Activism and the Everyday: The Practices of Radical Working-Class Politics, 1830-1842

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This thesis will re-evaluate the Chartist movement through research into day-to-day practice in four areas: sociability, material networks, gender and political subjectivity. It will demonstrate that Chartism’s activism and the everyday lives of its members were indistinct. In the early years of the movement and the years preceding it, activism and political thought engaged with the quotidian to successfully build a movement that was not only relevant to but an integral part of people’s everyday lives. This thesis will analyse how this interaction was not limited to Chartist activists politicising everyday grievances, but also how day-to-day practices and relationships contributed to the infrastructure, intellectual culture and political programme of the movement.

This thesis will make original contributions to a number of debates. It challenges the dominant view of Chartism as first and foremost a political movement distinct from its social conditions. It will be argued that this dichotomy between the political and the social cannot be sustained, and it will be shown that activists were most successful when they drew from and were part of society. It will criticise the related trend in studies of Chartism and Radicalism to focus on political identity, meaning and forms of communication. It will argue that these topics are valuable, but need to be seen within a wider existential framework and integrated with an approach that sees cultural activity as one part of a range of activities. As such, it will illustrate the ways that cultural practices are bound with social relationships. Following this, it will make the case for practice to be looked at not just in symbolic or ritualistic terms but also in terms of day-to-day activities that were crucial for the development and maintenance of political movements. It will be argued that prosaic, mundane and day-to-day activities are integral aspects of social movements and as such are worthwhile areas of research. Finally, it will add to our understanding of Chartism by providing biographical information on Henry Vincent, an under-researched figure, and the south west and west of England, under-researched regions.

This thesis is organised into two parts. The first will follow the work of activists in developing Chartism in the south west of England from the end of the Swing Riots until the Chartist Convention of 1839. Here it will be argued that Chartism relied upon a close and intensive interaction between activists and the communities they were politicising, with the result being that the movement was coloured by the politics, intellectual culture and practices of those communities. The second section will look at how the private lives and social networks of individual activists were integral to their political ideas, rhetoric and capacity to work as activists. Correspondence, documents produced by the state, the radical press and the internal records of the Chartist movement all shed light on the way everyday life and political thought and action merged.
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Despite not turning up for the inaugural week of the PhD and subsequently not speaking to any of them for a year, once we did make contact the postgraduate community in Manchester have been a source of jollity, support and good advice, and S2.6-7’s collective combats with management, undergraduates and door-slamers were key bonding moments. Chats with Andy Bowman, other MULE people, housemates, strangers at Hardy’s Well, and other people in that crowd were formative on my thinking about how activism works (and more often, doesn’t work), as was the experience of the student protests in 2010-11. George Nichols, Henry Clarke and Tom Todd all gave me free places to stay when I was archiving, even though I got in the way a lot and made a lot of mess. The Arts and Humanities Research Council provided the funding that made this project possible. I am obliged to dedicate this to Fitz.
Introduction

This thesis is an investigation into the interaction between Chartism and everyday life between 1830 and 1842, which will analyse day-to-day relationships and practices to revise the distinction present in the historiography of the movement between politics, culture and society. Although Chartism has been the subject of a vast scholarship, much of this early work was limited to accounts that neglected the sophisticated and national political nature of the movement, instead arguing that it was a protest movement reacting to economic distress. Critical of this approach, Dorothy Thompson and Gareth Stedman Jones’s revisions underlined the political nature of the movement, but this also divorced analysis of Chartist politics from social issues. In particular, this tendency has been expressed in more recent research discussing Chartism’s political language, ideas, identity and symbolism in isolation. Through demonstrating that Chartism’s activism and the everyday lives of its members were indistinct, this study will contribute towards bridging a gap in Chartist studies, where the political and cultural aspects of the movement have been divorced from many aspects of the social relations that they were embedded within.

This study does not contend that Chartism was a sophisticated political movement that united diverse sections of the working class in a coherent and national program. However, this emphasis on the autonomy of political ideas, organisation and culture has left a substantial gap in how we understand the movement, chiefly how Chartism interacted with society. In attempting to reattach analysis of Chartism’s politics to research on the social practices and relationships of the working class, this thesis will answer the following questions. How did Chartism’s organisation and ideas draw from the everyday lives of its leaders and grassroots members? What were the prosaic practices required to maintain and build the movement? What was the impact of the quotidian on the politics of the movement? What was the role of the quotidian during periods of political change and transition? In answering these questions, this thesis will show how Chartist organisation and ideology drew extensively from the social networks and culture of the working class. This was a mutually constitutive process: this interaction contributed to the crafting of Chartism’s political message, while simultaneously providing avenues through which Chartist activists could spread that message. Following this, logistical and practical concerns will be shown to be as important as political ideas and identity in the construction of the movement. Over-emphasis on either the autonomy of politics and political culture or the importance of social grievances in the development of Chartism has meant that these myriad connections between politics and society have been overlooked.
Bridging the gap after the Political Turn

Since the 1970s the historiography of Chartism has been dominated by what Miles Taylor has dubbed the ‘political turn’. Taylor’s description of the historiography in those terms was a response to a seeming impasse that had developed within Chartist studies following Gareth Stedman Jones’s work in the early 1980s on the language of Chartism. Stedman Jones’s work was both innovative and controversial for its use of linguistic analysis to explain the decline of the Chartist movement. He argued that Chartism’s discourse was fundamentally still part of the established ‘Old Corruption’ narrative that focussed primarily on the state, abuses of power and the theft of labour’s rewards through taxation rather than surplus value. Chartism did not, therefore, derive its political position from ‘social being’ in a Marxist sense; the ‘Old Corruption’ narrative was not the preserve of any one class and could not be attributed solely to the proletariat.

Taylor argued that the effect of this intervention was not new study but instead discord and impasse. Stedman Jones’s approach seemingly placed him in conflict with those historians who had looked at Chartism as a movement with a working-class composition and ideology, and the result was a preoccupation with theoretical debate rather than innovative study. It was this impasse that Taylor sought to end by arguing that Stedman Jones existed within the same tradition of reading Chartism as first and foremost a political movement, most particularly exemplified in the work of Dorothy Thompson.

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5 Stedman Jones, Languages of Class, pp. 90-178. This is an extended version of his ‘The Language of Chartism’, in Epstein and Thompson The Chartist Experience, pp. 3-58.
6 Taylor, ‘Rethinking the Chartists’, pp. 480-1.
The ‘political turn’ he defined on four points. Firstly, both Stedman Jones and Thompson ‘take the political aims and ideas of the chartists seriously, and see the movement as much more than an explosion of inarticulate social tension.’ Both also saw Chartism in a long chronology, beginning with the 1832 Reform Act, both saw Chartism as a national movement, and both rejected economic determinism when discussing the development of the movement.⁸

These commonalities were important since they overcame the shortcomings of earlier scholarship that saw Chartism largely as a reactive movement that was an emotive response to hunger and widespread distress. In its early Fabian years this trend saw Chartist politics expressed in an incoherent, irrational and violent manner. These aspects of Chartism, evidenced mostly in the north of England by starving factory workers, were held by Mark Hovell as ‘largely a passionate negation’.⁹ The politics of hunger was retained in G.D.H Cole’s *Chartist Portraits*, where in his first lines he wrote that: ‘Hunger and hatred – these were the forces that made Chartism a mass movement of the British working class’.¹⁰ This remained the case in the late 1950s, when a local studies approach was utilised by Asa Briggs in *Chartist Studies*, a collection of essays about the local condition of Chartism within the country.¹¹ These studies held that Chartism was a series of reactions to local social and economic problems, and as such could not constitute an articulate and national movement.¹²

It is this dichotomy between a newer political model and an older model of social grievances that this thesis will address. The narrow focus of the early historiography on

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⁸ Taylor, ‘Rethinking the Chartists’, pp. 482.
¹² Briggs’s belief that the trade cycle was a major impact on the movement followed George Kitson Clark, ‘Hunger and politics in 1842’ *Journal of Modern History* 25:4 (1953), pp. 355-74.
hunger has meant that economic conditions were emphasised while other aspects of the social were neglected, whilst the political turn has come to present politics in a largely autonomous light. Through investigations into sociability, gender, ethics, morality, and material networks this thesis will show how activism was deeply ingrained in social activities. It looks at politics as something that cannot be reduced to rhetoric or discourse, because to be political is also to be social. In this it will follow Iorwerth Prothero’s study of Radical artisans in England and France between 1830 and 1870, which also looks at Radicalism from the point of view of everyday life. As he argues:

…the stress…on the ‘autonomy of politics’ and the view of political movements as dependent on politics and not material interests can have two unfortunate results. One is a self-contained study of political activity that ignores any links between political and social developments. The ‘social’ category is much wider than that of work…radicalism was not a wholly self-contained activity, and does need to be related to other aspects and concerns of artisan life…¹³

This study will not just seek to understand how activists politicised everyday life, but also the inverse, by studying the impact everyday life had on political ideas, organisations and culture. This thesis will therefore illustrate how activism relied upon everyday relationships of friends and family, how it spliced political critique with popular culture, how political organisations were funded and managed, and how Chartism was shaped by these interactions. It will address the failing Prothero identifies with the ‘autonomy of politics’, where it leads to viewing ‘politics just as ideas…and, consequently, to confine the primary sources consulted largely to articles in newspapers and periodicals.’ It is important to study ‘what people did as well as what they said or wrote.’¹⁴ It will show that

¹⁴ Prothero, Radical Artisans, p. 4.
mundane practice stands alongside ideas as important creative (and sometimes restrictive) forces in political life.

This research necessitates a re-appraisal of how we treat practice, since symbolic and ritualistic practice has been the major thrust of research of post-political turn Chartism studies. Although historians such as James Epstein, Paul Pickering and John Belchem are critical of Stedman Jones’s work, their responses have nevertheless been situated within the field of communication outlined by Stedman Jones as a viable area of study, with work on material expression and symbolic practice a particularly influential and vibrant area of research. Together this has contributed to our understanding of how political movements distinguished themselves, integrated members and communicated political ideas, but this has also limited our understanding of practice to ‘the social and cultural practices essential to how meanings are ordered.’ Rather than seeking to situate language and political ideas in the social relationships from which they were inseparable, these studies have expanded the definition of language to include material practices that are analogous with the spoken or written word. This emphasis has obscured a number of aspects of political life and organisation; as with anyone else, not all practices that Chartists engaged in would be symbolic or ritualistic, and it is important to bear in mind that sociability provided a crucial network for political organisation in more ways than its

16 Epstein, In Practice, p. 11.
symbolism. It is more likely that these symbolic activities would be exceptional aspects of the movement for the activists who put in substantial amounts of their time organising, lecturing and writing. For them, quotidian issues were paramount, and this thesis will uncover some of the more prosaic and mundane aspects of political organisation.

In this it will also contribute to the literature on how activists related to their community. Historians of Chartism have tended to view its activists as separated by their talents, commitment and intellectual abilities. James Epstein has noted how there was a ‘constant tension’ between the plebeian intellectual and the ‘rouger’ working class. Robert Hall’s work on activists’ politicisation of everyday life in their rhetoric still posits a separation between the political and social, since activists are actors who utilise social grievances in a rhetorical strategy. Elsewhere, he has highlighted how Chartist leaders in Ashton-under-Lyne, although of the same economic bracket as their followers, were disconnected from the body of the movement by their own intellectual aspirations. The dual characteristics of intellectualism and theatrical performance presented activists as figures to be emulated by their audience, while the income many derived from their activism was another demarcation of them from the rest of the movement. With the

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21 Philip Howell, “Diffusing the Light of Liberty”: the Geography of Political Lecturing in the Chartist Movement” in Stephen Roberts (ed.), The People’s Charter: Democratic Agitation in Early Victorian Britain
‘gentleman leader’ it was the independence granted to them by their position outside of the working class that contributed to their popularity and scope of action.\textsuperscript{22} Although they created a democratic space in these encounters, the Radical leadership were nevertheless distinct.

These works have illustrated the successes and problems of leadership within the Radical movement, as well as highlighting the sense of reverence and celebrity that surrounded notable Chartist activists. Yet politicisation itself was a practical act to which was attached numerous commonplace issues, and it was at this level that activists broke down distinctions between the leaders and the led and interacted most closely with their followers. As Janette Martin’s recent thesis on oratory during the period makes clear, lecturers had to carefully take account of matters such as money, the distance between settlements, and the advantages and disadvantages of various means of travel, while coach journeys and long hikes allowed plenty of opportunity for face to face contact.\textsuperscript{23}

This thesis will illustrate that for the relatively sedentary, local organisers, there was no choice but to utilise everyday relationships and ideas with which the local working class were familiar. For travelling lecturers, it was imperative to quickly make friends, survey unfamiliar towns, find a place to sleep and eat, and spend money while trying to find a source for more. In having to utilise pre-existing friendships, form new ones, and intimately interact with the rank-and-file of the movement, these leaders broke down barriers of geography, intellectual aspiration and division within the working class. As a consequence of this close interaction the customs, grievances and intellectual traditions of local workers were clearly formative on the resulting movement: what did it mean for


leadership when leaders, through practical and economic necessity, were in constant, intimate contact with their followers?

It is at this prosaic and dynamic level that this thesis will study the social. Rather than emphasising the movement’s socio-economic composition, as with the approach of Dorothy Thompson to the relationship between politics and society, this thesis will look closely at the relationships and activities that occurred amongst these groups on a day-to-day level.24 As a result this thesis will both draw from and contribute to a wider historiography than that of Radicalism and Chartism. One particularly prevalent topic in this study will be the working-class family. The literature on the family is inclined to look more deeply at the middle class, particularly families marked by politics or business, likely because of the better preservation of family papers and the more common representation of the middle-class family in novels.25 Accounts of the working-class family have largely looked at family economy and demographic change during industrialisation, although more recently it has become of interest to cultural historians.26 In Chartism studies, Jutta

24 Thompson, The Chartist; Dorothy Thompson, Outsiders: Class, Gender and Nation (London, 1993).
Schwarzkopf’s *Women in the Chartist Movement* highlights the intensely emotional, often co-operative but generally patriarchal marital relations of many members of the movement.\(^{27}\) Malcolm Chase’s ‘Chartist Lives’ sections in his *Chartism: A New History* similarly highlights the family life of many Chartist activists.\(^{28}\) Thompson highlights the role of the family, but this features in a chapter on women’s role in the movement.\(^{29}\)

Throughout this thesis research will be extended beyond marital relations into relationships between siblings, in-laws and cousins, and following this will be uncoupled from its association primarily with women. Leonore Davidoff’s recent work on the wider relationships of the ‘long family’ has looked at them in terms of their social, economic and intimate relations, but again chiefly from the point of view of the middle class.\(^{30}\)

This thesis will show that, similar to the range of roles performed by middle-class family members, working-class and lower-middle-class families provided material aid and emotional wellbeing to activists. These extensive family networks also allowed political ideas and information to cross the country while providing a close-knit core to any local organisation: in this study the family appears as a political unit. Along with friendship groups, the family will be shown to have formed a material network that provided funding for political projects, ranging from the formation of unions and Working Men’s Associations to support for Radical newspapers and candidature for elections to Parliament. These family and friendship networks also supported opportunity for social advancement. In this, this thesis will show how sociability was important to the Chartist movement in material terms as well as its symbolism, but will also contribute to the

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\(^{29}\) Thompson, *The Chartists*, pp. 120-151.

historiography on working-class finances, co-dependence and credit and debt networks.  

These social relations were the glue of the Chartist movement and its activism.

Along with family life, sexuality and gender are also aspects of everyday experience that require further study for historians of Chartism. Anna Clark’s influential work on gender and Radicalism argued that the egalitarian potential of the movement declined as Chartist leaders sought to defuse the idea that the working class were immoral and undeserving, by striving to ‘overcome the indiscipline and sexual antagonism that had plagued plebeian cultures.’ In looking at the rhetoric of Chartist literature, Clark asserts that, once forced into this defensive pose, Chartists adopted melodrama to venerate domestic life, which in turn restricted and limited the possibilities for women’s activism.

Unfortunately, gender was not pursued as a major line of research, and research on women’s participation within the movement remains a neglected area. However, gender is equally about masculinity, and this too is under-researched in Chartist studies beyond,
chiefly, an appreciation for how skill was linked to masculine identity. As Eileen Yeo has noted, ‘labour history has been curiously quiet about labour and male identity’, and working-class masculinity has only recently become a topic of extensive research. Chartism’s prominent male figureheads and activists and its substantial and varied archives make it well suited for addressing this issue.

This thesis will contribute towards the study of working-class masculinity by developing an understanding of how male friends interacted, how sexual relations were pursued amongst Chartists, and how this form of masculinity interacted with both the rhetoric and the literary culture of the movement. Sexual identity and sexual practice were clearly still important aspects of Chartism’s day-to-day social network and culture, and even though its activists espoused the gender ideology outlined by Clark, bawdy popular culture was also fused with political critique to make an entertaining and appealing political print culture. Iain McCalman has highlighted how pornographic, satirical and


salacious literature was an important aspect of Radicalism into the 1830s, with the rough and the respectable difficult to divorce, but it is clear that the themes of McCalman’s research remain visible into the early Chartist period.\(^{38}\) In particular it will be shown that humour was a major aspect of Chartist culture and a means of interaction between the leadership and the rank-and-file. Unlike the studies of satire that see it disappearing by the 1820s, this study will illustrate that it was still clearly present in the Chartist movement, and operated within a space of extensive interaction between Chartist political principles and popular culture.\(^{39}\) This will complement the more vibrant studies of Chartism’s melodramatic literature.\(^{40}\) It also has ramifications for the vast literature on the development of working-class respectability.\(^{41}\) The bawdiness of this form of Chartist masculinity affirms Peter Bailey’s suggestion that respectability was contextual and situational, but also suggests that the category of respectability itself is of limited utility to


The moral position of prominent Chartists was therefore far less rigid than much of their discourse would suggest.

These everyday topics – logistics, material networks, sociability, family, gender and sexuality, morality and political subjectivity – will be shown to be major aspects of political organisation and integral to the Chartist movement’s dissemination, development and intellectual coherence. The social will be shown to be not only irreducible to just the economic, but also a highly creative range of relationships that were infused with politics and culture. Research into these areas will illustrate how integral to politics everyday life was, while illustrating the convergence of politics, culture and society in day-to-day experience. It will show how studying Chartist politics on the formal level of Associations, unions, newspapers and public meetings needs to be complemented by informal, day-to-day social, convivial, sexual, gender, familial and financial relationships. It will contribute to our understanding of how the working class pooled its resources, both material and non-material, and produced a mass political movement, but it will also illustrate how the archives on Chartism and Radicalism can contribute to our broader understanding of working-class society and culture in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Sources and Methodology

Most extensively, this thesis will draw from the Henry Vincent collection in the Archive and Study Centre of the People’s History Museum in Manchester.43 Vincent was one of the most prominent national leaders of Chartism from 1837 until 1842, when he began

43 Labour History Study and Archive Centre, Manchester, Henry Vincent Collection (LP/VIN).
to drift away from the core of the movement towards Liberalism, teetotalism and moral improvement politics. Vincent was one of the earliest Chartists, and as an itinerant activist, popular speaker, newspaper editor, political prisoner, businessman, Parliamentary candidate and Liberal convert he is a notable gap in the historiography as he has not been the subject of modern major study. Born in Holborn in 1813, Vincent was the son of a Radical gold and silversmith whose business failed when Henry was eight. In poverty, the family moved to Hull where Vincent was apprenticed as a compositor, and in 1829 his father died, leaving Vincent to care for his mother. In 1833 his apprenticeship ended, he began working in London, where he joined the London Working Men’s Association (LWMA) in 1836. By the summer of 1837 he and John Cleave, Radical publisher and fellow Association member, set off on a successful tour of the north with the objective of propagating the Association’s model of organising, and between 1838 and 1839 Vincent relocated to Bath, becoming one of the most important organisers in much of the West Country and south Wales. Between May 1839 and January 1841 he served two concurrent jail terms, and less than a month after his release he married Cleave’s daughter, Lucy. Following this he abandoned insurrectionary politics, becoming a committed teetotaller and advocate of alliance with the middle class.

At the beginning of the 1837 tour Vincent began writing to his cousin and close friend, John Minikin, and of this correspondence fifty-two letters from Vincent to Minikin have been preserved, the last letter in the collection dating from 1842. The breadth of Vincent’s activity throughout this period makes his letters a valuable insight into many

45 This collection includes none of Minikin’s replies, but does include letters from Vincent’s wife Lucy, the manager of the Vindicator, Francis Hill, and Francis Place.
aspects of the movement. As a man writing letters to a family member and closest friend, they offer insight into private matters such as the masculinity, sexuality, family life and business acumen. The letters therefore offer a detailed look at the private and political life of a politician, writer, speaker, and later husband, father, businessman and parliamentary candidate. This thesis is not a biography of Vincent, but much of this study will closely follows his experiences over these five years in order to investigate Chartist activism. It is therefore a contribution to our understanding of one of the major Chartist leaders of whom we know the least.

