

The importance of 'elsewhere': Looking beyond London and Ireland in the creation of Australian English¹

David Britain

Department of Language and Linguistics,

University of Essex

Wivenhoe Park

COLCHESTER CO4 3SQ

Great Britain

dbritain@essex.ac.uk

Introduction

In contrast to the very recent and energetic empirical research activity on the origins of New Zealand English (see, for example, Gordon, Campbell, Hay, MacLagan, Sudbury and Trudgill 2004, Trudgill 2004, Meyerhoff 2006), driven by the discovery of early recordings that, it is argued, can shed light on the formative period of this variety of English, research on the origins of *Australian* English have been much less vigorous (though see Trudgill and Gordon 2006). Consequently, although paying passing reference to some of the earlier theoretical products of research on the formation of post-colonial varieties of English such as Trudgill's proposals on dialect contact (e.g. 1986), there has been little attempt as yet to fully engage with the outputs of the more recent New Zealand work in the analysis of Australian English. As a result, much of the writing on the origins of this latter variety is monogenetic, arguing for a single geographical origin for each feature of the variety. Dominating this work is the claim that Australian English originates from some form of London English.

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Puzzled at the apparent lack of dialectological residue from the large numbers of *Irish* convicts and settlers who came to Australia in the early years of Anglophone settlement, another strand has seen researchers seeking to find as much evidence as possible of features from Ireland in Australian English.

In this article, I argue that London variants and Irish variants did (obviously) contribute to the formation of Australian English, but that alone they were not sufficient to account for it. Using historical demographic evidence of the origins and birthplaces of the convicts and the free and assisted settlers to Australia in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, complimented by historical dialectological and geolinguistic evidence of how people spoke in Britain in the first half of the 19th century, I suggest that London or Irish forms were only likely to survive into Australian English if they were also used in the area from which the most convicts and migrants came, *the non-metropolitan south of England*. In doing so, I don't want to argue that Australian English (AusE) 'came from' the South of England², but simply propose that we take seriously the relatively uncontroversial claim from new dialect formation studies that, possibly with one or two explainable exceptions, majority forms survive, and minority forms don't.

Below, having briefly reviewed the arguments that have been put forward in favour of London and Ireland as the origins of AusE, I show firstly that some features which were characteristic, even stereotypical, of London English in the 19th century did *not* survive into Australian English, because, despite being used in the capital, they were found too rarely outside London to form the critical mass necessary for survival; secondly, given London's location in the south of England, it is perhaps not surprising that generally London shares features with the South more often than Ireland does. But whenever Ireland does share features with the South (but which are absent from London), these features have usually survived into Australian English too. Consequently, it seems that while London and Ireland have been grabbing the attention with respect to the origins of Australian English, the South of England can be seen as largely responsible, ultimately, for providing the crucial numerical weight

² See Meyerhoff (2006: 185) for a discussion of the pointlessness of pinpointing the specific locations of where varieties came from.

behind many of those variants that made it into the 20th century vernacular variety. As we will see, some features traditionally ascribed to ‘London’, such as front mid-open nuclei of /au/, survive not because they are used in London, but because they are much more widely distributed in the English dialects of the early 19th century than just the British capital. Similarly, some features which, apparently defying all the odds, are survivals from Irish English, such as the use of /ə/ instead of /ɪ/ as the vowel in checked unstressed syllables (e.g. in words such as ‘cricket’, ‘fielded’ and ‘catches’), are, in fact, features again found widely in the South of England *but not London*. This work is therefore supportive of Trudgill’s polygenetic approach to new dialect formation which argues that “the particular variant from all those available which survives will depend on which one speakers actually accommodate to (or simply acquire, in the case of young children), which in turn will often depend on how *common* it is (1986: 102).

Where did Australian English come from?

The question of the origins of AusE has preoccupied researchers of this variety for a long time, and the argument does not appear to have been fully resolved. I do not intend to chew over the minutiae of these arguments here – many have done so before (see Leitner 2004: 23-39 for a review). I therefore limit myself to a brief overview of the main claims, of which I see that there are three.

The first is that AusE derives from London English. This position is made perhaps most forcefully by Hammarström (1985: 369, see also 1980) who argues that “the present Australian English pronunciation is very close to that used in London 200 years ago”. This position (or some variant of it) is probably held by the majority of people who have written on this issue. So, for example, Taylor writes that “it is pretty universally agreed that London English, especially in the form of non-standard Cockney English, played a most important role in the early development of AusE, if only because so many convicts derived from London and usually from the lower echelons of its society” (Taylor 2003: 173), Yallop argues that “the only form of speech that was represented substantially enough to seem like a model to accommodate to, was that of the London area” (Yallop 2001: 291) and Cochrane

suggests that “the present-day evidence thus speaks strongly for a London origin for the main features of the Australian accent” (1989: 183)³. This view is also held, for example, by Kiesling (2004). Most are not quite as resolute about the dominance of London as Hammarström, however, and a few stretch the net out from London to the South-east of England more generally (though rarely with much discussion about why). Turner, for example, says that “Nobody doubts that the origins of Australian English are to be sought in south-east England” (Turner 1994: 285), whilst Yallop, considering what the first Australia-born Anglophone population must have sounded like, suggested that “children must have spoken something that was similar, though probably not identical, to the contemporary speech of London or southeast England or at least to the accommodated version of it that might be heard most commonly among adults in the colony” (Yallop 2001: 292).

Baker, one of the earlier linguists to consider this question was adamantly opposed to this view, however. Railing against the fact that “the most constant and indeed the oldest linguistic charge levelled against Australians was that they spoke like Cockneys” (Baker 1966: 432), he argued that “since no observer has yet been able to produce more than a few resemblances between the Australian and the Cockney accents, the allegation that Australians talk like Cockneys must be regarded as one of the popular myths to which we, as a young nation, are susceptible.” (1966: 435). One of the aims of this paper is to put London’s contribution to the test, by examining what we know about levels of convict transportation and free migration from London to Australia, about London English in the early 19th century, and assessing the extent to which London English of the time is able to account for Australian English.

The second main concern of dialectologists of Australian English with respect to origins of the variety surrounds why Irish English did not play a bigger role in the formation of AusE than seems to be the case. Most who raise this concern point to the large numbers of Irish convicts and migrants, yet are faced with a variety that looks and sounds very non-Irish. In order to argue that Irish English has indeed contributed

³ Though he comes to this conclusion on the basis of a comparison of *present-day* London English with present-day Australian English (1989: 178-182).

more than might at first be apparent, a number of scholars have built up a list of features they consider “Irish” which are found in Australian English. Bradley, for example, argues that “While the main influence in the development of Australian English, as is widely agreed, was London English, Irish English also contributed a substantial component” (2003: 143)⁴. I will consider some of these features in more detail later⁵.

The third and final issue is about what happened to the dialects from the British Isles in order to end up as Australian English. Some argue that dialect mixture took place in Britain before emigration, forced or otherwise, to Australia (e.g. Collins 1975), and others argue that mixture took place in Australia itself (e.g. Trudgill 1986, 2004). It is certainly true that London, at the time of convict transportation, was both one of the largest cities in the world, and the recipient of very large numbers of migrants from other parts of Britain, particularly the South and East (Friedlander and Roshier 1966). And it is also undeniable that London has long had a very important linguistic influence on its hinterland. Ellis, whose very important work (1889) on non-standard British dialects I will draw on later, made this very clear in his search for local dialect forms in the parts of the neighbouring counties that adjoin London. He laments that:

“the composite nature of a very shifting population in this district renders the growth of any dialect proper impossible (Ellis 1889:129)...There are so many causes for interference with the natural

⁴ We have to reckon with the possibility that many of the Irish convicts and migrants may not have been Anglophone, or at least had English only as a second language. Haines reports that “many Irish women appear to have been observed as illiterate simply because they were monoglot Gaelic speakers. Their inability to communicate, (and alleged obstinacy, insubordination and ‘dullness’) was probably linguistic rather than stubbornness as so often reported (Haines 1994: 235)...a large proportion came from the Western counties and Donegal in Ulster, regions inhabited by a population of whom 50 per cent, and in the far west 80 per cent, were Gaelic speakers” (Haines 1994: 235fn).

