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Nineteenth-century England witnessed burgeoning urban growth and the resultant
struggle of the poor to find adequate shelter. Against this backdrop, Charles Dickens was
a fierce advocate for the rights of the street people of London to have sanitary and
adequate housing, earning him the title of radical. By combining sentimentality and
realism to develop his characters, Dickens was able to communicate his radical views to a
wide audience. As a source for Dickens' sentimental images of home, I refer to Frances
Armstrong, a twentieth-century critic, who shows insight into Victorian domesticity
within the private sphere in her work Dickens and the Concept of Home. Her work
provides insights into domesticity that I use in my discussion of three of Dickens'
homeless characters: Toby Veck from The Chimes, Jo from Bleak House, and Silas Wegg
from Our Mutual Friend. Furthermore, I use Jurgen Habermas' discussion of the public
sphere of the streets and private sphere of the home in his work, The Structural
Transformation of the Public Sphere, to illustrate that the poor did not, and could not
belong to either sphere. Because of their inability to fit these categories, the street people
were labeled as inferior and nomadic, a separate race. One such theory was propounded
by a contemporary of Dickens, Henry Mayhew in his work London Labour and the
London Poor. I show that Dickens countered these prevailing theories. His
characterizations of what we conceive of today as "street people" reveal that he did not
believe them to be innately inferior and demonstrates that, whenever able, they created on
the streets the comforts of home.
Caught Between Two Spheres: The Relationship of Charles Dickens' Street People to the Victorian Concept of Home

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Lynne S. Wylie

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APPROVED:

Elizabeth Campbell
Major Professor, representing English

Chair of Department of English

Sally Francis
Dean of Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Lynne S. Wylie
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Caught Between Two Spheres: The Relationship of Charles Dickens' Street People to the Victorian Concept of Home.

"In love of home, the love of country Has its rise."
--Charles Dickens

1. Introduction

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Industrial Revolution led to rapid growth within English cities. Rural inhabitants moved into cities because of the potential for increased earnings. The subsequent population explosion caused extensive overcrowding, especially for the poor. Against the backdrop of this rural to urban shift, the poor scrambled for subsistence and shelter. Many found housing, usually temporary, in derelict buildings, warehouses, storerooms, or stables. Run down and neglected, such buildings were adequate for storage or for livestock, but not for homes. In The Country and the City, Raymond Williams writes,

Poor people and vagrants, the casualties of a changing rural economy, or the hard-pressed or ambitious seeing in London some escape from their subordinate destiny, were the explicit objects of exclusion from the developing city. . . . [T]he main consequence of the limitations was a long-continued wave of overcrowded and insecure speculative building and adaptation within the legal limits: forced labyrinths and alleys of the poor. (145)

London, in particular, became so large that to the inhabitants, it seemed to take on a life of its own. Alexander Welsh in The City of Dickens states,

The greatest single factor affecting nineteenth-century views of the city was simply its size. . . . From 1801 to 1841 London and its suburbs doubled in population to become a city of two and a quarter million persons--and the population was destined to double again in the next forty years. As a result of this growth, the word 'metropolis' took on connotations of pride mixed with anxiety. (19)
A general feeling prevailed that the population explosion and resulting growth were uncontrollable. People were in awe of, and at the same time afraid of, the bewildering metropolis.

In light of these conditions, the common response of the public was to ignore the situation. They feared that the city had become “an unpleasant or abnormal living thing, in which something has gone wrong with the system” (Welsh 25). The growing masses of poor were constant reminders of the problem and were pushed out of sight, relegated to specific areas that rapidly turned into slums (25). Raymond Williams notes that “the great city was now, in many minds, so overwhelming, that its people were often seen in a single way: as a crowd, as ‘masses’ or as a ‘workforce’ (The Country and the City 222). Congealed into a single entity, the poor were easier to ignore.

In the midst of all these changes, the Victorians struggle to make sense of their world. On the one hand, Henry Mayhew, author of London Labour and the London Poor and a contemporary of Dickens, brought the conditions of the poor into public awareness by painstakingly cataloging the lives of the street people; however, Mayhew did a great disservice to the poor by viewing them as a separate race. The tension between the acceptance of Mayhew’s theory and Dickens’ advocacy for the poor is illuminated by examining the lives of the street people as played out in the public and private spheres, most notably in the idea of street as home.

As the situation in London and other large cities worsened, Charles Dickens, among others such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, waged war against poverty and oppression. For Dickens, the medium through which he could reach the greatest number
of people was his writing. In communiqués with friends like John Forster, we see that Dickens was pragmatic and increasingly skeptical about society, the government, and programs developed to assist the poor. He took a hard line against politicians and leading members of society who did little or nothing to improve the conditions of the poor, often satirizing situations and caricaturing individuals to make his point. His frequent diatribes against politicians and laws indicate that he was not a sentimental man, yet the characters in his fiction drip with sentimentalism.

Looking back at the fight Dickens waged for the poor, I argue that his radicalism found expression through his sentimental characters. He reached an audience already primed to react to this type of writing. In *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*, a work analyzing nineteenth century American literature, Philip Fisher says that "the most radical popular form [of writing] available to middle-class culture, [was] the sentimental novel" (91). Even though this work discusses American culture, sentimentalism was common to European society as well, and consequently European literature. His analysis includes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, a work that is heavy in sentimentality and light in realism. In contrast, Dickens' *The Chimes* and *Bleak House* also contains sentimentalism; however, Dickens wrote in an informed way, creating characters who are more realistic. Dickens, like Stowe, tapped into the consciousness of the middle class by appealing to their emotions.

Michael Bell's *The Sentiment of Reality* questions the validity of characters within these novels when sentimentality is used to develop them. He states that virtue and benevolence, factors of sentimentality, were inadequate qualities in the more fortunate
members of society to help the poor. They needed to be moved to action. They also needed to see the social problems for what they were and how their problems changed over time. He states that

By the mid-nineteenth century, as Dickens' novels began to address themselves more systematically to major social themes, it was evident that personal virtue and benevolence were incommensurable as solutions with the nature and scale of contemporary, changeable social ills. (140)

Ironically, Dickens gave these qualities to his street people who could not help themselves, instead of to the very people able to help them. Dickens realized the potential for reaching his audience through characters sentimentalized through these attributes, making them more appealing to the public, and perhaps shaming his reading audience.

As the social problems in London grew, the public had an increasingly difficult time understanding the exact nature of the needs of the poor, or even the poor themselves. A means by which the Victorians tried to understand these street people was by categorizing them as belonging to either the public or private spheres, terms which they were able to grasp. These two categories defined Victorian culture. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Jurgen Habermas explains that the public sphere was largely understood as the realm of national power--the sphere in which the ruling classes made law and policy (152-159). Louis Cazamian, in *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850*, explains the political situation of the masses:

the proletariat . . . counted for nothing politically. . . . The bulk of the workers passively accepted the consequences of every national crisis without ever finding the means to articulate their grievances. (63)
The street people had no power to voice their plight or to control their lives, let alone make laws; therefore, they failed to meet the criteria for membership in this public sphere.

On the other hand, the private sphere, understood by the Victorians as the home environment, functioned as a place that provided safety, comfort, and retreat from the outside world (Habermas 31-56). Frances Armstrong’s work, *Dickens and the Concept of Home*, reveals attitudes about home during this era. Her work and that of Habermas show that the private sphere was equally denied the street people because their inadequate housing exposed them to the outside world, rather than protected them from it. The streets, at times becoming surrogate homes for the poor, gave little shelter or protection and were not places of retreat. Sleeping in alleys or living in sheds could not be described as private by any definition, hence the street people could not be categorized as members of this private sphere either.

Street people hovered in a place between the spheres, a limbo or no-man’s land, where they carried on a marginalized existence. For them, home and street were the same. Some ate their meals in the streets; some slept on the streets. For those lucky enough to have a roof over their heads, many lived in dwellings so derelict that the walls were barely standing, cracks and holes opened these places to public view, and the line between home and street disappeared. Thus, the *only* means of defining these people was by their association with the streets as both their place of work and their place of rest.

The definitions of the public and private spheres, therefore, were inadequate for categorizing the poor. Since the streets were synonymous with home for many of the
street people, they tried to adapt the public sphere into a private sphere for themselves, making the streets as much of a home as possible with what they had. In most cases, they failed; the streets were inadequate as home environments. From the region of this limbo or middle zone, the poor tried to provide themselves with the basic elements of home.

Henry Mayhew's classic and exhaustive work, *London Labour and the London Poor* brought the impoverished conditions of the masses to the attention of the public. Mayhew made every effort to be as accurate as possible in his fact-finding mission. He was appalled at what he saw and considered it his responsibility to depict his observations in a strictly scientific way. This huge undertaking, serialized weekly in the *Morning Chronicle* from October 1849 to December 1850, was finally bound and published as a four-volume work in 1861-2. Anne Humpherys describes the attention Mayhew received for this study:

The readers of these articles were very enthusiastic about them. . . . there did not seem to be a single newspaper in the country that did not comment on the series, nearly all favorably and many enthusiastically. Mayhew himself became an instant expert in demand as a speaker by both middle-class philanthropic groups and working men's pressure groups alike. (8)

Thus, in his own way, Mayhew was affecting public opinion about the lives of the poor.

Mayhew's work led him to believe that specific groups of street people were nomadic, and therefore inferior by nature. He developed this thinking by looking at the similarities between nomadic tribes from various regions of the world and the urban London poor. He then extended his thinking by contrasting the wandering urban street people with "civilized" society:
there are--socially, morally, and perhaps even physically considered--but two distinct and broadly marked races, viz., the wanderers and the settlers--the vagabond and the citizen--the nomadic and the civilized tribes. (I: 2)

Mayhew's ideas appear naïve and somewhat distorted today. On the one hand, his attempts to categorize the street people made the public aware of their conditions. On the other hand, his work inadvertently provided the means by which the middle and upper classes could view impoverished people as inferior. For the privileged classes, the supposed inferiority of the street people made them deserving of their poverty, and the nomadic tendencies of this lowest class removed any need for improved housing. These attitudes relieved the more fortunate classes of any civic responsibility they may otherwise have felt toward the poor.

