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## Soundscapes

Listening to British and American Languages and Cultures

*edited by Alessandra Calanchi*

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# Roaring Trains and Ringing Bells: A Stylistic Analysis of Soundscape in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son*

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**ABSTRACT** – In my essay I investigate Charles Dickens's innovative use of language combined with a specific reference to the acoustic environment, which characterizes most of his works and defines his pervasive style. Rhythms, alliterations, the use of anaphora and onomatopoeia, and the variations of register in *Dombey and Son* constitute the most visible and 'audible' examples of the relationship between language and soundscape, as I explain in the first part of my work. Later, I explore how, in *Dombey and Son*, Dickens surprises and displaces the reader by using internal deviation and omitting the normally expected clues of context and coherence. I analyse these linguistic and stylistic aspects in the chapters that refer to the railway boom and the sounds of trains and ringing bells that accompany the troubled misadventures of one of the novel's main characters.

**KEYWORDS** – Charles Dickens; *Dombey and Son*; Style; Soundscape; Train; Bell; Foregrounding; Defamiliarization; Internal deviation; Estrangement.

## 1. DICKENS, SOUNDS AND THE VICTORIAN AGE

According to Robert Alter, "Dickens deserves to be read slowly, with delectation, with occasional pauses to reread a choice passage, because he is one of the most inventive and vigorous stylists in the whole range of English literature. Style, as we know, has many facets, and Dickens's powerful rhythms, his supple patterns of alliteration, the hammer-blows of the anaphoric insistence he often favours, the cunning interplay of different linguistic registers he sometimes introduces, are all worthy of attention" (Alter 1996, 131).

Alter mentions some of the unique elements that characterize the work of "the great master of figurative language in English after Shakespeare", as he defines the Victorian novelist (*ibid.*) whose style, to borrow from Geoffrey

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Leech and Mick Short, can be studied as a “dynamic phenomenon”, “as something which develops through peaks and valleys of dramatic tension, which not only establishes expectancies, but which frustrates and modifies them as a work progresses” (Leech and Short 2007, 46). The author constantly plays with the reader’s expectations. In each of his novels it is possible to detect a great number of variations in tone and deviations from the norm, such as sudden changes from colloquial expressions and familiar register, at times using the character’s newly invented idiolect, to a mock-heroic style made up of polysyllabic words and adjectives of Latin origins which usually belongs to a lower-middle class person and therefore creates a sense of irony.

The characters’ voices, whose peculiar accent and speech patterns reflect their social status, have for long defined the relationship between Dickens and sounds. When we think of Mr Sleary in *Hard Times*, compared to Mr Gradgrind and Bounderby, or of Mr Micawber in *Great Expectations* and Sam Weller in *The Pickwick Papers*, we can clearly recognize all their voices. In order to investigate a wider spectrum of sounds in Dickens’s work, however, as no longer limited to the characters of his novels, nor to the usual phonological schemes, we need to shift from voice to soundscape, as John O’Jordan suggests in his essay on *The Old Curiosity Shop* (2016). Raymond Murray Schafer (1977) appropriately defines the term as an acoustic environment that combines all the acoustic resources, natural and artificial, within a given area as modified by the environment.

More recently, Antonella Radicchi has praised Michael Southworth’s “The Sonic Environment of Cities” (1969) as a pioneering analysis focussed on a specific area in Boston. In the article, Southworth considered “both the singularity of the sounds emitted in that area and their ‘informativeness’, that is to say the limits of that area within which a sound is able to communicate its activity and its spatial form” (Radicchi 2019, 112). Southworth also analysed the ‘delightfulness’ of sounds, concerning those qualities that make us think whether a sound is more or less pleasant. The aim of his study was to draw meaningful conclusions for the city design, suggesting possible actions towards developing acoustic projects. Despite the different geographical and temporal contexts, his critical perspective and methodology can be used as a frame of reference to examine a modern author like Dickens. The way Dickens observes and describes certain areas of London limited by sounds and outer spaces where sounds express different human activities and behaviours seems to perfectly fit the kind of investigation that defines a soundscape in the twentieth century. I therefore intend to highlight those issues in

*Dombey and Son* (1847-49). I will examine the stylistic techniques employed to describe the acoustic landscape, especially deviation and foregrounding, to demonstrate the range of Dickens's auditory imagination and analyze a few of its specific operations.