Unsurprisingly and as with its forebears in the Radical, Jacobin and trade union movements, Chartism was of great interest to the state. The National Archives in Kew holds a substantial and varied amount of material on the movement as a result, and spy reports, correspondence between the Home Office and various magistrates, correspondence between different bodies within government such as the Home Office and the Poor Law Commissioners, and trial reports have been drawn on to discover how the movement developed and grew. These sources have the benefit of being intensive investigations into political activity in particular communities and regions. For the state it was paramount to know who local organisers were, how and where they interacted with the community and who specifically they interacted with. Yet spy reports cannot necessarily be trusted, magistrates were prone to exaggeration and malice, and the state focussed myopically on signs of conspiracy. Despite these drawbacks, the major advantage of these collections is the extensive insight they offer into political organisation in communities that left little written record.

46 This thesis will mainly make use of the correspondence held at the National Archives, Kew in the following collections: HO 40/42, HO 40/47-49; HO 41/13; HO 52/7; HO 73/52; TS 11/596-602; PRO 30/69.
These sources will be balanced by material produced by Chartists. This includes leaflets, posters, letters, and notebooks confiscated from arrested activists that exist in the archives of the Home Office and the Treasury Solicitor in Kew. The Chartist and non-Chartist press will be drawn on extensively, facilitated by the British Library’s newspaper digitisation project. However, this study will also include extensive use of the *Western Vindicator*, a major regional newspaper edited by Henry Vincent throughout 1839, the only complete collection of which survives in Manchester.\(^{47}\) The *Vindicator* is an underused resource, and the subject of only one extended study by Owen Ashton.\(^{48}\) As Ashton suggests, owing to the reading conventions of the working class the *Vindicator*’s circulation of 3,400 copies likely meant that it was read by around 60,000 people.\(^{49}\) The *Vindicator* is therefore a useful resource on the interaction between Vincent, who was a leader of national significance, and the rank-and-file of the movement. Of particular importance are the ‘Life and Rambles of Henry Vincent’, a travelogue that appeared in the newspaper between March and May 1839 and which is an unrivalled insight into the day-to-day life of one of the movement’s most prominent activists.\(^{50}\) Being based in Bristol before moving to Bath, it is key source for understanding Chartism in the west of England. Its extensive readership, correspondence pages and local, grassroots reportage also provides insight into the day-to-day culture of Chartism for the region.

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\(^{47}\) The *Western Vindicator* is preserved in the Labour History Study and Archive Centre, Manchester, Henry Vincent Collection (LP/VIN).


\(^{49}\) Ashton, ‘The *Western Vindicator*’, p. 68.

\(^{50}\) See *Western Vindicator*, 9 March 1839 for the first of these weekly columns. A complete compilation can be found online at http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/text/contents_page.jsp?_id=Vincent [Accessed 9/8/2012].
This thesis will also make use of the minutes of the LWMA and the collection of materials pertaining to the Chartist Convention of 1839, both in the British Library.\footnote{BL, Add. MS 34,245 A, Correspondence and Papers of the General Convention of the Industrious Classes, Minutes of the Committee for Extending Political Information; Add. MS 34,245 B, Miscellaneous Papers of the Chartist General Convention.}
The Convention’s miscellaneous letters in particular are underused resources, containing as they do letters from not only nationally renowned leaders of the movement but also correspondence between the local leadership and the movement’s centre. Despite Taylor’s suggestion that it should become a focus of research, the relationship between the localities and the centre has not been a major topic of recent discussion.\footnote{Taylor, ‘Rethinking the Chartists’, p. 492. This was the topic of research using these sources four decades ago. See Kenneth Judge, ‘Early Chartist Organization and the Convention of 1839’ International Review of Social History 20:3 (1975), pp. 370-397; D.J. Rowe, ‘The Chartist Convention and the Regions’ The Economic History Review 22:1 (1969), pp. 58-74.} The LWMA was seen as the major proponent of Chartism by the Fabian interpretation of the movement. Since the revisionist attack on this tradition in the 1960s and 1970s, London and the LWMA has fallen out of favour, with the emphasis of research focussing on the more evidently class-based wing of the movement, particularly in the north of England and particularly surrounding Feargus O’Connor.\footnote{Iowerth Prothero, ‘Chartism in London’ Past and Present 44:1 (1969), pp. 76-105; Thompson, The Chartists, p. 3.} Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that many members of the LWMA were key organisers in the first stages of the movement, and their documents are useful insights into how, between 1837 and 1839, the movement was built, if not its popular ideology.

The Francis Place papers have proven another invaluable source of correspondence. Place took studious notes and was a prolific letter writer, and these materials together formed an impressive archival legacy. After Graham Wallas’s The Life of Francis Place in 1898, and the Webbs’ History of Trade Unionism in 1894, Place was revered by Fabians who ‘produced a character for Place in their own image’.\footnote{W.E.S. Thomas, ‘Francis Place and Working Class History’ The Historical Journal 5:1 (1962), 61-70, p. 69.} The result was a wave of histories
of Chartism, Radicalism and reform that not only drew from Place’s notes but which left them largely uncontested.\textsuperscript{55} By the 1960s, accounts of him as an arrogant and pompous man who was not a reliable judge of character grew, and the revisions of Chartist studies lead to suspicion of his notes as a reliable account of either principle working-class activists or of the history of his lifetime.\textsuperscript{56} Although his work on moral reform gained some interest, he declined as a major source on class or politics.\textsuperscript{57} However, Place’s letters and commentary are fruitful if read not as accurate judges of character or political commentary, but instead as documentation of the mentoring which Place undertook throughout much of his life. If approached as such, they can be read not to support a liberal and progressive narrative of his life and times or denigrations of character, but instead as evidence of how he constructed such a narrative, and how he attempted to reform, morally and politically, the young, male, often working-class Radicals with whom he came into contact, thus hoping to produce the ‘new’ moral character of conscientious, self-improving Liberals.

These sources are particularly suited to a microhistorical approach, which will be adopted in this thesis. This use of focussed, local studies does not mean a rejection of either the political turn or the interpretation of the movement as above all a national movement. Rather than a return to local history, microhistory is instead useful because it can maintain these universal approaches while simultaneously raising questions about the experience of the Chartist movement at the day-to-day level.\textsuperscript{58} Local history is not

\textsuperscript{55} Hovell, \textit{The Chartist Movement}; West, \textit{A History of the Chartist Movement}.
\textsuperscript{58} A noteworthy example is Maurice Agulhon’s study of the Var region of France from the revolutionary period until the 1850s: \textit{The Republic in the Village: The People of the Var from the French Revolution to the Second Republic} (Cambridge, 1979); Natalie Zemon Davis, \textit{The Return of Martin Guerre} (London, 1983); Michel
oriented towards the broader picture and is instead interested in the locale in question; microhistory looks at its subjects as a component in a broader historical category, such as class relations, gender identity, various disciplinary regimes, and so on. As such, this thesis will look at quotidian topics in order to ascertain what they reveal about broader social relations, political positions and cultural formations.

In these aims it is distinct from prominent theoretical works on everyday life, particularly that of Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau. Drawing from Michel Foucault’s understanding of micro-power in *Discipline and Punish*, where individuals are disciplined to regulate their own minds and bodies, de Certeau argued that through these arrayed tactics subjects have a great deal of autonomy in quotidian life and as a result cannot be dismissed either as the technicians of their own subjugation or fixed and inactive consumers. A major element in the work of both men is the association of urbanity with modern everyday life and, with that, power relations. Representative of this sort of approach to everyday life is the substantial body of literature that has developed over the last decade analysing these power relations in the modern urban environment. In these accounts, the quotidian is a matter of tactics: individuals adapt their behaviour or routines either out of alignment with, or resistance to, the dominant disciplinary

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paradigm, but always as part of an engagement with micro-politics, and therefore with focussed, local goals. This study will focus instead on the inverse use of tactics: as contributions to a broader strategy, brought about by individuals united by social and cultural commonalities into a coherent political project that is emancipatory in its aims rather than focussed on local adjustments of power relations.

The chapters will therefore consist of microstudies that illustrate how individuals interacted with both local and national events. Chapter one will investigate the role of everyday social relations in the development of trade unions and later Chartism amongst the Dorset working class: how did activists within the county use everyday life to organise the protest of the Swing Riots in 1831 into the Chartist movement of 1838? The work on the Tolpuddle Martyrs has tended to focus on either their importance for national politics, or on the source of their decision to unionise. This chapter will contribute to this historiography by illustrating the deep social, cultural, political and intellectual roots of Tolpuddle’s Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers in Dorset, and how it led to the development of Chartism in the region. Through quotidian relations of family and religious association, the Chartist movement directly developed from the aftermath of the Swing protests, combining local social networks, their practices and their intellectual positions with the forms of organisation and critique found amongst Radicals and unionists in the north and in London.


63 The Martyrs’ role as early Chartists has been briefly discussed in Rogers Wells, ‘Southern Chartist’ *Rural History* 2:1 (1991), pp. 37-59.
Chapter two will look at Henry Vincent’s organising tour of the South West between 1837 and 1839. How did an itinerant traveller organise a region in which he was not indigenous? Furthermore, what were the logistics of this itinerancy, and how did these activists lay down the infrastructure of Chartism? Study of itinerancy has largely focussed on its geography, and seen it as a means of physically linking various localities into a broader national movement, united by the efforts and example of singular activists.64

More broadly, the early and mid-Victorian periods have been identified as being saturated with oratory.65 However, this study will investigate how these activists endeared themselves to their audiences not only through oratory but also by using conviviality and sociability to integrate themselves within the everyday life of the workers they sought to recruit. This chapter will investigate how Chartists maintained these tours, the infrastructure they laid down in their wake, and importantly the implications this had for the local movement’s organisation, leadership structure and political ideas.

Chapter three will focus on Vincent and the *Western Vindicator*. What was Vincent’s sense of sexuality and masculinity, and how did this interact with the wider movement, both in his home in London and his political base in the west? This chapter will respond to Yeo’s call for more research into masculinity in British labour history by looking at how Vincent interacted with men and women, both in private and in public, and in this will illustrate how gender can be reanimated as a major topic within Chartist studies.66

66 Yeo, ‘Editorial: Taking it Like a Man’.
looking at his broad social network, the literary culture that surrounded him, his friend John Cleave’s work as an editor and publisher and his own literary output in the *Western Vindicator*, this chapter will outline a Chartist sexual culture that contrasted sharply with its discourse of domesticity, but which nevertheless did not fundamentally undermine Chartism’s moralistic politics.\(^{67}\)

Chapter four will contribute to the debates about the relationship between Chartism and popular Liberalism by asking why Vincent changed his political beliefs in 1841 and 1842, and how he sought to change his character and actions in line with this new political position. In response to historians such as Patrick Joyce, who argued that continuity between Chartism and Liberalism was fairly harmonious, a number of historians sought to document the intellectual negotiations necessary for this change, particularly in research that looks at how Chartism was remembered.\(^{68}\) This thesis’s core argument that politics is indistinguishable from everyday life, relationships, practices and culture implies that significant shifts in ideology also entail corresponding shifts in those day-to-day practices and relationships, and through a study of Henry Vincent’s transition to popular Liberalism in 1841 and 1842, this chapter will assess the implications of this move for his social network, political positions and personal identity. Through study into Vincent’s reaction to his imprisonment through an intensive development of his identity, and his

\(^{67}\) As outlined by Clark in *The Struggle for the Breeches* and "The Rhetoric of Chartist Domesticity", and Schwarzkopf in *Women and the Chartist Movement*, pp. 89-122.

reliance on lines of credit to fund his ambitions after his release, the tumultuous and
difficult nature of this transition will be highlighted.69

These chapters, taken together, will illustrate how the Chartist movement grew from
social networks and popular culture, drawing from both material and non-material
resources. In focussing on communities and individuals and the more mundane aspects
of their lives it will offer insight into the development of this movement in its early years.
It will show how political movements are maintained, how they grow and how they
change, how they in turn influence their social and cultural roots, and from this it will be
clear that neither politics, society or culture are autonomous. Participants in Chartism
were not simply reacting to their social conditions, but their political, cultural and
intellectual lives were not divorced from those conditions either. Instead, they acted
within constant and often extremely complex interactions between these aspects of their
lives. When viewed from the day-to-day level, society, culture and politics are clearly
implicit in one another.

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69 On prison, see: Helen Rogers, ‘The Way to Jerusalem: Reading, Writing and Reform in an Early
Victorian Gaol’ Past and Present 205:1 (2009), pp. 71-104; Helen Rogers, ‘Singing in Gaol: Christian
Instruction and Inmate Culture in the Nineteenth Century’ Prison Service Journal 199:1 (2012), pp. 35-43;
The Radical Lives of Thomas Cooper (1805-1892) and Arthur O’Neill (1819-1896) (Bern, 2008); Sean Grass, The
Self in the Cell: Narrating the Victorian Prisoner (London, 2003); James W. Haslam, Fitting Sentences: Identity in
Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Prison Narratives (Toronto, 2005).
Chapter One: Radicalism and Everyday Life: Agitation and Protest in Dorset, 1830-1838

Introduction

The Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers (FSAL) was established by the men who would become the Tolpuddle Martyrs (also known as the Dorchester Labourers), amongst others, in the village of Tolpuddle in east Dorset in 1833. For Joyce Marlow, the author of the only full-length account of the men and their union, the FSAL was apolitical, and the agitation engaged in was solely for an increase in wages.\(^1\) Following Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Marlow suggested that the organisation of the FSAL was prompted by a delegation from the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, but as W.H. Oliver had already pointed out, the FSAL was in fact five months older than the Grand National.\(^2\) Their national significance has also been a strong current in the historiography: their role as the spark for an energetic campaign that followed their arrest, conviction and transportation has featured in several works on Radicalism and trade unionism during the period, and has been considered a formative moment in class consciousness and even the inspiration for a failed uprising in Oldham.\(^3\)

Roger Wells placed Tolpuddle in the long-term context of agricultural labour disputes, emphasising the culture and society of agricultural labourers rather than the Martyrs’

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roles in triggering a nationwide mass-movement. More recently Malcolm Chase outlined the Martyrs’ political context and, taking up Oliver’s criticism, offered some more likely candidates for groups who provided the martyrs with their organisational blueprint than the Grand National. However, consistently throughout the historiography the martyrs and their leader, George Loveless, are focussed on in terms of national union organising, and not in the context of the practices, politics and thought of their own county. Even Marlow’s account, the most thorough, fails to outline the Martyr’s increasing politicisation, the extent of the FSAL’s growth, or their leading role in the rapid expansion of Chartism at the end of the decade.

This chapter will establish the social, culture and political roots of the development of Chartism in 1838. It will be shown to be part of a decade of organisation and politicisation that drew from Dorset’s society and culture. The 1830s is significant in Dorset far beyond the repression of the FSAL: the first two years of the decade saw not only Captain Swing but also Reform riots, contemporaneous with an increasing agitation for better wages that eventually took the organised form of the FSAL. After the return of the Martyrs from Australia they began Chartist agitation in the county with aid from the London Working Men’s Association (LWMA), a matter than has barely been noted in the historiography. It is therefore a prime candidate for a case study that not only addresses the radicalism of an under-researched region, but also establish precisely how, through which tactics, ideas and social groups, radicalism grew from the nascent politics of the Swing riots into Chartism.

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The chapter will begin by establishing that the Swing riots of late 1830 morphed into a longer period of agitation across the county which itself grew into the FSAL. Following this, it will explain how the family and spiritual life of the Society’s organisers, amongst others, produced not only the thought that justified agitation and organising, but also provided the social network through which to spread these principles and establish the union. The chapter will conclude by looking at the Chartist agitation of 1838, wherein the returned Martyrs proselytised a form of radicalism closely in tune with the concerns of the region, in which the Working Men’s Associations were presented as not just organisations pursuing universal suffrage but also unions that would agitate for better wages and the protection of families from the new Poor Laws. This holistic approach suggests that we cannot understand politics purely by reading speeches and literature, or by focussing on professional agitators and national leaders: we also have to look at the families, the roadways, the homes, chapels and schools of an area to understand how ideas spread and how people organise.

Captain Swing and the birth of ‘a general movement of the working classes’

The Swing riots of 1830 began in Kent in August when agricultural labourers began rioting, attacking farm machinery and other property, primarily to secure better wages. For a long time seen as a disorganised social protest, largely because of the influence of Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé’s Captain Swing, in the 1970s Andrew Charlesworth, a historical geographer, argued that the uprisings occurred in areas along the main London highway where ‘radical nuclei’ lived and worked, contradicting Captain Swing’s model of spontaneous riots spreading principally along local routes. Since then some have underlined the importance of Radicals to local Swing events, while others have argued

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that it occurred within the fabric of the older ‘moral economy’ model of labourers
defending customary rights and which survived as late as 1930. Similarly, Hobsbawm
and Rudé’s notion that the labourers in the south were proletarianised by 1830 has also
come under criticism. More recently, a local studies approach has been advocated, with
Peter Jones arguing that for Swing to be understood, historians need to commit to local
studies, to understand the specific reasons for the mobbing, riots, fires and threats. To
understand the riots it is therefore crucial to understand the parochial relations within a
particular locality, what Jones calls the ‘history from within’.

The area of Swing rioting saw pro-Reform riots eleven months later, the establishment of
the FSAL in 1833, the spread of Working Men’s Associations in 1838 and finally a
Chartist mass-meeting in November of that year, the first time Chartist missionaries
headed south, all facts that indicate a strong Radical influence in the county which grew
as the decade progressed. At the same time, however, it is clear that many of the Swing
rioters were primarily, as Jones argues, motivated by the traditional, parochial negotiation
with employers, focussed upon the wage. To reconcile this, and the two
historiographical positions, it is necessary to extend a discussion of Swing and look at the
movements it morphed into: the FSAL, and later several Chartist Working Men’s
Associations, and in particular to look at how this transition took place. Working-class
organising in the region was initially parochial, but expanded into a wider movement
throughout the east of the county that by 1838 was explicitly politicised.

8 Ian Dyck, William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture (Cambridge, 1992); Roger Wells, “Mr Cobbett, Captain
Swing and King William IV” Agricultural History Review 45:1 (1997), pp. 34–48; D. Kent, Popular Radicalism
and the Swing Riots in Central Hampshire (Winchester, 1997); Roger Wells, “The Moral Economy of the
English Countryside” in A.J. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds), Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds,
Conflict and Authority (Basingstoke, 1999); R.W. Bushaway, By Rite (London, 1982).
9 J.M. Neeson, Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700–1820 (Cambridge,
1993); Mick Reed, The Peasantry in Nineteenth-Century England: A Neglected Class? History Workshop
Figure 1: Dorset in 1830. Although riots, strikes and fires occurred throughout the area east of the roads between Sherborne and Dorchester, the valleys west of Blandford saw the most intensive rioting in 1830.

Dorset was well-connected with the rest of the country. The two major highways heading through Hampshire from London both forked in Salisbury, the northern route heading west to Shaftesbury and Sherborne, and from there to Somerset, and the southern heading through Blandford and into Dorchester, and from there to Falmouth. The Dorchester-Salisbury route was the second turnpike trust to be set up in Dorset, by an Act of Parliament in 1753-54, and was the most direct route from Cornwall to London. Named the Harnham, Blandford and Dorchester Trust, it initially stretched all the way from Salisbury to Bridport, and it was the Dorchester to Salisbury extent that saw the initial rioting and fires between the 23rd and 26th of November. This was not simply a road improvement, but a major project that attained the name ‘Great Western Turnpike’, ‘comparable perhaps with the building of a motor-way today’, and Dorchester, Shaftesbury and Salisbury all featured prominently on pocket road-books listing routes throughout the country.12 It being on a main road, the mail coach from London to Penzance would have gone through Dorchester daily every morning (it took only 13 hours to get from London to Dorchester, and only 1 hour 40 minutes to get from Blandford to Dorchester), while Salisbury and Shaftesbury were on the London to Exeter mail route.13 Stagecoaches also operated these routes.14

Farmworkers in the county ‘were more sophisticated than has often been allowed: connections with radical politics were among the factors that shaped the Swing rising.’15

Travellers along these roads spread news from further east, contributing greatly to the spread of the protests; during the height of the rioting a magistrate from Poole requested that the Home Office issue a directive instructing any magistrate to inform all other...

15 Chase, Early Trade Unionism, p. 72.
magistrates in the county whenever a rising occurred in their jurisdiction, so that rumours
could not be spread by ‘coachmen, postboys and carriers’. At the beginning of the riots
the *Dorset County Chronicle* reported ‘political intriguers’ exciting a ‘spirit of discontent’,
while magistrates’ reports mentioned Henry Hunt speaking in Salisbury on the 24th of
November before heading west to Yeovil, and on November 30th a magistrate reported
‘Inflammatory papers’ being taken from an ‘agent’ arrested for theft in Blandford.
Although no documents survive that prove what these inflammatory materials were, it is
known that the London radical print culture was well-established along the highways.
Henry Hetherington and John Cleave, two of the most important London publishers and
members of the radical groups that would eventually craft the People’s Charter, had
provincial catchment areas along London routes, and Richard Carlile, who spent most of
the 1820s in Dorchester Gaol, used a singer in the town named Roberts as his agent in
1824. Hetherington’s *Poor Man’s Guardian* was mainly read outside of London, and its
weekly reports on the proceedings of the meetings of the National Union of the Working
Classes in London was likely the source of the unions in Hampshire that copied its
organisational model.