Writing in this century, three new historicists take a critical look at Mayhew's work. Gertrude Himmelfarb takes Mayhew to task in *The Idea of Poverty: England in the early Industrial Age*. She writes, "[Mayhew] inflicted upon the poor a new stigma and saddled society with a new social problem, the 'culture of poverty'" (370). This "culture of poverty" marked the poor as a separate race, that is Mayhew's nomads, which he believed placed them closer to animals than humans. Himmelfarb believes that this prevailing attitude created an atmosphere that precluded the poor from improving their situation (370). With no expectation of help from the majority of the middle and upper classes, their impoverished circumstances continued unabated until the latter part of the 19th century.
Secondly, F. S. Schwarzbach agrees with Himmelfarb that Mayhew's views cast the poor as separate from the rest of Victorian society. He writes:

Mayhew came to see the poor as another race, not only with customs and manners but even physiognomy and psyche different from the rest of society. By writing exclusively of street folk he convinced readers that they were typical of all of the urban poor. (370)

Mayhew's contention that the poor were like nomads in effect denied that the poor had the human inclination for the comfort and protection of a home. These ideas shaped the way Victorians perceived the idea of home for the poor. The moral responsibility to help them establish better living conditions was thus circumvented.

Jonathan Raban criticizes Mayhew in a similar vein. In *The Invisible Mayhew*, Raban reminds us that Mayhew's thinking marked the poor as alienated from the rest of society. He writes,

From anthropology Mayhew borrowed the distinction between "settlers" and "wanderers." . . . Civilized people . . . settled, uncivilized people wandered. The street folk of London were uncivilized wanderers with large jawbones. It was an alarmingly plausible statement of the sense of profound difference and alienation which the metropolitan middle class felt when they confronted their impoverished brethren. (68)

Raban's remarks point to the harm done by Mayhew's virtual condemnation of the London street people.

One of the problems I would like to discuss is the tension created because of the public acceptance of views like Mayhew's in contrast with Dickens' defense of the poor. Many people believed Mayhew's theory to be valid, allowing them to abdicate their responsibilities toward the street people. Clearly opposed to ideas like Mayhew's, Dickens examined the lives of the Victorian poor in relation to the norms and mores of
middle and upper class society—especially concerning where and how they made their homes. Dickens who shows that the poor sought to find or create homes for themselves counters Mayhew's claim that the poor were essentially nomadic.

Dickens' use of sentimentalism is obvious in his depiction of how his street characters try to convert their particular environments into homes as close to the Victorian ideal as possible. Dickens' belief in the use of sentimentalism is based on his belief in the innate goodness of humanity. Goodness was equated with nature and the natural. The closer the individual to nature, the more natural she or he was. Being natural meant that the traits of benevolence and compassion were inherent within the individual, traits which were the redeeming qualities of any individual.

Initially, Dickens believed that all humans possessed, even in minute amounts, these redeeming qualities; however, as time progressed and he was exposed to the inertia of a public unwilling to help those in need and the unresponsiveness of the government, his beliefs changed, making him more cynical. Even though he continued to use the sentimental characteristics of benevolence, kindness, and compassion to sway readers, later he realized that not all of the street people possessed these qualities. His most radical causes were given voice through those sentimentalized fictional characters who could move his audience to action. Readers were able to identify with his characters because he wrote in terms they could understand. Dickens humanized his street people for his audience. He developed an image of what a street person was, how she/he looked, acted, felt, and even thought. By creating this 'persona' of the street person in his novels, and by imbuing many of his characters with informed sentimentality, Dickens made manifest his
radical notions that the poor should be educated, the slums should be cleaned up, and all people should have decent homes. Fred Kaplan discusses Dickens' view in terms of his audience:

People--all people, except those who had been the victims of perverse conditioning or some misfortune of nature--instinctively felt, in Dickens’ view, pleasure, moral pleasure, when those they thought of as good triumphed and those they thought of as bad were defeated. Most Victorians believed that the human community was one of shared moral feelings, and that sentimentality was a desirable way of feeling and of expressing ourselves morally. (3)

Dickens learned over time how to read his public and how to use his talent to reach them. By using sentimentality to inform and to touch the reader, Dickens was able to counter some of the harm done to the poor by Mayhew and his ilk.

Dickens also challenged the idea that the street people belonged to a “culture of poverty” by showing that his characters are not a separate race of people, nor innately inferior. Through characters in his novels, Dickens demonstrates their innate proclivity for survival under difficult conditions. He shows the street people using their native intelligence, and he believes in their equality in terms of race and culture, despite their inequality on the grounds of class and status. Dickens’ consistent and imaginative empathy for the street people provides a counterpoint to the then accepted Mayhewian theories.

In examining the Victorian concept of home, I will use Frances Armstrong’s work, which encapsulates the Victorian attitudes about home and the expected behaviors within the private sphere. I will show that Armstrong’s private sphere equates to the public sphere for Dickens’ street people since their homes are often the streets themselves
or extensions of the streets. Armstrong explains that Dickens’ criteria for home were simple and straightforward: home should provide shelter, retreat from the outside world, and warmth and comfort. By looking at what Dickens considered important in the home, the behavior of his characters makes more sense. I will argue that Dickens, by sentimentalizing certain street characters, was able to effectively communicate his radical views about his social concerns to his reading audience. To accomplish these goals, I will refer to Armstrong’s discussion of the home as a place of safety and rest, a place of comfort, a means to escape the public sphere, an area which needs to be clean and tidy to be a proper home. I will demonstrate how Dickens’ characters embody the terms Armstrong uses in her discussion, including the ideas of invasion of the home by those without homes, and the use of the imagination to provide a psychological home for those who have no access to a home. To further demonstrate how the public and private spheres merge for the street people, and how they are essentially excluded from the public and private worlds of the middle and upper classes, I will refer to Jurgen Habermas’ work. Using three characters from Dickens’ novels, I will demonstrate that these characters are best understood by their consistent attempts to establish secure homes, indicating that Dickens did not consider them to be nomadic, nor inferior, nor as a separate culture.

The first character, Toby (Trotty) Veck, from *The Chimes*, created during Dickens’ early career (1844), is a street porter whose job is to carry mail and packages around London. Trotty’s character, created at a time when Dickens believed he could make a difference, shows that even the poorest individuals can and want to create stable homes, even if these homes belong more to the public sphere than the private.
Trotty and his daughter, Meg, live in a stable, a temporary lodging, which is nonetheless a home. In spite of the meagerness of the furnishings and the temporary nature of the occupancy, Trotty seems happy with his accommodations. “Stable” becomes a metaphor for the role that home plays in Trotty’s life. The stable nature of his home encircles him with a solid core for his existence. Dickens’ view that stability within the home as essential is evidenced through Armstrong’s work. Dickens demonstrates that Trotty accomplishes his efforts to provide a stable home, and through Trotty he shows that this ideal is possible for the street people.

The second character, Jo of Bleak House (1852-3), is Dickens quintessential street person. He is a crossing sweeper who works on the streets during the day, trying to keep his world clean. Following Armstrong’s discussion, we see that Dickens considered cleanliness as crucial for making a comfortable home environment tidy and livable. In Jo, Dickens’ penchant for cleanliness becomes evident. Jo’s constant and instinctive efforts to clean his ‘home,’ namely the streets of London, in essence his home, are wasted. He alone cannot succeed in cleaning London. Dickens sentimentalizes Jo, depicting him as a character who has a reverence for domesticity and possesses the requisite characteristics of benevolence and goodness, in spite of his penury. His temporary home, a slum called Tom-all-Alone’s, is not a secure or permanent living situation for him. In fact, it is closer to the street than a home; therefore, Jo’s home in this case is literally the street. He can be seen as the embodiment, the personification, of Tom-all-Alone’s. He is also dirty, unkempt, covered with parasites, and through inadequate nourishment, he is also decaying. He is an example of the sentimentalism used by Dickens to show the severe and
adverse effects of being virtually homeless, utterly destitute. Jo demonstrates, by negative example, the importance of having a home and the results of being deprived of such an environment. Clearly, Dickens' attitude toward the public was becoming jaded because his depiction of Jo indicates the lowest state of humanity. As Hochman and Wachs show in their book *Dickens: The Orphan Condition*, Jo experiences a "radical sense of disinheritance, placelessness, and declassing that marks the orphan condition" (16). Jo is considered a nobody, his home indicating his "placelessness," a projection of his disconnectedness from society. Fred Kaplan's work investigating sentimentalism in the novel tells us that Dickens

stands in the modern retrospect as the Victorian writer most energetic in demonstrating, even in his later novels, that human nature contains innate moral sentiments whose expression is the heart of moral feeling and the pulse beat of the novel as a literary form. . . . Every Dickens novel has one or more characters whose innate goodness cannot be perverted or destroyed by hostile forces. (70)

Jo is such a character. His is pitiable and alone, and he reflects what is innately good in the individual, in spite of the hostile environmental and societal forces that surround him.

Finally, Silas Wegg in *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5) appears to be very different from the previous characters. He is a complex character, evidence of a society changing dramatically due to the influences of the Industrial Revolution. Although his desire for a home and his need to make himself whole within both the public and private spheres seem to indicate sentimentalism, overall Silas is not a sentimental character. If he possesses the attributes of sentimentalism which indicate an inherently good nature, they
are not evident. Silas indicates Dickens' increasing skepticism that society and the government would respond positively to help the poor. This shift in Dickens' attitude is apparent in his depiction of a street character who is more like those of the middle and upper classes than the previous characters, Trotty and Jo. Silas exhibits the traits of greed, envy, jealousy, and manipulation. The point to remember is that Dickens still sentimentalized certain characters such as Betty Higden and Lizzie Hexam; however, in the case of characters like Silas, Dickens tried to demonstrate that street people are like anyone else, regardless of class.

Silas is a street-seller of ballads and fruit. He spends his time sitting on a wooden stool on a street corner in front of the same house every day, conducting his business. Dickens portrays Silas as a jealous, avaricious, and cunning individual, who nevertheless has as much desire to situate himself in a better environment as either Trotty or Jo. In fact, Silas' need for the security of four walls and a roof is so great that he creates a fictional family from people he has never met in a house which he has never entered. In Silas we see a hardened individual who will go to any lengths to acquire the security and comfort of a home.