⁵ Most of the features generally ascribed to Irish English origins are structurally relatively peripheral (e.g. the use of sentence final ‘but’, the expression ‘good on ya’) and consequently harder to track diachronically from the present-day back into the past. The most structurally central feature of those commonly listed is chosen for analysis later in this article.

development of speech, and the population is so shifting, that it would be misleading to suppose that there was any real hereditary dialect or mode of speech....the enormous congeries of persons from different parts of the kingdom and from different countries, and the generality of school education, render dialect nearly impossible (1889:225)...For the rural portions of the SE district, I have very slender information. My informants find a shifting population, and nothing distinctive to record. They imagine that if there is nothing different to their hearing than uneducated London speech, there is nothing to report (1889: 234-5)...the inhabitants of this locality are mainly strangers from every corner of the country who have settled here for a brief space and never remain long. They represent any and no special pronunciation” (1889: 235).

His presentation, though, makes it plain that although this was the case for the areas immediately around London, further afield, London’s influence was not as strong as it is today.

Trudgill’s view is that the most significant mixing took place outside Britain and his more wide-ranging approach, encompassing but not limited to Australian English (see, for example, Trudgill 2004, Trudgill and Gordon 2006), focussing on how new dialects are formed in contexts of dialect contact, especially in post-colonial contexts, has received relatively little attention in discussions of the origins of Australian English. The important distinction in his (especially later) work is that he takes a deterministic approach to new dialect formation, arguing strongly that, as a result of accommodation in contexts of interdialectal face-to-face contact, majority *variants* will win out in dialect contact situations, rather than dialects as a whole. It is in this way that novel combinations of variants can end up as victorious outcomes of dialect contact, because the dominant variant of one feature may well come from a different range of input migrant dialects than the dominant variant of some other feature. With dominant variants tending to survive, the output (in this case, Australian English) need not necessarily look like any one of the inputs (the late 18th and early 19th century dialects of the British Isles).

Trudgill (1986) examined some features of Australian English, attempting to account for them using the principles of koineization outlined in *Dialects in Contact*. Here, I apply what we now know both about the origins of convicts and early free and assisted settlers to Australia as well as about dialects of the British Isles in the early 19th century to argue that indeed, in most cases (but not all), majority *variants* became vernacular variants of Australian English. Importantly, however, I shall show that being a variant of London English alone or of Irish English alone was not enough to become one of the major structural characteristics of Australian English. I will demonstrate that both demographically and dialectologically *non-Metropolitan southern England* played the crucial role in the determination of especially the phonology of Australian English. In order to begin to demonstrate this, I look first at the historical demographic data on the origins in the British Isles of those who went to Australia, willingly or not, in the early period of Australian Anglophone settlement. Then, I consider the historical geolinguistics of a number of features of contemporary Australian English to exemplify my claims about the crucial role played by those southern English dialects spoken outside London.

Where did Anglophone migrants to early 19th century Australia come from?

Migration from the British Isles to Australia in the early 19th century principally came in two overlapping waves: firstly, transported convicts (between 1787 and 1868, though most were between the years 1825-1845 (Jupp 1998: 5)) of which there were approximately 160,000 (Nicholas and Shergold 2001: 16) and secondly, free and assisted migration. Figure 1, based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, shows the growth in the non-Aboriginal Australian population between 1790 and 1870. It shows that the population in the very early years, composed primarily of convict settlers, was totally dwarfed by later population growth, most of which can be accounted for by migrants rather than natural increase. Figures 2 and 3, based on Robson's (1994: 155, 162) analysis of a 5% sample of convict records show the regional distribution of the *county of trial* of convicts sent to Australia, male and female. For men, whilst both London and Ireland (as well as the North) account for large proportions of the total, it is the Southern Regions of England which dominate accounting for almost a third of the trial locations of all convicts. For women, it is the Irish that dominate, with London, the South and the North otherwise contributing

Figure 1: The rise and rise in the population of Australia between 1790 and 1870.
(From Australian Bureau of Statistics:
[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@archive.nsf/0/3451B0B3478CB42ECA2571760022670D/\\$File/3105065001_table1.xls](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@archive.nsf/0/3451B0B3478CB42ECA2571760022670D/$File/3105065001_table1.xls), last accessed 26th March 2008)

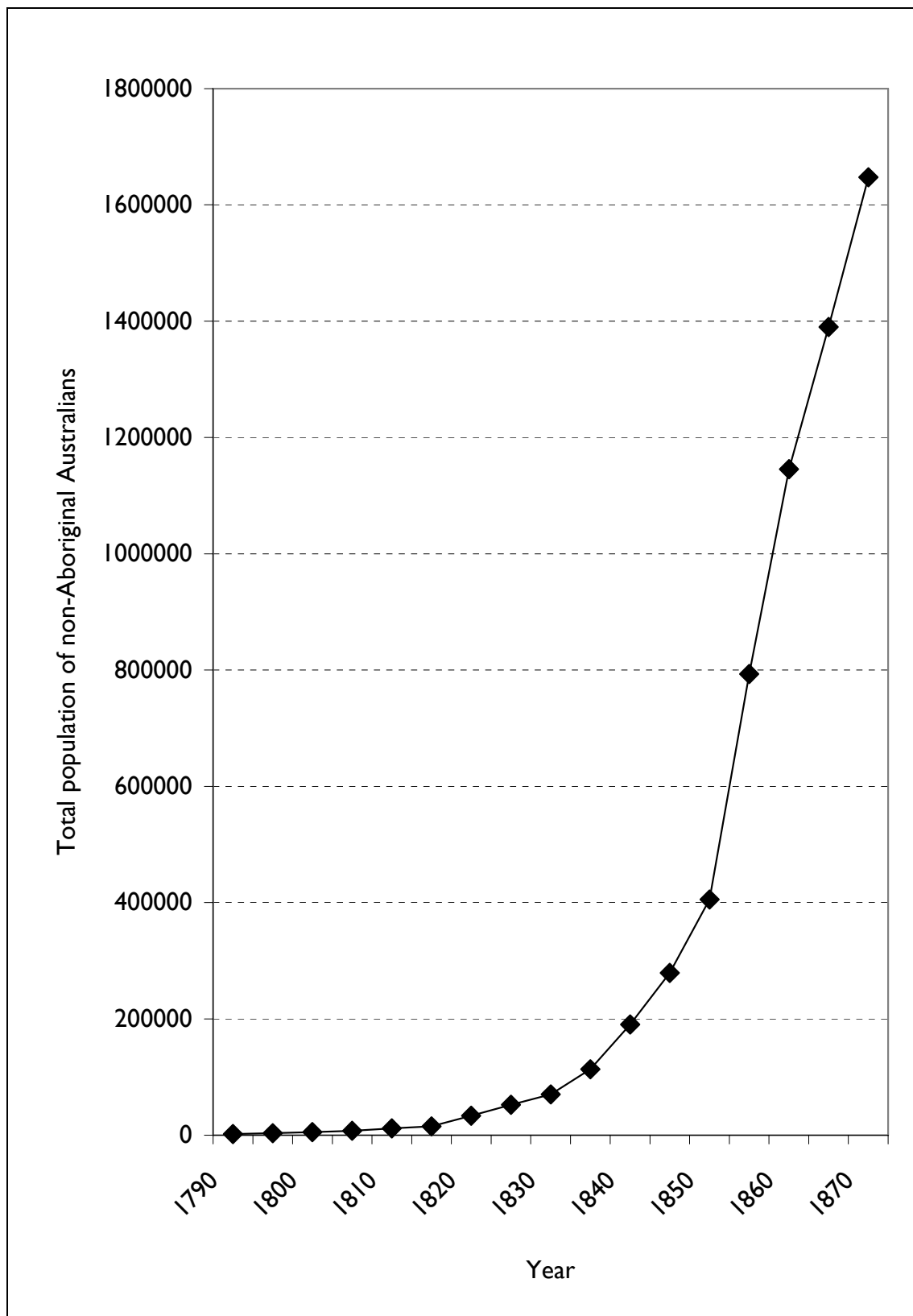


Figure 2: The regions of trial of male convicts transported to Australia, based on Robson's (1994: 155) 5% sample of convict records.

