Work, Identity and Letterpress Printers in Britain, 1750–1850

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2015

Emma L. Greenwood

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
Contents

Contents........................................................................................................................................2
List of Figures .................................................................................................................................3
List of Tables ..................................................................................................................................4
Abstract .........................................................................................................................................5
Declaration ......................................................................................................................................6
Copyright Statement .........................................................................................................................7
Acknowledgements ..........................................................................................................................8
Introduction .......................................................................................................................................9
Chapter One: Devils and Apprentices ............................................................................................31
Chapter Two: Journeymen .................................................................................................................63
Chapter Three: Masters and Proprietors .........................................................................................92
Chapter Four: Family Firms ............................................................................................................117
Chapter Five: Political Identities ....................................................................................................143
Chapter Six: Mobility .....................................................................................................................173
Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................203
Bibliography ....................................................................................................................................210
Appendices ......................................................................................................................................235

Total word count: 79,705
List of Figures

Figure 1: Letterpress Printer ........................................................................................................... 19
Figure 2: The Art and Mystery of Printing Emblematically Displayed ................................. 36
Figure 3: The Printer’s Devil, or a Type of the Old One .............................................................. 38
Figure 4: The Printer’s Devil [c. 1850?] ..................................................................................... 39
Figure 5: The Little Printer Boy .................................................................................................... 60
Figure 6: London Union of Compositors membership card, 1836 ........................................... 70
Figure 7: Scottish Typographical Association Executive Council, 1902 ................................. 90
Figure 8: Egerton Smith’s business premises ........................................................................... 101
Figure 9: Birthplace of Joseph Livesey ....................................................................................... 111
Figure 10: Survival of printing firms in Liverpool and Manchester 1814–34 ..................... 124
Figure 11: Market Place, Manchester, in 1820 ....................................................................... 126
Figure 12: Liberty Suspended! With the Bulwark of the Constitution! ................................. 149
Figure 13: Voting breakdown in Norwich, 1830 (%) ............................................................... 159
Figure 14: Voting breakdown in York, 1784 (%) ..................................................................... 160
Figure 15: Voting breakdown in Liverpool, 1837 (%) ............................................................. 161
Figure 16: Origins of tramps seeking relief from Glasgow Typographical Society, 1827–31 ...................................................................................................................................... 190
List of Tables

Table 1: Non-book trades engaged in by printers in north-west England ............23
Table 2: Printers’ apprentice premiums, 1750–77........................................46
Table 3: Number of male printers under 20 in 1841 and 1851........................55
Table 4: Male printers under 20 in 1851 by age group (% of total).....................56
Table 5: Number of masters brought up to printing, 1725-1824 .....................96
Table 6: Probate values in wills of master printers, 1775-1850......................102
Table 7: Printers’ assessments, Manchester township, 1801–41......................104
Table 8: Quartile distribution of printers’ assessments, Manchester township, 1801–41..........................................................104
Table 9: Intended outcomes for businesses where specified .........................129
Table 10: Percentage of female proprietors, 1724–1855.................................135
Table 11: Breakdown of printers’ voting behaviour, 1784–1837 (%) ..............158
Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between work and identity amongst letterpress printers in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. It probes the sources of work-based identity and considers efforts to maintain, and even manipulate, a distinctive sense of trade belonging. The effect of work on other interrelated personal and social identities is also examined. In contrast to other histories of work, particularly class-based studies, all levels of the trade are scrutinized, from apprentices through journeymen to masters and proprietors. Differences in the experience of work between these varying members of the trade are analysed, together with their effect on working relationships.

The first part of this thesis follows the hierarchy of the trade with chapters on apprentices, journeymen and masters. Apprentice printers endured increasingly exploitative conditions and came from more diverse social backgrounds than was commonly assumed. Journeymen took pride in the history of their trade, and had a strong tradition of fraternity, but their sense of identity was increasingly threatened by rising unemployment levels. Meanwhile, masters were less likely to have been brought up to the trade, and had few formal or informal trade associations. The second part of the thesis looks at how work-based identities intersected with familial, political, and socio-economic identities. Family relationships were crucial to the success of many printing businesses with intergenerational transfer being unusually prevalent compared with other trades. Political discussion played an important role in the formation of printers’ collective identity, particularly where campaigns for freedom of the press were concerned. Finally, social mobility became increasingly divergent among printers in the early industrial period.

The changes highlighted in this thesis had a profound effect on working relationships. A new generation of master printers was distant from the physical process of work and at times dismissive of the culture and customs of the workplace. This led to tension and conflict with journeymen over issues such as apprentice numbers. But there were also many stabilizing influences, such as the strength of journeymen’s fraternity, or a shared belief in the history and social significance of the press. By uncovering these complexities, even within a single trade, this thesis argues that occupation is a poor basis on which to base socio-economic classifications. Furthermore, the specific characteristics of occupational communities were in themselves strong contributors to personal and social identity, influencing working relationships, as well as the way in which people interacted with wider society.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
Copyright Statement

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trade marks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=487), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.
Acknowledgements

I am grateful for all the assistance — intellectual, financial, and personal — I have received over the six years of my PhD studies.

Several current and former members of the history department at The University of Manchester have given feedback on my research progress. Natalie Zacek and Paolo di Martino commented on early work and Anindita Ghosh has sat on my four latest panels. Aashish Velkar became my second supervisor in 2012 and has since given much valuable support. Hannah Barker, my primary supervisor throughout, has never failed to give timely, critical and astute advice.

The University of Manchester provided generous long-term funding in the form of a fees bursary. A research travel grant in 2011/12 then enabled me to travel to Warwick and Glasgow in pursuit of typographical society papers. In 2013 a research grant from the Printing Historical Society facilitated the sourcing of the hundred-odd wills which formed the basis for my research into family firms.

My understanding of the physical reality of letterpress printing was greatly enhanced by meeting several modern-day letterpress printers. Matt McKenzie of the Paekakariki Press showed me around his workshop one cold November day in 2013 whilst busy preparing for his latest private press release. Ken Burnley at the Juniper Press in Liverpool was similarly generous with his time. Then, at St Bride Printing Foundation, I undertook a short letterpress course with Mick Clayton, a former Fleet Street compositor, who not only instructed me in the ‘art and mystery’ of points, quads and slugs, but also shared memories of his time working on ‘the Street’.

Finally, it is doubtful whether I would have had the nerve to even apply for PhD study without the encouragement of my husband Thomas Evans. His confidence, unfailing optimism and practical support have sustained me throughout.
Introduction

In 1833 the journeyman printer-turned-author Charles Timperley addressed his latest work on printing ‘to those who feel the proud distinction of the printer’s name’.\(^1\) This single sentence hints at much about printers’ shared sense of identity. Many printers were proud; proud of their trade, its history and customs, and proud of their own personal literacy and learning which enabled them to pursue that trade (and, in the case of Timperley, to write about it too). But by 1833 this sense of dignity was at risk: around one thousand printers were out of work just in London and even those in employment were struggling to survive on low or irregular wages.\(^2\) At the same time, many masters were seen to enjoy increasingly affluent lifestyles.\(^3\) In appealing to printers’ collective identity under such circumstances, Timperley’s address poses interesting questions: what were the bases for this feeling of ‘proud distinction’, how widespread were such feelings, and to what extent was the connection between work and identity becoming fragmented at this time?

This thesis examines the relationship between work and identity amongst letterpress printers in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. Through studying all levels of the trade from apprentice through journeyman to master, I will consider sources of collective identity, threats to that identity and efforts to maintain, and even manipulate, a distinctive sense of trade belonging. I will also question how other identities intersected with work-based ones, especially familial, political and socio-economic identities. The picture revealed is largely one of change: socio-economic identities became far more diversified. But there were also stabilizing influences. The strength of journeymen’s fraternity


\(^2\) ‘Multiple News Items’, *Standard*, 21 April 1842; Salford, Working Class Movement Library, ‘Manchester Typographical Society: Minute Book, 1825–34’, TU/TYPO/9/2/A/1, 4 July 1826. See also the discussion in chapter six.

\(^3\) See, for instance, ‘Master Printers’ Dinner’, *Compositors’ Chronicle*, 6 (1 February 1841).
ensured continuity of some traditions, and certain shared values and beliefs helped to ensure understanding and cooperation between many masters and men. By uncovering the importance and complexity of work-based identities and work-based cultures, even within a single trade, this thesis argues that we can better understand how working relationships functioned in the early industrial period.

Today, work (or, more specifically, occupation) is considered to be one of the most important aspects of our identity. It informs both personal identity (how we acquire an individual sense of self) and social identity (how we identify with others). Sociologists, philosophers and psychologists all attest to the pivotal role of work in shaping individual and collective lives. The contemporary philosopher Alain de Botton has even gone as far as to describe work as ‘the principal source of life’s meaning’. Through work we search for meaning beyond financial reward, for a sense of personal worth and for a degree of status, even where work is unrewarding or monotonous. Conversely, the loss of work, either through unemployment or retirement, can lead to feelings of isolation, a lack of self-respect, and ultimately the loss of a meaningful sense of identity. As the philosopher Al Gini has put it, ‘to work is to be and not to work is not to be’.

---


7 These phenomena were powerfully observed in Studs Terkel, Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do (New York: New York Press, 1970).


In the period of this study — 1750–1850 — most people began work at an earlier age and worked for longer hours than we do today. Sources ranging from poll books to the census and even workhouse registers documented individuals primarily by what they did (or used to do) for a living. In the artisan community, different trades had specific rituals, customs and jargon unintelligible to outsiders. And there was a long tradition of workmates reinforcing their social bonds outside of the workplace in local alehouses. All of this contributed to high levels of self-identification with work and with occupational communities.

Yet historians of the early modern and early industrial period have rarely considered work as a primary site for the formation and maintenance of identity. Other aspects have usually taken precedence. Thus, when Henry French and Jonathan Barry considered the most significant force in determining identity in early modern England they asked, ‘was it economic position or social power or cultural knowledge or religious opinion or regional origin or gender role or sexual orientation or ethnic character?’ Other studies too have ignored the possibility that work could be a significant factor in understanding personal and social identity.

---

15 Alyson Brown, ed., Historical Perspectives on Social Identities (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006). This includes chapters on local, regional and national identities, class, gender and ethnicity, but nothing on work.
Where work has been studied, it has usually been secondary to another focus of analysis. Feminist historians, for instance, have stressed the importance of women’s work in challenging gendered assumptions about business, home and family (work can of course encompass unpaid, domestic labour as well as paid employment in a specific occupation). More recently, historians of masculinity have begun to explore how work, with its skills, tools and cultures, contributed to the construction of a specifically masculine identity. The particular area of child labour is also well documented.

Most commonly of all, work forms the more or less explicit basis for class-led histories, in that sociological definitions of class derive from specific occupational, or industrial, categories. This process of classifying people by occupation began with the 1851 census and has extended beyond the working class to middle- and even upper-class groups. Although the familiar tripartite structure did not appear until 1911, historians have applied these sociological categories to earlier societies using a variety of terms, only some of which derive from contemporary sources.

---


17 Karen Harvey, ‘Craftsmen in Common: Skills, Objects and Masculinity in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, invited submission for Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture c. 1750–1950* (Palgrave, forthcoming 2015). Work was also a key theme at the one-day conference *Beyond the Coffee House: Masculinities and Social Spaces in the Long Eighteenth Century* at Queen Mary University of London on 5 June 2015.

18 For an introduction to the historiography of child labour see Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain, 1750–1870*.


There are numerous problems with using class structures to inform discussion of working lives. Firstly, the lumping together of different occupations in broad categories creates anomalies that are difficult to explain in class terms. Printers, for example, do not easily fit working-class models, having for much of their history exhibited above-average levels of literacy, higher wages, and a reluctance to support other workers’ unions. In response to such anomalies, the ‘labour aristocracy’ theory was devised by historians who sought to explain the absence of a socialist revolution in the nineteenth century. Eric Hobsbawm, one of the theory’s chief exponents, claimed that printers in the period 1780–1840 displayed ‘the typical conservatism and sectional exclusiveness of their type’. The concept of a labour aristocracy was widely discredited in the 1980s, largely owing to new research which contradicted its premises, but the term has nonetheless continued to be applied to printers.

In making generalisations about occupational groups, class analysis also opens itself up to contradictions across different studies. For example, the printers included in E. P. Thompson’s The Making of the English Working Class were portrayed as radical activists whose main objective was the championing of freedom of the press as an expression of civil liberty. Far from being conservative labour aristocrats, this reading of the collective identity of printers suited Thompson’s vision of the working class as agents of their own making, rather than passive victims of repression and alienation. As this thesis will show, many

---

23 For one of the earliest challenges, see H. F. Moorhouse, ‘The Significance of the Labour Aristocracy’, Social History, 6, 2 (1981), 229–33.
printers were indeed active campaigners for freedom of the press, but Thompson’s
generalisation is not particularly helpful in understanding the variety of political
opinion held by printers at this time, the origins of those opinions, or the way in
which they contributed to work-based relationships.

The printers cited by Thompson were also largely masters (even if their
businesses tended to be small scale). This highlights another difficulty: inherent in
class-based analysis is a lack of clarity concerning the relative social status of
employers and their workers. For while printers at all levels of the trade have been
claimed for the working class, master printers can and do also fall into any
number of middling constructs — the ‘middling sorts’, the ‘petite bourgeoisie’, the
‘lesser-middle class’, or simply the ‘middle classes’.26 Conceptualizing the middle
class is notoriously fraught with difficulty.27 But if master printers can be at once
working and middle class, we are surely left none the wiser about their actual
socio-economic identity.

This lack of attention to trade hierarchies is linked to a general obfuscation
of life cycle changes: workplace status was not necessarily fixed throughout a
lifetime. This issue has on occasion been highlighted. Geoffrey Crossick and
Heinz-Gerhard Haupt pointed to the fluidity between wage earner and

26 Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks, eds, The Middling Sort of People (Basingstoke and
London: Macmillan and St Martin’s Press, 1994); Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, The
Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe, 1780–1914 (London: Routledge, 1995); Boyd Hilton, A Mad, Bad and
the Leeds Middle Classes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

27 For useful introductions to the conceptual and linguistic difficulties see Corfield, ‘Class by Name
and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain’; H. R. French, ‘The Search for the “Middle Sort of
analyses see Jack H. Hexter, ‘The Myth of the Middle Class in Tudor England’, in Reappraisals in
History (London: Longmans, 1961), pp. 71–116; Dror Wahrman, Imagining the Middle Class: The
Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780–1840 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1995). Some writers have also suggested changes to middling identities over time, see Simon Gunn,
independence amongst the petite bourgeoisie;\textsuperscript{28} Peter Earle admitted that ‘people would be likely to move in and out of particular social strata in the course of their lives’,\textsuperscript{29} and R. J. Morris noted the frequency with which middle-class traders designated themselves ‘gentleman’ on retirement.\textsuperscript{30} Nevertheless, despite the potential implications of these observations, working relationships between employers and employees have been apt to be simplified and focussed on conflict — hence the emphasis on industrial relations and the politics of class struggle seen in labour history.\textsuperscript{31} Patrick Joyce, in an attempt to encourage a post-structural approach to work, cautioned against the over-simplification of class narratives, warning that ‘we still know little about the character of individual occupations, and even less about their meanings to individual work lives’.\textsuperscript{32} Yet his call for an alternative approach to the study of work has gone largely unheeded.\textsuperscript{33}

This thesis offers such an alternative by focussing on the social and cultural make-up of a single occupation, and by considering all levels of that occupation from scarcely-paid errand boys to wealthy proprietors. In this it owes much to a couple of other industrial-period historians who have placed single occupational groups outside of traditional class structures: Carolyn Steedman, who pointed to the impossibility of understanding domestic servants as part of any emerging social class, and Deborah Rohr who highlighted the variety of socio-economic

\textsuperscript{28} Crossick and Haupt, \textit{The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe, 1780–1914}.
\textsuperscript{30} Morris, \textit{Men, Women and Property in England, 1780–1870}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{31} A recent historiographical review of labour history showed that despite the ‘eclectic pluralism’ of current studies, the core concerns are still those of the largely white, male, paid and organised workers of the industrial period, see Neville Kirk, ‘Challenge, Crisis, and Renewal? Themes in the Labour History of Britain, 1960–2010’, \textit{Labour History Review}, 75, 2 (2010), 162–80.
experience among British musicians.\textsuperscript{34} Similarly, the ambiguous status of printers, and their varied occupational experiences, deserves more attention. The majority of studies on printers were undertaken in the mid-twentieth century when the discipline of labour history was enjoying its heyday.\textsuperscript{35} There is, therefore, a focus on industrial relations in this work, and on compositors as the most organised of print workers. Discussion of the experiences of masters is restricted to those involved with the Stationers’ Company, or, from the turn of the twentieth century, the Federation of Master Printers.\textsuperscript{36} In all these studies there is a concentration on London; the experiences of provincial printers are confined to a handful of articles in local history publications or subsumed within the wider fields of book history or print culture.\textsuperscript{37}

In taking a nationwide view, and examining interactions across all hierarchical levels of the trade, this thesis offers a broader and more nuanced exposition of the printing trade than has so far been undertaken. In particular, my extensive examination of provincial sources from England demonstrates the importance of printers’ local, regional and national networks and the interrelatedness of work experiences across large areas. Important evidence from Scottish archives suggests similar work cultures and experiences elsewhere in


Britain — hence the decision to use ‘Britain’ rather than ‘England’ as a geographical frame for the title of the thesis. Furthermore, the evidence studied also describes printers travelling to and from Wales and Ireland, and beyond to America and France, with no suggestion that their working experiences differed markedly across these areas. Printers were able to move freely and find work in other countries apparently unhampered by parochial attitudes; their strong sense of work-based identity crossed and transcended national boundaries.

In this sense, work-based identity was social (to use the sociological category described above on p. 10). The use of jargon, rituals, shared working experiences, workplace discussion, and participation in sociability all contributed to a collective identity based around the workplace. Thus, social identity as understood in this thesis was communal, participatory, and, to some extent, performative; it is also at times termed a ‘culture’ with a ‘community’ of participants. But this is just one way in which identity is described in this thesis. Personal identity, in the sense of what made printers different to each other, is also addressed. Varying upbringings, or prior experience of other industries, for instance, might manifest themselves in differing socio-economic situations, or conflicting political principles, across the community of printers. This could create tension. For example, when a master had not been brought up to the trade, he rarely understood, or participated in, the collective culture of the workplace.

Public perceptions and representations of printers’ identities further complicate the picture. These are to be found, for instance, in satirical depictions of apprentices, in parental assumptions of the gentility of the trade, and in criticism of non-partisan, supposedly unprincipled, newspaper proprietors. Very often, printers’ public identity was at odds with the sorts of personal and social identities just mentioned, and indeed there is little evidence that printers’ own sense of themselves was much affected by wider perceptions of who they were. Nevertheless, printers were not unaware of their public image. Low-paid or unemployed journeymen, for instance, felt aggrieved by public perceptions of the
trade as ‘genteel’, and typographical societies were troubled by the effect widespread alcoholism would have on their public respectability. There was, then, a complex interplay between personal, social, and public identities amongst printers in the early industrial period. At times these identities could be overlapping and complementary, but they could also be contradictory and conflicting.

Printers, printing and printed material
Letterpress was the most prolific printing process in the early industrial period, being responsible for the bulk of books and journals as well as ephemera.38 This was, however, also a dynamic time for the printing trade when rapidly urbanizing towns led to a huge expansion in demand for printed materials.39 In common with other trades, this period saw the transition of printing from a pre-industrial, artisan craft, to a mechanised, large-scale industry (though that transition was a far-from-uniform process). Workers’ organizations also evolved from office-based ‘chapels’ and local typographical societies to regional and then national unions.40 These technological, regulatory and economic changes had a significant impact on identities and relationships within the trade.

Up until around 1800 the production of letterpress materials was known as the ‘hand-press’ period.41 Operations were carried out in the same way as they had always been since the invention of printing by moveable type in the fifteenth century: text was manually composed from individual pieces of lead type by a process known as composition and then transferred to a wooden press where the impression was made by pressing a sheet of paper onto the inked type. Thus, there

39 Ancillary trades such as press carpentry and paper making, and alternative printing processes such as copper-plate and lithography, were also affected by the growth in demand for printed materials but will not be considered in this thesis.
40 On the development of printing trade unions, see Musson, The Typographical Association: Origins and History up to 1949.
41 For a detailed account of book production in the hand-press period see Phillip Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1995).
were two basic operations taking place in a printing office — composition and presswork — which, depending on the scale of the business, would be undertaken by separate workmen known as compositors and pressmen (Figure 1 shows a compositor in the background working ‘at case’ and a pressman operating the press in the foreground). Such adult workers were referred to as journeymen and the whole operation would be overseen by a master who may also have taken on apprentices.

**Figure 1: Letterpress Printer**

![Letterpress Printer](source: John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Trades and Professions 3 (49d) via VADS <www.vads.ac.uk>)

After 1800, new technological developments began to affect the trade. At first these did not change the quantity of production or the nature of jobs but merely affected the quality of printed material and working practices. For instance, iron presses, which required a single pull of the press instead of two (because of a larger platen), replaced wooden ‘common’ presses but did not have
the effect of doubling output. More significantly, improvements in stereotyping (whereby pages of type were ‘copied’ onto metal plates by means of a mould) made that process easier and cheaper, enabling more offices to either store works for future reprints or duplicate texts for speedier production without the necessity of having them composed afresh.

The greatest change came with the introduction of printing machinery, the first instance being the Koenig machines, operated by separate steam engines, installed at The Times in 1814. It is commonly asserted that this technology had little impact on working practices or jobs within the trade as it affected only the work of pressmen who were in any case the least skilled members of the workforce. But The Times had been composed manually in duplicate in order to increase output and so the arrival of the new presses cut the work of compositors in half literally overnight. The proprietor John Walter II (1776–1847) knew full well his workmen would be opposed to the machines and so installed them in secret and paid for a police presence in case of machine breakers (a common threat in other industries). These developments affected provincial offices too. The Leeds Mercury was reportedly set up partly in triplicate before they got their first printing machine (operated by a flywheel rather than steam) in 1823. In Manchester, the first machine press was installed two years later by the Manchester Courier in 1825.

Nevertheless, the impact of mechanised presses was limited in this period by demand. It was only really newspaper firms with large circulations that could benefit from the new inventions. Book printers with smaller print runs preferred

42 Ibid., 251.
43 Ibid., 201–05.
to use hand presses on which they could retain more control over the quality and set-up of the impression. At the Chiswick Press, for instance, steam power was not employed until 1860, despite the owners embracing other new technologies such as gas lighting and hot water pipes. In 1820 there were still only eight powered machines in London. But where there was demand, steam presses enabled proprietors to vastly increase output and thus generate more revenue. John Walter II managed to retire early from business on the back of the extra proceeds. More public-spirited were those who used the new inventions to reduce the cost of literature to the end reader. Machines to speed up the composition process were only introduced in the later nineteenth century.

Aside from technology, certain legal and taxation issues also affected the trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From its inception, printing had been heavily regulated. The number and location of masters was controlled, along with the number of presses and apprentices allowed to them. Furthermore, pre-publication censorship was exercised through the Licensing Act, and administered through the trade’s guild, the Stationers’ Company (which included all the book trades). Gradually these powers and controls were eroded. In 1695, the Licensing Act, last renewed in 1693, was allowed to lapse. The consequence of this was that printing offices could spread throughout the country for the first time, although it was only in the latter part of the eighteenth century, with growing urbanisation,

---

that demand fuelled this growth.\textsuperscript{52} By the mid-nineteenth century, around two-thirds of the total labour force and half the output of British letterpress printing occurred outside of London.\textsuperscript{53}

With the spread of printing to the provinces, the Stationers’ Company’s control over aspects such as apprentice numbers declined. The repeal of the Statute of Artificers in 1814 (allowing anyone to practise a trade regardless of whether they had been apprenticed to it), meant that the printing trade was in theory entirely free of structural control. In practice, however, journeymen did their best to restrict apprentice numbers through early combinations, and governments continued to exercise control over the products of the press via libel laws and the so-called ‘taxes on knowledge’. These latter taxes — on paper, advertisements and newspapers — were only finally repealed in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{54}

As the demand for printed materials grew during the eighteenth century, businesses also expanded in size. The roles of compositor and pressman became increasingly separated and apprentices were often taken on specifically in one or other branch of the business.\textsuperscript{55} Additional specialist roles such as reader and overseer were also becoming commonplace, which resulted in masters having less frequent contact with their employees. But specialisation and operational increases happened at different rates in different towns and offices. Many provincial offices continued to work on a very small scale. As late as 1834, for instance, a Mr Lomax advertised in the Chester Chronicle for ‘a steady man, to take the management and perform the entire work of a small Printing Office’.\textsuperscript{56} Even in London it is thought that eighty per cent of printing firms employed three men or fewer by the middle

\textsuperscript{55} As early as 1756 an apprentice was sought solely to work at press in one London office, see ‘Classified Ads’, Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser, 26 July 1756.
\textsuperscript{56} ‘Advertisements and Notices’, Chester Chronicle, 8 August 1834.
of the century, though the largest had around four hundred employees.\textsuperscript{57} This pattern is consistent with other industries at this time where small-scale enterprises, workshops and domestic forms of manufacturing are now known to have proliferated alongside the rise of factory production.\textsuperscript{58}

Printing outfits were also sometimes run conjointly with other enterprises. Table 1 shows the diverse roles some printers undertook in north-west England between 1788 and 1850 (many more ran printing businesses in conjunction with other book trades such as bookselling and bookbinding). In such cases it is questionable whether the business owner’s identity would have been so strongly linked to their occupation(s) compared to, say, a journeyman solely engaged in one activity.

**Table 1: Non-book trades engaged in by printers in north-west England**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manchester</th>
<th>Liverpool</th>
<th>Chester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>library</td>
<td>hosier</td>
<td>tavern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicine vendor</td>
<td>navigation shop</td>
<td>tea dealer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pattern maker</td>
<td>spirit dealer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-office</td>
<td>victualler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stamp distributor</td>
<td>milk house</td>
<td>mathematical instrument maker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Even where printing businesses were apparently sole operations, the level of involvement of a master may have depended on a number of other factors. Luke Hansard’s description of his former master should be seen as a warning not to jump to conclusions: ‘my master was but very rarely in the office; he was either engraving, or painting, or wood-cutting, or fishing, or pigeon and rabbit shooting, or boatbuilding and rowing and sailing; anything but the office’. In Hansard’s version of events, as an apprentice he was left to run the business more or less single-handedly, despite his master having been apprenticed to the trade in London and having worked as a journeyman in a respectable printing house. Most of the printers studied in this thesis were located only because they identified themselves, or were identified by others, as a ‘printer’; Hansard’s description of his former master reminds us of the likely existence of those who produced printed material but may not have thought of themselves primarily as printers.

Changes in the technology and structure of printing in the early industrial period also affected trade identities. The introduction of printing machinery, for instance, along with a disregard for traditional limits on apprentice numbers, threatened the jobs of journeymen. Rising unemployment then placed strains on journeymen’s sense of loyalty to their brethren whilst also creating tension with employers. Those employers came increasingly not from within the trade but, taking advantage of new freedoms, set up printing offices with large amounts of capital earned outside of the trade. In many cases, their wealth enabled them to compete successfully at the top end of the business, building up vast operations with extensive divisions of labour, which not only distanced journeymen and apprentices from their employers, but also created new roles of ambiguous status. Nevertheless, this was not a simple story of increasing alienation resulting from the growth of large-scale operations. In fact, as late as the 1960s, the sociologist Robert Blauner found a minimal level of alienation among print workers in the

---

United States, something he attributed to the continued requirement for skilled workers, a relative lack of subdivision and the strength of workers’ organizations.\textsuperscript{60} As we shall see, there were many other factors, more personal and ideological, which contributed to a high degree of cohesion across all hierarchical levels of the printing trade in the early industrial period.

**Sources and methodology**

The methodology used in this thesis is based on the principles of prosopography, sometimes referred to as ‘collective biography’.\textsuperscript{61} This has facilitated the use of a large number of disparate source types in order to build up a picture of working lives which were otherwise poorly documented at an individual level. These source types range from personal material (autobiographies, letters and wills), through contemporary publications (newspapers, directories and poll books), to local government records (poor law rate books) and trade records (typographical society records and Printers’ Pension Society publications). In addition, official publications and criminal records have proved useful sources, particularly for printers’ petitions. Lastly, contemporary fiction, including satirical plays and novels, have been used as evidence of popular perceptions of the trade.

Most of these sources are used at specific points in the thesis — probate records in chapter four for instance — and their use will be discussed in the text. A few source types appear throughout, such as newspapers. These were located through the use of online databases and have been used regularly as a source of apprenticeship adverts, crime reports, and accounts of local events such as trade processions and trade dinners.\textsuperscript{62} The fact that printers often wrote these accounts

---


\textsuperscript{62} 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} Century Burney Collection Newspapers, 19\textsuperscript{th} Century British Library Newspapers, *The Times Digital Archive*, and *The British Newspaper Archive*. For a recent examination of the potential pitfalls of digital history see Tim Hitchcock, ‘Confronting the Digital: Or How Academic History Writing Lost the Plot’, *Cultural and Social History*, 10, 1 (2013), 9–23.
themselves, especially in small provincial offices where the roles of journalist, editor and printer overlapped, make newspapers a particularly valuable source for this thesis. The politics of newspapers also form an important subject in chapter five, although, as I will demonstrate, there were many reasons why the professed political stance of a newspaper may not have been a reflection of its printer’s own political opinions.

Another major source I use throughout the thesis is autobiographies. Twenty-three surviving printers’ autobiographical writings have been utilized (see bibliography for full list). The only criteria for inclusion I imposed were that writers were involved in the trade in some way before 1850, and that they wrote about their working experiences in their autobiographies. Some did not work as printers for very long; two worked only as printers’ boys for a short time, another undertook an apprenticeship but then left the trade to become an artist, whilst others still entered the trade only later in life. The majority of the writers came from, and worked, in mainland Britain. Additionally, one came from Ireland but worked in London and York, and another grew up and was apprenticed in America but worked for several years as a journeyman in London. Most intended their reminiscences for publication.

---

63 Some printers wrote broader reminiscences which refer only obliquely to their own working lives; these are referred to in the thesis but are not listed, or analysed, as autobiographies, see, for instance, Thomas Frost, Forti. Years’ Recollections: Literary and Political (London: Sampson Law & Co., 1880); Andrew Aird, Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters, and Printers, During the Last Sixty Years (Glasgow: Aird & Coghill, [1890]).
66 See, for instance, Joseph Ricketts, ‘Notes on the Life of Joseph Ricketts’, Wiltshire Archeological and Natural History Magazine, 60 (1965), 120–26; Thomas Dolby, Memoirs of T. D. Late Printer and Publisher, of Catherine Street, Strand (London: Hunt & Clarke, 1827).
68 Benjamin Franklin, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin, 3 vols (London: H. Colburn, 1818).
There are many concerns over the use of autobiographies as a source, not least their unrepresentative nature (written by literate and overwhelmingly male writers), and issues over their reliability (the fallibility of memory is a particular concern). These questions were addressed by John Burnett, David Vincent and David Mayall in their *Autobiography of the Working Class* (from which the majority of autobiographies used here have been sourced).\(^69\) As a result of their research, others have enthusiastically taken to the material. In a recent study of child labour, for instance, Jane Humphries used autobiographies exclusively in a striking departure from traditional economic history methodology.\(^70\) More controversially, in a revisionist social history of the industrial revolution, Emma Griffin’s sole use of autobiographies led her to offer an alternative, more benign and optimistic, picture of working-class experience.\(^71\)

Owing to the limited number of printers’ autobiographies available, and their inherent limitations, they form just one of many sources used in this thesis and are rarely used as the sole evidence for an argument. On occasion I have used them as a source for factual details of personal experiences such as hours worked or tasks undertaken, judging these kinds of personal memories to be largely accurate. Jane Humphries argued that where economic or social conditions affected personal lives, memories as recorded in autobiographies were indeed remarkably accurate.\(^72\) And an analysis of the journeyman printer Charles Manby Smith’s autobiography, despite finding numerous inventions and inaccuracies,


\(^{70}\) Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*.


\(^{72}\) Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*, p. 19.
gave no reason to suppose he invented details of his personal experiences within the printing trade.73

A more significant use of autobiographies in this thesis, however, lies in analysing the way in which printers imagined themselves. This sense of self could be, and was, contested. A manuscript comment on James Paterson’s autobiography states:

It was known when too late that Mr. Paterson was intemperate in his habits, which added fuel to a vindictive temper. This caused him to insult every one sooner or later. He thus lost every friend he had.74

Needless to say, the image Paterson created of himself was quite different, chiefly that he was talented and hard-working (though, reading between the lines, it is indeed possible to reach the conclusion that he had difficulty maintaining personal and professional relationships). Many autobiographers were similarly creative, whether consciously or otherwise; as Patricia Spacks has suggested, ‘the author presents for public contemplation a version of the self that he wants or needs or chooses to offer, rarely recognizing distinctly the imaginative components of that version’.75 But this element of self-creation in autobiographies is part of their joy for the historian — as the authors of The Autobiography of the Working Class wrote, ‘it is precisely the element of personal interpretation which affords the deepest gratification to the historian’.76 We look to autobiographies as evidence of how people wanted to think of themselves and, especially if they were published in their lifetimes, as most printers’ autobiographies were, how they wanted to be remembered by others.

**Structure of thesis**

Part one of this thesis examines the internal hierarchy of the trade, from apprentices through journeymen to masters. It reveals a growing social diversity with apprentices at one end coming from progressively poor and poorly-educated backgrounds, to successful masters who were often the product of wealthy and well-educated upbringings. In chapter one, negative popular perceptions of young printers will be shown to have stemmed from assumptions about affluent backgrounds and congenial working conditions. But these perceptions were increasingly out of step with levels of exploitation in the trade and conditions which ought to have been deserving of sympathy, as was becoming the case in more industrialised sectors. As apprentices were taken on in greater numbers as cheap, unskilled labour, so employment opportunities for journeymen became restricted. Chapter two will show how, as disputes within the trade ensued, journeymen separated themselves conceptually from masters, as well as from a more visible and ‘disreputable’ unemployed body of workers. Through their societies and unions journeymen carefully constructed a unified vision of occupational identity which emphasised their role as guardians of the trade’s history, meanings and customs. Chapter three then explores the relationship between masters and journeymen in more detail by focusing on the backgrounds and experiences of masters, showing an increasing diversity of socio-economic standing, as well as a rise in those not brought up to the trade. Irrespective of these aspects, however, some good relations between masters and men were fostered, usually depending on shared social values and certain admired personality traits.

Part two examines the way in which work-based identities intersected with familial, political, and socio-economic identities. Chapter four highlights the importance of family firms within the printing trade. Unusually high levels of intergenerational transfer are observed, along with a strong desire to see businesses, and thus trade identity, passed on to a new generation. However, printing was heavily male-dominated, and, although women played a crucial role
in the success of long-lived family firms, they existed in low numbers within the trade overall. The nature of political thought among printers will be explored in chapter five. Although personal politics will be shown to have been diverse, the particular issue of freedom of the press united printers in common cause. Finally, chapter six explores social inequalities, demonstrating how the early nineteenth century saw a growing conceptual divide between the desperate situations of those at the bottom struggling to survive unemployment, bankruptcy or imprisonment, and the extreme wealth of certain proprietors who operated in an elite social world. The collective identity of printers was becoming increasingly fragmented, which would have profound consequences for the trade in the later nineteenth and into the twentieth century.
Chapter One: Devils and Apprentices

Young printers did not receive a favourable press in this period. In popular fiction, songs, and satirical prints they were characterized as dirty, thieving, mischievous and subversive. And yet not all sources reflect this view. In this chapter I will contrast popular representations of printers’ apprentices with an image of hard work and self-improvement as presented in printers’ autobiographies. The tension between these two representations will be explained with reference to youngsters’ backgrounds, conditions of work, the age of starting work and the unique environment of the printing office. A lack of sympathy for young printers will be related to perceptions that they came to the trade not as children but as teenagers, from ‘respectable’ families after a good education, and that printing was a ‘genteel’ trade with conditions of work that were suitably amenable. Whilst there was some basis for these perceptions, I will show the identities and experiences of young printers to have been far more complex than the popular press allowed. Conditions of work could be exploitative, the age profile of the trade varied across the country, and social and educational backgrounds became increasingly diverse.

The dominant form of child labour in the printing trade was apprenticeship. The term ‘printer’s devil’ was sometimes applied to boys who were employed specifically as errand boys, but more usually to the youngest apprentice in a printing office. Outside of the trade the term seems to have been less specific and was applied to any youngster connected with printing. Although the decline of some forms of apprenticeship in this period is debated, printers

---

1 John Johnson, Typographia, or, the Printers Instructor, 2 vols (London: [n. pub.], 1824), I, pp. 653–56.
3 Another meaning of printer’s devil was as a metaphor for typographical errors, but that use will not be considered here, see The Printer’s Devil, and the 7,405,926 Satellites (London: Cousins & Co., 1884).
retained an unusual preference for the institution. In 1850 a pamphlet which attributed an unemployment crisis in the trade to ‘excessive boy labour’ referred only to apprenticeship, the perceived problem being abuse of the system, rather than its neglect. In the second half of the nineteenth century, printing was one of only five industries associated with ‘new-style’ apprenticeships and remained far and away the biggest defender of the traditional seven-year term. Even in the twentieth century, the method of training remained disproportionately used by printers; in one town nearly half the total number of apprenticeships between 1935 and 1939 was to printing. With this in mind, this chapter focuses on the institution of apprenticeship, but with awareness of the existence of younger boys who were employed prior to apprenticeship.

To some extent the negative portrayal of young printers was shared with apprentices in general. By the seventeenth century they were represented in literature as possessing a strikingly independent subculture. Although this subculture did include heroic representations, historians studying the behaviour of apprentices have tended to focus on the negative aspects. The role of apprentices in early modern riots, for instance, has attracted much scholarly debate. Another strand of research has picked up on the low completion rate of

---


apprenticeships (thought to be around fifty per cent), focussing in particular on the breakdown of the apprenticeship contract.\textsuperscript{10} Although these studies have shown that the cancelling of indentures might occur because of refractory behaviour from either apprentices or masters, the spotlight has all the same been on unsatisfactory relationships. This preoccupation with negative experiences, especially where they concerned transgressions by apprentices, reflects a wider interest in juvenile delinquency, crime and the reform and rehabilitation of young offenders.\textsuperscript{11} Rarely has due attention been given to mutually satisfactory apprenticeships.\textsuperscript{12}

This chapter presents a more balanced view by comparing unfavourable representations of printers’ apprentices with the largely positive (if idealised) view of the autobiographers. In doing so I necessarily employ a qualitative approach, which in itself is unusual for a subject dominated by economic histories.\textsuperscript{13} In fact, a dearth of appropriate quantitative evidence has been cited as a limitation in

---


\textsuperscript{12} Though Alysa Levene has pointed to a high level of satisfaction amongst the Foundling Hospital apprentices, see Alysa Levene, ‘Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence’: Master–Apprentice Relations in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England’, \textit{Social History}, 33, 3 (2008), 183–200.

apprenticeship and child labour research; a qualitative approach opens up the possibility of using a more diverse and unusual set of sources. At the core of this chapter is a collection of literary and pictorial representations of young printers including eighteenth-century plays by the popular actor and playwright Samuel Foote (bap.1721–1777) and nineteenth-century novels by Charles Dickens (1812–1870). Novels (and, by implication, other fictional works) have been described as an ‘extremely poor source’ for investigating the working life of children. But although they clearly need careful handling, fictional sources can offer useful insights into contemporary society. Many authors of nineteenth-century ‘realism’ novels, including Dickens, did have direct experience of the lives they wrote about. Furthermore, over and above the contested accuracy of their depictions, fictional accounts reveal popular stereotypes of child workers. The audience for these writings was diverse and numerous. Historians of the eighteenth-century stage, for instance, tell us that audiences were ‘highly diverse in age, class and occupation,’ while Anthony Trollope famously stated in 1870 that ‘novels are in the hands of us all; from the Prime Minister down to the last-appointed scullery maid’. It matters little, then, if these writings did not accurately reflect the experiences of all apprentices; what is interesting is that they represented the very real preconceptions of a paying public.

Popular representations of young printers are contrasted in this chapter with autobiographies, whose use as a source was discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Overwhelmingly, these autobiographers portrayed themselves in a

---

14 Kirby, Child Labour in Britain, 1750–1870, pp. 9–19.
15 Most plays were sourced from the online databases Eighteenth Century Collections Online and the Making of the Modern World.
16 Kirby, Child Labour in Britain, 1750–1870, p. 19.
positive light as diligent and well behaved. Possibly, they were consciously reacting against the negative propaganda seen in the popular press, but equally they may simply have stood for a largely unrepresented vision of apprenticeship which, in its quiet diligence, was less ripe for satire and scandal.

Another significant source for this chapter is a collection of apprenticeship adverts: a total of seventy-eight adverts were located over a roughly one hundred year period from 1756 to 1850. These offer a vivid insight into the character and ability of apprentices as desired by masters, along with some clues as to the working conditions apprentices could expect. It must be borne in mind, however, that only the more prosperous master printers would have been able to afford the trouble and expense of placing adverts. Most would-be apprentices probably found positions not through newspapers but through networks of friends and relations, or cheaper methods of advertising such as notices in shop windows. Indeed, of the autobiographers, only Luke Hansard’s family appeared to have utilised the adverts section of the local newspaper. As elsewhere in this thesis, these sources are supplemented by a range of other material including contemporary printers’ manuals and law reports.