Dickens' radical views, finding voice primarily through sentimentalism, were taken to heart by a reading public ready for that genre and that style of writing. His works were serialized, anticipated eagerly by a public constituting members from all classes. Dickens' timing was apropos because he was able to convey his views in a manner which had the most beneficial impact on a broad spectrum of the reading public, evidenced by the responses he received from many of his readers across Europe and America. By
analyzing the three characters discussed, the progression of Dickens' changing attitude, and the possibilities for social change become evident. Trotty becomes a counterpoint to the rude, inconsiderate middle and upper classes. Jo is shown as a contrasting figure to Trotty, but also depicts the invisibility of the truly abject. He indicates the extremes of poverty. Silas, on the other hand, is depicted as the street person who has adopted the values of the middle and upper classes to survive in their world. His hope is that, by imbuing himself with the value systems of those above him, he can rise above his own class.

Armstrong's study of Dickens shows how he projected what he considered the greatest assets of a home into the stories of his street people. However, her terms need to be employed broadly to explain the home situations of the poor because the street people did not truly belong within the public or private spheres and thus were not able to create the kind of homes the more affluent understood or expected. The primary concept within this analysis is that, in spite of their adverse conditions, the street people attempted to find or create homes, even if they were within the public sphere: the streets. For each character, the central issue is different. Trotty home is a stable and is stable. Jo's desire for a home is never achieved because he is incapable of creating a home environment, in spite of his need for one, evident in his efforts to clean any place that affords him rest or comfort. Finally, Silas' imaginative projection of what his home should be shows us that regardless of the means by which he tries to achieve his goal, he also needs and wants a home. Each of these factors of home concerned Dickens greatly. Security, comfort, cleanliness, and stability were essential ingredients of the home, the private sphere, and
by contrasting the efforts of his street characters to show how much they desire these criteria, we see Dickens' radical views being voiced. Overriding personal difficulties, each character attempts to make a home on the streets in the public sphere, the only sphere with which each is identified.
2. Toby Veck: Continuity Achieved Through Transcendence

One of Dickens' most endearing characters is Toby Veck, the central character in *The Chimes*, written in 1844. Trotty, so-called because of his propensity to trot when delivering mail, is a ticket porter, a street person whose work, as Mayhew describes it, consists of "the conveyance of goods and communications" around the city (3: 364). Trotty is one of the first characters to be used by Dickens to create the persona of the street person. Although Trotty fits the criteria of Mayhew's nomads—living on the streets, moving in and out of temporary quarters which barely fit the definition of a home--Dickens shows through his portrayal that Trotty is, in fact, a homebody.

In Trotty Dickens creates a simple, kind character, living day to day, hand to mouth. Therefore, Trotty's simple home in a stable serves to indicate Dickens' belief that street people would make a home in any environment and under any conditions. In this instance, Trotty and his daughter have converted a stable into living quarters, until the time comes when it will be needed for other purposes. Armstrong states that Dickens' criteria for a home includes a place to which a person can return on a regular basis. She writes, "home involves some kind of continuity, a return at night to the same spot" (3). The impermanency of their situation counters the idea of stability; however, in spite of this adversity, Dickens shows that Trotty makes the best of his situation, managing to create a warm, cozy home for himself and his daughter.

From the start, Dickens establishes Trotty as a generous, yet impoverished individual, whose time is spent on the streets where he ekes out a meager living.
Immediately the reader feels sympathy for Trotty and his situation in life. Logically speaking, his work as a ticket porter delivering mail to specified individuals should place Trotty within the public sphere; however, terms such as “public” and “private” spheres are inadequate in the lives of individuals like Trotty. What is important to consider is that the streets (the public sphere) become a second home (private sphere). As a result, Trotty lives within the overlapping portions between the spheres, the middle zone. This no-man’s-land causes the distinction between the public and private spheres, as understood by the average middle and upper class Victorians, to become blurred.

As a street person, Trotty has no part of the power structures that characterize the public sphere. Dickens describes Trotty as

A weak, small, spare old man, [who] was a very Hercules, this Toby, in his good intentions. He loved to earn his money. He delighted to believe--Toby was very poor, and couldn’t well afford to part with a delight--that he was worth his salt. (154-5)

Depicted as a man with a big heart in a small body, Trotty is considered inferior to those individuals who possess power and status. Characters like Trotty, created for the sole purpose of eliciting emotion, did much to open the hearts and minds of the Victorian reader.

Dickens supplies various examples within the text to illustrate Trotty’s situation in his no-man’s-land and the consequential lack of power characteristic of the street people. Trotty “stood all day long . . . just outside the church door, . . . and waited there for jobs” (152-3). Work is scarce, and because of the hours spent daily waiting for work, Trotty’s time at home is limited; the streets therefore become for him a place to continue
those activities usually carried on at home, like eating and resting. Despite his menial labor, however, Trotty derives satisfaction from his work and from the streets on which he makes a living. We are told that “He loved to earn his money” (153), and furthermore, “He delighted to believe—that he was worth his salt” (154). Obviously, Trotty’s sense of self-worth comes from his ability to earn his own way in the world. Thomas Carlyle states “there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work” (229). Despite his work ethic and pride in his ability to support himself, those individuals holding positions of authority undermine Trotty’s fragile dignity.

We see this assertion of power in Alderman Cute, a member of the upper classes whose position in society marks him as superior to Trotty. The steps to the Alderman’s house belong to the general vicinity that Trotty inhabits. Since the amount of time he spends out of doors represents most of his waking hours, Trotty uses the streets as others would a home. He eats on the steps or sidewalk when food is available. Early in the story, he sits on the steps of the Alderman’s home to eat his dinner; however, the Alderman’s footman denies even this basic right to him:

‘Out of the vays here, will you! You must always go and be a settin on our steps, must you! You can’t go and give a turn to none of the neighbours never, can’t you! Will you clear the road, or won’t you?’ (165)

The footman’s reference to “our steps” clearly defines the boundary of the Alderman’s domain, but leaves Trotty’s boundaries undefined. He has no definite domain.

When the Alderman appears with his associates, they also assert control over Trotty’s dinner, debating what kind of food it is. Not only is his corner on the steps denied him, but his food also becomes public property as soon as the Alderman sees it, an
indication of Trotty’s insignificance in the public sphere. Mr. Filer, one of the Alderman’s friends, describes the food while poking it with a pencil-case:

‘This is a description of animal food, Alderman,’ said Filer, making little punches in it, with a pencil-case, ‘commonly known to the labouring population of this country, by the name of tripe. ... I find that the waste on that amount of tripe, if boiled, would victual a garrison of five hundred men for five months of thirty-one days each, and a February over. The Waste, the Waste!’ (166)

Trotty is not only made to feel inadequate, wasteful, and guilty for starving all those unknown people in the garrison concocted by Filer, but much to his dismay, the Alderman then eats the last remnants of his tripe. Power on the streets is definitely with the Alderman and his friends. Trotty therefore, “[made] a miserable bow” (167) and submitted to the occupants of the house.

When Alderman Cute commands Trotty to deliver a message to Sir Joseph Bowley, we see another instance of the assertion of power. Bowley’s condescension is apparent when he tells Trotty, “I am the Poor Man’s Friend ... I will think for you; I know what is good for you; I am your perpetual parent. Such is the dispensation of an all-wise Providence!” (182). Alexander Welsh tells us that Dickens “is unexcelled at exposing the inhumane administration of charity” (91). The contrast with kind, sweet Trotty further emphasizes the hypocrisy of those in control. Michael Slater’s article, “Carlyle and Jerrold into Dickens: A Study of the Chimes,” asserts that “Bowley ignores obligations to his fellow men more fundamental than financial ones” (509). Trotty is divested of his power, and subsequently of his sense of self-worth. He is seen as childlike, limited in intelligence, and as such, incapable of handling his own affairs.
In contrast with the streets, Trotty’s home environment allows him a greater degree of dignity. His home is the area designated as the private sphere. On his way home one evening, he crosses paths with an apparently destitute man, Will Fern, holding a child in his arms. Trotty offers them a place to settle for the night, describing it to Will as follows:

‘It’s not much of a place. Only a loft: but having a loft, I always say, is one of the great conveniences of living in a mews; and till this coach-house and stable gets a better let, we live here cheap. There’s plenty of sweet hay up there, belonging to a neighbour; and it’s as clean as hands and Meg can make it.’ (195)

Beside the obvious pathos generated by Trotty’s words, Dickens reminds us that the stable is a temporary home. In addition, the structure of a stable, for the sake of ventilation and ease of movement for horses, is open and public. This type of enclosure cannot be defined as private or protected, which is the primary feature of the private sphere. The stable provides no way of retreating from the public sphere. Just as we have determined that Trotty does not belong to the public sphere, we see he cannot be part of the private sphere either.

Despite the inadequate food, clothing, furnishings, and protection that characterize Trotty’s stable, Dickens manages to suggest comfort through various symbols of home, such as a fire, the kettle whistling on the hearth, and plenty of straw with which to make the beds comfortable. Armstrong’s analysis of Dickens’ novels reveals that fire is an important element of the home to Dickens. A cozy fireplace is an indicator of a happy home establishment. Several times within *The Chimes*, Trotty is depicted making a fire or sitting in front of a fire, thereby mirroring the desires and
behaviors of the privileged classes. For Dickens, fire not only represents warmth and coziness, but also power. If Trotty is deprived of power on the streets, he is rewarded with a small amount of power through control of his own hearth. The fire indicates a warm and, if not particularly comfortable or protected, peaceful place to rest and enjoy the camaraderie of his daughter and friends. Trotty tells Will Fern, "'Here! Uncle Will! Here's a fire you know! Why don't you come to the fire? Oh here we are and here we go! Meg, my precious darling, where's the kettle? Here it is and here it goes, and it'll bile in no time!'" (192). Implicit in this scene is Trotty's devotion for Meg, and his efforts to make his guests feel at home. Dickens believed that, regardless of their conditions in life, the street people revered the warmth and comfort of a hot cup of tea in front of the fire, just as members of all classes did.