Ian Dyck’s work on Richard Cobbett outlines his particular interest in the countryside,
and efforts to distribute in the provinces, making it a focus as far back as the war. As
Cobbett wrote a few months after the end of Swing:

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16 National Archives, Kew (hereafter NA): HO 52/7/134 ff. 304-305.
17 HO 52/7/128 ff. 293-293A; Dorset County Chronicle, 25 November, 1832; HO 52/7/138 ff. 311-314.
19 Dyck, *Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*, p. 198; see also Roger Wells, ‘Crime and Protest in a Country
Parish: Burwash, 1790-1850’ in John Rule and Roger Wells (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern
20 Dyck, *Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture*; Ian Dyck, 'William Cobbett and the Rural Radical Platform’ *Social
History* 18:2 (1993), pp. 185-204.
It is a most erroneous notion, that the country people are ignorant on the subject of political rights, and that they are to be led to the pool like horses. They understand the matter well, they are more stubborn than towns-people in adhering to their rights, and much more difficult to deceive and cajole.21

Local anti-radicals saw a link between the riots and the radical press. A penny broadside published in Wimborne just after the riots, and attributed to a local clergyman, specifically targets Cobbett and the Political Register, alongside Hunt and O’Connell:

When good King William ruled,
He was a very fine King;
Three knaves in grain
He sent in a train
As a present to Captain Swing

The first fatted hogs upon corn,
Such as hogs like himself only love;
While the rumps of the Court
He pepper’d for sport,
And fried on a Register-stove.

The second made ‘Salve for Soles,’
Waterproof against all weathers;
But the blacking he boasted,
And coffee he roasted,
Were death to the upper-leathers.

21 Cobbett’s Political Register, 21 May 1831.
The third was a Pat, full of talk,
A cowardly, noisy debater;
Whose friends in the House,
For three skips of a louse,
Sold the head of their great Agitator.

On his Gridiron Cobbet was broil’d;
Hunt was drown’d in a tub of Japan;
While aloft on his back
To the Union-Jack
Was spliced the old scare-crow Dan!22

It is particularly noteworthy that the riots did not begin in Dorset until the Reform Crisis was in full swing, Wellington having declared against reform on November 2nd and having resigned on November 16th. Similarly, news from the continent would likely be important; Hobsbawn and Rudé pointed out that reports from France and Belgium would arrive at the trading ports in Kent, but this is also true of Weymouth or Poole.23 It was at Poole that Charles X began his exile greeted by excited crowds, a fact that made Wellington extremely nervous, since this served as a ‘bad and mischievous example’.24 Charlesworth draws similar conclusions, writing ‘it was during political crises that the time for protest was right, for then there was a heightening in the expectations for change in all men’.25 In October the labourers in Sutton Scotney, a Hampshire village on the London-Salisbury highway that continued on to Blandford and Dorchester,

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22 Dorset History Centre, Dorchester (hereafter DHC): D/ANG/B5/42, William Castleman’s Estate Correspondence.
23 Hobsbawm and Rudé, Captain Swing, p. 66.
25 Charlesworth, Social Protest in a Rural Society, p. 31.
petitioned the King for parliamentary reform by sending an emissary to Brighton.\textsuperscript{26} Generally, ‘the lengthy duration of the Reform Bill crisis served principally to enhance the political atmosphere of town and country’, an atmosphere picked up by the anti-reform \textit{County Chronicle} when they described the nation as having ‘arrived at a crisis’.\textsuperscript{27} At the beginning of November the paper preached that it opposed ‘Radical prints’ that made their audiences ‘disposed to call in question the purity of constituted authorities.’\textsuperscript{28} Since Rudé offers the (imprecise) figure of between 66 and 75 per cent of rioters being literate, based on convict details, it seems likely that audiences existed for any newspapers that were circulated in the county.\textsuperscript{29}

Nevertheless, despite the evidence that radical literature was spread along the turnpikes, the Dorset protests and crowds focussed on the traditional practices of strike and negotiation. The extensive records of the Agent of Lord Anglesey’s Stalbridge estate, William Castleman, reveal a great deal about this process. On the 25\textsuperscript{th} of November (the first day of rioting) Castleman’s son Harry, a solicitor, met with labourers at Wimbourne and negotiated an end to the protests in return for fairly large wage increases, up to 10s for labourers and 11s for shepherds. One of the conditions of this was that the labourers would receive no additional parish relief beyond medical care and during periods of unemployment, but Harry Castleman noted that this proposal was impractical ‘as long as the rioters continued in the neighbourhood, and the labourers have the means of intimidating their employers by refusing to resist or by actually joining them.’\textsuperscript{30} That labourers were still a threat even when they had gone back to work was pointed out by the Reverend of the parish, who upon hearing a rumour that William Castleman was not

\begin{footnotes}
\item[26] Hobsawm and Rudé, \textit{Captain Swing}, p. 223.
\item[27] Charlesworth, \textit{Social Protest in a Rural Society}, p. 128; \textit{Dorset County Chronicle}, 2 December, 1830.
\item[28] \textit{Dorset County Chronicle}, 4 November, 1830.
\end{footnotes}
planning on meeting the promised increase warned that: ‘The Farmers had better look to it for the disturbances in this place are either ended or only begun...as they do or not comply with the rate of wages agreed upon by the Magistrates in the Special meeting of the 25th.’

On December 1st there was another strike, and fires were started at Stalbridge, in the north west of the estate; Castleman headed there after hearing that the men who remained in the village did not want to be sworn in as special constables. A rump of three shoemakers and a currier still refused even after the rest had been convinced by Castleman, which suggests they had radical principles, or were at least independently minded. After further negotiation, in which Castleman opposed the local Reverend's plan to grant land to the parish so that the unemployed had somewhere to work all year round and the magistrates proposed a wage scale of 9s per man over 20, an agreement was finally reached in which the labourers would be paid no more than 8s a week, in return for Lord Anglesey employing 26 of the 41 unemployed men, while the tenants took on seven more. The remaining eight men and 31 unemployed boys were to be put to work on road building and quarrying, to be paid for by the parish.

Negotiating in itself was not new, and was a particular characteristic of the moral economy, and one of the many ways of conducting parochial affairs. The term ‘moral economy’ was coined by E.P. Thompson to combat the idea that Georgian food riots

31 DHC: D/ANG/B5/42, Mason to Castleman, 30 November, 1830.  
32 DHC: D/ANG/B5/42, Castleman to Earl of Uxbridge, 2 December, 1830.  
33 DHC: D/ANG/B5/42, ‘Scale of Relief’, signed by Henry Seymour and Harry Yeatman, December 1830; DHC: D/ANG/B5/42, Castleman’s proposal for employing labourers at Stalbridge, 7 December 1830.  
were simply desperate and structureless hunger riots, which he rejected as ‘crass economic reductionism’ in favour of his own reading in which ‘men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs…in general…they were supported by the wider consensus of the community.’

The threat of violence was even a normal part of such relations, if not always utilised, and a high degree of negotiation and agency on the part of the labourers was involved in this complex web of relationships: ‘[a]ll sides operated within a mutually understood “field of force”…[with]…disputes often following a strict choreography, with protesting crowds displaying a strong discipline’.

However, the conservatism implied by this concept and the parochial negotiations themselves need to be considered in the context of a moment of transition brought about by political crisis, and it was this crisis that furthered the integration of the traditional parochial protest and the Radicalism that spread along the road networks.

Eleven months after the Swing riots, pro-Reform riots in two of the principle towns of the east of the county followed increasing agitation throughout the county. The last Swing event of 1830's week of rioting and strikes was on December 5th, when a group of rioters camped in the Iron Age Hillfort at Castle Hill, between Blandford and Sherborne, were dislodged by yeomanry and cavalry. Things were relatively quiet over the New Year, but by February reform meetings began in the towns, particularly Sherborne and Blandford in the north east and Lyme on the south west coast, and fires were started at

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Milton Abbas and Arne, with two men arrested for sending Swing letters.\textsuperscript{38} A Radical association was started in Yeovil, and in March, reform petitions were signed in Lyme, Blandford, and ‘several other places in this county’, along with increased anti-slavery agitation, and at some point during the year a radical association was founded in Taunton.\textsuperscript{39}

On the 19\textsuperscript{th} September, a by-election was declared following the suicide of the pro-reform MP, John Calcraft; on the 22\textsuperscript{nd}, the Commons passed the second Reform Bill, but on the 8\textsuperscript{th} October the Lords rejected it. The by-election was therefore bound to be a focal point for local anger, and on the 17\textsuperscript{th} the \textit{County Chronicle} reported Lord Ashley, the anti-Reform candidate, was stoned while out in public.\textsuperscript{40} By the end of the month, Ashley was elected to parliament with a majority of 36. Riots followed in Sherborne, Blandford, and a few miles across the Devon border in Yeovil; in Sherborne they began when a crowd of one hundred formed around ‘three strange persons, with a drum, fife and small flag’.\textsuperscript{41} Memories of the previous year’s riots remained, since the magistrate James Frampton wrote a letter to Lord Digby suggesting that ‘just after the conclusion of so recently contested an election’ it would have been a better idea to use the regular soldiers stationed in Dorchester rather than the Yeomanry, who, he admitted, ‘excite angry feelings’.\textsuperscript{42} At the same time there were several days of rioting in Blandford; two members of Lord Ashley’s committee had been attacked in the morning, before the

\textsuperscript{38} Dorset County Chronicle, 27 February 1831. 
\textsuperscript{39} Dorset County Chronicle, 28 March 1831. 
\textsuperscript{41} Dorset County Chronicle, 27 October, 1831. 
\textsuperscript{42} DHC: D/DOY/A/3/1/3, Frampton to Digby, 20 October 1831.
result had been declared, and a mob formed on the day after Ashley was elected.\footnote{43 \textit{Dorset County Chronicle}, 27 October, 1831.} Supporters of Ashley, local magistrates, and the homes of the vestry were the principal targets; as with Swing, the violence was concentrated on buildings and property, not people (except the very prominent), and those considered to have committed no wrong were ignored.

It is likely that many of those involved in the riots had also been Swing rioters, since many agricultural labourers lived in these towns. In Dorset it was not the case that ‘[e]lection riots…stand out because of the flatness of the surrounding countryside’, since there were clear commonalities, and not just geographical proximity, between Swing and the electoral riots.\footnote{44 K. Theodore Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence in Nineteenth Century England and Ireland’ \textit{The English Historical Review} 109:432 (1994), 597-620, p. 606.} The \textit{County Chronicle} noted that the reform rioters were ‘the lower orders…the mere rabble…incited and upheld in their proceedings…by a radical and revolutionary press’, with one of the “‘signs of the times’” being ‘the impunity with which publications full of rank sedition are disseminated amongst the lower orders’.\footnote{45 \textit{Dorset County Chronicle}, 27 October, 1831.} Since their report of the riots noted that the tradesmen of Blandford stood by and watched, refusing to join the special constables, it seems likely that the significant number of labourers, agricultural labourers and button makers of the 1841 census would have formed the crowd.\footnote{46 Buttons, being made of bone, were a by-product of dairy farms and was often secondary employment for farm labourers and their families.} Living in urban areas but working the farmland, the farm labourers served as the synapse between the radical artisans and the Swing rioters. Newspaper reports that the Yeovil riot was due to ‘boys and thieves’ seems unlikely, given the town’s Radical association, the existence of which suggests similar radical groups down the turnpike in Sherborne and Blandford.\footnote{47 \textit{Bristol Mercury}, 1 November, 1831.} Most of the rioters arrested in
1830 were from the Blackmore Vale, the dairy farming valley between Yeovil, Sherborne and Blandford. 48 Barbara Kerr’s suggestion that overcrowding in the Vale was the cause of the intense rioting there and that political issues ‘did not concern’ these rioters overlooks the clearly political rioting in the surrounding towns less than a year later. 49

Meanwhile on the farmland just outside the towns, the legacy of Swing was temporary wage increases and repression, both of which were followed by increasing agitation. In some parishes, the generous agreements of December 1830 remained for a while: in 1832 at Hazelbury Bryan, about ten miles north of Tolpuddle and close to Stalbridge, and likely where some of the Castle Hill rioters came from, the family wage was calculated at 13s 6d per week, while the relief system was much more generous than it was in other parishes. 50 However concessions were not adopted as a widespread strategy, and differences were seen from parish to parish, hence why places such as Tolpuddle saw their wages drop from 8s to 6s. In Stalbridge, the wage increases and near-total employment were only temporary, and by the summer of 1831 Castleman's reluctant arrangements no longer stood.

Squire Frampton, in his letters to Melbourne during the trial of the Martyrs, reported that during Swing a group had gathered together in Tolpuddle determined to join the rioters in nearby Puddletown. 51 He claims to have been told by an anonymous farmer that George and James Loveless were both in the crowd, encouraging riot, a charge that George denied and which seems suspect given that no witness claimed such during the

48 A full list of convicts can be found in Appendix E of Kerr, Bound to the Soil, pp. 265-267.
49 Kerr, Bound to the Soil, p. 119.
50 Extracts from the Information Received by His Majesty’s Commissioners as to the Administration and Operation of the Poor Laws (London, 1837), p. 101.
51 Also referred to at the time as Piddletown.
However, George was definitely inspired by the movement and tactics that followed the riots, as he attested in *The Victims of Whiggery*, his account of the Tolpuddle repression and his transportation. Knowing of the continuing agitation for wage increases, which he referred to as a ‘general movement’ that lasted until 1832, a crowd formed in Tolpuddle and elected Loveless as one of the delegates to represent them in negotiations with the local farmers, magistrates and clergy. Such elections followed a traditional practice that was common during Swing and which derived from everyday working life, when ‘Captains’ were unofficial representatives of work-gangs or villagers who negotiated as delegates on their behalf with employers, the parish or the landowners.

However, Loveless was a man who thought that ‘nothing will be done to relieve the distress of the working classes, unless they take it into their own hands.' Swing transposed into a much wider agitation and organisation that laid the groundwork for a more consistent and coherent organisation. Activists like Loveless took the energy that had previously been directed towards traditional negotiating, and placed it instead into working-class self-organisation coloured by political self-awareness. As Rudé noted, riots tended to develop from ‘relatively small beginnings’, a small injustice in a market or singular act of brutality, and snowball into a protest with definite ends and specific targets. In a similar way but over a longer time period, Swing developed into a much wider desire for change, that would collect influences, leaders and grievances over the

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52 The TUC’s *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle* (London, 1934) contains reprints of many original documents, including the Frampton/Melbourne correspondence, and this is the most accessible source for these letters. See also NA: PRO 30/69/1382 for a typed copy of the complete material, including the letters and the material confiscated from Loveless’s house. The correspondence can also be found in NA: HO 52/24. Frampton to Melbourne, 29 March 1834; George Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery: A Statement of the Persecutions Experienced by the Dorchester Labourers* (London, 1837), p. 10.
53 Loveless, *Victims*, p. 5.
55 Loveless, *Victims*, p. 23.
next decade; it directly led to the formation of the FSAL, and the FSAL in turn
developed into the Working Men's Associations, which incorporated, importantly, both
the urban dwellers of Blandford or Shaftesbury and the farm labourers in the unions, an
alliance that did not formally exist during 1830-31. The Reform agitation’s inability to
transition into a revolutionary movement was not, therefore, the end of Radicalism or
working-class organising in the county. When the fruits of their victories in the winter
of 1830-31 were withdrawn rural workers turned their efforts towards a form of
organising that sought a union comprising a confederation of parishes, and turned away
from their previous parochial negotiation by seeking far broader organising. Accounts of
Swing and the Reform crisis should not therefore stop in 1832.

Although political organisations and rioting in the region of the Swing riots are important
evidence of political feeling in the county, the path through which this shift was possible
was not explicitly political, but rather religious and familial: the thought and practice of
Loveless's family and his wider Methodist 'brethren’ were the channels through which
this politicisation was undertaken. The next stage of working-class action in Dorset grew
in equal measures from everyday life, from networks of sociability to the family and
Methodism, and in the next section the way in which politics was distilled through these
networks will be outlined. This process can be thought of as both the politicisation of
the quotidian and the quotidianisation of the political: Loveless both explained to people
how action and organisation would make their lives better, while simultaneously crafting
a political position that was heavily influenced by the beliefs and practices of the culture
in which it was forged. Swing and reform initiated the crisis that sparked the desire for
further action, but it was this quotidian network of ideas, practices and people that
allowed workers to ‘take it into their own hands.’

57 George Rudé, ‘English Rural and Urban Disturbances on the Eve of the First Reform Bill, 1830-1831’
‘I had seen at different times accounts of Trade Societies’: The Family Life of the Dorchester Labourers

The main end of the FSAL, which was founded in October 1833, was not in fact agitating for a wage increase, but was instead primarily a defensive organisation. In its rules the union would strike if there was an attempt to reduce wages or sack someone solely for belonging to a union.58 No doubt this stance was because the negotiations that mushroomed after the Swing riots were being undone and the region’s workers were generally on a reactive footing, as the wage plunging to as low as 6s in Tolpuddle indicated. Following this, the labourers of the village consulted one another, and ‘having sufficiently learnt that it would be vain to seek redress either of employers, magistrates or parsons’ resolved to form ‘a friendly society amongst the labourers’, likely an idea put forward by George since he had ‘seen at different times accounts of Trade Societies’. George provides two sources for the structure of the FSAL, once it was founded:

I inquired of a brother to get information how to proceed, and shortly after, two delegates from a trade society paid us a visit, formed a Friendly Society amongst the labourers, and gave us directions how to proceed.59

This led to the assumption, conceived by the Webbs but repeated by others, that the FSAL was founded after two delegates from the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union visited the village upon invitation from George Loveless, the organiser of the Society, and instructed him of their practices and aims.60 This cannot be the case, since

58 Marlow, Tolpuddle Martyrs, p. 47.
59 Loveless, Victims, p. 6.
60 Webb and Webb, History of Trade Unionism, p. 130.
the Grand National was formed several months after the FSAL, making it impossible for
the emissaries to have been official representatives.\(^6\) Candidates for the two delegates
have been suggested by Malcolm Chase, although there is not enough evidence for firm
conclusions.\(^6\) However, focusing on these delegates ignores the intellectual and political
life of the local working class, and in particular a direct influence that we know about,
George's brothers.

J.A. Roebuck, the Radical MP for Bath, wrote that George wrote to Robert in London to
ask about unionism, and that his advice was key, but it seems that the most important
influence was his brother John, who lived in Burton Bradstock, outside Bridport, a port
west of Dorchester where sail making, linen production and flax dressing were crucial
industries.\(^6\) As Frampton noted in a letter to Melbourne, John was a flax dresser who
visited Tolpuddle in October 1833, and gave George a leaflet entitled To the Flax and
Hemp Trade of Great Britain, written in Leeds on November 30\(^{th}\), 1832.\(^6\) A copy still exists,
sent to the Home Office from West Chinnock near Yeovil in July 1833. It came with a
letter from Barnsley, dated July 10\(^{th}\) of that year, in which the author Thomas Scott urges
the reader to form a lodge, to set up a 1s entrance fee and 2d weekly subscription (the
Tolpuddle Friendly Society's fees were 1s and 1d, respectively), and to pass the leaflet on
to neighbouring workplaces.