**Visions of apprentices**

The first and most obvious negative imagery used in connection with young printers was that of the devil, playing on the use of the term ‘printer’s devil’. It is not clear how this term originated but it seems likely that it was connected with the appearance of printers’ boys. The first known use was in 1683 by Joseph Moxon who claimed that boys blackened themselves deliberately:

> The Press-man sometimes has a Week-Boy to Take Sheets, as they are Printed off the Tympan: These Boys do in a Printing-House, commonly

---

20 These were taken from the databases 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, 19th Century British Library Newspapers and The Times Digital Archive. Searches were constructed along the lines of ‘printer N10 apprentice’ and restricted to advertisements.


black and Dawb themselves: whence the Workmen do Jocosely call them
*Devils*; and sometimes *Spirits*, and sometimes *Flies.*

In fact, boys could easily have become dirty in the normal course of their work: tasks expected of them included lighting fires, sweeping the office, and sorting and cleaning ink off type.

The imagery of the devil was appealing to artists and authors who made much of the comparison. Figure 2 is an early satirical depiction of a printing office showing a printer’s devil in a suitably devilish guise employed taking sheets off the press (centre) and hanging them up to dry (right).

Figure 2: The Art and Mystery of Printing Emblematically Displayed

![Image](image_url)

Source: *Grub Street Journal*, 26 October 1732.

In literature, Samuel Foote picked up the theme with his ‘little sooty, sniv’ling, diabolical puppy’, a printer’s errand boy who appears in his play *The Author.*

Printers themselves were also apt to wallow in the metaphor in their own writings. Edwin Waugh (1817–1890), who became renowned for his Lancashire dialect poetry, wrote a poem about the printer’s devil during his own apprenticeship to a printer in Rochdale in the 1820s. In this, Waugh describes the

---

25 Samuel Foote, *The Author, a Comedy of Two Acts as Perform’d at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane* (Glasgow, [1758]), p. 9.
‘little dirty devil’ as an ‘imp’ and ‘sprite’ and refers to his ‘infernal renown’. By the mid-nineteenth century, developments in printing technology had largely done away with the particularly dirty work of earlier times (thereby nullifying the chief aspect of the printer’s devil’s identity); the term was said to have gone out of use amongst printers by 1857. Nonetheless, the idea remained in popular vernacular use and has continued to inspire authors down to the twenty-first century.

The use of devil imagery was, however, fairly harmless by comparison with other aspects of young printers’ representations which focussed more on their behaviour and attitudes than their appearance. For example, youngsters were shown to display a lack of respect for their masters: a printer’s devil in the anonymous eighteenth-century play *The Cabal* speaks ‘too freely’ to his master and is called ‘an impudent Hand’. More seriously still, the strictures of apprenticeship indentures were disobeyed. The opening scene of *The Printer’s Devil!* depicts a printer’s apprentice (Idle Bob) and a printer’s devil (Nicholas) drinking and gambling in a ‘tap room’, both pursuits being contrary to the letter of indentures. The behaviour of apprentices more widely was also subverted by Charles Dickens in *Barnaby Rudge*. His creation the ‘Secret Society of ’Prentice Knights’ met at night in a disreputable cellar and engaged in bizarre initiation ceremonies accompanied by abundant drinking and gambling; their leader went on to become one of the cheerleaders for the anti-Catholic Gordon riots.

---

29 *The Cabal, as Acted at the Theatre in George-Street* (London: Printed for [S. Hooper], 1763), p. 12.
30 *The Printer’s Devil: or, a Type of the Old One: A Burlesque Extravaganza in One Act* (New York: R H. Elton, 1833), p. 3.
31 Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1998, first pub. 1841), pp. 69–78. The social make-up of the rioters was in fact highly diverse, with two in three of those tried being wage earners, only some of whom were apprentices, see G. F. E. Rudé, *The Crowd in History* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981), p. 61.
Unlike in Barnaby Rudge, where all apprentices are painted black, Idle Bob and Nicholas’ antics are contrasted with those of a good apprentice, Jerry, who is seen clutching his indentures and citing from the behavioural clauses (see Figure 3 — Jerry is in the centre). The juxtaposition of a good and a bad apprentice was a device most famously used by William Hogarth (1697–1764) in his series of Industry and Idleness engravings to suggest that behaviour was a matter of personal choice on the part of the apprentice.\textsuperscript{32} The inclusion of a good apprentice, however, also served to highlight the depravity of the bad, and the very necessity for the moralistic tale in the first place. Industry and Idleness, as with The Printer’s Devil, can therefore be seen as visual and literary counterparts to the various conduct books aimed at apprentices in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{33}

Figure 3: The Printer’s Devil, or a Type of the Old One

Source: The Printer’s Devil: or, a Type of the Old One: A Burlesque Extravaganza in One Act (New York: R H. Elton, 1833).


\textsuperscript{33} John Barnard, A Present for an Apprentice; or a Sure Guide to Gain Both Esteem and an Estate, with Rules for His Conduct to His Master (London: [n. pub.], [1740?]); Samuel Richardson, The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum (London: J. Roberts, 1734).
The representation of bad behaviour amongst young printers went beyond the breaking of indentures to other forms of felony. A late play by Samuel Foote, *The Devil on Two Sticks*, depicts a printer’s boy taking bribes for delivering proofs of radical political pamphlets. His benefactor, Squib, quips ‘Come, who knows but in a little time, if you are a good boy, you may get yourself committed to Newgate’. When the boy suggests he is too young, Squib replies, ‘Not at all: I have seen lads in limbo much younger than you. Come, don’t be faint-hearted; there has many a printer been raised to the pillory from as slender beginnings.’

An illustration from the mid-nineteenth century (Figure 4) similarly framed young printers with criminal activity: a ruffianly-looking devil, blackened with printer’s ink, is seen making off with the contents of someone’s pantry, his cunning expression making it plain it was not his for the taking.

**Figure 4: The Printer’s Devil [c. 1850?]**

Source: John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Trades and Professions 3 (74) via VADS <www.vads.ac.uk>

---

Negative public attitudes towards apprentice printers were no doubt bolstered by newspaper law reports which recorded plenty of young printers brought to trial for a variety of offences including theft, neglect of duties, misconduct, absconding from service, and even murder. Within the trade, poor behaviour was explained with reference to growing apprentice numbers. John Johnson, author of a popular printer’s manual, claimed this led to a lack of supervision: ‘as boys are naturally prone to idleness, and not having sufficient examples of industry daily before their eyes, little good can reasonably be expected from them.’ Apprentice numbers rose largely because of an increase in the out-door system of apprenticeship (where boys lodged with family or friends rather than with their employers under the ‘in-door’ system) — the count was no longer restricted by the size of a master’s property. One writer claimed, rather hysterically, that criminal activity was on the rise because of the practice: ‘In the short space of two years, Thirty Out-door Apprentices to Printers received their sentences for crimes committed in London and Surry!!!’ Similarly, one newspaper law report in 1805 made a point of stating that a felonious young printer was apprenticed under the out-door system, as if that were in itself explanation of the crime.

Another cause for concern was ‘turnovers’, those apprentices bound over to another master before their time was out. By the end of the nineteenth century they had acquired a highly dubious reputation and were charged with corrupting other apprentices wherever they went (‘talk of a scabby sheep infecting the

---

36 Johnson, Typographia, p. 128.
38 Quoted in Howe, The London Compositor, 1785–1900, p. 120.
flock!’). John Ives was an early warning: turned over to one or more printers during his apprenticeship in the mid-eighteenth century, he ‘very early fell into bad company, about Ludgatehill and Fleet-bridge, and was used to gamble amongst them there’. At the age of twenty-seven he was hanging on the gallows for his crimes. It was no doubt in response to such accounts that some adverts for printers’ apprentices included phrases such as ‘morals strictly attended to’ and ‘morals will be free of contamination’.

In their autobiographies printers gave a rather different impression of their behaviour as apprentices. Overwhelmingly, they represented themselves as hard-working, respectful, and sober. Indeed they seem to have been very models of apprenticeship morality, obeying their indentures to the letter and paying heed to the conduct books. One famous printer’s apprentice, the writer Samuel Richardson (bap.1689–1761), was even responsible for one of the earliest apprentice conduct manuals. The model for many serious apprentices was Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) whose own apprenticeship to a printer in the early eighteenth century he described in his autobiography. Although apprenticed in America, Franklin later spent some time working as a journeyman printer in London. His subsequent fame meant that his autobiography became widely available and was certainly read by other printers. Franklin’s boasts of his autodidactic education, his seriousness of purpose and his condemnation of the omnipresence of alcohol in the London trade set the tone for many printers’ autobiographies.

43 Richardson, The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum.
44 Franklin, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin.
45 In 1876, the Printing Times declared that ‘there are few of us who in our youth have not read, and re-read, with absorbing interest, the autobiography of … Benjamin Franklin’, see Printing Times, 2, 18 (15 June 1876), p. 113. The young Edward Baines was said to have been inspired by Franklin and set out to follow his example, eventually becoming known as ‘the Franklin of Leeds’, see Edward Baines, The Life of Edward Baines, Late MP for the Borough of Leeds (London: Longman, Brown, Green etc, 1851), p. 27.
Sometimes these autobiographers implied good conduct through contrasting their own behaviour with that of their co-workers. Stephen Quelch, for instance, writing about the drunkenness of journeymen in his office, recalled with superiority that ‘I did not much like their habits’, and William Edwin Adams wrote of the ‘despicable people who seem to take a delight in corrupting their younger companions’. More obviously, autobiographers demonstrated their good behaviour through their actions, particularly in their professed efforts at self-improvement. Robert Skeen, despite a fourteen-hour working day, said he ‘found time to read at night, often when the rest of the family were asleep’; the books he borrowed from friends because he could not afford his own. Finding time to read within the constraints of long hours was also a feature of Samuel Richardson’s apprenticeship: ‘I served a diligent Seven Years to it, to a Master who grudged every Hour to me, that tended not to his profit … I stole from the Hours of Rest & Relaxation, my Reading Times for Improvement of my Mind’.

In addition to private reading, a common method of learning involved participation in mutual improvement societies. Charles Manby Smith joined one towards the end of his apprenticeship in Bristol in the early nineteenth century:

We met nearly three hundred nights in the year, and talked, read, disputed, and wrote de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis, until the clock struck eleven. We had fines for non-attendance, and prizes, paid out of the fines, for the best-written productions.

The creation of a credible and urbane identity was clearly important to Smith, and his efforts were rewarded by the occasional visits of his father and master who, unsurprisingly, quite approved of the way he was spending his leisure time.

North of the border, another earnest young printer was attending the Glasgow

---

Young Men’s Society for Religious Improvement. They met in a coffee house every Sunday at 7am: ‘The members in rotation presided. There were singing, prayer, reading of God’s Word, questions asked and opinions freely given on the portion read. Once a month the members read essays, which were criticized.’ These autobiographers, by detailing their engagement with such worthy pursuits, distanced themselves from the stereotype of apprentices out on the streets inciting public disorder or in the pub drinking and gambling.

The careful saving of earnings was another common feature of serious apprentices. By the time Thomas Gent finished his apprenticeship he had saved a sum which surprised his new master. John Robinson in Devon was more enterprising in the way in which he spent his income and leisure time: he bought a violin, ‘taught himself a few tunes’ and was soon supplementing his printing wages by playing at parties. Other evidence suggests these thrifty young printers were not alone. A report of theft from 1777 revealed that a printer’s apprentice named William Thorn had five guineas stashed away in a locked box, only to have it broken into and the money stolen. The acquisition of money could confer a sense of power to an apprentice as it gave hope to the idea of one day setting up as master in their own right.

The concentration by the public press on negative representations of printers’ apprentices, in spite of the existence of much good behaviour, coincides with an increasing fear of juvenile delinquency in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, stemming from the widespread assumption that criminal activity amongst youngsters was on the rise. The focus of this concern was on London, and it may be significant that all of the autobiographers were apprenticed

---

50 Autobiography of a Scotch Lad: Being Reminiscences of Threescore Years and Ten (Glasgow: David Bryce & Son, 1887), p. 35.
51 Gent, The Life of Mr Thomas Gent, p. 20.
54 King, Crime and Law in England, 1750–1840, p. 73.
in provincial towns (with the exception of Thomas Gent who finished his apprenticeship in London) and usually in small towns rather than large urban centres. Nevertheless, although there certainly was an increase in indictment levels, this did not necessarily reflect a substantial increase in law-breaking — the period also saw changes in the administration of criminal justice which affected the reporting of crime.\textsuperscript{55} Furthermore, unfavourable representations of apprentices predated this new-found attention to the ‘problem’ of juvenile delinquency. There must therefore have been other reasons for their poor representation. The following sections will explore some of these possibilities, looking in particular at apprentices’ backgrounds, their conditions of work, their ages, and the influences of the office.

**Backgrounds**

When Charles Dickens had Oliver Twist bound out to an undertaker he drew a sharp distinction between the behaviour of Oliver and that of Noah Claypole, an older apprentice.\textsuperscript{56} Although Noah was a charity apprentice he felt himself socially superior to Oliver by virtue simply of knowing who his parents were; Dickens made it plain through highlighting the iniquity of his behaviour that those at the very bottom of the social scale, the ‘work’us orphans’, deserved the most pity.\textsuperscript{57} But Dickens’ choice of trade, the undertakers, as a site for both orphan and charity apprentices, is significant: it was not a desirable trade.

Printing, by contrast, was often referred to as ‘genteel’. One apprenticeship advert in 1770, for instance, referred to printing as a ‘genteel profession’.\textsuperscript{58} Over fifty years later, in the 1820s, Charles Manby Smith met an out-of-work compositor in London who reportedly complained, ‘fathers and mothers, all of ‘em, think that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 101.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London: Penguin, 1985, first pub. 1837–9), pp. 75–97.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Alysa Levene has suggested that parish apprentices may have been better behaved than private ones but the evidence is inconclusive, see Levene, "Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence: Master-Apprentice Relations in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England".
  \item \textsuperscript{58} ‘Classified Ads’, *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 2 July 1770.
\end{itemize}
printing is a light and genteel business; and the consequence is, they are for everlastin’ a-bringing their sons to be bound apprentice’.\textsuperscript{59} In Norwich, Luke Hansard’s mother was a case in point: she would not consent to her son being a ‘common mechanick’ but was delighted when a situation with a printer was found.\textsuperscript{60} The difference between so-called ‘genteel’ trades and ‘common’ trades was largely a reflection of levels of capital investment, but also of the frequent social intermingling between superior ‘Men of Trade’ and the gentry.\textsuperscript{61} Assumptions were therefore made about the backgrounds of those entering supposedly genteel trades, assumptions which were fuelled by masters themselves. Thus, many printers’ adverts stressed the importance of ‘respectable’ parents or connections in would-be apprentices.\textsuperscript{62} Clearly, if masters had any pretension to the ranks of the gentry it was in their interests to bolster perceptions of the gentility of printing.

To a basic degree, the prevalence of apprenticeship in the printing trade was in itself an indication of status. The first years of an apprenticeship were generally unpaid, with wages starting only part-way through the term and usually at a very low rate, rising only towards the end of the term. Therefore, apprenticeship was not a feasible option for the poorest households which relied on the income of children. Eric Horne, for example, worked as a printer’s boy, a position found for him by his schoolmaster, but when the time came to be apprenticed, Eric’s father could not afford the loss of his wages and sent his son to work for a doctor instead.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{63} Horne, What the Butler Winked At: Being the Life and Adventures of E. Horne, Butler, p. 40.
Beyond the loss of a child’s wages, premiums were often demanded from parents on apprenticing their child. The extent of these has sometimes been taken as an indication of the gentility of a trade: Dunlop and Denman wrote, ‘relatively high premiums were given in those occupations which were beginning to rank rather as honourable professions than as trades’. 64 However, premium prices varied considerably within individual trades. In 1747 premiums for printers were said to be between five and forty pounds. 65 Fourteen years later, another commentator was more specific, declaring the cost to be between ten and twenty pounds for pressmen, and twenty to forty pounds for a compositor (which was more expensive than other manual production trades such as bakers but below haberdashers). 66 In the City of London, actual premiums as paid to Stationers’ Company members ranged more dramatically from those refusing a fee to those demanding over eighty pounds. 67 Data from the Inland Revenue taxation records, which record the sums paid over the entire country, shows similar variation. Between 1750 and 1777 the price paid in premiums to printers varied from as little as five shillings to eighty pounds (see Table 2). There was no geographic logic to these figures with towns of varying sizes all seeing a range of premiums.

Table 2: Printers’ apprentice premiums, 1750–77

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1750–59</th>
<th>1760–69</th>
<th>1770–77</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of premiums</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. premium (£.s)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. premium (£.s)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

In the nineteenth century, premiums diverged still more substantially. At the top end, one master in 1836 sought a premium of 150 guineas.\(^{68}\) At the other end of the spectrum, the rise of ‘out-door’ apprenticeships led to more boys being taken on without any fee at all. In 1811 an advert in the *Bury and Norwich Post* explicitly sought an out-door apprentice on these terms, stating the expectation that the apprentice would live with parents or friends in the town.\(^{69}\) The Stationers’ Company also began taking on out-door apprentices without fee at this time.\(^{70}\) The practice was often frowned upon and when one printing firm suffered the theft of goods worth around five hundred pounds in 1849 by an apprentice, the writers of *The Times* law report clearly imputed the fault to the masters’ practice of taking ‘lads into their employment without fee’; the low social status of the boy was equated with his criminal activity.\(^{71}\) Given this increasing variation in the cost of apprenticeship, assertions that by the middle of the nineteenth century premiums were ‘around fifty pounds’ are therefore fairly meaningless.\(^{72}\)

Even where there was a premium involved, conclusions cannot always be drawn from its size about a family’s spending power. William Edwin Adams, for instance, was orphaned at an early age and was brought up in poverty by his grandmother whose only source of income was from her work as a washerwoman. Even so, she was able to procure for him a rudimentary education (by doing the schoolmaster’s laundry in exchange for fees) and then an apprenticeship to a printer. She negotiated the premium down to fifteen pounds (‘fancy £15 for a poor old washerwoman!’) which she was allowed to pay in instalments and Adams later recalled with pride and admiration that ‘the obligation was discharged to the last penny’.\(^{73}\) The existence and extent of

---

\(^{68}\) ‘To Parents and Guardians’, *The Times*, 2 July 1836.
\(^{69}\) ‘Multiple Advertisements and Notices’, *Bury and Norwich Post*, 26 June 1811.
\(^{71}\) ‘Police’, *The Times*, 29 December 1849.
\(^{73}\) Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, p. 82.
premiums could, then, mask a surprising social diversity; the role of negotiation and flexible payment options made apprenticeship potentially accessible even to very poor families. Their belief in the ability of the institution to improve a boy’s prospects must have been a powerful incentive. For other disadvantaged children, there was also occasionally the option of apprenticeship via the Poor Law system or through charitable organizations.

The diversity of apprentices’ backgrounds was also reflected in their educational attainments. In theory at least, printing required a high degree of literacy. Compositors had to take copy from authors’ manuscripts, correcting spelling and grammar as they went, and the ability to read classical languages was considered desirable. Many apprenticeship adverts requested applicants who were ‘well-educated’, ‘properly educated’, or whose education had been ‘grammatical’, ‘liberal’, or ‘classical’. In practice, however, few would-be apprentices met these high standards. Of the autobiographers who described their education, only three would have lived up to these expectations: Charles Knight, who was educated at a ‘somewhat famous classical school’ in London, and Luke Hansard and Charles Manby Smith who had both been at grammar schools.

---


75 In Warwickshire three per cent of paupers were apprenticed to printers in the period 1700–1834, Lane, Apprenticeship in England, 1600–1914, p. 83. A handful of printer’s apprentices were also sponsored by charities in Coventry and Westminster, see Coventry Archives, ‘Billing’s and Crow’s Charities’, School and Charity Records, PA26/8 f.56, 11 November 1823; London Metropolitan Archives, ‘Apprenticeship Indenture: Printer’, Hodgson, ACC/0612/052, 13 April 1837; London Metropolitan Archives, ‘Apprenticeship Indenture: Printer’, Hodgson, ACC/0612/051, 11 April 1837.


rest of the autobiographers described more patchy educational experiences of dame schools, Sunday schools, national schools and local private academies — options which were either free or required only modest fees. From the reflective vantage point of a lifetime working as printers, these autobiographers often felt their education had been inadequate. One anonymous printer, born in Ayrshire in 1816, described his education as ‘simple and meagre’. Thomas Catling, born in 1838, had little good to say about his national school in Cambridgeshire. In Northumbria, Robert Skeen, born in 1797, made do with ‘as good an education as the village schools could bestow’. And John Bedford Leno, apprenticed around 1840 in Aylesbury, remembered, ‘My education was miserably deficient for such an occupation, and my first proof occasioned roars of laughter.

Most of these autobiographers were from poor families. That they had had any education at all is testament to the determination of their families. At a time when schooling was not compulsory and illiteracy commonplace, their basic education would have set them apart from many other youngsters. It explains why printers derived a sense of pride from their learning, however rudimentary it may have been (chapter two will look at this sense of pride in more detail). John Robinson boasted in later life about how he had been selected in 1836 from his national school in Newport Pagnell to be apprenticed to a local printer because, ‘At 13 years of age John was considered the cleverest boy in the School’.

---

80 Thomas Thurgood Catling, My Life’s Pilgrimage (London: John Murray, 1911), p. 11.
83 Illiteracy of grooms (indicated by being unable to sign their name in the church register) averaged forty per cent in 1754 falling to thirty-three per cent in 1840, but there were significant regional differences, see W. B. Stephens, Education, Literacy and Society, 1830–70: The Geography of Diversity in Provincial England (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 5. In Leicester, male illiteracy in 1840 was sixty-three per cent amongst frame-work knitters, and sixty-one per cent amongst labourers, see Elaine Brown, ‘Gender, Occupation, Illiteracy and the Urban Economic Environment: Leicester, 1760–1890’, Urban History, 31, 2 (2004), 191–209, (p. 203).
84 Robinson, A Short Account of the Life of John Robinson.
explains why so many master printers took these youngsters on (those who advertised in newspapers looking for well-educated boys were, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, probably unusual).

**Conditions of work**

Stereotypes about the gentility of printing were linked to perceptions of the conditions of work; no ‘respectable’ parent would apprentice their child to a trade which was obviously exploitative, arduous or dangerous. The most common occupations for boys in 1841 included agricultural labour, cotton manufacture and coal mining, all of which involved dangerous machinery and working conditions.85 Concern for appropriate working conditions in these areas had been growing since the mid-eighteenth century, as evidenced by a growth in child-orientated philanthropy, and in 1802 child employment in textile mills became regulated for the first time.86 It is no coincidence that early nineteenth-century plays generally idealised the behaviour of child factory workers in a positive light, in order to emphasise their status as innocent victims.87

By comparison, printing was a minor industry (less than one per cent of the adult male population was employed in all book trades in 1841)88 and there was probably limited awareness of working conditions. The first published report into the occupational health of printers was conducted in 1831 by the surgeon Charles Turner Thackrah as part of a wide-ranging and pioneering study into the occupational health of various industries. He assessed the risks as follows:


Printers are kept in a confined atmosphere, and generally want exercise. Pressmen, however, have good and varied labour. Compositors are often subjected to injury from the types. These, a compound of lead and antimony, emit, when heated, a fume which affects respiration, and are said also to produce partial palsy of the hands. Among the printers, however, of whom we have inquired, care is generally taken to avoid composing till the types are cold, and thus no injury is sustained. The constant application of the eyes to minute objects gradually enfeebles these organs. The standing posture long maintained here, as well as in other occupations, tends to injure the digestive organs.\footnote{C. Turner Thackrah, \textit{The Effects of the Principal Arts, Trades and Professions and of Civic States and Habits of Living, on Health and Longevity: With a Particular Reference to the Trades and Manufactures of Leeds} (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1831), p. 24.}

Within the trade, these and other poor health effects were understood to have catastrophic personal consequences. In 1828 the Printers’ Pension Society noted that the working conditions of printers, specifically the long hours indoors, ‘frequently produce debility in an early period of life, and lay the foundation of a premature decay’.\footnote{London, St Bride Library, ‘Address to the Public’, \textit{Printers’ Pension Society Reports}, Closed Access 1201A, 1828.} Failing eyesight, asthma and pulmonary conditions rendered many printers unable to work and thus vulnerable to destitution (chapter six will discuss the consequences in more detail). These afflictions were, however, cumulative rather than immediate, and so the risks to apprentices were indeed minimal by comparison to other industries.

For apprentices themselves, the most complained-about aspect of their working conditions was their hours of work. Thomas Gent in early eighteenth-century Ireland recalled working ‘many times from five in the morning till twelve at night, and frequently without food from breakfast time till five or six in the evening’.\footnote{Gent, \textit{The Life of Mr Thomas Gent}, p. 10.} This may have been extreme but in 1747 Campbell reported that printers generally worked from 6am to 9pm which at fifteen hours was an hour longer than in the majority of trades.\footnote{Campbell, \textit{The London Tradesman}, p. 337. From Campbell’s data, Joan Lane calculated that 52.3 per cent of trades listed worked from 6am to 8pm, \textit{Lane, Apprenticeship in England, 1600–1914}, p. 96.} Roughly one hundred years later (referring to the 1840s), John Forbes Wilson complained, ‘during my seven years’
apprenticeship I had not one hour’s holiday that was not previously paid for by working over-time — this at a period when the ordinary hours of labour were sixty-three per week."93 Over six days, this averaged out at ten and a half hours, roughly consistent with the eleven hour days which were apparently standard elsewhere in the printing trade at that time.94

Although these hours were not in themselves significantly longer than in other trades (Hans Voth’s research suggests that twelve hour days, at least, were normal throughout the early industrial period),95 printers also had to deal with irregular hours brought about by the constraints of publishing deadlines. One apprentice printer claimed in 1846 that he sometimes worked thirty-six hours successively.96 Such extended periods of work were the primary reason that printing was brought under the control of the Factory Acts Extension Act in 1867.97 However, although this legislation did limit extreme cases, it also legalized the irregularities. It was still permissible, for instance, to keep a boy of sixteen at work for fifteen hours at a time during the day, or eleven and a half at night (with only an hour and a half in breaks), and for sixty hours in the week. In fact, printing was not the only trade which struggled to get public recognition for, and legal protection against, long hours: bakers, who worked for up to twenty hours at a stretch and overnight, were also campaigning in the mid-nineteenth century for improvement to their working conditions.98

In addition to lengthy hours, apprentice printers also frequently complained of a lack of training. In 1793 John Gee successfully petitioned the Justices of the Peace for Middlesex against his master Deodatus Bye for being in

94 Aberdeen Association of Master Printers ([Aberdeen]: [n. pub.], 1846), (University of Aberdeen, Special Collections (King 2/20).
96 ‘Police’, The Times, 29 January 1846.
97 An Act for the Extension of the Factory Acts, 31 Victoria, cap. 103 [1867].
breach of his apprenticeship indentures by keeping him at press and neglecting to teach him case work (composition). This latter Gee said could only be learnt ‘by means of great Instruction and Application’, whilst press work he described as ‘great Drudgery and Labour and the knowledge of it may be attained with very little Instruction’. Similarly, over fifty years later, describing his apprenticeship in Cheltenham in 1846, William Edwin Adams wrote: ‘I was to be taught the trade and craft of a printer. As a matter of fact, I was taught little more than what I picked up myself, and that only in one branch of the business’.

The out-door system was sometimes blamed for a decline in standards of training because it led to rising apprentice numbers and fewer adults in the workplace. John Johnson claimed, ‘we have found that boys are not regularly initiated by men, but an elder boy takes a junior under his care: we have seen instances in which the instructor has known very little more than the first rudiments of the art’. The growth of newspaper-only printing offices was also held to account for the number of boys who finished their time with limited knowledge of the business; composing material for books was considered to require much more skill and training than that necessary for newspaper work. The restriction of training to those aspects most easily taught, or requiring no training whatsoever, reveals these masters to have been using apprentices as nothing more than cheap, unskilled labour. This was a form of exploitation and again it was not restricted to printing.

**Age of apprentices**

Related to the potential level of sympathy generated by perceptions of genteel backgrounds and soft working conditions, was the age of children involved. It has

---

100 Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, I, p. 82.
been suggested that attitudes towards young workers were highly influenced by their age — the difference, say, between a vulnerable, exploited child and an independent, unruly adolescent.\textsuperscript{104} It was significant, for instance, that William Blake (1757–1827) singled out chimney-sweeps as objects of compassion in both his \textit{Songs of Innocence} and his \textit{Song of Experience}.\textsuperscript{105} Not only were their working conditions horrendous, but chimney-sweeps were very small children. A year before Blake wrote his \textit{Songs of Innocence} a bill passed through parliament setting the minimum age to eight but this was largely ignored and it wasn’t until 1864 that the climbing boy system was abolished.\textsuperscript{106} The age at which children started work in other trades varied considerably but the findings of the 1843 Children’s Employment Commission Report were striking: ‘in general, regular employment commences between seven and eight’.\textsuperscript{107}

Apprentices were generally older but this was also variable. In the City of London’s seventy-eight livery companies, the starting age became steadily younger in the period 1575 to 1810, falling from a mean of 16.9 to 14.7 in the 1800s.\textsuperscript{108} Elsewhere, the age of apprenticeship, as gleaned from settlement examinations between 1700 to 1760 and 1835 to 1836, remained fairly constant at fourteen.\textsuperscript{109} Parish apprentices, meanwhile, tended to younger, particularly in London where Alysa Levene found an average starting age of twelve across the period 1751 to 1833.\textsuperscript{110} Amongst the autobiographers who were apprenticed to printers and recorded their age of apprenticeship, the average age was a mean of

\textsuperscript{110} Levene, ‘Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London’, p. 924.
12.9 and median of thirteen (out of a total of eleven), suggesting that they may have been slightly younger than usual for private apprentices outside of London.

Data from the 1841 and 1851 censuses, however, shows that the percentage of printers under the age of twenty rose considerably in this interval in most places in Britain (see Table 3). This may have been owing to an increase in the numbers of apprentices taken on at the expense of journeymen, a declining age of apprenticeship, or an increase in younger, non-apprenticed child labour in the industry. The percentages for London are lower than elsewhere in the country which again could support differing conclusions: the age of apprenticeship may have been higher or there could have been less abuse of the apprenticeship system. In any case it supports Peter Kirby’s conclusion that the capital generally suffered lower levels of child labour than elsewhere in the country.111

Table 3: Number of male printers under 20 in 1841 and 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1841 Total male printers</th>
<th>1841 Printers under 20 (% of total)</th>
<th>1851 Total male printers</th>
<th>1851 Printers under 20 (% of total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>6553</td>
<td>1020 (16)</td>
<td>10365</td>
<td>2288 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England &amp; Wales (excluding London)</td>
<td>9029</td>
<td>2231 (25)</td>
<td>11844</td>
<td>3887 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2446</td>
<td>869 (36)</td>
<td>3401</td>
<td>1302 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isles in British seas</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>45 (44)</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>83 (43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 1851 census was the first to give a more thorough breakdown of age groups with respect to employment. The figures show that the majority of child labour in the printing industry was in the age group most associated with

apprenticeship — fifteen to nineteen (see Table 4). However, the proportion of youngsters in the lower category, ten to fourteen, was far higher in Scotland and the Isles (which included the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man). Furthermore, Scotland also employed two boys in the age five to nine category (not shown in the table). This was almost certainly an underestimate, and indicates the presence of non-apprenticed boys in the industry, at least outside of the capital.\footnote{For the problems of using the occupational statistics in the census see Edward Higgs, \textit{Making Sense of the Census Revisited: Census Records for England and Wales, 1801–1901} (London: Institute of Historical Research and The National Archives of the UK, 2005).}

\begin{table}[h]
\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
& 10–14 & 15–19 & Total under 20 \\
\hline
London & 498 (22) & 1790 (78) & 2288 \\
England & 797 (21) & 3090 (79) & 3887 \\
Wales & 429 (33) & 871 (67) & 1302 \\
Isles in British seas & 26 (31) & 57 (69) & 83 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
\caption{Male printers under 20 in 1851 by age group (% of total)}
\end{table}

Although no firm conclusions can be drawn from this data about the age of apprenticeship in the printing industry, the evidence does point to variations in the overall age profile of the trade across the country and over time. Outside of London more youngsters were employed as a percentage of all printers and everywhere the age profile fell in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is significant that more boys were not employed at a very young age; whether printers started work on average at twelve, thirteen, or fourteen matters little since they were on the whole all adolescents. In the public eye, therefore, they presented a very different image to the younger children at work in other industries.

\textbf{Influence of the office}

If perceptions of relatively prosperous backgrounds, soft working conditions, and even their ages led to a lack of sympathy towards young printers, another major
reason for their poor representation can be found in attitudes towards the
environment in which they worked. These centred on the youngsters’ access to
products of the press (which might be subversive) and their association with adult
printers (who might be corrupting) and reflected a wider fear of the power of the
press at this time.

The involvement of young printers with political ideas was a significant
aspect of many representations from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Often
such opinions were supposed to have been imbibed from the materials boys came
across in the course of their work. In the Printer’s Devil! (mentioned above),
Nicholas encourages Idle Bob to gamble on five pounds belonging to his master.
As justification for the theft, Nicholas offers the following:

Your master’s! — nonsense! — all wealth should be in common — what’s
mine is yours, and what’s yours is mine. If we want what another man has
too much of, isn’t it right to take it? Don’t we print so every day? — and is
not the principal use of our printing presses to teach this wholesome
doctrine of universal property and to forget the laws of Meum and
Tuum?”

Another play, set in Paris, went further in attributing the authorship of a
subversive political pamphlet to a printer’s devil. One writer described the
‘confused Idea of Politics’ gained by a printer’s devil from reading an ‘anti-
ministerial’ newspaper published in his office. Another boy was ridiculed for
refusing to print a play-bill with ‘G.R.’ at the head on account of his Jacobin
principles: ‘That black fellow there, is a printer’s devil, as they call those sort of
gentry, and has thrown himself out of good bread, because the puppy will affect
to be of a party: what, should such fellows as he meddle with party!’

Association with adult printers was also suspicious:

---

113 The Printer’s Devil; or, a Type of the Old One: A Burlesque Extravaganza in One Act, p. 5.
115 Mary Latter, Pro & Con; or, the Opinionists: An Ancient Fragment (London: Printed for T.
    Lowndes, 1771), p. 78.
116 Chiron: Or, the Mental Optician, 2 vols (London: Printed for J. Robinson, [1758]), II, p. 139.
It would be unseemly in us to insist, that his constant intercourse with a certain class of individuals, whets his spirit, endues him with a peculiar look of intelligence; but so it is; the Devil, especially the newspaper Devil, is as distinct an animal from the mere errand boy, as is the wild ass of the desert from the ass of the sand man.\textsuperscript{117}

That ‘certain class of individuals’ were no doubt the anarchic, radical workmen that printers were supposed to be. Those who worked on newspapers, with their potentially subversive political views, were especially to be mistrusted. It is of course significant that representations always showed the precocious political awareness of youngsters to be of a radical, revolutionary tendency. As chapter five will demonstrate, the political ideas of printers in fact spanned the political spectrum. Still, there was a definite tendency towards liberal/radical views and these tendencies were the most public since they brought individuals into conflict with authorities.

Unlike in matters of behaviour, the autobiographers gave credence to the notion that their ideas were influenced by their working environment. John Bedford Leno (apprenticed around 1840) remembered the way in which two journeymen persuaded him of their radical political views. One was a Free Trader, the other a Chartist and he learnt about their ideas through listening to their conversations in the office and by borrowing printed material:

As [they] lost no opportunity of advancing their views, I was soon possessed of a tolerable knowledge of the tenets of each. This was supplemented by the perusal of the tracts issued by the Anti-Corn Law League, and the “Examiner” newspaper. Farrell lent me the former, the “Star,” and the “New Moral World,” and his opponent their antidotes.\textsuperscript{118}

It was not long before Leno himself became an active Chartist. Similarly, Edward Baines, according to his son, became involved in political discussion groups as an apprentice printer.\textsuperscript{119} He went on to become a Member of Parliament, supporting

\textsuperscript{117} ‘Printer’s Devil’, \textit{Caledonian Mercury}, 7 November 1839.
\textsuperscript{118} Leno, \textit{The Aftermath with Autobiography of the Author}, pp. 18–19.
\textsuperscript{119} Baines, \textit{The Life of Edward Baines, Late MP for the Borough of Leeds}, p. 19 and p. 23.
the Liberal party. In Norwich, Luke Hansard enjoyed the political debates which centred around his printing office:

in the evening assemblies at the door of our Shops … I was great among the little combatants of electioneering disputants. This wetted my zeal in the Printing office; and as often as a Whiggish Song, or Squib, was to be printed, if none of my party Poets or Authors were at hand, I ventured at something myself.¹²⁰

Hansard was a confirmed Tory even in youth but there is no doubt that his political ideas were developed by this unique access to political discourse. He went on to become the parliamentary printer.

Only Charles Manby Smith admitted to feeling some regret at the way in which he was influenced by the office environment. He particularly remembered a ‘confirmed and hackneyed freethinker and leveller’ who joined the office while he was an apprentice:

Though I had been too early and painstakingly instructed in the doctrines of the Christian faith not to be able to render a reason for adhering to it, I was yet too young to pretend to be its champion, especially against such an antagonist. I therefore held my peace, but unhappily did not continue to hold my faith in the same reverence as I had hitherto done.¹²¹

The unavoidable access to printed material also unsettled the young Smith. He was apprenticed during the time when Tom Paine’s *The Rights of Man* were read with ‘avidity’ and as a result of this and other works he concluded that he ‘learned more of the world and the way of it than perhaps it was profitable to know.’¹²² During a lull in trade he was moved over to the bookselling side of the business and had ample time to read. He remembered reading *The Age of Reason* and Bishop Watson’s *Apology for the Bible* ‘in order that both sides of the question might be fairly presented to my mind. I should have read neither. What mischief the infidel writer effected the bishop failed to repair.’¹²³ Despite Smith’s stated misgivings, he

¹²² Ibid., 8.
¹²³ Ibid., 10.
nevertheless went on to hold and express strong opinions about the rights of working men (again, these will be discussed in more detail in chapter five).

**Conclusion**

Later in the nineteenth century, portrayals of young printers became more sympathetic. *The Little Printer Boy* of 1878 heaped rewards on Tommie, a printer’s errand boy, who is good, works hard, does what he is told and reads his scriptures (see Figure 5).

![Figure 5: The Little Printer Boy](Image)

Source: The British Library, General Reference Collection 12809.aaa.44.

Significantly, this was after attention had been drawn by the Factory Acts Extension Act to exploitative child labour conditions outside of factories in industries including printing. But Tommie was also poor (his widowed mother was struggling to provide for her four young boys), and younger than apprenticeship age (he ‘hoped to be a printer’s devil’). He therefore represents a change in awareness of the identity of young printers at this time: they could now

---

be seen as vulnerable children rather than unruly adolescents, and as coming from poorer backgrounds than previously assumed.

Tommie’s story stands in stark contrast to the earlier negative portrayals of young printers. This chapter has shown how these representations may be accounted for by perceptions of the relative wealth of apprentices on entering their trade, the non-hazardous nature of their work and even their (teenaged) ages. The stereotype was not of pauper children with no connections forced at a young age into dangerous factory occupations, but adolescents whose families could afford the premium to have their sons apprenticed to a small workshop trade where their future prospects would be secure. They evoked no sympathy. Young printers furthermore had to deal with the suspicion generated by their particular line of work. The potentially subversive nature of the press and its printers were considered to have a destabilizing effect on youngsters.

But identities were far more complex than those depicted in the popular press. Apprentice printers came from an increasingly wide variety of backgrounds and faced conditions of work which, whilst not immediately hazardous, were exploitative and would result in negative long-term health consequences. In spite of their difficulties, many demonstrated a tenacious determination to continue their education and took every opportunity of improvement offered to them. Their experiences were shaped by the office environment — the products of the press and the people who worked there — but the effect these had on their character and attitudes were not usually regarded by apprentices themselves in a negative light.

For some commentators, apprenticeship has been seen as an important introduction into the social and cultural world of the adult workplace. Bert De Munck asserted that ‘apprentices are inculcated into the way of life associated
with the trade and are introduced to [its] norms and values’. To a certain extent this chapter has shown this to be the case: young printers worked alongside their adult counterparts in the same conditions and were influenced by their opinions. However, it would be a mistake to think that their experiences were homogenous or that they picked up any one set of ‘norms or values’. The values held by adult printers will be explored in the following chapters and will be shown to be diverse and at times contradictory.

125 See De Munck, Kaplan, and Soly, eds, Learning on the Shop Floor: Historical Perspectives on Apprenticeship, p. 4.
Chapter Two: Journeymen

In 1876 the *Printing Times* published a review of an autobiography written by the journeyman printer Robert Skeen. Throughout his working life Skeen remained a wage earner, first as a compositor and later as overseer. His attitude to work was applauded:

> from the beginning to the end of his long career [he was] always a subordinate: accepting manfully the inevitable minor inconveniences of his position; not envying his master, not repining at his own lot in life; but, with genuine self-respect, loyal and true to his employer …¹

The writer here accepted that the journeyman status was not always ideal, that others might have been envious of their master’s position, but this feeling is eclipsed by an emphasis on certain admired personal traits. Manliness, self-respect, and loyalty: these were carefully chosen descriptors, by then characteristic of the self-projected image of journeymen printers. Later on in the article, the writer even suggested the potential for moral superiority over masters by describing Skeen as ‘a character quite as honourable, and perhaps more commendable, than that of one who has founded a successful firm or amassed a huge fortune’.² The message to fellow journeymen was clear: have pride and dignity in your status.