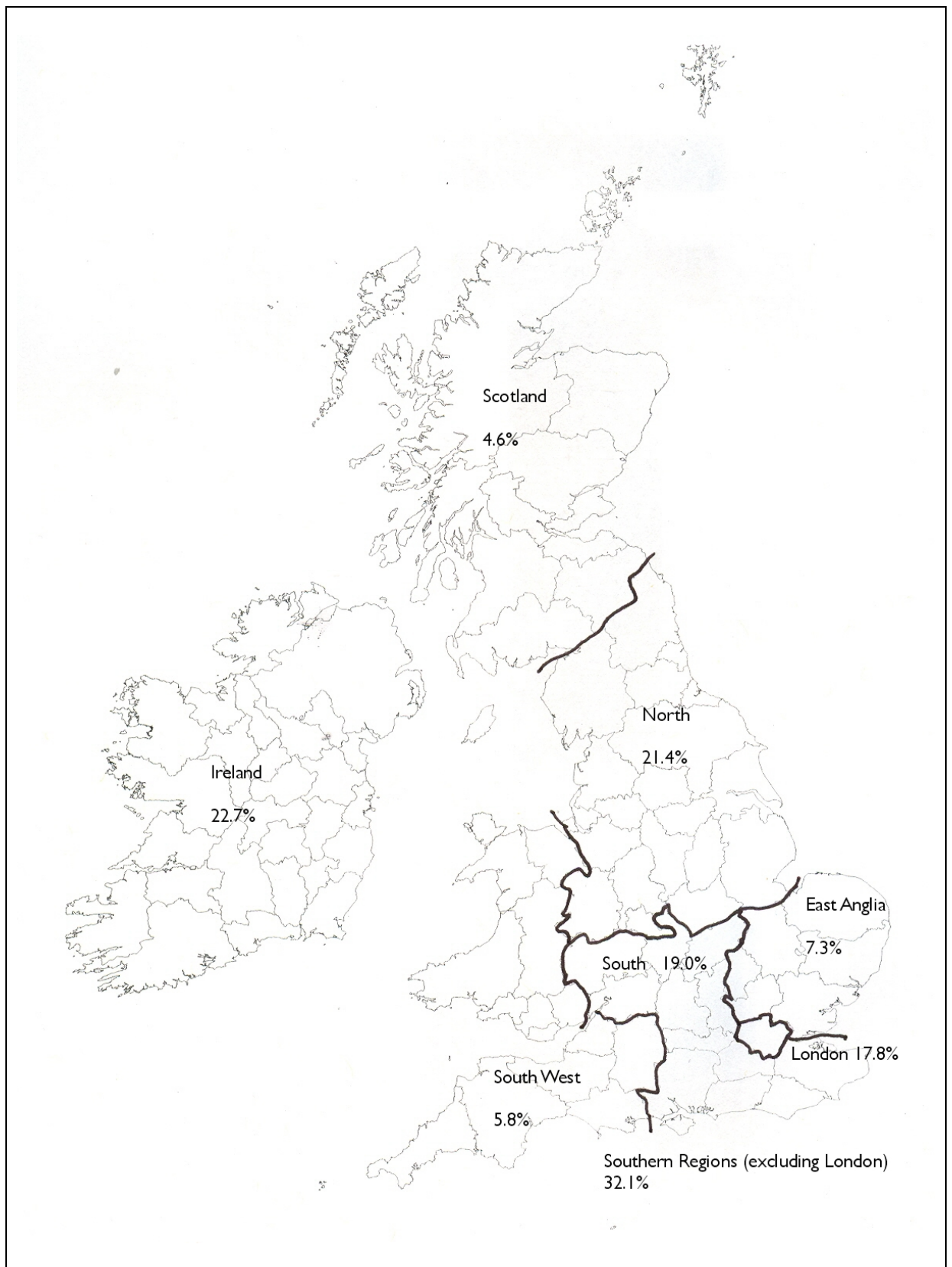


Figure 3: The regions of trial of female convicts transported to Australia, based on Robson's (1994: 162) 5% sample of convict records.



similar proportions of the total number of female convicts. These figures need to be set in the following context, however. Firstly, and perhaps not surprisingly, the vast majority of convicts were male (and young). According to Nicholas and Shergold (1988: 51), only around 11% of convicts were female (and 86% were under the age of 34 (Nicholas and Shergold 2001: 16)). We should not overstate, therefore, the role played by the seemingly high numbers of Irish female convicts. Secondly, transportees were not the most serious or dangerous criminals in society (who were hanged), but were convicted for mostly minor crimes: over 80% were transported for acts of theft (Nicholas and Shergold 2001: 16), and fewer than 3% for crimes against the person. As Nicholas and Shergold make clear (1987: 159) “the once popular view⁶ of a criminal or “dangerous class”, of prostitutes, young delinquents, hawkers and vagrants who were born to lives of crime, who lived entirely by it and who inhabited the “low lodging houses”, gambling joints, brothels and beer houses of English cities is incorrect”, with Robson (1988: 37) calling them ‘really pretty ordinary’.

Perhaps more importantly for our considerations here, however, a number of authors make it clear that we must not place *too* much emphasis on the place of trial, but consider, as best as is possible, where the convicts were *born*. Nicholas and Shergold show that urban counties (e.g. Middlesex (London), Lanarkshire (Glasgow)) were more significant as convicts’ places of trial than as their places of birth, principally because urban centres were attractive sites of employment during this important period of Britain’s industrialisation. Almost a third of the convict records they surveyed showed inter-county movement between place of birth and place of trial (Nicholas and Shergold 1987:160), and most of this was from rural hinterland into urban centre. Friedlander and Roshier (1966: 253), for example, emphasize London’s influence as an attractor of non-metropolitan migrants from right across the

⁶ Found, for example, in Madgwick (1937).

south of England. Many London-trying convicts were born elsewhere in the South, swelling the figures for the numbers of convicts from the non-Metropolitan South⁷.