Dickens felt strongly that Christian values were a source of strength and betterment. Armstrong states that "Dickens, then, saw in home at its best a place to sense the transcendent, and a source of moral power; at the same time he wanted to use its influence to preserve those elements which he valued in traditional Christianity" (43). For Trotty, the Chimes provide this transcendence, the bells in the church in front of which he stands daily. When life gets difficult for Trotty, he turns to the sound of the Chimes for comfort, for the feeling of camaraderie that he derives from them. They offer a means for him to transcend his alienation. The Chimes represent a binding, communal spirit that provides Trotty with a sense of continuity within the private and public spheres. The Chimes are a metaphor for the Christian ideal, a belief that has a profound influence on this character.
The relationship between Trotty and the bells becomes manifest when the narrator describes him:

Falling out into the road to look up at the belfry when the Chimes resounded... Perhaps he was the more curious about these Bells, because there were points of resemblance between themselves and him. They hung there, in all weathers: with the wind and rain driving in upon them: facing only the outsides of all those houses; never getting any nearer to the blazing fires... Faces came and went at many windows... but Toby knew no more... whence they came... than did the Chimes themselves.(155)

Trotty and the Chimes are both outsiders in the private sphere, whereas in the public sphere, the Chimes provide solace for him, “for they were company to him” (155). They seem to talk to him, perhaps providing that sense of mutual caring that family members might. Just as Trotty is marginalized, staring into windows at rooms warmed by fires, so the Chimes “[faced] only the outsides of all those houses” (155). The Chimes are his spiritual support. When he becomes disillusioned with his life, the Chimes help him find the right path on his metaphorical journey through time. Forster, Dickens’ close friend, describes Trotty’s disillusionment:

[He] is a sorry old drudge of a London ticket-porter, who in his anxiety not to distrust or think hardly of the rich, has fallen into the opposite extreme of distrusting the poor. (348)

In his dream, Trotty is in the belfry of the church. He is given a terrifying sight of the future, ending with his daughter’s imminent death and Trotty crying out to the Chimes to stop her. Ultimately, the spirit of the Chimes saves him from the disaster of losing faith. He wakes to see Meg safely sewing in her chair. Dickens describes this scene that could not be called anything but transcendent in every sense of the word:
[Trotty] sat down in his chair and beat his knees and laughed and cried together; . . . he got out of his chair and hugged [Meg and Richard] both at once; he kept running up to Meg, and squeezing her fresh face between his hands and kissing it, going from her backwards not to lose sight of it . . . being—that’s the truth--beside himself with joy. (241-2)

Home, according to Armstrong, is where one attains a sense of one’s own value as a human being (43). The Chimes have brought Trotty home to a renewed sense of his life. By this time, Trotty seems to know his own worth.

Dickens uses Trotty as a medium through which he projects his own views on the plight of the street people. For the Victorian reader who valued melodrama, Trotty, like many of Dickens’ flawless characters, was taken into their hearts, and in the process, opened their minds to his condition. Dickens provided insight into the lives of the underprivileged, showing that there were no boundaries between what was theirs and what belonged to the privileged classes. Trotty’s home belongs to him only until it is let to someone with horses. Alderman Cute confiscates and eats Trotty’s dinner. Mr. Filer punches holes in it with a pencil case. There is no respect for that which is Trotty’s. He is even dispossessed of his free will and his right to think for himself by Sir Joseph, who claims, “I will think for you” (182). The Sir Josephs of the world have taken these aspects away, leaving Trotty and others like him, with little of a private nature to call their own. Their working class status exposes them to the interference and ridicule of those presumably better than they are. Therefore, the boundaries between the private and public worlds blur, leaving a class of people forced to survive in the difficult environment between the two spheres.
However, as Dickens has illustrated, Trotty is not deprived of his faith and his exuberance for life, two attributes that cannot be taken from him. As Kaplan states, “The dramatization of moral ideals is a sacred task given to novelists whose duty is to provide models of innate goodness” (74). By the time Dickens wrote The Chimes, he had become informed about the situations of the poor and the characters of the street people; therefore, his depiction of Trotty is far more real than his earlier attempts. Trotty is one of those informed sentimentalized representations. He reflects in his actions and speech his innate goodness. Although he lives in a no-man’s-land, he does create a home for himself and his daughter, illustrating once again that this sentimentalized character may be poor, but he is not nomadic; he may be a street person, but he is not uncivilized; and by his actions and words, he demonstrates that he is anything but inferior.
3. Jo: The Invasive Nature of Dis-Ease

Armstrong tells us that *Bleak House* is where the “connection between the home and the world becomes central” (85), explaining Dickens’ shifting views. His initial belief had been that the public and private spheres were separate and distinct, but over time he began to understand that the two spheres were interconnected: the outside world was moving into the home and home functions were spreading outside of the home environment. For characters like Jo from *Bleak House*, however, the merging of the two spheres only adds to the confusion already in his mind. Dickens illustrates that the confusion experienced by Jo, who belongs to neither the public nor private sphere but understands vaguely that he is on the periphery of both, is akin to a world where fog acts as a metaphor for confusion, near-sightedness, and disconnectedness. In his state of ignorance, Jo’s mind is engulfed with a fogginess which he cannot overcome. The fog also manifests itself as the myopia experienced by characters who are better off than Jo and fail to understand or help him. For this reason, he touches the sentimental in most readers, due to a propensity in people to nurture children, no matter what their condition or situation. This sentimentalism is strengthened when Jo’s living conditions become apparent through Dickens’ careful thematic development.

If Trotty’s function is to show that street people can indeed create stable homes for themselves, then Jo’s is to show that persons devoid of any direction or help from family, loved ones, or society cannot survive in their environments. Jo, the antithesis of Trotty, has no home and cannot create one. Since he has no clear understanding of what a
home is, he sees the streets of London as his home and tries to keep them clean. Again, we see that Armstrong's terms for home are inadequate when applying them to the street people, and especially for Jo whose private and public spheres are literally one. Jo is surrounded by all those elements which Dickens abhors in life: filth, disease, hunger, homelessness, and ignorance. The causes of disease are constantly present, striking anyone who is weak enough to be susceptible. The filth surrounding people like Jo is the direct cause of the disease that invades his body. An additional irony is that Jo, who tries to keep his environment clean and disease-free, is the transmitter of the disease that has insidiously invaded his body. Not only does Jo not know that he is a carrier of disease, but he does not understand the causes. Like the fog, the disease spreads to all parts of the city, and the fog which engulfs Jo's mind and his lack of education prevent him from knowing the origin of the disease, what it is, and how it spreads.

Having no social power to better himself, Jo's ignorance clouds his mind, making understanding difficult, as though he were thinking through a foggy haze. Associated with his ignorance is his appearance, a haze of dust and odor emanating from him which causes anyone who crosses his path to move away from him in revulsion. No one thinks about the reasons for his condition, but his appearance and demeanor are enough to make him an outcast. In Jo as in Trotty, Dickens has extended the concept of what the persona of the street person is. Jo is the consummate street person: living, eating, sleeping, and working on the streets. He wanders through the city daily, and many hours during the night, but only because he has insufficient funds to pay for lodgings. When funds are available, however, Jo consistently sleeps in a slum tenement called Tom-all-Alone's,
showing that when possible, he returns to the same place. Dickens extends his message that the street people desire and need homes by showing that Jo acts out behaviors which are consistent with those practiced by those with homes. He cleans the streets, sleeps on the streets, and even eats his meals on the streets, thus indicating that the streets are home for Jo.

Consistent with the idea that the city of London is Jo’s home, Philip Fisher’s comments about sentimentalism help connect this analogy with the elements of the sentimental novel, including the idea that the individual has to struggle against odds that are overwhelming. He states, “It is essential in environments that the forces of the particular world dwarf the human will: as the forest does in Cooper, the sea in Melville, the city in . . . Dickens” (80). Jo is overwhelmed by the city in which he lives, by his lack of understanding, by his penury. His appearance, evident sweetness, and lack of means touch the heart of any reader. In spite of his conditions, he, like Trotty, also wants the comfort and security of a home. More importantly, Jo is overwhelmed by the dirt and untidiness of his “home.” He has no control over what other people do within his home and consequently cannot sweep away the dirt. Dickens insists on the Englishness of his characters, their almost genetic attachment for home which, if denied them, becomes a dis-ease, and Jo illustrates this by being not only diseased, but also dis-eased. The desire to have a place to rest and be comfortable is part of what gives value to the lives of Dickens’ characters. Jo’s condition proves that his life has no value, nor is he valued by others. This dis-ease also manifests itself in those who are aware of the plight of the Jo’s
of the world and do nothing to help them, showing itself in the form of conscience or guilt. Ideally, Dickens hoped to use guilt to move his readers into action.

Jo's character highlights the segregation of the destitute street people from the world around them, just as the fog segregates people who cannot see each other clearly. Like Trotty, Jo works alone and is alone most of the day, emphasizing the non-nomadic characteristic of being solitary. As a crossing-sweeper, he stands on his street corner, waiting for the opportunity to sweep it clean for any passerby. He does this alone, day after day. Jo is the essence of a being dispossessed by society. He works alone, wanders the city streets along, eats alone, sleeps alone, and converses very rarely with others.

Frances Armstrong's statement that the primary aspects of the Victorian home are security and comfort creates a counterpoint to Dickens' street folk. He emphasizes that the aesthetic elements of home can only be created when the home is at its best. As Armstrong explains,

Dickens sees tidiness and cleanliness as having practical value as a means of controlling one's surroundings. Anyone with enough water, elbow grease and self-respect can start to make things clean and orderly, and the result leads to even more control: disease is kept at bay, possessions can be used more efficiently. (34)

In this statement, the union of cleanliness with control is an interesting consideration. Jo's inability to clean his home is now equated with a lack of power. Like Trotty, Jo is powerless in the public sphere, a point made more evident by Jo's inability to understand his own condition. He has no home within the private sphere, nor within the public sphere, a situation which leaves him defenseless and at the mercy of his environment. Jo's case is exponentially worse than Trotty's, as if Dickens realized that his depiction of
Jo’s condition had to be compounded to make his point clear. Jo, whose filth engulfs him, whose lodging place is falling apart, whose home is the antithesis of cleanliness and order, highlights the conditions of the street person. The irony of Jo being a crossing-sweeper, trying to keep his work environment as clean as possible, is obvious. He has no control over the filth of his “home.” Dickens wants his readers to see that public accountability for the situations in which the poor have to live does not begin and end at the doorstep. To stamp out disease, sanitation and living conditions have to improve. For the street people, home and the street are not only linked but also unavoidably interconnected. In fact, they are synonymous, the streets providing as much of a home environment as the home itself.