This rhetoric was, however, new to the nineteenth century. By drawing on four key areas of journeymen printers’ identity — craft pride, sociability, respectability, and literacy — this chapter will demonstrate how numerous tensions existed in the interpretation of these concepts and how attitudes to them changed over time. The upholding of trade customs brought journeymen into conflict with some masters, alcohol abuse threatened the enjoyment of sociability, and ‘disreputable’ behaviour called into question the respectability of journeymen’s societies. Gradually, however, these tensions were weakened and a

² Ibid., 91.
new vision of work-based identity emerged which was based on loyalty, sobriety and self-control.

Traditionally, journeymen were craftsmen who had completed an apprenticeship and were working for a master, a change in status which in larger offices was marked by ritual humiliation, low-level violence and the enforced buying of drinks (in the twentieth century this ‘celebration’ became known as a ‘bang out’). In the early industrial period, journeymen printers were rarely on fixed contracts; the origin of the term journeyman is from the French journée, implying a day’s labour for a day’s wages. It is relevant, too, that the word journeyman suggests journeying, as in travel. Many journeymen printers did travel widely in search of work (this geographic mobility will be explored in chapter six). Others, however, remained with the same employer for many years. Robert Skeen, for example, worked in the same office for over forty years. In fact, the activities of journeymen’s societies, where membership was in the first instance to a local society, suggest that travel was only intended to be a temporary solution to finding work. Whilst most societies held some funds for the relief of printers on ‘tramp’, their work often encompassed the settlement of local trade disputes, something which could only be achieved with a fairly stable body of workers. One of the stated aims of the Edinburgh Typographical Society, for instance, was ‘to bring about an amicable adjustment, in cases of dispute between employer and employed’.

Not all wage earners in the printing trade, however, rallied under the collective banner of journeyman. As businesses grew in the nineteenth century, some tasks became divorced from the two traditional skills of composing and presswork. Readers and editors, for example, were not necessarily apprenticed to

---

3 Timperley, Songs of the Press and Other Poems, pp. 73–74.
the trade and were therefore sometimes considered to be outsiders. Similarly, the
overseer’s role was an ambiguous one, treading a middle line between the
employed and the employer. In 1834 the London Union of Compositors (LUC)
excluded overseers stating:

Its most violent opponents are to be found among that class of persons
denominated overseers, who, it is to be feared, abuse the situations which
they hold, and avail themselves of the opportunity they possess, to pour
into the ears of the masters numberless falsehoods and misrepresentations,
for the purpose of magnifying their own zeal for their employers’
interests.6

Later, overseers were seen as the representative of the employer and excluded
from chapel meetings.7 When it suited them, however, the journeyman’s fraternity
did embrace overseers. Robert Skeen, as shown above, was admired and claimed
by journeymen as one of their own. And in 1838 the overseer of Gore’s Advertiser in
Liverpool was described as ‘venerable and respected’ after he took part in the
town’s trade procession for Queen Victoria’s coronation.8

When looking for journeymen in the historical record there are three main
sites of activity: printing office chapels, early trade societies, and later trade
unions. The first of these, chapels, were the way in which journeymen organized
themselves in individual printing offices. They probably existed from the earliest
days of printing and were certainly well established by the time Moxon wrote his
manual on printing in 1683.9 A system of payments and fines helped to ensure the
smooth running of the office and harmony between workers, as well as providing
a collective pot of money for social activities outside the workplace. Membership
was effectively compulsory, at least (as we shall see) if one wanted to work in
peace. Often chapels worked in favour of masters by ensuring discipline within

---

6 Warwick Modern Records Centre, London Union of Compositors Reports, MSS.28/CO/1/8/1/1, 1833–
1845, p. 42.
7 John Southward, Practical Printing: A Handbook of the Art of Typographic, 6th ed. (London: The
8 ‘Coronation Festivities’, Liverpool Mercury, 29 June 1838.
9 Moxon, Mechanick Exercises, II, pp. 356–63. See also Child, Industrial Relations in the British Printing
Industry, p. 36.
the office, and masters might encourage them by contributing to chapel funds, although they were excluded from chapel meetings.

In the early nineteenth century, some masters became suspicious of chapels, regarding them as ‘a strong engine of combination’, and abolished them within their offices. They survived, however, and eventually did become concerned with industrial relations — in the closed shop system of the late twentieth century, chapels operated as union branches. This later history has coloured some views of earlier chapels. John Child praised them for sustaining a ‘spirit of industrial comradeship’ prior to the emergence of unions. But this is to underestimate their unusual nature. Chapels were unique to printing (although shoemakers had ‘shop committees’), and, tellingly, they continued to thrive independently of unions throughout the nineteenth century. Furthermore, as Donald Bateman has argued, their primarily social function meant that they had to be ‘ignored, weakened, disciplined, and reorganized before they could be used by societies’. 

Printers’ societies (usually termed ‘typographical’ societies) were independent of the workplace and originated in the late eighteenth century. They were often formed under the guise of benefit or friendly societies, in order to avoid suspicion of illegal combination, but some did meet more openly to discuss ways in which to improve pay and conditions. They did not, however, apparently engage in the same rituals, secret codes, or masonic symbolism of other

---

early combinations.\textsuperscript{17} After the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824, societies morphed into unions and began to more openly advocate for workers’ rights. For example, the LUC had as its first stated object the ‘protection and regulation of the wages of labour’.\textsuperscript{18} There was also a difference in the scale of operations: the LUC joined together two different compositors’ societies, while the Northern Typographical Union (NTU), formed around 1830, attempted to unite all typographical societies across the north of England.

Membership of these societies and unions was probably unusually high amongst printers compared with other trades. E. P. Thompson suggested that society men (a collective term for society and union members) comprised only one fifth or one sixth of all trades.\textsuperscript{19} By contrast, the LUC reckoned that around one third of the printing trade had contributed to trade societies in the twenty years preceding 1833.\textsuperscript{20} Outside of London, this figure may have been much higher. In Bristol, for instance, eighty-six per cent of journeymen were recorded as members of the Bristol Typographical Society between 1832 and 1833.\textsuperscript{21} All the same, it is important to bear in mind that the identities displayed and encouraged by the typographical societies and unions were not necessarily representative of all journeymen printers. Compositors working on newspapers in London, for instance, were reluctant to join the LUC.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Thompson, \textit{The Making of the English Working Class}, p. 277.
\textsuperscript{21} The society recorded 49 members and only eight non-members. Nine had left the City in search of work and were therefore not considered in this calculation. Bristol Record Office, ‘Bristol Typographical Society, Statement of Receipts’, MSS 34463/26, 1832–33.
union regulations on apprentice numbers led to several groups splitting from the NTU (this dispute will be described in chapter three).

A range of sources have been used here to draw out the characteristics of journeymen printers. Several sets of chapel rules have been studied covering almost 150 years, significantly enhancing other studies of printers’ chapels which have relied heavily on the chapel rules listed by Moxon and a few anecdotes from a small number of autobiographies. Early society records form another important source. Whereas other printing histories only had access to the papers of the LUC and the Manchester Typographical Society (MTS), I have additionally studied records of societies in Leeds and Glasgow. This provides for a richer field of study, the more so because these records frequently refer to, and even include, correspondence with other provincial societies. The minutes of such societies reveal much about the way in which their leaders wished to present themselves to the outside world, and in particular their understanding of what it meant to be respectable. Other useful sources which demonstrate the public construction of identity are press reports of trade processions and society dinners. Legal proceedings in the form of newspaper law reports and trials from the Old Bailey shed further light on the behaviour and activities of journeymen printers.

Craft pride
Historians have often noted the strength of craft pride amongst artisan working men. Sometimes it has been credited as an alternative identity construct to class. Robert Darnton, in seeking to explain the symbolic rebellion of one eighteenth-century Parisian printing office, claimed that, ‘the printers identified with their craft rather than their class’. Hamish Fraser suggested that craft consciousness gave way to a ‘wider working-class class consciousness’ in the nineteenth

23 Paul O’Leary has described the way in which urban processions formed and reaffirmed occupational and civic identities, see Paul O’Leary, Claiming the Streets: Processions and Urban Culture in South Wales, c. 1830–1880 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 9.
century,²⁵ but even then craft pride has been shown to have existed independently of political consciousness.²⁶ In spite of this acknowledgement of the importance of craft pride in the formation of artisanal identity, the nature of this pride has not been widely discussed. So, what exactly did it mean to identify with one’s craft?

In the first place, for printers, craft pride was strongly connected with the historicism of the trade. When Manchester celebrated the coronation of William IV in 1831, the town’s printers had someone dressed up as William Caxton, the first English printer.²⁷ They also carried flags bearing his name along with those of Wynken de Worde (another early English printer), Johannes Gutenberg and Johann Faust (inventors of printing by moveable type). In similar vein, many printers’ poems contained references to the history of the trade. John McCreery’s poem The Press, for example, included many prominent printers from the past.²⁸ In addition, virtually all printing manuals (of which there was a proliferation in the early nineteenth century) included a potted history of printing.²⁹ Since these manuals were intended for practising printers, it is probable that all journeymen would have been familiar with at least the basic outline of their trade’s past.³⁰

Printers were proud of the pedigree of their trade largely because of its perceived significance. Printing by moveable type was, and still is, acknowledged as an invention that changed the world (only the digital revolution in recent decades has rivalled its impact on human communications). The LUC’s membership cards graphically illustrated this glory in the power of the press by

---

²⁸ Timperley, *Songs of the Press and Other Poems*, p. 3.
³⁰ The importance of printers’ manuals may be indicated by the gift of a ‘Composers or Printers Guide’ to John Tyrer in the will of Edward Holland of Liverpool, see Preston, Lancashire Record Office, ‘Will of Edward Holland’, Liverpool, 21 January 1825.
depicting light beams emanating from a printing press, illuminating the surrounding darkness in quasi-religious symbolism (see Figure 6). A globe is centred on Europe, the geographic birthplace of the press.

Figure 6: London Union of Compositors membership card, 1836

At trade processions, printers carried flags bearing legends such as, ‘Dispeller of Darkness’, ‘Enlightener of Mankind’, or ‘The Press, the Safeguard of Innocence and the Dread of Tyrants’. Numerous printers’ poems expressed similar sentiments; witness the first stanza of the following:

Hail, noble Art! Enlight’ner of mankind,
And best preserver of the human mind;
To thee we owe emancipation bright
From dull-eyed ignorance to immortal light.

31 ‘The Coronation and Sunday School Jubilee’, Manchester Times, 10 September 1831; ‘Grand Procession in Honour of the Queen’s Triumph!’, Liverpool Mercury, 24 November 1820.
32 William Skeen, Typography or Letterpress Printing in the Fifteenth Century (Ceylon: Government Pres, 1853), p. 42. See also many inclusions in Timperley, Songs of the Press and Other Poems.
Journeymen were not the only printers to appreciate the significance of their trade, but they claimed special rights to its glorification as its operators. Apprentices had not yet learnt the necessary skills and masters did not always work on the shop floor; without journeymen, there would be no press. By the early twentieth century, public manifestations of such craft pride were unashamed, as this boast by Cork’s printers demonstrates: ‘Surely the world of progress and education has good reason to be grateful to the printing profession, for not only is it the medium of education and progress, but the commercial world would be at a complete standstill without the services of the inevitable printers’.\textsuperscript{33}

Journeymen were also well aware of the role of the press as a ‘fourth estate’. The newspaper press in particular was considered to have an almost constitutional role in defending the rights of citizens and warding off government corruption (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter five).\textsuperscript{34} The Reform Act of 1832 gave printers ample opportunity to show off this connection. An ode written by a printer for the Derby celebration of the bill credits the influence of the press:

\begin{quote}
Th’ eternal Press!
Corruption’s worms shall ne’er destroy,
But patriots shall its power enjoy…\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Similarly, when Manchester’s printers took part in their town’s celebrations to mark the bill’s passing they distributed a notice from their float which declared, ‘if the slightest importance may be allowed to attach to [printers] as a body, it must be owing to their connexion with that mighty and invaluable instrument the “PRESS”’.\textsuperscript{36} The printer Andrew Aird later remembered the Reform procession that had taken place in Glasgow and the printers’ role in it:

\begin{quote}
The picture rises up before me still, and I see some of the old worthies of the printing trade as they then appeared with their blue sashes and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{34} Barker, \textit{Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855}, pp. 2–3.  
\textsuperscript{35} Timperley, \textit{Songs of the Press and Other Poems}, p. 20.  
\textsuperscript{36} Manchester City Archives, ’Printed Details of Letterpress Printers’ Part in Celebrations in Honour of Passing of Reform Bill’, M71/2/19/12, 1832.
rosettes, medals and white aprons. Mr Milne was mounted in a cart, with a small Ruthven press in it. There … he was, with all his Radical energies, printing a demy 8vo bill. This leaflet detailed all the glories that would result to the nation by this Reform bill. As each copy was printed Mr Milne … threw it among the great crowds who lined the streets. He considered himself honoured by the laudable work of that day.37

These journeymen clearly felt they had played an important role in bringing about what they considered (at that time) to be a momentous change to the legislature.

Another important source of craft pride for journeymen printers was their self-appointed role as defenders of the customs of the trade.38 Two fundamental aspects of trade custom, according to journeymen, were that apprentice numbers should be limited (so as not to overcrowd the jobs market), and that journeymen should only work legitimately having completed an apprenticeship (so as to protect their skilled status).39 But there were many other customs which journeymen also tried to defend. For instance, in 1797 a journeyman printer in London argued against a charge of theft on the basis of a trade custom of obtaining free copies of works printed.40 And in Liverpool in 1842 journeymen argued against an increase in working hours claiming that ‘the recognised working-time in the printing business is, and has been for years, fifty-nine hours per week’.41

Crucially, as Eric Hobsbawm has argued for other industries, these customs contributed to journeymen’s wage expectations.42 Printers certainly were aware of the value of their labour, largely because it was so easily undermined. In 1834 the committee of the LUC declared,

37 Andrew Aird, Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters, and Printers, During the Last Sixty Years (Glasgow: Aird & Coghill, [1890]), p. 69.

38 That is, accepted terms and conditions of work, rather than social customs, although printing did also contain many of these, see John Rule, Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 195–98.


42 Hobsbawn, Labouring Men, pp. 344–70.
In all trades like ours, where the acquirement of the rudiments is easy, and where, after a year or two's practice, the labour of boys approached in value, in some degree, to that of men — there will, if men are not united, be always a supply of young hands; because thereby the profits of the master are increased, or he is enabled to underwork those who employ men.43

The adherence to custom, through the medium of combination, was here perceived as a way of protecting jobs and wages. Unsurprisingly therefore, there were disputes as to whether said customs were indeed customs and not just inventions to favour journeymen. The LUC addressed these doubts in 1833 when they stated, ‘we do not meet to establish new customs, but to destroy innovations’.44 Nevertheless, as will be discussed in chapter three, journeymen did use trade customs as a bargaining tool on unwary masters. Neither was this practice restricted to Britain: of printers in revolutionary France, it has been said ‘confronted with masters who knew nothing of the business they, the workers, presented themselves as the only true trustees of the art and mystery of the trade’.45

**Sociability**

In addition to the collective identity gained through a shared commitment to trade customs and craft pride, good social relations also helped to strengthen work-based identity among journeymen printers. Office chapels helped to ensure harmony at work and created the means for socialising outside of work, masters commonly treated workmen to annual dinners in a feast known as the ‘wayzgoose’, and typographical societies followed suit by organizing annual meals.46 These social activities all contributed to notions of fraternity, loyalty and

---

44 Ibid., 9.
solidarity. But the contexts in which printers engaged in sociability, and the purposes to which it was put, could vary quite considerably.

The importance of sociability was not of course restricted to printers. The enjoyment of ‘company’ has been shown to have encompassed many different types of social interaction, including both formal associations as well as habitual and voluntary associations. Peter Clark noted how British clubs and societies in the period to 1800, despite their numberless different interests and purposes, were united by a sense of sociability. Later, in the early nineteenth century, sociability was a key factor in ensuring cohesiveness amongst all journeymen’s friendly societies; in the words of one historian, ‘sociability was the flux which made the whole system work’. The public house has frequently been seen as a key site of work-based sociability. Clive Behagg, for instance, described the workplace and the pub as ‘twin streams feeding the same collective values and beliefs’. And Mark Hailwood has noted how seventeenth-century porters, shoemakers, coblbers and blacksmiths all gained a ‘positive and collective sense of occupational identity’ through participation in alehouse company.

The sustained importance of sociability amongst journeyman printers, both within and without the workplace, can be seen clearly in their chapel rules. These frequently specified the amounts due from members in order to celebrate various occasions. The earliest extant rules, listed by Moxon in 1683, include payments for when journeymen joined a chapel (known as the ‘bienvenue’), when they married

---

and when their children were born.\textsuperscript{52} Chapel rules from a mid-eighteenth century London office show that little had changed in the intervening period.\textsuperscript{53} Later rules from early nineteenth-century Nottingham additionally included payments for birthdays whereby the celebrant paid one shilling and every other member of the chapel three pence.\textsuperscript{54} The richest source of evidence of early nineteenth-century chapel sociability comes from the \textit{Bristol Gazette} chapel which kept minutes of its meetings between 1838 and 1872.\textsuperscript{55} These include lists of birthdays and wedding days, and, at the back of the volume, a chit detailing the way the money was spent. This consisted almost entirely of various quantities of beer. Other indications of sociability amongst the \textit{Bristol Gazette} printers are a list of wagers and a list of the members of the ‘Young Mens’ Enjoyment Society’ which charged three pence per week for subscription. Chapel payments also included fines for poor behaviour at work or actions which undermined the smooth running of the office; thus, the incentive of after-hours sociability contributed to harmony at work.

But access to sociability was certainly not a given. In fact, as in other trades, a complex ‘politics of participation’ governed the giving and receiving of sociability.\textsuperscript{56} The practice of withdrawing fellowship, for example, was a widespread punishment. Benjamin Franklin was excommunicated from a London chapel on account of refusing to pay a second bienvenue when he changed roles within the same office.\textsuperscript{57} He eventually paid up but only because his life at work had been made unbearable by the pranks of his fellows. The \textit{Nottingham Review} office had an escalating system of fines for those refusing to pay, but the final sanction was social exclusion: after one week of refusing to pay ‘he shall then

\textsuperscript{52} Moxon, \textit{Mechanick Exercises}, II, pp. 360–62.
\textsuperscript{54} Ernest Button (ed.), \textit{A Centenary Souvenir: A Hundred Years’ Record of the Nottingham Typographical Society, 1826–1926} (Nottingham: Boots Printing Works, 1926), [unpaginated; rule no. 8].
\textsuperscript{57} Franklin, \textit{Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin}, p. 48.
become an outlaw’. Furthermore, others were dissuaded from breaking this rule and conversing (other than on business) with the so-called outlaw by the threat of a six pence fine. Clearly, solidarity was required if the penalty of social exclusion was to carry any weight. In 1839, one London chapel got into comic difficulties over a lack of such solidarity. A member was ‘sent to Coventry’ after withdrawing from the LUC but, unfortunately for the chapel, another member objected to this treatment and was consequently also sent to Coventry. This cycle carried on, with other members objecting, and then also being excluded, until a greater part of the chapel was being kept in ignorance of chapel proceedings. Eventually the dispute was referred to the union.

Whereas the threat of withdrawing sociability was usually enough to sustain a certain degree of solidarity amongst journeymen, the act of reciprocal sociability was a more proactive tool in its promotion. In 1810, during a trial of journeymen printers for conspiracy, a fly boy gave evidence concerning the relations between the four defendants and the men in The Times office where he worked. The Times, then owned by John Walter I (1739–1812), had long been considered an unfair office because of its practice of employing boys on newspaper work, and its workers were in consequence blacklisted by the rest of the trade. The boy explained that the four defendants came to the office to persuade the men of The Times to demand an advance of one halfpenny per hour, adding the threat ‘if they did they would retrieve their character, if not; they would always be looked upon as rats, as they always had been’. The defendants sent for half a pint of gin which they paid for, all the printers then had a discussion about other offices, following which The Times’ men sent out and paid for another half pint of gin. The next day ‘all Mr. Walter’s men gave warning, all the

---

58 Ernest Button (ed.), A Centenary Souvenir: A Hundred Years’ Record of the Nottingham Typographical Society, 1826–1926, [unpaginated].
companionship, because Mr. Walter would not grant a halfpenny an hour’. This episode is interesting for it demonstrates the way in which it was possible to re-engage with one’s peers by adhering to a moral code of sociability, by entertaining and reciprocating in the purchase and consumption of alcohol. It also highlights the desire amongst The Times’ printers to belong to their fraternal group; in this instance their loyalty was to their journeymen brethren before their employer. In effect, sociability was equivalent to a form of networking; it helped to engage and solidify relationships within the trade.61

The link between sociability and alcohol consumption in these examples is revealing. One writer claimed that there was ‘nothing more disgusting than a dry chapel’.62 Writing in later life about the trade in the mid-nineteenth century, John Forbes Wilson wrote that ‘the occupation of compositor, pressman, or machine-minder was then considered as necessarily involving a certain, or rather uncertain, amount of intemperance’.63 Autobiographies abound with stories of drunken workmates, alcohol being consumed at all hours of the day. Stephen Quelch, for instance, remembered that the journeymen he worked with as an apprentice would, while the master was away, ‘amuse themselves by singing songs and whistling, and what they called “wetting their whistle,” that is, they frequented a public house very often, to put an “enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains”’.64 The office in which Benjamin Franklin worked in the early eighteenth century took an altogether more open approach to alcohol consumption at work by employing an ‘alehouse boy’ whose sole purpose was to keep the men (near fifty in number) supplied with beer during the working day.65 Of course, beers and

---

61 Phil Withington has similarly noted that institutional societies ‘perpetuated and regenerated themselves’ through sociability, see Withington, ‘Company and Sociability in Early Modern England’, p. 300.
63 Wilson, A Few Personal Recollections. By an Old Printer, p. 10.
64 Quelch, Early Recollections of Oxford, p. 57.
65 Franklin, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin, p. 47.
ales were more routinely consumed as beverages then, but stronger drinks were also taken. Andrew Aird remembered the ‘passion for intoxicating liquors’ gripping a ‘very large number’ of the three hundred or so compositors and pressmen working in Glasgow in the early nineteenth century. In one newspaper office he claimed ‘the “bottle” and glass were daily to be seen on the imposing stone at 4.30pm’. All this, he said, contributed to their ‘moral deterioration’.

The disdain felt by many commentators was in part a reflection of changing attitudes towards alcohol in the light of the temperance movement of the early nineteenth century. This movement gained strength from having both religious and political dimensions: free traders and temperance campaigners, for instance, were united against the government’s taxation policies on beer which they thought increased prices and drove people to hard liquor.Printers were identified as being in especial need of help. Charles Turner Thackrah in his 1831 report on the health of workers wrote that ‘in many towns printers are intemperate’. A few years later, in 1840, one of the stated aims of the Compositors’ Chronicle was ‘to promote temperance, frugality, and honesty,’ evidently in the belief there was a lack of those qualities in the trade.

Most journeymen printers, however, were probably less likely to be swayed by temperance arguments and more by the immediate threat of loss of income. In 1843 a master printer in Edinburgh commented,

I cannot but state, that a great deal of the distress prevailing in the business is to be attributed to intemperance. Although an enemy to machinery, if I

---

66 Aird, Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters, and Printers, During the Last Sixty Years, p. 82.
68 Thackrah, The Effects of the Principal Arts, Trades and Professions and of Civic States and Habits of Living, on Health and Longevity: With a Particular Reference to the Trades and Manufactures of Leeds, p. 24.
69 ‘Address’, Compositors’ Chronicle, 1 (7 September 1840).
cannot get sober men, I will be obliged to get a machine to get the work done in the time required.\textsuperscript{70}

Of all innovations, ones which threatened to replace skilled workers with machines were the most to be feared. Perhaps not coincidentally, the very same year saw the MTS ban alcohol from its meetings.\textsuperscript{71} As with other trade societies, the MTS’s earliest meetings had been held in public houses and access to beer during meetings was taken for granted. In 1827 the society decided to move to a different pub ‘in consequence of the general badness of the ale with which we are served’, and in 1834 a motion to restrict intake to one pint per member was lost by a ‘great majority’.\textsuperscript{72} By June 1843, however, the motion to ban alcohol altogether was won decisively by a majority of seventy-one to twenty-eight.\textsuperscript{73}

The ‘beer question’ at the MTS was brought forward by a Mr John Tinckler who complained of ‘the bad effect resulting from the admission of liquor into the room during the hours of business’.\textsuperscript{74} Although no further justification was given in the minutes, it is likely that in demonstrating their sobriety, and thereby severing the connection between their meetings and boisterous sociability, the MTS thought they could improve their bargaining position with masters. This was certainly the rhetoric being adopted by other workers’ organizations around this time. In April 1834 Robert Owen cautioned a meeting of his Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, ‘as long as intemperance shall be permitted \textit{within} the lodges … the producers of wealth and knowledge must continue to be the lowest and most oppressed members of society’.\textsuperscript{75} This was just a few days before the


\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Crisis and National Co-operative Trades’ Union Gazette}, 19 April 1834, no. 2, vol. IV, p. 13.
Copenhagen Fields Meeting when an estimated fifty thousand members of the union marched in support of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in a show of solidarity which was remarkable for its orderliness, lack of ostentation (no banners were allowed) and the absence of violence. Such a public display of restraint was the by-product of the new insistence on temperance among society men, and was all part of what Simon Cordery has described as their ‘political struggle’ to present themselves as respectable.

Demonstrations of sobriety during printers’ society meetings, however, did not preclude the continued enjoyment of sociability at other times. Indeed, some printers’ groups sought to present their sociability in a positive light and use it to their advantage. The following report of the Preston Typographical Society’s annual dinner in 1842 was an exercise in the public construction of social status:

On Monday last, the members of the Preston Typographical Society sat down to a dinner, provided for them by the Misses Stewart, at the Old Cock Inn, Church-street … The dinner was of the best description, everything that could please the palate, or add a charm to the entertainment, abounding in the utmost profusion. The cloth being withdrawn, the company proceeded to the immediate business of the evening, and to promote that kind feeling and brotherly love, which, it is desired, should distinguish them as a body. The greatest harmony and hilarity prevailed throughout the evening, to which all contributed until a late hour. During the evening, appropriate toasts, songs, and recitations, were given in a manner highly creditable to the individuals from whom they proceeded. Each toast was prefaced with neat and appropriate remarks, and drunk with cordiality.

Firstly, the printers here highlighted the quality and abundance of the dinner, separating themselves in the public’s mind from poorer working classes. Secondly, they emphasised their fraternity (‘kind feeling and brotherly love’), alluding to the collective interest which journeymen believed separated them morally from the self-interested individualism of masters. Finally, the journeymen established their

---

76 Even otherwise anti-trades union papers could find little to criticize in the proceedings, see ‘The Trades Union Procession’, *Morning Chronicle*, 22 April 1834.
78 ‘Printers’ Dinner’, *Preston Chronicle*, 22 October 1842.
credibility and urbanity through post-dinner toasts (reminiscent of the formal dinners of the urban elite). We are supposed to be left with the over-riding impression that journeymen printers were jolly and convivial, but also respectable and well-educated members of society. However, one doesn’t need much imagination to see an alternative reading: the ‘hilarity’ which lasted until a ‘late hour’ also suggests the effects of copious alcohol consumption, especially since the toasts, each ‘drunk with cordiality’, seem to have taken up the greater part of the evening. And the repeated use of the ambiguous word ‘appropriate’ in reference to the toasts and songs leaves room for the possibility that what journeymen in the context of their annual booze-up considered appropriate, could have been considered far from appropriate by others. The attempt to appear respectable within a social context was, however, significant. As will be discussed in the following section, notions of respectability began to take on new meanings and significance in the early nineteenth century.

**Respectability**

In 1829 a member of the MTS was brought before a magistrate and charged with felony. Although neither the crime nor the outcome was recorded in the minutes, the episode was clearly felt to be scandalous. The society’s leaders recorded their disapproval by stating, ‘this Committee have learnt with the deepest regret, that a member of our Society has, by associating with persons of the most depraved manners and abandoned habits, brought himself into a situation of all others the most to be dreaded by those who entertain any regard for their character’. It was not, however, mere regret that the men felt. There was also genuine alarm about the way in which the scandal would affect the reputation of the society: ‘it is the imperative duty of the Society carefully to preserve its *respectability* as a body; to

---

see that its character be not endangered by any flagrant indiscretions of its members’ [my italics].

It is clear what was unrespectable about this situation: a felonious printer, keeping bad company, with no regard to his ‘character’ was not a good advert for the society. But what of its active opposite, what did the practice of ‘respectability’ actually mean to the society’s leaders? Respectability has been a contentious issue amongst historians. Some have offered rather straightforward interpretations, such as F. M. L. Thompson whose mid-Victorian respectable man was ‘hard-working, reliable, reasonably sober, and a dependable family man’.80 Simon Cordery, however, in his work on friendly societies has pointed to a rather more complex picture: ‘while middle-class definitions rested on the premise that individualism and self-help were the twin foundations of respectability, friendly societies gained access to the social power of respectability by offering an alternative definition based on collective self-help and independence from external control’.81 Similarly, Robert Gray claimed that, ‘working-class respectability was more ambiguous than a passive reception of middle-class indoctrination’.82 Peter Bailey has gone further, identifying the fluid nature of working-class respectability among individuals (which varied according to space and time), but also suggesting that respectability was ‘a choice of role rather than a universal normative mode’.83 Respectability could, then, have different meanings in different contexts, and, crucially, could be adopted at will.

Appearance was the most obvious way in which printers fashioned their respectability. The membership card of the LUC (See Figure 6, earlier in this chapter) shows a pair of highly presentable journeymen, their polished shoes, well-fitting clothes and top hat intended as clear indications of respectability. Even

---

their clean-shaven faces would have been seen as a mark of respectability at that time. Appearance was also at the forefront of the minds of the MTS in 1826 when they presented their outgoing secretary with a ‘handsome pair of silver spectacles, enclosed in an elegant tortoiseshell silver mounted case; together with a neat silver pencil case’. Privately, too, printers aimed at respectability through their appearance. Thomas Gent, for instance, recalled with pride the day when, as a young journeyman printer, he was able to go out and buy himself a watch and chain for the princely sum of six guineas.

What respectable behaviour constituted in the eyes of typographical societies can be largely surmised from their rules and regulations. These rules, which detail the kinds of behaviour which were not to be tolerated, can be seen as evidence of what Patrick Joyce has described as the ‘moral remit’ of workers’ organizations. The Glasgow Typographical Society stated on their formation in 1817: ‘If any member enter the room intoxicated, or refuse to keep order when admonished by the President, or his representative, he shall forfeit 6d for each offence, and every oath uttered during the hours of meeting shall be subject to a penalty of 3d’. The Leeds society copied this rule almost verbatim in a revised set of rules two years later. Similarly, in Belfast in 1837 members were warned against being ‘disorderly or intoxicated’. The greatest fines (and possibly the greatest trouble) were at Manchester: ‘any member of the society who shall during the hours of

---

86 Gent, The Life of Mr Thomas Gent, p. 21.
meeting, beat, or strike, or threaten to beat or strike, any brother member, shall be fined ten shillings; and be suspended until such fine be paid'. The following entry from the minutes shows the need for the article:

Mr G. Thompson and Mr. G. Lloyd being much intoxicated and impeding the business were both fined and put out of the room; their conduct was violent and outrageous in the extreme; and deserving the severest reprehension. The conduct of Mr. W. Foster was also extremely blameable he being greatly the cause of Mr. Thompson’s violence.

If the typographical societies aimed at respectability through controlling the behaviour of their members, there was clearly still some way to go. Violence had been an accepted means of settling disputes within printing and other trades for some time, and may not have been seen by all as unrespectable. Notions of respectability can also be gauged from the emotive language used in societies’ records, particularly in discourses surrounding the concept of ‘manliness’. For the London General Trade Society of Compositors in the 1820s, unmanly behaviour included the use of ‘gross, insulting and unbecoming’ language while in Manchester it was considered unmanly to work on a Sunday (and thus break rank with society edicts). On the positive side, manly conduct was considered to be ‘efficient’ and ‘impartial’. For these printers, manliness was associated with self-discipline, duty and honour, and its opposite with coarseness and disloyalty; it was, in effect, shorthand for an entire code of respectable behaviour. But it is worth noting that in other contexts, and at other times,

---

92 Ibid., 3 August 1830.
93 Thomas Gent recalled in a matter-of-fact way fighting with a workmate in the early eighteenth century, Gent, The Life of Mr Thomas Gent, pp. 55–56. See also Behagg, ‘Secrecy, Ritual and Folk Violence: The Opacity of the Workplace in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century’.
95 Ibid., 1 April 1828.
manliness held different meanings, such as in the sensibility-laden representation of British sailors, or the admired physical prowess of the hero-explorer.96

In promoting these visions of respectability — in appearance, behaviour, and language — journeymen printers offered an alternative identity construct to the drunken and disorderly vision which had come to prevail. As already suggested in relation to the control of alcohol, this was quite probably a deliberate act to appeal to employers, and thus improve their bargaining position. Simon Cordery has argued that friendly societies appealed to middle-class notions of respectability in order to ‘appear credible, to defend their philosophy of voluntarism and to avoid middle-class intervention’.97 For printers, the impetus behind this need for a strong bargaining platform was a combination of the threat of unemployment (from increased use of technology and abuse of the apprentice system), declining standards of living (as will be discussed in chapter six), and a lack of sympathy from masters increasingly not brought up to the trade (as will be suggested in chapter three).

Proving their respectability to the employer class was not, however, without challenge. In 1827 the Printers’ Pension Society was set up by a committee mainly comprised of masters to provide relief for elderly and unemployed printers and their widows, in spite of the existing provisions of the journeymen’s own societies.98 Behind their reasoning was the rather patronizing assumption that ‘the application of the money, when collected, was not always likely to be the most judicious, in the hands of persons

---

97 Cordery, British Friendly Societies, 1750–1914, pp. 5–6.
98 Although the idea was said to have originated in a conversation between two pressmen, and the committee was originally intended to be comprised of an even numbers of masters, overseers and journeymen, the organization soon became dominated by masters, see James Shirley Hodson, A History of the Printing Trade Charities (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1883), p. 6.
unaccustomed to the disposition of a sum larger than sufficed for their daily wants’.\textsuperscript{99} This attitude undermined the emphasis on collective self-help which was at the heart of societies’ respectability.

A more public display of no-confidence was given by an angry Thomas Bean, proprietor of the \textit{Liverpool Albion}, who attempted to destroy all notions of the respectability of the Liverpool Typographical Society in an open letter. He wrote in the third person:

\begin{quote}
With respect to the writer … having been a member of the said society, he was so, for a short time, because, as a journeymen, he, like a hundred who have been and are members, could not help himself. He was, however, a very bad member, having been generally fined for non-attendance at the club meetings. He neither relished the smell of the beer nor of the tobacco smoke with which the club-room was redolent. Above all, he could not bear the noisy spouters who, then as now, make the floor of the pothouse the scene for the display of their “logic, and their wisdom, and their wit.”\textsuperscript{100}
\end{quote}

Bean’s sarcasm made plain his disapproval of the society’s ways. In a few sentences he reduced their cherished meetings to nothing more than boisterous pub outings. Not only that but he also belittled their intellect; as we shall now see, nothing could be calculated to more inflame the pride of a journeyman printer.

\textbf{Literacy}

Journeymen printers set great store by their literacy. Not for nothing did Charles Timperley write of the ‘acumen’ of journeymen printers in the preface to his \textit{Songs of the Press}.\textsuperscript{101} Similarly, the \textit{Printer’s Chronicle} referred to the ‘intellectual character and superior usefulness’ of printing in its opening number.\textsuperscript{102} As we saw in chapter one, printers were at the very least functionally literate and this would have been enough to give them ideas of superiority throughout most of the early industrial period. However, many journeymen took their learning rather more seriously. Chapter one showed the extent of autodidactic efforts amongst

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{99} ‘Printers’ Pension Society’, \textit{The Athenaeum}, 22 May 1830.
\item \textsuperscript{100} ‘The Printing Business’, \textit{Liverpool Mercury}, 30 September 1842.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Timperley, \textit{Songs of the Press and Other Poems}, p. [v].
\item \textsuperscript{102} ‘Address’, \textit{Compositors’ Chronicle}, 1 (7 September 1840).
\end{footnotes}
apprentice printers and many journeymen continued those efforts into adulthood. John Bedford Leno, for instance, published volumes of poems in the Buckinghamshire dialect, Charles Timperley wrote several histories of the printing trade and Robert Skeen engaged in biblical scholarship. The pages of the *Compositors’ Chronicle* were filled with the literary ambitions of journeymen printers. And then of course there were the autobiographies, most of which were written by men who had at one time worked as journeymen.

But the literacy of working men was not always viewed favourably by outsiders. Some masters felt threatened by the learning of their employees, working-class autobiography as a genre was met with scorn, and the ‘march of intellect’ amongst working classes was frequently ridiculed. Thomas Frost (1821–1908), the printer and radical writer, recalled that education was discouraged by the upper classes for fear that ‘if the working classes were taught to read and write it would be impossible to obtain servants,’ adding, ‘the first locomotive was not viewed with more fear and distrust than the first elementary school and the first penny periodical’. Journeymen printers seem not to have been put off by these negative attitudes. Possibly, as Jonathan Rose has surmised in relation to other autodidacts, they did not recognise criticism as applying to themselves: ‘they considered themselves respectable and intelligent, so when they came across allusions to the uneducated masses, they might assume that the author had others in mind.’

---


Literacy, however, was more than a source of pride and respectability for printers. It was also a means of fostering occupational identity. Jargon and technical language abounded in the printing industry and a favourite pastime of printers (and indeed others in this period) was to compose punning doggerel using this language. A collection of these efforts, entitled *Songs of the Press*, was published by Charles Timperley in 1833. The extract from the following poem, written for the Liverpool Typographical Society in 1823, will serve as illustration.

The italics (given in the original) show the printer’s language:

Ye famed men of letters, companions so jolly,
Take copy from me, and chase out melancholy;
To the point I’ll soon come, Sirs, nor run it on long,
Ere a period I put to the lines of my song.

Huzza! For the Printer, may care never press him;
But friendship and love ever bless him, huzza;

On Mersey’s wide margin I went on the tramp,
My stick in my hand, short of quoins, spirit’s damp;
When a fair slender female, of paragon face,
Began as soon to set me in much lower case.

Huzza! For the Printer, may care never press him;
But friendship and love ever bless him, huzza;

Her figure was capital — ’twas nonpareil,
Her look — Oh! What cut could ex-press such a smile?
Sprung she seem’d from no minion, but some English Earl,
For her rings were all set with bright diamond and pearl.

Huzza! …

As well as demonstrating printers’ pride in their literacy, and their ability to manipulate language, such literary exercises as these had the effect of excluding the uninitiated and helping to reinforce identity amongst printers.

Sociability was also at the forefront in many of these poems, particularly those composed for annual typographical society dinners: friendship, mirth and

---

fraternal love were celebrated and washed down with the inevitable ‘jovial can’ (songs and recitations, remember, were also an important feature of the Preston Typographical Society’s annual dinner described above). In this way, the *Songs of the Press* reveal a rather more lively side to typographical societies than that presented in the societies’ minutes. There is an irony here that a compilation which sought to show off the literacy of printers might have undermined their claim to respectability in the eyes of others. On the other hand, the *Songs of the Press* further demonstrate that sociability and respectability, for many journeymen in the early nineteenth century, were not yet contradictory concepts.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has revealed numerous contradictions and tensions within the identities of journeymen printers. At the most fundamental level there was a difference between the way many journeymen behaved in the relatively private spheres of work and public house, and the more public assertions of a somewhat contrived identity as put forward by the leaders of the typographical societies. The increasing emphasis on a particular vision of manly respectability, for instance, was seen to be at odds with a more convivial masculinity as witnessed in the drinking culture of the workplace, public house and society dinner. This latter identity was strongly linked with expressions of craft pride, as songs and poems eulogising the press were an integral part of social occasions. There was therefore a danger that in emphasising a more restrained and sober identity, journeymen risked losing that aspect of their identity — craft pride — which was specific to their trade.

But journeymen proved highly adaptable in the face of threats to their sense of collective identity. From the mid-nineteenth century, expressions of craft pride took on new forms. Trade journals, written by journeymen for journeymen, were initiated and their pages filled with news, history and gossip relating to the

---

108 Ibid., 30.
trade. And by the turn of the twentieth century, printers’ societies were consolidating their new interpretation of respectability through publishing retrospective histories and formal portraits of their officers. In Figure 7, the smart clothes, watch chains and handkerchiefs of the Scottish Typographical Association Executive Council, along with the formality of the setting (a long way from the pub), and even the well-groomed facial hair, all create an impression of temperance, intelligence and self-restraint, an impression which had come to symbolise the societies’ definition of respectability.

Figure 7: Scottish Typographical Association Executive Council, 1902

Source: Executive Council, *Scottish Typographical Association: a Fifty Years’ Record, 1853–1903* (Glasgow: Printed for the association by J. Horn, 1903), frontis.

