volume 4 of the 1862 edition of *London Labour and London Poor* (originally serialized in 1851–1852, see below).[31]

28. William Blanchard Jerrold, *The Life of George Cruikshank* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1883). Written by Henry Mayhew's brother in law, this is an affectionate biography that contains information on the *Comic Almanack*. Other texts by Blanchard Jerrold, notably *The Life and Remains of Douglas Jerrold* (London, [n. pub.], 1859) also contain useful information on the comic writings of the Mayhew brothers.
29. George Cruikshank, *The Comic Almanack*, annual published 1835–1853, reprinted by John Cambden Hutton in 1870 in 2 volumes, and Chatto and Windus in 1877. The text is not specifically attributed but Humphreys identified the 1850–1851 period as one under the editorship of Henry Mayhew; Frank Palmeri, 'Cruikshank, Thackeray, and the Victorian Eclipse of Satire', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 44.4, *The Nineteenth Century* (2004), 753–77; Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841–1851* (Columbus: Ohio Press, 1997).
30. This is the fundamental explanatory pattern of Humphreys's *Travels into the Poor Man's Country*, p. 91. See Alan Thomas's review of Humphreys in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 13.3 (1980), 109–110.
31. The Brothers Mayhew, *The Greatest Plague of Life or the Adventures of a Lady in Search of a Good Servant* (London: David Bogue, 1847); *Whom to Marry and How to Get Married or the Adventures of a Lady in Search of a Good Husband* (London: David Bogue, 1848); *The Image of His Father or One Boy is More Trouble than a Dozen Girls, Being the Tale of a Young Monkey* (London: Henry Hurst 1848); *Acting Charades, or Deeds not Words a Christmas Game* (London: David Bogue, 1850). *The Fear of the World* (New York: Harper, 1850): serialized in 1849–1850 in *Illustrated London News* and reprinted as *Living for Appearances* (London: James Blackwood, 1855); John Bradley, 'Henry Mayhew Farce Writer of the 1830's', *Victorian Newsletter*, 23 (1963), 21–23.

Henry Mayhew's travel narratives, which some commentators, such as Anne Humphreys and Bertrand Taithe, have used to attempt a critical reading of *London Labour and the London Poor*, appeared later in the 1850s and represented a new departure in his writing. *The Rhine and its Picturesque Scenery*, appeared in 1856, followed shortly by another expensively illustrated book, *The Upper Rhine and its Picturesque Scenery*, in 1858. Contrary to the dismissive views of E. P. Thompson, *German Life and Manners as seen in Saxony at the Present Day* (1864) was well received and reviewed widely. From an intertextual perspective, these books relate closely to the research undertaken for the *Boyhood of Martin Luther* while *The Rhine and its Picturesque Scenery* contains Henry Mayhew's most significant reflection on aesthetics and expresses his opposition to pre-Raphaelite art. David Phillips's analysis of British commentators on German education is a rare example of scholarship situating Mayhew's travel writing in a broader context of cultural exchange between Victorian Britain and Germany. For Phillips, Mayhew appeared as representative of a broader range of intellectual exchanges that could be developed.[32] Mayhew regularly referred to Carlyle and to a wide range of continental writers and influences while his frequent musings on language and philology built on the work of Max Müller.[33]

Mayhew as social commentator: *London Labour and the London Poor*

If Mayhew remains largely unread as a 'Victorian' author, he can also be regarded as one of the most commonly misread Victorian social explorers. The scholarly rediscovery of Mayhew, in the late 1960s until the 1980s, generated much debate on his politics, methodologies and economic theories. When *The Morning Chronicle* launched a national survey of labour and the poor in 1849 in the wake of the cholera epidemic and Chartist agitation, Henry Mayhew was appointed Metropolitan correspondent. Printed in the central pages of the newspaper, the first 'Labour and the Poor' letter appeared on 19 October 1849 and the last on 12 December 1850.[34]

In 1850 Henry Mayhew and the *Morning Chronicle* parted company, probably as a result of Mayhew's speech to the tailor's committee over sweated piece work in which he associated the division of labour to the impoverishment of needle workers and their 'fall' into occasional prostitution.[35] Nevertheless, Mayhew continued his theme and