Within Victorian studies, John M. Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* (2003) has been the first sustained attempt to examine the place of sound in nineteenth-century British literature and culture. Picker's chapter on Dickens is especially noteworthy for the information it contains about the writer's interest in the rather eccentric theory of sound advanced by his friend, the mathematician Charles Babbage, who elaborated on the theory of permanent sonic vibrations in the air. Picker underlines some passages from *Dombey and Son* in which the reflection of those vibrations is made explicit, like in little Paul Dombey's constant listening to the waves. I will not go into the relationship between Babbage and this novel, because my point is to move from the simple mapping of sounds and voices to a more elaborated concept of sound reproduction. As Jay Clayton writes, "Dickens dramatizes the power of sounds to provoke emotion throughout his career, but he is just as sensitive to the effect of sounds. His fiction frequently registers the physical impact of sounds – not just on the ears, but on the body and the mind of listeners too" (Clayton 2012, 22).

We need to consider that different forms of sound reproduction were common in Dickens's time, before the age of recording. Clayton refers to Jonathan Sterne (2003), who points out that ancient uses of animal horns to amplify the voice for the hard-of-hearing are, in a certain sense, sound-reproduction technologies, and so are nineteenth-century speaking automata, music boxes and player-pianos. To all these forms Clayton adds "Dickens's many barrel organs, bells, clock chimes, train and factory whistles, theatrical sound effects, telegraph sounders, and more [...] In the absence of recordings, we must take the measure of Dickens's voice in other terms, find a different kind of tape to tie up the bundle of meanings and memories that sounds in his texts evoke" (Clayton 2012, 20). In order to understand the acoustic experience in the nineteenth century, we need to defamiliarize the concept of *reproduction*. "Each time a bell rings or train whistle blows, it produces a characteristic sound, *re*-producing it only in the sense of repeating it. Prior to recording technology, this kind of reproduction was one of the main ways in which remembered sounds could be heard again" (21). As Clayton concludes: "This embodied sensory experience prompts us to attend to the distinctive kinds of affect Dickens and other nineteenth-century authors attributed to sound reproduction" (*ibid.*).

## 2. *DOMBEY AND SON*: SOUNDSCAPE IN THE CITY

Dickens's seventh novel, *Dombey and Son*, appears to be “dominated and absorbed with the effects and intelligibility of sounds and voices” (Picker 2003, 17). Sounds are connected through variations in tone, internal deviations and parallelisms that constitute the pervasive Dickensian style, the main feature of which is multiplicity within the same work. In *Dombey and Son*, style variation is intrinsic to the novel's satiric-epic picture of Victorian urban society, caught in a moment of crucial change towards commercial and industrial advancement.

The most evident example of a turbulent revolution taking place in the heart of the city emerges from the soundscape that defines it and refers to the so-called railway boom of the 1840s. The novel could be understood, among many other things, as the narrative of new relationship between the train and people's lives in the nineteenth century, affecting the whole sensorial system of people of all classes.

Between this publication and the appearance of the final instalment of *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), which had not been as successful as expected, the author wrote two Christmas stories and the travelogue *Pictures from Italy*. He was then searching for new inspiring modalities of expression; but he also needed to satisfy his increasingly stringent standards of language and style. According to Picker, “In *Dombey* there is a constant preoccupation with the problem of expressing things clearly, of getting out the word. This work conceives of expression in manifold senses: as verbal communication, primarily, but also as interchange between different parties, the moving forth of people and goods, the passing of legacies, and the spread of language and ideas” (Picker 2003, 19). These constant movements and passages are connected with the images and descriptions of the railway, in particular the construction of the London-Birmingham Line.

At the opening of chapter VI, we read about the excursion organized by the nurses Susan Nipper and Polly Toodle with the Dombey children, Florence and Paul, towards Polly's house in Staggs's Garden, Camden Town. When they arrive, the scenery is marked by the sounds of the works in progress.

First of all, Staggs's Garden is defined as “this euphonious locality”, because of the place's name, full of sibilant and non-sibilant fricatives that make it sound sweetly musical, and because of what is happening there in terms of noise/sound production:

The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. [...] Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth [...]. (Dickens [1847-49] 1995, 63)

The reader is taken to a limited area of the city that presents its own acoustic environment: “Boiling water hissed and heaved” and “the glare and roar of flames” certainly provide a sound to the images of destruction and transformation depicted above. Alliteration and the conjunction “and” create rhythm for the landscape of water and fire that surrounds the protagonists of the scene. Furthermore, using his typical irony, the author tells us that people in Camden Town are shy and skeptical about the railroad and the finished works. He does so by a series of objects and places located at the door of the railway, representing the old landscape that has not been transformed yet: “frouzy fields, and cow-houses, and dunghills, and dust-heaps, and ditches, and gardens, and summer-houses, and carpet-beating grounds” (64).