There may have been a considerable element of invention in this display. As Patrick Joyce noted in relation to the printer-turned-poet Edwin Waugh, he had been ‘concerned to invent himself’, choosing to present himself as a paragon of respectability whereas just the opposite seems to have been the reality at

---

109 The *Compositors’ Chronicle*, *Typographical Protection Circular*, and *Scottish Typographical Circular* all began life in the 1840s and 1850s.

times. The philosopher Jacques Rancière, writing about nineteenth-century France, also noted the tendency of workers to adopt positive representations of themselves. Nevertheless, invention or otherwise, the new emphasis on respectability had a profound impact. In 1876 Robert Skeen was able to write:

The character of “Printers” has greatly improved since I first knew London. They were then spoken of as a “drunken set” … The general tone of morality is, no doubt, much higher than it was about sixty years ago. Then drunkenness was indeed very prevalent … The influence of the more sober and steady men, however, began to be felt.

In making these changes, and minimizing the ambiguities and contradictions within their collective identity, the relationship between journeymen and other members of the printing trade was affected. In particular, society men set themselves up against masters as an entirely distinct entity. They championed fraternity and collectivism over individualism, appointed themselves as the only true defenders of the customs of the trade and in consequence frequently clashed with masters over conditions of work. At the same time, their attempts to project particular identities were based on assumptions of what would appeal to masters: minimising sociability and maximising respectability were calculated to make societies appear credible. But the relationships between journeymen and masters were in truth more complex than the leaders of the trade’s societies would lead us to believe. Relationships were not at all similar because masters were not all the same. They had vastly different attitudes to their work, to business, and to the trade. The complex and changing identities of masters form the subject of my next chapter.

113 Skeen, Autobiography of Mr. Robert Skeen, Printer, p. 50.
Chapter Three: Masters and Proprietors

When master printer Frederick Thorowgood gave evidence before the House of Commons Select Committee on Printing and Stationery in 1822, he made a striking declaration: ‘I do not associate with any in the trade’.\(^1\) Such a denial of fraternity with the rest of his trade could hardly have been uttered by a journeyman printer. However, unlike journeymen, master printers had few formal or informal associations during this period. Within the workplace, they were isolated from their employees, barred from chapel meetings and possibly not even present on the shop floor. Outside the workplace, masters gathered together only occasionally and in limited numbers. In London, an association of master printers was ‘re-established’ in 1836 but there is little evidence of the earlier association beyond ad hoc meetings in response to specific crises.\(^2\) Masters in other towns only began to organize from the mid-nineteenth century and then in small numbers at first.\(^3\) In incorporated towns, masters had been required to join guilds, which had social as well as regulatory functions, but these were never specific to printers, and insistence on this practice was in any case breaking down in the late eighteenth century.\(^4\) It was then perfectly possible for a master like Thorowgood to conduct a printing business with no interaction with other masters and very little

---

\(^1\) This was by way of explaining his practice of giving out his own blank paper to his printers, and not being able to say whether this was common practice in other offices, ‘Report from the Select Committee on Printing and Stationery’, 1822, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* <www.parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk> [Accessed 26 February 2013], IV.401, p. 158.


\(^3\) Six masters formed an association in Aberdeen in 1846, see *Aberdeen Association of Master Printers*. Masters in Manchester joined together in 1874, but most other masters’ associations only began in the 1890s, see *Manchester and Salford Association of Master Printers, 1874–1924: Jubilee Souvenir* (Manchester: printed for the association, 1924), pp. 29–30. See also *Sessions, The Federation of Master Printers: How It Began*.

\(^4\) In the seventeenth century, printers in London, aggrieved by a lack of power within the Stationers’ Company, attempted to form a separate body but this was unsuccessful, see Cyprian Blagden, ‘The “Company” of Printers’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 13 (1960), 3–17. See also Blagden, *The Stationers’ Company: A History, 1403–1959* and Kellett, ‘The Breakdown of Guild and Corporation Control over the Handicraft and Retail Trade in London’. 
with his own employees. Work-based sociability, a key element in consolidating the journeyman printer’s working identity, could be almost entirely absent among masters.

This absence of work-based sociability begs the question of whether trade identity was at all important to masters and, if it was, how it might have been formed and maintained in the absence of any clear associative space. This chapter will address these questions through an examination of masters’ backgrounds, motivations and socio-economic positions. I will demonstrate how a decline in those brought up to the trade was related to increasing disparity in wealth and status as new masters, especially newspaper proprietors, entered the trade with large amounts of capital accrued from a wealthy, well-educated and well-connected past. These changes affected working relationships. In the final section of this chapter I will show how a background in the trade could be important in forming and sustaining networks, brokering reconciliation, and fostering peaceful and respectful relationships with employees. Nevertheless, despite masters’ divergent backgrounds and experiences, there were elements which helped to consolidate a sense of trade identity across hierarchical divisions. The uniquely political motivations of so many master printers found common cause with a workforce politicized at an early age, and certain admired personality traits also helped to ensure a degree of cohesion.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the term ‘master’ had a long and meaningful history for all trades. Under medieval laws, the right to carry on a trade in incorporated areas was restricted to freemen, which meant either serving an apprenticeship with a free master, being the son of a freeman or paying for the privilege. Freedom also necessitated membership of the relevant guild and conferred additional rights and privileges. Therefore, although it was possible to

---

buy one’s way in, most masters would historically have been practising craftsmen as well as business owners. However, from the eighteenth century onwards the term master did not necessarily imply direct practical involvement with one’s business. In fact it was used quite broadly, and anyone in charge of a shop or business, with or without employees, might be referred to as a master. The term remained in use amongst printers throughout most of the twentieth century, even when business sizes were so large as to suggest little practical involvement.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the term ‘proprietor’ also began to appear in relation to people who owned printing offices. Often the term was applied to newspaper proprietors who, as we shall see, were increasingly not brought up to the trade. Their direct involvement varied considerably, with many taking an active lead in editorial matters but not necessarily in the management or practical aspects of the business. The earliest use in the Proceedings of the Old Bailey was in 1797 when William Lane declared ‘I carry on, as proprietor, the Minerva Printing office’. Lane was not brought up to the trade of printing, but as a liveryman of the Poulterers’ Company, and thus a freeman of the City of London, he was able to transfer to the Stationers’ Company. His business encompassed printing, publishing and bookselling, but his main interest and chief importance lay in facilitating the start-up of circulating libraries. The court case, in which Lane prosecuted one of his employees for theft, revealed that Lane was reliant on his clerks for accounting purposes and seems to have been little involved in the day-to-day running of his business. Such a lack of engagement became increasingly common in conjunction with the term proprietor. In this chapter, I

---

6 ‘master, n.1 and adj.’, OED Online [accessed 22 August 2015].
7 The British Federation of Master Printers, formed in 1931 out of the Federation of Master Printers and Allied Trades, only changed its name, getting rid of the reference to master printers, in 1974, see Warwick Modern Records Centre, Papers of the British Printing Industries Federation, MSS.375col, 1905–95.
tend to restrict my use of the word to the owners of large newspaper businesses (as suggested by the source material) but it should be borne in mind that to a large extent the terms master and proprietor were interchangeable.

A major source for this chapter is the biographical descriptions in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) which have formed the basis for a prosopographical analysis. In total, 136 biographies were located, searching by the occupational descriptors ‘printer’ and ‘newspaper proprietor’, with a birth or baptism year between 1725 and 1824 (so that they were likely to have been active as masters between 1750 and 1850). Clearly, the sample was limited by notional and inconsistent descriptions: many involved in printing were omitted because they are described on DNB as, for example, journalists, publishers, or newspaper editors. There is also a limit to the sample’s representativeness: subjects are generally chosen because they did something interesting or remarkable. Nevertheless, despite their achievements, a wide range of experiences, upbringings, and fortunes are represented. For example, Edward Baines (1774–1848) was the son of modest farmer-turned-grocer but went on to become an influential newspaper proprietor, politician and historian, while Andrew Foulis the younger (1756–1829), despite matriculating at Glasgow University and inheriting his father’s printing office, died in the Edinburgh poorhouse. Many masters left more of a trace in historical records than journeymen, so evidence from DNB has been supported by a variety of other sources including rate books, trade directories and probate records.

**Backgrounds and motivations**

For some, the transition from apprentice through journeyman to master was little more than a rite of passage, a natural step in the lifecycle. Thomas Gent in the

---

early eighteenth century described how he gradually purchased the necessary materials out of his savings whilst continuing to work as a journeyman, explaining ‘it was purely the effect of Providence that seemed to push me forward in this continually transient life’. The assumed achievability of setting up as a master was so ingrained into social thought that the hugely popular eighteenth-century text *A Present to an Apprentice* talked of it as an expectation, the only question being how long young men should wait before setting up on their own (the author recommended a year or two as a journeyman first). However, by the early nineteenth century the reality for the vast majority of journeymen printers was a lifetime as a wage earner. As will be discussed in chapter six, static wages and high set-up costs made the notion of business ownership increasingly unattainable.

### Table 5: Number of masters brought up to printing, 1725-1824

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of birth</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>No. with printing fathers</th>
<th>No. apprenticed to printers</th>
<th>% brought up to trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1725–49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750–74</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775–99</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800–24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


But not all master printers were brought up to the trade. Table 5 shows how, from the DNB data, the numbers of those apprenticed to printers and those with printer fathers fluctuated over the hundred years studied. Combining these figures together, a maximum of sixty per cent of masters had a background in printing (those born between 1750 and 1774). This percentage fell significantly in

---

11 Gent, *The Life of Mr Thomas Gent*, p. 119.
the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to only thirty-nine per cent of those born between 1800 and 1824. This decrease coincided with the declining power of guilds and the final repeal of the Statute of Artificers in 1814 which meant that anyone could practise any trade anywhere in the country.

The decline in those brought up to the trade also corresponds to a huge rise in those described as ‘newspaper proprietor’. Of those masters born between 1800 and 1824, seventeen are described in this way, the same number as all those born in the preceding seventy-five years. Although the descriptions are those applied by the DNB editors, the trend confirms contemporary descriptions, as identified in the introduction to this chapter. Moreover, the rise in newspaper proprietors mirrors a dramatic growth in newspaper publication at this time: titles in provincial England rose from around forty in the mid-eighteenth century to 130 in 1832, an increase which has been shown to have outpaced population growth.13

The backgrounds of these newspaper proprietors were more likely to have been outside of the trade than those simply described as ‘printer’. Only thirty-eight per cent of newspaper proprietors were brought up to the trade and, of these, two had fathers who also owned successful newspaper businesses (Edward Baines and John Walter II). Many of the others had well-educated backgrounds: several attended university and had had careers in law, medicine or business before setting up newspapers. Sampson Perry (1747–1823), for example, trained as a physician, practised as a surgeon and wrote books on bladder, kidney and venereal diseases before turning to newspapers in his forties.14 As with other newspaper proprietors, he probably brought significant financial resources to the venture. Perry’s motivation to enter the printing trade was apparently political. His first paper, the Argus, was a joint venture with Jonathan King and was one of moderate opposition, but a few years later King left the partnership and Perry

---

took the paper in a more radical direction, facing several libel prosecutions as a consequence.\textsuperscript{15}

Explicitly political motivations were typical of the new breed of incoming newspaper proprietors. John Edward Taylor (1791–1844), the founding proprietor of the \textit{Manchester Guardian} stated in his prospectus for the paper that it would ‘zealously enforce the principles of civil and religious liberty, warmly advocate the cause of reform, endeavour to assist in the diffusion of just principles of political economy, and support, without reference to the party from which they emanate, all serviceable measures’.\textsuperscript{16} Although there were reasons why the stated position of a newspaper did not always coincide with the proprietor’s own political opinions (as we shall see in chapter five), in Taylor’s case the desire to influence political debate through the press had been stirring for some time. After education in his father’s classical academy, he had been apprenticed to a cotton merchant, becoming a partner in the business before he was twenty-one.\textsuperscript{17} But alongside his business interests Taylor began to involve himself in liberal politics. He visited the reformist journalist Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) when he was in prison for libel, wrote articles for the liberal \textit{Manchester Gazette}, and in 1818 faced a libel charge of his own for writing a handbill thought to have provoked an arson attack on the Royal Exchange. After hearing Taylor conduct his own defence, John Childs, the radical printer of Bungay, suggested that he might start his own newspaper.\textsuperscript{18} Three years later Taylor did just that; with the financial support of the leaders of the moderate

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{18} John Childs was at Taylor’s trial as a friend of Archibald Prentice, who wrote a lively account of the proceedings, see Archibald Prentice, \textit{Historical Sketches and Personal Recollections of Manchester} (London and Manchester: [n. pub.], 1851), pp. 132–45.
reform movement, the *Manchester Guardian* was set up in 1821 with Taylor as sole proprietor and editor.¹⁹

Political motivations were not, however, restricted to those masters entering the trade from outside; in fact many of those brought up to the trade were also highly motivated by a political, or social, agenda. As we saw in chapter one, it was difficult for young printers to avoid becoming politicized within the trade, by being exposed to the political opinions of journeymen, visiting authors, and the contents of the material they printed. One who may have been affected in this way was Egerton Smith (1774–1841). Smith was closely connected with printing from birth: his father had a printing and stationery shop in Liverpool and although Smith was just fourteen when his father died, his education into the industry was continued through an apprenticeship to James Ashburner in Kendal in Westmorland.²⁰ Meanwhile his mother continued the family business, handing over to Smith on the completion of his apprenticeship. Smith subsequently set up the liberal newspaper the *Liverpool Mercury*, and became one of the most energetic campaigners for social reform in north-west England in the early nineteenth century. He was instrumental in the formation of many charitable institutions in Liverpool including a Night Asylum, the Apprentices’ & Mechanics’ Library and the Liverpool Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.²¹ He was also a vocal supporter of parliamentary reform.²² Though from altogether different backgrounds, J. E. Taylor and Egerton Smith would surely have had much in common.

Of course, master printers shared with other business owners a myriad of other motivations: the desire for security and power, for instance, and especially

---

²² 'Triumph of Reform', *Liverpool Mercury*, 7 September 1832.
the desire to provide well for a family (see chapter four). But the explicitly political motivations of so many printers distinguished them from other business owners. The political atmosphere of such printing offices also affected apprentices and journeymen, and was an important contributor to printers’ collective identity.

**Socio-economic status**

In 1840 the *Mirror Monthly* printed an article which compared the large, modern and industrial printing business of William Clowes with a small jobbing office in the late eighteenth century which contained only two wooden presses, where the apprentices slept on the shop floor, ate frugal yet nourishing food, and went to church on Sunday with their master and mistress. The writer had been one such apprentice and his description suggests nostalgia for a certain type of master printer:

> Insignificant as the above office may appear in comparison with those of the present day, yet the proprietor was a “Canny mon for a’ that.” He lived — as all printers ought to live — like a nobleman: kept plenty of company — relieved the poor — subscribed to the various charities; went annually to the Bank and deposited a good round sum, the surplus cash of the profits of this trade.

In many ways this portrait of a master printer chimes with ‘middling’ narratives: an independent trader of increasingly comfortable means with a wide circle of respectable acquaintances and sound philanthropic principles. Indeed, he fits neatly into Peter Earle’s tripartite description of middling sorts in London in this period which defined firstly by economic function (occupation), secondly by size of income and thirdly by manners and behaviour. The emphasis on an associational world with its involvement in voluntary and charitable organizations

---


has also been noted (though not without challenge) as a typical feature of urban middle-class life.26

Figure 8: Egerton Smith’s business premises

Source: John Harwood, ‘Part of Lord Street and South John Street’ (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1829). Smith’s premises are the second from the corner building, downhill.

Many master printers continued to fit this description into the nineteenth century. Egerton Smith’s charitable activities, for instance, though clearly motivated by his liberal political outlook, could also be framed in terms of the creation and maintenance of urban middle-class respectability. As with other wealthy masters, Smith also occupied substantial and well-built business premises (see Figure 8) whilst keeping a separate home address.27 The DNB data furthermore shows that many others held positions in local government (including churchwarden, borough reeve, high bailiff, magistrate, and mayor).

---


Table 6: Probate values in wills of master printers, 1775–1850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Min. value (£)</th>
<th>Max. value (£)</th>
<th>Mean (£)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (£ to 2 decimal places)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1775–99</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>142.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800–24</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>589.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825–50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>921.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: probate documents located via North East Inheritance Database; Cheshire Wills Database; London Metropolitan Archives Consistory Court Index; Oxfordshire Wills Index, 1516–1857; Salisbury Wills Index, 1464–1858; and the printed indexes of the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire.

Yet the socio-economic identities of masters underwent a fundamental change in this period, becoming much more diverse than these examples suggest. Probate values, though not unproblematic as evidence of an individual’s wealth, offer a basic indication of this diversity.\footnote{Issues relating to probate values include lack of accuracy, the exclusion of freehold property from the value, and not accounting for debts and expenses, see Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans, and Nigel Goose, eds, When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England (Oxford: Leopard’s Head, 2000); Karen Grannum and Nigel Taylor, Wills and Probate Records: A Guide for Family Historians (Kew: National Archives, 2009), p. 85.} As Table 6 demonstrates, printers’ wealth on death ranged from twenty pounds to four thousand pounds. In terms of standard deviation, this can be represented as an increasing divergence from the mean of around one hundred and forty pounds in the period 1775–99 to well over nine hundred pounds in the period 1825–50. The actual spread of wealth among master printers is likely to have been even more extreme (the limitations of the
will sample will be discussed in detail in chapter four). The wealth estimates given in the DNB biographies, for example, range dramatically from William Harrod who died ‘impoverished’ to John Walter II whose wealth was estimated at ninety thousand pounds at his death in 1847.\textsuperscript{30}

This increasing divergence in the wealth of master printers is also observable at a local level. Rate books from the township of Manchester between 1801 and 1841 show the rateable value of property (which might also have included stock contained within premises), and were used to calculate the tax liability of occupiers for the purposes of poor law administration and relief.\textsuperscript{31} They are a good indication of the prosperity of a business and its proprietor; indeed, the compilers of the Westminster Historical Database have argued that ‘the rack rent valuations … may serve as a proxy for income and as a measure of social standing’.\textsuperscript{32} That said, the data presented here is based on businesses rather than individuals so, for instance, ignores the financial involvement of multiple parties, or additional real estate (in the directory for 1841, fifty-eight per cent of master printers in Manchester listed a separate home address).\textsuperscript{33} As with the probate data, the Manchester rate books show a dramatic increase in the variation of assessments towards the mid-nineteenth century (see Table 7). Whereas the figures at the lower end of the spectrum varied little through the years analysed, assessments at the top end soared from forty-five pounds to well over two hundred pounds.


\textsuperscript{31} Manchester City Archives, Manchester township and parish: rate books, M9/40/2/1-713, 1801–41. Businesses were located using trade directories and are therefore also subject to the limitations of directories as a source, particularly in terms of accuracy and consistency. The extracted data relevant to printers can be found in Appendix I.


\textsuperscript{33} Pigot & Slater’s General and Classified Directory of Manchester and Salford, (Manchester: Pigot & Slater, 1841).
Table 7: Printers’ assessments, Manchester township, 1801–41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Min. value (£ s)</th>
<th>Max. value (£ s)</th>
<th>Mean (£ to 2 decimal places)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (£ to 2 decimal places)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13.61</td>
<td>12.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>34.76</td>
<td>24.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>235.15</td>
<td>52.12</td>
<td>53.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: see Appendix I.

These extremes were not however extraordinary cases; variation was evenly spread across the assessments, and in fact became more evenly spread as time went on. Table 8 shows the assessments divided into four quartiles (the largest values are in the first quartile, the lowest in the fourth). In 1801, twenty-seven per cent of master printers in Manchester had their business property valued in the top quartile, thirty-six per cent in the bottom quartile and eighteen per cent in each of the middle quartiles, but by 1841 the rental values were divided almost equally across the range.

Table 8: Quartile distribution of printers’ assessments, Manchester township, 1801–41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartile</th>
<th>No. of printers (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>3 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>11 (99)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: see Appendix I.

The business with the highest rates in 1841 was that of Pigot and Slater who conducted copper plate and lithographic printing processes in addition to letterpress printing. Obviously, the more enterprises carried on, the more space
was required, and the greater the cost of stock and machinery, hence the higher rental assessments. Pigot and Slater’s premises were on Fountain Street, a relatively newly laid out road consisting of substantial buildings. James Pigot, the founder of his company (Slater was a former apprentice), also had a private residence in Chorlton-on-Medlock, a comfortable suburb of Manchester. He was recorded in the census for 1841 as living in a household of six which included a female servant (also a basic indication of status). At the other extreme, George Innes operated a simple letterpress printing business on Cock Gates, in an old part of town near the Cathedral where property tended to be cheaper. Innes apparently lived above his shop as no separate address was recorded in directories. And whereas Pigot was a well-known publisher, particularly of trade directories, Innes’ name appears on only a handful of imprints. He probably had to rely on jobbing work (i.e. the production of ephemeral material) to make his modest living.

James Pigot and George Innes exemplify the difference between what has been described as the ‘petite-bourgeois manufacturer’ and ‘artisan small master’. As Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt noted, ‘there was an irreconcilable gap between men and women out of work, who sought to survive by opening a small shop or a workshop, and the well-established traders and master craftsmen of a town’. But whilst wealthy masters are relatively prominent in historical records, the experiences of small masters are more difficult to

34 Ibid.
36 See, for instance, The Cheshire Enchanter, or, the Legend of the Iron Gates (Manchester: G. Innes, junr., [1820?]).
uncover. One master who may have had a similar experience to George Innes in Manchester was the Chartist printer John Livesey who, after being imprisoned in 1840, claimed that as a jobbing printer he had been earning only fifteen or sixteen shillings a week, an amount well below the wage of a journeyman compositor and more on a level with a cotton spinner.\textsuperscript{39} Not surprisingly, such printers did not readily identify with other, more wealthy business owners. In 1842 one reluctant master in Edinburgh, forced into business on his own account because of lack of work, wrote, ‘having been nearly forty years a journeyman, I am essentially one to the backbone; and, indeed, have never reckoned myself anything else.’\textsuperscript{40}

Increasingly, then, master printers in the early nineteenth century cannot be classified. This chapter will now question how these diverse identities impacted on their relationships with journeymen and with the wider trade.

**Trade relationships**

Towards the end of his life, the newspaper proprietor John Passmore Edwards (1823–1911) reflected on the difficulties of starting periodical publications in the early part of the nineteenth century:

> It was no easy matter ... when the taxes on knowledge were in full swing, and before modern Education Acts came into operation, to commence and establish a magazine, with experience and without capital, or with capital and without experience; and, of course, doubly more difficult to achieve success without both money and experience.\textsuperscript{41}

According to Edwards, then, both capital and experience were necessary in order to run a successful printing business. The need for capital is self-evident: being able to purchase abundant type and high quality presses, perhaps even printing machines, would have increased output and given a competitive advantage. The ability to withstand initial losses while the business grew would also have helped.


\textsuperscript{40} Typographical Society (Edinburgh), ‘Unto the Master Printers of Edinburgh: The Memorial of the Journeymen Printers of That City’, p. xiv.

But, as this section will demonstrate, experience also contributed to the success of a business, largely through the formation and sustenance of productive workings relationships.

In 1838 the publisher Charles Knight (who had been apprenticed to his printer father) suggested that the ability of a master to turn his hand to work would set a good example to workmen. In his guide to the printing trade, journeymen who indulged in Saint Monday (a commonly-held practice of abstaining from work on Monday) were seen to be put to shame by their master who did their work for them: ‘fortunately the master can work himself, and is not ashamed of working, though he is wealthy and a man in authority’. In Knight’s scenario, the workmen were suitably chastened when they eventually returned to work; their master’s ability to work himself brought about their eventual obedience.

Aside from the ability to work themselves, experience of the printing business would also ensure that masters were not taken advantage of by employees who knew their business better than they did. As suggested in chapter two, journeymen used their knowledge of trade customs as a bargaining tool with masters. In 1797 the master printer George Cawthorne accused one of his employees of stealing a number of items which had been printed at his office. The defendant, Stephen Hickson, claimed a trade custom of workmen being allowed free copies of every item they printed. Under cross-examination Cawthorne was questioned about his background during which it emerged that for most of his working life he had been a grocer. When Cawthorne later asserted that there was no established right to free copies in the printing trade he was promptly put down by the defence lawyer who quipped, ‘but we will hear that rather from persons

---

who were bred to the business, than from a grocer’. Hickson was found not guilty. Although the judge was keen to point out that his acquittal should not ‘decide the right’, Cawthorne’s lack of credibility within the trade seems to have worked in the defendant’s favour.

A background in the trade might also provide useful networks of connections. In 1810 a threatened strike by journeymen in Manchester tested the connections of masters in the town to the full. Joseph Aston, a writer-turned-printer, described the strategies used to his friend James Montgomery (1771–1854), the poet and proprietor of the *Sheffield Iris*:

> Mr Cowdroy has got 2 hands coming from Mr Fletcher of Chester both clever lads – he hopes also for a third from another office in Chester — these with his own 2 apprentices & he hopes will carry his paper through … Messrs Wheeler — have similar assistance promised — & Mr Harrop says he is prepared for the Battle.

William Cowdroy, Charles Wheeler and his son, and James Harrop had all been brought up to printing. Cowdroy and Wheeler senior had been apprenticed to the trade and worked as journeymen whilst James Harrop had inherited his father’s successful business in the town’s market place. The relationship between Cowdroy and ‘Mr Fletcher of Chester’ dated back to 1785 when Cowdroy had successfully managed Fletcher’s office during his incarceration for libel. Fletcher probably felt indebted towards Cowdroy, enabling the latter to subsequently call in a favour. With these good connections, and the experience to be able to turn their hand to work themselves in a crisis, these masters had little to fear from a strike by journeymen.

---

Aston on the other hand, with no background in the trade, was struggling. He hoped his friendship with Montgomery might be the source of assistance, as indeed it had been in the past. When Aston had announced his new newspaper venture in 1804, Montgomery patiently answered all of Aston’s practical questions, giving extensive advice on many aspects of running a printing business, including wage rates in various locations, costs of paper, duty, carriage, and recommended suppliers for type.47 Now Aston wrote to Montgomery asking him to ‘lend me one, two, or three Apprentices who can work at Case,’ explaining that ‘though the other Masters promise to assist me, yet I should wish to be provided with some relief to add to the common stock’.48 Aston’s inexperience may perhaps excuse his apparent blindness to the magnitude of the favour he was asking: three apprentices who were capable of composing text as well as journeymen were not likely to be easily spared by a small provincial printing office. There is no evidence of Montgomery responding to Aston’s cry for help and their correspondence fell off sharply after this incident. Every few years Aston wrote rather plaintive pleas for renewed friendship but Montgomery seems to have been unwilling to reciprocate and their correspondence never regained its former frequency or warmth. In this case at least, networks secured through long experience in the trade proved more effective than ones based on social acquaintance.

Elsewhere, masters who had been brought up to the trade proactively contributed towards peaceful relationships beyond their own office. In Leeds, Edward Baines, the proprietor of the Leeds Mercury, whose name was said to be ‘almost revered’ by journeymen printers, was thought to have contributed to the reconciliation process in another office by speaking ‘a word in season’.49 He was also one of the signatories, on behalf of employers, to a new scale of wages agreed

with journeymen in 1858. In their centenary souvenir, the Leeds Typographical Society noted approvingly that two or three other masters signing this document had previously been members and officials of their society.\textsuperscript{50} It seems likely that such masters with a background in the trade had a better chance of earning and keeping the respect of journeymen, especially if they advocated for journeymen’s causes amongst fellow masters.

But it was not always necessary to have been brought up to the trade to be successful. J. E. Taylor, the founder of the \textit{Manchester Guardian}, used his and his investors’ knowledge of the textile trade to appeal to the business class in Manchester, adding business acumen to their considerable capital investment. To manage the practical side of the business, Taylor engaged an experienced journeyman printer, Jeremiah Garnett, as overseer — a strategy that was widely employed by other proprietors not brought up to the trade. The business relationship between Taylor and Garnett was evidently positive because five years after the foundation of the \textit{Manchester Guardian} Garnett became a partner in the business with a third share of the profits. However, the difference in the two men’s backgrounds may have undermined any closer personal relationship. Taylor’s fiancée Sophia Scott wrote to her brother at the outset of the venture assuring him that the newspaper would not interfere with Taylor’s business (i.e. cotton trade) interests ‘as there is a person to take the labour of it’.\textsuperscript{51} It seems unlikely that Sophia would have welcomed her husband’s ‘person’ into her home as an equal.

Joseph Livesey (1794–1884), famous for his advocacy of temperance, was another apparently successful master printer who came from outside the trade, although in his case from altogether more humble origins. Born in 1794 in Walton-le-Dale, Lancashire, he was orphaned early in life and grew up in poverty, working as a handloom weaver from a young age to support himself and his

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{51} Ayerst, ‘Guardian’: Biography of a Newspaper, p. 23.
grandfather (Figure 9 shows his childhood home and the basement in which he worked). As a teenager, he discovered in an enterprising departure that he could make more money selling cheese, a business which grew successful enough for him to move to Preston and then to embark on a self-funded printing venture in 1832.52 At first, the press was set up in his house in order to publish temperance tracts, but in 1844 he was able to expand his business to produce the weekly liberal newspaper the *Preston Guardian*. Richard Cobden (1804–1865) apparently stated that he ‘never remembered a case of a paper succeeding as this had done in so short a time, and subject to the same competition’.53 After all, using John Passmore Edwards’ terms of reference (cited at the opening of this section), Livesey had neither experience nor (significant) capital.

Figure 9: Birthplace of Joseph Livesey

![Birthplace of Joseph Livesey](image)

Source: © Lancashire County Library and Information Service.

Instead, Livesey’s success apparently owed more to his character and ideals, and the respect he managed to gain from his employees. On his retirement

---

52 Livesey continued to profit from his cheese business throughout his lifetime and the company still bore his name a century later, see *Livesey & Toulmin, Cheese Merchants, Preston [Company Brouchure]* ([Preston]: [n. pub.], c. 1905).

in 1860 eighteen of his journeymen wrote and signed a glowing address, written on vellum, framed, and presented to him at his home. It began:

We, the undersigned persons, employed upon the Preston Guardian newspaper . . . are anxious to express our grateful sense of the numerous favours received by us from your hands, and to record our conviction of the extended usefulness of your labours, and the purity of motive by which your conduct in public and private has been regulated. Your example cannot fail to exercise a great influence upon the young men of the present and next generations . . . Your biography when written will exhibit one of the most notable instances of "the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties," and of its true application. Patient industry, singleness of purpose, directness of aim, modesty and confidence, unostentatious charity, and practical benevolence, are the salient traits of character which your long life has embodied. These qualities have won for you the respect of all earnest men, and have enlisted the affection of those who have been immediately associated with you . . . your anxiety on all occasions, and by every means which you considered legitimate, to promote the comfort and happiness of the persons in your employment, establishes a claim on their gratitude, and we fully recognise and admit our share of these benefits . . .

Several elements of this encomium are revealing of the way in which Livesey fostered good relations in his office. Firstly, his workmen recorded their gratitude for Livesey’s benevolence as an employer: the ‘numerous favours’ received and his ‘anxiety’ to promote their ‘comfort and happiness’. Next, the men drew attention to his ‘pursuit of knowledge under difficulties’. Like many journeymen printers, Livesey was immensely proud of his autodidactic education, claiming that ‘I seldom got a meal without a book open before me at the same time, and I managed to do what I have never seen any other weaver attempt — to read and weave at the same time’. Livesey’s workmen also recorded their ‘conviction of the extended usefulness’ of his work. Possibly this referred to his many and varied activities for social reform; as chapter five will demonstrate, a liberal political bias was often shared between journeymen and their masters. Livesey’s ‘moral egalitarianism’ (anti-paternalistic, convinced by his own example that working

54 Ibid., 49.
55 Ibid., 6. Livesey was not in fact the only weaver to boast this particular feat, see the description of William Latto, a Chartist weaver, in Rose, The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes, p. 61.
men could bring about their own salvation without the help of church or state) may have especially appealed to his men. Finally, Livesey’s character was emphasised: his ‘patient industry, singleness of purpose, directness of aim, modesty [etc.]’. Livesey set great store by being a working man. He professed to prefer the company of ‘poor people’ and was keen to stress the working element of the ‘men of Preston’ who campaigned alongside him for temperance. In short, despite Livesey’s lack of experience in the trade, his humble background, autodidactic education, modesty and benevolence as a master, along with his liberal outlook, apparently found common cause with his journeymen and provided the basis for the respect he evidently commanded within his office.

Significantly, however, Livesey’s relationship with the wider trade was not always so positive. Early on in his printing venture, in 1836, the NTU included his name on their blacklist writing, ‘Mr. Livesey’s Office continues unfair; at present there is only the notorious rat Edward Shepherd engaged there’. A circular letter the following year from the secretary, John Backhouse, to all branches of the union revealed that Shepherd had since left the office and gone to Carlisle, and that Livesey had advertised for a replacement. Backhouse warned against applying for the situation: ‘As Mr. L. has now three apprentices, besides two or three of his own boys assisting in his office, you will, of course, know how to appreciate such application’. Again, in October of 1837, Backhouse wrote that ‘Mr Livesey, of Preston, was determined to introduce a fourth apprentice, and thus render his office unfair’.

---

57 Joseph Livesey, Reminiscences of Early Teetotalism (Preston, [1868]), p. 5.
Livesey was far from being alone on the blacklist: in the late 1830s the NTU instigated a sustained, and often vitriolic, campaign against masters who took on more than two apprentices, unless they also employed more than four journeymen. A maximum of three apprentices was allowed to larger offices. Livesey appears to have contravened this edict by having an ‘unfair’ proportion of apprentices to journeymen. He further exacerbated the situation by engaging his sons (who had not been apprenticed) and the journeyman, Shepherd, who for some reason had already fallen foul of the union.

It is easy to see the appeal of such methods for new masters and why tensions arose over union regulations. As Clive Behagg noted in relation to early nineteenth-century Birmingham, small manufacturers were often seen as ‘bad’ employers due to their financial inability to fulfil the formal workplace obligations increasingly expected of larger firms.61 However, the ruling on apprentices in the printing trade was contentious not only among masters but also among members of the union. In Hull, printers formed a new society in 1838 in objection; in an open letter to all the typographical societies in Britain and Ireland they expressed concern at ‘the spirit of hostility’ the rule had created amongst masters, and, seeing that it did no good, suggested a ‘more philosophic — a more philanthropic — a more fellow-feeling remedy’.62 Journeymen in Leeds also split over the apprentice question around the same time.63 The existence of journeymen who sided with masters on this issue (and perhaps others) obviously undermined the credibility of the union and its ability to dictate equitable terms and conditions of work across the trade in northern England. But the division also underlines the complexity of relationships within the trade at this time. The conceptual space between masters and men was fluid, and cooperation between the two depended

on a wide range of factors including a master’s background, character and opinions.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the social and economic identities of master printers diverged considerably during the early industrial period. This was largely due to newspaper proprietors entering the trade from outside with capital earned elsewhere. It is questionable whether these masters identified with the printing trade to any great degree. Their multiple careers, business interests and lack of direct involvement in practical aspects suggest that they would have felt little of the craft pride which bound journeymen together. Their main motivation was political influence, and they were prepared to risk large sums of capital in its pursuit. In the case of newspaper proprietors such as J. E. Taylor, security generally came from businesses outside of printing, power from their hope that through print they might influence political debate. It is no coincidence that the six Members of Parliament in the DNB sample were all newspaper proprietors: today’s media moguls were in effect born in the early nineteenth century.64 By the mid-twentieth century, it was claimed that ‘every great man wishes either to own a newspaper or to own ships’.65

The increasingly diverse backgrounds of masters complexified relationships within the trade. Those entering from outside might face disputes with journeymen and their unions over ignorance of, or disregard for, trade customs such as restrictions on apprentice numbers. Meanwhile, those masters brought up to the trade sometimes used their experience and sympathy with journeymen to broker peaceful relations, though they were also better placed to

64 These were Edward Baines (1774–1848), Herbert Ingram (1811–1860), John Francis Maguire (1815–1872), Sir John Gray (1816–1875), John Walter (1818–1894), and William Saunders (1823–1895).
withstand their demands. However, differences in backgrounds were not always as significant as might be supposed. Certain mutually-respected values were also important. Diligence, modesty and trustworthiness were valued by masters just as those qualities in a master elicited the respect of employees. And the explicitly political motivations of many masters was a unifying factor, finding common ground both with masters who had been politicized as apprentices, and with journeyman who took an active interest in what they printed. This was not simply a story of increasing alienation between employers and employees resulting from the move from small workshops to large-scale industry.

Part one of this thesis has revealed an increasingly diverse picture of identities within the printing trade in the early industrial period. Chapter one showed how more apprentices entered the trade with low educational standards and from relatively poor families. This affected journeymen too, as increasing numbers of freed apprentices resulted in reduced employment opportunities. In response, journeymen clung to their work-based traditions and sought to consolidate their vision of trade identity in typographical societies. In the face of rising tension between masters and men, journeymen attempted to maintain continuity within the trade, emphasising and reinforcing their notions of the true printer’s identity, even if this was a rather artificially created and at times contradictory concept.

Part two of this thesis will now investigate some of these sites of trade identity in more detail, as well as looking at others which have so far remained hidden from view. Chapter four will consider family firms, examining in particular the role of women in what was an increasingly male-dominated industry. Following this, chapter five will explore the nature of political identities within the trade and the degree to which they provided a means of cohesion. Finally, chapter six will examine the fragile line between success and failure, including possibilities for social mobility, and the consequences of business failure, imprisonment and unemployment.
Chapter Four: Family Firms

Family enterprise in the early industrial period has been the subject of much research. We now know that family firms proliferated in this period, forming the majority of small businesses.¹ But there is also some confusion over their management and persistence. For many historians, family firms, as with other small businesses, were short-lived, and vulnerable to economic fluctuations, misfortune and mismanagement.² Problems with succession are said particularly likely to have blighted the family firm.³ Others, however, have taken a less negative stance, suggesting that family business should only be seen within the context of family priorities, and that their termination was not necessarily evidence of economic failure.⁴ New research is also now emerging which points to socio-economic differences in the persistence and management of family firms,

---
suggesting that their continuance, particularly by women, was far more likely among lesser traders.5

This chapter explores the longevity and organization of family firms in the printing trade. As I will demonstrate, individual printing businesses were unusually long-lived in the early nineteenth century, something which can in large part be attributed to a high incidence of family involvement. Although the most common model was of a partnership or transfer between father and son, widow proprietors made a significant contribution to long-lived printing businesses. And yet, as the second section of this chapter shows, women were rarely recognised in the inheritance strategies of will makers which tended to favour male relations. Printers placed an unusual degree of importance on intergenerational transfer; where no sons were present, surrogate heirs were found in the form of nephews or even more remote relatives. Finally, the organization of family firms will be scrutinized, looking especially at the gendered use of family labour. Despite their significance to long-lived firms, the proportion of widow proprietors among printers declined during the early industrial period, leading the trade to become even more male-dominated than it had been earlier in the eighteenth century.

Personal and social identity was closely associated with family enterprise. The historian Andrew Popp recently suggested as much when he wrote, ‘to the firm flowed family resources and labour, family money, the family home in some instances — but also, and above all else, provision, dignity, respectability, and independence were generated for the family’.6 Joanne Bailey has also emphasised the role family played in the retrospective formulation of personal identity in a broader context.7 When that family was engaged in the same occupation, family as well as trade identities were necessarily strengthened. Work brought families

together, and identified the family to outsiders. Thus, the inheritance decisions of family firm owners (as with all will-making) were part of a public performance concerned with the consolidation of posthumous reputation — they were not only acts of duty and affection towards surviving family members.\(^8\) Whether it was a father passing on a business to a son, a widow continuing a business after the death of her husband, or a childless uncle leaving a business to his nephew, family was a means of reinforcing work-based identity, and passing that identity onto the next generation.

However, the nature of family firms — their management, structure and succession — varied enormously. The very meaning of ‘family firm’ allows for a variety of interpretations. Dynastic patrilineal arrangements between fathers and sons are frequently-cited examples of family firms, though they were probably most common among relatively wealthy families. True primogeniture was rare outside of the elite.\(^9\) Meanwhile, high levels of transfer to wives have been noted in studies which focus on middling groups.\(^10\) The role of siblings, and the wider relationships they created (uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews), is often overlooked but these were another crucial means of extending networks and increasing opportunities for work within family enterprise.\(^11\) There is even an argument for including master-apprentice relationships among analysis of family firms — we know from Naomi Tadmor’s research that the meaning of ‘family’ in the

---


eighteenth century could encompass household family as well as blood relationships.\textsuperscript{12} John Filby Childs and Robert Childs, who inherited their former master’s printing business in Norwich in 1821, would fall into this category, though it must be said that this was an exceptional occurrence, at least among the printers I have studied.\textsuperscript{13}

Differences in the organization of family firms based on occupation during the industrial revolution are a particularly neglected area of research. Alastair Owens’ study of family firms in Stockport is one of the few to distinguish between different occupational groups, in this case between cotton manufacturers, tailors and drapers, and publicans and brewers.\textsuperscript{14} Amongst his findings, he noted that tailors and drapers enjoyed higher levels of longevity. Perhaps significantly (though Owens himself did not suggest this), tailors and drapers were the one artisan sector in his study group. Barker and Ishizu claimed that their results showed ‘little evidence that certain types of business were more or less likely to be continued by families’, but then gave examples of highly-skilled trades (watchmaking, shoemaking, peruke-making) that did continue where those in largely retail-based sectors (inn-keeping, flour-dealing, pawnbroking) ceased.\textsuperscript{15}

Could there be something in the skilled nature of artisan trades which meant owners were more interested in the succession of their businesses? Perhaps craft tools and equipment were invested with emotional meaning — would this make their owners more likely to want to pass them on to a relative rather than have them sold? It may well be that a strong artisanal identity, as identified elsewhere in this thesis, was a key factor in the persistence of printing firms.