32. Henry Mayhew, *The Rhine and its Picturesque Scenery* (London: David Bogue, 1856) contains a long text on aesthetics that is echoed in *The Upper Rhine and its Picturesque Scenery* (London: Routledge, 1858). *German Life and Manners as seen in Saxony at the Present Day*, 2 vols (London: William Allen & Co., 1864); David Phillips, 'Beyond Travellers' Tales: Some Nineteenth-Century British Commentators on Education in Germany', *Oxford Review of Education*, 26.1 (2000), 49–62. This article is much broader in focus but contains a discussion of Henry Mayhew's travel narratives.
33. Taithe, *Essential Mayhew*, pp. 46–49.
34. Reprinted by Caliban in 1982.
35. *Labour and the Poor: Report of the Speech of Henry Mayhew, Esq. and the Evidence Adduced at a Public Meeting Held at St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, on Monday Evening, Oct. 28, 1850* (London: The Committee, 1850). It sets the case for Mayhew's political views and accuses *The Morning Chronicle* of misrepresenting his views on sweated labour.

published weekly pamphlets, titled *London Labour and the London Poor*, between December 1850 and February 1852. Poorly distributed outside London, it nevertheless sold *c.* 13,000 copies weekly at 1d. and 2d. per issue.[36] In 1851 Mayhew announced *Low Wages*, a political economy treatise, much of which had been already presented in *London Labour*'s 'Answers to Correspondents' columns. *Low Wages* remained unfinished. While Mayhew responded to a correspondent on 28 June 1851, that his London labour project would probably take another 5 or 6 years, legal difficulties and a possible decline in sales brought it to an end in 1852.[37] The unfinished state of Mayhew's work may account for historians' criticisms that he was overly selective in the groups he studied. As Gertrude Himmelfarb pointed out in 1971, Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, unlike his earlier writings for the *Morning Chronicle*, focused on 'streetfolk' and, therefore, omitted the largest occupational groups in the metropolis: domestic workers, building workers, tailors, dressmakers, milliners, shoemakers and so on. At most, Mayhew's writing addressed one twentieth of the metropolitan population.[38] By 1856, Mayhew attempted to revive the project under the title *The Great World of London*, also published in instalments. Unlike *London Labour and the London Poor*, this new work dealt primarily with institutions and, in the first instance, the prison system, a focus of interest that had grown throughout Mayhew's writing. The project once again abandoned, Mayhew's publishers, Griffin, Bohn and Co., commissioned John Binny to complete *The Great World of London*, which was published as *The Criminal Prisons of London* in 1862, the entire second half of the volume being John Binny's.

The *London Labour and the London Poor* pamphlets were collated into volume 1 (1851) and 2 (1852). The so-called definitive edition was produced during 1861–1862 by Griffin, Bohn and Co. as a triple decker, containing the original volumes 1–2 and a third volume composed of new material. In 1862, they added a fourth volume, a history of prostitution, beggars and thieves, written by Bracebridge Hemyng, John Binny, Andrew Halliday, Reverend William Tuckniss and Horace St John. This poorly received volume was excluded from subsequent editions in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, this four volume edition was the most often reprinted edition in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with many associated issues arising from its decontextualized reading. The issue of authorship in the *London Labour and the London Poor* project remains a difficult question. Augustus Mayhew played a key part; Richard Knight was acknowledged as an informant but Henry Wood, a keen social observer from Richmond, also appears to have been a major contributor as shown in Leslie Anne Hendra's study of Wood's correspondence.[39] These editorial vagaries have

36. Taithe, *Essential Mayhew*, p. 18.
37. Taithe, *Essential Mayhew*, '28 June 1851', pp. 163–64.
38. Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'Mayhew's Poor: A Problem of Identity', *Victorian Studies*, 14 (1971), 307–20 (pp. 310–11).
39. Leslie Anne Hendra, *A Voice from Richmond Yorkshire: The Letters of Henry Wood, 1825–1832* (Createspace Independent Publishing, 2012). Based on the discovery of the correspondence of Henry Wood, Hendra's research brings into focus a neglected contributor to *London Labour and the London Poor*.

had a considerable impact since much of the scholarship has misattributed key quotations and ideas, particularly in relation to volume 4 of the 1862 collected edition. In particular much of the critique presented by Gertrude Himmelfarb, that Mayhew was an undisciplined, chaotic ideologist appears to have been framed by this bibliographical history.