The alliteration of vowels and consonants and the prevalence of compound and hyphenated nouns cause a phonological effect, because we cannot ignore, in a treatment of levels of language, the phonological potential of the written word (Leech and Short 2007, 105). That effect seems to function as the counterpart for the sounds produced by the railway. What gives a true sense of resistance to progress and change in that area pervaded by the new industrial sounds, however, is the use of parallelism in the following passage: “Little tumuli of oyster shells in the oyster season, and of lobster shells in the lobster season, and of broken crockery and faded cabbage-leaves in all seasons, encroached upon its high places” (Dickens [1847-49] 1995, 64).

The repetition of the word “season” reinforces the sense of the cyclical passing of time and the cyclical renewal of the natural environment, which never changes and cannot be easily and artificially interrupted by technology. Again, the element of cohesion “and” highlights the sense of an enduring and ongoing process. Later in the novel, Stagg’s Gardens reappears in a way that makes it clear how the railway has definitely pervaded Camden Town, despite the inhabitants’ hesitation and even resistance to it:

There were *railway* patterns in its drapers’ shops, and *railway* journals in the windows of its newsmen. There were *railway* hotels, coffee-houses, lodging

houses, boarding-houses; *railway* plans, maps, views, wrappers, bottles, sandwich-boxes, and time-tables; *railway* hackney-coach and cab stands; *railway* omnibuses, *railway* streets and buildings, *railway* hangers-on and parasites, and flatterers out of all calculation. There was even *railway* time observed in clocks, as if the sun itself had given in. (205; all italics mine)

The use of the “Dickensian far-fetched quasi-simile introduced by *as if*” (Leech and Short 2007, 51) closes a paragraph made up only of the verb construction *there were* or *there was* and a long list of names and compound names. Its purpose is to stress the end of the railway works and the construction of a new landscape/soundscape, but without ever saying it. The reader focuses on the obsessive repetition of the word “railway” and realizes that the place has gone through a complete redefinition.

Sounds enter the narration in moments of change, and sometimes upheaval. The ever bustling and working world invades Dombey’s house too, in the heart of the City. In the following passage, the use of a series of gerunds regarding actions that provoke strong sounds – *hammering*, *crashing*, *tramping up*, together with the *barking* of the dog, a reaction to that noise – provides the effect of slow but inevitable transformation, since the silent and “enchanted” Dombey’s house can no longer exist in the new modern world. The sound of the works of restructuring go together with the voices of the people who restructure. The act of listening to them leads Florence to a different reality, that of a happy family she has never had. It is indeed from those sounds that she can think of a different life:

Although the enchanted house was no more, and the *working world* had broken into it, and was *hammering* and *crashing* and *tramping up* and downstairs all day long, keeping Diogenes in an incessant paroxysm of *barking* from sunrise to sunset – evidently conceived that his enemy had got the better of him at last, and was then sacking the premises in triumphant defiance – there was, at first, no other great change in the method of Florence’s life. At night, when the workpeople went away, the house was dreary and deserted again; and Florence, *listening to their voices echoing* through the hall and staircase as they departed, pictured to herself the cheerful homes to which they were returning, and the children who were waiting for them, and was glad to think they were merry and well pleased to go. She welcomed back the evening silence as an old friend, but it came now with an altered face, and looked more kindly on her. Fresh hope was in it. The beautiful lady who had soothed and caressed her, in the very room in which her heart had been so wrung, was a spirit of promise to her. (Dickens [1847-49] 1995, 390; all italics mine)



This is one of the many examples of how “For Dickens observable reality is, for all its vivid and multifarious particularity, symbolic of deeper realities of mood and spirit” (Leech and Short 2007, 138). In *Dombey and Son*, however, it happens that when reality is observed through the act of listening and within a specific soundscape, a peculiar mood and spirit comes out, which differs from a parallel scene where the sound is absent. This difference emerges in the confrontation of two passages regarding Miss Tox, friend of Mr. Dombey’s sister and secretly in love with the rich entrepreneur, but with no hope of winning his heart:

Miss Tox sat down upon the window-seat, and thought of her good papa deceased – Mr Tox, of the Customs Department of the public service; and of her childhood, passed at Seaport, among a considerable quantity of cold tar, and some rusticity. She fell into a softened remembrance of meadows, in old time, gleaming with buttercups, like so many inverted firmaments of golden stars; and how she had made chains of dandelion stalks for youthful vowers of eternal constancy, dressed chiefly in nankeen; and how soon those fetters had withered and broken.