In the same manner that Trotty belongs within a “no-man’s land,” not fitting into either the public or private spheres, Jo’s “home,” a slum, does not imitate in any way the homes prevalent within Victorian society. Tom-all-Alone’s provides temporary and unsatisfactory shelter when Jo earns enough money to pay for a night’s rent. As a slum, it is obviously a site of neglect, disease, and ignorance:

Jo lives—that is to say, Jo has not yet died—in a ruinous place, known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone’s. It is a black, dilapidated street, . . . where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so, these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever, and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years—though born expressly to do it. (BH 273)
The language in this passage, full of words such as ruinous, dilapidated, decay, swarm of misery, and fever, creates a sentimental image of a being trapped in these dreadful surroundings. The language also helps amplify the message to “Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle” that these conditions not only took many years to occur, but will take as many to rectify, and even then, it will be too late for Jo. Dickens not only pulls at the heartstrings of the reader who must feel at the very least empathy for little Jo, but also delivers a scathing criticism to those in power. By illustrating the disease present in these dwellings, Dickens shows its invasiveness and the fact that it has no boundaries. By demonstrating that people like Jo existed and that the disease which he harbors is in fact invasive, Dickens hoped to create a greater sense of “dis-ease” in the middle and upper classes since they too were threatened by disease.

Armstrong alludes to Gaston Bachelard’s view of the home in The Poetics of Space, which serves to illustrate the Victorian concept of home, and which extends the idea of comfort and security to encompass a sense of belonging. As Armstrong explains, “A home could be seen as an extension of a suit of clothes--a protection from the outside world as well as a representation of the inhabitant to that world--and should therefore be well-fitted to its owner” (28). To the street people, whose homes frequently meant any doorway or protected area on the streets, home could not be understood in these terms. Applying the idea of this “well-fitted” home providing comfort and security is useless since the middle and upper class understanding of a home as a well-fitted suit is
immaterial to people like Jo, who knows neither safety nor ease at Tom-all-Alone’s. His “suit of clothes,” which is literally hanging off his body in shreds, does reflect his home, but can hardly be said to protect him from the outside world. The opposition between the standards of the Victorian home as understood by the middle and upper classes and Tom-all-Alone’s is Dickens’ way of illustrating the futility of expecting that the street people could surmount the conditions in which they lived.

Jo’s characterization is most important in showing the radical Dickens. Jo’s condition cries out for action. His aloneness in the world becomes more pointed when he asks “What’s home?” and says that he has “No father, no mother, no friends” (199). To be so completely ignorant and unaware that there is such a thing as a home amplifies the pathos we feel as we read about him. The sense of Jo’s alienation is deepened by the fact that he not only has no family, but does not know who they are. He has no one to guide him, and no place which he recognizes as a source of warmth and safety. Christine Van Boheemen sums Jo up in one statement in her book, *The Novel as Family Romance*: “it is precisely in his pathos that the figure of little Jo, the orphan, seems to personify the loneliness, the key-lessness, the perplexity of most of the inhabitants of *Bleak House*” (109). Jo’s plight illustrates what happens to children who are not cared for or educated. Winifred Pederson’s opinion is that “England’s guilt and her responsibility for the Joes of her society are stressed inescapably” (164). We see Dickens’ attempt to raise his readers’ consciousness to this responsibility in the following passage from the novel:

[H]e is not softened by distance and unfamiliarity; he is not a genuine foreign-grown savage; he is the ordinary, home-made article. Dirty, ugly, disagreeable to all the senses, in body a common creature of the common
streets, only in soul a heathen. Homely filth begrimes him, homely parasites devour him, homely sores are in him, homely rags are on him; native ignorance, the growth of English soil and climate, sinks his immortal nature lower than the beasts that perish. (696)

Jo is a representative of many crossing-sweepers who lived in the same way.

Pederson echoes Dickens’ opinion that Jo, rather than being a savage or nomad, is the product of his environment.

Mayhew describes several crossing sweepers who lived like Jo. They earned subsistence wages as sweepers, forcing them to sleep on the streets frequently:

There are many other lads who, being unable to pay the 1d, 2d., or 3d. demanded, in prepayment, by the lodging-house keepers, pass the night in the streets, wherever shelter may be attainable. (I: 475)

Dickens’ character seems to be based on a boy named George Ruby who had a similar background and experiences, probably experiencing the same sense of isolation from society. One of the boys Mayhew interviews tells him that “I’ve got no mother or father; mother has been dead for two years, and father’s been gone more than that--more nigh five years--he died at Ipswich, in Suffolk” (2: 494). He is one of many. Like Jo, this boy lives by his own means, sweeping crossings for a living with no parents to help him out.

Having to fend for himself, Tom-all-Alone’s is the only place Jo can afford. He and Tom-all-Alone’s are intricately intertwined; the ugliness, decay, filth, and misery are apparent in the tenement and in Jo. The irony is that even though he has no real sense of what a home is, he still seeks the relative shelter afforded by the tenement building, in spite of the fact that it cannot provide protection. The significance, therefore, of Tom-all-Alone’s goes beyond a reflection of Jo as a character. His innate need for comfort and
protection are manifest in his continued use of this slum. As a home within the private
sphere, Tom-all-Alone’s falls short. The falling walls amplify the idea of openness to the
outside world, so privacy is nonexistent. Jo’s shelter on the street provides as much
protection and privacy as Tom-all-Alone’s.

The consequences of living in a derelict, decaying building are related to the sense
of disconnectedness that is more profoundly observed in Jo than almost any other
Dickens character. As Tom-all-Alone’s is linked with Jo, so is his disconnectedness
linked with Jo’s lack of identity and dignity, his poor self-image, and the subsequent
negative association with the animals with whom he shares space. Jo is not only
disconnected from society, but also from himself. His lack of self-worth makes him see
himself as nothing, nobody. His inability to think through the fog in his brain creates a
sense of disassociation from himself and his subsequent confusion. His attire and
demeanor reflect his lack of dignity and self-respect. He is repugnant and he knows it.
Lady Dedlock seeks Jo out to help her find the grave site of her former lover, Nemo, who
died destitute: “‘Did he look like--not like you?’ says the woman with abhorrence. ‘O not
so bad as me,’ says Jo. ‘I’m a reg’lar one I am!’”(277). Not only does he know that he is
repulsive to Lady Dedlock and others, but he tries to keep himself away from them

Unfortunately, although Jo does possess certain wonderful qualities, such as
compassion, kindness, and consideration, he is unable to see his greater attributes. He
sees himself as lowly. In fact, as Gail Houston explains in Consuming Fictions, Jo is the
negation of the self:
Through a consistent use of terms such as “nobody,” no one,” “blankness,” “nothink,” and “nothing.” Dickens also represents those on the fringes of society . . . who as consumed ciphers are the negation of the meaning of self. Consequently, unable to make sense of his own existence or essential meaning in the Victorian system of things, Jo literally forgets himself. Knowing “nothink” of his origins, he regards himself as nothing. (125)

For Jo, then, pride and dignity are absent because he is nobody. Again, this passage demonstrates Dickens’ use of sentimentalism. Jo, ignored by society, and therefore nothing, sees himself as nothing, which is a major issue facing the homeless. By depicting Jo’s situation, compounded by his awareness of his repugnance and his efforts to protect others from himself, the reader’s empathy for Jo grows. Street people, by viewing themselves in a negative light, are less inclined to help themselves. They feel worthless. This attitude, when observed by those in positions of power, is interpreted as an unwillingness to change or better themselves. Therefore, the common response is that the street people deserve what they get.

One of the factors causing a sense of worthlessness in the street people was and still is illiteracy, a major consideration for Dickens. Other species cannot fully communicate with humans, and Jo’s illiteracy places him in this respect within the category of a lower species of animal. His inability to read creates a communication barrier between himself and others. Since he cannot read signs or newspapers, he does not know what is going on in the world around him. He sees himself in negative terms and consequently utters negative terms. His language, therefore, emphasizes his negativity, his inability to relate to a world seen through the mists of ignorance and misunderstanding. As Dickens points out, Jo can look at signs, but cannot read them,
hence being deprived of the information requisite to belonging to a society. The narrator, reinforcing the idea that Jo is nobody, tells us:

It must be a strange state to be like Jo! To shuffle through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes and in utter darkness as to the meaning, of those mysterious symbols, so abundant over the shops, and the corner of streets, and on the doors, and in the windows! To see people read, and to see people write, and to see the postman deliver letters, and not to have the least idea of all that language--to be, to every scrap of it, stone blind and dumb! It must be very puzzling to see the good company going to the churches on Sundays, with their books in their hands and to think (for perhaps Jo does think, at odd times) what does it all mean, and if it means anything to anybody, how comes it that it means nothing to me? To be hustled, and jostled, and moved on; and really to feel that it would appear to be perfectly true that I have no business here, or there, or anywhere; and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I am here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am! (274)