Links between unionism in Yorkshire and the south west were not new, as a confederacy
of various shearmen and cropper societies had been formed in the Brief Institution of
1796-1802.\(^6\) In Devon there was agitation and unionisation amongst the bricklayers,

\(^6\) Oliver, ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs and Trade Union Oaths’.
\(^6\) Chase, Early Trade Unionism, pp. 162-166.
\(^6\) NA: HO 40/31 f. 167, 'To the Flax and Hemp Trade of Great Britain'.
\(^6\) Chase, Early Trade Unionism, p. 58.
many of whom were arrested in the same year as the Martyrs, with delegates being sent
down from Manchester and Huddersfield.\textsuperscript{66} However, it seems unlikely that such
delegates would go to the expense of organising in a Dorset village of a few hundred
people, and it seems a reasonable possibility that the two delegates were, in fact, Flax
Dressers from West Dorset, possibly even John himself or men known to him.
Continuity between him writing to Robert and the delegates’ arrival is certainly implied
by the way that George phrases the matter in the above quote: ‘I inquired of a brother to
get information how to proceed, and shortly after, two delegates from a trade society
paid us a visit.’ We know that the leaflet was important to Loveless, since he remarked
upon it being taken from him that ‘it was the cause of their being there now’\textsuperscript{67}

John was the oldest son of Thomas and Dinah Loveless (nee Stickland); Dinah had died
in 1809, whilst Thomas lived until 1838. That John could read and write suggests that all
of the eight children of Thomas and Dinah could, and it seems likely that Thomas also
could, given his involvement in Methodism, which will be discussed shortly. The Martyrs
themselves had an extremely close relationship, to the extent that four of the men
arrested can be referred to as a compound, the Loveless/Standfields. Of the arrestees,
George and James were brothers, while Thomas and John Standfield were father and
son. Both families worked on the same farm; the oldest of the six, Thomas Standfield,
was married to George and James’s sister, Dinah. This meant John was George and
James’s nephew. After returning from Australia James Brine’s son married Thomas’s
daughter, tying the five closely together. James Hammet was not part of this close-knit
group, and his arrest is something of an anomaly. Unlike the other five he was not a
Methodist, had no blood or familial ties with the others, and had been arrested in 1829
and jailed, but in these facts he was similar to any other of the rank-and-file members of

\textsuperscript{66} Oliver, ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs and Trade Union Oaths’, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{67} Information of John Cox; \textit{The Book of the Martyrs}, p. 111.
the Society; his inclusion for arrest was likely misfortune or perhaps malice. The romantic story that he put himself forward for arrest to help his brother, the actual target of the warrant but with a pregnant wife, is probably not true, as James is the only man with the surname Hammet to appear on the membership list confiscating from the locked box in Loveless’s house.\(^{68}\)

The importance of family is also clear from that list. John Daniel, his brother Henry, and John’s son William were all members, as was James Oliver and John Oliver, most likely James’s nephew or cousin.\(^{69}\) Although the list gives the name William and John Cope, William and John Cake lived in Tolpuddle.\(^{70}\) A James Briggs lived in Tolpuddle, while Elias Briggs was the Elias Riggs mentioned in the trial as coming from Affpuddle.\(^{71}\) Another Briggs, Richard, joined on the same day as James, November 16\(^{th}\) 1833, although he does not appear in census returns or other parish documents. A William House was likely the 19 year-old William House from Puddletown, but Eli House is more elusive, the only record of him being a marriage in Tolpuddle in 1832; the name was a common Dorset one so these two men were possibly not, or were at least distantly, related. George and his brothers do not appear on the list, which makes it hard to gather how many Lovelesses were officially in the FSAL, but with Thomas Standfield, John Standfield and his son Thomas it is clear that a substantial number of members of the Tolpuddle lodge were related. This was likely the case elsewhere, as the key organiser of the Bere Heath lodge, George Romaine, wrote a letter to Loveless following the Bere

\(^{68}\) NA: PRO 30/69/1382, ‘Copy of the List of Names found in the Box in George Loveless’s House’.

\(^{69}\) This information was taken from the census returns, baptismal and wedding records held in the Dorset History Centre’s collection of parish registers.

\(^{70}\) In some documents they are also referred to as “Coke”.

\(^{71}\) The Book of the Martyrs, p. 108.
lodge’s inaugural meeting, mentioning that his father wanted to join at the next meeting.\footnote{\textit{The Book of the Martyrs}, p. 112.}

In practice, these men had a shared material and intellectual life. That John and Robert provided George the advice to start the union indicates a close intellectual relationship, and although we may not know for sure where the delegates came from (although them being companions of John seems the best bet), we do know that there was already a vibrant, close-knit community in Tolpuddle itself, which was linked to the wider world through men like John and Robert. Tolpuddle’s proximity to the turnpikes roads (the post office at Milton Abbas was a short walk away) was clearly a factor in this. The example of the Loveless family shows how the wider Radical and unionist networks that clearly existed in Dorset could be extended into supposedly isolated villages through family connections. This, then, is why we should think of hybridisation rather than E.P. Thompson’s notion of orbiting around ‘radical nuclei’: Radicals were integrated into the life of the community, rather than a distinct entity with a role to be performed equivalent to a division of labour.\footnote{E.P. Thompson, \textit{The Making of the English Working Class} (London, 1991), p. 201, 806.} The family network was one such network in which Radicalism became an integral part. Another, which itself was an important part of family relations, was the Methodist network, and it was the principles and practices of this network that allowed unionism and radicalism to spread.

\textit{‘The earth was given to man for an inheritance and not to become the property of individuals’}: Methodism and the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers

The issue of Methodism’s influence on radicalism and Chartism has recurred in the historiography, often with Methodism being viewed as detrimental. The basis for this
was the so-called Halevy thesis, after the author of the *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*’s argument that Methodism’s conservatism prevented a revolution in the country.74 E.P. Thompson was also hostile in *The Making of the English Working Class*, famously referring to Methodism as a ‘ritualised form of psychic masturbation’.75 In an informative piece, John Rule’s microstudy of a Chartist mission to Cornwall revealed significant hostility amongst the local Wesleyan Methodist establishment, which was reciprocated by the Chartists.76 However, other work has also revealed the sympathy of Methodists in other areas, particularly the Primitive groups in the midlands and the north, who transferred a great deal of their skills and methods into the radical and trade union movements.77

The Dorset Methodists were Wesleyan, an ostensibly apolitical and conservative religion, and thus their Radicalism presents an apparent incongruity. Hobsbawn attributes the Martyrs’ activism to the county’s supposed isolation: ‘In remote areas, where no more congenial sect penetrated - as in Dorset – Wesleyans might even become trade union leaders, as did the Tolpuddle Martyrs.78 Hobsbawm concludes by noting that there is no reason to assume that Methodism, or religion generally, prevents revolutions, and Iowerth Prothero similarly argues that religious belief does not indicate simplicity, stupidity or conservatism.79 However, these accounts treat religious life and principles as

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a potential impediment that does not get in the way as much as may be assumed. In the Tolpuddle case, Methodist thought, community and practice was absolutely integral to the transition from crowd protest to unionism, and from that to Chartism. Methodism provided both a basis for a critique of exploitation and repression, and the means to fight it. ⁸⁰

Loveless’s house received a Dissenter’s License in his father Thomas’s name in 1810, meaning they would have been core Methodists in the area, and that George grew up in the heat of the revival. Tolpuddle would have been fairly important to Methodism in the region as it was home to the ‘mother chapel’, the first Methodist chapel in the county constructed intentionally as such. The wattle building was erected in 1818 a few steps from the Loveless and Standfield family homes, with both George and Thomas Standfield amongst the twelve trustees for the purchase of the plot of land, all of which suggests that Methodism was particularly organised in the village with the Loveless/Standfields central. ⁸¹ Although Methodism had first arrived in the 1740s and slowly expanded among the quarry workers and stonemasons in Portland and the Isle of Purbeck along the south coast of the county, after the 1770s the focus of missionary work in the county shifted to converting outsiders, particularly evident in the revivalist mission of George Carr Brackenbury and George Smith after 1790. ⁸² During this period ‘the social turmoil of the Revolutionary era presented unique opportunities for experimentation’, and itinerant preaching allowed much more inventiveness, since it rejected the rigidity of the traditional, stationary, pastoral preacher, encouraging ‘the

⁸¹ DHC: NM.2/S/19/TS/3/2, ‘Copy title deed concerning the old chapel dated 1818’.

The Loveless/Standfields would have also spread the religion far, since after Tolpuddle chapels start to appear in villages a short distance away. Thus the family likely preached in Milbourne St. Andrew, where persecution in 1823 prevented a permanent foothold, Dorchester in 1824, Bere in 1828, where the Romaines - important companions to the Loveless family - began preaching, Piddletrenthide, which had its first meeting house in 1833, Blandford in the same year, and Cerne Abbas in 1834. George was a class leader at Tincleton, and was likely responsible for introducing Methodism to Dewlish, since this is where his wife, whom he married in 1824, came from, and it is known that it was introduced there by preachers from Tolpuddle. He would, then, have been a very experienced and well-known local preacher by the 1830s, and in the 1829 Circuit Plan (Figure 2) that timetabled the local preacher’s Sunday preaching between November and December, he is number 8 on a list of 27 preachers, arranged in order of seniority (his brothers James and William Loveless were 24 and 25). Through this he would have met the Romaine family, who were active Methodists since the very beginning of the century, with George Romaine becoming the secretary of the FSAL. These preachers would have walked every Sunday from Tolpuddle to nearby villages to preach – a custom that would come in useful during the Friendly Society agitation.

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86 Simon, *Methodism in Dorset*, p. 56.
Figure 3 denotes the region in which these men would have preached, but the Methodist community was likely spread across a far larger region as many practitioners would have travelled to distant chapels to worship. Some locations where George preached would have been fairly close, like Dewlish, two and a half miles away. Some were a considerable distance, like Houghton, a village west of Blandford, deep in the Blackmore Vale and six and a half miles from Tolpuddle. Studies of marriages during the period suggest that Dorset’s farm labourers were isolated, with most marrying partners who lived two or three miles away, and rarely more than five. The Loveless family’s experience can challenge this: George, James and William would have travelled extensively, every week, and in doing so would break down isolation by being a routine source of information and communication. Alongside this fact, Figures 2 and 3 add to the evidence that it was the unionised flax dressers in the Bridport region who visited George as delegates, even though it was twenty miles away. John Loveless lived and worked in Burton, a Methodist community in the west of the county. Coryates, a small hamlet on the road east to the religion’s stronghold in the region around Purbeck, Tolpuddle and Bere, was the closest Methodist community. This road allowed both religious and familial links between Tolpuddle and the workers in the flax and linen industries in the west. Along with the document that John had delivered him, it seems extremely likely that these were the delegates Loveless alluded to. As a consequence of this, if the evidence suggests that the Methodist network of which the Loveless family were a key part was a crucial aspect of the initial idea to unionise, understanding the culture of this network is imperative for appreciating how it spread.

These preachers would have been the face of Wesleyanism for most local Methodists, and their preaching and interpretation of texts would colour the religious lives of their

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congregations. Lay members like the Martyrs possessed a degree of independence that allowed them to develop the character of their own communities: ‘Low Wesleyanism was more local, more lay…Lay members [were] more democratic in style…It was oriented towards chapel culture, to lay prerogatives and leadership. It was more consciously dissenting.’ Despite the conservative nature of the High Church’s aping of Anglican respectability and political quietism, the experience of the Chartists in Cornwall was not universal across the south west. This supports Raphael Samuel’s statement that there were ‘many Methodisms in many places at many times’. The generalised sweep of Halevy and Thompson’s theses is fractured by these local accounts.

Dorset also possessed notably high Sunday School enrolment, with 7.2% of the population enrolled in 1818, meaning that in Thomas Laqueur’s *per capita* ranking system, the county was number 4 of all in the country. Laqueur warns against assuming that Dissent formed all of these schools, and since according to Henry Hetherington when he visited the village Elizabeth Brine, James’s wife, ran a school funded by an Anglican reverend, it may be wrong to attribute it to local Methodists. If a Methodist Sunday school did exist in the village, it would have been part of the Wesleyan hierarchy like the chapel, but enjoyed a *de facto* independence during the first decades of the century. It is worth noting that although the chapel identified itself as being Wesleyan, and the Tolpuddle preachers were part of a Wesleyan circuit, they themselves owned the chapel, not the Wesleyan High Church. Because of arrangements like this, even though the Conference of 1814 officially forbade teaching of writing in Methodist Sunday Schools (a

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91 *Poor Man’s Guardian*, 25 October, 1834.
fact that Thompson makes much of), the rule was ‘more often broken than kept’, and groups like the Martyrs had a great deal of independence.92

Figure 2: The circuit plan in Dorset in 1829. George Loveless is number 8, while James and William were the newest preachers at 24 and 25. From John Smith Simon, Methodism in Dorset: A Sketch (Weymouth, 1870), p. 56.

Figure 3: Extent of the Methodist community in the county by 1829 (in green). From John Smith Simon, *Methodism in Dorset: A Sketch* (Weymouth, 1870), p. 56.
There is evidence that the school was a Methodist one. Brine was a Methodist preacher himself, and the reverend may have funded it in a spirit of non-denominationalism. This is a more likely prospect than it may seem, since the chapel had a curious funding arrangement: Robert Standfield (Thomas's father) let the land adjacent to his house that it was built on to several lifeholders, including his son and George Loveless. Two of these lifeholders were daughters to the Reverend Gilbert Langdon, vicar of nearby Milton Abbas; Hetherington may have meant him when he referred to ‘the reverend’, and not the reverend of Tolpuddle, who was not warm towards the Martyrs or their creed. 93 Although it is possible that the vicar’s daughters were converts, it may also be the case that there was at times a greater degree of Anglican and Methodist co-operation than has been assumed. It would, after all, allow local Anglicans some influence over Methodists if they co-operated. There is further evidence of this: one of the Tolpuddle lodge’s members, Benjamin Roper, was buried in the village’s Anglican church in 1883, his headstone noting that he was the parish clerk for thirty years. Although it is difficult to assess the ratio of Methodists to Anglicans, one of the Society’s laws, ‘that no…religious subjects be introduced during lodge hours’, suggests that Anglicans were present and welcomed, even if religious distinction and hostilities remained. 94

A noted aspect of Methodist culture during the period was the way Radical literature could seep into formal and informal reading groups. In 1819, for instance, a group of men from Hull organised ‘an institution of Political Protestants’, in which Cobbett, Sherwin’s Register and the Black Dwarf were read. 95 These meetings consisted of half an hour of reading, followed by a discussion in which all were encouraged to state their opinions – the same as a Methodist class meeting. In London, the National Union of the

94 NA: PRO 30/69/1382, ‘Copy of Rules of Society found in the Box in George Loveless House’.
Working Classes had an organisational model ‘the same as that which was so successfully followed and pursued by the Wesleyans’, even using the nomenclature of the Methodist societies, with one official known as the ‘class leader’.\textsuperscript{96} One possible reason for this is that local Methodists were simply well organised, and so their practices worthy of copying. It is also the case that being part of these forms of organisation would be everyday for Methodists such as William Lovett in London or Loveless in Tolpuddle. During the Chartist years there was also a tactical element, since it was harder to be prosecuted as a Dissenter than a Radical, and so lay preaching, Sunday open meetings and lovefeasts were used to exploit this loophole.\textsuperscript{97} However, the democratic nature of the lay system meant that, if the class leaders felt so inclined, reading groups could \textit{de facto} become radical reading societies; Samuel Bamford wrote that \textit{The Age of Reason} and \textit{The Rights of Man} were studied in Methodist reading groups in Lancashire.\textsuperscript{98} How widely a class could deviate from Wesley’s prescribed lists depended, of course, on the nature of the class leader and their companions, and how wide they saw their remit to teach and preach, and whether or not it was a Primitive or Wesleyan congregation.

It is also notable that, in Loveless’s case, Radical political positions were reached because they were not far removed from Methodist belief. Concepts like justice, fairness and equality were familiar to people like Loveless who were immersed in a tradition of reading ethical texts, and thanks to his writing career it is possible to delve quite deeply into his thought. Loveless himself wrote two pamphlets, the first, the \textit{Vic}\textit{tims of Whiggery}, being a bestseller that was advertised in the \textit{Northern Star} until 1844. The second, \textit{The

\textsuperscript{97} Mathews, \textit{Methodism and Education}, p. 93.
Church Shown Up, outlines how ethics could lead to sophisticated political positions.\(^99\) Victims is one of the most important texts of early Chartist, having been completed in August 1837 and selling 12,000 copies by January 1838, and being printed in at least eight further editions. The Church Shown Up likely sold less, but nevertheless both texts are excellent examples of autodidact radical working-class writing, and both almost totally ignored by historians, with Victims serving chiefly as a source for details of the formation of the FSAL and The Church Shown Up discussed by Marlow only briefly.\(^100\) Analysis of both texts reveals how easily religious principles could be applied to politics, and strongly suggests that Loveless came to politics through ethics, as much as through explicitly political and unionist texts.

The Church Shown Up was addressed to the Vicar of Haselbury Bryant, Henry Walter, after Walter had written to the President of the Wesleyan Conference denouncing Loveless. The first line is a quote from Milton’s Areopagitica: ‘Give me the liberty to think, to speak, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties’.\(^101\) Loveless tells the Reverend that ‘I adopt the above as my motto’, since ‘the Almighty Creator of Man hath blést me in common with others with thinking and reasoning powers’, before then moving into an attack on the church, since ‘state religions and state churches are a curse to mankind.’\(^102\) This is a significant statement: clearly some lay Wesleyans completely disagreed with the High church’s fondness for the state, and in Loveless’s case this was based on the concept of a rationalist God. This belief in a God that gave men reason likely informed Loveless’s humanism. In an argument with an Anglican during the Catholic Emancipation debates in 1829, Loveless told him: ‘I thought it criminal to

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\(^{100}\) Marlow, The Tolpuddle Martyrs, pp. 222-24.

\(^{101}\) Loveless, The Church Shown Up, p. 1.

\(^{102}\) Loveless, The Church Shown Up, p. 6.
persecute any man for conscience sake, and although men differed in religious opinions I
did not see why that should make them worse citizens, or less loyal and dutiful
subjects."  

It seems likely that Loveless kept up with the debates through the national
press, but his attitude was supported by his understanding of religion. After all: ‘Was
religion first established in grandeur and all the pomp of state?’ It was fishermen the
Redeemer went to in order to spread the word, and ‘they went forth and proclaimed
“liberty to the captives and the opening of the prisons to them that were bound”’. 

His identification with the disciples and the oppressed is clear but also justified, since he
was a humble farm labourer imprisoned for doing what he thought right. Those ethics
were gleaned from Christ, as the reference to the Redeemer suggests, and with that the
New Testament rather than the Old. This is different to many early Chartists, who used
rhetoric of God punishing the aristocracy and bourgeoisie rather than the language and
images of love binding the working class that was more common in Britain in the later
Chartist period and in France in 1848. As early as 1818 (assuming he was a preacher
when he signed the chapel deed) Loveless would have been taught to think of himself
ethically, since part of the lay preacher’s examination before ‘being put on the plan’
involved ‘giving an account of their conversion, their Christian experience, and their
vocation’. Because of this preachers had a literary template that explained all, in which
they suffer greatly: ‘In recording this experience, he encourages others to imitate him,
just as he himself is supported by a literary tradition. 

104 Loveless, The Church Shown Up, p. 10.
105 Prothero, Radical Artisans, p. 257.
(Grand Rapids, 1950), p. 558.
Humphreys (Leicester, 1978), 189-203, p. 197.
The Dorset Methodists had suffered, which likely bound the community together, as well as preparing Loveless for later political repression. In Owermoigne a squire threw the Methodists out of their cottages, many of whom chose to subsequently emigrate. At the Tolpuddle chapel’s opening in 1818, there was an anti-Dissenter riot, with around 200 people besieging the chapel. According to a letter sent to the *Morning Chronicle* in 1834, this had been ongoing throughout the next two decades, and among a long list of intolerant acts in the area, tantalising mention was made of ‘a forgery, to keep this very George Loveless from preaching in one of the villages.’ Loveless himself was just as allusive, saying that some in Tolpuddle considered being a ‘Dissenter’ equal to ‘the sin of witchcraft’. He continued: ‘the years 1824-5 are not forgotten, and many a curious tale might be told of men that were persecuted, banished, and not allowed to have employ if they entered the Wesleyan chapel at Tolpuddle.’ Loveless, having lived a life of persecution, both religious and political, would likely have sympathised with Jesus, the quietly rebellious carpenter, more than God, the vengeful deity.

It is no surprise then that both pamphlets Loveless wrote were about persecution, the first political, the second spiritual; and although it was part of his character to outwardly seem calm and without emotion, that did not make him a quietist. In *The Victims of Whiggery*, his earlier Radicalism is affirmed, and his confidence in it reinforced: ‘…I am returned from my bondage with my views and principles strengthened. It is indelibly fixed in my mind, that labour is ill-rewarded in consequence of a few tyrannizing over the millions.’ Such exploitation and repression was only possible, in Loveless’s mind, when cloaked by the faux-spiritualism of the state and its church, both admired by conservative Wesleyans: ‘the most cruel, the most unjust, the most atrocious deeds are committed and

109 *Morning Chronicle*, 8 April, 1834; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, January 18 1819.
110 *Morning Chronicle*, 2 April, 1834.
111 Loveless, *Victims*, p. 10.
112 Loveless, *Victims*, p. 23.
carried on under the cloak of religion’. This was a radical statement for an experienced preacher, and suggests that Dorset Wesleyanism was iconoclastic. The exploitation of labour, and the state’s role in facilitating it, were not possible without the connivance of the church. Not only did his humanism derive from Christ’s teachings, but Loveless’s understanding of the state, church and employers as malignant forces had the events of the New Testament as a precedent.

Indeed, *Victims* follows the U-shaped ‘divine comedy’ identified by Northrop Frye: prosperity (the creation of the union), descent (transportation), return (to Tolpuddle) and redemption (the humiliation of Frampton and the Whigs). However, the narrative can take other forms, although in each taking the same basic structure: ‘Each story was the story in miniature.’ In the case of *The Church Shown Up*, the fall is that of the Church and their vanity, but the redemption is the work of the dissenters: ‘the working classes are beginning to question their value and utility, and to think that they can do without [the clergy’s] assistance.’ The new creation is a world delivered by Dissenters in line with God’s plan, with no obfuscation from the corrupt state church, but also not from the class of capital: ‘the earth was given to man for an inheritance and not to become the property of individuals.’ The redemption is in the hands of the workers, who know that ‘labour is the source of wealth, and that “if there be any true definition of property, is it that which defines it as the thing which man creates by his own labour”.’