[...]

Sitting on the window-seat, and looking out upon the sparrows and the blinks of the sun, Miss Tox thought likewise of her good mamma deceased – sister to the owner of the powdered head and pigtail – of her virtues, and her rheumatism. And when a man with bulgy legs, and a rough voice, and a heavy basket on his head that crushed his hat into a mere black muffin, came crying flowers down Princess’s Place, making his timid little roots of daisies shudder in the vibration of every yell he gave, as though he had been an ogre hawking little children, summer recollections were so strong upon Miss Tox that she shook her head, and murmured she would be comparatively old before she knew it – which seemed likely. (Dickens [1847-49] 1995, 379)

Parallelism is evident in Miss Tox’s action of sitting down and thinking about the past in both passages, first remembering her father, then her mother, when they were still alive. The author shows his typical use of similes and figurative language at large. The syntactic coupling, the balancing of one construction against another parallel construction of similar form or similar length, seems to bring to the passage a feeling that all is well, calm and relaxed. The first paragraph, however, has a contemplative and static dimension, though permeated with sadness, whereas the second one leads to action thanks to the fact of presenting a soundscape in the city, made up of the “cry” of a boy selling flowers in the street, so loud that it makes “daisies shudder in the

vibration of every yell he gave”. It is not a soft and delicate voice and the use of the word “cry” is related to the description of the boy, “with bulgy legs, rough voice”, terms that could refer to a scary character in a classical fairy tale. It is not by chance that we find the simile “as though he had been an ogre hawking little children”.

The emphasis on such a character is appropriate, since in the following paragraph Miss Tox’s thoughts “wander on Mr Dombey’s track”, the ogre of the whole novel until the very last page, before his final redemption. While thinking of him, Miss Tox receives the visit of Dombey’s sister, who tells her that he is about to marry another woman. The soundscape in which she was immersed and that shook her head has therefore brought her a real shock, and put an end to her relationship with the Dombey family.

### 3. *DOMBEY AND SON*: SOUNDSCAPE OUT OF THE CITY

Dickens’s language presents several examples of internal deviation, when features of language within the text may depart from the norms of that text itself and stand out against the background of what the text has led us to expect. For instance, sentences become more complex or far simpler than expected. In the two passages regarding Miss Tox cited above, the author uses simple sentences in the first one all through the first half of the second, but switches to complex sentences in the end, when he introduces similes and secondary clauses. This reflects the kind of more intricate and disturbing thoughts that pervade the woman’s mind: “Dickens varies his style like a virtuoso who can grade and colour the tone of his instrument as the mood requires” (Leech and Short 2007, 50).

Furthermore, while reading and analysing his novels from a linguistic perspective, we need to bring in another model of style: foregrounding, or artistically motivated deviation, when “the aesthetic exploitation of language takes the form of surprising a reader into a fresh awareness of, and sensitivity to, the linguistic medium which is normally taken for granted as an automatized background of communication” (23). Foregrounding is not limited to metaphor and alliteration, because it may take the form of denying the normally expected clues of context and coherence.

The theory of foregrounding leads us to see the opaque qualities of prose style as more than vague metaphors: “Prose is opaque in the sense that

the medium attracts attention in its own right; and indeed the interpretation of sense may be frustrated and obstructed by abnormalities in the use of the lexical and grammatical features of the medium” (24). Foregrounding shows how prominent features of text can be experimentally correlated and increase the reader’s attention. We can observe this phenomenon in relation to the soundscape of a specific area in the passages in Chapter LV regarding Dombey’s trusty clerk, Mr. Carker, ambiguous and deceitful, a sort of Dickensian Jago who tries to seduce Edith, Dombey’s second wife. She understands his intention and partially follows his plans, the romantic getaway to Sicily; but then she brutally rejects him when they are alone in France and threatens to kill him with a knife. In this chapter, the reader is totally immersed in an acoustic environment that creates the significant deviations of the language norms. The overwhelming and perturbing Dickensian “ringing bells” guide and control the clerk’s escape from France back to England, from the moment he understands that his plans have failed. The bells mark the time of his different stopovers and, ultimately, they mark the time of his journey to death.<sup>1</sup>

This first scene clearly introduces this sound and how it starts to become fundamental in the development of the actions:

All this time the ringing at the bell was constantly renewed; and those without were beating at the door. He put his lamp down at a distance, and going near it, listened. There were several voices talking together: at least two of them in English; and though the door was thick, and there was great confusion, he knew one of these too well to doubt whose voice it was.