Free and assisted⁸ migrants provided a slightly later but ‘much larger input’ (Jupp 2004: 28) to Australia than convicts. Atkinson says that “the bulk of English free immigrants came from the southern counties, along the entire coastline from Kent and London to the West Country” (2001: 283). Haines’s (1994) analysis of Immigration Agent returns shows that “rather than unsuitable town labourers, as often claimed, government-assisted emigrants between 1831 and 1860 came predominantly from the rural sectors of English, Irish and Scottish society. They were mostly pre-industrial labourers, artisans and domestic servants in the prime of life” (1994: 231), and in a more detailed analysis of migrants between 1846 and 1850 he shows that the major urbanised counties of Middlesex (London); Lancashire (Manchester, Liverpool...); Warwickshire and Staffordshire (Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Stoke...) together were home to just 15.8% of assisted migrants to Australia during that period, whilst, together the counties of the South and East (excluding London) accounted for over two in every three such migrants (72.2%) (Haines 1994: 233) (see Figure 4). He argues that “a typical adult government assisted male emigrant tended to be a semi-skilled English agricultural worker, while a typical single female worker tended to be an Irish domestic servant...English government assisted immigrants came predominantly from the southern, rural, or suburban low-wage rural counties and tended to be agricultural labourers, or to claim a pre-industrial trade” (Haines 1994: 242, 246; see also Jupp 1998: 7, 16⁹).

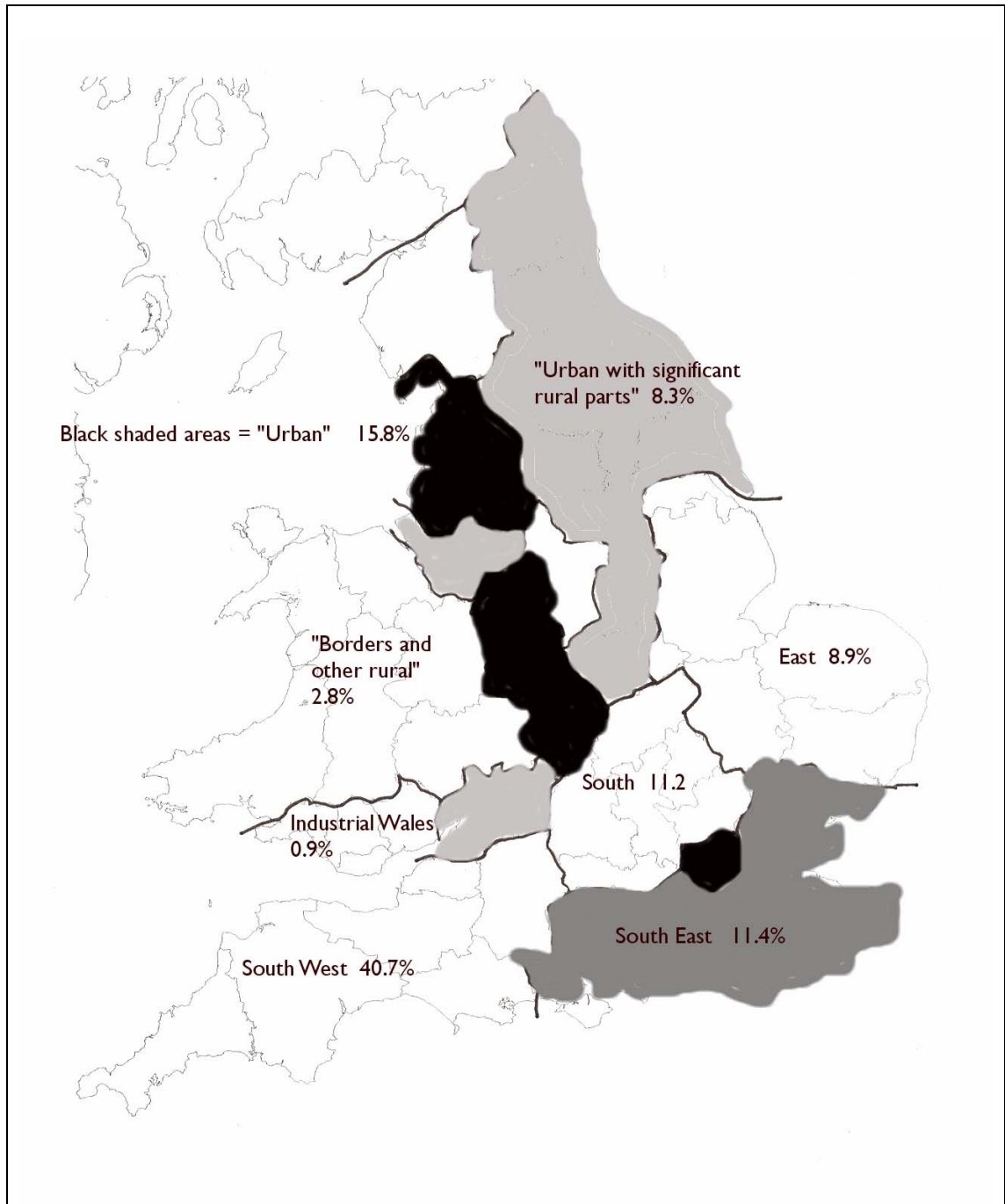
⁷ It is sometimes argued that there were many Irish in the London-trying convict population, but Nicholas and Shergold (2001: 17) argue that these were offset by the numbers of English- and Scottish-born that were tried and transported from Ireland.

⁸ An assisted migrant was one who was supported financially and materially to migrate to Australia, either by individual parishes using their money set aside for Poor Relief, or, later, by the ‘Wakefield system’ by which the proceeds of land sold in the colonies was used to finance emigration through the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (see Jupp 1998, 2001 for more details).

⁹ “Most of those brought out to Australia from England between the 1820s and the gold rushes of the 1850s as free settlers were from the southern rural counties. Very few came from industrial districts...there was very little Australian manufacturing industry into which

So, when we put together the pictures of convict and free migrants to Australia, we see a somewhat different picture to that often portrayed. London and

Figure 4: Areas of origin of assisted migrants to Australia 1846-1850.



urban migrants could be fitted...the colonies did not want urban workers, especially when... they were from the city poor, without skills or potential” (Jupp 1998: 16).

Ireland, although significant sources of the early Australian settler population, were actually outnumbered, quite significantly, by migrants and convicts from parts of the south of England *other than London*. This will have important consequences for our understanding of the dialects brought to Australia in the first half of the nineteenth century. We also know that, once on Australian soil, there was a tendency for the migrants to mix. Atkinson argued forcefully that, once in Australia, migrants did not overly stick together with their former county compatriots back in the British Isles: “men and women coming from the same counties of regions in England rarely sought each other out, as they might have done had settlement happened in an earlier generation. Confronted by radically new circumstances...they were merely English” (Atkinson 1997: 247). He goes so far as to comment on the effects this mixing may have had on their language. Migration led to “the cancelling of distance and the erosion of old peculiarities of language. Such changes overran the boundaries between regions and dialects” (1997: 247). Whilst some have put the crucial formative period of AusE at the very beginning of Anglophone settlement in Australia, the early convict population, the population growth figures shown in Figure 1 suggest that, because of much heavier levels of migration in the second and third quarters of the 19th century, we should reckon that the free and assisted migrant populations played an important formative role too.

Historical geolinguistic examination of linguistic features

In selecting for further examination linguistic features which might shed light on the origins of Australian English, I draw from Trudgill’s (2004: 1-2) methodological perspective on the comparative analysis of dialects that may once have shared a history, but which have become separated both in time and space. He argues that in accounting for the structures of post-colonial Englishes, we need to bear in mind not just the likely outcomes of dialect contact, but also:

- a) linguistic changes that have taken place in the British Isles but haven’t taken place in the post-colonial context (in this case, Australia) or did so after the main waves of settlement. The case that most obviously springs to mind here is the use of [ʔ] for intersonorant and word final /t/. Today, much of England

and Scotland show high levels of glottalisation, but it is now fairly well recognised that for most of England at least this is a mid to late 19th century innovation (see Trudgill 2004: 80-81, for example, for a review). The relative absence of [ʔ] in Australian English has sometimes been cited as an example of the influence of Irish English (e.g. Bradley 2003), though the recency of its emergence in English English means that this is not a particularly persuasive claim. Another is the vocalisation of /l/, found at extremely high levels in London and the South East, but which also seems to be a fairly recent phenomenon, probably of the late 19th century (Wells 1982: 259; Johnson and Britain 2007). Australian English does have /l/ vocalisation, but at much lower levels, and the sociolinguistic profile of it is as a mid to late 20th century change in progress (see the extensive work on vocalisation by Barbara Horvath and Ron Horvath (e.g. 1997, 2001, 2002)¹⁰.