Awareness of the labour theory of value likely came to George through the trade union

113 Loveless, *Victims*, p. 23.
press, or papers such as the *Poor Man’s Guardian*.

However, George’s self-confidence, and his desire to create afresh, would have come from other Christian rationalist sources. For instance in the *Areopagitica*, Milton writes:

> God then raises to his own work men of rare abilities and more then common industry not only to look back and revise what hath bin taught heretofore, but to gain further and goe on some new enlighten’d steps in the discovery of truth.

The point of inquiry was not to simply think what was already thought and live as people already lived, but to think and act creatively. The soil in which such ideas fell was fertilised by Dissent, and far from ‘ritualised psychic masturbation’, Loveless’s Methodism was interrogative, and any introspection it encouraged seems to have only made him more confident and determined to engage with the world.

Loveless’s ethics were materialist as much as they were intellectual, and they were radical because the bible could be interpreted as a radical book. As he asserted:

> …from the Bible may be extracted all those principles of morality and justice the practice of which would increase the happiness of mankind; and…ultimately, stripped of the appendages and mystifications of priestcraft, it will rise above all opposition, and will go down with revolving ages, enlightening the faith.

Loveless clearly thought that a social, political and spiritual redemption could be brought to the world through working-class education and organisation. As with many working-

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122 Loveless, *Church Shown Up*, p. 15.
class Radicals, it was Jesus the carpenter who helped form this belief, and it was Christ’s redemption that provided the ontological template.¹²³

The fact that Loveless based his Radicalism and unionism on Methodist ethics suggests that Methodists would have been amongst the first to see its appeal. There were several paths through which such appeals could be made beyond purely the congregations of Sunday services. Methodist societies were also social groups, and friendships would be formed amongst congregations, or between members of reading classes.¹²⁴ As the Loveless/Standfield family tree attests, Methodism spread through families because they were ‘useful in recruitment, as converted parents or children shared their faith within the household’; it seems that the evangelical zeal extended to unionism and politics, as well, since nine Lovelesses in total were in the FSAL.¹²⁵ On top of this, Radicals like George who ‘wished [state churches] to lose their official positions and wealth’, would have possessed a message that resonated greatly with the workers who during Swing had demanded a lowering of tithes and even threatened to attack churches, and during the Reform riots specifically targeted members of the clergy.¹²⁶

Similarly, the rituals and organisation of the FSAL reveal religious imagery. The copy of the oath administered lists a number of infractions, mostly relating to the secrecy of the Society and the imperative to avoid ‘illegal men’ and try and do everything to bring in ‘legal’ ones. Throughout the oath a man stood in front of the oath taker with a drawn sword pointed at his chest, and it ended ‘…if I ever reveal any of the rules, may what is

¹²⁵ Hempton, Methodism and Politics, p. 13.
before me plunge my soul into Eternity.' The ritual also involved kissing a bible while Loveless and his brother wore their preaching smocks and above them a painting of death bearing the legend ‘Remember thine end’ looked on. Such rituals were common to unions during the period, and no doubt the Methodist members of the Society would have seen an affinity between these practices and their own beliefs. However, the society also possessed certain secular elements. The skeleton symbolized death and, evidently, hell, but also ‘human equality beyond the grave.’ The positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer suggest a more formally accountable system than the reading classes or preaching. Similarly, the name and nature of the Society was also not alien to the labourers, since a small number of friendly societies existed within the county, with five people of every one-hundred estimated to be within friendly societies in 1831. Although the societies were less common in Dorset than elsewhere it seems likely that Loveless consciously chose the term ‘Friendly Society’ because he saw a basic affinity with other mutual aid groups.

Loveless and other members of the union were probably already acquainted with Radical literature and elements of Radical culture. As already noted, there was some penetration of Radical literature into Dorset during the Swing riots. The Flax Dresser’s Address that was brought by John to George advocated all members drop their various political and religious differences and disagreements, but was simultaneously explicitly radical, as referring to France’s 1830 revolution they attribute the ‘justly celebrated three days of July’ to ‘the magic power of union’, and then claim the same for the Reform crisis, the

127 NA: PRO 30/69/1382, ‘Copy of the Oath Administered to the Members of the Unions’.
128 The Martyrs of Tolpuddle, pp. 111-12.
129 Chase, Early Trade Unionism, pp. 167-68.
‘ten days of May’. The poem George threw into the crowd upon being sentenced strongly suggests that in the early 1830s he held radical political views as well as radical ethical ones:

God is our guide, from field, from wave,
From plough, from anvil, and from loom;
We come, our country’s rights to save,
And speak a tyrant faction’s doom:

We raise the watch-word, liberty,
We will, we will, we will be free.

God is our guide! No swords we draw.
We kindle not war’s battle fires:
By reason, union, justice, law,
We claim the birthright of our sires:
We raise the watch-word, liberty,
We will, we will, we will be free!!!

These lines formed part of the Birmingham Political Union’s hymn at its first meeting, indicating that George had read political newspapers since at least 1830, and in fact probably earlier considering his support for Catholic Emancipation. That it would appeal to him and that he would copy it down is not surprising; James Hammet’s granddaughter said, when asked whether Loveless wrote it: ‘Of course he wrote it. After

132 NA: HO 40/31 f. 167, ‘To the Flax and Hemp Trade of Great Britain’.
133 Loveless, Victims, p. 8.
134 Preston Chronicle, 5 April, 1834; Loveless, The Church Shown Up, p. 7.
all, he was brought up on John Wesley’s hymns.\textsuperscript{135} Although an inaccurate supposition, singing and writing would have been important for a Methodist local preacher, and couplets were not merely easy for amateurs to write, but were well-suited for the Methodist practice of reading two lines aloud before singing them, so that the illiterate could learn new hymns. It is fitting that the themes of God and Liberty are combined considering Loveless’s own hybridisation of ethics and politics, a practice that continued into Chartist hymn-books.

Nevertheless, whatever the state of the men’s political consciousness, their Methodism was crucial. With unionism and Radicalism it contributed to the formation of a coherent working-class ideology through intellectuals like George, but on a practical level it also allowed the steady growth of the Society. This is suggested by the men who joined the Society who lived outside of Tolpuddle, since all were on the Loveless family’s circuits. The first wave of initiation began in November and consisted of men from Tolpuddle or Affpuddle, a small settlement less than a mile away. According to the informers Edward Legg and John Lock, themselves, Richard Percy and Elias Riggs (Richard Pearsey and Elias Briggs on the membership list) and Henry Courtenay were sworn in ‘before Christmas’, which would have been the December 7\textsuperscript{th} meeting.\textsuperscript{136} All of these men were from Affpuddle, and after Christmas, the Society began expanding to more distant villages. William House was from Puddletown, while Edward Davis (sometimes Davies) lived in Piddletrenthide but had his children baptised in Puddletown and Tolpuddle, further suggesting that Anglicanism was not a serious barrier to membership. James Puckett and Thomas Crumpler (written as Pusket and Crumpper on the list) both lived in Tincleton. Petter Adams was most likely a member of the large Adams family that lived in Dewlish. Significantly, all of these men joined on or after January 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1834,

\textsuperscript{135} Cited in Marlow, \textit{Tolpuddle Martyrs}, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{The Book of the Martyrs}, p. 109.
unlike the Tolpuddle and Affpuddle men who mainly joined in November and December, suggesting that once a large base had been formed in Tolpuddle the Friendly Society’s organisers were pushing out into the towns and villages on their circuit. The fact that they were arrested a month after these men joined also suggests that it was this wave of expansion that so alarmed the authorities.137

In its rules, it was made clear that the Society should be organised with a lodge in each parish, closely mirroring the practice of having preachers circulate around a number of central chapels which serviced Methodists across a wide area.138 The list recovered from Loveless’s house was most likely the membership list for the Tolpuddle Lodge only. When the Society expanded south into the Winfrith area, labourers came from neighbouring Wool, a village in which George Romaine preached. Romaine ended up serving as the secretary of the Society, with his house in Bere used as a meeting space twice a week, and this house therefore was likely the Lodge for the Bere region.139 Romaine’s house was ‘situated on a very wild heath with only a few cottages near it’ but despite this ‘we have had repeated information that from twenty to thirty persons at least pass at a time thro’ Bere and also come from other villages into which it has extended rapidly’.140 Within months of founding, the FSAL covered much of the extent of the 1830 riots, including the Blackmore Vale. Frampton also reported ‘great numbers’ in the Blandford region.141 Figure 4 represents Frampton’s imprecise reports of the Society’s activities in his letters to the Home Office, and therefore is an approximation of the area in which the Society operated. The locations of lodges beyond Tolpuddle and Bere are unknown, but these two villages clearly formed the centre of the movement.

137 NA: PRO 30/69/1382, ‘Copy of the List of Names found in the Box in George Loveless House’.
138 NA: PRO 30/69/1382, ‘Copy of the Rules of Society found in the Box in George Loveless House, February 26th 1834’.
139 Frampton to Melbourne, 5 March, 1834.
140 Frampton to Melbourne, 5 March 1834.
141 Frampton to Melbourne, 5 March 1834.
Figure 4: The extent of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers by March 1834 (in purple).
The Society therefore used Methodist organising practices and existing organisation as its foundations, but the presence of Anglicans suggests that it was also capable of becoming a broader, class-based organisation. By March, evidence of the Society expanding out of the Methodist circuit appears, as they began sending messages to distant villages using similar resources as were used during the Swing riots.  

William Elsworth, a carter, who ‘happened to pass thro’ Bere on his way to Haselbury’, where he lived, was given a paper with instructions to show it to working people in his neighbourhood and then send it on to Mappowder, a village in the Vale close to Haselbury and Castle Hill. William may have been a relative of George Elsworth, one of the first members of the Tolpuddle lodge, although George does not appear to have lived in Bere. Regardless, instead of following this network it followed the network of authority instead, Elsworth delivering it to his master, who encouraged him to deliver it to the local reverend, Henry Walter, the target of *The Church Shown Up*, who gave it to a local Magistrate, who sent it to Frampton. Notably, it addressed the workers as ‘Brethren’, identification typical of Methodists, but even if written by one of the preachers (which seems likely, considering they were the most literate) they were clearly trying to expand the society away from its core region and out of the Methodist circuits.

This in-depth study of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers reveals that it had deep social and cultural roots in east Dorset. Most notably, Methodist practice was crucial: the Society was closely aligned with the Methodist circuits, with the Lodges being based in Thomas Standfield and George Romaine’s houses, but this clearly did not alienate Anglicans. Alongside this, families were important, with relatives forming the core organising group but also being prominent amongst the rank-and-file members. On
an intellectual level as well as a social one, Radical and unionist ideas found fecund
ground in Dorset because they aligned with Methodist beliefs but also the recent
experience of the Swing protests, the success of the strikes and the retrenchment of
1832. The remarkable story about the Tolpuddle Martyrs is therefore not the question of
who the delegates were, but how they formed the FSAL from the resources of their day-
to-day beliefs and relationships. However that story does not end with their arrest,
instead continuing with the growth of Chartism throughout east Dorset at the end of the
decade.

‘The working classes were nearly unanimous in their favour’: The Dorset

Working Men’s Associations

The People’s Charter was in preparation in the summer of 1837, the year the Martyrs
returned to England, and by 1838, the Lovelesses and Standfields began agitating once
again, forming unions on their old turf around Tolpuddle. However, these organisations
were not just unions, since judging by a pamphlet Loveless wrote at some point that year,
he now openly advocated universal suffrage.144 By this point a Chartist, he had been
accepted as an honorary member of the LWMA on 26 September 1837.145 The new
union was a hybridisation of the FSAL with the Working Men’s Association model; they
were named ‘associations’, sometimes capitalised, but also sometimes referred to as
unions or even, by Frampton, ‘the union’. The use of multiple names even happened in
the same documents, indicating that just as informal groups of Methodists and labourers
morphed into the Friendly Society, so too was the Friendly Society morphing into
Working Men’s Associations.

144 NA: HO 32/4, 'To the Farming Labourers and Working Men of Dorsetshire'.
145 British Library (hereafter BL): Add.57773, Minutebook of the London Working Men's Association, 26
September 1837.
It is possible that the FSAL survived the repression of 1834, although judging from Frampton’s accounts it petered out before reviving again. In August 1838 Frampton wrote a letter to Lord Russell warning: ‘the union is going on in great force in Bere Regis and Milton Abbas & the neighbouring villages’ and that a ‘great many labourers had joined it’, and that a demonstration was being organised on the 24th of that month in the vicinity of Blandford. Material in the archives of the Poor Law Commission states men were establishing Associations in the villages between Shaftsbury, Blandford and Wimbourne, and by October and November they were expanding throughout the east of the county. Lessons had evidently been learned, as Frampton reported that ‘the Labourers are very cautious’ and seldom met in groups larger than four or five. They were not sworn in, so as to avoid the same fate as the Martyrs, but did undertake to pay a penny a week, the same funding scheme used by the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers and recommended in the Address and Rules of the Working Men’s Association, the rulebook for the LWMA and as such a text handed out on missions across the country.

That the London Association was involved was affirmed by Frampton in an unpublished history of the Dorset Yeomanry. The only Londoner we know for sure was consistently involved was Robert Hartwell, the compositor who was crucial to the London Dorchester Committee, which raised £1,300 for the returning Martyrs, and who was a founding member of the LWMA. Hartwell reported back on ‘his visit to Dorchester’ to the London Association in the same month, writing that he had attended

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146 DHC: D/FRA/X32, ‘Copy of letter to Lord John Russell from James Frampton, J.P., concerning renewal of trade union activity in Dorset’.  
147 NA: HO 32/4, A’Court to the Poor Law Commission, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 26 August, 4 October, 9 and 17 November, 1838.  
148 Address and Rules of the Working Men’s Association for Benefiting Politically, Socially and Morally the Useful Classes (London, 1837); also BL: Add.37773, Minutebook of the London Working Men’s Association, 17 July, 1836.  
149 DHC: D/FRA/X4, James Frampton, Account of the Queen’s Own Dorset Yeomanry.
seven public meetings and fifteen private ones, and that several Working Men's
Associations had been formed along with some women's, and that 'the working classes
were nearly unanimous in their favour.' After the summer, according to Frampton,
'more of these emissaries went round a great part of the county from village to village
and persuaded a great many persons to join'. A'Court also noted that the Address and
Rules was being circulated.

This was one of the first Chartist missions in the south, and this was solely because of
the connections built up with the Martyrs. Hartwell knew Robert Loveless, because they
were both on the London Dorchester Committee (also known as the Central Dorchester
Committee) together. George returned to Tolpuddle in winter 1838, since he signed The
Church Shown Up 'Tolpuddle, Dorsetshire, Feb. 1838.' By May, he had gone to London
with James Brine to assist the 'Central Dorchester Committee in carrying out their plans
for future operations', and likely stayed or worked with Robert, who had earlier acted as
the family's agent on the Committee. A'Court noted that he was seen speaking in
Sturminster that autumn, meaning that he had likely returned by August, when the
agitation started. A leaflet of his was being distributed in the county, and was sent on to
Somerset House in November, with the note that it 'proves without doubt the active
agency of George Loveless' in the agitation. This backs up Frampton's assertion
(despite its evident point scoring) that: 'The Tolpuddle men who had been convicted of
administering unlawful oaths in 1834 & who were so injudiciously and unjustifiably
pardoned by Lord John Russell, had returned from Transportation & having been held

151 DHC: D/FRA/X4, Frampton, Account of the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry.
152 Northern Star, 26 May 1838; London Dispatch, 2 July 1837.
153 NA: HO 32/4, A'Court to the Poor Law Commission, 17 November, 1838.
up as martyrs and made a show of by this association, were very active on this occasion.\textsuperscript{154}

Hartwell seems to have pressed for organising two mass meetings, the first the one in August, which never materialised, and one in November, which took place on the 14\textsuperscript{th}. On the 13\textsuperscript{th} of November a letter from Hartwell was read out in the meeting of the London Association requesting help. The minutes note that Henry Vincent had already been sent, and on the 14\textsuperscript{th} he arrived to stay at the Standfield cottage. Several thousand workers turned up for the large Charlton Down meeting, with the \textit{Northern Star} claiming 1,500 farm labourers within a total crowd of 5-6,000 people.\textsuperscript{155} According to the \textit{Dorset County Chronicle} report, the local workers feared repercussions from the employers, as threats had been made beforehand that workers would be ‘turned off’ employment, leading Vincent to note that ‘we were convinced that all the business would have to be done by ourselves.’\textsuperscript{156} In the event it was, although under odd circumstances: a quarter mile from Charlton Down, Vincent and Hartwell looked into a carriage and found W.P. Roberts, a solicitor and Vincent’s friend, with Anthony Phillips, a plasterer, both prominent members of the Bath Working Men’s Association, who had heard of the meeting alongside a rumour that a warrant was issued for Vincent’s arrest, and wanted to be at the ‘post of honourable danger’.\textsuperscript{157} The meeting then went ahead with only one advertised speaker, Hartwell. Afterwards, Vincent gave speeches in Blandford and several other villages were visited, including Tolpuddle.

\textsuperscript{154} Frampton, \textit{Account of the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry}.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Northern Star}, 24 November, 1838.
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Dorset County Chronicle}, 15 November, 1838; Labour History Study and Archive Centre, Manchester (hereafter LHSAC), LP/VIN/1/1/13, Vincent to Minikin, 17 November, 1838.
\textsuperscript{157} LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/13, Vincent to Minikin, 17 November, 1838.
The letters from Frampton and A’Court to the Home Office, and the letters of Hartwell to the LWMA allow mapping of the broad areas the Chartist activists were operating in (Figure 5). Compared to the Friendly Society’s extent in Figure 4, by 1838 the centre of the movement had shifted to Blandford, which seems to have been the focal point of Hartwell’s energies considering that he twice tried to organise mass-meetings in the fields nearby. The fact that Loveless was spotted speaking in Sturminster, north of Blandford, would imply that he now had the funds to travel far from his home, either from the London Dorchester Committee or the LWMA. What is also notable is the broad social composition of this movement, with these activists targeting agricultural labourers around Tolpuddle and Bere, shepherds and dairy workers in the Blackmore Vale further north, and artisans and tradesmen in the towns of Blandford and Sherborne. The Martyrs served not only as experienced speakers and organisers in their own right, but in many areas knew where to go and who to speak to, possessing the important leadership qualities of experience, sociability and trustworthiness that Londoners Hartwell and Vincent had to earn. Notably, the Chartist agitation never left the same boundaries as the Methodist revival at the beginning of the century, the Swing riots in 1830, reform riots during 1831, the agitation over wages between 1831 and 1832, and the spread of the Friendly Society between 1833 and 1834. The network utilised in 1833-34 to spread unionism was now being used by the same men to spread Chartism.

Despite the evident success that autumn, the mass meeting would in fact be something of a disaster, seriously undermining Chartism in the area by inviting repression from nervous farmers and landowners. Such meetings were quite alien to Dorset, except when sanctioned as fairs or elections, and a public meeting of labourers tended to be a precursor to a strike, riot or negotiation, not the sort of pageantry and show of strength
that men like Vincent were used to. In the pamphlet being disseminated amongst the villages of east Dorset, Loveless outlined the legal situation:

Figure 5: Area of Chartist organising, August-November 1838 (in blue).
...you can laugh at their threats as long as you act peaceably and avoid all secrecy in your association, for you are allowed by law to unite openly to attain your just rights and discuss your grievances.\textsuperscript{158}

This outfoxed Frampton, who complained to Russell that he could not repress the Associations since they were not acting illegally. In November, he repeated this attempt, and on the morning of the meeting attempted to call out the soldiers at Dorchester, and failing that the yeomanry, but the respective commanders refused each attempt since there was no breach of the peace.\textsuperscript{159} Regardless, repression quickly followed the meeting since the farmers made good on their threat and sacked the labourers present and gave pay rises to those who left the Associations. The Blandford Board of Guardians, which was supportive of the new Poor Law and largely formed from farmers, refused relief.\textsuperscript{160}

Notably, the repression of 1838 was quite unlike the harsh sentences following Swing, and perhaps Tolpuddle had served as an important lesson in this regard: the subtlety of a sacking, coupled with the threat of the workhouse, replaced transportation and hard labour.