Dickens, in this passage as in previous passages, uses sentimentality to clarify his position. He makes it evident that Jo has a brain and thoughts, although uninformed and decidedly foggy, and is therefore a human being. He is not on a par with the lower animals. Without the ability to communicate, Jo is cut off from crucial information. In his undeveloped and confused brain, Jo knows, without having to be told, that he is not a part of the society which can read and interpret the signs and symbols that Jo does not understand. He is aware that he does not belong, has “no business here, or there, or anywhere,” but also that he has somehow been planted in this place and must make the best of it. He is not only a victim of his environment, but also a victim of language and the power it holds to tie people together. What is most evident about this passage is that Jo cannot help himself. Only those in a position of power in the public sphere can help those like Jo.
Dickens associating Jo with animals, indicates his position in the hierarchy, not only to himself, but also to society: “To see the horses, dogs, and cattle, go by me, and to know that in ignorance I belong to them, and not to the superior beings in my shape, whose delicacy I offend!” (274). Like any of the animals Dickens lists, Jo is ignored. As Pederson points out, “With a few exceptions, such as Esther, Hawdon, Jenny, and Allan Woodcourt, Jo is usually left alone by society unless it has use for him” (165). The narrator in *Bleak House* makes Jo’s status clear to the reader: “Jo, and the other lower animals, get on in the unintelligible mess as they can” (275). In fact, the narrator extends this metaphor, so that Jo moves *down* the scale to a point directly beneath that of a thoroughly vagabond dog . . . but an educated, improved, developed dog, who has been taught his duties and knows how to discharge them. He and Jo listen to the music, probably with much the same amount of animal satisfaction; likewise, as to awakened association, aspiration or regret, melancholy or joyful reference to things beyond the senses, they are probably upon a par. But, otherwise, how far above the human listener is the brute! (275)

Jo’s alienation from society, and his abandonment by his family have produced a human being unfit for the world. He is unsocialized. However, albeit his inability to read creates a world of confusion for Jo, he does possess intelligence, is considerate and compassionate, and goes out of his way to help those in need. After guiding Lady Dedlock to Nemo’s grave site, Jo shows his reverence for Nemo by sweep[ing] the step and passage with great care” (279). This action illustrates Jo’s care and consideration not only for Captain Nemo, one of the few people to show Jo kindness, but also for Lady Dedlock, who is visibly upset by Nemo’s grave site, and his death. Dickens would have us see that such actions are not the traits of the lower animals. Unlike the dogs, horses,
and cattle, Jo has the ability to realize his inadequacy and his ignorance. He is aware of his inferiority, which lower animals cannot be. He knows how to be kind and how to show his regard.

Jo is a wanderer, ignorant, and repulsive, but he has what lower animals do not possess. Dickens endows Jo with purity, raising him spiritually above not only the dogs, cattle, rats or other animals, but also above those human beings with less compassion and purity of spirit. Harry Stone in *The Night Side of Dickens* calls Jo and other Dickens characters "vessels of virtue, children or childlike adults . . . maintaining their purity in the midst of depravity" (471). Jo maintains his integrity throughout, giving as much of himself to others as he has to offer.

Although Jos' inner being is one of purity, the invasion of his body by disease marks the final boundary which he faces. This boundary is not the one that exists between the public and private spheres, but the one between this world and the next. It is the boundary of death, which he seems to accept with placidity. In fact, death is more of a release for Jo than something fearful. His extreme illness prompts him to find a quiet place on the street to die. He is not, however, allowed to do this, which may be a blessing in this case. Esther and Charley, who discover him in his state of illness, offer Jo shelter for the night. He responds:

'I don't want no shelter,' he said; 'I can lay amongst the warm bricks.'
'But don't you know that people die there?' replied Charley.
'They dies everywheres,' said the boy. 'They dies in their lodgings--she knows where; I showed her--and they dies down in Tom-all-Alone's in heaps. They dies more than they lives, according to what I see.' (488)
Jo is taken by the well-meaning Allan Woodcourt to Mr. George’s shooting gallery, where he is given lodgings, warmth, and more comfort than he has often experienced (696). For the first time in his life, he is cared for by kind, well-meaning individuals.

Jo represents those lower class people who do not recognize social boundaries on the same level as the middle and upper classes. In fact, death is the best example of the blurring of these social boundaries because of its commonness and familiarity, especially to Jo who sees it so constantly. Dickens makes Jo’s life so terrible that he has no option other than death. Jo is unable to create a home for himself, clean or otherwise, because he has no clear concept of what a home is. His innate urge to clean his environment is an instinct within him that he does not understand, but reveals the innate need of all people to surround themselves with security and comfort. I believe that Dickens’ intent is to show that, in spite of failing to find a niche in society, Jo’s spiritual qualities are ultimately his salvation. His spirituality places him above the lower animals. In death, Jo finds his home. Death is not Jo’s failure, but his success, his release from a world that has caused him nothing but misery.
4. Silas Wegg Imagines His Roots: Parasitism and Invasion in Our Mutual Friend

*Our Mutual Friend*, published in 1864-5, was Dickens’ last finished novel. It is unique for several reasons. As a novel filled with symbolism and metaphor, it deals with many social concerns that were uppermost in Dickens’ mind, among them poverty, sanitation, and housing. One character in this work who is particularly interesting is Silas Wegg. Fred Kaplan’s discussion of Dickens’ use of sentimentalism relating to his characters is interesting because it brings to light another device Dickens used to make his point. Kaplan states that

[Dickens’] belief in the moral sentiments, in the feelings as innately good, inevitably forced Dickens to attempt to create a working definition of human nature. It was clear to him that human nature not only contained more than the moral sentiments, but also that aspects of what seemed to be innate human nature were in conflict with one another. (62)

Dickens’ development of Trotty and Jo was based on this assumption of the innate goodness of the human being; however, Silas shows Dickens’ development and his increasing awareness of the complexity of the human personality. Silas does not exhibit innate goodness. According to Kaplan, Silas has “moral sentiments to such a negligible degree that they challenge the assumption that moral sentiment is an innate human quality, a basic constituent of human nature” (63). This work indicates the most drastic change in Dickens’ beliefs and his increasing cynicism. With the development of Silas, Dickens indicates his move away from the device of sentimentalism to voice his opinions. Rather, he shows that Silas is so much like any other character in the book, regardless of
class, that he is as deeply flawed as they are. He is greedy, manipulative, and jealous, human qualities possessed by the majority of characters within *Our Mutual Friend.*

Rather than depict Silas as a kind, even pure individual, Dickens uses Silas to show that street people are no different from anyone else and therefore should be recognized primarily as human beings who possess the same needs and desires as anyone else.

Dickens recognized the complexity of human nature and progressively developed characters who were more realistic. Silas is one of those characters, pointing to Dickens’ move from his belief that all human beings are innately good, to a position where he concedes to the fact that some human beings are irredeemable. Silas is developed in an environment which to Dickens is not natural and has no relationship to nature. An increasing emphasis on monetary gain and materialism had produced individuals like Silas, whose unnaturalness is the antithesis of goodness. This is the basis for Silas’ characterization, a person totally devoid of sentimentalism, a term applied to individuals of good moral character, benevolence, and naturalness.

The commonality between Silas and the two previous characters is that he is a street person who, like Trotty and Jo before him, spends long hours on the street earning a living for himself. Like Trotty and Jo, Silas wants to plant himself in a stable environment, both within the private and public spheres. The element of the imagination is particularly relevant when discussing Silas because Dickens shows through this element that Silas’ desire for a home is just as imperative for him as it is to Trotty and Jo. His astuteness places him in a pathetic situation because he is fully aware of the void between his world and that of the wealthy. His awareness of what he does not and cannot
have, home, family, a place within society, makes him a sad character, but not necessarily the recipient of the reader's sympathy. Fisher's comment about the importance of family has relevance to Silas' state of mind: "The family is the one social unit that in political terms validates the entire life span" (102). Without family, the individual cannot attain feedback through the eyes of a trusted family member. He or she has no way of assessing self-worth and relationship to other family members or to society. There is no sense of connectedness or belonging. This feeling of disconnectedness has influenced the lives and actions of Trotty, Jo, and also Silas, attesting to the fact that Dickens meant his audience to realize that Silas' needs are as genuine as those of either Trotty or Jo, manifesting themselves through his imagination.

Both Trotty and Jo are extreme examples of sentimentality; however, by changing his perspective, Dickens was able to create a far more realistic character in Silas. Even though the emotional response to Silas is limited, he is still a one-legged man who wants the same fulfillment experienced by others. Living in a post-Industrial world where the possibility for a working class man to rise above his station has become a reality, Silas wants to believe he too can be as fortunate. Louis Cazamian states, "Our Mutual Friend is deliberately set in the post-industrial world. Here, at the end of his life, Dickens resigned himself to a world from which the stage-coaches had vanished for ever" (166). Dickens reflects the changes that occurred through his characterizations. Silas is a part of the wasteland, fragmented and disconnected like Trotty and Jo, but more astute and streetwise than either of the previous characters. Silas has lived through the changes and survived. He has learned through his environment on the streets to ignore everything else
in life except the attainment of his own desires. He has found a place where he feels he belongs in the public sphere, his street corner where he has set up his stall for many years. He is self-assured and confident of his ability to maintain himself. Unlike Trotty and Jo, Silas shows his ability for independent thought, action, and calculation, characteristics developed because of the Industrialization of England and the subsequent hardships it produced. Silas lives for himself only. He illustrates the results of an environment on a man who has had to struggle for his existence over a long period. He is tough, canny, and manipulative. His goal, however, is the same as that of Trotty and Jo. Silas wants a home.

A man with a wooden leg, Silas has limited capacity for work. He therefore supports himself by selling ballads and the odd piece of unappetizing fruit. Images of trees surround this character. His leg of wood only begins to describe a character so wooden in his demeanor that he is unbending, just as a large, solid tree refuses to sway with the wind. Dickens describes his work environment, which discloses not only his limited means, but also a great deal about his personality:

Over against a London house, a corner house not far from Cavendish Square, a man with a wooden leg had sat for some years, with his remaining foot in a basket in cold weather, picking up a living on this wise: -Every morning at eight o'clock, he stumped to the corner, carrying a chair, a clothes-horse, a pair of trestles, a board, a basket, and an umbrella, all strapped together. Separating these, the board and trestles became a counter, the basket supplied the few small lots of fruit and sweets that he offered for sale upon it and became a foot-warmer, the unfolded clothes-horse displayed a choice collection of halfpenny ballads and became a screen, and the stool planted within it became his post for the rest of the day. (45)

The allusions to wood cannot be mistaken. Silas is likened to a tree. He sets up his wooden stall, his wooden chair, his trestles, and wooden clotheshorse to sell paper
products. In fact, he has more or less rooted himself in the same spot for many years, refusing to move his location or give way to any other street-seller. The woodenness of his thinking indicates that his hardships have not only made him more limited in his perception of the world around him, but have also ingrained his intentions of gaining what he wants in life in any way he can.