Many of the innovative features of Henry Mayhew's non-fiction emerged in his early letters on the London poor, notably interviewing techniques and vivid character depictions that dramatized the mass of mundane information his work contained. Among the first scholars to stake a claim for the seriousness of his writing, E. P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo looked to Mayhew's *Morning Chronicle* contributions as a pioneering empirical survey of poverty, locating these letters in the political context of radicalism. Raphael Samuel augmented these claims, suggesting that Mayhew's early work established a theory of exploitation, anticipating Marx. The main debates at the heart of the historiography on Mayhew and London labour relate to discussions around the idea of poverty. Together, historians such as Thompson, Yeo and Samuel argued that the radical politics of Henry Mayhew trumped the pre-existing folklorist interpretation of his work. This interpretation correlated Henry Mayhew's platform activism during the final years of Chartism, and at various trade meetings of the early 1850s, with his text. Yet while Mayhew attempted to grapple with paradoxes such as the relationship between overwork and underpay or the consequences of piece work on working conditions, Marxist and liberal historians have been prompt at pointing out his inability to establish an overarching theory of political economy.[40] Yet, as Donna Loftus notes in her essay here on Mayhew's writing on the small master, Mayhew did identify the conundrums and contradictions of capital and labour in the distinctive metropolitan market; his seemingly confused thinking on the small master was, in many ways, an echo of the messiness of the London economy.

The debates of the 1970s and 1980s were profoundly marked by contemporary political divides. Some on the right, led by Himmelfarb, chose to reduce the ontological status of Mayhew's poor to an unrepresentative caricature of poverty.[41] Stressing the fact that his most significant interviews were not representative of the London poor as a whole but were sensationalistic anecdotes, some historians have debated the significance of his text as social 'exploration'. Himmelfarb, in particular, underplayed the iconic role of Mayhew in creating a social, urban history or any claims that his work might be regarded as sociology.[42] Other debates arose as to his status as an 'oral' or 'social' historian, all labels that would have been alien to Mayhew, though he claimed to write 'history in their own words' as he indicated in the introduction to

40. See especially Raphael Samuel, 'Mayhew and Labour Historians', *Society for the Study of Labour History*, 26 (1973), 47–52.
41. Himmelfarb, 'Mayhew's Poor'.
42. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Knopf, 1984), pp. 307–70. Himmelfarb argues that Mayhew stands not as a discoverer of poverty – considering the important debates of the preceding decades on pauperism – but rather as one of the individuals who reshaped the problem of poverty as a cultural and moral phenomenon and whose prejudices make him an unreliable witness.

the *London Labour and the London Poor*, or more explicitly, in his 'Answers to Correspondents' of 11 January 1851, 'the first real history of the People that has ever been attempted in any country whatsoever'.[43] At the heart of this debate, were more fundamental issues relating to the centrality of the study of poverty to the discipline of social history and the welfarist politics of the Wilsonian and Thatcherite eras in British politics.[44] This context explains the particularly lively tone of these debates and presents at least one compelling reason why scholars might think of turning to Mayhew now.

In 1981, Karel Williams denounced previous ways of reading Mayhew's reportage; in particular, attempts to read Mayhew according to external quality criteria, which might denote his 'value'. Challenging historians' condescension towards Mayhew, Williams argued that Mayhew's fractured text was part of its modernity. *London Labour* was not chaotic, merely disordered; this disorder was positive in producing anti-realist effects; scholars' frustration with Mayhew's concentration on street folk exposed a narrow, flawed sense of what constituted the 'serious' in social analysis.[45] Methodological debates between Himmelfarb and Stedman-Jones also hinged on what later became known as the linguistic turn in cultural history.[46] Other scholars, such as T. J. Edelstein and Richard Maxwell, turned to Mayhew to help develop a wider understanding of 'social reportage' in the context of mid-Victorian journalistic practices while still emphasizing the political novelty of this reportage and its radical nature.[47] Celina Fox framed Mayhew as part of a movement of social reportage, contextualizing the numerous illustrations in *London Labour* engraved from daguerreotypes.[48] These academic debates nevertheless failed to impact on the popular appreciation of *London Labour and the London Poor* and many continued to see Mayhew as a precursor to George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*, creating imaginary genealogies of radical social explorers, despite the fact that, by 1895 and until 1947, Mayhew had been almost entirely forgotten.[49]

Henry Mayhew's work on crime, prison reform and the rehabilitation of prisoners on remand has not had the same impact as *London Labour and the London Poor* since it adds to an already considerable literature on prison visits and prison reform from