\textsuperscript{14} Owens, ‘Inheritance and the Life-Cycle of Family Firms in the Early Industrial Revolution’.

\textsuperscript{15} Barker and Ishizu, ‘Inheritance and Continuity in Small Family Businesses During the Early Industrial Revolution’, p. 232.
Gendered identities are another significant area in the discussion of family firms. Discourse surrounding ‘separate spheres’, for example, has questioned the nature of women’s involvement in the workplace and the type of work undertaken, as well as men’s involvement in domestic arenas. The idea that men and women’s lives occupied increasingly discreet spheres (in contrast to an earlier ‘joint sphere’), or that women’s work was restricted to clearly gendered roles such as needlework, has come under sustained criticism. We have been warned that separate spheres may have been an ideal which corresponded poorly with reality, that separate spheres has been overplayed (and that joint spheres ideology was resilient), and that separate spheres was just one of many discourses through which men and women made sense of their lives. Other writers have stressed the importance of domesticity to many men’s private and public lives, from the early modern period through to the Victorian era. Furthermore, Andrew Popp has highlighted the fluidity between gender roles demonstrated by one entrepreneurial marriage: ‘[John and Elizabeth Shaw] defy our crude and fixed characterizations of what it was to be a man and a woman in the early nineteenth century. They each moved constantly between multiple roles, identities and relationships’.

Nevertheless, as this chapter argues, printing offices did become more masculine spaces during the course of the early industrial period. Though the existence of female printing proprietors has been used to question both the extent of separate spheres ideology, as well as the supposed gendering of occupation, I

---


will show that the numbers of women in printing declined considerably during the nineteenth century. Again, a closer attention to the specifics of occupational communities could be a key to unlocking the ways in which gender identities played out in the early industrial period.

A major source for this chapter is a sample of ninety-nine probate documents (specifically last wills and testaments — hereafter simply wills), proved between 1750 and 1850. These cover a wide geographic area and represent the full range of testatory courts (consistory, archdeaconry and prerogative). Wills offer valuable insights into the priorities and hopes of individuals both during their lifetimes and after death. Although most followed a commonly-used legal format, there was considerable scope for individual testators to reveal much about their business and family lives; it is this qualitative information which I have analysed here. Any study of wills has, however, to be mindful of the problems of poor representation. Only a fraction of the population made wills in this period — perhaps around fifteen per cent of the dying population in 1858. Urban retailers (which would include printers) may have been proportionally more numerous among will makers, though craftsmen and shopkeepers were found to be underrepresented in one study. Women were especially unlikely to


20 The wills were located by searching on 'printer' in the North East Inheritance Database; Cheshire Wills Database; London Metropolitan Archives Consistory Court Index; Oxfordshire Wills Index, 1516–1857; Salisbury Wills Index, 1464–1858; and the printed indexes of the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. It was not possible to study all the printers' wills in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury but a small sample was taken based on known individuals studied elsewhere in this thesis, plus eight wills made by women testators.


leave a will, largely owing to the legal status of married women’s property prior to the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882. Where women did make a will, they usually used civil terms such as ‘widow’ rather than occupational labels. Many widow proprietors therefore escape my sample, though I have located eight wills in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury left by widows who described themselves additionally as ‘printer’. The majority of the wills are assumed to have been written by master printers. Two wills obviously by journeymen were discounted on the grounds that they did not own a business to pass on, but there remains the possibility that others which do not mention a business were also written by journeymen. Another major source for this chapter is trade directories, which will be discussed in the following section.

Longevity

It is generally assumed that the majority of family businesses were short-lived in the industrial period. Studies by Geoffrey Crossick, Stana Nenadic, R. Lloyd-Jones and A. A. Le Roux, C. Young, and Alastair Owens have all contributed to this argument. There are, however, notable differences in levels of longevity across these studies, as well as in location, sampled years, and industry. For instance, Nenadic found just five per cent of book trade firms survived beyond ten years in late nineteenth-century Edinburgh, whereas Owens found that forty-one per cent of tailors and drapers survived for a similar length of time in early nineteenth-century Stockport. This section further challenges the assumption that family firms were short-lived by demonstrating high levels of longevity among printing firms, the majority of which were run by families.


My sample is taken from the trade indexes found in local directories for Manchester and Liverpool over a twenty-year period between 1814 and 1834. Although directories may have been unreliable and uneven in their coverage, this was the same methodology adopted by Owens and therefore my results may be broadly comparable. Similarly, I have treated businesses as surviving firms where individuals entered into new partnerships or new premises, as well as those that passed between different family members. The results show strikingly high levels of persistence among printing firms (see Figure 10). After ten years, eighty-two per cent of firms were still in existence in Manchester and seventy-one per cent in Liverpool. After twenty years, an impressive forty-seven per cent were still in business in Manchester and forty-one per cent in Liverpool. The true longevity of these firms was in many cases much longer than twenty years, extending well before or after the sampled dates.

Figure 10: Survival of printing firms in Liverpool and Manchester 1814–34

The majority of these long-lived businesses were transferred between family members at some point in their history.\(^{26}\) In 1824, seventy-one per cent of printing firms in Manchester, which had survived the ten years from 1814, were operated by families. By 1834, after twenty years had passed, that figure had risen to eighty-eight per cent. In Liverpool, the proportion of persistent firms which were operated by families was lower, though they were still in the majority: fifty-nine per cent in 1824 and fifty-seven per cent in 1834. In both towns, therefore, family ownership was a significant factor in the persistence of printing firms. Far from being short-lived, family firms were conspicuous by their long-term success.

The models of these family firms did, however, vary. In Manchester in 1824, half of the firms which had survived from 1814 (five cases) involved the transfer of a business between a father and a son, either during or outside this period. For instance, the firm of Harrop operated in Manchester for over seventy years during which time it passed through three generations down the line of the eldest son. Joseph Harrop, who was apprenticed to the printer of the *Manchester Magazine*, started the firm in 1752 by establishing a rival paper which would continue as the *Manchester Mercury* until 1830. He was succeeded by his son James Harrop in 1788 and then his grandson in 1824.\(^{27}\) During the whole of this time, the firm was based in Market Place, right in the heart of the town, from where they also operated the post office for many years (see Figure 11).

---

\(^{26}\) Family firms were identified through comparison with trade directories before and after the sampled years, in addition to comments made in contemporary sources, see J. A. Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool, Historical and Topographical*, 2 vols ([n.p.]: Longman, Green, 1875), ii; Richard Wright Procter, *Memorials of Manchester Streets* (Manchester: [n. pub.], 1874); J. T. Slugg, *Reminiscences of Manchester Fifty Years Ago* (Manchester: [n. pub.], 1881); Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing*.

Harrop’s premises were located in the slender building, centre-left, indicated by the ‘post office’ sign. Source: Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives, Manchester Central Library (reference: m03005).

Another persistent firm in Manchester in 1824 was that of William Dean who had until the previous year been in partnership with his brother Randle on Market Street since around 1800. Partnerships among brothers were a fairly common occurrence among printers, as indeed they were in other industries. The partnership between the Dean brothers was, however, terminated by Randle’s untimely death in 1823, after a ‘long indisposition’, at the age of forty-eight. This seems to have hastened the collapse of the firm and William filed for bankruptcy in 1830. He may even have been the ‘W. Dean’ who was awarded relief from the MTS in 1827.

---

29 ‘Marriages and Deaths’, Liverpool Mercury, 31 October 1823. See also Preston, Lancashire Record Office, ‘Will of Randle Dean’, Manchester, 1824.
30 London Gazette, issue 18705, p. 1475. See also Slugg, Reminiscences of Manchester Fifty Years Ago, p. 79 and p. 89.
The one other category of persistent family firm in Manchester in 1824, accounting for four cases in my sample, was those managed by widows. Three of these women — Martha Cowdroy, Isabella Russell and Alice Swindells — were in fact the only women listed as owners of printing businesses in 1824. Thus their presence in long-lived businesses can be seen as disproportionately high compared to all printing firms. Neither was their involvement short-lived. Isabella Russell managed her business for at least eight years between 1821 and 1829, and Mary Bancks for a similar length of time between 1807 and 1815. Most impressive of all, Alice Swindells headed her business on Hanging Bridge for around thirty-seven years between 1791 and 1828. Her husband, George, had operated a letterpress business at the same address from around 1788 (he was listed as a pattern maker before this). Alice did not relinquish control of her business until around the time of her death in 1828 aged seventy-four — her son John Swindells first appears in the directory for 1829, by which time he would have been forty-three.\footnote{Assuming this was the ‘John Swindles’ who was baptised at Manchester Cathedral to parents George and Alice on 29 January 1786. A George Swindells and Alice Anderson had been married in the cathedral on 15 October 1778 and an Alice Swindells was buried at the newly-built St Ann’s church on 4 February 1828. Information from Family Search, <https://familysearch.org>, [accessed 10 August 2015].}

In some cases, the involvement of widows may have been in the manner of ‘holding operations’, keeping a family business afloat until a son came of age.\footnote{Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes}, Rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 210.} But Barker and Ishizu found many more examples of women such as Alice Swindells retaining control of businesses even after their sons had reached the age of majority.\footnote{Barker and Ishizu, ‘Inheritance and Continuity in Small Family Businesses During the Early Industrial Revolution’, p. 234.} Amongst printers, there is also evidence of widows taking sons into partnership rather than handing over to them entirely. In Liverpool, for instance, the two businesses involving women in 1824 were apparently run conjointly with sons: ‘Nevett, widow and brothers’ and ‘Harris, widow and brothers’. Again,
these firms had survived the previous ten years. Elsewhere too, this pattern of management is evidenced in long-lived firms. The Angus family in Newcastle, for instance, ran a successful business with Margaret Angus taking over on the death of her husband, first on her own while her children were still minors and later in partnership with her sons.\textsuperscript{35} One of her sons, Thomas Angus, died in 1809 leaving his share in the partnership to his brother George. In his will he suggested that his mother was still the dominant partner when he referred to business property ‘lately purchased by my said mother Margaret Angus’.\textsuperscript{36}

The strength of persistent businesses, then, owed much to the involvement of families. In particular, women played a crucial role in their long-term success, managing businesses, bridging gaps in intergenerational transfer, and as the dominant partner with their sons. Nevertheless, as the rest of this chapter will show, women were far less likely to inherit family firms than their male relations, and became less numerous among printing firms during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

**Inheritance**

A significant number of printers’ wills (thirty-nine out of the sampled ninety-nine) specified intentions for the family business, or at least parts of it such as a share in a business, the stock in trade, implements or other business materials. Of these thirty-nine, the vast majority (thirty-two) intended for such business assets to be transferred between family members (see Table 9). In only one instance was a business bequeathed to (apparently) a non-family member.\textsuperscript{37} In another case, the testator, Thomas Cutler, directed his executor (again, apparently a non-family member) to use his discretion either to sell the business or to carry it on for the


\textsuperscript{36} Durham University Library, ‘Will of Thomas Angus’, Newcastle, 1809.

\textsuperscript{37} Richard Leigh left his share in the business to his partner Thomas Wolley, see Preston, Lancashire Record Office, ‘Will of Richard Leigh’, Manchester, 1833.
joint benefit of himself and the widow. Explicit instructions to sell were given in only five cases.

Table 9: Intended outcomes for businesses where specified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfer of business assets within family</th>
<th>Other intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>son(s) directly</td>
<td>son(s) indirectly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: probate documents located via North East Inheritance Database; Cheshire Wills Database; London Metropolitan Archives Consistory Court Index; Oxfordshire Wills Index, 1516–1857; Salisbury Wills Index, 1464–1858; the printed indexes of the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire; and Wills 1384–1858 (the index for Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills).

These findings contrast markedly with other studies which have shown both lower levels of intent to transfer businesses within the family and a greater desire to see firms sold. In Robert Morris’ sample from Leeds, only twelve per cent of wills made provision for the transfer of business assets. Owens found in his study of family firms in Stockport that one quarter to one third of firms were directed to be sold, stating that ‘intergenerational transfer of firms was rare in all sectors’. Barker and Ishizu, however, found higher levels of family transfer in Liverpool and Manchester, something which they attributed to the largely modest status of their sample group. They concluded that small businesses were often thought to be ‘worth most to surviving family members as going concerns’.

Among printers in my sample the desire to pass a business on to a family member was apparently unrelated to the value of the estate. Stated probate values

---

38 Chester, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, ‘Will of Thomas Cutler’, Chester, 1812.
39 The total sample was 362. Thirty-five mentioned stock in trade and twenty-four made more specific reference to the transfer of the business. See Morris, Men, Women and Property in England, 1780–1870, p. 119.
41 Barker and Ishizu, ‘Inheritance and Continuity in Small Family Businesses During the Early Industrial Revolution’, p. 239.
range from forty pounds in 1768 to four thousand pounds in 1848 (which, even allowing for inflation, is still a considerable range). There were, however, differences in the way in which the inheritance of businesses was managed in relation to the rest of an estate, and between the category of family member chosen to inherit, both of which may have been based on the economic situation of testators.

In some cases, the nature of the business transfer suggested that support for the family was the primary concern of testators. John Brown of Wigan, for instance, directed in 1842 that his printing, bookselling and stationery business be carried on by his trustees, ‘for the support and maintenance of my said wife and for the education bringing up and apprenticing of my children until the youngest of them … shall attain the age of twenty one years’.42 Similarly, Frederick Thorowgood locked himself into a deed of co-partnership with his brother for twenty-one years on the understanding that in the event of one of their deaths the surviving brother would carry on the business with the deceased’s share of the profits to be directed towards his family, by which Frederick meant his wife and daughter.43

In three instances, testators directed that the preferred family member should have to purchase materials of trade from the estate, indicating concern that inheritance of the business should not compromise the economic security of other family members. When Christopher Clark wrote his will in 1844, for example, he directed his executors to let his son have the opportunity to purchase his trade premises in Lancaster, plus his stock in trade, printing presses, and types.44 His intention, presumably, was to give his son the chance to purchase a business at a favourable rate, free from competition, whilst also ensuring sufficient provision for his wife and other children, one of whom was still a minor.

44 Preston, Lancashire Record Office, ‘Will of Christopher Clark’, Lancaster, 1848.
In many other cases, however, inheritance of the family business was entirely separated from the rest of the estate, suggesting that its continuance was important to testators above and beyond provision for the family. Peter Joynson in Chester in 1764, for instance, left his son his ‘printing press and all the types and materials thereto belonging’ outright and separate to the residual estate, which was left to his wife. Similarly, Thomas Reed in Sunderland in 1840 left his share in his business to one of his sons (the other already being in partnership), free of obligation, while his residual estate was put in trust for the equal benefit of his four children. James Harrop, meanwhile, was so determined to see his newspapers the Manchester Mercury and Manchester Volunteer continued that he set aside a yearly salary of two hundred pounds for his son James, ‘so long as he faithfully discharges his duty in editing assisting and conducting the printing and publishing of the said two weekly papers’. A wish to see the business continued was apparently not simply a matter of providing well for immediate family members or dependents.

Such arrangements were of course only possible in wealthier families. In these cases, as Morris has pointed out elsewhere, inheritance was often gendered ‘in qualitative rather than quantitative terms’. Whilst sons frequently inherited businesses, female relations were more likely to be provided for through yearly annuities out of a trust. Luke Hansard, for example, divided his share in business into four equal parts to go to two of his sons and two grandsons, whilst providing for his wife, daughters and sister with yearly annuities. The money put aside in trust for them was the result of savings and investments and was entirely separate from his business interests. However, although fifty-two per cent of wills in my sample used a trust in the period 1826–1850, they only appear twice before 1800.

---

45 Chester, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, ‘Will of Peter Joynson’, Chester, 1764.  
Trusts were a good way of protecting women’s inheritance from future husbands and may simply have been a reflection of increasing legal disadvantages relating to women’s property towards the end of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{50}

The desire to see a business continued by a new generation is especially apparent where firms were left to sons who had not yet reached the age of maturity. In Liverpool, Thomas Bean in 1843 stated that he was ‘desirous of being succeeded … by my Son or Sons’.\textsuperscript{51} To that end he appointed his elder daughter Ann a ‘special trustee’ to continue his general printing and stationery business until her brothers came of age. William Bethell, also of Liverpool, similarly left ‘all the material of my printing office, my books, my stock of printed books, and whatever else may be considered as appertaining to the printing office’ to his son William in 1834, but with instructions for the property to be put in trust for him by his mother until he reached the age of twenty-one.\textsuperscript{52} Henry Richardson left his business and other property to his son who was then only eleven, though on the condition that when twenty-one he provide for his mother and sisters.\textsuperscript{53} This last case in particular suggests that the passing of firms to the next generation was not necessarily based simply on economic logic — Richardson could hardly have predicted the best financial solution for the family ten years hence — or on the skill level, or indeed inclination, of the chosen party.

Where no sons were present, testators might look further afield. In three cases, nephews were chosen as surrogate heirs, two of whom were minors. Mary Ann Skinner of Middlesex instructed her brother to continue her business until her nephew came of age.\textsuperscript{54} And William Eachus of Middlewich in Cheshire left his

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Amy Louise Erickson, ‘Property and Widowhood in England 1660–1840’, in Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ed. by Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Harlow: Longman, 1999), pp. 145–63 (p. 158).
\item \textsuperscript{52} Preston, Lancashire Record Office, ‘Will of William Bethell’, Liverpool, 1834.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Durham University Library, ‘Will of Henry Richardson’, Berwick upon Tweed, 1821.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}

Surrogate heirs were also to be found amongst more distant relations. Isaac Lane of Durham in 1762 left his business to his late wife’s nephews, apparently his nearest living relations.\footnote{57}{Durham University Library, ‘Will of Isaac Lane’, Durham, 1762.} More unusually, Edward Harold appointed his son-in-law heir to his business in spite of the existence of a son who received just twenty pounds in legacy.\footnote{58}{Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, ‘Will of Edward Harold, Marlborough’, Probate records of the Consistory Court of Salisbury, P1/1824/3, 1824.} Possibly this can be seen as evidence of a rift, or simply that alternative provision had already been made for the son, who perhaps followed a different line of work. But it is also indicative of the importance of daughters’ marriage alliances within the trade.\footnote{59}{Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 279.}

Most transfer of family printing businesses occurred between male relations, and most commonly between fathers and sons (over half of cases of family transfer). Although wills rarely specified whether or not this was the eldest son, such a patrilineal arrangement is something of a cliché among wealthier
entrepreneurial families. Certainly, in my sample, printing businesses left to sons directly did tend to be from wealthier estates. Out of fourteen cases, four were valued at four thousand pounds. Five more wills were proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and, though probate values are not recorded, the detail of most of these wills suggest the testators were extremely wealthy. Among the remaining cases, the lowest recorded probate value was six hundred pounds in 1816, which was still a relatively sizeable estate.

Where businesses were left to widows, the value of estates was much lower, ranging from forty pounds in 1768 to four hundred and fifty pounds in 1848. These instances were also far less numerous at just thirteen per cent (five cases) of all wills which specified the transfer of businesses. A further two wills left widows responsible for businesses in conjunction with others. This economic differentiation may have been related to place. The widows left businesses in my sample were all located in small towns and villages including Todmorden on the Lancashire–Yorkshire border, Whitehaven in Cumbria and Romford in Essex.

The relative marginalisation of women in printers’ business planning may also be a reflection of specific occupational structures. Owens, for instance, found that brewers and publicans were far more likely to leave their businesses to their wives than in the other trades in his sample, speculating that they were already playing a dominant role in those businesses. As we shall see in the next section, the numbers of widow proprietors in printing declined in the early industrial period, just as the trade was undergoing dramatic changes, not only in terms of size and machinery involved, but also in terms of scope — where previously businesses had often been run alongside retail operations, they now became more exclusively focussed on production.

---

60 Tosh, A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England, p. 115.
Management and labour

As suggested by the gendered inheritance strategies of printers, the number of widow proprietors in the printing trade was fairly low throughout the early industrial period. Table 10 shows their prevalence as represented by lists of master printers in printers’ manuals and trade directories. Nine large provincial towns were surveyed — Glasgow, Dublin, Cardiff, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Sheffield, and Newcastle — as well as the capital. Inevitably there was some variation between these towns. In many years there were no female proprietors at all in some places, whilst in Liverpool in 1853 there were five, a much higher than average rate. Overall, however, these listings reveal a low and declining number of female proprietors across the country. As a proportion of all masters their numbers were particularly low in London, which in the earlier period at least may have been owing to the tight controls of the Stationers’ Company.62

Table 10: Percentage of female proprietors, 1724–1855

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2/74)</td>
<td>(2/124)</td>
<td>(4/286)</td>
<td>(15/517)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The Post Office Dublin Directory for 1850 (Dublin: printed for the proprietors, [1850]); A Directory of Sheffield (Sheffield: John Robinson, 1797); A New, General, & Commercial Directory of Sheffield (Manchester: Albion Press, 1825); General Directory of … Sheffield (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1849); The Glasgow Directory (Glasgow: W. McFeat & Co., 1804); The Glasgow Directory (Glasgow: W. MacFeat, 1824); Glasgow Post-Office Annual Directory for 1852–1853 (Glasgow: William Mackenzie, [1853]); A General Directory for Newcastle upon Tyne (Newcastle: printed for the publisher, 1824); A Directory for the Town of Leeds (Leeds: Binns & Brown, 1800); General and Commercial Directory of the Borough of Leeds (Leeds: Edward Baines, 1826); Directory and Topography of Leeds (Sheffield: printed by R. Leader for W. White, 1847); Bancks’s Manchester and Salford Directory (Manchester: G. Bancks, 1800); Pigot & Dean’s New Directory of Manchester, Salford, &c. for 1821–22 (Manchester: R. & W. Dean and J. Pigot, [1821]); Slater’s General and Classified Directory… of Manchester and Salford (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1850); Gore’s Directory of Liverpool and its Environ (Liverpool: J. Gore and Son, 1853); Sketchly’s Bristol Directory, 1775 (facsimile) (Bath, 1971); Matthews’s Annual Bristol and

Clifton Directory (Bristol: Matthew Mathews, 1850); Watson’s or the Gentleman’s and Citizen’s Almanack ... 1827 (Dublin: Stewart & Hopes, 1827); The First Newcastle Directory, 1778, reprinted in facsimile (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Mawson, Swan and Morgan, 1889); Directory for the Year 1801 of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Mitchell, 1801); General Directory of ... Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Sheffield: Printed for the authors, 1847); A Complete Directory and Guide to the Town and Castle of Cardiff (Cardiff: printed by J. Bird, 1796); Wakeford’s Cardiff Directory (Cardiff: Wakeford, 1835); Negus (1724) and Pendred (1785) reprinted in Howe, The London Compositor, 1785–1900; Pigot and Co.’s London & Provincial New Commercial Directory for 1823–24 (London & Manchester: J. Pigot & Co, [1823]); Post Office London Directory 1847 (London: Frederick Kelly, 1847).

Widow printers were probably proportionally less numerous than in other sectors; up to ten per cent of urban businesses around this time have been shown to have been conducted by women.63 More specifically to the book trades, Hannah Barker found that around eight per cent of businesses in Northumberland and Durham, including bookselling and publishing as well as printing, were headed by women between 1700 and 1840.64 This greater percentage to those shown in the table above may be a reflection of the earlier starting point of the sample, but also the likelihood that more women worked in retail than production industries.65 Printing, as described in the introduction to this thesis, was often carried out in conjunction with retail functions in the eighteenth century, particularly in provincial towns. But increasing specialisation towards the end of the century and into the nineteenth, meant that printing businesses began to focus exclusively on production. It is probably no coincidence that this period also saw a reduction in female involvement. The introduction of specialist heavy machinery in the form of mechanised printing presses, and the growth of workplaces full of increasingly unionized journeymen, almost certainly also played a part.

Although rarely found heading printing businesses, women did contribute to family workforces, though, as in other industries, the nature and extent of their

63 Barker, The Business of Women, p. 56.
involvement is hard to quantify.\textsuperscript{66} The printers who wrote autobiographies in the latter half of the nineteenth century, for example, mostly silenced female relations in their narratives, in line with contemporary norms.\textsuperscript{67} John Bedford Leno gave tantalisingly brief information about his wife’s role in his fledgling business: ‘How she laboured at the press and assisted me in the work of my printing office, with a child in her arms, I have no space to tell’.\textsuperscript{68}

Will writers offered slightly more detail on the tasks undertaken by women in family business. Jonas Chambers, from the small town of Todmorden, suggested equality of roles when he wrote, ‘I do will and desire that Hannah my well beloved wife and my family shall and may dwell together in the same place, and carry on the business in the same manner as we now do for so long time as she is convinced and satisfied the concern is or will be a benefit to them’.\textsuperscript{69} One London printer, Robert MacDonald, was even more forthcoming on the role of his daughter Elizabeth in his will: ‘she has always worked at home and assisted in the business to the utmost of her power – without any pay or remuneration but her bare subsistence’.\textsuperscript{70} But Robert wrote about Elizabeth’s role in this way only in order to explain an unequal distribution of his estate among his children which favoured Elizabeth. Her brother, who was already in partnership with their father, was disinherited because of an alleged abuse of trust whereby he had taken money out of the business without his father’s consent and ‘furnished his house according to his own pleasure and likewise has kept a servant maid to wait upon

\textsuperscript{69} Preston, Lancashire Record Office, ‘Will of Jonas Chambers’, Todmorden, 1829.
his wife at my expense’. Without this family rift it is doubtful whether Elizabeth’s role in the family business would have been recorded at all.

Though the practice of using daughters’ labour in family printing firms may have been more widespread than documents such as wills suggest, it was probably not used regularly. When the female-run Victoria Press opened for business in 1860, its founder Emily Faithfull recorded her dependence on women whose printer fathers had given them some training in the family business: ‘I have now also three other hands who have received some measure of training in their fathers’ offices, having been taught by them in order to afford help in any time of pressure’.71 In other words, these women were not trained formally by their fathers with a view to using their labour regularly, but in order to assist in the business as necessity demanded, on an informal and part-time basis. This may be seen as a parallel to the seasonal approach to female labour that was typical of the agricultural industry.72

Whereas the labour of female relations was occasional rather than regular, and rarely resulted in formal title in a business, the training of sons was taken more seriously. The high number of boys with printer fathers apprenticed to the Stationers’ Company attests to the importance attached to formal apprenticeship.73 Outside of London, too, the apprenticeship of boys from family firms was common. The autobiographer Charles Knight, for instance, was apprenticed to his father at the age of fourteen in Windsor.74 Similar arrangements in other family firms suggest it was thought important that sons start at the bottom, learn the business thoroughly, and receive few, if any, favours.75 It was also common to be

73 McKenzie, Stationers’ Company Apprentices, 1701–1800.
74 Knight, Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century with a Prelude of Early Reminiscences, I, p. 67.
apprenticed outside of the family firm. Egerton Smith, whose mother managed the family firm after the death of her husband, sent the young Egerton to James Ashburner in Kendal, keeping the business going for him in Liverpool until he had finished his time.\textsuperscript{76} This strategy was perhaps employed as a means of expanding trade networks, or it may have been thought a superior training opportunity. It may even have been a means of reducing conflict at home, either between siblings or between parents and their offspring.

Certainly, family tensions played their part in the management (and mismanagement) of many family firms. As Leonore Davidoff has put it, ‘the overlapping of enterprise and family always held potential for trouble’.\textsuperscript{77} In the Hansard family, the complex strictures of Luke Hansard’s will set in train a dispute which was to last for the following two generations. As described above, Hansard specified a line of succession which gave preference to two of his sons as well as his two eldest grandsons. One of these grandsons, Luke Henry, was only a minor when the will was made and later made it clear to his father, Luke Graves, that he had no inclination to enter the business. As a result, Luke Graves attempted to get another son, Frederick, trained up in his place but this was met with opposition from his partners (his brother and nephew). He wrote bitterly in his diary,

\begin{quote}
My brother has had successive alarming attacks of the gout … he is fortunate that with this affliction in having a son vigilant and zealous in supplying his place in business. I am thank God in health – but if it had been otherwise, the aversion of my eldest son to the business, and the unkind refusal of my partners to my training up another son in his place, deprives me of such an assistant … if he reflects on these things my brother must see that his natural good nature has been perverted by bad advice.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

Frederick was eventually apprenticed to his brother-in-law, Francis Rivington II (1805–1885), head of another wealthy printing dynasty. However, in spite of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[76] Perkin, ‘Egerton Smith and the Early 19th-Century Book Trade in Liverpool’.
\item[77] Davidoff, \textit{Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780–1920}, p. 152.
\end{footnotes}
‘aversion’ on the part of Luke Henry to the family business, he did nevertheless end up inheriting his father’s share and entered into a partnership with his cousin which proved to be even more acrimonious than that of the previous generation. After litigation proceedings and an apparent estrangement between several members of the family, Luke Henry finally took sole control almost twenty years after his grandfather’s death in 1847.79

Family disputes such as those embroiling the Hansard family were just one way in which complex emotional experiences affected family firms. As Robin Holt and Andrew Popp suggested in relation to problems of succession in the Wedgewood family, the family firm was ‘a site of powerful emotional experiences, processes, and settlements’.80 The irreconcilability of those issues might well spell the end of the line for a family business.

**Conclusion**

Family firms were highly visible in the printing industry throughout the early industrial period. They were a major factor in the extraordinary persistence of all printing firms, often surviving across multiple generations. This high level of intergenerational transfer was also reflected in inheritance planning. Securing the future of a business was often separated from other arrangements made to provide for dependents. Therefore, whereas numerous family members might share monies from a trust, created out of an amalgamation of various sources, a business was frequently left to a specific individual, free of any obligation to continue using the proceeds to provide for relatives. Printers furthermore seemed unusually keen to see their businesses continue into a new generation. Children were bequeathed firms or tools of the trade when still very young, and, where no

---


direct descendants existed, surrogate heirs were found, trained up and primed for succession. Only very occasionally were businesses directed to be sold.

The position of women within this landscape of family firms was, however, somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, they were hugely significant in the long-term success of businesses. We saw, for instance, that women were involved in the management of forty per cent of long-lived family firms in Manchester between 1814 and 1824. And yet, widows inherited businesses in their own name in only thirteen per cent of cases of business transfer, and accounted for an even lower, and declining, proportion of all printing proprietors. The inheritance and management of family firms was thus clearly gendered. As wives and daughters, women were not trained up formally with a view to succession (as were male relations), and their labour was used on an occasional rather than regular basis. Women’s involvement was most likely to have occurred in small, relatively low-value family printing firms, but even so their involvement was considerably less conspicuous than in other sectors.

It may be that both the persistence of printing firms and the marginal role of women owed much to the character of the printing trade. This was an artisan trade which continued to place an unusually high degree of importance on the seven-year apprenticeship, where journeymen were highly skilled and early to combine. It was always a male-dominated trade and became even more so as the nineteenth century progressed. The growth of large-scale operations, introduction of machinery, and increased pressure on jobs would not have made for an environment conducive to the deployment of unpaid, low-skilled family labour. Attempts to introduce paid female labour into printing in the second half of the nineteenth century were met with vociferous complaint by journeymen.81 The increased presence of wealthy masters, as described in chapter three, no doubt

also contributed to the distancing of women from the workplace. These proprietors kept separate home addresses and were more likely to favour patrilineal succession in their business planning.

This was also a trade where value was placed on knowing the history of printing and upholding trade customs. Printers derived occupational identity from an appreciation of the significance of their trade. As we shall see in the next chapter, masters and journeyman fought side by side in an ideological battle for press freedoms that went far beyond simple economic motivation. Printers’ work lives were not just a means to an end, to maintain independence or support a family. They were a major source of personal and social identity, and it is not surprising that they should wish that identity and status to be passed on to a new generation.
Chapter Five: Political Identities

In her novel *Felix Holt the Radical*, George Eliot suggested changes in the political attitudes of newspaper owners in the early nineteenth century. Set around the time of the 1832 Reform Act, she portrayed a Tory printer coming to the fictional town of Treby and threatening the business of the established printer: ‘Quorlen was a new man in Treby, who had so reduced the trade of Dow, the old hereditary printer, that Dow had lapsed to Whiggery and Radicalism and opinions in general, so far as they were contented to express themselves in a small stock of types’. \(^1\) In this passage, the long-established family firm of Dow is seen to be prepared to print material of any political tendency in order to survive, in contrast with the incomer Quorlen, who is seen to achieve success by aligning his paper with his own partisan political affiliation. Eliot’s gently mocking tone further suggests that Dow’s apparent political indifference in print was not only losing him custom, but personal respect too.

Eliot’s comments are indicative of a wider phenomenon: that, to outsiders, the identity of printers was closely related to the politics of what they printed, at least in the case of newspaper proprietors. Indeed, those who printed a variety of political opinion could come under personal attack. For instance, the Chancellor John Spencer, Lord Althorp (1782–1845), reportedly held that newspaper men were ‘persons of no faith, and whose opinions, if they ever had any, were merely framed to suit their readers’. \(^2\) On the other hand, those who demonstrated political integrity through the partisan affiliation of their papers increasingly garnered respect, to the extent that many were appointed Members of Parliament. \(^3\) It is no coincidence that this was the same period in which the trade saw an influx of men

---


entering for explicitly political reasons, as demonstrated in chapter three. Yet, with any political affiliation came opposition. As we saw in chapter one, even apprentices were ridiculed for their association with the radical press.

But what exactly were the political opinions of printers? And how far were these related to their sense of work-based identity? This chapter examines the relationship between work and political identity among printers in the early industrial period. It seeks to understand the nature of political thought among printers, but also the extent to which political and work-based identities were intertwined. I begin with the various campaigns for freedom of the press which engaged a huge number of printers throughout this period. I will demonstrate how on this particular issue political consensus was achieved among printers of all levels in the trade, providing an important point of common ground. But belief in the freedom of the press crossed political divisions in the trade and, as will be shown in the second section of this chapter, printers exhibited a wide range of voting behaviours and preferences at the polling booth. Finally, there were a number of reasons why the political principles of newspaper proprietors and the politics of their papers were not necessarily aligned. Economic incentives, complex management structures and the threat of libel all affected the content of papers. As we found in chapter one, public perceptions of printers’ identity (in this case based on their supposed political preferences) were not always in tune with their personal identification. Nevertheless, the association between political thought and work-based identity was strong among printers, and their unusual level of political engagement was a clear identifying characteristic.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, there have been conflicting accounts of printers’ political affiliations. These have centred on Hobsbawm’s assertion of the essentially conservative nature of the ‘labour aristocracy’, and E. P. Thompson’s vision of printers as radical activists.4 The historiographical

---

4 Hobsbawm, Labouring Men; Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class.
association between printers and the labour aristocracy stems in part from the apparent reluctance of printers’ societies and unions to engage in collective political action. The LUC, for instance, had a policy of confining funds entirely to trade purposes (they only began to give aid to other workers’ organizations late in the nineteenth century and did not establish a political fund until 1923).\(^5\) They were also conspicuous in their absence from the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.\(^6\) Similarly, Bristol printers did not join the United Trades Association of Bristol set up in 1844.\(^7\) As Donald Bateman has argued, the Bristol Typographical Society continued to see itself as ‘erudite and elite’, keeping aloof from other labour groups throughout the nineteenth century.\(^8\) Even within the trade, some organizations remained determinedly isolated; members of the MTS, for instance, rejected a motion to amalgamate with the Northern Typographical Association, ‘lest the foundations of our stability might be undermined’.\(^9\)

This reluctance to support other workers’ organizations was not, however, necessarily evidence of political conservatism among printers, either as a body or as individuals. The economic difficulties of the early nineteenth century meant that society funds were frequently insufficient to relieve fellow printers, let alone workers in other trades (see chapter six). Furthermore, research into radical political activity in this period invariably draws on the involvement of printers, their influence extending well beyond their professional functions. It has been noted, for example, that many radical writers and publishers had their origins in the printing trade.\(^10\) In the French Revolutionary era, printers were amongst the

---


\(^6\) Though there is some evidence they were sympathetic to Owenite principles, see Child, *Industrial Relations in the British Printing Industry*, p. 76.


\(^9\) Dickson, *Manchester Typographical Society and Branch of T. A.*, p. 15.

most active and influential leaders of provincial radical reform societies — men such as Joseph Gales of the Sheffield Constitutional Society and Matthew Falkner of the Manchester Constitutional Society, both of whom fled to newly-independent America (Gales to escape prosecution, Falkner after his shop was attacked by a ‘Church and King’ mob).\textsuperscript{11} In London, too, printers were prominent in radical organizations: they were the fourth largest occupational group of the London Corresponding Society after shoemakers, weavers and tailors.\textsuperscript{12} Later, in the tumultuous summer of 1819, printers were prominent at massed radical meetings, for example Edward Baines at Hunslet Moor, Thomas Wooler at Birmingham and James Wroe at St Peter’s Fields, Manchester.\textsuperscript{13} Then, after the disappointment of the Reform Act of 1832, printers were among the skilled artisans that initiated the Chartist movement under William Lovett.\textsuperscript{14}

Still, it is questionable whether one can generalize about the politics of a particular occupational group from such examples. Iorwerth Prothero has warned that political movements transcended and ignored work divisions and trade particularism.\textsuperscript{15} Similarly, John Vincent claimed that voting preferences could not be differentiated along class lines, within or without occupational groups.\textsuperscript{16} But whatever their political affiliation, printers’ unusual working environment suggests that they were at any rate politically engaged. As we saw in chapter one, apprentices picked up political ideas from adult printers and from the materials they printed. This process continued throughout their working lives. On the shop


\textsuperscript{12} The occupations of only 347 members are known. Of these, twelve were printers and a further ten were booksellers. Mary Thale, ed., \textit{Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792–1799} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. xix.

\textsuperscript{13} Donald Read, \textit{Peterloo: The “Massacre” and Its Background} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1958]).


floor both compositors and pressmen could work and talk at the same time. As the printer-turned-sociologist I. C. Cannon put it, ‘some men prefer working quietly, but the more garrulous have ample opportunities to express themselves’.17 Charles Manby Smith’s autobiography is filled with the personalities of his fellow workmen, their ideas and principles (not only concerning politics) being freely discussed during working hours.18 In Glasgow, a pressman named John Logan was renowned for his constant chatter: ‘on all subjects, whether political, ecclesiastical, or commercial, he would be ever talking, whether inking the forme or when pulling the press bar’.19 Clearly, those working in noisier environments, such as textile factories, would have been unable to communicate so freely.

Such talk certainly had an impact on printers’ political thought. John Bedford Leno, influenced by radical journeymen during his apprenticeship, later proceeded to ‘convert the whole of the printers’ to Chartism at the Eton office in which he worked as a journeyman.20 There was also the opportunity to converse with writers. John Forbes Wilson wrote of the early nineteenth century: ‘In those days printing offices were not the extensive establishments, with separate apartments for the accommodation of authors and editors. Compositors then had the pleasure of seeing and conversing with the men whose copy they put into type’.21 Though Wilson was not specifically referring to political writers, such opportunities were significant; John Vincent has provided some evidence of a relationship between the party preference of a retailer or artisan and the typical social status of his customers.22 Journeymen, as masters, were then likely to have been politically engaged and, as will be demonstrated in what follows, may well have contributed to the content of what they printed.

---

19 Aird, Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters, and Printers, During the Last Sixty Years, p. 74.
**Freedom of the press**

Of all the political questions of the period, freedom of the press was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the one which roused printers to greatest action. Campaigns for greater press freedom took many forms over the years but by the early nineteenth century revolved around the unfairness of the libel laws (which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter) and the harshness of paper tax and stamp duty on newspapers, pamphlets and advertisements. These latter taxes (the so-called ‘taxes on knowledge’) were introduced first in 1712 but had steadily increased during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the 1830s the campaign for their abolition (in particular the four pence stamp duty on newspapers) intensified. Between 1830 and 1836 a defiant group of printers and publishers deliberately courted prosecution by printing unstamped (i.e. untaxed) papers and around 740 men, women and children went to prison for selling them. The unstamped press disappeared in 1836 when stamp duty was reduced to a penny, but it would take another two decades before all the taxes on knowledge were finally abolished.

From an ideological point of view, a connection between freedom of the press and civil liberty had been established in the seventeenth century and continued to grow in importance. William Wickwar, historian of press freedom, described a free printing press as being ‘the symbol of human progress and emancipation’ for contemporaries. Thus, when habeas corpus was suspended in 1817 (an act widely termed the ‘Gagging Bill’), the satirist George Cruickshank

---

depicted a personified Liberty hung from a gibbet fashioned out of a dismantled press — a clear indication of the interrelation of a free press and civil liberty in public minds (see Figure 12). Of course, the press was gagged precisely because of its perceived power: in the 1820s it became known as the ‘fourth estate’, but its ability to hold governments to account was already well established.27 By the mid-nineteenth century, press freedom was seen as a measure of the civilisation of Victorian society, which was separated ideologically from the corruption of the past.28

Figure 12: Liberty Suspended! With the Bulwark of the Constitution!

Source: British Museum Collection Online © Trustees of the British Museum (released under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license).