Similarly, Loveless’s Chartism was clearly different from that of the men from London and Bath. They were all for the Charter, but the pamphlet Loveless penned and which was being spread only mentioned reform once, in a sentence immediately after mention of the desire to obtain ‘a fair return of wages for your labour.’ He also addressed the new Poor Law, which had been implemented in 1835 in Dorset: ‘if you want…to be enabled to spend [the last] few years of your life under your own roof, in the bosom of your

\textsuperscript{158} NA: HO 32/4, George Loveless, ‘To the Farming Labourers and Working Men of Dorsetshire’.
\textsuperscript{159} DHC: D/FRA/X32, ‘Copy of letter to Lord John Russell from James Frampton, J.P., concerning renewal of trade union activity in Dorset’.
\textsuperscript{160} NA: MH 1227/24, Letter from Hartwell to Blandford Board of Guardians, 3 December, 1837.
family, [then] stand by each other, and remain firm to your unions." This is a clear example of Chartist activist’s politicising of their audience’s everyday life, as discussed by Robert Hall. This does not simply seem a convenient piece of rhetoric, however. For Loveless, his family helped create and comprise the union; when the union was repressed, his family was repressed. This in turn led to the desire to create, with the help of his family, new organisations, expressly for the purpose of defending the family. It seems likely that this would have a popular sentiment with families like the Olivers or Daniels who joined the FSAL back in November 1832, for whom the family was a crucial pooling of resources, and formed a material, emotional and intellectual union not altogether dissimilar from the FSAL or Methodist groups. It is no wonder, then, that Loveless considered the Associations a means of compelling ‘your [masters to treat] the honest and industrious labourers with respect’. Associations meant self-defence, utilising the power of labour, and the defence of the family. In this form of Radicalism, parliamentary reform is only one aspect of a wider plan of betterment that will come through working-class organisation. Economic critique, political consciousness, and the social and cultural being of the working class were all united by this grassroots, hands on and always relevant form of organisation.

The Bath and London Chartists were not oblivious to local conditions, and likely did a great deal of research, not least by consulting the Martyrs themselves. The first speaker, Roberts, spoke of the perversion of God’s plan and the average local wage of 8s before proposing that all of this was because ‘the lower classes had not been represented in the legislature.’ He then proposed that the meeting vote to endorse the Charter and use any means to bring it about, to demand an increase in wages, and to elect George

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161 NA: HO 32/4, George Loveless, ‘To the Farming Labourers and Working Men of Dorsetshire’.


163 Dorset County Chronicle, 15 November, 1838.
Loveless as the delegate from Dorset at the forthcoming General Convention.

Discussing this, Malcolm Chase notes that ‘Chartism was developing a capacity to adopt and adapt local political issues’.\textsuperscript{164} This is clearly true of Chartist oratory, and one of its clear strengths, especially in the early years. Nevertheless, in the Dorset case there is a question of whether or not this same sort of adaptation was capable on a practical and organisational level. It is significant that of the speakers that day, Vincent had around 12 hours total experience of Dorset, and his friends from Bath even less, having arrived completely unannounced. Only Hartwell had experience of Dorset, but the real experts were the martyrs themselves. One of the Standfields was present at the meeting but was content only to wave from the platform, while Loveless was completely absent. From his exposition of the legal situation, Loveless clearly knew that his nemesis, Frampton, was looking for a breach of the peace. In this context, the meeting itself seems misguided, and Phillip’s joke that he wished ‘the farmer’s head was in its right place’ a particularly bad idea. By the time of the Convention, which Loveless did not attend as he could not afford to leave his new farm in Essex, the Blandford Association was reporting that the repression had made it difficult to organise outside of the town.\textsuperscript{165} Once again, the agricultural labourers and the urban Radicals were divorced.

Although politically these men were united, organisationally it could be said that the intimate, small-scale, cautious organisations Loveless was encouraging was a different form of Chartism from Hartwell and Vincent’s expectations. The brief union of farm labourers, artisans and shopkeepers that Chartism represented died when the farm workers – the most numerous workers in the county but simultaneously the weakest link because of their lack of economic independence – were unable to respond to the repression. The remaining Chartist agitation in the county took place in the towns, as

\textsuperscript{165} The Charter, 3 February, 1839.
Wiltshire Chartist William Carrier reported to the convention in April 1839 that he had travelled to Salisbury, Shaftesbury and Blandford, as well as gathering 700 signatures at Sherborne. Robert Gammage, who lived in Sherborne while he was on the tramp in 1840, had the *Northern Star* sent to him every Sunday, and noted that his work mates knew little of Chartism, but were sympathetic to it once they read it.\(^{166}\) Nevertheless, even if Chartism did retain a presence after 1838, the town folk could not be significant alone, and the agricultural labourers were simply too vulnerable to regain anywhere near the strength that they had begun to develop in the FSAL in 1833-4 and Chartism in 1838.\(^{167}\)

**Conclusion**

Jacques Rancieré, in his study of French artisans during the 1830s, argued that the worker-intellectuals like Loveless ‘were seeking intellectual growth, an escape from the worker’s world.’\(^{168}\) In a study of the Chartist leadership of Ashton-under-Lyne, Robert Hall argues against this notion by pointing out that, despite their existential anxieties and musings that demarcated them as different, the local Chartist leadership fundamentally remained within the same social and economic bracket as the rest of the Chartist community, even if they did not share their culture.\(^{169}\) As he notes, ‘the irony of their situation was that the very qualities that made them ideal leaders of a working-class movement…also set them apart from the majority of working men and women.’\(^{170}\) In Dorset, this seems less of an issue. Although Loveless was exceptional, his exceptionality

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\(^{167}\) *The Charter*, 7 April, 1839.
was what made him a trusted and recognisable figure, as a well-travelled, articulate preacher, and even his religious text, *The Church Shown Up*, was an intellectual rumination on materiality as much as ethics. Little about his work and attitude, or the dedication shown by Standfield or Romaine, suggests that any of them considered themselves set apart, even if they seem so in retrospect.

In Dorset, therefore, it appears that the leadership did not attempt what Rancieré saw in the French artisan, ‘an impossible effort to escape the “culture” of their everyday working lives.’171 If anything, Loveless was proud of it and saw in it virtue and redemption that paralleled the experience of Christ and the disciples. More than this, if he and his family hadn’t embraced their everyday lives, along with their friends and congregations, and hadn’t wandered the roads and pathways of the countryside or invited men into their homes, none of this would have happened. For eight years the families of Tolpuddle and Bere managed to organise the workers from the parochially focussed, inchoately Radical Swing protests into an expansive agricultural union, and from that into the most extensive organisation of Working Men’s Associations along the south coast. They did all of this precisely because in thought and in action they were intimately bound with their communities. Neither intellect nor social relations were dominant in their careers as activists: they were instead co-dependent and mutually creative categories. Because of this, it is clear that isolating either political ideas and culture or economic grievances and the social composition of a movement overlooks the way in which social relations and intellectual activity were not cleaved in everyday life and activity, but were instead hybridised.

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Chapter Two: Sociability, Conviviality and the Infrastructure of Early Chartistism:

Henry Vincent in the West of England, 1837-39

Introduction

The role of oratory and the mass platform in Chartist and radical organising has been the focus of a large amount of research over the last two decades. Amongst the studies of the itinerant political lecturer during the Chartist period, the emphasis has varied from the role of early Victorian political movements in the development of public oratory in Janette Martin’s study, to the importance of lecturing in creating a national political body in Humphrey Southall’s work, to the lecturer’s role as the embodiment of Chartist principles in Philip Howell’s study. Each has made worthwhile contributions to the historiography. In Martin's thesis, the role of the lecturer as a crafter of public opinion was emphasised. Their meetings ‘constituted both an actual and theoretical public space: a place where ideas might be legitimately raised and openly debated. Contemporary orators were conscious of their role in formulating opinion.’ Humphrey Southall's article argues that a ‘fundamental aspect of becoming organized was spatial: well-organized localities had to be linked to one another and then organization extended over as much of the country as possible.’ Lecture tours gave the audience a strong sense of belonging.


4 Southall, 'Agitate! Agitate! Organize!', p. 190
to ‘a social force beyond their immediate locality but within their particular needs’, and as such forged what Feargus O’Connor called ‘the Great Chain’, or the sense that Chartism was a national movement. Similarly, Phillip Howell has argued that ‘the geography of political lecturing was inescapably charged with profound cultural and political influence’. This led to ‘the construction of a cultural form of politics that contrasted sharply with the established polity’, and more than this the lecturer themselves served as an embodiment of ‘all those qualities that Chartism aimed to inculcate in its constituency.\(^5\)

In the post-Chartist period, the lecturer became increasingly popular and professionalised, and with this innovative. With highly-tuned physical and verbal performances, the platform became one of the key entertainments of the Victorian era.\(^6\)

This chapter will build on this work by moving away from the focus on performance, rhetoric and oratory by looking at the other practices lecturers took part in on their tours. It will follow Henry Vincent during his tour of the South West and West of England between 1837 and 1839 to illustrate how crucial socialising and conviviality was to his organising, thereby drawing together the literature on lecturing with the literature on working-class and Radical sociability.\(^7\) This chapter will advance this work by looking beyond symbolic practice, viewing practice instead in a broader sense that is not limited to the chiefly figurative. As was evident from the Tolpuddle case study, many practices

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\(^5\) Howell, “Diffusing the Light of Liberty”, p. 129.
were undertaken not because they were symbolic or representative of anything, but rather because they were crucial to itinerant activism. As Martin has highlighted, the prosaic aspects of itinerancy were vital, and it is this practical aspect of itinerant activism that this chapter will address. Information gathering, discussion and organising took place in locations like tea parties or pubs, while on the most mundane level people like Vincent needed the funds to eat, travel and sleep. It will be argued that all of this had an important impact upon the structure and style of leadership in the region, as the result of his constant interactions with the population of the regions he was visiting was a mutually constitutive form of organising and activism. In this both Vincent and the audience developed a political identity and style of organisation together, not just through symbolic meetings or oratory but through recurring convivial contact and shared experiences.

A key aspect of this will be the importance of materiality of Chartist activism. By looking at the expenses of the tour and the physical limitations of Vincent himself, the logistics of activism will be revealed in this study. This will illustrate the problems with organisation, leadership and communication within the national movement as it existed in 1839, in particular the poor relationship between the centre of the movement and the regions. As a result of this it is clear that Chartist activists were more likely to work with nascent local organisations, and therefore adopt by the practices of the communities into which they sought to integrate themselves. This high local initiative and energy revolved around direct action and increasingly confrontational politics centred on economic distress, leading to Vincent leading marches into the Wiltshire town of Devizes in March and April 1839, ultimately inviting state repression.

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This chapter will start by looking at the period between 1837 and 1838 in Bath, focussing on the symbolic practices surrounding Vincent’s activism there and the attempts to found a cross-class Radical alliance following his presentation of the Charter to the city in summer 1838. It will then look at his itinerant tour across the west of England and the Newport area, utilising the deep archival legacy left by this tour to establish how the symbolism and oratory evident in Bath were only part of a broader range of activities required to maintain and develop the movement. It will conclude by looking at how the communal, democratic and intimate style of leadership adopted by Vincent led to his developing an antagonistic political position that utilised community based direct action, and adopted language of social and economic rather than just political critique.

‘These two classes constituted the people, whose real interests were the same’:

Tea and Symbolism in Bath, 1837-38

Vincent’s first visit to Bath was in October 1837, when he was the main speaker at the inaugural meeting of the Bath Working Men’s Association, established three months earlier. His next visit in June 1838 was to present the Charter in a public meeting on Whit Monday. Bath was a highly politically active city, with a largely Radical Council, and strong working-class organisation stretching back to the Reform crisis. Between 1832 and 1837 the City had also had a Radical MP, JA Roebuck, who drew most of his support from the largely artisan population of the parish of St. James. A large body of artisans could vote, as even in the poorest areas ‘the rated houses are far above £10

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yearly value’, meaning that the Working Men’s Association pulled weight with the city’s Radicals in the middle class and gentry.\textsuperscript{10} However, in summer 1837 Roebuck was defeated in the ‘drunken election’, where the Tories were accused of bribing the electorate with drink, causing a riot. In order to return him a broad anti-Tory alliance was sought, and in August 1837, a number of the city’s working and middle-class Radicals approached the city’s Whigs with an offer of forming a union, on the condition that Roebuck was the joint parliamentary candidate in the next election.\textsuperscript{11} This was disrupted by the arrest in October of Charles Henry Acherley, a Radical from Gloucestershire who spoke every Friday in the Orange Grove outside the Guildhall, a building largely off limits to working-class organisations.\textsuperscript{12} Although Acherley’s case became a major issue for the Working Men’s Association, with Vincent and Roebuck also publicly supporting him, the attempts to forge an alliance were on-going until December, with resolutions for the ballot, shortened parliaments and, eventually, universal suffrage being agreed at a joint meeting.\textsuperscript{13}

This meant that when Vincent moved to Bath to expound the Charter the following June, he now had to work with men who were trying to maintain and galvanise a broad, cross-class alliance, and as a result the Whit Monday meeting became an extravagant and convivial event designed to bring together as broad a constituency as possible. Working Men’s Associations from Bristol, Trowbridge and ‘the surrounding districts’ gathered at the North Parade, ‘decorated with colours, banners, flags &c.’ After this:

\textsuperscript{10} Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 20 June, 1837.
\textsuperscript{12} LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/4, Vincent to Minikin, 17 October 1837; Bath Chronicle, 31 August, 1837; Bath Journal, 30 October, 1837; Bath Journal, 17 October, 1837.
\textsuperscript{13} Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 19 December, 1837.
The procession, which was a very large one, having been duly arranged, at eleven o’clock the committee conducted Mr. Vincent to the assembly, who was received with the hearty acclamations of the multitude. The committee having taken up their position, the band struck up, and the procession moved on through Widcombe, and on passing over the old bridge was saluted by a round of cannon and a peal of the Abbey bells, and after proceeding through the principle streets of the city, arrived at the Corn Market, where hustings had been erected, at half-past twelve o’clock. The immense meeting presented a very animated appearance, which was increased by the presence of numerous well-dressed ladies.14

The sounds and sights of the march and hustings were in many respects as important as the speaking itself. As Kate Bowan and Paul Pickering have pointed out, Chartist public culture was one of sound as well as words, and music varied in its use from a means of fundraising to a ‘ritual of solidarity’.15 Practically, bands and banners showed where the front of the demonstration was, as well as leading the way and setting the pace during the march, while symbolically, ‘the number of banners and bands provided a complementary visual and sounding index to the importance of the occasion.’16 Banners and flags, along with clothing such as sashes or Phrygian caps, were the most prominent, iconic and colourful forms of self-identification on Radical marches and meetings, and were used along with music and singing as integral parts of the contest over public space.17 A march

14 London Dispatch, 10 June, 1838.
16 Bowan and Pickering, “‘Songs for the Millions’”, p. 50.
and speech were both therefore the focal point of diverse ‘rituals of solidarity’ that were played out across several days.

These practices were repeated again at the tea party at the Guildhall that evening. Vincent reported that it was ‘got up in the most expensive style’, and that ‘the immense number of mechanical, middle-class, and wealthy ladies that were present’ astounded him.\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{London Dispatch} described the itinerary:

\begin{quote}
At half-past five Mr. Vincent entered the room. The whole company simultaneously rose and received him with the most enthusiastic cheering and waving of handkerchiefs. The company then partook of an excellent tea…The evening was then passed by addresses and democratic songs. Mr. Vincent delivered one of the most eloquent addresses to the men and ladies we ever listened to. He favoured the company with a democratic song, “Plant, plant the tree”…the assembly broke up at a late hour. Thus ended a day which will never be forgot by the people of Bath, in which principle and social feeling were enjoyed in the highest degree.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

This meeting was similar to the functions of the Bath Temperance Society, founded in 1836. In June 1839, to celebrate their three year anniversary, a procession moved through the city to the Assembly Rooms, where well-dressed men and women took tea around tables, singing hymns before and after the meal, before the tables were taken away and the lecturers spoke.\textsuperscript{20} At another, the tables were decorated with blossoms and evergreens, while the service given by the minister was broken up with singing, prayer and rounds of water.\textsuperscript{21} The Christmas festival in the Assembly Room’s Ballroom was

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\item \textsuperscript{18}LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/6, Vincent to Minikin, 18 June, 1838.
\item \textsuperscript{19}London \textit{Dispatch}, 10 June, 1838.
\item \textsuperscript{20}Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 25 June, 1839.
\item \textsuperscript{21}Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 13 August, 1839.
\end{enumerate}
accompanied by the normal light meal along with singing and an organ, while two years later the Assembly Rooms were ‘crowded with a happy and attentive audience’, taking their tea while accompanied by the ‘teetotal band’. The main difference between these meetings was the presence of workers. The temperance society’s meetings, to which workers were not admitted, were of the moderationist school of thought which ‘merely sanctified the existing social hierarchy’ by using tea parties to set a good example. Tickets were deliberately priced highly to exclude workers.

The Chartist tea party, on the other hand, was designed to allow workers and the middle class to interact on a convivial basis. Having fallen at the turn of the century, tea consumption in Britain was slowly increasing, beginning a steady and consistent rise by the 1840s. By 1840 tea consumption was 1.55lbs a head, and as a ‘necessary luxury’ it was widely consumed even in the poorest households; as Engels put it, ‘where no tea is used, the bitterest poverty remains.’ Amongst the upper classes a trade grew in exotic and rare Chinese teas following the opening of trade with China. Merchants arrived in Bristol and auctioned thousands of packs of tea monthly, and in Bath a specialist lapsang dealer advertised it as ‘the finest of the stronger Black Teas’ selling it at 6s a lead-lined pack. As its importance as a beverage increased, it also increased in popularity with temperance societies. Tea parties were therefore one way to exploit the overlap between artisan and upper-class culture.

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22 Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 31 December, 1839.
26 Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 14 May, 1839, 9 June, 1839.
The day chosen was also significant, with the Whit holiday period another opportunity for broad, cross-class festivities.²⁷ By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Whit had become an austere religious procession, particularly observed in the north west.²⁸ Its roots, however, were in agricultural custom, and before the move towards ‘rational recreation’ it was a licentious celebration of fertility.²⁹ These traditional festivities were expensive, and beer-tents, dance-hall and Morris dancers would be funded by the wealthier members of the community.³⁰ In the Bath case it seems likely, given the expense that Vincent reported, that rich locals had paid for the tea party, keeping alive previous customs in a new form. The ‘Whit-Ale’ would last six days, although in some cases it could last for as long as thirteen.³¹ In Bath, the entire week seems to have been taken off since Vincent noted that throughout it he held meetings with electors in various parts of the city, as well as attending three more tea meetings ‘each consisting of from 200 to 300 persons male and female’.³² During the daytime of the Thursday, a meeting held by the local Tories to celebrate the Queen’s coronation was hijacked by Vincent and several Radicals.³³

³¹ Howkins, “The Taming of Whitsun”, p. 188.
³² LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/6, Vincent to Minikin, 10 June, 1838.
³³ London Dispatch, 17 June, 1838.
The day’s events were also supported by the local municipal authorities, since before the party, during the meeting where the Charter was presented, Vincent and the Chartists were greeted with the ringing of the Abbey bells and the firing of cannon. Having ‘set out in the right course’, by ‘making friends out of the enemies to the cause, instead of converting lukewarm friends into enemies’, the London Dispatch argued in an article on the meeting that ‘these two classes constituted the people, whose real interests were the same.’\textsuperscript{34} Tea parties would go on to become a staple of Vincent’s time in Bath, with him reporting that September that ‘two or three’ occurred in one week alone.\textsuperscript{35} As James Vernon and Patrick Joyce have suggested, after the extension of the franchise in 1832 and then the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, cities became the sites of the construction of a populist, national identity that sought to overcome class divisions.\textsuperscript{36} The success of this endeavour was limited, with the Acherley affair fuelling distrust in 1837 and the experience of 1839’s riots, insurrections and repression splitting Radicals along class lines. Nevertheless, such an alliance was attempted, and it was the 1832 and 1835 reforms that made it a mutually beneficial prospect. While they lasted the Bath tea parties can be seen as early symbolic events in the tempestuous effort to construct the inclusive, cross-class identity of ‘the People’. But these were not just dry events dominated by the more moralistic members of the middle class; after the Whit Monday party, Vincent boasted in a private letter to his cousin how he had spent time joking with his ‘sweethearts’.\textsuperscript{37} Events like these helped his popularity grow, while the hints of flirting suggest he did more than discuss temperance and moral improvement.

\textsuperscript{34} London Dispatch, 17 June, 1838.
\textsuperscript{35} LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/11, Vincent to Minikin, 23 September, 1838.
\textsuperscript{37} Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 21 December, 1841.
A key aspect of these festivities was therefore the periods given over to mingling, with the light meal and the serving of drinks in particular allowing introductions to be made and conversations to be conducted. In this, Vincent excelled, and his social skills became a central tool in his political agitating. After his death, his wife reflected that it ‘was his constant remark that in all his travels he found so many friends that he seldom entered an hotel.’ His first visit to Bath the previous October had been fleeting, but after he began spending more time there in June he became close with a number of families. One of his letters ends in a scrawl:

...you must think all else I would say – for I am writing in the Company of Mr Bolwell, Mr Day and a host of young lasses – and they all desire me to tell you that they think you must be a lady in disguise or I would not sit writing a letter instead of talking to them they are all at working jogging my arm so by God I cannot write any more.