43. Taithe, *Essential Mayhew*, 'To Correspondents', 11 January 1851, p. 87.
44. See, for instance, Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'The Idea of Poverty', *History Today*, 34 (1984), <www.historytoday.com/gertrude-himmelfarb/idea-poverty> [accessed 8 August 2014].
45. Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).
46. Gareth Stedman-Jones, 'Preface', *Outcast London A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian London*, 2nd edn (London: Peregrine, 1984), pp. xxiii–xxiv; Stedman-Jones responded to the accusations of Gertrude Himmelfarb regarding his allegedly literal use of Mayhew as a source expressed in her review in *American Historical view*, 78 (1971), 1467–68.
47. T. J. Edelstein, 'They Sang "The Song of the Shirt": The Visual Iconology of the Seamstress', *Victorian Studies*, 23 (1980), 183–210; Richard Maxwell, 'Henry Mayhew and the Life of the Streets', *Journal of British Studies*, 17 (1978), 87–105.
48. Celina Fox, 'The Development of Social Reportage in English Periodical Illustration during the 1840s and Early 1850s', *Past and Present*, 74 (1977), 90–111.
49. Woodcock, 'Henry Mayhew', pp. 556–73. Woodcock discussed how Mass Observation members engaged with Mayhew in the post-war era.

which it did not differ radically. Nevertheless, scholars have turned to Mayhew's denunciation of the so-called Pentonville system of isolation, which included the wearing of masks, and his illustrations of prisoners to identify signs of resistance and agency among prison populations.[50] A. L. Beier's innovative approach to Mayhew's writing on prisons recovered the linguistic and bodily strategies used by convicts to respond to the dreaded isolation system of punishment.[51]

The difficulty of embracing the entirety of Henry Mayhew's social exploration, let alone the entirety of his output, has led some scholars to concentrate on particular aspects of his work, either by bringing him in comparison with other sources or, by relating to his work as a set of texts worthy of deconstruction in literary terms. Raymond Williams was an early inspiration for those who sought to read Mayhew as part of a broader range of literary texts.[52] It is little surprise that Mayhew featured prominently in *The Making of the Modern Body* (1987), a manifesto for a new kind of cultural history, including an essay by Catherine Gallagher using Mayhew and Thomas Malthus to think through the dynamic between the social and physical body.[53] This methodological renewal away from the questions of pure social history has been particularly marked in Mayhew studies.

Historians of the body as social body, such as Gallagher, or historians of dirt, inspired by Mary Douglas, have revisited some of the salient themes of Henry Mayhew's work. In particular, they explored more attentively volume 2 of *London Labour*, which is almost entirely devoted to sewers and the processing of dirt. Christopher Herbert and Birgitta Edelman each drew attention to the rats in *London Labour* to, respectively, highlight notions of taboo in Mayhew's London and human–animal relations, a theme developed in Neil Pemberton's essay on inter-species relations in *London Labour* included here.[54] Inspired by anthropological methodologies, Herbert has also drawn on issues of dirt and money present in Mayhew and Dickens to analyse Victorian ideas of money.[55] Audrey Jaffe, meanwhile,

50. F. B. Smith, 'Mayhew's Convict', *Victorian Studies*, 22 (1979), 431–44. Smith is the first significant study of Henry Mayhew's convicts and of his investigations of the prisons of London; Caroline Arscott, 'Convict Labour: Masking and Interchangeability in Victorian Prison Scenes', *Oxford Art Journal*, 23.2 (2000), 123–42.
51. A. L. Beier, 'Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian "Criminal Class": Mayhew's Convict Revisited', *The Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), 499–515.
52. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). This book is not devoted to Mayhew but makes use of Mayhew and his brothers comparing them with their contemporaries.
53. Catherine Gallagher, 'The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew', *Representations*, 14 (1986), 83–106; reprinted in Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (eds), *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 83–106.
54. Christopher Herbert, 'Rat Worship and Taboo in Mayhew's London', *Representations*, 23 (1988), 1–24; Birgitta Edelman, 'Rats Are People, Too!' Rat–Human Relations Re-Rated', *Anthropology Today*, 18.3 (2002), 3–8.
55. Christopher Herbert, 'Filthy Lucre: Victorian Ideas of Money', *Victorian Studies*, 44 (2002), 185–213.

compared Mayhew and Arthur Conan Doyle's depictions of beggars and their simulated ailments in her analysis of the Sherlock Holmes story, 'The man with the twisted lip'.[56] Others have established links between important contemporary texts and images to uncover the full range of anthropological meanings that might be attached to Mayhew's most striking pen portraits.[57] Meanwhile, Carolyn Steedman placed a singular character of *London Labour and the London Poor*, a little girl selling watercress, at the heart of several of her texts pioneering what has been called the biographical turn.[58] More recently, Tanya Agathocleous read Mayhew in relation to a range of canonical Victorian literary figures, such as Henry James or Joseph Conrad, to develop the concept of cosmopolitan realism, interpreting Mayhew in a literary framework that largely bypassed the essentialist debates of the 1970s and 1980s.[59]