This connection with civil liberty ensured that freedom of the press campaigns were often associated with radical movements. The freedom to print parliamentary debates was won in 1771 only thanks to the support of John Wilkes (1725–1797) and his metropolitan radicals, alongside the defiance of printers, most

27 Barker, Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855, pp. 15–16.
notably John Miller of the *London Evening Post* (in the ‘printer’s case’).²⁹ In the 1790s the Friends of the Liberty of the Press was founded to counteract allegations of licentiousness from loyalists, and moved the debate on from the press’ relationship to parliament towards the notion that free public discussion should include the right to criticize the constitution.³⁰ Later, after the repression of the Six Acts in 1819, which had made other radical writers modify their tone, the printer and publisher Richard Carlile made the rights of the press, in E. P. Thompson’s words, ‘the fulcrum of the Radical movement’.³¹

By the 1830s the ideology of the supporters of the unstamped press was linked to the importance of education for all, a radical idea at a time when many believed that such a course would tend towards the destabilization of society. James Watson (1799–1874), printer and one of the founders of the London Working Men’s Association, reportedly had as his main aim, ‘the elevation of the working class by means of free speech and free printing’.³² The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) had a similar ambition, although this was arguably marred by ineffectiveness and attempts at social control.³³

The movement for freedom of the press also went hand-in-hand with the radical free trade movement, as both were ideologically opposed to government regulation. The Anti-Corn Law League’s leader Richard Cobden campaigned against the taxes on knowledge in the 1850s, acting on the committee of the Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge and, as a

---

Member of Parliament, backing plans for their repeal. The weekly paper, *The Economist*, set up in 1843 by the manufacturer James Wilson (1805–1860) with the help of the Anti-Corn Law League in order to promote free trade, also campaigned for a free press, both at home and abroad. As the historian Stephen Koss has suggested, restrictions on press freedom became seen as increasingly anomalous as the campaign for free trade accelerated: ‘impediments to knowledge were no more defensible, and arguably more deleterious, than those to trade and industry’. 

Radical printers often evoked press freedom as a defence for seditious libel. It was one of four arguments put forward by Thomas Jonathan Wooler (1786?–1853), along with the unconstitutional nature of the law of libel, the truth of his allegations against the government, and his appeal to the jury as the only protector of ordinary citizens. Similarly, Daniel Holt (printer of the *Newark Herald*) wrote in 1794 from Newgate gaol where he was serving out a libel sentence, ‘The Freedom of the Press was attacked, and I felt it my duty as well as my inclination, as a PRINTER, to defend and support it, as far as my individual exertions could extend’ (Holt’s fate had been further sealed when his apprentice was spotted wearing a cap on which was written ‘LIBERTY AND EQUALITY’).

Such cases seem to have only hardened attitudes within the trade in favour of a free press and against the government. Thomas Curson Hansard, printer of

---

35 In 1850, for instance, the paper campaigned against the introduction of a law in France to restrict press freedom, see ‘The French Law Against the Press’, *The Economist*, 12 October 1850, issue 372, p. 1125.
39 This may not have been the red Phrygian cap commonly associated with the ‘liberty cap’, but the message would have had similar resonance, see James Epstein, ‘Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Past and Present*, 122 (1989), 75–118.
William Cobbett’s radical *Political Register* (and eldest son of Luke Hansard), was sentenced in 1809 to three months in prison, and required to promise to keep the peace for a further three months. But he afterwards claimed that ‘the only effect this persecution had upon me, was that of confirming my mind more strongly than ever upon the necessity of reforming … the monstrous stretch of power assumed by the crown in executing *ex-officio* informations’. He continued passionately in defence of a free press: ‘I am conscientiously persuaded that a perfectly free press is as essential to our existence and welfare, as a free and independent state, as the freedom of the air we breathe is to the life and vigour of the organs of our frame’. All the same, it is significant that Hansard buried these comments within an innocuous-looking printing manual; neither contents page nor index gives any clue as to the existence of several pages devoted to the subject of his trial and press freedom.

It was not only masters and proprietors who campaigned for freedom of the press: journeymen too were among its strongest supporters. After all, the commercial rewards of a free press would affect everyone as proprietors would be able to sell more material which would mean expanding the workforce. But journeymen also endorsed the ideological arguments. Charles Timperley, the most published of all journeyman printers, wrote of the press as ‘the rock of civil and religious liberty’ and linked it to the importance of education as a means of social improvement: ‘Wherever the liberty of the press has been permanently fixed, and the diffusion of knowledge has extended its blessings, mankind have become both happier and wiser’. Many press poems, beloved of journeymen, included references to press freedom. For example, John McCreery’s much-quoted poem

---

The Press included a long stanza on the subject.\textsuperscript{42} A poem written for the MTS in 1829 entitled ‘The Press and Liberty’ included the following stanzas:

\begin{quote}
Each Briton loves his native shore,  
And Liberty doth prize:  
The richest gem in Nature’s store  
Is nought, till bondage flies;  
‘Til Freedom breaks despotick chains,  
And tyrants prostrate fall;  
Then man’s majestic soul attains  
The fire of Freedom’s call.  

O’er sea — on land — with power divine,  
The Press spread Liberty;  
The knave, with heart of base design,  
And all “The Powers that be,”  
Are, by its master-spirit taught  
That Nature must be free:  
Hail, then, the noble Art, so fraught —  
The Press and Liberty!\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

Also in Manchester, journeymen carried a ‘freedom of the press’ banner at the town’s procession to mark the coronation of William IV in 1831.\textsuperscript{44} And in 1833 the MTS agreed to petition parliament for a repeal of the paper tax and newspaper stamp duties.\textsuperscript{45} Journeymen printers in Liverpool had already sent such a petition in 1830 and did so again in 1849, this time specifically against the paper duty.\textsuperscript{46} In Barnsley, at a coronation procession for Queen Victoria, the printers’ waggon was decorated with a banner inscribed ‘Freedom of the press, which procures the independence of the country and the stability of the Crown’.\textsuperscript{47} This last part was presumably added so as not to arouse suspicion given the potent ideology of press freedom, but even so the banner reportedly attracted ‘some degree of attention’.

\textsuperscript{42} John McCreery, The Press, a Poem (Liverpool: printed by J. McCreery and sold by Cadell and Davies, 1803).
\textsuperscript{43} Timperley, Songs of the Press and Other Poems, pp. 26–27.
\textsuperscript{44} ‘The Coronation and Sunday School Jubilee’, Manchester Times, 10 September 1831.
\textsuperscript{45} Dickson, Manchester Typographical Society and Branch of T. A., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{47} ‘Coronation Proceedings’, The Leeds Times, 30 June 1838.
By the 1840s and 1850s the new printers’ journals displayed a powerful discourse on press freedom, attributing, for example, the French Revolution to the seizure of printing presses by police.⁴⁸

These examples do not, however, necessarily demonstrate a radical tendency among journeymen printers. Indeed, the campaign for press freedom was so strongly supported by all printers to suggest that it crossed party affiliations. In 1835, Lord Brougham presented a petition against stamp duties to the House of Lords which was signed by over 1,700 printers from London and Westminster.⁴⁹ Other printers’ petitions came from every quarter of Britain, including from Newcastle, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Dublin, Belfast and Carnarvon, alongside those from Liverpool and Manchester already mentioned.⁵⁰ Moreover, some of these petitions were described as having been signed by ‘compositors and printers’, suggesting that masters and men were united on this issue.⁵¹

Many of these supporters of press freedom are known to have been moderate in their political views, or at least non-partisan. Henry Sampson Woodfall (1739–1805), proprietor of the Public Advertiser, suffered several libel prosecutions in defence of a free press, but his paper included a wide variety of opinion and Woodfall himself was remembered for being ‘strictly impartial’.⁵² He was also politically non-partisan at the polls: across three general elections he voted for both Pittite and Foxite supporters.⁵³

Similarly, Charles Knight, the publisher for the SDUK, remained politically moderate whilst engaged in the struggle to end the taxes on knowledge. He had

---

⁵² Timperley, A Dictionary of Printers and Printing, p. 821.
revealed his politics during his time as editor at the *Windsor and Eton Express*, taking variously moderate Tory or moderate liberal stances.\(^{54}\) His interest in working-class education, like many at the SDUK, was paternalistic, seeking to influence and civilise his readers with carefully selected works. He enthused in later years that the SDUK ‘sent its light into the strongholds of ignorance and superstition, by superseding, for a time, a large amount of weekly trash, and destroying, for ever, the astrological and indecent almanacs’.\(^{55}\) This was not the same radical tone as those like Henry Hetherington of the *Poor Man’s Guardian* who held that working-class people should have equal access to printed material. The SDUK was, in fact, populated by moderate, middle-class reformers, a similarity shared with the Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge. As Cobden himself described the latter, ‘we comprise steady, sober middle-class reformers — free trade, temperance, education, peace advocates’.\(^{56}\) The involvement of such ‘respectable’ figures from the wider world of laissez-faire politics altered the course of the debate and by the end of the 1850s the campaign for freedom of the press was effectively won.

**Printers and their votes**

In the previous section I have suggested that, whilst united on the issue of freedom of the press, printers continued to hold a variety of wider political opinions. This section analyses printers’ political affiliations in more detail using their voting behaviour as gleaned from contemporary poll books.\(^{57}\) Uniquely, poll books listed the votes cast by named individuals and are therefore a valuable source, but there are some provisos in their use. Throughout the early industrial period, but particularly prior to the Reform Act of 1832, elections were highly

---


\(^{57}\) For an introduction to the use of poll books as a source see Harvey, Green, and Corfield, *The Westminster Historical Database: Voters, Social Structure and Electoral Behaviour*, pp. 8–20.
unrepresentative and eligibility criteria were inconsistent. Furthermore, the lack of a secret ballot may have affected some voting choices. The surviving poll books are themselves inconsistent in their format and the data entered is unlikely to be entirely accurate. Nevertheless, and crucially for my purposes, occupational descriptions are generally thought to be reliable.58

The poll books studied here relate to general election campaigns between 1784 and 1837 in the large urban boroughs of York, Liverpool, Norwich, Canterbury and Westminster (poll books for country seats were not analysed owing to the lower proportion of printers in rural areas and the less frequent inclusion of occupational data). In all these areas, except Westminster, voting rights were held by freemen both before and after 1832. This meant that all printers who had completed an apprenticeship or had achieved freedom through patrimony were eligible to vote. Westminster was a ‘scot and lot’ borough meaning that anyone who was assessed for poor rate tax was eligible to vote, resulting in a large electorate. In Norwich, freeholders were additionally eligible. After 1832 the franchise was standardised to include owners or occupiers of buildings worth ten pounds per annum (obviously, the inclusiveness of this qualification varied from place to place). As a crude indication, the Manchester rate books show that most, but not all, master printers would have been eligible to vote: in 1841 just five out of thirty-eight printing firms fell below the ten pounds mark.59 Presumably, the vast majority of journeymen would have been ineligible, unless they were able to exercise freemen’s rights. The lists do not differentiate between masters and men, but John Vincent has suggested that voting preferences were not generally differentiated along these lines.60 Women, of course, were also

---

59 This is based on my sample of the rate books (see Appendix I and discussion in chapter three). Manchester City Archives, Manchester township and parish: rate books, M9/40/2/1-713, 1801-41.
60 Vincent, Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted, p. 52.
excluded from the franchise — in practice before 1832, since few could fulfil the qualifications, and explicitly thereafter.

The data and sources for my sample are given in Appendix II. Party labels were ascribed based on a number of sources including Dod’s *Parliamentary Companion*, the *History of Parliament* database and the DNB. However, it must be remembered that for much of this period, particularly before the Reform Act of 1832, party politics was not as entrenched as in more recent history: party labels held various and shifting meanings, individuals often conducted ambiguous election campaigns, and, once elected, Members of Parliament might vote inconsistently on different issues or change sides of the house.61 The labels in the appendix should then be taken only as a general guide; the discussion explains, where relevant, the campaigns and issues on which candidates stood in more detail.

The most striking finding from the data extracted from the poll books is that printers exhibited a wide range of voting behaviour. In particular, partisan voting practices varied widely between different areas, with no clear overall change over time (see Table 11). Voters had two votes (four in Westminster) and so partisan affiliations can be measured by the number of ‘plumpers’ (where voters plumped for one candidate) or ‘straights’ (where voters chose two candidates from the same party). ‘Splitters’ split their vote across party lines and are therefore considered non-partisan voters. However, possible voting combinations increased exponentially with the number of candidates on offer and not all voters were aware of the partisan or non-partisan implications of their choices, something which party activists increasingly tried to counteract.62

---


Table 11: Breakdown of printers’ voting behaviour, 1784–1837 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Splitters</th>
<th>Straights/plumpers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>1818</td>
<td>38 (59)</td>
<td>26 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>1818</td>
<td>11 (73)</td>
<td>4 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>9 (36)</td>
<td>16 (64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>1802</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1818</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>28 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>42 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>32 (97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>41 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>2 (14)</td>
<td>12 (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1818</td>
<td>4 (11)</td>
<td>34 (89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>16 (42)</td>
<td>22 (58)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: see Appendix II.

Some areas were more strongly partisan than others, and printers’ votes often reflected these local tendencies. Norwich, for instance, where printers’ votes were almost universally ‘straights’ or ‘plumpers’, had a reputation for increasingly partisan battles in the early nineteenth century — something which John Phillips has attributed to a connection between Whigs and the strong dissenting community in the area. It was also more common to find high levels of partisan voting behaviour in four-way contests such as that in Norwich in 1802 and 1830. Furthermore, Norwich was a marginal constituency, which may have affected voting behaviour. In 1830, the two Tory and two Whig candidates each received around a quarter of the printers’ votes, roughly in line with the electorate as a whole (see Figure 13).

---

64 Frank O’Gorman found that less than one per cent of voters split their votes in four-cornered contests, see O’Gorman, ‘Electoral Behaviour in England, 1700–1872’, p. 232.
Newspaper proprietors contributed to this strong partisan showing. The proprietors of the liberal paper the Norwich Mercury (Richard Mackenzie Bacon and William Kinnebrook) as well as Bacon’s brother Richard Noverre (who would join them in partnership five years later) all voted for the Whig candidates Richard Hanbury Gurney and Robert Grant. At the other end of the political spectrum, William Matchett, proprietor of the high Tory paper, the Norfolk Chronicle, voted for the Tory candidates Jonathan Peel and Sir Charles Ogle.\(^6^5\) Other areas, however, demonstrated lower levels of partisan voting behaviour. In Westminster, for instance, where there was a tradition of electoral independence, fifty-nine per cent of printers split their votes in 1818.\(^6^6\)

As for electoral choices, a slight tendency towards Whig/liberal/radical candidates can be discerned among printers as a group.\(^6^7\) Again, this was sometimes a reflection of local tendencies. In Westminster, for example, printers were only slightly more likely to vote for the successful radical candidate, Sir Francis Burdett, in 1818 than the rest of the electorate (and none voted for the

---

\(^{65}\) The Poll for Members of Parliament for the City and County of Norwich ... July 1830.


\(^{67}\) Although the Liberal party was not officially formed until 1859, it was clearly recognisable both at Westminster and at a local level from the 1830s. Robert Ingham and Duncan Brack, eds, Peace, Reform and Liberation: A History of Liberal Politics in Britain, 1679–2011 (London: Biteback, 2011).
ultra-radical candidates Henry Hunt or Major Cartwright). Elsewhere, printers voted for unsuccessful liberal-minded candidates, diverging from majority local choices. In York in 1784, for instance, a greater proportion of printers voted for the Whig candidate, Lord John Cavendish, than the rest of the electorate who voted in the two Tory candidates (see Figure 14). One printer who voted for Cavendish was William Blanchard, the proprietor of the York Chronicle, who one year earlier had been listed as a member of the Rockingham Club (the Rockinghamites were a faction of the Whigs). Still, Blanchard split his vote with the Tory candidate Viccount Galway, emphasising that apparently partisan affiliations were far from inflexible at this time.

Figure 14: Voting breakdown in York, 1784 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printers</th>
<th>Total Electorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visct. Galway (Tory)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Slater Mlines (Tory)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord John Cavendish (Whig)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir William Mordaunt Milner (Whig)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: see Appendix II.

The liberal vote among printers was most obvious in reformed Liverpool, particularly in 1837 when printers stuck to the free trader William Ewart (1798–1869) who had represented the city since 1830 but who lost the 1837 election during a slump in trade. Three quarters of printers voted for him and his partner Howard Elphinstone, as against just under half of the electorate (see Figure 15).

---


The newspaper proprietor Egerton Smith (met in chapter three) voted consistently for liberal candidates in both 1835 and 1837 in line with the liberal politics of his paper the *Liverpool Mercury*. The majority of these liberal votes in Liverpool came from householders rather than freemen, amongst both printers and the electorate as a whole, although freemen printers were slightly less likely than their fellow freemen to vote for the Tory candidates.\(^\text{70}\) The election in Bristol in 1832 produced a similar result, with the majority of printers voting for the reform candidates Prothero and Williams (seventy-three per cent of their votes) against the electorate who voted in Baillie and Vyvyan.\(^\text{71}\) This more pronounced liberalism in Liverpool and Bristol post 1832 was, however, probably not a reflection of the reformed system: Frank O’Gorman has stressed continuity in all areas of election behaviour before and after 1832.\(^\text{72}\) And indeed in York in 1832 the printers’ vote was split evenly.

Printers’ voting preferences as demonstrated by this analysis are entirely consistent with those of artisans more generally. John Vincent showed that in most
boroughs, shopkeepers and craftsmen were radical by ‘a good deal less than two to one’ and that within this group there was great variation. Nonetheless, despite their lack of unity in political affiliation, artisans were significant in providing the backbone of the liberal/radical vote, concentrated as it was in urban areas. Artisans were most prominent in towns and cities and therefore this was where the liberal/radical vote was most prevalent, in contrast to county seats which tended to be conservative.

It is possible, of course, that voting trends would have been more strongly liberal among printers and other artisans had more journeymen been enfranchised. Rudé has shown how the majority of Wilkite supporters in the eighteenth century belonged to ‘the lesser freeholders of both urban and rural districts, who owned or occupied freeholds of a value ranging from forty shillings to ten pounds a year’. That radical supporters tended to be lower-income individuals is also indicated by the popularity of radicals such as Henry Hunt amongst disenfranchised people. Hunt, along with other radicals, made effective use of elections to further the radical cause precisely because they attracted large numbers of non-voters. Certainly, many journeymen printers appear to have supported parliamentary reform, as demonstrated by their participation in the celebrations to mark the eventual passing of the Reform Act in 1832 (as discussed in chapter two).

That said, one cannot assume liberal/radical opinions of all journeymen printers, or indeed any other group of journeymen. Working-class conservatism increased in the early nineteenth century, as evidenced by the proliferation of ‘Operative Conservative’ associations. Charles Manby Smith was one journeyman printer who may have been sympathetic to their cause. In an

73 Vincent, Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted, pp. 15–16.
appendix to his autobiography he wrote a lengthy argument against socialism, concluding with the capitalist refrain of ‘every man for himself’. He explained, ‘when every man has learned to rely upon himself, the plethora in the labour-market will be very much reduced; thousands will emerge from the ranks of working-men, and take post as something better, and a more even balance will be struck between the labour to be done and those who have to do it’. Such was the result of ambition and pride in this autodidactic journeyman; in this respect at least, Manby Smith was the very prototype of the labour aristocrat.

**Newspapers: economics, libel and the limits of partisanship**

As we have seen, some newspaper proprietors, such as Egerton Smith in Liverpool, did vote in line with the politics of their papers, whilst others, such as William Blanchard in Norwich, exhibited less partisan tendencies. Others still apparently did not vote at all or were ineligible to vote. Poll books are then a limited tool in understanding the relationship between personal political belief and the politics of papers. In fact, historians of the press have debated the role that the personal politics of newspaper editors may have played in the contents of papers, as well as the role papers played in influencing public opinion. Early accounts claimed that eighteenth-century provincial papers contained little original material and did not aspire to influence local opinion. Later, Michael Harris pointed to a more individualistic style of newspaper ownership, and influence, in the latter part of the century. More recently still, Hannah Barker has emphasised the complexity of the relationship between partisan politics and the press, suggesting that while the political opinions of many newspaper editors ‘permeated the newspapers which they produced’, less overtly political papers...
continued to be successful.\textsuperscript{80} The relationship between thought and print is not, however, easy to uncover. As I will argue here, there were a number of reasons why the politics of newspapers and their proprietors were not necessarily aligned at any point in this period.

The most obvious reason for a discord between personal opinions and the substance of newspapers was the simple economic reason that taking a popular political stance sold papers. This truism was one of the chief reasons for prejudice against all who worked for newspapers in this period.\textsuperscript{81} Certainly, we know that some were open to bribery, or at least financial persuasion. The Anti-Corn Law League paid the \textit{Sun} an annual sum for the special advocacy of repeal, and Alexander Somerville was sponsored to write favourable articles in the \textit{Morning Chronicle}.\textsuperscript{82} Political manipulation of the press was also rife, particularly in the eighteenth century — John Walter I, for instance, negotiated an agreement of three hundred pounds per annum in 1789 for inserting paragraphs sent from the Treasury into \textit{The Times}.\textsuperscript{83} Nevertheless, the effects of such financial incentives on newspaper politics may have been overstated.\textsuperscript{84}

A more significant reason why news publications did not always represent the views of their proprietors in this period was the threat of being prosecuted for seditious libel. This law allowed the prosecution of anyone connected with the publication (i.e. printers, proprietors, publishers, newsvendors, street hawkers etc.) of material deemed to have a tendency to cause a breach of the peace. Prosecution and conviction were unpredictable. Cases were liable to punishment without trial (if one could not afford bail), they could be brought through ‘ex-officio informations’ more or less at the whim of the Attorney General, and, even after Fox’s Libel Act of 1792 gave juries the right not only to judge the fact of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Barker, \textit{Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855}, p. 109 and p. 119.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} Aspinall, ‘The Social Status of Journalists at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century’.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Brown, ‘Cobden and the Press’, pp. 82–83.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Kathryn Chittick, \textit{The Language of Whiggism: Liberty and Patriotism, 1802–1830} (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), p. 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Barker, \textit{Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855}, pp. 80–93.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
publication but also whether or not it was libellous, the practice of packing in special juries, and the bias of judges, meant that verdicts and sentences were not likely to be impartial. On top of this, libel laws were strengthened by a number of repressive legal interventions which ensured that printers could be, and were, held liable for what they printed. In particular, in 1799 printers were required to register their printing presses and to include their name and business address on every item printed as part of the Seditious Societies Act. And in 1819 the infamous Six Acts included measures to crack down on unstamped newspapers including requiring proprietors to secure recognisances or bonds for fines in case of libel before printing.

Although historians have pointed to the sporadic nature of libel enforcement, and unpredictable conviction rates, the mere threat of prosecution was enough to make many printers wary of publishing anything that could be construed as libellous, seriously hampering their freedom of expression. After Henry Hetherington (1792–1849), champion of the unstamped press (most famous for his Poor Man’s Guardian), had his presses seized in the 1830s he was apparently unable to find a printer willing to undertake his work for him. Thomas Wilkin explained such reticence on the part of printers at his trial for libel in 1787: ‘The object of five or six pounds for work, could not induce a printer to hazard his person and property — I have been already much punished; the noise the affair made, has caused my creditors to come upon me, fearing I might be ruined by this

---

87 60 George III cap. 9, ‘An Act to Subject Certain Publications to the Duties of Stamps Upon Newspapers, and to Make Other Regulations for Restraining the Abuses Arising from the Publication of Blasphemous and Seditious Libels’, ([1819]).
88 Barker, Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855, p. 68.
prosecution’. Wilkin was making the point that even a ‘not guilty’ verdict could not undo the damage and suffering inflicted by a libel prosecution. As Martin John Smith has argued, it is no coincidence that radical journalism was largely the prerogative of youth or that the maximum number of radical daily newspapers in London during the French Revolutionary era was only four.

James Montgomery, having already been imprisoned twice for libel (in 1795 and 1796), modified his political tone in order to avoid a repeat prosecution. By the late 1790s Montgomery’s newspaper, the Sheffield Iris, had become, in the words of Donald Read, ‘no more than liberal conservative’. In private, however, Montgomery’s political principles remained as radical as ever. On 6 March 1809 he wrote to Joseph Aston in Manchester:

The moment I take up my pen, it kindles between my fingers, and I seem to write in fire that alarms me when I read it afterwards, and makes my thoughts once more familiar with prison scenes … O my very heart turns sick with horror, when I imagine the possibility — the probability, considering my fanatic zeal in the most righteous cause under heaven — of my being again buried alive for months, perhaps for years, bankrupt in circumstances, forgotten by the world, neglected by my friends, in the solitude — or, worse than the solitude, in the society of a gaol! And for what? For truth, for justice, for liberty, which ought to be more precious to me in principle than freedom of person, or life itself … I strive, therefore, with all my might to restrain my fury for mending mankind by ruining myself, when I write for my newspaper, which makes it in general a very dull, equivocal thing, rather tolerated than admired or approved.

Montgomery, then, was painfully aware that his newspaper was not a true expression of his politics. His commitment to reform remained strong and in 1832, at the first Sheffield elections, he voted for the unsuccessful radical candidate

---

91 Lord George Gordon, The Trial at Large of the Hon. George Gordon ... To Which Will Be Added, the Trial of Thomas Wilkin, the Printer of the above Libel (London: printed for R. Randall, [1787]), p. 7.
93 Read, Press and People, p. 73.
94 Montgomery, Holland, and Everett, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery, p. 222.
Samuel Bailey (bap.1791–1870) who campaigned for triennial parliaments, the secret ballot and abolition of the taxes on knowledge.95

Only a few very committed printers were prepared to risk prosecution for seditious libel deliberately, and, having done so, to defend their principles in court. One who did so was Thomas Jonathan Wooler, the printer of the radical journal, the Black Dwarf. In 1817 Wooler was tried on two counts of seditious libel. He defended himself in the dock and, in a remarkable display of defiance, declared, ‘Gentlemen, standing as I do directly opposed to an odious system it is impossible for me to deny or disguise the opinions I entertain … if the system at present pursued is to be established I would rather die its victim than live its slave’.96 Wooler’s courtroom performance has been hailed for its theatricality and success in generating political controversy.97 Part of this success was down to Wooler’s appearance of defencelessness (he refused bail, had not seen a copy of the indictments prior to trial, and appeared in the dock in the ‘garb of an ordinary citizen’). But this was in fact a carefully cultivated impression; Wooler took legal advice before his trial, and, like the handful of other radical publishers who similarly defended their principles in court, had developed a sophisticated legal awareness.98

Wooler, as with other radical printers, operated on a small scale. He was a trained printer and ‘wrote’ his articles straight into his composing stick. Henry Hetherington, also with a background in the trade, operated with a staff of around

---

95 The Poll Book ... for the Borough of Sheffield, December 13 and 14, 1832 (Sheffield: Printed by A. Whitaker, 1833).
three plus an apprentice. In cases of libel, liability in these small-scale operations was clear. In larger firms, however, a number of individuals had the potential to contribute content; foremen, editors, printers, and proprietors might all take a hand in putting together a newspaper, whilst the sources themselves often came unsolicited from unknown outsiders. In 1753 the proprietors of the *Gazetteer* established an internal safeguard of making the printer responsible for half the costs of prosecution directed at any item not signed by two members of the committee of proprietors, but this was highly unusual, presumably because few printers would agree to such a stipulation.

The defences given at libel trials offer an insight into the editorial strategies of other large printing businesses. Henry Baldwin, for instance, was retired, elderly and infirm when he was convicted of libel in 1808. He was the joint proprietor of the *London Packet*, with its printer John Crowder, but claimed never to ‘interfere’ with its management, or to be taking any profit from the venture. Baldwin’s case was just one in a suit of prosecutions tried at the same time for reprinting the same article, apparently inadvertently, in a number of different newspapers. Several of the defendants, whilst not claiming Baldwin’s level of detachment, entrusted the editorial management of their papers to others, exhorting them not to print anything libellous. Mary Vint, for example, employed James Batt as her editor, but promptly sacked him when she saw the offending article printed in her paper the *Selector* (of which she was sole proprietor),

---

claiming that she herself was ‘firmly attached to the Laws and Constitution of the Country’.  

John Walter II and Thomas Hurlstone, principal proprietors of The Times, apparently followed a similar management style, stating that they left their printer Hugh Brown with ‘orders not to insert any article or paragraph whatsoever of an offensive or libellous import or tendency’. Such a strategy they particularly associated with the tight production deadline of a daily newspaper when proofs only went to press late at night. The defence brief explained:

from the lateness of the hour at which those parts of the paper which do not consist of advertisements are usually set up, [they] cannot have an opportunity of seeing any article previous to the publication of the paper & are under the unavoidable necessity of relying on the care & diligence of Hugh Brown to see that nothing improper is inserted therein.  

On the night in question, however, Hugh Brown was reportedly so unwell that he could not return to the office after his dinner and the management of the paper was left to the foreman. The question as to who actually inserted the libel, and whether they did it knowingly, was left unresolved.

In another case, concerning the Liverpool Chronicle, there was a strong implication that one or two employees had been responsible for inserting a libel. The proprietor, Francis Browne Wright, had been out of the office dealing with the consequences of his partner’s bankruptcy and claimed in a letter to the Attorney General that the nature of the libel was ‘perfectly abhorrent to my own sentiments’ and that the Whig principles of his paper were the result of ‘sincere deliberation and proceed from the most disinterested motives’.  

During the trial suspicion fell on the affidavit of his foreman who said that he inserted the item in question from a note which was in the handwriting of the clerk. In his summing up, Mr Justice Grose more or less accepted that the guilt lay elsewhere but still made it clear that

102 Ibid., fol. 110.  
103 Ibid., fol. 100.  
Wright was responsible for the actions of his employees: ‘If the man who has made an affidavit in mitigation of your sentence has been himself guilty of causing your offence it is time that you should dismiss such a careless and unworthy servant’.105

There were then a number of reasons why the political views expressed in newspapers were not necessarily a reflection of a proprietor’s own personal views. Economic incentives to publish partisan material were readily available throughout this period. Management structures also became increasingly complex, allowing for a number of contributors, not all of whom would have been known to, or controlled by, a paper’s proprietor. The threat of being prosecuted for seditious libel further hampered a printer’s desire to give full vent to political principles. The printers of the radical press needed to be legally well informed, as well as possessed of a good deal of bravery. Of all newspapermen they were the most likely to be committed to their stated political objectives and, contrary to what has been stated elsewhere, the least likely to be swayed by vested interests.106

**Conclusion**

The association between politics and work-based identity was strong among all printers. Their unusual working environment, which allowed conversation with fellow workers as well as with writers and editors, ensured a high degree of political awareness, influenced their political ideas and even provided a platform (the press itself) on which to express those ideas. It is hardly surprisingly that one of the chief identifying characteristics of printers to outsiders was the supposed nature of their political views (or the lack thereof).

The most high-profile demonstration of printers’ active political involvement was through the various freedom of the press campaigns. Such was

105 Ibid.

the concern felt by printers of all political persuasions over this issue that they united in common cause. The ability to exercise a free press was closely allied to a sense of duty as a printer to facilitate access to knowledge. The ideologies of equality and liberty surrounding press freedom were also deeply held by many printers, both journeyman and master alike. Furthermore, the anti-regulatory stance of the campaign to repeal the taxes on knowledge attracted other disparate groups, particularly those campaigning for free trade, and it was this ability to tap into the wider laissez-faire movement which ultimately led to repeal of the taxes in the 1850s.

However, the extraordinary level of cooperation over freedom of the press did not equate to political uniformity amongst printers on other issues. At general elections printers displayed a broad range of voting behaviour that varied according to both place and time, sometimes in line with the rest of the electorate, and sometimes not. Indeed, the multiplicity of voting choices among printers indicates that occupation had little impact on the exact nature of their political ideas, beyond a slightly liberal tendency shared with other artisans. It may well be that we are left with J. Ann Hone’s conclusion that ‘in trying to determine the reasons for a person’s ‘political’ attitude … we are faced with a psychological problem about which little is known and which in addition is particularly inaccessible to historians’.

It seems likely that the results of elections involved a complex interplay between patrons, local leaders, candidates and the social and economic requirements of a community. Religious affiliations probably also played a part in some areas, such as in Norwich.

The political beliefs of proprietors were not, in any case, always aligned with the content of their papers. Throughout this period a number of factors influenced the make-up of newspapers. Economic incentives — whether related to shrewd market calculations or bribery — continued to play their part. Moreover,

---

the complex management structures of larger firms made possible (and even depended upon) the ability of numerous employees to produce, edit and decide on the content of a paper. Tight publication schedules on daily papers in particular meant that it was difficult for proprietors to personally oversee the contents of everything published. (Indeed, editorial distance from the practices of employees continues to be claimed by the senior management of newspapers today.) Of most significance in this period, however, were the severe penalties attached to seditious libel and the effect this had on hampering freedom of expression.

The relationship between public perceptions of printers’ identity as expressed in print, and printers’ actual political beliefs was complicated by the public nature of libel cases. Certain high-profile court cases involving printers of the radical press excited public opinion, whilst others made criminals out of innocent (or at least unwary) victims. Nevertheless, libel cases involving printers, along with the campaigns for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, demonstrated in the public eye the extraordinary level of political engagement by printers at all levels of the occupational hierarchy. It was only after the taxes on knowledge were finally abolished that a new era of cheap print dawned allowing other workers to become more politically engaged. Together with further reform acts in 1867 and 1887, and the growth of centralized party political groups, the efforts of printers in the early industrial period were crucial in contributing to the rise of a more modern political system.

\[109\] See the trial of News International employees over phone hacking which ended in 2014, particularly the defence of Rebekah Brooks, former editor of News of the World, who repeatedly claimed that she trusted her journalists and never pressed them on where their stories came from, Tim Adams, ‘Phone hacking trial: now it’s over, has anything really changed?’, The Observer, 28 June 2014.
Chapter Six: Mobility

In 1817 the parliamentary printer Luke Hansard composed a private autobiography addressed to his sons. When it came to their sons (Luke’s grandchildren), he had the following piece of advice:

Having brought them to the period when a Business is to be thought of, do not flatter nor pamper them with hopes of riches or fashionable pleasures; tell them, all depend upon their own exertions, their own skill, their own applicability, of the learning they may have already acquired, which will be tenfold doubled by their own docility, their own industry.¹

Luke himself had risen from a modest background to be the owner of the largest printing office in the country and this reads like an explanation of his own approach to life. Industry and frugality, he believed, had been the keys to his success and he wanted to instil the same values in his grandchildren. This belief in the possibility of rising from nothing through sheer hard work can be seen as a version of the ideology of self-help, or the ‘gospel of advancement’, an ideology which became famous through the writings of Samuel Smiles from the late 1850s but which was already, in the words of one historian, ‘deep-rooted in British public opinion’.²

Other printers, however, experienced a harsher reality in the early industrial period with poor standards of living and few opportunities to improve their prospects. In 1850 a report on the state of the trade concluded, ‘to be as poor as a printer is to be poor indeed’.³ The true extent of the self-made man phenomenon is in fact contested by historians. Harold Perkin dismissed the idea as myth, writing that it was ‘one of the most powerful instruments of propaganda

² François Crouzet, The First Industrialists (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 48. Samuel Smiles’ books were in the libraries of at least two nineteenth-century printers, James Hansard and William Blades, see Southampton, University of Southampton, ‘Manuscript Inventory of the Furniture and Effects of the Late James Hansard at Darent Villa, Westerham, by George Hansard’, Hansard Family Papers, MS 59/A103/1, 20 and 21 March 1849; John Southward, Catalogue of the William Blades Library ([London]: St Bride Foundation Institute, 1899).
³ Edwards, The Disease and the Remedy, p. 10.
ever developed by any class to justify itself and seduce others to its own ideal’. It was not that the myth had no basis, but that entrepreneurs from the working classes were few and far between. As Andrew Miles put it, there was a ‘tension’ between the myth and reality of the self-made man in the nineteenth century. Miles’ own study of social mobility concluded that although society was far from stagnant, intergenerational continuity was the norm. Similarly, Clark and Cummins have found striking levels of wealth persistence over five generations from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. On the other hand, another study has suggested that, in the eighteenth century at least, significant downward mobility actually occurred, resulting in the lowest economic groups, labourers and craftsmen in particular, growing as a share of society.

This chapter explores the opportunities for, and limits to, social mobility amongst all printers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, considering both upward and downward movement. I will address the economic feasibility of setting up one’s own business and the profitability of printing for masters, suggesting that, for the vast majority of printers, opportunities for upward socio-economic mobility were extremely limited. I will then examine the considerable risks facing everyone involved in the trade, citing in particular the (often interrelated) threats of imprisonment (as discussed in chapter five, so-called ‘moral offences’ were an occupational hazard for printers), debt and bankruptcy, and long-term unemployment. Strategies for survival will next be considered, beginning with the system of migration known as tramping. Although primarily a means of finding work, tramping became increasingly unlikely to result in

---

employment and was used as a means of relief, or a last-ditch effort at survival within the trade. Finally, I will discuss the last remaining options for the long-term unemployed, focussing on the lived experience of downward mobility — namely, poverty and destitution.

This is essentially a story of increasing contrasts and divergent mobility. The possibilities for accumulating wealth became increasingly limited in the early nineteenth century, but those masters with pre-existing capital (either from inheriting successful firms or from wealth accrued elsewhere) were able to expand their businesses and enjoyed a great degree of affluence. Patterns of mobility were also complex with considerable fluidity at the bottom end of the scale for both journeymen and small masters (the two statuses overlapped in many cases). The overwhelming conclusion of this chapter is that survival and success were precarious and uncertain for the vast majority of printers in this period, and became more so towards the middle of the nineteenth century.

Commonly, the study of social mobility has been intergenerational, i.e. concerned with tracking changes across different generations.\(^8\) In such cases, mobility is usually equated with occupational mobility, using a change in occupation as an indication of changing social status. Occupational descriptors, from sources such as marriage registers, are mapped onto social classification schemes, a methodology which raises the same criticisms of occupation-fed class analysis discussed in the introduction to this thesis.\(^9\) Such studies tell us little about the lived experiences of mobility, either upward or downward: the data sets are large and necessarily impersonal. Migration studies, only sometimes related to

---


\(^9\) For an early and comprehensive analysis of the shortcomings of the methodology, see Crouzet, *The First Industrialists*, p. 61 and p. 126 (although he also based his own analysis on an occupation-fed, class-bound arrangement).
social mobility, tend to be *intra-*generational, i.e. focussed on a single generation, but here again the methodologies used are primarily economic and quantitative.\(^\text{10}\)

My approach to mobility differs by examining changes, at a micro level, within a single lifetime and within a single occupation. This allows for a much more detailed analysis not only of the opportunities but also of the risks attached to business and working lives, as well as a greater understanding of their effects. Through a variety of source material including reports of the Printers’ Pension Society (PPS), bankruptcy and insolvency accounts, newspaper reports, and prisoners’ petitions, I have located printers when they were unemployed, aged, infirm, bankrupt or insolvent, convicted criminals, and paupers: occupational descriptors were used as a primary identifier even when an individual was far from being economically active. Indeed, the use of sources where non-active printers are to be found significantly extends the parameters of social mobility in a downward direction, and highlights the stark realities for those who suffered serious decline in their economic and social situations in the early industrial period.

**Opportunity and its limits**

Part one of this thesis has already implied that the opportunities for upward social mobility within the printing trade were limited. Although apprenticeship was an opportunity for social mobility for some, increasing exploitation and poor training hindered future prospects for many others. Thus William Mason, in his 1820s printers’ manual, concluded, ‘it is painful to observe that the majority of modern compositors are very bad workmen, and are not able, when fully employed, to earn as much as compositors used thirty years ago’.\(^\text{11}\) The growing issue of the

---


‘apprentice problem’ led to too many journeymen competing for too few jobs and thus created an unemployment crisis. Meanwhile, an increasing number of masters entered the trade with money earned elsewhere, increasing competition, and thereby further restricting opportunities for journeymen to set up in business on their own.

As we saw in chapter three, potential routes to becoming a master varied — some inherited family firms, some were taken into partnership by their employers, and others were offered funds to borrow — but for ordinary journeymen without access to such opportunities, progression to ownership depended on the ability to earn a decent living and to save money. The amount needed could, however, vary considerably. In 1747 Campbell declared it was necessary to have a sum of between five hundred and one thousand pounds.\(^{12}\) Less than two decades later, in 1761, Collyer was more specific saying that a master printer could not set up with less than seven or eight hundred pounds, at least not ‘in a genteel way’.\(^{13}\) But in 1786 Kearsley’s *Table of Trades* gave a wide margin of between three hundred and two thousand pounds.\(^{14}\) By 1825, Whittock declared that a thousand pounds would be insufficient to set up a book printing office effectually, although he did acknowledge the existence of smaller and less costly set-ups.\(^{15}\)

The variety given in these prices may be largely accounted for by variations in the intended size of operation and the sourcing of materials. It was possible, for instance, to make savings by buying second hand; William Mason advised that thirty per cent might be saved in this way.\(^{16}\) Despite this variety, it is likely that minimum set-up costs were greater than in the majority of trades: Kearsley’s *Table* gave a figure of one hundred pounds or under for seventy-five per cent of the

\(^{12}\) Campbell, *The London Tradesman*, p. 337.