[...]

At the moment, the bell rang loudly in the hall. He turned white, as she held her hand up like an enchantress, at whose invocation the sound has come. ‘Hark! do you hear it?’

He set his back against the door; for he saw a change in her, and fancied she was coming on to pass him. But, in a moment, she was gone through the opposite doors communicating with the bedchamber, and they shut upon her. [...] All this time the people on the stairs were ringing at the bell and knocking with their hand and feet. (Dickens [1847-49] 1995, 714)

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<sup>1</sup> In general, in Dickens’s work the bells always bear meanings in the story, they mark crucial moments, they can interrupt something important or give way to some peculiar action. In one of the Christmas Stories, “The Chimes”, the church bells are humanized and stand out as the novel’s protagonists (Clayton 2012, 19-40).

In this passage, and in all the others that follow here about Carker's flight, the sentence structure is simplified, compared to the rest of the novel: sentences are short and separated mainly by commas and semicolons. This brevity gives the idea of the rapid pace of the actions and of the looming danger signalled by the bells. From this moment on, we painstakingly follow the physical and mental behaviour of the fugitive man. Dickens describes his fears, his movements, his thoughts for several pages.

In examining the concept of foregrounding, John Douthwaite firstly refers to the terms of defamiliarization and estrangement as they are elaborated by Shklovsky. The perceiver, Shklovsky asserts, is diverted from the familiar and forced to recognize the unfamiliar, because "the function of art is to make people look at the world from a new perspective, to restore the freshness that ordinariness perforce removes from daily experience, to make them regain the world they risk losing" (Douthwaite 2000, 104). Many techniques contribute to defamiliarization and have to do with the manipulation of reference and point of view. In the scenes regarding Mr. Carker in *Dombey and Son*, we can retrace the two techniques elaborated by Douthwaite. The first one is called "abnormal reference" and consists in not naming the phenomenon being described. The text never says that Carker is chased by Dombey and his companion (probably Major Bagstock) and that he is finally run over by the train.

According to Michael Halliday, this effect can be achieved through "overgeneralisation", the opposite of underlexicalization, because in Dickens's description of Carker there is an "availability of a wide range of lexical items which are (near) synonyms to convey a given concept (cit. in Douthwaite 2000, 106):

The lamps, gleaming on the medley of horses' heads, jumbled with the shadowy driver, and the fluttering of his cloak, made a thousand indistinct shapes, answering to his thoughts. Shadows of familiar people, stooping at their desks and books, in their remembered attitudes; strange apparitions of the man whom he was flying from, or of Edith; repetitions of the ringing bells and rolling wheels, of words that had been spoken; confusions of time and place, making last night a month ago, a month ago last night – home now distant beyond hope, now instantly accessible; commotion, discord, hurry, darkness, and gallop over the black landscape; dust and dirt flying like spray, the smoking horses snorting and plunging as if each of them were ridden by a demon, away in a frantic triumph of the dark road – whither? (Dickens[1847-49] 1995, 709)

Again, a far-fetched quasi simile closes a paragraph characterized by parallelisms and a wide range of lexical items used to express the concept of how a

frightened man who desperately tries to go back home feels, thinks and suffers. By the middle of the paragraph we find the “ringing bells and rolling wheels”, four alliterated words that constitute the soundscape of the whole chapter and stand as a refrain that accompanies Carker’s flight until the end of his journey:

The same intolerable awe and dread that had come upon him in the night, returned unweakened in the day. The monotonous ringing of the bells and tramping of the horses; the monotony of his anxiety, and useless rage; the monotonous wheel of fear, regret and passion, he kept turning round and round; made the journey like a vision, in which nothing was quite real but his own torment. (712)

From this point in the novel, and for three incredibly intense pages, each paragraph begins either with *It was a vision of*, or simply with *of*, omitting *it was a vision*. To begin a paragraph with *of* for five times really constitutes a deviation from the norm, especially because after that *of* there are short sentences separated by semicolons and commas and mainly gerunds that express actions in progress:

A vision of change upon change, and still the same monotony of bells and wheels and horses’ feet, and no rest. Of town and country, post-yards, horses, drivers, hill and valley, light and darkness, road and pavement, height and hollow, wet weather dry, and still the same monotony of bells and wheels, and horses’ feet, and no rest.