- b) linguistic changes that have taken place in Australia, but haven't taken place in England. Perhaps the best known example here is the fronting and rounding of /ɜ:/, found only very sporadically in British accents, but common not just in Australia, but also in New Zealand (Bauer and Warren 2004: 591) and the Falklands (Sudbury 2000, 2001)¹¹;
- c) linguistic changes that have taken place in either Australia or Britain but not both, as a result of contact with either indigenous or non-anglophone migrant populations. Kiesling (2005), for example, highlights the backing of unstressed <-er> (as in 'better', 'warmer') that seems to be underway in Australian English led by Greek Australians (see also Horvath 1985);

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Horvath and Horvath found vocalisation highest in South Australia. Jupp (2001: 306) mentions the relatively high numbers of migrants to South Australia from the South-West of England, specifically mentioning that emigration agents were appointed to, amongst other places, Pewsey in Wiltshire, from where some influential migrants went to South Australia. Pewsey is one of the first places in which /l/ vocalisation was spotted by linguists in Britain (Kjederkvist 1903).

¹¹ Trudgill (2004: 143-144) argues that the parallel development of this feature in these varieties is an example of 'drift'.

- d) linguistic developments in Australia that result from the adaptation to new flora, fauna and topography, unknown or regionally restricted in Britain; Ramson's (1988) *Australian National Dictionary* is a massive compilation of such developments, and only a relatively small number of the words can successfully be traced back to British origins (see Moore 2004).

These features should in theory be avoided in an examination of the putative London, Irish or 'elsewhere' origins of AusE, but in selecting features for closer scrutiny I have taken into consideration those features which have become *stereotypically associated* with a particular origin of Australian English, as well as a few, deliberately, which have *not* survived into Australian English:

Firstly, I consider the diphthongs /ei/ and /au/. Both form part of what Wells (1982:256-7) has argued is a chain shift of diphthong nuclei now commonly now known under his label 'Diphthong Shift'. As part of Diphthong Shift, the nucleus of /ei/ has lowered and backed to [ɐɪ]. Wells reports /ei/ in vernacular Australian English as being [ɛɪ - ʌɪ] (1982: 597), a view supported by other commentators, such as Turner (1994: 290) and Cox and Palethorpe (2001: 25) who show that in data collected in the 1960s the nucleus was between /æ/ and /ʌ/ but has fronted, with a nucleus closer to /æ/ in data from the 1990s (see also Cox (1998:39). Consequently, Horvath, for example, in her survey of Australian English, reports /ei/ as [æe] (2004: 630). The beginnings of a lowering of the nucleus of /ei/ was reported as early as Samuel McBurney's description of AusE from 1887 (published in Ellis 1889: 240-241). This feature was chosen for analysis here because "this conversion, plus the conversion of the diphthong [au]...has been accepted by many observers as sufficient evidence to prove that our accent is Cockney from first to last" (Baker 1966: 434). London English, traditionally at least, before the advent of recent changes linked to London's multiculturalism (see Fox 2003, 2007; Torgersen, Kerswill and Fox 2008) realises /ei/ as [ɛɪ - ẽɪ - ɐɪ] (Wells 1982: 307; Altendorf and Watt 2004: 187; Ryfa, in press).

/au/, similarly pinpointed by Baker, is also one of the forms implicated in Wells' Diphthong Shift. Wells suggests that vernacular Australian English has [æo - ε:o- ẽ:ʌ] (1982: 597). There is almost total accord about the front mid-open nucleus of this diphthong (Horvath 2004: 630; Turner 1994: 291; Cox 1999: 15; Baker 1945; Mitchell and Delbridge 1965: 41-42; Cochrane 1989: 179). Samuel McBurney's (Ellis 1889: 240-241) early report suggests that such front mid-open nuclei were 'general or almost all, more than three quarters' (Ellis 1889: 239) in all of the Australian locations he reported from except Brisbane. London English, similarly, has front mid-open nuclei, with Wells transcribing them as [æ: - æə] (Wells 1982: 309; Altendorf and Watt 2004: 187; Ryfa, in press).

I then selected some features categorised as 'Cockney' or 'Irish' in Taylor's (2003) investigations of dialect forms unearthed by an examination of mid-19th century court reports from cases heard at the Sydney police office and published in two Sydney newspapers. The nature of these data, of course, lend themselves better to the examination of grammatical as well as consonantal developments, rather than vocalic, so a selection of the pinpointed features from this analysis will complement the choice of the two vocalic features above. Taylor classifies speakers from these records as 'Irish' or 'London' (or some other ethnicity) on the basis of their surname (2003: 171) (so O'Brien is assumed to be Irish) or some comment in the text itself (so "Tommy Hopkins" is assumed to be from London, it appears, because in his cross-examination he mentions "vot they calls *The Morning Chronicle* in Lunnon" (Taylor 2003: 174; Corbyn 1854/1970: 62)).

Taylor recognises, however, in some cases at least, that the application of the labels 'Cockney' and 'Irish' are problematic for some of the features he points to in the court records. Some, for example, of the "London" features are and were found well outside London and even outside the South of England, for example, 'a-prefixing' (found across the South and Midlands in Ellis 1889); non-standard past BE forms (see Britain 2002: 21 for a regional distribution of such forms from Ellis 1889), non-etymological /h/ insertion and non-standard use of -s inflection across the present tense paradigm are mentioned as being both 'Cockney' and 'Irish'. From Taylor's accounts of 19th century voices, I have selected:

[v] for [w]: (the examples given by Taylor are ‘vos’ for ‘was’, ‘away’ for ‘away’). This feature was found in a number of the texts Taylor examined from 1850s Sydney (Taylor 2003: 174-178), although is reported as being common in early 19th century London (Ellis 1889). Today, it is present neither in London English, nor in Australian English.

/h/ dropping: Taylor finds relatively little /h/ dropping represented in the court reports (2003: 175), though it is clear from other accounts in Corbyn (1854/1970) that occasionally /h/ dropping is used to signal ‘Londonness’¹². There is, however, frequent recourse, both in the ‘London’ and the ‘Irish’ data, to non-etymological /h/ insertion. Until recently, /h/ was generally deleted in London English (Wells 1982: 322; Altendorf and Watt 2004:192; Ryfa, in press). Irish English is /h/-ful (Wells 1982: 432). Wells notes /h/ ‘hypercorrection’ in London (1982: 322). Horvath (2004: 636-7) provides a concise summary of what we know about /h/ in AusE “the widespread deletion of /h/ is probably linked to a former period in AusE...Horvath’s study of /h/ found no /h/ insertion and the rate of /h/ deletion was low”.