Mayhew describes Silas' profession as a coster, a street-seller of fruits and ballads. As a seller of stationery, literature, ballads, Silas belongs to a sub-group of "patterers," the street people who sing, quote poetry, or ballads, as Silas does. One of the patterers Mayhew interviewed said, "We are the haristocracy of the streets... People don't pay us for what we gives 'em, but only to hear us talk. We live like yourself, sir, by the hexercise of our hintellects" (1: 213). This description places Silas squarely within this category. As Mayhew claims, the patterers were conscious "of their mental superiority," and Silas displays his belief through his actions that he is superior in intellect to several other characters in the novel, namely Mr. and Mr. Boffin, and Mr. Venus (OMF 213). The costers frequently found a particular spot on which to place their cart or basket, claiming that area as their territory. Silas has done just that, claiming his corner as his workplace. Unlike Trotty, who is never able to claim his area as his workplace, Silas defies intrusion. In this regard, he has established for himself a permanent place within the public sphere, in which he is comfortable, until avarice infuses him with desire for more.

Within the public sphere, Silas has found a place that satisfies him for the time being, a place in which he is confident in his ability to survive. However, in the private
sphere, he is at odds with himself. Like Trotty and Jo, Silas struggles to acquire the security and comfort of home. To reveal this desire in Silas, Dickens gives him a powerful imagination, through which the reader sees the innermost ambitions, frustrations, insecurities, and defects of this character. However, Dickens' development of the imagination in Silas creates a separation between what is real and what is not. Silas illustrates this separation through his imaginative desire for a home. His longing is so great that in his imagination he takes possession of "Our house," the house directly behind the vicinity of his workstation. The narrator depicts this scene:

He had not only settled it with himself in the course of time, that he was errand-goer by appointment to the house at the corner (though he received such commissions not half-a-dozen times in a year, and then only as some servant's deputy), but also that he was one of the house's retainers and owed vassalage to it and was bound to leal and loyal interest in it. For this reason, he always spoke of it as 'Our House,' and, though his knowledge of its affairs was mostly speculative and all wrong, claimed to be in its confidence. On similar grounds he never beheld an inmate at any one of its windows but he touched his hat. Yet, he knew so little about the inmates that he gave them names of his own invention: as 'Miss Elizabeth,' 'Master George,' 'Aunt Jane,' 'Uncle Parker'--having no authority whatever for any such designations, but particularly the last--to which, as a natural consequence, he stuck with great obstinacy. (45)

This passage creates empathy between Silas and the reader. We see the pathos in a situation in which a man has to invent a home and a family because he lacks them in his life. By using the phrase, "he touched his hat," we see a man trying to become a part of this group of people, showing them the courtesy he believes will endear him to them.

Through his imagination, Silas has not only gained a home, but also a family, in spite of never having met any of them. He has rooted himself in the world of others, trying to find a way to establish himself in the private sphere, a way to surround himself with security.
Armstrong’s lengthy talk about Dickens and the imaginary home help elucidate the importance of the idealized home for Dickens. The imaginary home is the one which most people have in their minds, particularly memories of the childhood home that are incorporated into their concept of the ideal home. For Silas, his imaginary home is one that he creates as an adult, presumably because he had no ideal childhood home. As Armstrong explains, “A home in the mind may be conceived of in intellectual rather than emotional terms, as a place furnished with ideas rather than memories” (20). The idea of home that Silas has in his mind is equivalent to the homes of the more fortunate. Silas wants to elevate his position in society, including his status within the private sphere.

Arthur Quiller-Couch in his biographical study of Dickens and other Victorians notes that Dickens called his home “his castle” (18). In this regard, Silas echoes Dickens. Silas wants the means to provide himself with a castle, which may involve a touch of manipulation and cunning, but he is confident in his abilities. Naturally, those without wanted what others had gained. Silas takes this idea to the extreme, trying to take what does not belong to him, namely the Boffin’s inheritance.

Being an outsider looking at the wealth around him, Silas becomes more and more desirous of sharing the spoils. His actions mirror those of the middle classes, especially when he finds that one of his own class, Noddy Boffin, has managed to acquire the much-coveted prize—a fortune from his old employer, John Harmon. John Harmon made this fortune through the mounds of coal dust collected from the city. The residual dust from the burning of coal in the fireplaces provided dustmen with large incomes, used mainly as
a soil additive and as a product for making bricks. Frequently, other articles were found in
the dust by means of sifting, some of great value (Mayhew 2: 170). The dust mounds for
Silas are a means to an end. The potential wealth attainable from the mounds would make
Silas a rich man. The attainment of a fortune through trade was more of a possibility for
people from all classes during the post-Industrial period than at any prior time. Silas is
reflecting the desire, even though he does not succeed in the act.

Noddy Boffin, a kind and generous individual, offers Silas John Harmon’s old
house, called Harmony Jail, in which to live, the very property on which the dust mounds
lie. However, the Boffins’ generosity is tempered by the fact that they then move into the
house on Silas’ corner, the one which he has imaginatively long considered his own. The
well-meaning Boffin provides a foil for the insidious Wegg, who secretly searches
through the mounds for valuable items, until he accidentally finds a will deposited by the
old John Harmon, which postdates the will that made the Boffins heir to Harmon’s
property. Silas’ elation is understandable since he has had to struggle for his survival and
now has a chance of gaining a fortune. He tells his comrade, Mr. Venus,

“I discovered [an object] to be a small flat oblong cash-box. Shall I say it
was disappointingly light?”
“There were papers in it?” said Venus.
“There your expressive countenance speaks indeed!” cried Wegg. “A
paper. The box was locked, tied up, and sealed, and on the outside was a
parchment label, with the writing, “‘MY WILL, JOHN HARMON,
TEMPORARILY DEPOSITED HERE.’” (493)

Wegg’s cunning nature comes to the fore. His plans to disinherit the Boffins echoes the
machinations of other characters, namely the Laemles who try to procure financial
support for themselves from their friends and neighbors. Unlike Jo, or even Trotty, Silas’ desire is greater because of his greed.

Silas’ attempts to root himself in the private sphere imply a form of parasitism, in which Silas tries to provide for himself the security he needs. He plans to prey on the Boffins, a behavior characteristic of all classes and one which makes him completely human. In fact, *Our Mutual Friend* provides several instances of parasitic behavior, most of them occurring in the middle and upper classes. Silas’ knowledge has accumulated from his observations of those around him. Harry Stone’s study takes this predatory nature of Silas into account. In fact, Stone goes even further. He considers Silas to be cannibalistic in nature: “Silas Wegg . . . and many others help to refine and enlarge [this] theme . . . All humankind is compromised by a social order that must sustain itself by feeding each one on the other” (161). As a human quality, Silas exhibits more than his share of greed. As a means to acquiring what he wants, Silas sustains himself by feeding on the Boffins. He imagines he possesses the power to succeed in separating Boffin from his inheritance, but this belief is only in his imagination. By acquiring what others have, Silas believes he will be accepted into the world of the private sphere. He will have acquired a home. Again, Silas only imagines this. Although Silas’ imagination tells us a great deal about his character, his ideals, and desires, Dickens shows that imagination can become harmful when it displaces reality.

Frances Armstrong’s focus on the invasive nature of Wegg, his parasitic tendencies, which she sees as destructive, gives perspective to Silas as a character (114-15). While I have to agree that Silas is invasive, entrenching himself in Boffin’s world, I
would argue that Dickens does not allow him to be destructive. Silas’ purpose is not to do harm, but to show the consequences of harmful actions, to demonstrate that Silas, as a human being, is not a member of another culture or race. He is as human as any individual who manipulates others to get what he wants. Silas manipulates Boffin into giving him the house in which to live and attempts to take over the Boffin’s fortune, but fails to deceive Noddy Boffin on all counts. In fact, Silas, portrayed in a comical way, shows the results of avarice, but more importantly, why characters like Silas are avaricious in the first place. Armstrong explains that “For many of the characters in the novel, though, the main priority is to be at home in the world, and those less pleasant in nature accomplish this by invasion” (139). The rigors of Silas’ street life provide such a counterpoint to what Boffin has attained that his actions are extreme in his attempts to deprive Boffin of his inheritance.

Silas’ desire to construct a private world for himself extends beyond his environment to his corporeal home. As Armstrong explains, “he is never quite at home with himself” (141). He has lost a leg, which has been replaced with a wooden one. One means of discovering the function of Silas within a novel, which is by far the strongest of social criticisms Dickens made, is an analysis of his wooden leg. This analysis explains through metaphor his sense of disconnectedness from society. My discussion centers on Silas belonging to the world between two worlds, the state of limbo to which Jo and Trotty belong. Silas extends this concept even further because even in body he is not complete. One scene in particular highlights Wegg’s leg as important, showing Silas trying to re-assimilate himself. His excursion to Venus’s home to buy back his leg is
comical, yet gruesome. He asks Venus, ‘And how have I been going on, this long time, Mr. Venus?’ The question sounds innocent enough, except when considering that Wegg is talking about his amputated leg as if it still has life. He goes on to ask, ‘Am I still at home?’ (78). Wegg is trying to make his corporeal home complete. He has bought his leg from Venus, but cannot attach it to his body. Armstrong explains ‘Wegg wants to ‘collect’ himself, and buys his leg back’ (141). Metaphorically speaking, he is disconnected from himself, just as he is from the spheres of which he wants to be a part.

In a sense, Silas’ quest for his leg is an attempt at regeneration, a theme prevalent throughout the work. The regeneration of John Harmon and Rogue Riderhood through the river, first by drowning, then by resuscitation, and Boffin’s regeneration through wealth obtained from the dust mounds are only a few examples in this novel of the regeneration that takes place. Silas’ desire for the money reaped from the mounds is significant because it illustrates again his need to be regenerated through the same means. He belongs to the no-man’s land, that world within a world where the occupants are virtually invisible. Dorothy Van Ghent considers Silas as ‘reduced to the quality of his appendage . . . The inanimate member of the organism [signifying] spiritual necrosis’ (215). His attempts to make himself whole are unattainable since his physical and spiritual body are in the process of decay, another aspect of the cycle of life or regeneration.