Thomas Bolwell and William Day were both important Bath Chartists, Bolwell a shoemaker living at 5 Gallaway Buildings and Day owning a grocery at 1 Gallaway Buildings. Both men were in their late thirties, Bolwell the Chair of the Society of Cordwainers, Secretary of the Bath Working Men’s Association. The ‘lasses’ may have been the men’s wives, who were both politically active, as Elizabeth Bolwell and Rebecca Day were both members of the Bath Female Radical Association, which met in the Bolwell’s premises. Vincent’s closest friend in Bath was W.P. Roberts, a Radical and later Chartist solicitor who lived in one of the affluent parts of the city but catered largely for the working class. Roberts stood by Vincent through his imprisonment in May 1839, defending him at times, helping him financially after his release and remaining loyal during the 1842 split when Vincent left the National Charter Association. When, as we

39 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/11, Vincent to Minikin, 23 September, 1838.
saw in the last chapter, he and Anthony Phillips, a plasterer and the Bath Association’s Treasurer, travelled all the way to Tolpuddle because they thought Vincent was in danger they revealed how intense these relationships could be. As well as political, emotional and social bonds, these activists had business relationships, with William Young, a jeweller and pawnbroker advertising in the *Vindicator* along with Bolwell, who set up as a newsvendor after the boom in Chartist newspapers, and Day.

The considerable overlap between politics and civic culture as well as the importance of symbolism and pageantry to Radicalism are clear from Vincent’s experiences in Bath. Yet this was only the public face of the movement, and although these events are excellent sources for discovering what sort of messages Chartists wanted to send and how they sent them – the proximity and civility of these meetings was a physical demonstration of class co-operation – they reveal little about the day-to-day operations of the movement or of itinerant activists like Vincent. To get a better idea of the day-to-day, grassroots process through which Chartist leaders became not only responsive to but part of the communities they sought to organise, it is necessary to turn to Vincent’s exploits elsewhere.

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41 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/4, Vincent to Minikin, 17 November 1838.
The Life and Rambles of Henry Vincent: Sociability and the Infrastructure of Chartism

In Bath, sociability and conviviality helped fuse the working and middle-class wings of the Radical movement into a broad pro-Reform movement that accepted the Charter. In the weaving counties of Wiltshire, Somerset, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Vincent did much the same, socialising with his audience rather than just lecturing at them. The result was ultimately a shift in his politics, with Vincent moulding an antagonistic, class-conflict form of Chartism, eventually advocating insurrection, which would ultimately have the effect of splitting apart the Bath alliance. The material surrounding this lecture tour is far richer than that surrounding Vincent’s time in Bath, and as a result it is possible to look far more deeply at the events surrounding his platform appearances and formal speeches, as well as expand into investigating the logistics and infrastructure of the Chartist movement. By doing this it will be possible to explain how Vincent and the region’s Chartists moved from a political form that had allies with the middle class and Bath’s council to becoming one of the centre-pieces of insurrectionary Chartism by 1839, with a form of Chartist politics that now incorporated social conflict.

On February 8th, 1839, the National Convention’s ‘Committee of Extending Political Information’ resolved that several men would travel the country, starting on the 26th of February, in simultaneous lecturing tours. The intention was for delegates to visit ‘the portions of the Kingdom which are not sufficiently instructed of the Chartist movement, to explain the principles of the Charter, to obtain signatures to the national petition & subscription of rent’, and Vincent and William Burns were selected to visit Somerset,
Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. They were to be given a cheap map of their district, papers for collecting signatures, copies of the national petition and People’s Charter, along with credentials proving that they were from the Convention. They were also given £10 spending money, which the Committee clearly expected would not be wasted: the ‘delegate missionaries’ were requested ‘to keep an account of each days expenses for living travelling &c, that he be as economical as possible compatible with the efficiency of his mission and that he pay back to the treasurer whatever portion of this money may not be expended upon his return.’ Written in their instructions, but later struck out, was the request that they spend no more than 10s a day.

Vincent had had intentions to set up a newspaper in the west since the previous September, and his plans came to fruition after the new year. The *Western Vindicator*, despite only lasting ten months, became a popular and well-circulated newspaper, and in the edition of March 9th the ‘Life and Rambles of Henry Vincent’ first appeared. The column was a travelogue charting every day of Vincent’s tour, with commentary on the destitution on display combined with occasional remarks on the countryside and physical landmarks. It was also a political diary, documenting the organising and protests that occurred on each day, and as such provided an accurate picture for local Chartists of the extent of organising in the region. Since Vincent wrote an entry for every single day between February 26th and May 11th, it is a remarkable resource, clearly documenting what an itinerant lecturer did when they were not giving speeches. It is therefore particularly useful for the ends of discovering the popular culture of the workers in the

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cloth weaving districts outside of Bath, and how this culture was utilised by Vincent and his companions.

The region was at the tail-end of long-term deindustrialisation. Although there was some proletarianisation as some of the textile industry moved into mills and loomshops around the turn of the century, overall investment was heading north, where the trade was set-up in a way that was more profitable for capitalists. An investigation into the deprivation began in 1837, and on February 15th 1839, two weeks before Vincent began his tour, *The Report of the Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners* was presented to Parliament.\(^44\) It contains evidence compiled in the cloth regions of the West Riding and the south west, between Gloucestershire and the west Dorset coast. The west of England had been, along with the West Riding, one of the principal areas of the lucrative cloth industry since the medieval period, but since the end of the eighteenth century had seen steady mechanisation.\(^45\) Between 1781 and 1828 the expenditure on labour had halved; by the latter year only a third of the men, a fifth of the women and a quarter of children were employed as had been in the 1780s.\(^46\)

The Bath-based Chartists saw this as fertile ground, and with the London Association and Vincent began organising the region. The Committee for Extending Political Information sent questionnaires to Working Men's Associations around the country asking about the state of trades in their towns as well as broader questions about education and political activity. Very few replied, but Bradford (Wiltshire) and Holt both did. When asked the wages of the trade in 1814, the Bradford Association wrote that

\(^44\) *Reports from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners*, Part II (London, 1840), pp. 440-441.
\(^46\) *Reports from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners*, pp. 440-441.
they were nearly double the wages of 1839; in 1820 one third more, and in 1830 ‘nearly’ the same as in 1839. They added that in 1814 ‘778 ends of Broad Cloth were made weekly, in 1838 only 144!!!’; the little that was still made in the town was made by machines. Wages were poor, and food was expensive. When asked to sum up the chief grievances of the various trades in the town, they replied: ‘Scarcity of Employment – low wages, high rents…enormous rates and very heavy taxation’. Holt, a village that was also chiefly in the clothing trade, replied that the wages in 1814 were double and in 1820 one third more than in 1839. The families Vincent was to speak to on this tour were not skilled labourers resentful of a lack of political representation, as in Bath, but were deskilled workers who formed a substantial surplus population.\(^4\)

The new mills brought with it capitalist time-discipline, and although the workers of Trowbridge complained about their long hours and confinement in mills, outdoor workers were also working 12-14 hour days.\(^4\) However, these periods of intense work were often followed by long periods of unemployment. As one manufacturer said: ‘If a weaver brings in on Tuesday, he may think himself lucky if he gets a chain on the following Monday.’\(^4\) Periods of unemployment would have been regular, with the Commissioner estimating the weavers were out of work ‘one-third of their time’.\(^4\) All of this meant that the region had deep-seated economic grievances that could easily be politicised by men of talent like Vincent and his friends but furthermore, and equally importantly, the culture of these dispossessed workers also facilitated organising.

Drinking establishments became important sites for the employed and unemployed.

\(^4\) Reports from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers’ Commissioners, pp. 451-52.
\(^4\) Reports from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers’ Commissioners p. 451.
Monday was the day when new ‘chains’ would be sent out to work, and during periods when no work was forthcoming weavers would ‘most probably [be] walking from factory to factory seeking a chain, and in constant temptation of spending his money in beer; every day that they look for work they get together and drink.’ Another manufacturer stated that a ‘journeyman who can earn 10s a week may, perhaps, play one week in four.’ Another witness, a relieving officer, stated that although workers were so eager for work their wives worked by day and the husbands by night to get it done quickly, once out of work they drank:

When they bring in their work the weavers are apt to drink, and every day that they look out for work they get together and drink; if they have no money they are trusted, if it is known that they are in employment.53

Of Westbury he reported that:

There are two public-houses and one beer-shop; there were more beer-shops when first the law allowed them, but many are now given up; the work-people prefer the regular public-houses [licensed victuallers] to the beer-shops; the former sell beer of their own brewing; many of the latter dealt in brewer's beer.54

Although the evidence attacks workers for their lack of prudence, drinking establishments were centrepieces of working-class life, and their multifaceted nature as places of leisure, consumption, domesticity, meetings, and information exchange makes

53 Reports from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners, p. 427.
54 Reports from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners, p. 428.
such evidence believable. They were particularly attractive to those like the cloth weavers for whom work was irregular, since it was a form of recreation that required little money or planning. They were also the first sites Vincent, as a traveller, would have seen of a new town, being for the people of the 1830s analogous to railway stations later in the century. Thus, the inn recurs frequently in Vincent’s account as the location of important meetings, both pre-planned and spontaneous. In Gloucester a ‘small Chartist society’ helped Vincent organise a meeting in the large room of the Upper George Inn, the Bell Inn was used in Monmouth for meetings, with Vincent's rooms in a separate inn used as the location for the formation of the Monmouth Working Men's Association, in Newport a woman's meeting and later a mixed gender meeting were held in the Bush Inn, and in Stroud on Good Friday the procession began and ended at Vincent's inn.

Leisure and popular culture therefore became the terrain for much of Vincent’s organising during the 1839 tour, even the very first day of which was spent at a fair and in pubs. Vincent and his friends Roberts and Young of Bath visited Frome on a Tuesday afternoon, the first day of the 1839 tour. They arrived at one o’clock, when the Secretary of the local Working Men’s Association, along with some other radicals, took the men to the Sun inn, ‘where we partook of an excellent dinner of beef steak and onions, and washed it down with a few glasses of fine spring water’. They then headed to the marketplace where they ‘found a fair going on’. The local weavers still took time off for

56 Anthony Davies, ‘Popular Recreation and Social Conflict in Derby, 1800-1850’ in Yeo and Yeo, Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 89-127, pp. 98-100.
57 Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp. 50-52.
59 Western Vindicator, 23 March, 1839; Western Vindicator, 6 March, 1839; Western Vindicator, 6 April, 1839; Western Vindicator, 27 March, 1839.
60 Western Vindicator, 9 March, 1839.
fairs: ‘When work is plenty they will not touch a shuttle for a week, at the time of the fair; there are three fairs in a year.’ The fair quickly emptied, as 4,000 people were assembling at a hustings to hear Vincent speak. Afterwards he returned to the Sun for dinner, then held an evening meeting for the benefit of those who had been at work, after which he spent the night in an inn in the company of some radicals he had just met.

Brian Harrison notes Vincent had abstained from alcohol since 1836, but he was no teetotaller and clearly did drink, although this caused controversy. In March 1839 a correspondent accused the editors of the Vindicator of being hypocrites for praising a teetotaller in one part of the paper while calling teetotallers ‘canting hypocrites’ in another. In reply, the editors wrote:

Although not tee-totalers ourselves, we should be very unwilling to say aught that might give offence to those who are laudably endeavouring to prevent the crime of drunkenness. We firmly believe that they do much good; yet consider, that it no more follows we should totally abstain from malt liquors (for we seldom indulge in anything else) because its excess is bad, that it would, because the Roman Catholic religion may be presumed to be wrong, that we should have no religion at all.

This colours what we can assume went on in many of these more social gatherings that took place after a long day of meeting and lecturing. Vincent and his cohort were unlikely to be getting extremely drunk, but that does not mean they did not drink and partake in drinking culture. Because of this Vincent could, despite everything that marked him as different – his upbringing in Yorkshire and London, his trade as a compositor, his education, his ambitions and his family’s relative prosperity – quite easily

61 Reports from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers’ Commissioners, p. 428.
63 Western Vindicator, 23 March, 1839.
make himself acceptable company for other working people. At Wooton-under-Edge on March 6th he reported that following an afternoon meeting: ‘We returned to our inn in procession, and spent the evening in the company of 200 ultra rads. “Fall, tyrants, fall” was sung by the whole company in famous style. We separated about eleven o’clock’.64 Singing was important to Radical groups, since it was a bonding activity that did not require the ability to read or write, nor great expense or any equipment.65 Vincent particularly seemed to enjoy singing, and sang ““Democrat Bold” and the “Marselloise Hymn”” to cheer himself up on the first night of his imprisonment in May.66 Singing in inns late at night was far-removed from the stage-managed lectures, and allowed a far more intimate connection between activist and audience than speaking alone.67 Along with eating and drinking, group singing was a fairly straightforward way of building bonds, formed not only between local communities and national leaders like Vincent or the national Chartist body more generally, but also between men who, in many cases, would go on to set up the town’s Working Men’s Association. Alongside lectures and formal meetings, these sociable gatherings were important moments in a town’s political trajectory.

As the site of the meeting of the national and local, the inn allowed men like Vincent the opportunity to meet and interact with complete strangers. In Tewkesbury, during the daytime of March 12th:

64 Western Vindicator, 16 March, 1839.
66 Western Vindicator, 18 May, 1839.
We then walked over to the Queen’s Arms, a complete palace of an inn, the landlord of which, Mr. Pearse, professed himself a Radical, and immediately let us his large room for a meeting in the evening. Whilst sitting in the parlour two working-men entered, whom we soon found to be readers of the *Northern Star*. As soon as they learnt whom we were they shook us heartily by the hands, and promised to surround us by a Radical staff in the evening.⁶⁸

The resulting meeting that evening went on to establish the Tewkesbury Working Men’s Association. Large inns were more like complexes than single buildings, and the enormous halls of some could contain hundreds or even a thousand people. Mr. Pearse’s large room would have been rented for a fee, and it would have been divided from the rest of the customers.⁶⁹ During the daytime however, Vincent was in a parlour, a specifically open and social space. He was most likely doing this because he deliberately wanted to meet men who walked in. Unlike other notable Chartists Vincent had not had his portrait appear in the *Star*, and who he was would only have come about in conversation.⁷⁰ However, simply being a stranger likely made him popular, as George Holyoake recalled from his own experiences of travelling:

> A pale-faced young traveller, of unforbidding aspect and his head full of town ideas, was—when there were no penny papers to give news—sometimes as welcome in English country places as a New York “prospector” at a prairie farm in the Far West...Often the husband would sit up until a late hour conversing. Sometimes I thought

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⁶⁸ *Western Vindicator*, 23 March, 1839.
⁶⁹ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 45.
the cottagers regarded me as a pedlar of news, since they made me only very moderate charges for my night's accommodation.\textsuperscript{71}

This experience was different from the meeting in Frome. Owing to its proximity to Bath, Frome had a pre-existing Association, and evidently these men knew that the workers would have taken the day off for the fair and so organised accordingly. In Tewkesbury, with no Association, Vincent had to organise informally simply by talking to people as they came into the pub. Alongside larger sociable meetings Vincent was committed to meeting and befriending anyone capable of advancing the cause.

As a local meeting place as well as the first port of call for strangers, the inn provided locals with regular access to new ideas and new faces, and as with the inn in Tewkesbury they were also frequently newsagents, post offices and stops on stagecoach routes.\textsuperscript{72} Once Associations were established, they maintained contact with one another by constant communication using the postal system, and thus the physical infrastructure of the region became the infrastructure of Chartism, just as the social life of the local supporters became the basis of Chartism’s organisation.\textsuperscript{73} Bath and Bristol were well connected to not only London but the surrounding towns in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, thanks to the ability of clothiers and retirees to invest money in road improvements throughout the late eighteenth century and into the first decades of the nineteenth. Although most turnpikes had been completed by the 1790s, they were continually improved, as were the coaches, until by 1831 the average speed of a summer journey was 9.6 mph, and a trip from London to Bath took a day.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} Harrison, \textit{Drink and the Victorians}, pp. 50-54.  
\textsuperscript{73} R.B. Pugh, 'Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire', in Briggs (ed.) \textit{Chartist Studies}, p. 177.  
\textsuperscript{74} W.T. Jackman, \textit{The Development of Transportation in Modern England} (London, 1966), pp. 683-701; Ruth Livesey ‘Communicating with Jane Eyre: Stagecoach, Mail and Tory Nation’ \textit{Victorian Studies} 53:4 (2011), pp. 615-38; Derek Aldcroft and Micheal J. Freeman (eds.) \textit{Transport in the Industrial Revolution} (Manchester,
Unfortunately, neither the newspapers nor local trade journals report the price of a journey by coach, because there were so many variations, such as distance travelled, the amount of luggage, and whether or not the customer sat on the inside or outside, that the fee was worked out at the departure station. However, it is possible to judge how far a Chartist would travel using the jottings in the notebook of another itinerant activist in the same region. John Richards was a Chartist from the Potteries who travelled to Bath and Bristol in July 1840 and kept a list of expenses, which are worth listing thoroughly since they illustrate how financially and physically sapping the constant travel Chartist activists undertook was. After taking the train to London he caught a coach to Cheltenham on July 15th for £1, spending 1s 6d at Oxford and then 2s on the ‘coach and guard’ back to Cheltenham. On the 16th, he spent 5s at Cheltenham, 2s on the coach fare to Gloucester along with another 5s expenses in the town. The coach to Bristol the next day cost 8s, and two days at the Temperance Coffee House cost 15s. The coach fare to Bath the next day was 2s 6d, and over two days there he spent 7s 6d on food and lodgings. On the 22nd he took a boat to Bradford at 1s, where he spent 1s 9d, at Trowbridge he spent another 2s, and the return trip from Bradford to Bath cost him 9s. At Bath he spent another 3s on food before heading back to Birmingham. He calculated the entire two-week journey, from Stoke to London to Somerset and then back to Stoke at £12 16s 5d; the ten-day long part of his journey in the region Vincent would have travelled the year before totalled at £3 3s 6d.


75 National Archives, Kew (Hereafter NA): TS 11/600, the notebook of John Richards.

76 See Martin, ‘Popular Political Oratory’, pp. 63-68, for Bairstow’s lecture tour in 1841. She notes that he abandoned his schedule, deciding instead to speak in locations where he would make a name for himself. In 1839 Vincent had a similarly lax attitude towards his instructions.
Martin notes that ‘Chartist, Owenite and temperance lecturers were not amply rewarded for their efforts despite suspicions to the contrary’, and cites £2 as the weekly wage given to early lecturers, from which they deducted expenses. In sixteen days Vincent spent all of his £10, ending up in Ledbury in Herefordshire. Although he had originally been instructed to stop once he had reached that county, he decided to continue into Wales and sent a letter to Lovett with a postscript saying: ‘You must forward to me immediately the sum of £5’, adding ‘do not neglect it – as I am just out of money’. The letter was then read out at the Convention, minus the postscript, which in the original had been struck out with pencil. Later, William Burns arrived at the Convention to relay his and Vincent’s tour to the delegates, at the end of his speech making clear that the application for a further £5 ‘was not made for him, but Vincent alone.’ It was then proposed by two other delegates that ‘no money should be voted without giving three days notice’, and the motion passed. Although there was no direct criticism, Vincent’s expenditure seems a cause for concern, perhaps justified considering that together Vincent and Burns had been given the substantial sum of £25.

Although Vincent left no receipts, Richard’s expenditure on food, lodgings and travel in the same region is instructive. Both men had embarked upon only eight journeys during their respective periods in the region, but Richards spent on average between 6s and 7s a day whilst Vincent spent between 12s and 13s. The convention’s Committee members were ambiguous over whether or not this was acceptable. Although initially instructing delegates to spend no more than 10s, after striking this out with pencil they left no clues

77 Martin, ‘Popular Political Oratory’, p. 221.
78 BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, Vincent to Lovett, 13 March, 1839.
79 The edited letter was printed in a report on the Convention in Henry Hetherington’s London Dispatch, 17 March, 1839, and in The Charter of the same date.
80 The Charter, 31 March, 1839.
as to whether or not this was considered too much or too little. At 10s a day Vincent would have spent £8 of his £10, but the request that he spend as little as possible and the raising of the matter at the convention suggests that even this would have been too much. In Martin’s study missionaries tended to defray costs by staying with supporters, and appeals were often made to audiences for someone to volunteer to accommodate visiting speakers.\(^{82}\) However, both Vincent and Richards used inns or hotels on every night of their respective tours of the region. Alongside bedding, the body of Vincent’s expenditure likely went on eating and drinking with his new companions during their inn meetings such as the ‘excellent repast in the company of about fifty sturdy Radicals’ in the village of Holt.\(^{83}\) Considering the importance of dining to Radical culture, it seems likely that the other inn meetings during the tour also included food and drink; landlords happily provided the space for such meetings, even at a reduced fee, in the hope that the attendees bought food and alcohol.\(^{84}\)

In most cases this could only have been funded by Vincent or Burns. It seems unlikely that the Holt Radicals could have paid for their meal, as the farm labourers of the village made between 8 and 9s a week, while the cloth workers made between 10 and 14s.\(^{85}\) Yet what at first seems like profligacy and naked demagoguery was more likely an attempt by Vincent to recreate the political culture that he himself was accustomed to. Dining had become an important element of Radicalism during the counter-cultural expansion following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Formal commemorative dinners became a means of affirming and celebrating the history of Radicalism, and with toasting and

\(^{82}\) Martin, ‘Popular Political Oratory’, p. 54, 221.
\(^{83}\) *Western Vindicator*, 9 March, 1839.
\(^{84}\) Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 52; Epstein, ‘Radical Dining’; Brett, ‘Political Dinners in Early Nineteenth Century Britain’.
drinking became important rituals of solidarity and opposition.\textsuperscript{86} The dinner became a useful event, and secured its longevity, since its ill-defined location between the public and private spheres allowed a space for discussion and organising during waves of repression; by the Chartist period Vincent’s generation became inducted into the movement by the veterans through such practices.\textsuperscript{87}

His imitation of these practices in villages like Holt illustrates the importance of Radical conviviality to his own political experience and an astute awareness of how important sociability and direct contact was. Vincent was emulating the ‘gentlemen leaders’ like Hunt, Oastler, Cobbett or O’Connor who, with independent wealth, funded and patronised the movement.\textsuperscript{88} Vincent likely spent at twice the rate of Richards because he saw conviviality and sociability as integral parts of the movement. All of this suggests that Vincent was aware of the ‘complex mutual relationship of expectation, performance and response’ identified by Paul Pickering as an element in being a leader, but at the same time it is necessary to avoid the suggestion that Vincent was simply playing a role or adopting an identity.\textsuperscript{89} These meetings were organised in such a way that meant there was little time to set up a hustings or decorate meeting rooms, and the more informal dinners, drinking and singing sessions would be indistinguishable from more routine types of sociability. Part of his role was to facilitate debate and produce a working-class public sphere able to counter the domination of the local elites, and conviviality, informality and sociability was a crucial part of that. His apparently profligate expense, along with his friendliness and sociable nature, was designed to integrate Chartist politics with the social life of the workers he was visiting. Rather than a swindle, his request for more money was a sign of success.