Another feature - the realisation of unstressed vowels in checked position as [ə] instead of [ɪ] - has been chosen since it is the most often cited example of a phonological feature of Irish English that has survived into AusE (Kiesling 2004: 427; Bradley 2003:143). Here, London has [ɪ] according to Altendorf and Watt (2004: 189) and Australia (Wells 1982: 602; Horvath 2004: 628) and Ireland (Wells 1982: 427) have [ə]. Finally, I add post-coronal yod-dropping/palatalisation (respectively, the deletion of /j/ after a consonant or coalescence of /j/ with the preceding consonant (in words such as ‘news’ [nu:z]), mentioned by Ellis (1889: 245), in his discussion of McBurney’s report on AusE, as a feature of London English. Certainly until recently, yod-dropping is reported as being frequent after /n/ in London, and competes with palatalised forms after /t d/ (e.g. ‘tune’, ‘duke’: [tu:n - tʃu:n, du:k - dʒu:k]) (Wells 1982: 330-331; Altendorf and Watt 2004: 196; Ryfa, in press). Wells makes no

¹² For example: “No, thank Evin! I’m not so infortinite!” (1854/1970: 89), “he vore a vite at” (1854/1970: 97) etc.

mention of yod-dropping in Australian English, Horvath discusses palatalisation (1985: 109-117; 2004: 636).

So, in all, we have:

- /ei/ as [æɪ - ɪɪ];
- /au/ as [æʊ - ɛʊ];
- Vowel in unstressed checked syllables: [ə];
- /w/ as [v];
- /h/ deleted;
- /Cj/: deletion or palatalisation of [j].

I'll now consider each in turn, examining the regional distribution of the relevant forms in the early 19th century. The main source of information about these varieties comes from Ellis's (1889) nationwide survey, the aim of which was to "determine with considerable accuracy, the different forms *now or within the last hundred years*...passing through the mouths of uneducated people, speaking an inherited language, in all parts of Great Britain where English is the ordinary medium of communication between peasant and peasant" (1889: 92, his emphasis). Ellis (1889) is a dialectological survey of the traditional kind, based on transcriptions of reading passages and small extracts from stories from over 1100 locations in Great Britain sent to him either by his research assistant Thomas Hallam, a phonetician, or by interested locals. Ellis cast a very critical eye across the reports he received from the latter and often sent Hallam off around the country to confirm or deny the work of the local data collectors as well as investigate some features in greater depth. As he explains in his preface, the work on the book began in 1848 (1889: xviii), and was the final volume of five on the history of English, the first of which was published in 1869.

Ellis's work was, in Charles Jones's view, pioneering. He claims that it is "an unsurpassed masterpiece of philological scholarship, a work equally indispensable for information on period data, the direction of phonological change, sociolinguistic and regional distribution and, perhaps above all, a work noted for its attention to real observed data analysed through highly pragmatic eyes" (C Jones 2006: 274), while

Mark Jones suggests “his data have been found to be extremely reliable when compared with modern studies of various areas” (M Jones 2002: 332). Although problematic in modern terms, Ellis was in many ways ahead of his time with respect to methodological concerns. He was cautious about what we could learn from educated speech, and from the speech of professional linguists themselves, was wary of word lists because of their decontextualisation of the word from continuous speech, was aware that, with respect to recording pronunciation, “the only safe method is to listen to the natural speaking of someone who does not know that he is observed” (Ellis 1874, cited in C Jones 2006: 280) and was an ardent descriptivist, chiding orthographers: “it is those word pedlars, these letter drivers, those stiff-necked pedantic, unphilosophical, miserably informed, and therefore supremely certain, self confident and self-conceited orthographers who make default, when they will not alter the spelling after the sound has changed” (Ellis 1869: 155). Bailey (1996: 72, 73) described him as “the most assiduous of the nineteenth century phoneticians...an observer of minute distinctions”. The data for the final volume that is relevant to this study were collected primarily from older people, giving us a picture of the vernacular dialects of people born in the early to mid 19th century. The dating of the volume may make it appear too late for the analysis of the early 19th century, but, as noted above, it was started much earlier and it is clear from the dates and his account of the lectures he presented throughout the mid-19th century that his descriptions encompass the relevant time period for our purposes here. Ellis divides the country up into 42 ‘districts’, the data from which were examined for the presence of the features above. The other source that will be referred to where relevant is Wright’s (1905) *English Dialect Grammar* (much of which is an account of phonological variation).

/ei/ as [ɛɪ]

This feature is a rather complex one. Wells (1982), for example, shows that /ei/ in contemporary standard accents of British English is the result of a merger of Middle English /a:/ and /æɪ - ɛɪ/ (one of his so-called Long Mid Mergers (1982:139-140, 192-194)) into a long vowel [ɛ:], which subsequently diphthongized, with the South-East of England particularly subsequently lowering and backing the nucleus. Evidence from Ellis (1889), however, shows that many non-standard varieties of English, especially of the South West at that time had not yet undergone the Long Mid Merger

of /a:/ and /æɪ - ɛɪ/, meaning that at the time of migration to Australia, many migrants had relatively open nuclei either as a result of the diphthongization and nucleus lowering of a merged /ei/ diphthong – particularly in London and the South-East, or, in ME /æɪ - ɛɪ/ words, *as a result of a failure to yet merge with ME /a:/*. Consequently, there was quite a widespread distribution of accents at the time of Ellis’s survey that had lowered nuclei in at least some /ei/ words. This distribution is shown in Figure 5 and included most of the South of England, including London and East Anglia, but excluding Devon and Cornwall. /ei/ must have been a variable in considerable flux in early Australian English, and McBurney’s account (Ellis 1889) bears witness to this, but with lowered nuclei (from both conservative and innovative sources in Britain) ultimately winning out.

Figure 5: The regional distribution of nuclei of contemporary /ei/ or ME /æɪ - ɛɪ/ lower than [ɛ] in Ellis (1889).



/au/ as [æʊ - ɐʊ]

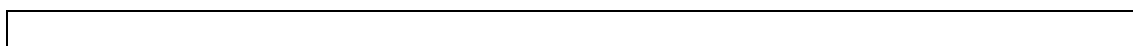
Figure 6 presents the areas of Great Britain with front mid-open nuclei of /au/ in Ellis. A large part of southern and eastern England shows the use of such front mid-open nuclei: not just London, but also East Anglia (along with central mid-open nuclei (see Britain 2008)), the south-east, the south Midlands and parts of the South-West. Importantly for our argument here, Hickey makes clear that such forms were also found in the 19th century English of eastern Ireland (Hickey 2004: 74, 84, 86; personal communication). An overwhelming majority both of the convicts and the free and assisted settlers would therefore have brought [æʊ - ɐʊ] realisations of /au/. It is not surprising, therefore, that such forms dominate McBurney's account of Australian