The end result of Silas’ greed is part of Dickens’ lesson to society. Silas has behaved badly and must pay the price. His physical expulsion from the Boffin home is an analogy for the expulsion from society and home. He is thrown into a scavenger’s cart. The irony, as P.J.M. Scott points out in Reality and Comic Confidence in Charles
*Dickens*, is that Silas is deposited “into exactly the kind of ‘scavenger cart’ that has made [Boffin’s] fortune” (30). He has tried to scavenge from Boffin and ends up becoming refuse in a scavenger’s cart instead. His imagined ability to outmaneuver Boffin is exposed as pride and arrogance. Leslie Thompson points out in “The Masks of Pride in *Our Mutual Friend,*” that “Dickens lashes out at man’s humorous but tragic pretensions” (124). Silas’ pretensions separate him from Trotty and Jo, whose honesty and purity are exemplified. Dickens assures us that Silas’ mask is stripped away not only to reveal his true nature to others, but also to himself.

Silas’ associations with money, decay, and resurrection all tie in with the sense of floating between two worlds. From his position on the outside of society looking in, he sees the elusive money slowly disappearing as the Boffins spend it and the dust mounds are sold one by one, a process he cannot control. He has no hold on the money. He has no hold on the elusive worlds of the private or public spheres since he is thrown out of home by Boffin in the private sphere and restricted to his fruit stand in the public sphere. Of all the characters in this work, Silas is one of the most mercenary, but also one of the saddest. He has nowhere to go but back to his former position, a pill all the more bitter for him to swallow, considering his brief view of a world he wants so much. The allusions to wood make him a comical caricature of the greedy, unbending individuals who have developed this way because of their environments. Dickens is not only able to point out through Silas the sense of dissociation endemic among the poor, the invisible class, but also the need for those like him to find a legitimate way to belong, to become whole. As a contrasting figure to either Trotty or Jo, Silas demonstrates the most important of
Dickens' messages. The street people are human beings just like everyone else, and deserve to be treated as such. By avoiding any sentimentalization of Silas' character, Dickens was able to state his case more pointedly and more realistically, reflecting not only his growing cynicism, but also his increasing awareness of the complexity of, and contradictions within human nature.
5. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to show the importance of home to the street people. The fact that their home and street environments blur together shows the difficulty of talking about the street people in the same terms as those which apply to the middle and upper classes. Using Armstrong's discussion of Dickens' view of home, we are able to look beyond the Victorian concept of the public and private spheres as inadequate for discussing the street people.

Dickens' depiction of his street characters indicates that each in his own way tries to belong to the sphere of the home, or incorporates as many aspects of the Victorian home into his or her own. The development of Trotty in 1844 shows that Dickens still held idealistic views about society and still believed that he could make a difference through his writing. He, therefore, created Trotty as a man possessing the attributes of the sentimental man: benevolence, innate goodness, and naturalness. Trotty's success in including elements that provide comfort and security reveal that Dickens was astute enough to understand the needs and desires of the street people. Trotty's work ethic, his pride in his ability to earn a living no matter how meager, his generosity, kindness, and love all attest to Dickens' belief that the street people were intrinsically good. For this reason, his message to the street people to keep faith with each other is a condemnation of those more fortunate, for they were largely the cause of the disillusionment suffered by people like Trotty. What is also evident is that the Trottys of the world are the personification of the powerlessness intrinsic in the lives of the poor and downtrodden.
However, the Chimes give Trotty the means to find happiness and faith in his fellow man. Most importantly, he has created for himself and his daughter a stable, comfortable home.

By the time *Bleak House* was written, 1853-4, Dickens was more informed about those in abject poverty. However, he still believed in the innate goodness of the human soul; therefore, Jo is depicted as being not only innately good, but pure as well. Jo, the quintessential street person, fails completely to create a home for himself because he is the sum total of his environment and his experiences, which are non-existent or negative. Dickens wanted to shock his audience with explicit details of the young boy's life. To illustrate Jo's desire and need for a home, Dickens describes his instinctive need to tidy up his home, in direct association with Esther, who is tidying up Bleak House. This points to Dickens' view that London is Jo's bleak house. In fact, Jo's house is so bleak, he cannot live in it comfortably or safely. Disease, which invades his house, also invades him. The ludicrousness of Jo trying to clean up London alone, or to hold back the flood of disease, demonstrates Dickens' ability to reach his audience through the use of pathos and sentimentalism. Few Victorian readers, already enveloped within a culture of pathos and melodrama, could help realizing the impossibility of Jo's task, or feeling the appropriate emotion. His character depicts Dickens' growing awareness that the society he is trying to reach would rather ignore people like Jo. However, Jo's disease makes it impossible to ignore him, just as it breaks down the barriers between the spheres. Dickens gives Jo no hope for survival. Not only is he powerless within his world, hounded and harassed constantly, but he is also abandoned by society. He, therefore, exudes a sense of
disconnectedness since he really does not belong anywhere. For Jo, death is a way out of a bleak existence.

In contrast with Trotty and Jo, Silas' covetous nature reflects his preoccupation with the self and Dickens' move away from the sentimental as a means of moving his audience. He creates Silas as entirely human, forcing his readers to place Silas on a par with themselves as human beings. Silas' desire to reunite his leg with the rest of his body indicates his need to become whole, physically and emotionally. This wholeness is a central issue in Our Mutual Friend since one of the results of the Industrial Revolution was the street people's sense of separation, disconnectedness from society. The divisions between the working class and the middle and upper classes grew enormously. Silas' dismemberment is an analogy for his disassociation from society. His attempt to make his body whole mirrors his hope that by attaining the means to create a home environment, his private world will also become whole. He will belong to the private sphere, be accepted into the society which has rejected him. His body and his life will no longer be fragmented. Silas' situation is sad and evokes sympathy, even if only briefly.

Dickens' initial use of sentimentalism was successful in moving his audience to action. His move to realism where Silas is concerned reflects his growing awareness of his own limitations in portraying the street people as ideal, rather than real. In all instances, whichever device he used, Dickens was able to reach his reader, to establish a bond with his audience.

Malcolm Andrews tells us that Dickens' concerns for the poor showed in his disgust with government neglect and the gloomy, unhygienic environments of their
homes (138). These were only two of the many situations with which Dickens took issue, and in each case, he chose an interesting way of voicing his opinions. He used street characters who would touch the hearts of those very same readers who chose to allow the poor to continue living in adverse conditions.

Silas is a clear indicator of Dickens’ progressive cynicism. He is the one character who embodies the complexity of the human psyche, including many of the negative qualities attributed to human nature. We see Silas after life’s struggles have taught him to become tough. Unfortunately, his fight has hardened him to the extreme. He becomes wooden, greedy, and manipulative. Silas’ implicit need for a home, shown by his harshness and greed, indicates his similarity to the members of the middle and upper class whose preoccupation with materialism distorts their sense of right and wrong. Dickens illustrates that he disdains characters like Silas, whose punishment fits his crime. His disposal in a scavenger’s cart places him where he began. He is denied the home that he struggles so hard to attain, and entrance into the private sphere of the home which he needs so much. Silas is the outward manifestation of Dickens’ disenchantment with English society, and of the disrupting effects of the Industrial Revolution on the lives of the street people.

In every instance, home is the key for each of these characters. For the street people, the separation between the public and private spheres begins to fade, boundaries blur. In this state of limbo, they try to fit into their worlds. However, since they do not belong to the recognized spheres, they are either misunderstood, or ignored. In the case of Trotty, he works to establish a stable home, whereas Jo, too uncivilized to participate
adequately within society, becomes overwhelmed by the filth and disease he tries so hard to clean up. However, his attempts indicate his innate need to create a clean, tidy, protected environment in which to live, despite his ignorance of the concept of home. Silas' overriding greed attests to the strength of his desire to establish himself in the private sphere. The quest for a home is the ultimate goal of each character discussed.

Dickens' depiction of his characters and their efforts to establish homes for themselves counteracts some of the harm created by society's acceptance of Henry Mayhew's assertions. Trotty and Jo are, in fact, spiritually superior to many of the people with whom they come into contact. In various other ways, Dickens shows his characters to be superior to the lower animals with which they are associated. Trotty is educated enough to read, an ability lower animals do not possess. He also has the ability to reason and learn. Jo, the closest to the world of the lower animals, nevertheless demonstrates the qualities Dickens' revered the most: kindness and compassion. Silas, because of his flaws, creates a basis of comparison with those individuals deemed to be superior to him.

Although Mayhew investigated in-depth the situations in which the poor lived and worked, in many ways he did not see the true state of affairs. Many of his interviews with street people indicate Mayhew's acknowledgment that most had homes, many were intelligent, some were well educated, and all tried to survive on virtually nothing. These documented statements disprove Mayhew's own theory, yet he failed to see the paradox, if he actually was aware of it. Thus, most, if not all of the people with whom he talked were no more nomadic than he was. Ironically, Mayhew, who strove to be scientific in his
depiction of the lives and events surrounding the people he interviewed, succeeded only
when he used sentimentalism in his writing.

Dickens' ultimate goal to raise the consciousness of the public to an awareness of
what the street people had to endure was described by T.A. Jackson:

All his life long, according to his lights, Dickens fought for the poor and
for the oppressed as stoutly as any man who ever struck a blow on their
side. . . . The common people loved him living, and mourned him dead,
and in these matters the common people are always right. (303)

Dickens was not alone in his attempts to help those in need; however, he contributed
greatly to opening the minds, and in many instances, the hearts of thousands of his
readers. Whether this growing awareness in the public actually evolved into action is
difficult to determine, but the collective efforts of people with the same goals slowly
turned the tide, causing the conditions of the street people to gradually improve. Even
though Mayhew was a major factor in raising the awareness of the plight of the street
people, it was Dickens, through devices like sentimentalism, who revealed the true
conditions of the street people. In a way that made them human, Dickens' depictions
brought these characters to life, thereby making the greatest contributions to the eventual
changes that took place in Victorian society.
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