\(^{16}\) Mason, *The Printers’ Assistant*, p. 27.
trades listed (compared to three hundred pounds for printers). By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, developments in printing technology gave additional options for those with enough capital. In 1825 Thomas Curson Hansard estimated the cost of a steam printing machine at between six and seven hundred pounds, noting that it was a ‘serious expense’ (though considerably less than the £2,800 John Walter II paid for his two machines at The Times in 1814).

With relatively high set-up costs, journeymen would need to amass considerable savings, something which depended upon a favourable relationship between wages and the cost of living. It seems certain that this relationship became less advantageous during this period. I. C. Cannon in his study of London compositors compared average wages against Silberling’s Cost of Living index and found that from the last decade of the eighteenth century to the second decade of the nineteenth, cost of living increased above increases in income. Thereafter, the situation further deteriorated. In 1810 a new scale of prices was introduced in London which, remarkably, remained in place until 1891 with increases to the basic pay (thirty-three shillings per week) only taking place in 1866 and 1872 (a slight reduction on some work was also imposed in 1816). Elsewhere, provincial towns tended to follow the London scale, though at a lower rate; in Glasgow, for instance, the ‘stab’ weekly wage was twenty-five shillings for sixty hours’ work. Thus, from 1810 until the end of the period under study actual monetary wages remained static and real wages amongst journeymen printers declined.

Standards of living are, however, difficult to measure, depending as they do on a number of interrelated factors including family size, working hours and ill

---

17 That is, 265 out of a total of 354 listed trades, see Kearsley, *Kearsley’s Table of Trades*.
20 These ‘establishment’ wages were for those journeymen working for a fixed weekly sum, but the scale also covered in detail the sums to be paid to those working ‘piecemeal’, see Howe, *The London Compositor, 1785–1900*, p. 187, p. 189 and p. 352.
21 Aird, *Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters, and Printers, During the Last Sixty Years*, p. 83.
health, as well as wages, cost of living, inflation and other external factors. Leonard Schwarz, for instance, has attributed static wages to slow productivity growth and low inflation.\textsuperscript{22} It is now thought that standards of living in the early industrial period rose at a much slower rate than was previously held, and that wage increases would have been insufficient to compensate for urban problems, additional workloads and the rise in infant and child mortality.\textsuperscript{23} Nevertheless, printers with their static wages would have seen their standard of living decline more than other workers.

Many journeymen printers certainly felt increasingly aggrieved by their situations. During the protracted negotiations which finally resulted in the 1810 scale, compositors detailed the price of essential goods to demonstrate the rising costs of living. They concluded the improbability of rising to master: ‘The capital required to set up as a master is so great, that no man, whatever may be his capacity as a journeymen, can rationally entertain expectations of ever acquiring a sufficiency by mere journey-work’.\textsuperscript{24} They felt this unfairness particularly in relation to other trades which, they claimed, afforded ‘almost a moral certainty … that by industry, economy, prudence, they may sooner or later emerge from the condition of journeyman’. By 1832, the journeymen represented by the PPS were no longer holding out for business ownership but simply a basic standard of living. In response to an attack in The Times claiming that printers ought not to be deserving of sympathy, the PPS countered that, ‘very few ever enjoy an opportunity of saving any money at all’.\textsuperscript{25} They backed this up with an analysis of

---


\textsuperscript{24} Quoted in Howe, The London Compositor, 1785–1900, p. 143.

estimated wages over a working life based on the 1810 scale and an estimated cost of living for a modest family. Their conclusion was that the lifetime expenses of journeymen would actually exceed their receipts. By this calculation, becoming a master really was nothing more than a fantasy; the perceived reality was a lifetime of hardship and deprivation.

Another significant limiting factor on journeymen’s ambition was, ironically, journeymen themselves. The strength of their solidarity meant that attempts to earn above the average were severely restricted: there was a feeling that work should be distributed evenly among the workforce. Taking on casual work in a printing house where one was not regularly employed (‘smooting’), going back to work during a strike, or working in an ‘unfair’ office were all severely punished. Such journeymen were labelled ‘rats’ and blacklisted; names were circulated between societies, and offenders would find it difficult to obtain employment elsewhere.\(^{26}\) Attempting to do some work for themselves whilst working as journeymen was also disallowed. The MTS made it clear that, ‘any Journeyman having a Printing press, and other materials used in the profession, and doing work with them, shall be deemed ineligible to be a member of the MTS, as such practice is considered injurious to Journeymen, and in some respects dishonourable to the profession generally’.\(^ {27}\) In 1824 the journeyman printer James Hay fell foul of his brethren and suffered the consequences: ‘whenever I obtained a comfortable situation the rest of the journeymen finding me favoured and patronized by my employers universally combined to get me discharged thereby repeatedly depriving me of getting a respectable and comfortable independent livelihood’.\(^ {28}\) Any journeyman who aspired to improve his situation was thereby

held back, not only by unfavourable market conditions but also by the solidarity of his journeymen brethren.

For those who did achieve business ownership, it was possible through prudent management, experience and the right connections to increase profits, even throughout the recessions of the early and mid-nineteenth century (though it should be remembered that being a master was not of itself a sign of social or economic success). Luke Hansard, from a modest background, did phenomenally well simply by continuing to secure the lucrative contract for parliamentary printing. Luke’s son James inherited a share in his father’s business and by the time of his death in 1849 was living in a substantial seven-bedroom country villa furnished with damask curtains, mahogany furniture, Ottoman carpets and china vases: the inventory of his estate paints a picture of comfortable middle-class belonging. Newspaper publication also became more profitable from the late eighteenth century owing to increasing circulations and advertising revenue, and by the early nineteenth century profits on the larger papers were soaring throughout the country. The Manchester Guardian, founded on external capital, had weekly sales of over 11,000 by 1840. This was partly to do with the introduction of steam printing presses. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, John Walter II at The Times was in 1814 the first to adopt the new technology, reducing printing time from ten hours to three, whilst also halving his compositors’ bill. In a few short years he thereby doubled his circulation, earned a fortune, and retired from business.

For successful masters, a dramatic upward change in their economic circumstances sometimes produced a noticeable change in their social standing.

---

29 Southampton, University of Southampton, 'Manuscript Inventory of the Furniture and Effects of the Late James Hansard at Darent Villa, Westerham, by George Hansard', Hansard Family Papers, MS 59/A103/1, 20 and 21 March 1849.
31 Ibid., 35.
Edward Baines, for instance, was the son of a modest grocer and was apprenticed to a printer in his home town of Preston. However, his ambition, self-consciously modelled on Benjamin Franklin, led him to Leeds where he completed his apprenticeship, set up in business, married the daughter of a wealthy local currier, and bought the *Leeds Mercury*. He then turned the paper into a successful and powerful voice for political reform, and was eventually elected Whig MP for Leeds at a by-election in 1834.\(^{33}\) His sons easily assumed places in middle-class society as lawyers, MPs, writers and newspaper proprietors.

Journeymen were not slow to notice the higher standards of living enjoyed by such employers. When the Master Printers’ Association met for dinner in 1841, an article appeared in the *Compositors’ Chronicle* taking issue with the public display of decadence while hardships existed in the trade. The writer expressed the hope that ‘in the season of their festivity [masters] could be induced to remember their starving workmen, and would generously resolve to remedy their present condition by removing the principal cause of that distress which they well know prevails to an unprecedented extent amongst them’.\(^{34}\)

But the profitability of printing for many small masters, and therefore their potential for upward socio-economic mobility, was in fact limited. As discussed in chapter five, the so-called ‘taxes on knowledge’ placed a heavy burden on masters whose sales could not compensate for the costs of production. Newspaper proprietors without capital who were unable to invest in new printing machinery could not hope to match the circulation figures of the more successful papers. It has been estimated that the majority of provincial papers produced fewer than two thousand copies a week before 1850.\(^{35}\) Surviving business accounts of provincial printers are rare but those of John Fletcher, proprietor of the *Chester Chronicle*, demonstrate the difficulty of turning a profit out of a small newspaper

---


\(^{34}\) ‘Master Printers’ Dinner’, *Compositors’ Chronicle*, 6 (1 February 1841).

\(^{35}\) Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695–1855*, p. 34.
As we shall now see, newspaper proprietors, as other master printers, were vulnerable to a number of risks which threatened to slow or even reverse their socio-economic mobility.

**Risk**

This section explores three hazards which were common threats to printers in this period, all of which could lead to significant downward economic and social mobility: criminal conviction, bankruptcy and insolvency, and long-term unemployment (clearly there were other hazards but these represented the worst-case scenarios). The threat of prosecution for libel and other so-called moral offences was usually borne by masters. Similarly, masters carried the risk of financial ruin in a business. But journeymen were also vulnerable to imprisonment from insolvency, and the ultimate threat of unemployment (either through a lack of work or because of sickness or old age) loomed large for everyone in the trade. I will discuss the consequences for those who found themselves struggling with these challenges, demonstrating how the threats were often interrelated, and how the distinctions between the social hierarchies in the trade were broken down at this most vulnerable end of the scale.

As discussed in chapter five, the threat of prosecution for printers was very real. Even the costs of appearing in court, and the negative publicity, could adversely affect a business, not to mention an individual’s wellbeing. Those unable (or unwilling) to pay bail, such as Thomas Jonathan Wooler, were incarcerated before trial, which might have severe implications for both individuals and their businesses. But for those who were convicted, life became even more difficult. Sometimes the choice was between a hefty fine and imprisonment. The dilemma was summed up by Peter Finerty at his trial for libel in 1798: ‘I have only then to inform your Lordship that a heavy fine would be

---

36 Chester, Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, ‘Account Book of John Fletcher’, D3876, 1783–86. See also Gardner, 'Humble Pie: John Fletcher, Business, Politics and the Chester Chronicle'.

tantamount to perpetual imprisonment, and long imprisonment little short of death’. The Birmingham printer Joseph Allday faced the same predicament when in 1834 he was sentenced to a fine of eighty pounds for two libels on the local clergyman George Montgomery West. His goods and printing utensils had been ‘distrained’ (seized) and sold at auction rendering him unable to pay the fine, leaving him no option but imprisonment. In the end the Reverend took pity on him and petitioned the Home Office for his release, citing the ‘great distress to which the … prisoner and his family are reduced’.38

Prison conditions often came as a surprise to printers, particularly those convicted of moral offences who expected to be treated differently to common felons. In 1835 the Leeds printer and bookseller Joshua Hobson was imprisoned for selling the *Weekly Police Gazette* on unstamped paper, one of the many waging the ‘war of the unstamped’. He complained of his treatment in Leeds Prison where he was put in irons along with his companions, some of whom he said were ‘old and hardened offenders, “notorious thieves and blackguards”’.39 He further objected to their ‘depraved and obscene conversation’ and to being forced to bear ‘their filthy gibes and jeers.’ Other printers convicted of moral offences petitioned parliament directly to complain about what they perceived to be harsh sentences and unfair treatment disproportionate to their crimes.40

Prison conditions could indeed vary widely at this time. When the seventy-four-year-old Manchester printer and parliamentary reformer William Ogden fell prey to the suspension of habeas corpus in March 1817 he was initially imprisoned

---

37 *Trial of Peter Finerty, Late Printer of the Press, for a Libel against His Excellency Earl Camden, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland* (Dublin: printed by J. Stockdale, 1798), p. 61.
in the town prison.\footnote{Emma Greenwood, \textit{William Ogden and the Path to Reform}, 2 September 2014, <http://theoystercatchers.wordpress.com/2014/09/02/william-ogden-and-the-path-to-reform/> [accessed 23 August 2015].} He later complained in a petition to parliament of his ‘brutal’ treatment there at the hands of the local constable, of being left without adequate food, unattended in solitary confinement, and loaded with heavy manacles.\footnote{‘Petitions from Joseph Mitchell, Thomas Evans, William Ogden, John Stewart, and William Ben-Bow, Complaining of the Operation of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act’, 13 February 1818, \textit{Hansard 1803–2005}, HC Deb vol 37 cc399-416.} But Ogden was subsequently transferred to Horsemonger Lane gaol in London and, although he continued to be kept in solitary confinement, praised his treatment in a letter to his wife: ‘[I] am here treated in the most hospitable manner; I live in a stile never experienced in my former humble but contented station; having the best viands, and two pints of good Porter daily, Coffee to breakfast, good roast veal or beef for dinner, indeed I have every thing I want but company’.\footnote{The Following Letter Was Received on Sunday Last, by the Family of Mr. William Ogden (Manchester: printed and sold at the office of W. Ogden, [1817]) (Manchester, Chetham’s Library, MAIN HayPortf.190).} Ogden was eventually released after nine months, still without charge or conviction, and continued to campaign for reform until his death in 1822.

Imprisonment inevitably led to business difficulties. Daniel Holt, two years into a libel sentence, appealed in February 1795 to be removed from Newgate to Nottingham gaol in order to be closer to his business and family. He wrote, ‘At this distance it is wholly impossible for me to give the requisite attention to a very extensive business … the consequences of this distant imprisonment have been extremely disadvantageous to my business, and peculiarly injurious to my general interest’.\footnote{London, The National Archives, ‘Letter from Daniel Holt, Applying for His Removal from Newgate to Nottingham Gaol’, \textit{Home Office: Domestic Correspondence, George III}, HO 42/34/38, 7 February 1795, fols 79–80.} Holt’s appeal was apparently unsuccessful and he remained in London until 1797, by which time his newspaper the \textit{Newark Herald} had been taken over
and renamed the *Midland Mercury*.45 Two years later Holt died of consumption in Newark, aged just thirty-three.46

Many businesses, of course, failed for other reasons. The risks attached to business management and ownership in this period were many and varied — local factors such as the size of the market and number of competitors, personal qualities such as the success of decision-making, and temporary external crises such as war or harvest failure all played a part.47 Specific to printing, a flawed management style was displayed by the printing/bookselling partnership Chandler and Ward whose failure Christine Ferdinand attributed to their inability to manipulate the local newspaper market, along with their willingness (or recklessness) to risk all in an expensive multi-volume publication.48 Similarly, Christopher Berry of Norwich was bankrupted by underestimating the costs of producing the 1810–11 local trade directory. His goods were auctioned and his wife and children ended up in the workhouse while he struggled to earn a living publishing cheap pamphlets on the one press he was allowed to keep.49 When it came to outside factors, even large firms were vulnerable, as Ballantyne & Co., the printers of Sir Walter Scott, were to find out after the financial crisis of 1825–26.50

The reports in the *London Gazette* give an indication of the paths that could lead to bankruptcy. Felix Huntley Howitt, for example, had been the printer and publisher of the *Wiltshire and Gloucester Standard* in Malmesbury.51 But he subsequently spent nine months in lodgings apparently as a journeyman printer on the move between Birmingham, Bath and Gloucester. He then went into

46 It is worth noting that in 1795 Holt had praised his treatment within Newgate so it cannot necessarily be surmised that his consumption was brought on through his incarceration.
49 *Who do you think you are?* (2014), series 11, episode 6, Mary Berry, BBC1, 11 September 2014.
51 *The London Gazette*, 14 April 1843, issue 20213, p. 1266.
business in Gloucester offering a diverse range of services including printer, stationer, bookseller, newspaper agent, and ‘dealer in fancy goods’. This diversification strategy was obviously unsuccessful as he moved to Cheltenham and within a week filed for bankruptcy. Howitt’s story demonstrates how the boundaries between master and journeyman could be fluid and also how trade multiplicity could be employed as a strategy for survival (albeit an unsuccessful one in this case).

It is difficult to quantify the exact number of printers whose businesses failed. Ian Maxted listed eighty-eight printers out of a total of 631 book trade bankrupts between 1731 and 1806, but the data on which this list was made was far from complete. Printers were not strictly eligible to file for bankruptcy as they did not fulfil the criteria of being a ‘trader’. The alternative was becoming an insolvent debtor which carried the risk of imprisonment at the behest of creditors. In this sense, insolvency was a worse fate than bankruptcy, although both carried a stigma and for those really desperate, prison did at least offer the relief of food and shelter.

In 1813 the Act for the Relief of Insolvent Debtors was introduced and, although not everyone would have been able to petition the court which was set up to administer relief (the total cost was estimated to be about ten pounds), it is unlikely that anyone with the means to do so would have passed up the opportunity. The first to apply were listed in a Commons Sessional Paper, and among them were six printers with debts ranging from around four hundred to over one thousand pounds. Three were from Middlesex, one from Surrey,

---


another from Durham and another from Bradford, Yorkshire. All were discharged. Thereafter the numbers of printers imprisoned for debt increased steadily to a peak around 1830 when seventeen London printers applied for release.\(^56\) These included those self-identifying as journeymen as well as masters and newspaper proprietors.

The risks attached to business ownership were not undertaken lightly and it must not be assumed that all who had the opportunity of becoming a master would have taken it. The autobiographer Robert Skeen claimed to have twice refused assistance to set up on his own account. The second time, around 1835, he was offered one thousand pounds by two friends (‘an extraordinary and unsought-for offer’) with a promise for the amount to be written off should he fail. But still he would not accept: ‘I shrank from the responsibility of bearing such a burden of debt, and felt that the cares and anxieties of business thus burdened would not suit my temperament’.\(^57\) However, he was canny enough to discuss the matter with his employer who promptly increased his salary and promised extra advantages such as apprenticing all of Skeen’s seven surviving sons into the business.

Long-term unemployment, either through lack of jobs, business failure, or the inability to work, was undoubtedly the greatest threat to all printers in the early nineteenth century. In 1826 the MTS received a letter from the London Society of Compositors seeking assistance for the eight hundred journeymen printers who were currently out of work in the capital.\(^58\) That was the year after the banking crisis, but from then on the subject of mass unemployment in the trade haunts the records of all the typographical societies. In 1842 it was reported that twelve hundred journeymen printers had been out of work in the City of

\(^57\) Skeen, Autobiography of Mr. Robert Skeen, Printer, p. 15.
London over the preceding year.\(^{59}\) The following sections of this chapter will discuss the strategies used by printers to deal with the ultimate threat of destitution.

**Tramping**

For unemployed journeymen, their first attempt at survival in the trade was through the system known as tramping.\(^{60}\) The aim of going ‘on tramp’ was to find employment but often this failed and so tramping also became a method of relief. Members of typographical societies could receive payment from a cooperating society elsewhere in the country on production of a valid card.

Tramping was a feature of other trades too, but seems to have been particularly widespread among printers. Eric Hobsbawm claimed that the high proportion of permanent tramps was due to the printing trade being ‘riddled with casualism’.\(^{61}\) Whilst there may have been an element of this, the feasibility of tramping in the first place owed more to the existence of an extensive network of typographical societies. This also meant that printers could travel long distances. Between 1823 and 1831 tramps arriving in Glasgow had travelled a mean minimum distance of 197 miles (that is, measured in a straight line, but most had undoubtedly travelled via a more circuitous route). Figure 16 shows the locations of their home societies (see Appendix III for full data). Long-distance migration was a distinctive feature in other skilled trades — members of the Steam Engine Makers’ Society, for instance, travelled on average 129 miles between 1835 and 1845 — but printers’ typographical societies were located in more disparate locations throughout Britain, thereby enabling particularly long-distance

---

\(^{59}\) ‘Multiple News Items’, *Standard*, 21 April 1842.


\(^{61}\) Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, p. 43.
migration. By the 1850s the ‘grand tour’ for a compositor was said to have covered around 2,800 miles.

Figure 16: Origins of tramps seeking relief from Glasgow Typographical Society, 1827–31

Tramps belonging to typographical societies received money when leaving town and when arriving if unable to find work, but the amounts given were often discretionary, varied over time and between societies. The Leeds Typographical Society stated in its 1815 rules that any tramp arriving in town, ‘who can give a satisfactory account of himself’, was entitled to a sum not exceeding five

---


Typographical Circular article from 1891 quoted in Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, p. 34.
shillings. In his research Albert Musson found that between 1830 and 1848 relief ranged from nine pence to five shillings. Societies changed their rules at various times, usually dependent on the strength of membership. Therefore in times of mass unemployment, relief was likely to be less, precisely at the times when it was needed most. In 1826, in the wake of the London banking crisis, the MTS reduced relief from five to four shillings for those from ‘old established societies’ but those from minor societies such as at Preston, Wigan, Bolton, Rochdale, or Blackburn were to receive only two shillings and six pence. Those from London were also only to receive two and six, presumably because the pressure on funds was simply too great to accommodate the influx of unemployed men coming from the capital. In 1830 the MTS abolished relief to London tramps altogether. In Glasgow, the amount tramps received was reduced from seven shillings to two shillings and six pence from 1829 (see appendix III). Between 1827 and 1831, sixty-seven members of the society also left town, suggesting that pressure on local jobs was intense.

Ideally, journeymen would find work soon after arriving in a new town and join the local society, thus enabling them to receive the leaving fee should they need to move on again. If they were unable to find work they would have to remain on the move. It was not a profitable scheme. In 1841 the NTU stated that the most a tramp could get in relief, if he called upon all the societies in the union (which comprised over forty towns), would be two pounds and nineteen shillings for the first twelve months. This was hardly enough to survive on. Added to this, there were restrictions on where tramps could go as they were forbidden in towns

---

65 Musson, The Typographical Association: Origins and History up to 1949, p. 54.
67 Ibid., 4 May 1830.
where trade disputes were taking place. In 1837, for instance, a circular from John
Backhouse of the NTU made it clear that tramps should avoid Chesterfield,
Glasgow, and Dublin.\textsuperscript{70} (In Glasgow that year 141 union members were out on
strike.)\textsuperscript{71}

Not all printers on tramp were members of typographical societies,
however. John Bedford Leno, for instance, found himself on tramp in 1850 without
a card when, after arriving in London shortly after the crash in railway stocks, he
was unable to find work but also unable to join the London Society of
Composers having lost his indentures. And so, aged twenty-two, he set off on a
thousand-mile tramp, taking in St Albans, Northampton, Leicester, Derby,
Birmingham, Worcester, and Gloucester before arriving back at his home town of
Uxbridge no better off than when he had set out. He was unable to find work
anywhere except Gloucester and survived through the generosity of strangers,
only one of whom was a printer. The misery of the experience caught up with him
when his money ran out in Market Harborough: ‘Homeless, penniless, wanting to
sell my labour; but finding no purchaser … Vainly I strove to restrain my tears, it
was all to no purpose’.\textsuperscript{72} This was far from the emancipating rite of passage
Humphrey Southall claimed young tramps experienced; rather, it was a shocking
initiation into a potential lifetime of misery and deprivation.\textsuperscript{73}

In response to the inevitable hardships, some tramps turned to desperate
measures. In 1847 a tramping printer named William Mason broke a window,
apparently deliberately, in order to get into prison, and thereby receive a meal and

\textsuperscript{70} Salford, Working Class Movement Library, '[Circular Letter from John Backhouse]', Leeds
\textsuperscript{71} Glasgow, University of Strathclyde Archives, 'Printed Circular Entitled "Letter-Press Printers",
Records of the Glasgow Typographical Society, T-GTS 1/9/1, 14 March 1837.
\textsuperscript{73} Humphrey Southall, 'Mobility, the Artisan Community and Popular Politics in Early Nineteenth-
103–30 (p. 122).
a roof over his head. Another printer on tramp was believed to have faked a suicide attempt in order to excite compassion. Others were more devious still. The wife of one well-known itinerant printer named John Farrell tried to claim relief from the Leeds and Sheffield typographical societies, alleging that her husband had died, only for the pair of them to be spotted together, her husband still alive and well. There were also reports of theft, such as that by an Irish printer who stole two composing sticks from an office in Leicester while on tramp there (composing sticks were the only tool owned by journeymen themselves so the theft would have been seen as an attack on fellow journeymen rather than on the master).

The language of these reports was very often critical of tramps. For example, a journeyman printer named Thomas Summers was described as ‘an ungrateful tramp’ in a report which, without giving specific details, accused him of ‘victimising his landlady and some of his benevolent brethren’. No doubt reports like this contributed to giving tramps a bad name in the nineteenth century. Peter King has described the problems of crime reporting more widely, stating it to be unbalanced, lacking in detail, and giving a misleading idea of the prevalence of crime. The term ‘tramp’ was itself broadening to include vagrants as well as mobile artisans. By the late nineteenth century, sympathy was mixed with disgust for men who were seen to be shirking their responsibilities towards their families (many saw tramping as absconding from home).

---

76 ‘Leeds, Saturday, April 12’, Leeds Mercury, 12 April 1823.
77 ‘Cambrian Miscellaneous Intelligence’, Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties, 20 September 1845.
78 ‘Wednesday to Friday's Posts’, Hereford Journal, 13 September 1848.
Tramps were gaining a bad name within the trade as well. Charles Manby Smith launched a vicious tirade against tramps in his autobiography: ‘A regular tide of lazy and filthy vagabonds, professedly of various trades, but virtually living without work, or the intention of working, flowed lazily through the kingdom from one end of it to the other’. He accused them of inventing wives and starving children in order to get money, and talks of the tramping system as a ‘burdensome tax’ on ‘industrious members’. Manby Smith’s conservative views have already been noted, but he was not alone in his opinion of tramps. In the 1840s the new Compositors’ Chronicle regularly included negative comment on tramps and tramping, such as in this letter from 1842:

the present system is the productive source of most of the evils under which the printing profession is now labouring. To it we are indebted for the great number of apprentices; it is one of the great means by which rat offices are increased; it is the cause of much drunkenness; makes us the dupes of imposters and designing men; and causes much unnecessary suffering to the steady and industrious man.

There were also rumours of tramps being treated badly when they applied for relief. John Backhouse of the NTU complained in the 1830s that, ‘unfortunate and poorly-dressed unemployed tramps [are] saying “they treats me like a dog when I applies for relief”’. Almost certainly, increasing levels of tramping in the trade were leading to divisions between employed and unemployed journeymen. The discourses of respectability and ‘manliness’ which infiltrated the proceedings of the typographical societies in the early nineteenth century (as discussed in chapter two), can be seen as an attempt by society men to distance themselves from the rising tide of vagrancy and its more controversial side effects.

---

83 ‘Tramping’, Compositors Chronicle, 17, 1 Jan 1842.
84 Salford, Working Class Movement Library, '[Handwritten Note from John Backhouse]', Leeds Typographical Society: Letters and Rule Book Scrapbook, TU/TYPO/7/4/2, [1837].
Desperation

Obviously, the tramping system of relief could not cope with large-scale unemployment and was easily exhausted. In 1839 a journeyman printer named Mr Millan returned to London after a long tramp which had evidently left himself and his family in a desperate situation:

he had tramped a great distance, and had returned to London only a few days since. His wife had lost the use of her limbs, his children were suffering from fever — they had been turned out their lodgings and out of the workhouse, & the only shelter he could obtain for them was in a station house during the night, whilst he was compelled to walk the street. They were destitute both of food & clothing, and if not relieved must perish in the street. One of his children was asleep in the outer-room of the office and its wretched appearance would prove that he had spoken truly.85

Typographical societies were limited in their ability to provide relief and it was not until 1848 that a dedicated unemployment fund was set up within the trade.86

In Liverpool, a friendly society had been established in 1816 whereby masters were to pay into a fund for the provision of foremen and journeymen, ‘in certain cases of sickness and want of employment’, but this level of cooperation between masters and men was apparently unusual and there is no evidence of the continuation of the scheme.87

In the meantime, it is likely that those struggling would have looked to a number of different sources for survival; the disparate nature of income in the poorest households — the ‘economy of makeshifts’ — is well documented.88 This

86 Named the Printers’ Provident Fund, it was an initiative of the London Society of Compositors and received one quarter of the sums received by that society, see London Society of Compositors, Rules of the London Society of Compositors and London Compositors’ Provident Fund (London: printed for the society, 1848) (London, St Bride Library, Closed Access 235).
might have included temporary work in other areas (Charles Manby Smith, for example, worked as a teacher during periods of unemployment), informal help from friends and family, and debt.\(^{89}\) Pawnshops were also utilized, although probably only as a last resort.\(^{90}\)

As has already been suggested in relation to tramps, and has been described elsewhere, crime can also be seen as a makeshift strategy used to maintain independence.\(^{91}\) When the twenty-one-year-old journeyman printer George Munden was convicted of the theft of some stockings (value one pound and sixteen shillings) in 1831, and sentenced to fourteen years transportation, a petition on his behalf attempted to get the sentence reduced by claiming he was ‘starving’ at the time. He had served his apprenticeship in Northampton and come to London in search of work but in sixteen months had ‘been able to get but very little employment’. The petition concluded, ‘when he committed the trifling theft it was more from real want & hunger not from wickedness’.\(^ {92}\) A similar tale was told by James Hay, convicted of forgery in 1823. He stated that ‘through the introduction of machinery and boys … there was very little opportunity for a regular journeyman to always obtain employment’.\(^ {93}\) Another petition on his behalf claimed, ‘the prisoner was in great poverty arising from his inability to get employment’.\(^ {94}\) These may of course have been hopeful excuses designed to induce clemency but they were nevertheless credible.

The PPS, established in 1827, gave some help to those unable to work either through ill health or old age. Their stated objective was ‘to grant pensions in the

---


decline of life to such infirm and afflicted journeymen printers and their widows as may be thought most deserving’.\textsuperscript{95} But, as became immediately obvious from the outset, the society was not able to help everyone in need. Being old (there was a minimum age of fifty) was rarely enough; most beneficiaries also had some physical disability, most commonly problems with eyesight, asthma, or paralysis.\textsuperscript{96} After 1836 only those who had paid into the society’s funds regularly for a set period of time (seven years by 1850) were entitled to apply for relief, making it little more than a precarious life insurance scheme that might not even pay out when you needed it to.\textsuperscript{97} Between 1827 and 1850 the PPS supported just 149 individuals and many more, apparently in great distress, were left disappointed.\textsuperscript{98}

Despite increasing support from journeymen, and successful fund-raising activities, the efficacy of the society was limited by the difficulty it had in persuading masters to subscribe. When they did so, the resulting support was not always liberal. Much was made, for instance, of a donation of fifty pounds from Andrew Strahan (1750–1831), but this was an insignificant sum within the context of Strahan’s vast wealth (he had inherited his father’s lucrative business as the King’s Printer and on his death left at least £300,000 in cash bequests in addition to a manor house in Surrey, a property in London, and his share in the business along with its stock, copyrights, and premises).\textsuperscript{99} John Walter III (1818–1894), who similarly inherited his father’s valuable business at \textit{The Times}, contributed just ten pounds in order to become a life subscriber to the PPS.\textsuperscript{100}

The gulf between these men and those who found themselves seeking relief could hardly have been greater. In 1832 the society put out a plea which was rather disingenuous in its appeal to wealthy masters:

many of the subscribers, are, happily, so far removed by affluence above the knowledge of the distress which too frequently prevails among the aged poor, that they can form no adequate idea of the soul-harrowing misery endured by them in the hour of death.\(^\text{101}\)

There was an irony that while some masters contributed just enough to the society to enjoy the perks of middle-class conviviality which that brought (such as annual dinners with celebrity guests),\(^\text{102}\) they also refused to countenance the wage increases, or apprentice limits, which might have reduced the overwhelming burden on that society’s funds. The office of Andrew Strahan was, for instance, vilified in the pages of the Compositors’ Chronicle as being, ‘the first wholesale rearer of apprentices in London’.\(^\text{103}\)

The last remaining expediency for those in need was to seek parish relief. William Anthony did just that: aged twenty-five, married with four children, having served a seven-year apprenticeship to Edward Justice of Wild Street, but apparently unable to find work, he sought out-door relief on 9 July 1798.\(^\text{104}\) After the New Poor Law Act of 1834, relief concentrated on the workhouse, an institution which was viewed with fear by many. In 1841 the Compositors’ Chronicle printed a poem which began:

“O give relief!” the aged printer cried.
 None gave relief; in vain the old man sigh’d.
 Now full before the suppliant’s languid eyes,
 High tow’ring walls of brick and mortar rise;

---


\(^{102}\) In 1844, for instance, Charles Dickens presided in the chair at the PPS’s anniversary dinner, see London, St Bride Library, ‘Seventeenth Report’, Printers’ Pension Society Reports, Closed Access 1201A, 1844.

\(^{103}\) Compositors’ Chronicle, 9 (3 May 1841), p. 72.

Walls which sustain the inhospitable dome —
The friendless poor man’s last said wretched home,
Where semi-famine thins the manliest face,
And stamps Despair’s deep lines with vivid trace.105

For printers, then, the workhouse meant more than a loss of independence and possible wellbeing; it was also a threat to their masculine pride. Two of those faced with such a predicament were Anthony Egan, aged sixty-five, originally from Ireland, and George Nelson, aged sixty, from Middlesex, who were recorded in the 1841 census at St James’ Westminster workhouse on Poland Street.106 Other members of the book trade were also there: two booksellers, a bookbinder and a copperplate printer. In 1836 the LUC entertained the idea of the printing trade having an asylum of its own, ‘in which its aged members may nurse the fading, flickering lamp of life, and where, when no longer able to work, instead of entering a poor-house, to be rated by the minions of fortune, the aged Compositor may rest with the consciousness that he is in a home which he himself has contributed to build’.107 A similar scheme was taken up a few years later by an offshoot of the PPS, the Printer’s Almshouse Society, but it was not until 1856 that almshouses were finally available for printers and their widows, and even then they could only accommodate twelve couples.108

Some desperate few sought a more immediate and final solution. In 1841 a printer named Henman was reported to have jumped over Blackfriars Bridge in a suicide bid (he later died in St Bartholomew’s Hospital). The newspaper report explained the act by stating that he ‘had been upwards of two months out of employment, which had reduced himself, wife, and child to a state of

105 Compositors’ Chronicle, 10 (7 June 1841), p. 80.
wretchedness and want'. Likewise, a journeyman printer named George Fry was reported to have committed suicide as a result of ‘despondency of mind, arising from want of employment’. Such newspaper reports reflected a change in attitude towards self-destruction in the early nineteenth century: there was greater leniency in coroners’ inquests, more public sympathy, and a desire to understand suicide as a moral and philosophical problem. A common conclusion was to relate increasing suicide bids to a rise in alcohol abuse. Indeed, a recurring problem with delirium tremens, brought on by excessive alcohol consumption, was reported as having contributed to Henman’s troubles. Thus, for printers, as with other artisans, another stigma was attached to the increasingly controversial subject of alcohol.

**Conclusion**

The printing trade in the early industrial period was characterized by increasingly divergent mobility. On the one hand, deregulation, the introduction of printing machinery, and a growing demand for news publications led some masters to earn vast sums from their printing businesses. They lived the life of the lesser gentry, kept separate town and country residences, and furnished their homes in comfort and style. On the other hand, the risk of business failure, prosecution for moral offences, and unemployment through lack of jobs or ill health, loomed large for many. A great number of printers, and their families, were reduced to desperate poverty having previously enjoyed independent, if not hugely affluent, lives.

Masters were not immune to difficulties. They bore the responsibility for financial ruin of a business, as well as the threat of prosecution from the kinds of moral offences which were an occupational hazard at this time. Frequently one misfortune led to another and masters could find themselves no better off than

---

unemployed journeymen. Dramatic fluctuations in an individual’s socio-economic status were far from uncommon in the printing trade, something which is rarely acknowledged in larger-scale studies of social mobility. The result was that the boundaries between masters and journeymen were kept fluid and mobility between the two was considerable.

In common with other trades, migration proved to be no aid to social mobility. Based on an analysis of 16,000 life stories, Pooley and Turnbull found that around eighty per cent of those who moved at this time experienced no change in their social position.\(^{113}\) For printers, the most prevalent form of migration, tramping, became increasingly unlikely to result in employment. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the system was overburdened and unable to cope with the high levels of unemployment in the trade; the hand-outs from typographical societies were not enough to survive on, and the experience frequently ended in hunger and homelessness. Tramping thereby became a last-ditch effort at independence within the trade before seeking alternative, and less dignified, means of relief.

Later in the nineteenth century, life in the printing trade showed signs of improvement. The growing strength of the compositors’ unions, allied with their persistent efforts at negotiation, brought about an advance in basic pay in 1866, and a reduction in the working week in 1872.\(^{114}\) The moral rhetoric of the typographical societies also began to pay dividends. In the 1880s one influential master printer, William Blades, gave a very public declaration of support to the London Society of Compositors, noting in particular its positive ‘moral influence’.\(^{115}\) At the same time, employment in the trade was boosted by the repeal

---

\(^{113}\) Pooley and Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain since the Eighteenth Century*, p. 179.


\(^{115}\) Ibid., 292.
of the ‘taxes on knowledge’; between 1851 and 1891, the number of men engaged in printing increased 250 per cent to 82,000.\textsuperscript{116}

Nevertheless, concerns about unemployment in the trade persisted.\textsuperscript{117} An increasing economic divide between masters and their men was also noted: as John Southward lamented in the first edition of \textit{Practical Printing} in 1882, ‘In many cases the proprietor seldom visits any portion of his office except the counting house, and is personally, almost entirely, unknown to the people he employs … Nowadays the employer is often merely a capitalist’.\textsuperscript{118} The differences between the lived experiences of wealthy masters and the men they employed, or failed to employ, continued to grow. Not only were their physical experiences of work, and their understanding of the culture of the workplace, radically different, but their living conditions, and their social affiliations, were also worlds apart.

\textsuperscript{117} Warwick Modern Records Centre, ‘Report of a Special Committee on Unemployment’, \textit{Trade reports of the London Society of Compositors, MSS.28/CO/4/1/19}, 1895.
Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the fundamental importance of work to printers’ sense of personal and social identity throughout the early industrial period. Work was where they spent the majority of their waking lives, work fostered pride, and work provided social networks. Beyond that, work reinforced family identity, shaped political ideas, and was the foundation of socio-economic change.

Uniquely to printers, work, through the products of the press, could also be a mouthpiece for influencing public debate and achieving status within a community. But work experiences, and therefore work-based identities, were far from homogenous. The early industrial period saw many structural, legisatory, and social changes in the printing trade which diversified the nature of printing operations, and their personnel, and thus intensified tensions, both amongst journeymen and between journeymen and their masters.

The first part of this thesis followed the internal lifecycle of the trade from apprentices through journeymen to masters and proprietors. Apprentices were shown to be represented negatively in satire, popular imagery and newspapers, in contrast with autobiographers’ own recollections of quiet diligence, autodidacticism, and overall good behaviour. The disparity between these visions was explained by a delayed realisation that far from the trade being ‘genteel’, as was widely supposed, a harsher reality existed where exploitation was increasingly common, and where social and educational backgrounds were more diverse than commonly assumed.

The exploitation of apprentices had an impact on journeymen’s collective identity. As the workforce became overstocked with poorly-trained apprentices out of their time, pressure on jobs became more intense. Tensions among journeymen multiplied, on issues including alcohol consumption, respectability and the best means of negotiation with masters. Identity for journeymen became more fluid and somewhat contrived. There were, for instance, differences between
the way journeymen behaved in the relatively private spheres of work and public house, and more public assertions of collective behaviour as put forward by the leaders of the typographical societies. This latter identity came to focus on upholding the customs of the trade, sobriety, and respectability.

Chapter three demonstrated how greatly the social and economic identities of master printers diverged during the early industrial period. This was largely due to newspaper proprietors entering the trade from outside with capital earned elsewhere. Their motivation was often political influence and their affluence ensured they could move in very different social circles to those they employed. On the other hand were those small masters who struggled to earn a living, surviving on perhaps less than a typical journeyman’s salary. The differences in these backgrounds and aspirations affected not only masters’ working relationships but also the extent of their trade identity.

The second part of this thesis looked at how work-based identities intersected with familial, political and socio-economic identities. In chapter four, family firms were shown to be conspicuous among long-lived printing firms. Unusually high levels of intergenerational transfer were observed, along with a strong desire to see businesses, and thus trade identity, passed on to a new generation. Nevertheless, printing was heavily male-dominated, and, although women played a crucial role in the success of long-lived family firms, they were not trained formally and accounted for a low, and declining, proportion of all printing proprietors. As wealthy proprietors entered the trade, businesses expanded in size, and heavy machinery was introduced, the involvement of women was increasingly restricted to low-value printing firms in small country towns.

The importance of political identity to printers was explored in chapter five. A major area of political consensus was achieved around campaigns for freedom of the press. Restrictions on press freedom throughout the early industrial period seriously hampered not only freedom of expression for masters, but also the
growth of the industry and thus job prospects for journeymen — the issue was an important way in which cohesion was fostered across trade hierarchies. Yet, at the polling booth printers demonstrated a multiplicity of voting choices indicating that the occupational group had but little impact on the exact nature of their political ideas, beyond a slightly liberal tendency shared with other artisans. The relationship between printers’ personal political thought and the politics of newspapers was also shown to be complex and subject to a number of factors. Economic incentives, management practices in large firms, and libel all affected the politics of the press.

Finally, chapter six looked at opportunities for, and limits to, social mobility among printers, considering both upward and downward movement within individual lifetimes. The overwhelming conclusion was that survival and success were precarious for the vast majority of printers, and became more so towards the middle of the nineteenth century. The (often interrelated) threats of imprisonment, debt, and long-term unemployment haunted the trade and made downward mobility a harsh reality for many printers, both journeyman and master alike. At the same time, however, some master printers, especially those able to invest in the burgeoning newspaper market, or those inheriting lucrative family firms, managed to do extremely well. They lived the life of the lesser gentry, kept separate town and country residences and furnished their homes in comfort and style. Socio-economic identities in the trade thereby became increasingly diverse.