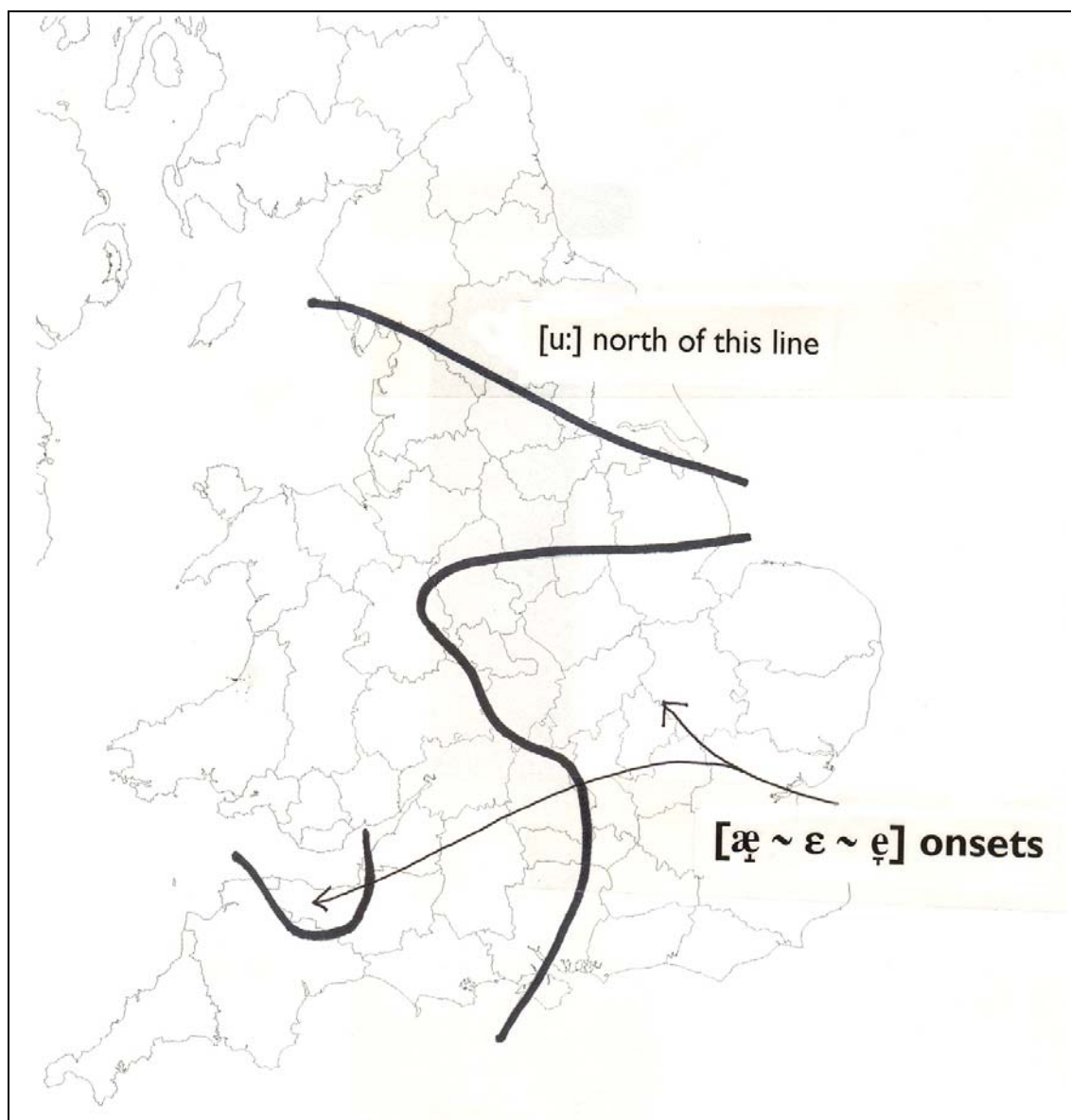
English in Ellis (1889), and all accounts of Australian English since. This was a transported feature, but was far far more widespread in the settler population than simply London.

/w/ as [v]

Figure 7 shows the regional distribution of /w/: [v] in Ellis (1889). Ellis reports these forms from just two places: London, and Folkestone in Kent. Conversely, he reports /v/: [w] in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and parts of Kent and East Sussex. Kökeritz (1949: 192) finds both /w/: [v] and /v/: [w] in representations of late 18th century Cockney. Wright (1905: 227) finds /v/: [w] in roughly the same area as Ellis, but excludes the reverse /w/: [v] (1905: 207). These forms appear to have lasted until the first half of the 20th century in the speech of the very oldest rural speakers. The Survey of English Dialects shows /v/: [w] reported as “older” by its already very old speakers in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire (Orton and Tilling 1969-71: 666); Berkshire and Kent (Orton and Wakelin 1967-8: 592, 479). Following a complex discussion both of the accents of south-eastern England and of a wide range of usually small and isolated varieties of English around the world which also appear, from descriptions, to have /v-w/ alternation, as well as the examination of some primary data sources of other such varieties, Trudgill, Schreier, Long and Williams (2003: 41) come to the conclusion that in fact /v/ and /w/ had merged, on [β], causing realisations of /v/ to often be *portrayed* as [w] and vice versa (see also Trudgill 1999). Whatever the account, what we do know is that these forms were restricted in the British Isles in the late 18th and early 19th centuries at most to

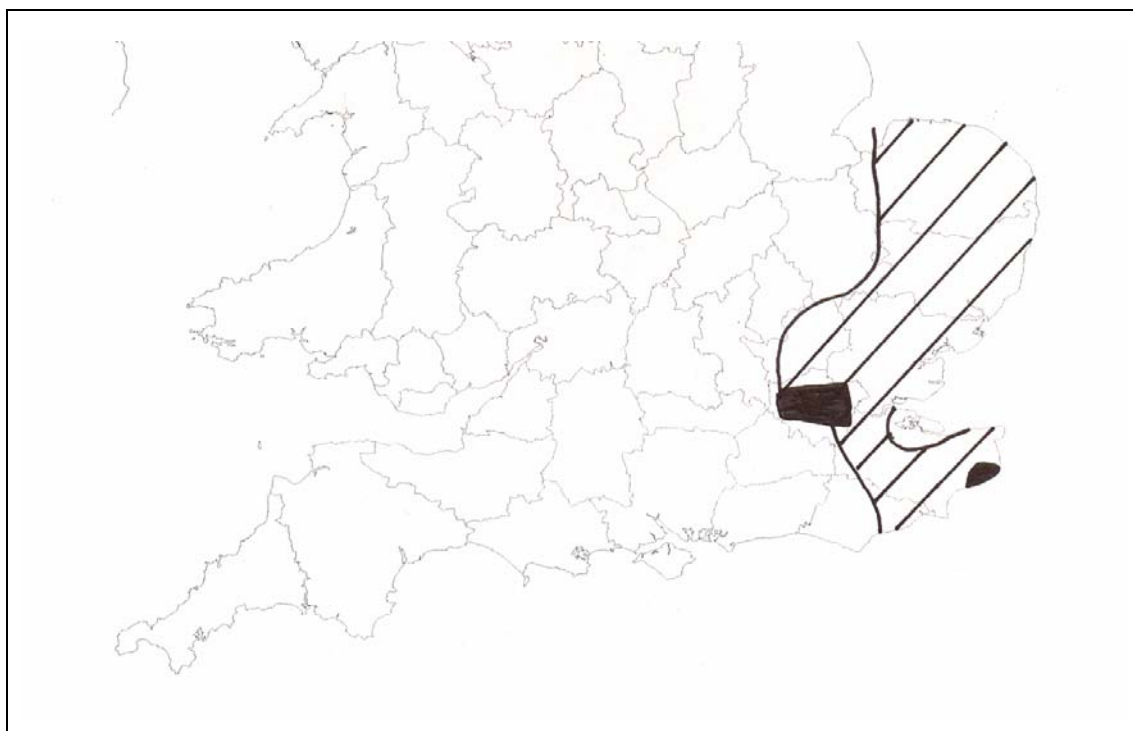
Figure 6: The geographical distribution in England of front mid-open nuclei [æ ~ ε ~ ɛ̃] of MOUTH, based on Ellis (1889).