Agathocleous's treatment of Mayhew as a 'writer' rather than a social surveyor signals a shift in Mayhew studies. Indeed, Carolyn Steedman's essay here urges us to find new ways of reading Mayhew by engaging with his writing. The many internal contradictions in Mayhew's work and the lack of certainty over the veracity of his testimonies, which Steedman notes below, has typically provoked anxiety for social historians, but we might read Mayhew's texts, particularly those that staked a claim to give a voice to the people, as a collaborative effort to produce meaning. In the most recent anthology from *London Labour*, the editor, Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, asks what kind of facts make a story? Many of the statements in Mayhew's text were incorrect but Douglas-Fairhurst doubts that Mayhew, or his respondents, were deliberately intending to mislead readers. Rather, they were caught up in reciprocal pressures exerted by a commitment to truth and the playful possibilities of fiction. This was hardly exclusive to Mayhew. Each character in the volumes articulated, at once, a self of experience and alternate possible selves, transforming Mayhew's project from reportage to a simultaneous celebration of, and lament for, the people. The pathos and melodrama of Mayhew's writing save his characters from being repulsive while, simultaneously, ensuring that Mayhew's moral consciousness, and his prejudices, are never far beneath the surface.[60]

Karl Sabbagh's literal dramatization of character testimonies from *London Labour and the London Poor*, with actors playing the part of streetfolk and an invisible

56. Audrey Jaffe, 'Detecting the Beggar: Arthur Conan Doyle, Henry Mayhew, and "The Man with the Twisted Lip"', *Representations*, 31 (1990), 96–117.
57. Mark Bills, 'William Powell Frith's "The Crossing Sweeper": An Archetypal Image of Mid-Nineteenth-Century London', *The Burlington Magazine*, 146 (2004), 300–07. See also, Patrick Brantlinger and Donald Ulin, 'Policing Nomads: Discourse and Social Control in Early Victorian England', *Cultural Critique*, 25 (1993), 33–63.
58. Carolyn Steedman, *Past Tenses: Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992); Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp. 134–39. See also, Victoria Rosner, 'Have You Seen This Child? Carolyn K. Steedman and the Writing of Fantasy Motherhood', *Feminist Studies*, 26:1 (2000), 7–32.
59. Tanya Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century: Visible City, Invisible World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
60. Douglas-Fairhurst, *Henry* Mayhew, pp. xxvii–xxix.

'Mayhew' asking the questions that the published pamphlets omitted, imagines the text as a creative, collaborative process between Mayhew and respondents.[61] Sabbagh's exercise at once highlights the problems of Mayhew's editing (the reader must guess at what is left out and what is imaginative narrative shaping) and the underlying authenticity of the lives in his period drama(s). This imaginative space has lent itself to dramatizations of various kinds but, in doing so, echoes the 'problems' with Mayhew that Sabbagh's work exposes.[62] As others have noted, the biographies in *London Labour and the London Poor* seem familiar: they draw on what we now think of as Dickensian tropes for characterization of the poor. Mayhew's social texts on poverty, the city, labour and street life present moral and political conundrums that we continue to recognize as 'newsworthy'.[63] If his respondents' accounts are suffused with contradictions and confusions, might this not resemble, to some degree at least, the performative element of bearing witness; the stream of consciousness that has an internal logic to the narrator, however irrational it may seem to readers who approach published text with particular expectations concerning structure, organization and coherence? John Seed, in his contriution to this issue, also turns to questions of language to consider the dynamic between material worlds and language, and the power dynamics at play in the process of Mayhew's interviews. For Seed, Mayhew's writing offers us an opportunity to engage with the complex production of meaning in specific times and places.