There were many reasons why printers at all levels of the trade from apprentice through journeyman to master continued to feel a shared sense of collective identity centred around their work in the early industrial period. Socialization into the trade was early and lengthy through the continued practice of seven-year apprenticeships while specialist jargon, used at work and repurposed in literary exercises, reinforced an exclusive trade identity. Craft pride revolved around the four hundred-year-old history and significance of the press, and literacy, a necessary attribute, was a significant source of personal and
collective pride. Belief in the importance of freedom of the press further united printers in common cause.

But the early nineteenth century saw many changes which threatened the bases of this collective identity. Deregulation allowed masters to abuse the apprentice system, taking on poorly-educated boys as unskilled labour and thereby overstocking the trade with low-skilled journeymen. Growing demand for news publications and the rise of partisan politics led to an increase in wealthy newspaper proprietors who neither understood the culture of the workplace nor participated in its physical aspects. Sociability among journeymen was threatened by rising tension between alcoholism and the emerging temperance movement. Furthermore, abuse of, and an increased burden on, the tramping system generated ill-feeling towards unemployed printers.

The tension between commonalities and disparities in the collective identity of the trade had a profound effect on working relationships. As masters became more distanced from the business of their trade, journeymen emphasised their role as the true guardians of trade customs and traditions, sometimes exploiting their employers’ ignorance. Growing economic inequality between wealthy masters and their men fuelled antagonism and led to increasing conflict: journeymen’s societies and unions began to enforce more regulations on employment through striking against ‘unfair’ offices and blacklisting ‘rats’. As an aid to this process, a new emphasis on respectability among society men encouraged ‘manly’ conduct and discredited drunken and disorderly behaviour: heavy drinking became associated with the unemployed, the work-shy, and even the suicidal. Meanwhile, the workplace was becoming a site for the construction of a specifically masculine identity. As businesses expanded, wealthy proprietors established dynastic patrilineal control, homes and businesses were separated, and women’s involvement was increasingly restricted to small, low-value family firms.

As the nineteenth century progressed, and on into the twentieth, the printing trade underwent more dramatic transformations. Technological advances
began to affect the work of compositors as well as pressmen, though strong unions managed to protect an element of skill and commensurate wages.¹ Relations between masters and men became progressively polarised. Masters began to unionise in order to strengthen their bargaining position against journeymen. On Fleet Street, which became the centre of the British newspaper industry, a ‘closed shop’ system operated whereby unions managed employment on behalf of owners who now had no direct contact with their workers. Chapels became mere union branches.

That said, familiar trade customs and behaviour lived on among workers, in apprenticeships, ‘bang out’ rituals, compositors’ jargon and even a heavy drinking culture.² Some masters also contributed to a sense of continuity with past work practices. In 1921 the Manchester and Salford Association of Master Printers published a jubilee souvenir which traced the history of the trade in Britain, emphasising the craft skills of their forebears as well as the ‘social importance’ of their work — the rhetoric bears comparison with earlier journeymen’s publications.³ The private press movement, given impetus by William Morris’ Kelmscott Press, continued in a more practical way to keep traditional skills in hand composition and hand printing alive in increasingly mechanised times.⁴

This continuation of shared work-based customs, ideas, and practices, despite huge structural changes, underscores an argument I have made throughout this thesis; that occupation is a poor basis on which to build socio-economic classifications. In just one trade we have seen how varied socio-economic situations were, both between individuals and within lifetimes. Even the

³ Manchester and Salford Association of Master Printers, 1874–1924: Jubilee Souvenir, p. 7.
internal hierarchies that existed between journeymen and masters could not consistently be said to correlate respectively to working-class and middling identities. There is no reason to think printers unusual in this respect. Moreover, the case for considering work-based identity as a distinct and separate element of personal and social identity is strong. Work fostered pride, provided a focus for sociability, influenced ideological beliefs, and informed domestic lives. In doing so, it crossed social, cultural, and political divisions.

Where then should we take the history of work? One avenue might be to further explore the representation and meaning attached to individual and collective work identities through the methods of cultural history. For example, Mark Hailwood has in recent years been analysing broadside ballads to inform understanding of early-modern labouring identities. And for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Karen Harvey has begun to use material culture to assess the significance of tools and other objects to work-based identity. A recent ‘cultural turn’ in business history also holds the potential for further insights, particularly concerning business owners.

One area which remains neglected by historians, however, is the study of historical ‘hierarchies of esteem’, an omission highlighted back in the early 1990s by Penelope Corfield. There is a linguistic aspect here: the semantic meaning of ‘profession’, for instance, only became associated with skilled service occupations later in the eighteenth century. But there are also cultural differences. In ancient China, society was organised by an occupational hierarchy with scholars at the top.

---

and merchants at the bottom — an unfamiliar power structure to a modern Western societal view.\textsuperscript{10} Significantly, work-based hierarchies can be independent of economic status. In early modern Germany, those engaged in a catalogue of trades from skinners and grave-diggers to actors and shepherds were known as \textit{unehrliche Leute} (dishonourable people) and treated as social outcasts, despite often enjoying higher earnings than the guild-entitled artisan community.\textsuperscript{11} However, any attempt to understand historical hierarchies of esteem centred on work must be mindful of the potential gap between societal perceptions and lived experiences. As this thesis has shown, printing continued to be thought ‘genteel’ even at a time when there was massed unemployment in the trade, prospects for social mobility were limited, and many journeymen were struggling to provide for themselves and their families on low, irregular and static wages.

\textsuperscript{10} The Chinese four-part occupational structure is thought to date back to the late Zhou/early Han period and comprised \textit{shi} (scholars), \textit{nong} (farmers), \textit{gong} (artisans) and \textit{shang} (merchants). John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, \textit{China: A New History}, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2006), p. 108.

\textsuperscript{11} Kathy Stuart, \textit{Defiled Trades and Social Outcasts: Honor and Ritual Pollution in Early Modern Germany} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archives and Special Collections

Bristol Record Office
- Bristol Gazette Meetings, 34463/66

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Chester
- Account Book of John Fletcher, 1783–86, D3876
- Probate Records, WS

Chetham’s Library, Manchester
- *The Following Letter Was Received on Sunday Last, by the Family of Mr. William Ogden* (Manchester: printed and sold at the office of W. Ogden, [1817]), MAIN HayPortf.190

Coventry Archives
- School and Charity Records, PA26/8 f.56

Durham University Library
- Pre-1858 Durham Probate Records

Lancashire Record Office, Preston
- Probate Records

London Metropolitan Archives
- Hodgson, ACC/0612
- Diocese of London Consistory Court Wills

Manchester City Archives
- Manchester Township and Parish: Rate Books, M9/40/2/1-713
- Printed Details of Letterpress Printers’ Part in Celebrations in Honour of Passing of Reform Bill, M71/2/19/12

Rochdale Local Studies Library
- The Printer’s Devil, F/8/4/WAU/1/VOLUME ONE/16

Sheffield Archives and Local Studies
- Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society, SLPS/36/202

St Bride Library, London
- Printers’ Pension Society Reports, Closed Access 1201A

The National Archives, London
- Court for the Relief of Insolvent Debtors and Office for the Commissioners of Bankrupts and Successors: Indexes, B 8/6
- Friendly Societies Rules and Amendments, Series I, FS 1/302/1273
- Home Office: Domestic Correspondence, George III, HO 42/34/38
Home Office: Criminal Petitions, Series I, HO 17
Treasury Solicitor and HM Procurator General, Papers, TS 11
Prerogative Court of Canterbury and Related Probate Jurisdictions: Will Registers, PROB 11

University of Aberdeen
Aberdeen Association of Master Printers ([Aberdeen]: [n. pub.], 1846), Special Collections (King 2/20).

University of Southampton
Hansard Family Papers, MS 59

University of Strathclyde Archives, Glasgow
Records of the Glasgow Typographical Society, T-GTS 1/1/1-2

Warwick Modern Records Centre
London Society of Compositors, 1792–1968, MSS.28/CO
Papers of the British Printing Industries Federation, MSS.375col

Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham
Probate records of the Consistory Court of Salisbury

Working Class Movement Library, Salford
Leeds Typographical Society, 1837–1988, TU/TYPO/7

**Online Databases**
17th & 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers
19th Century British Library Newspapers
British Newspaper Archive
Eighteenth Century Collections Online
Hansard 1803–2005
History of Parliament: British Political, Social & Local History
House of Commons Parliamentary Papers
London Electoral Database
London Lives, 1690–1800
Making of the Modern World
Old Bailey Proceedings Online
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
Oxford English Dictionary
Times Digital Archive

**Printers’ Autobiographies**
Autobiography of a Scotch Lad: Being Reminiscences of Threescore Years and Ten
(Glasgow: David Bryce & Son, 1887)
Catling, Thomas Thurgood, My Life’s Pilgrimage (London: John Murray, 1911)
Dolby, Thomas, Memoirs of T. D. Late Printer and Publisher, of Catherine Street, Strand (London: Hunt & Clarke, 1827)
Edwards, John Passmore, A Few Footprints ([London]: [n. pub.], 1905)
Fleming, Leslie, An Octogenarian Printer’s Recollections (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Typographia, 1893)
Franklin, Benjamin, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin, 3 vols (London: H. Colburn, 1818)
Gent, Thomas, The Life of Mr Thomas Gent, Printer, of York (London: Printed for Thomas Thorpe, 1832)
Horne, Eric, What the Butler Winked At: Being the Life and Adventures of E. Horne, Butler (London: T. Werner Laurie, [1923])
Knight, Charles, Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century with a Prelude of Early Reminiscences, 3 vols (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1864–65)
Leno, John Bedford, The Aftermath with Autobiography of the Author (London: Reeves and Turner, 1892)
Paterson, James, Autobiographical Reminiscences (Edinburgh: Ogle, 1871)
Quelch, Stephen, Early Recollections of Oxford (Oxford: Oxford Chronicle, 1900)
Ricketts, Joseph, 'Notes on the Life of Joseph Ricketts', Wiltshire Archeological and Natural History Magazine, 60 (1965), 120–26
Robinson, John, A Short Account of the Life of John Robinson (Torquay: Printed by John Robinson, [1882]) (Torquay Reference Library, D929/ROB PAM)
Scenes from My Life by a Working Man, with a Preface by the Rev. R. Maguire. (London: 1858)
Skeen, Robert, Autobiography of Mr. Robert Skeen, Printer (London: Messrs Wyman & Sons, 1876)

Trade Directories
Bancks’s Manchester and Salford Directory (Manchester: G. Bancks, 1800)
The Chester General Directory (Chester: Parry, 1840)
The Commercial Directory for 1814–15 (Manchester: Wardle and Bentham, [1814])
The Commercial Directory for 1819–20 (Manchester: J. Pigot, 1819)
A Complete Directory and Guide to the Town and Castle of Cardiff (Cardiff: printed by J. Bird, 1796)
A Directory of Sheffield (Sheffield: John Robinson, 1797)
Directory and Topography of Leeds (Sheffield: printed by R. Leader for W. White, 1847)
A Directory for the Towns of Manchester and Salford for the Year 1788 (Manchester: J. Radford, [1788])
A Directory for the Town of Leeds (Leeds: Binns & Brown, 1800)
Directory for the Year 1801 of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Mitchell, 1801)
The First Newcastle Directory, 1778, reprinted in facsimile (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Mawson, Swan and Morgan, 1889)
General and Commercial Directory of the Borough of Leeds (Leeds: Edward Baines, 1826)
A General Directory for Newcastle upon Tyne (Newcastle: printed for the publisher, 1824)
General Directory of … Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Sheffield: Printed for the authors, 1847)
General Directory of … Sheffield (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1849)
The Glasgow Directory (Glasgow: W. McFeat & Co., 1804)
The Glasgow Directory (Glasgow: W. MacFeat, 1824)
Glasgow Post-Office Annual Directory for 1852–53 (Glasgow: William Mackenzie, [1853])
Gore’s Directory of Liverpool (Liverpool: J. Gore, 1818)
Gore’s Directory of Liverpool and its Environs (Liverpool: J. Gore and Son, 1829)
Gore’s Directory of Liverpool and its Environs (Liverpool: J. Gore and Son, 1853)
Gore’s Liverpool Directory (Liverpool: J. Gore, 1781)
Matthew’s Annual Bristol and Clifton Directory (Bristol: Matthew Mathews, 1850)
A New, General, & Commercial Directory of Sheffield (Manchester: Albion Press, 1825)
Pigot & Co’s New Commercial Directory for 1824 (Manchester: J. Pigot, 1824)
Pigot & Co’s National Commercial Directory (Manchester: J. Pigot & Co., 1834)
Pigot & Dean’s New Directory of Manchester, Salford, &c. for 1821–22 (Manchester: R. & W. Dean and J. Pigot, [1821])
Pigot and Dean’s Directory for Manchester, Salford &c. for 1824–25 (Manchester: J. Pigot, [1824])
Pigot & Slater’s General and Classified Directory of Manchester and Salford, (Manchester: Pigot & Slater, 1841)
Pigot & Son’s General Directory of Manchester, Salford &c. for 1829 (Manchester: J. Pigot and Son, [1829])
Post Office London Directory (London: Frederick Kelly, 1847)
The Post Office Dublin Directory for 1850 (Dublin: printed for the proprietors, [1850])
Schofield’s New Liverpool Directory (Liverpool: J. Schofield, 1800)
Scholes’ Manchester and Salford Directory (Manchester: Sowler and Russell, 1794)
Scholes’ Manchester and Salford Directory (Manchester: Sowler and Russell, 1797)
Sketchly’s Bristol Directory, 1775 (facsimile) (Bath, 1971)
Slater’s General and Classified … of Manchester and Salford (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1850)
Wakeford’s Cardiff Directory (Cardiff: Wakeford, 1855)
Watson’s or the Gentleman’s and Citizen’s Almanack … 1827 (Dublin: Stewart & Hopes, 1827)

Poll Books
The Poll for the Election of Members of Parliament for the Borough of Liverpool … January 1835 (Liverpool: J. and J. Mawdsley, 1835)
The Poll for the Election of Members of Parliament for the Borough of Liverpool … July 1837 (Liverpool: J. and J. Mawdsley, 1837)
The Poll Book, for Electing Two Representatives in Parliament for the City and Liberty of Westminster … 1818 (London: J. J. Sodiacale, 1818)
The Poll for Members of Parliament, for the City and County of Norwich … July 1802 (Norwich, [1802])
The Poll for Members of Parliament for the City and County of Norwich … June 1818 (Norwich: Burks & Kinnebrook, [1818])
The Poll for Members of Parliament for the City and County of Norwich … July 1830 (Norwich: Bacon & Kinnebrook, [1830])
The Poll for Members in Parliament to Represent the City of York … 1818 (York: T. Sotheran, [1818])
The Poll for Members in Parliament to Represent the City of York … 1832 (York: H. Bellerby, 1833)
The Poll … for Members of Parliament to Represent the City of Canterbury (Canterbury: Elizabeth Wood, 1830)
The Poll … for Members of Parliament to Represent the City of Canterbury (Canterbury: Cowtan & Cologate, 1818)
The State of the Poll for Members in Parliament to Represent the City of York (York: W. Blanchard & Co., [1784]).

Other Printed Primary Sources
60 George III cap. 9, ‘An Act to Subject Certain Publications to the Duties of Stamps Upon Newspapers, and to Make Other Regulations for Restraining the Abuses Arising from the Publication of Blasphemous and Seditious Libels’, [1819]
Aird, Andrew, Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters, and Printers, During the Last Sixty Years (Glasgow: Aird & Coghill, [1890])


Barnard, John, *A Present for an Apprentice; or a Sure Guide to Gain Both Esteem and an Estate, with Rules for His Conduct to His Master* (London: [n. pub.], [1740?]?)


The Cabal, *as Acted at the Theatre in George-Street* (London: Printed for [S. Hooper], 1763)


*The Cheshire Enchanter, or, the Legend of the Iron Gates* (Manchester: G. Innes, junr., [1820?]?)


Chiron: *Or, the Mental Optician*, 2 vols (London: Printed for J. Robinson, [1758])


Cork Typographical Society, *Centenary of the Cork Typographical Society, 1906* ([Cork], 1906)


Dodd, George, *Days at the Factories* (London: Charles Knight & Co., 1843)


Executive Council, *Scottish Typographical Association: A Fifty Years’ Record, 1853–1903* (Glasgow: Printed for the association by J. Horn, 1903)

Faithfull, Emily, *'Victoria Press', English Woman’s Journal*, 6, 32 (1860), 121–26
Fitch, Stona, *Printer’s Devil* (Ullapool: Two Ravens, 2009)

Foote, Samuel, *The Author, a Comedy of Two Acts as Perform’d at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane* (Glasgow, [1758])

— — —, *The Devil Upon Two Sticks, a Comedy in Three Acts* (London: Printed by T. Sherlock for T. Cadell, [1778])


Gordon, Lord George, *The Trial at Large of the Hon. George Gordon ... To Which Will Be Added, the Trial of Thomas Wilkin, the Printer of the above Libel* (London: printed for R. Randall, [1787])

*The Guide to Trade: The Printer* (London: Charles Knight, 1838)


Hansard, Thomas Curson, *Typographia* (London: [n. pub.], 1825)

Holt, Daniel, *A Vindication of the Conduct and Principles of the Printer of the Newark Herald: An Appeal to the Justice of the People of England, on the Result of Two Recent and Extraordinary Prosecutions for Libels* (Newark: printed and sold by the author, 1794)

Holyoake, George Jacob, *The Life and Character of Henry Hetherington* (London: J. Watson, 1849)

Hudson, John Corrie, *Plain Directions for Making Wills in Conformity with the Law* (London: [n. pub.], 1838)


Johnson, John, *Typographia, or, the Printers Instructor*, 2 vols (London: [n. pub.], 1824)

Kearsley, George, *Kearsley’s Table of Trades* (London: printed for George Kearsley, 1786)

Keith Maslen (ed.), *Bowyer’s Chapel Rules* (Otago: Bibliography Room, University of Otago, 1976)

Kerkadec, Solange de, *The Little Printer Boy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1878)

Knight, Charles, *The Old Printer and the Modern Press* (London: [n. pub.], 1854)


Latter, Mary, *Pro & Con; or, the Opinionists: An Ancient Fragment* (London: Printed for T. Lowndes, 1771)

Leno, John Bedford, *Herne’s Oak and Other Miscellaneous Poem* (London: [n. pub.], 1853)

Livesey & Toulmin, Cheese Merchants, Preston [Company Brochure] ([Preston], c. 1905)
Livesey, Joseph, Reminiscences of Early Teetotalism (Preston, [1868])
Manchester and Salford Association of Master Printers, 1874–1924: Jubilee Souvenir (Manchester: printed for the association, 1924)
Mason, William, The Printers’ Assistant (London: printed and sold by the editor, [1823])
McCreery, John, The Press, a Poem (Liverpool: printed by J. McCreery and sold by Cadell and Davies, 1803)
Montgomery, James, James Holland, and James Everett, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery, 7 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1854–1856)
Moxon, Joseph, Mechanick Exercises, 2 vols (London: Printed for Joseph Moxon, 1683)
Picton, J. A., Memorials of Liverpool, Historical and Topographical, 2 vols ([n.p.]: Longman, Green, 1875)
Planche, James Robinson, The Printer’s Devil: A Farce in One Act ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1843)
Prentice, Archibald, Historical Sketches and Personal Recollections of Manchester (London and Manchester: [n. pub.], 1851)
‘A Printer’s Autobiography’, Printing Times (May 1876)
The Printer’s Devil, and the 7,405,926 Satellites (London: Cousins & Co., 1884)
The Printer’s Devil; or, a Type of the Old One: A Burlesque Extravaganza in One Act (New York: R. H. Elton, 1833)
Printing Office Characters (London: Dorrington Bros., 1881)
Proctor, Richard Wright, Memorials of Manchester Streets (Manchester: [n. pub.], 1874)
Richardson, Samuel, The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum (London: J. Roberts, 1734)
Skeen, Robert, The Unsealed Prophecy: Lectures on the Revelation of St John (London: [n. pub.], 1857)
Skeen, William, Typography or Letterpress Printing in the Fifteenth Century (Ceylon: Government Pres, 1853)
Slugg, J. T., Reminiscences of Manchester Fifty Years Ago (Manchester: [n. pub.], 1881)
Smith, John, The Printer’s Grammar (London: Printed by L. Wayland, 1787)
Southward, John, *Catalogue of the William Blades Library* ([London]: St Bride Foundation Institute, 1899)

———, *Practical Printing: A Handbook of the Art of Typography* (London: The "Printers’ Register" office, 1882 and 1911)

*The State of the Poll for Members in Parliament to Represent the City of York* (York: W. Blanchard & Co., [1784])


———, *Songs of the Press and Other Poems* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1833)

*Trial of Peter Finerty, Late Printer of the Press, for a Libel against His Excellency Earl Camden, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland* (Dublin: printed by J. Stockdale, 1798)


Whittock, N. and others, *The Complete Book of Trades* (London: John Bennett, 1837)


**Secondary Literature**


Alloway, Ross, 'Cadell and the Crash', *Book History*, 11 (2008), 125–47


———, 'The Social Status of Journalists at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century', *Review of English Studies*, 21, 83 (1945), 216–32


Blauner, Robert, Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Identity (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964)


Brown, Alyson, ed., Historical Perspectives on Social Identities (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006)


— — —, *Power and the Professions in Britain, 1700–1850* (London: Routledge, 1995)


Feinstein, Charles Hilliard, 'Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain During and after the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 58 (1998), 625–58


Hitchcock, Tim, ‘Confronting the Digital: Or How Academic History Writing Lost the Plot’, *Cultural and Social History*, 10, 1 (2013), 9–23


———, 'Liberty’s Dawn: A People’s History of the Industrial Revolution, by Emma Griffin', Times Higher Education (1 August 2013)
<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/books/libertys-dawn-a-peoples-history-of-the-industrial-revolution-by-emma-griffin/2006142.article#>
[Accessed 9 March 2015]


Humphries, Jane, Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)


Jenkins, Roy, Social Identity (London: Routledge, 2008)


Jones, Max, The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott’s Antarctic Sacrifice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)


Kirby, Peter, 'A Brief Statistical Sketch of the Child Labour Market in Mid-Nineteenth-Century London', *Continuity and Change*, 20, 2 (2005), 229–45


Leeson, Robert, *Travelling Brothers: The Six Centuries’ Road from Craft Fellowship to Trade Unionism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979)


Levene, Alysa, '“Honesty, Sobriety and Diligence”: Master–Apprentice Relations in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England', *Social History*, 33, 3 (2008), 183–200

———, 'Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London', *The Economic History Review*, 63, 4 (2010), 915–41


Moorhouse, H. F., 'The Significance of the Labour Aristocracy', *Social History*, 6, 2 (1981), 229–33


Perkin, Michael, 'Egerton Smith and the Early 19th-Century Book Trade in Liverpool', in Spreading the Word: The Distribution Networks of Print, 1550–1850, ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester, 1990), pp. 151–64


Pooley, Colin G., and Jean Turnbull, Migration and Mobility in Britain since the Eighteenth Century (London: UCL Press, 1998)


Read, Donald, Peterloo: The "Massacre” and Its Background (Manchester: Manchester University Press, [1958])


Rose, David, 'Official Social Classifications in the UK', Social Research Update (July 1995)
———, Firms, Networks and Business Values: The British and American Cotton Industries since 1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)


Stuart, Kathy, *Defiled Trades and Social Outcasts: Honor and Ritual Pollution in Early Modern Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999)


Tuttle, Carolyn, Hard at Work in Factories and Mines: The Economics of Child Labour During the British Industrial Revolution (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999)
Wahrman, Dror, Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780–1840 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)


## Appendices

### I. Rates Assessments in Manchester Township, 1801–41

Data extracted from Manchester City Archives, Manchester, *Manchester Township and Parish: Rate Books*, M9/40/2/1-713.

#### 1801

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Assessment (£.s.d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bancks, Gerard</td>
<td>10 Exchange St</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>26.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowdroy, William</td>
<td>20 Hunter’s lane</td>
<td>house, warehouse</td>
<td>15.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean, R. &amp; W.</td>
<td>9 Spring Gardens</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>11.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrop, James</td>
<td>30 Market Place</td>
<td>shop &amp; post office</td>
<td>45.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogden, William</td>
<td>26 Wood St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>2.10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oswald, John</td>
<td>2 Wilmott St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>4.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radford, Elizabeth</td>
<td>25 Hanover St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>6.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seddon, James</td>
<td>6 Hanging Bridge</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>5.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowler &amp; Russell</td>
<td>125 Deansgate</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>11.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindells, Alice</td>
<td>5 Hanging Bridge</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>6.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheeler, Charles</td>
<td>3 Cannon St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>15.0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1822

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Assessment (£.s.d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aston, Joseph</td>
<td>St Ann’s St</td>
<td>house, shop &amp; office</td>
<td>45.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bancks &amp; Co.</td>
<td>7 Exchange St</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>50.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave, George</td>
<td>Exchange Buildings</td>
<td>Room</td>
<td>3.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowdro, Martha</td>
<td>261 Deansgate</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>50.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean, R. &amp; W.</td>
<td>80 Market St</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>58.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, John</td>
<td>Market Place</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>45.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnett, Jeremiah</td>
<td>Market St</td>
<td>office &amp; shop</td>
<td>40.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrop, James</td>
<td>26 Market Place</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>80.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innis, George</td>
<td>14 Back Turner St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>8.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leake, Charles</td>
<td>St Mary’s Gate</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>45.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leech, James</td>
<td>3 Wright’s Court, Market St</td>
<td>warehouse</td>
<td>30.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, John</td>
<td>11 Market Place</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>24.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix, James</td>
<td>506 Bow Street</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>8.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratt, Joseph</td>
<td>Pool Fold/Chapel Walks</td>
<td>Room</td>
<td>12.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell, Isabella</td>
<td>299 Deansgate</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>28.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Henry &amp;</td>
<td>7 Back Square</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>15.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowler, Thomas</td>
<td>St Ann’s Sq</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>90.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindells, Alice</td>
<td>8 Hanging Bridge</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>26.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheeler, Charles &amp; Son</td>
<td>37 King St, Pall Mall</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>60.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkinson, Thomas</td>
<td>19 Ridgefield</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>7.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mark</td>
<td>1 Barlow’s Court, Market St</td>
<td>warehouse</td>
<td>6.0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1841**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bancks &amp; Co.</td>
<td>20 Exchange St</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>122.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellfield, Henry</td>
<td>30 Cross St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>4.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottomley, George</td>
<td>15A Market St</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>18.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradshaw, James</td>
<td>Church St</td>
<td>Room</td>
<td>41.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave &amp; Sever</td>
<td>2 Pool Fold</td>
<td>rooms</td>
<td>16.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheetham, Samuel</td>
<td>5 Wright’s Ct, Market St</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>33.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condy &amp; Leresche</td>
<td>78 Market St</td>
<td>shop &amp; cellar</td>
<td>66.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooke &amp; Hodson</td>
<td>59 George St</td>
<td>rooms</td>
<td>125.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalton &amp; Wrigg</td>
<td>61 Spring Gardens</td>
<td>rooms</td>
<td>21.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doherty, John</td>
<td>4 Withy Grove</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>29.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellerby &amp; Cheetham</td>
<td>1 Oldham St</td>
<td>Room</td>
<td>28.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fothergill, William</td>
<td>46 King St</td>
<td>Room</td>
<td>20.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadsby, John</td>
<td>12 Newhall’s Buildings, Market St</td>
<td>rooms</td>
<td>49.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison, John</td>
<td>26 Abraham’s Ct, Market St</td>
<td>rooms</td>
<td>16.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haywood, Joseph</td>
<td>22 Market Place</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>83.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heywood, Abel</td>
<td>Oldham St</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>37.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodgson, James</td>
<td>99 Cannon St</td>
<td>warehouse</td>
<td>54.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innes, George jnr</td>
<td>6 Cock Gates</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Joseph</td>
<td>32 Shudehill</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>33.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiernan, James jrn</td>
<td>28 Garden St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>5.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis, Richard</td>
<td>34 Oldham St</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>50.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; Barton</td>
<td>10 Market St</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>133.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynch, Richard</td>
<td>20 Back King St</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>18.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick, Joseph</td>
<td>6 Cockpit Hill</td>
<td>Room</td>
<td>8.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigot &amp; Slater</td>
<td>55 Fountain St</td>
<td>rooms, warehouses</td>
<td>235.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratt, Joseph</td>
<td>23 Bridge St</td>
<td>house &amp; shop, warehouse</td>
<td>40.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice &amp; Cathrall</td>
<td>13 Ducie Place</td>
<td>room, vault, shop</td>
<td>121.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston, John</td>
<td>5 Red Lion St</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>4.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, Jno. Ambrose</td>
<td>2 Deansgate</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>56.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shackleton, William &amp; Son</td>
<td>11 Ducie Place</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>16.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowler, Thomas</td>
<td>4 St Ann’s Sq</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>166.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindells, Henry</td>
<td>22 Deansgate</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>15.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindells, John</td>
<td>12 Hanging Bridge</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>23.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor &amp; Garnett</td>
<td>Warren St</td>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>133.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varey, William Dixon</td>
<td>Red Lion St</td>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>11.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardle, Mark &amp; Son</td>
<td>17 Fennel St &amp; 35 Piccadilly</td>
<td>house &amp; shop</td>
<td>90.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White &amp; Carter</td>
<td>20 St Ann’s Sq</td>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>33.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wortham, John</td>
<td>14 Half St</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>10.0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Poll Books Analysis

Poll books were located using John Sims’ *Handlist* and Jeremy Gibson and Colin Rogers’ *Directory*.¹ Electoral results were checked in the History of Parliament online database for the unreformed years and Charles Dod’s *British Electoral Facts* for the reformed years.²

**Westminster 1818**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Sir Samuel Romilly (Whig)</th>
<th>Francis Burdett (Radical)</th>
<th>Sir Murray Maxwell (Tory)</th>
<th>Douglas Kinnaird (Radical)</th>
<th>Henry Hunt (Radical)</th>
<th>Maj. Cartwright (Radical)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (64)</td>
<td>33 (32%)</td>
<td>38 (37%)</td>
<td>31 (30%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5339 (34%)</td>
<td>5238 (34%)</td>
<td>4808 (31%)</td>
<td>63 (0.4%)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Norwich 1802

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (12)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>7 (30%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>1532 (27%)</td>
<td>1439 (25%)</td>
<td>1356 (24%)</td>
<td>1328 (23%)</td>
<td>5655</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Poll for Members of Parliament, for the City and County of Norwich … July 1802* (Norwich, [1802])

### Norwich 1818

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>William Smith (Whig/ Radical)</th>
<th>R. Hanbury Gurney (Whig/Radical)</th>
<th>Hon. Edward Harbord (Tory)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (30)</td>
<td>18 (37%)</td>
<td>18 (37%)</td>
<td>13 (27%)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>2089 (37%)</td>
<td>2032 (36%)</td>
<td>1475 (26%)</td>
<td>5596</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Poll for Members of Parliament for the City and County of Norwich … June 1818* (Norwich: Burks & Kinnebrook, [1818])

### Norwich 1830

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>R. Hanbury Gurney (Whig)</th>
<th>Robert Grant (Whig)</th>
<th>Jonathan Peel (Tory)</th>
<th>Sir Charles Ogle (Tory)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (42)</td>
<td>20 (24%)</td>
<td>21 (25%)</td>
<td>21 (25%)</td>
<td>21 (25%)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>2363 (28%)</td>
<td>2279 (27%)</td>
<td>1912 (23%)</td>
<td>1762 (21%)</td>
<td>8316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Poll for Members of Parliament for the City and County of Norwich … July 1830* (Norwich: Bacon & Kinnebrook, [1830])
### York 1784

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Visct. Galway (Tory)</th>
<th>R. S. Milnes (Tory)</th>
<th>Lord John Cavendish (Whig)</th>
<th>Sir W. M. Milner (Whig)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (14)</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
<td>9 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>1083 (28%)</td>
<td>1022 (27%)</td>
<td>913 (24%)</td>
<td>812 (21%)</td>
<td>3830</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The State of the Poll for Members in Parliament to Represent the City of York* (York: W. Blanchard & Co., [1784])

### York 1818

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Hon. Lawrence Dundas (Whig)</th>
<th>Sir Mark Masterman Sykes (Tory)</th>
<th>William Bryan Cooke (Whig)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (38)</td>
<td>27 (42%)</td>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
<td>23 (35%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>1446 (38%)</td>
<td>1276 (34%)</td>
<td>1055 (28%)</td>
<td>3777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Poll for Members in Parliament to Represent the City of York ... 1818* (York: T. Sotheran, [1818])

### York 1832

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (38)</td>
<td>20 (31%)</td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>19 (29%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>1505 (35%)</td>
<td>1140 (26%)</td>
<td>804 (19%)</td>
<td>872 (20%)</td>
<td>4321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Poll for Members in Parliament to Represent the City of York ... 1832* (York: H. Bellerby, 1833)
### Liverpool 1835

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Viscount Sandon (Cons)</th>
<th>William Ewart (Liberal)</th>
<th>Sir Howard Douglas (Cons)</th>
<th>James Morris (Liberal)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (33)</td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
<td>22 (34%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>22 (34%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>4407 (28%)</td>
<td>4075 (26%)</td>
<td>3869 (24%)</td>
<td>3627 (23%)</td>
<td>15978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Liverpool 1837

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Viscount Sandon (Cons)</th>
<th>Cresswell Cresswell (Cons)</th>
<th>William Ewart (Liberal)</th>
<th>Howard Elphinstone (Liberal)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (41)</td>
<td>11 (13%)</td>
<td>11 (13%)</td>
<td>30 (37%)</td>
<td>30 (37%)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>4786 (27%)</td>
<td>4652 (26%)</td>
<td>4381 (24%)</td>
<td>4206 (23%)</td>
<td>18025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Canterbury 1818

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>S. R. Lushington (Tory)</th>
<th>E. Bligh, Lord Clifton (Whig)</th>
<th>John Baker (Whig)</th>
<th>Taylor (Ind.)</th>
<th>Royle (Ind.)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (15)</td>
<td>12 (46%)</td>
<td>5 (21%)</td>
<td>9 (35%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>990 (39%)</td>
<td>861 (34%)</td>
<td>655 (26%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Poll ... for Members of Parliament to Represent the City of Canterbury* (Canterbury: Cowtan & Colegate, 1818)

## Canterbury 1830

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Hon. Richard Watson (Tory)</th>
<th>George Augustus Frederick Cowper, Lord Fordwich (Whig)</th>
<th>Henry Bingham Baring (Tory)</th>
<th>S. Elias Sawbridge (Ind.)</th>
<th>Hon. G. J. Milles (Ind.)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printers (25)</td>
<td>8 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (29%)</td>
<td>15 (43%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total electorate</td>
<td>1334 (42%)</td>
<td>1101 (35%)</td>
<td>731 (23%)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Poll ... for Members of Parliament to Represent the City of Canterbury* (Canterbury: Elizabeth Wood, 1830)
### III. Tramps Seeking Relief from Glasgow Typographical Society, 1823–31


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 November 1823</td>
<td>Francis Sharp</td>
<td>Tramp, compositor</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May 1824</td>
<td>William Wade</td>
<td>Tramp, compositor</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 May 1824</td>
<td>William Cadwell</td>
<td>Tramp, pressman</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 1824</td>
<td>Henry Walker</td>
<td>Tramp, compositor</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 August 1824</td>
<td>William Brenan</td>
<td>Tramp, pressman</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 October 1824</td>
<td>John McMillan</td>
<td>Tramp, pressman</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 January 1825</td>
<td>William Anderson</td>
<td>Tramp, compositor</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 June 1825</td>
<td>Alex McIntosh</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 June 1825</td>
<td>Games Lindsay</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 November 1825</td>
<td>John McMillan</td>
<td>Tramp without ticket, pressman</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 January 1826</td>
<td>George Dick</td>
<td>Tramp, pressman</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 April 1826</td>
<td>Ebenezar Smith</td>
<td>Pressman (tramp)</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 April 1826</td>
<td>Edward Smith</td>
<td>Pressman (tramp)</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 April 1826</td>
<td>James Williamson</td>
<td>Compositor (tramp)</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 May 1826</td>
<td>Charles Jordan</td>
<td>Compositor (tramp)</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 May 1826</td>
<td>Malcolm Logan</td>
<td>Pressman (tramp, no card)</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 May 1826</td>
<td>James Loghlan</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 June 1826</td>
<td>James Ayre</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 June 1826</td>
<td>John Moore</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 August 1826</td>
<td>John Dixon</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 September 1826</td>
<td>John Ross</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Ticket Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 September 1826</td>
<td>James Keith</td>
<td>With ticket</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 September 1826</td>
<td>Finlay McBain</td>
<td>Tramp, ticket renewed</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 December 1826</td>
<td>Andrew Murray</td>
<td>Tramp, recommended by 3 members</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 January 1827</td>
<td>Archibald McKendrick</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 January 1827</td>
<td>James Hulton</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 February 1827</td>
<td>James Sinclair</td>
<td>Tramp, recommended</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 February 1827</td>
<td>John Johnston</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 March 1827</td>
<td>John Schofield</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 April 1827</td>
<td>William Wade</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>5s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 May 1827</td>
<td>James O. Adams</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 1827</td>
<td>John Wilson</td>
<td>Tramp, London ticket</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 1827</td>
<td>George Wallace</td>
<td>Tramp, London</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 June 1827</td>
<td>Patrick Holland</td>
<td>Tramp, Cork</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 September 1827</td>
<td>Campbell Flynn</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 September 1827</td>
<td>John Watts</td>
<td>Tramp, London</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 January 1828</td>
<td>John Behan</td>
<td>Tramp, Dublin</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 June 1828</td>
<td>William Foster</td>
<td>York ticket</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 June 1828</td>
<td>George Hill</td>
<td>Rochdale ticket</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 July 1828</td>
<td>Alex Cameron</td>
<td>Manchester ticket</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 July 1828</td>
<td>James McKenzie</td>
<td>Glasgow ticket</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 August 1828</td>
<td>Philip Byrne</td>
<td>Tramp, London</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 August 1828</td>
<td>James Sinclair</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>1s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 September 1828</td>
<td>Joseph Tovey</td>
<td>Tramp, London</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 September 1828</td>
<td>Charles Thornton</td>
<td>Tramp, London</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 October 1828</td>
<td>William Birmingham</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October 1828</td>
<td>Thomas Hand</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 November 1828</td>
<td>J. Burnet</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>7s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 January 1829</td>
<td>Henry Connell</td>
<td>Tramp “pressman’s best friend”</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 July 1829</td>
<td>James Foster</td>
<td>Tramp, Warrington</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 July 1829</td>
<td>C. Byrne</td>
<td>Tramp, Liverpool</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 August 1829</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Tramp with Liverpool ticket</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 September 1829</td>
<td>Edward Dickens</td>
<td>Tramp, Liverpool</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 September 1829</td>
<td>Duncan McLean</td>
<td>Tramp, Dublin</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 September 1829</td>
<td>George Richardson</td>
<td>Tramp, Liverpool</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 September 1829</td>
<td>James Hewit</td>
<td>Tramp, Leeds</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 September 1829</td>
<td>Stephen Keefe</td>
<td>Tramp, Dublin</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 December 1829</td>
<td>John Stevenson</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 December 1829</td>
<td>Richard W?</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 December 1829</td>
<td>Charles Horner</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 December 1829</td>
<td>Mark Kerr</td>
<td>Tramp</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 March 1830</td>
<td>Thomas Fla?</td>
<td>Belfast ticket</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 March 1830</td>
<td>Charles Conqueror</td>
<td>Perth ticket</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 March 1830</td>
<td>James Denny</td>
<td>York ticket</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 March 1830</td>
<td>John Behan</td>
<td>Tramp, Belfast</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 May 1830</td>
<td>William Holland</td>
<td>Huddersfield ticket</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 May 1830</td>
<td>John Leonard</td>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 1830</td>
<td>James Beeves</td>
<td>Newark</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 May 1830</td>
<td>Thomas Flickey</td>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 June 1830</td>
<td>William Peal</td>
<td>Congleton</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 June 1830</td>
<td>Thomas Drew</td>
<td>Newark</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 June 1830</td>
<td>Paul Fenton</td>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 July 1830</td>
<td>John Burgess</td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 August 1830</td>
<td>John Noble</td>
<td>Wakefield</td>
<td>2s.6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Other Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 August 1830</td>
<td>Richard Nable</td>
<td>Cork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 September 1830</td>
<td>? Brenan</td>
<td>Merthyr, Wales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 September 1830</td>
<td>P. Byrne</td>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 November 1830</td>
<td>Robert Burges</td>
<td>New?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 November 1830</td>
<td>William Smeaton</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 January 1831</td>
<td>Daniel Mawatt</td>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 February 1831</td>
<td>John Gallagher</td>
<td>Belfast, tramp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 March 1831</td>
<td>William Shannon</td>
<td>Belfast card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 April 1831</td>
<td>Charles Jordan</td>
<td>Wakefield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 April 1831</td>
<td>Jacob Read</td>
<td>Wakefield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 May 1831</td>
<td>James McKenzie</td>
<td>Tramp, Glasgow ticket renewed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 May 1831</td>
<td>Joseph Nugent</td>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 June 1831</td>
<td>William Robinson</td>
<td>Tramp, York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 July 1831</td>
<td>Thomas Waller</td>
<td>Tramp, Wakefield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 August 1831</td>
<td>James Shaw</td>
<td>Tramp, Sheffield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 September 1831</td>
<td>Robert Shirra</td>
<td>Tramp, Belfast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 September 1831</td>
<td>Andrew McMillan</td>
<td>Tramp, Edinburgh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>