London, East Anglia and those parts of the home counties neighbouring London. Clearly, judging by the 1850s court records (Taylor 2003), these forms survived at least briefly into the early *mêlée* that was AusE in the first half of the 19th century. There are also reports of them in Cunningham (1828) among Australian-born adolescents (reported in Blair 1975: 1920). But they did not survive very long by all accounts. It may well be then, that, in contrast with the slightly later developed New Zealand English (for which Trudgill 2004: 109 claims that /v/-/w/ merger had not survived “rudimentary levelling”), these forms did survive the journey to Australia

Figure 7: The distribution of /w/: [v] (blocked shading) and /v/: [w] (striped shading) according to Ellis (1889).



but were expunged as part of later rounds of levelling (which Trudgill calls “apparent levelling”¹³). But this was a stereotypical feature of London in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, one of the most commonly mentioned in portrayals of London speakers and widely used, for example, in the work of Charles Dickens. Hammarström (1980: 22), the staunchest defender of the AusE=London hypothesis, is prepared to argue that Cunningham was wrong and that London speakers at the relevant time did not have this merger at all. The considerable evidence, however, does not support his position. Judging by the historical demographic data this merger may well have been

¹³ “Rudimentary levelling” is defined by Trudgill thus: following the “initial contact and mixing between adult speakers of different regional and social varieties at assembly points in the British Isles, on the long boat journey out, and early on in the new location...certain limited types of accommodation by adult speakers to one another in face-to-face interaction...would have occurred. As a consequence, rudimentary dialect levelling would have taken place, most notably of minority, very localised Traditional-dialect features...any very localised features which diminished mutual intelligibility would have been particularly susceptible to loss” (Trudgill 2004: 89). “Apparent levelling” is defined as the levelling of “more mainstream regional English features which were sufficiently common that they must have actually survived the initial contact stage” (Trudgill 2004: 109). Trudgill argues that /v/-/w/ merger did not survive rudimentary levelling in the formation of New Zealand English.

present, though probably only variably so, in the speech of up to 20% of the convicts and the free and assisted settlers. Despite it being stereotypical of London, however, this was simply not enough.

Vowel in unstressed checked syllables: [ə]

Ellis does not provide enough detail about these forms to be helpful, but Wright does in his 1905 *English Dialect Grammar*: what we know about the 19th century regional distribution of [ə] in the unstressed syllables of the words ‘harvest’, ‘herring’, ‘morning’ and ‘shilling’ from Wright is presented in Figure 8 below. As well as in Ireland, as is often reported, this feature is found in East Anglia, Sussex, large parts of the South-West and the North-West of England, parts of the north-east, the heavily populated central belt of Scotland, as well as the North-East. In fact, Wright’s presentation suggests that [ə] may have been more widespread even than this in the 19th century. For example, in his list of words with [ə] in unstressed syllables, for the word ‘breeches’, instead of showing where [ə] is used, he provides the much shorter list of where it isn’t - the places where [ɪ] is used instead, suggesting a broader geographical distribution of [ə] than that displayed in Figure 8. McBurney (Ellis 1889) does not mention these unstressed vowels in his account of Australian English either, but it is clear that [ə] has been the dominant form in AusE throughout the 20th century (Turner 1966: 97). Firstly, the predominance of [ə] in AusE is clearly an example of the adoption of a non-London feature, and it’s interesting to note that Hammarström does not discuss this feature which would clearly contradict his London-centric hypothesis on the origins of AusE. But it’s not just an Irish feature. Just as important, in migrant population terms, are the non-Irish areas of the British Isles that would have brought [ə], including large tracts of the South of England.

Figure 8: The distribution of [ə] in unstressed syllables in the 19th century English of the British Isles.



/h/ deletion

We saw earlier that whilst Australian English is largely /h/ retaining today, there is reasonable evidence to support Horvath's (2004: 636) claim that "the widespread

deletion of /h/ is probably linked to a former period in AusE”. In examining the historical dialectological evidence concerning /h/, such claims should sensitize us to expect that perhaps neither h-fulness nor h-lessness dominated the early Australian English speech community. Figure 9 shows the distribution of areas that retained [h] in Ellis (1889). Ireland, East Anglia, the South-West and significant parts of Scotland retained [h], whilst London, the South-East, the Midlands and most of the North, especially the North-West deleted it. [h] retention must have been a majority variant taken to Australia, but was competing with an unmarked one, deletion. The dominant form ‘won’, but perhaps not so swiftly and categorically as some other majority forms.

Yod-dropping

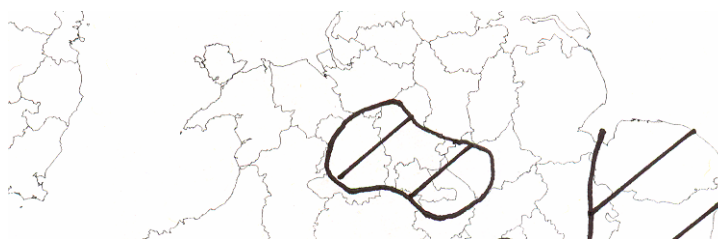
East Anglia is well known as the home of glide deletion in post-consonantal environments, e.g. in ‘music’, ‘few’, ‘beauty’, ‘huge’ (Trudgill 1974, Britain, Amos and Spurling 2008); in other parts of England it is more restricted to contexts following coronal stops (e.g. ‘tune’, ‘new’), with palatalization especially prominent after /t d/ because of the phonemic status of /tʃ dʒ/. The map in Figure 10, drawn from the data in Ellis (1889), shows the maximal extent of yod-dropping in at least after coronal stops, if not also after labials and velars. Some parts of the South-west, London and some of the surrounding Home Counties, and parts of the North Midlands show variable yod-dropping, in addition, of course, to East Anglia. But most of the North of England, Scotland, Ireland, and large parts of the mid-South do not. It is not surprising, therefore, that yod-dropping after coronal stops, labials and velars has not systemically become part of Australian English. Once again, though, we have here a feature of London English which has *not* survived into AusE. Palatalized forms are found only extremely sporadically and are geographically dispersed in Ellis (1889), and their appearance in contemporary Australian English is probably an independent (and totally unsurprising) innovation.

Figure 9: The geographical distribution of /h/ retention, for Great Britain from Ellis (1889). Ireland still retains /h/ today. The shading denotes areas with /h/ retention.

The dotted area has /h/ retention in rural areas, but not urban.



Figure 10: Regional distribution of 'yod-dropping' in Ellis (1889).





Conclusion:

In the past it has always been relatively easy to find counter-examples to the dominant claim that the origins of Australian English can be found in London (see Trudgill 1986, for example), but there has been inadequate exploration of the demographic evidence to establish a more solid foundation for proposing an alternative. Despite Trudgill's (1986) account, therefore, researchers have largely held onto the London-origins hypothesis. The evidence presented here suggests that, contrary to what is sometimes claimed, the largest population input to early Anglophone Australia was from those parts of the South of England beyond the capital city of London. Bearing this in mind, we can more adequately account for the linguistic facts than more London-centric approaches. Similarly, researchers have highlighted a few features of Irish English which appear to have survived into Australian English (e.g. Bradley 2003, Kiesling 2004), but this time have not sufficiently examined dialect sources from parts of the British Isles other than London which would have explained why, unusually, Irish English had indeed seemingly contributed a structural feature of AusE (and London, in this case, hadn't). Frustratingly, researchers (other than those working in the new dialect formation paradigm) have not been able to provide good reasons *why*, specifically, for example, it was unstressed schwa in checked syllables that managed to survive from Irish English rather than some other feature. Consequently, a more holistic unified account of *how* (as opposed to *which*) British

dialects shaped Australian English since Trudgill (1986) has not been forthcoming until now. As it happens, perhaps not surprisingly given the demographic evidence, features found in the accents of the non-Metropolitan south of England are heavily implicated in the structural development of Australian English. But more importantly this diachronic overview lends further weight to polygenetic arguments about new dialect formation, demonstrating the simple proposition that whilst majority forms tend, on the whole¹⁴, to win out in contexts of dialect contact, those majority forms need not all come from the same place(s).

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¹⁴ The important exceptions tend to consist of forms which, despite appearing to be in the minority in the pre-migration dialect mix, survive because they are new and vigorous diffusing innovations and the trajectory of change continues in the post-colonial context (see Gordon et al 2004 and Trudgill 2004 for examples).

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