[...]

Of sunset once again, and nightfall. Of long roads again, and dead of night, and feeble lights in windows by the roadside; and still the old monotony of bells and wheels, and horses’ feet, and no rest. Of dawn and daybreak, and the rising of the sun. (714)

Then we read about Carker’s drowsy senses and his reflections:

[...] he had no more influence on them, in this regard, than if they had been another man’s. It was not that they forced him to take note of present sounds and objects, but that they would not be diverted from the whole hurried vision of his journey. It was constantly before him all at once. She stood there, with her dark, disdainful eyes again upon him; and he was riding on, nevertheless, through town and country, light and darkness, wet weather and dry, over road and pavement, hill and valley, height and hollow, jaded and scared by the monotony of bells and wheels, and horses’ feet, and no rest. (715)

One can achieve foregrounding even more radically by describing a phenomenon from an unusual perspective, or from a point of view of an actor who is

unfamiliar with the phenomenon in question: “This technical device fulfils the general condition that an object or person should be described as being perceived for the first time” (Douthwaite 2000, 106). In the novel, Carker’s escape is recounted from the point of view of “the old monotony of bells and wheels, and horses’ feet, and no rest”. The writer therefore makes the reader focus on Carker’s terror and hallucinations, on what he sees and hears, on the fact that all the things he mentions in a never-ending list are his enemies. Without the repetition of that refrain in almost every paragraph of the entire chapter, we would have followed the clerk’s flight in a more familiar perspective, as a description of his movements and feelings. Conversely, Dickens displaces the point of view and creates an unfamiliar, estranged one that disorients the reader. The author is not limited to the description of the scene, since the “old monotony of bells” functions like an agent that unleashes all the subsequent actions:

There was no wind; there was no passing shadow on the deep shade of the night; there was no noise. The city lay behind him, lighted here and there, and starry worlds were hidden by the masonry of spire and roof that hardly made out any shapes against the sky. Dark and lonely distance lay around him everywhere, and the clocks were faintly striking two.  
[...]

He still lay listening; and when he felt the trembling and vibration, got up and went to the window, to watch (as he could from its position) the dull light changing to the two red eyes, and the fierce fire dropping glowing coals, and the rush of the giant as it fled past, and the track of glare and smoke along the valley. [...] And he would lie down again, to be troubled by the vision of his journey, and the old monotony of bells and wheels and horses’ feet, until another came. (Dickens [1847-49] 1995, 717)

And here railway and bells go together to compose the soundscape of Carker’s tremendous end, included in a series of repetition of words and adjectives, alliterations, phrasal verbs that produce a kind of rhythm to be associated with the sounds mentioned in the passage.

He heard a *shout* – another – saw the face change from its vindictive passion to a faint sickness and terror – felt the earth *tremble* – knew in a moment that the rush was come – uttered a *shriek* – looked around – saw the red eyes, bleared and dim, in the daylight, close upon him – was beaten down, caught up, and whirled away upon a jagged mill, that spun him *round and round*, and struck him *limb from limb*, and licked his stream of life up with its fiery heat, and cast his mutilated fragments in the air. (718; all italics mine)

When we consider the object of the displaced reference, *the ringing bells and horses' feet*, we may refer to Halliday's definition of relational processes that "are concerned with the processes of description regarding the abstract relations". If  $x$  is  $a$ , a relationship of sameness between two entities is established. Of the three types of relational processes we may choose the intensive one, which pertains to the attribute of quality. This is because irreversible attributive process assigns a quality, or adjective to a participant titled as Carrier realized by a noun or a nominal phrase. We can consider the nominal phrase *ringing bells and horses' feet* as the Carrier, accompanied by all the emotive terms whether objective or subjective, positive or negative at the rank of adjectives, adverbs and nouns in interpersonal function. These indicate "an attitudinal approach towards an entity or event when arousing a particular image and effect in a narrative discourse and context such" (Halliday [1978] 1994, 184).

To conclude, we can now add to that particular image the element of soundscape that arouses in a narrative discourse and that can be considered in terms of processes of descriptions regarding the abstract relations in a limited area, as Dickens's work has powerfully shown.

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