Scholarship on oral history has long agonized over the veracity of respondents' testimony, the inter-subjectivity of interviewer and interviewee, and the ways in which oral accounts are transcribed, edited and deployed. Since the linguistic turn, however, cultural historians have positively embraced the 'problems' of memory narratives, in particular, the 'misremembered' past and the dynamic contexts in which respondents shape their stories, to illuminate the relationship between imagination and experience. Far from individuals' memories being 'wrong' or untruthful, their stories sketch the interplay between context, culture, ideology and everyday life.[64] Might not scholars move towards this kind of appreciation of Mayhew's published version of his interviews? John Seed's paper in this issue provides a possible engagement with these concerns that justify a revisiting of even the better known and most arresting fragments of *London Labour and the London Poor.*

61. See Karl Sabbagh (ed.), *The Wayward Genius of Henry Mayhew* (London: Hesperus Press, 2012) and 'Voices of Victorian London', *Timewatch*, BBC 2, 11 February 1996, 7.30pm.
62. See for instance, Asa Briggs, John Plender, Christine Edzard and Olivier Stockman, *The Fool, with a Short Biography of Henry Mayhew 1812–1887, An Introduction to the Film and Extracts from the Screenplay* (London: Broadcasting Support Services And Sands Films, 1990); Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London, Verso, 1994), pp. 413–25; Penny Gold, *A Chaos of Wealth and Want*, BBC Radio Four, 9 July 2010.
63. Douglas-Fairhurst, *Henry Mayhew*, p. xli.
64. Alistair Thomson, 'Unreliable Memories? The Use and Abuse of Oral History', in *Historical Controversies and Historians*, ed. by W. Lamont (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 23–34 and Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 18–32.

Karel Williams saw Mayhew's fractured narrative as the essence of its modernity. Douglas-Fairhurst sees the instability of Mayhew's writing and his very identity as posing questions about the nature of truth and its relationship to storytelling: people generally reshape the 'facts' of their lives to produce particular patterns of narrative. Douglas-Fairhurst suggests that we embrace Mayhew's instability and its indeterminate occupation of a borderland between fact and folklore to read *London Labour* in particular as both historical record and a suggestive inquiry into cultural myth-making. Williams saw Mayhew's competing realisms as part of his texts' subversive character; he made realism pastiche.[65] For Douglas-Fairhurst, the vying realisms put forms of contemporary urban writing repeatedly under pressure: like the city and its people, Mayhew's writing is at once an exercise in structure and containment, expansion and collapse. At heart, then, Mayhew's early works might be read anew as a series of 'puzzled' questions about poverty, character, nation and national identity, and the limits of reader sympathy.[66]

Why Mayhew now?

The articles in this 'New Agenda' are an attempt to rise to the challenge of Henry Mayhew's prodigious corpus. They tackle his earlier journalism and his more complex work, his relation to the material culture of his era, his attempt to comprehend complex economic conundrums, his engagement with the spoken word and education. These essays all open or engage with different dimensions of Henry Mayhew's work. They participate in a wider and more public debate that makes use of Mayhew even if it is often difficult to distinguish Henry Mayhew from largely Dickensian or, later, 'slum', tropes in the representation of Victorian London. The essays represent a call to return to Mayhew. As such, they are far from exhaustive. The brief overview presented in this introduction highlights the partial nature of current Mayhew studies while drawing attention to the, as yet, untapped resources in the Mayhew corpus. The possibilities for engaging with Mayhew's work multiply with ongoing developments in methodologies and new technologies. Much of Mayhew and his brothers' work, collaborative and individual, self-contained and editorial, can be accessed digitally. As the 'Digital Forum' series in this journal highlights, digitization enables the formulation of different kinds of research question in addition to facilitating alternative methodologies. Likewise, the illustrations in Mayhew's work, from his innovative perspective on London from a hot-air balloon or picaresque characters to geographical landscapes, are slowly gaining recognition. Again, there are possibilities here for a truly interdisciplinary reading of Mayhew or, at least, Mayhew's world.

Many of the 'puzzled' questions in Mayhew's corpus, from fictional depictions of family life and sociability to pedagogical texts to the identity of the English at home and abroad to the complexities of political economy, remain pertinent. In the current academic climate, concerned with social responsibility, Mayhew's writing offers an

65. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p. 270.
66. Douglas-Fairhurst, *Henry Mayhew*, pp. xxxiv–xiii.

exemplar of the difficulties of grappling with ideology, compassion, social conscience and accessibility. As Mayhew noted, 'There is vast deal of philosophy in words, rightly considered'.[67] Mayhew's words were often rambling, but remain deeply evocative of a time and place, of social problems and national ambitions, of humanity and prejudice. We might return and consider them anew.

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67. Henry Mayhew, 'Home is Home, be it ever so Homely', in *Meliora or Better Times to Come*, ed. by Viscount Ingestre (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1852), pp. 261–62.