\textsuperscript{86} Epstein, ‘Radical Dining’, pp. 275-81.  
\textsuperscript{87} Epstein, ‘Radical Dining’, p. 282.  
\textsuperscript{89} Pickering, ‘Class without words’, p. 151.
'THE ARISTOCRACY WILL COMMIT MURDER RATHER THAN GIVE THE PEOPLE FOOD': Leadership and the Formation of Chartist Policy

Vincent therefore appreciated that the leader should not be aloof. Feargus O’Connor famously illustrated this by wearing a fustian suit, the material of the working class, after his release from prison in 1841; Vincent illustrated it by coming into frequent contact with workers and their families on equal terms.90 The intimacy of the pub meetings broke down the distinction between the activist and the people, or the leaders and the ‘led’. This in turn has important implications for the direction and thought of the local Chartist movement, as it is difficult to cleave which party is the instigator of Chartism’s structure and programme in this arrangement. Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette suggest that leadership is simultaneously ‘a purposive activity and a dialogical relationship’.91 It is purposive since leadership is both an intellectual and practical activity, consisting of ‘thinking about what movements can and should do, and in urging the conclusions of that thinking on others.92 The model of Gramsci’s ‘organic intellectual’ is a useful one to apply to Vincent: integrated within the working class, the organic intellectual understands their grievances but, more than this, engages in a practical response and aids in the development of a mass party.93 However, this is not simply a formal political matter but also clearly a cultural and social one. Vincent could be accepted because he was outgoing, friendly and engaged in rituals of solidarity with the workers he dealt with day-by-day. As a compositor he was from a similar work culture as

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90 Pickering, ‘Class without words’.
the artisans of Bath and the cloth-weavers, who still considered themselves skilled workers despite the proletarianisation and steady de-industrialisation of the region.

It was this conviviality and familiarity that facilitated the ‘dialogical relationship’. In dialogics, discourse ‘is composed neither of fixed nor free-floating signifiers. Its meaning is produced through a dynamic social process that always has the potential for shift.’

Meaning is constructed through ‘utterances’, but an integral aspect of these utterances is their situation between subjects. Meaning is ‘not within us, but between us,’ neither a matter of isolated subjects nor purely structure. Utterances find meaning from interaction, communication and the response of the listener, making discourse a communal, inter-subjective affair, while making meaning a diffuse and constantly variable matter entwined with both immediate and broader social relationships. This has clear implications for relations between leaders and led; Mikhail Bakhtin distinguishes between authoritative and ‘internally persuasive discourse’. Authoritative discourse is inflexible and uncreative, and it demands obedience of its audience through its fusion with political or institutional power. One must either ‘totally affirm it, or totally reject it’. Internally persuasive discourse instead describes the sort of discourse Vincent was engaged in with his audience. It is:

…half-ours and half-someone else’s. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. It is not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions, it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts.

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More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a struggle with other internally persuasive discourses.  

One result of this is that attempts to create hegemonic ideologies always result in contestation, with the construction of counter-ideologies from the same discourse always possible. This process has been analysed by Mark Steinberg amongst the Spittalfields silk workers in the 1820s, where he illustrates how workers sought to use the discourse of political economy to construct their own ideology of a moral economy.  

In Vincent’s case, this process was not one of conflict but co-operation. By going to people’s homes, walking the streets and holding formal and informal meetings at inns, he presented the Charter and Chartist forms of organisation as the solution to a large number of political, economic and everyday problems. This was part of the wider policy of Chartist activists politicising the everyday life outlined by Robert Hall, but as with the Tolpuddle case study the inverse was true, and politics itself became a quotidian matter. This created amongst these communities a sense of belonging to the national polity as well as creating links between their own grievances and the political framework outlined by Chartist speakers and in Chartist literature. It was this internally persuasive discourse, a creative combination of Vincent’s political principles with his audience’s everyday experiences that created the basis of the movement.

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The result is a distributed agency amongst both leaders and their audiences, of the sort that Robert Lowery recognised and recalled. On speaking, Lowery, an acquaintance Vincent admired and the missionary to Cornwall, said that it:

…consisted of that kind which is ever the most eloquent and impressive to the feelings of the multitude, where speaker and audience are one in feeling and desire. The speaker only gives vent to the hearer’s emotions. His words at once find a response in their wishes.99

This was not simply an aspect of rhetoric, but part of a broad set of social interactions. The speaker could only give vent to their audience’s feelings because, like Vincent, they went out of their way to get to know them and integrate themselves with the community. These activists organised through environments where conversation, good-humour and egalitarianism between the activists and the body of the movement allowed a diverse number of experiences and perspectives to come into play. The formal symbolism of Bath is not clearly analogous to the more informal organising of the counties of the west.

Vincent’s visits to inns and his drinking, eating and singing, were all part of this process. Alongside this was a concerted effort to engage in fact-finding, which Vincent did intimately and thoroughly. Before visiting Mr. Pearse’s pub, Vincent ‘called upon Mr. Craig the currier, who received us politely and gave us every information in his house regarding the political opinion of the people.’100 The day after, in Ledbury, the men went from house to house asking if the people knew of the Charter (they did not), and enquiring about the town’s state of poverty:

100 Western Vindicator, 23 March, 1839.
We visited one house where two young women were at work. They stated that their wages had considerably declined of late years. One of them said that a few years ago she could earn two shillings and six pence per day BUT NOW SHE HAD TO WORK VERY HARD FOR ONE SHILLING!  

Vincent was so observant he even went on to describe in detail the sewing machine that the two women, glove makers, used in their work.

The dialogue in spaces like pubs was therefore part of a similar process. Far from simply lecturing and manipulating the audience, open conversation allowed locals with knowledge of their own grievances to explain their problems and begin to take over the organising role. As with Vincent’s walks around town, enquiring about the condition of the workers, conferences with the most capable and active locals were a key part of forming this local leadership. As with Mr Pearse’s pub in Tewkesbury, Vincent sought out these people himself. Sometimes they came to him, as in Monmouth after a meeting in the large ballroom of a pub, attended by hundreds: ‘On retiring to our inn we were waited upon by several intelligent people, who undertook to form the nucleus of an association, and to obtain signatures for the National Petition.’ The letters these local activists would send the Committee in London allows us to know what Vincent and his friends told them to do, and highlight how pub meetings were not just symbolic meetings of leaders and the grassroots but practically and organisationally crucial. When in Tewkesbury he at some point spoke to William Morriss, who then wrote a letter to Lovett:

101 Western Vindictor, 23 March, 1839.  
102 Western Vindictor, 30 March, 1839.
I now write to you sir, on the advice of Mr Vincent for copies of the Rules of the
“London Working men’s association” begging that you will also be please to send us therewith every other requested information if you can please do send them we should like a couple of copies of the “People’s Charter” as explaining the principles embodied in the “National Petition” with a few copies of the “Petition” also\(^{103}\)

Similarly, following Vincent’s visit to Ledbury, Lovett received a similar letter:

Since Messrs Vincent & Burns paid us a visit we have had another public meeting in the Market Place of town when the Petition was Read and commenced signing and is now in course of signature we have a few of us met for the purpose of forming a working mens association in consequence of which I am directed by the Present Meeting to make the necessary Enquiries as to the manner of formation Rule and Every other information Requisite\(^{104}\)

They also made a request for copies of the *Charter* and *Northern Star* adding ‘we like the papers very much’. These men would then set about organising their own town, and the towns and villages surrounding. This face-to-face structure was clearly formidable. It allowed a national figure to use the national road network to introduce Chartism to a local community, organising them enough that they could organise themselves, before moving on. O’Connor’s ‘Great Chain’ of Chartism was forged in pubs, homes and on the streets as much as on platforms.

In terms of leadership structure, Vincent, the Bath Association and the London Association were clearly proposing certain organisational structures and strategies for

\(^{103}\) BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, William Morriss to Lovett, 23 March, 1839.
\(^{104}\) BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, from Ledbury, Herefordshire to Lovett, 12 March, 1839.
movement. However, men like Morriss who formed the intermediate layer of leaders were also crucial. Leadership can be said to run ‘all the way down’ the Chartist movement, with the convivial meeting forming the synapse between the formal national leadership and the local leaders. Upon Vincent’s departure, these local leaders began speaking to one another and organising the regional movement along the same lines as the national one, with corresponding Associations co-ordinating with one another, sharing lecturers and organising mass-meetings. Vincent’s mark was still clear, however, as the political structure of this regional organisation started off limited to the towns he had visited during his journey north, as a letter from Thomas Farr of the new Stroud Association shows:

For the purpose of Brining [sic] the County into a better state of ongoing action we have in Conjunction with our Brethren of Gloucester, Cheltenham, Cirencester, Wotten &c formed a central Committee, we held our first meeting on Saturday last when it was thought highly advisable that we should use our utmost exertions to get up a County Demonstration for Whit tuesday

These new Associations became important missionary organisations in their own right, taking it upon themselves to organise in their more immediate surroundings. Farr added that ‘Infant Charter Associations are now formed in Nailsworth, Hampton Eastington & Stanley & we are expecting ourselves to form unions in several other places in the Borough’. Alongside this the Stroud Association were planning on sending delegates into the Forest of Dean to agitate amongst the colliers. This means of organising, with missionaries travelling along roads and constant correspondence meant that Chartism in the region organised on a federal level amongst those towns and villages that could easily

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105 Barker, Johnson and Lavalette, ‘Leadership Matters’, p. 3.
106 BL: Addl. MS 34,245 A, Thomas Farr to William Lovett, 25 April, 1839.
communicate with one another. A key role of Vincent amongst this was teaching self-sufficiency, and these Associations, with their subscription membership and subsequently the ability to finance their own lecture tours, were the key practical result of Vincent’s formal mass-meetings. At the meeting at the Queen’s Arms in Tewkesbury, a key part of the Association model Vincent explained was the use of subscriptions to pay expenses. Despite their poverty the attendees were enthusiastic, with £10 collected from 450 people at the door, all to go towards the establishment of a local Association.  

Nevertheless, there were still problems. The people of these towns relied upon Vincent to bring them the model of the Association, explain its operation, the necessary subscription rates, give them the addresses of local and national leaders, and provide them with Chartist newspapers and other literature. This, along with his clear enthusiasm, meant that he was severely overworked. In April 1839 he calculated that ‘I have spoke above two hours a day for thirteen months, and travelled six thousand and seventy-one miles.’ This evidently took its toll. On 30 March, in Stroud, Vincent was taken ‘very ill’ at about six in the evening but still stayed out at a meeting until eleven. The next day, a Sunday, he had to make a complicated and expensive journey back to Bath due to the limitations on coach services on the Sabbath, again returning to bed at eleven, still ‘very ill’. The next day was the second Devizes riot, where Vincent was repeatedly struck with clubs, punched and kicked in the head and stomach, and pelted with stones. He passed out three times and eventually had to be revived by a glass of brandy. Remarkably, the next day he managed to give a speech to his supporters in Bath. Staying in the house of his friends the Days, Vincent began to recuperate, by Thursday introducing Robert Lowery at a meeting in the city. He attended three more meetings in the city and the immediate surroundings over the following week, and it was not until

108 *Western Vindicator*, 6 April, 1839.
Saturday, April 13th that Vincent wrote: ‘for the information of my country friends I beg to inform them I am quite recovered from the Devizes fracas!’ There were of course other lecturers and activists, such as Vincent’s friends Bolwell, Day, Carrier, the Bartlett brothers or Roberts, but none of these had Vincent’s national notoriety, and with their own work to do with families and businesses they also did not have his independence. Vincent’s two week absence would have been costly for the local movement, not because they were disorganised but because his skill and independence made him a brilliant tool for expanding the movement.

The relationships between the local branches and the national movement were crucial but also fragile. Vincent physically embodied this fragility, but the wider logistics of the movement became a major hamstring of the early Chartist organisation, as is clear from the letters sent from the provinces to the London Radicals. The central organisation of the agitation, the Convention and the Committee of Extending Political Information, did not provide the support for Lovett, who as the secretary was severely overworked with no clerical staff to assist him. The Gloucestershire central Committee’s requests for a notable speaker, requesting Vincent or O’Connor, went unnoticed, as by May 9th they were still writing to Lovett asking for someone to speak at their Whit Tuesday meeting. This request was partly successful, since judging from the handbill advertising the meeting, some lesser names arrived. Vincent was in jail by this point, and everyone else was in London at the Convention, which at the time must have appeared the more important theatre of action. Requests for help, materials and information from Shaftsbury and Blandford went similarly unanswered, wasting a lot of the work in Dorset

109 Western Vindicator, 20 April, 1839.
111 NA: HO 40/42, f. 569.
of the previous autumn.\footnote{BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, William Dunham to William Lovett, 7 April, 1839; Illegible (from Blandford) to William Lovett, 23 March, 1839.} Despite payment for members being a key Chartist demand, George Loveless, elected delegate for Dorset at the meeting outside Blandford the previous November and now working a farm in Essex provided by a fund collected for the Martyrs and their families, told Lovett that he could not attend the Convention as without payment he could not hire anyone to do his work for him.\footnote{BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, George Loveless to William Lovett.} In Leamington, Joseph B. Smith told Lovett that ‘Our town contains twelve thousand inhabitants: - but, hitherto, we have no had a public meeting, in consequence of your inability to send us a Delegate’.\footnote{BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, Joseph B. Smith to Lovett, 6 July, 1839.} He went on to argue that the town would be more active if large public meetings occurred more regularly. In Tiverton in Devon, Henry Hamlin sent a desperate letter:

I am Directed by the Members of the Working Mens Association of Tiverton in the County of Devonshire to Inform you that the are sorry to tell you that the Consider themselves Neglected by the Convention for the have Never Sent them Any information Since the Have Met we have Sent 4 Sovereigns and 2000 Signatures to the Petition and we do Consider that you Ought to Send us some Information at times for to Stimulate the people as Well as Send it all to the North of Tiverton and Other Placed in the West of England do feel Ourselves Neglected I am happy to inform you that the Cause is Progressing in Tiverton and its Vicinity With Regard to the Sacred Month we Are Not Prepared for it at Preasent We hope that you Will Not forget is for the Future\footnote{BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, Henry Hamlin to Lovett, 4 August, 1839.}

Kenneth Judge’s attribution of these problems to inefficiency and disorganisation overlooks the political reluctance of key organisers of the Convention to adopt a position
of organised central leadership.  

Lovett was perhaps singularly unsuited for the position of Secretary, since the London Association’s wariness of mass-movements as opposed to elitist political instruction was reflected in their disregard for provincial organisations.  

The LWMA was opposed to the organisational as opposed to instructional activities that Vincent was carrying out in the West: ‘We have not, neither do we desire, leaders, as we believe that the principles we advocate have been retarded, injured or betrayed by leadership, more than by the open hostility of opponents’.  

The symbolism of the anti-Parliament, a tradition in British protest that held much sway, not least because it was a key component of the American Revolution, may have overridden a genuine effort to create a disciplined central organisation. Regardless, it is notable that in the western counties organisation was remarkably energetic, with local activists relieving Vincent’s burdens, Vincent breaking down the barriers between himself and local leaders, and organisations like the Gloucestershire central committee providing clear leadership and organising their own large rallies. The lack of leadership did not result, as Judge suggests, in the local movements running out of co-ordination and energy, but rather resulted in localities such as the west enthusiastically pushing Chartism into a Radical and confrontational direction. D.J. Rowe suggested that the lack of strong national leadership allowed ‘demagogues’ like O’Connor to exploit the vacuum and push the movement towards physical force.  

This idea of radicalisation needs to be turned on its head, as it was the experience of being in the west that converted Vincent to physical force, not the west’s experience of Vincent.

120 Judge, ‘Early Chartist Organization and the Convention of 1839’.
Home Office documents indicate that the region was becoming a concern of the state’s since the new year. In Trowbridge in February a man was arrested for making spears, and a report was sent to Lord Russell at the end of March claiming muskets, pistols and other arms were circulating in Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire. On March 13th, Roberts showed a crowd in Holt ‘an elegant specimen of physical force workmanship’, while in the same month reports were being sent to the Home Office of muskets being assembled in Bath and sent to Trowbridge. The frequency of letters from magistrates to the Home Office increased after the two Devizes riots, of March 22nd and April 1st. The March 22nd riot was due to an ambush of Vincent and the radicals surrounding him by a group of drunken ‘Tories’ (who Vincent later noted included Whigs), leading to a vicious fight that only ended when the two groups retired to their appropriately named inns, the Tories’ to the Castle Inn and the Radicals’ to the Curriers’ Arms. Vincent then spoke inside the inn in private, and although the Tories attempted to gain entry, they were denied by the constables, who dispersed both crowds and escorted the Chartists out of town. The day afterward Vincent wrote to Lovett:

I cannot be in London for a fortnight for two reasons – first because the Stroud people will have a large meeting...on Good Friday, at which I am bound to be present – secondly – in consequence of our temporary defeat at Devizes, a second Meeting is commended for Easter Monday when the Chartists of Wiltshire will accompany me into the town in sufficient force to put down the hireling ruffians by who we were previously assailed the Meeting will be at 10 in the forenoon, so we shall have day-light for our battle...I have no doubt that a dreadful riot would have occurred had we not adjourned the Devizes meeting.

123 Pugh, ‘Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire’, pp. 182-3; NA: HO 40/47.
124 Pugh, ‘Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire’, p. 182.
125 BL: Add. MS 34,245 A, Henry Vincent to William Lovett, 23 March, 1839.
The Stroud meeting was the centrepiece of Gloucestershire’s central committee’s efforts, and Vincent’s decision to be there rather than London is illustrative both of the Convention’s lack of discipline over its delegates but also the abilities and potential of local organisations to act independently. As for the decision to head back to Devizes, it probably is true that fighting would have resumed had the Chartists not left, but Vincent's intention to visit the town again on a public holiday seems counter-productive if he actually sought to avoid violence. In the *Vindicator* he requested a large force to join him, specifying men:

**LONG LIVE THE PEOPLE**

Men of Trowbridge, Bradford, Holt, Westbury, Bromham, and all the villages around Devizes. – You must all be in Devizes at 10 0’clock, on the Morning of Easter Monday. Do not be later. I will meet you on the Bath road, one mile from Devizes, at a quarter to one.

Yours truly,
HENRY VINCENT¹²⁶

Malcolm Chase notes that it is difficult to distinguish ‘loose talk from firm planning’, suggesting that Vincent’s threats were the former.¹²⁷ His decision to march on Devizes seems firm planning: he may have wanted an unopposed entry to prove a point, but he was clearly prepared for a fight. In this, he was aligned with the body of the local movement. Over the next week and a half, bills from magistrates appeared warning against the procession and meeting, and the Royal Wilts Yeomanry were mobilised and special constables called up along the marchers’ route.¹²⁸ One magistrate in Bradford reported the Chartists armed ‘at least with Bludgeons’.¹²⁹ William Carrier, a Trowbridge organiser and frequent companion of Vincent’s, was reported theatrically addressing an

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¹²⁶ *Western Vindicator*, 30 March, 1839.
¹²⁹ NA: HO 40/48, f. 329.
audience before leaving for Devizes while putting on a life preserver (a rudimentary stab-or bullet-proof vest) and showing a brace of pistols. The audience reciprocated by showing him their bludgeons, ‘loaded with lead’. Another man had a life-preserver made from whale bone, while others had assorted sticks and carving knives.

Vincent’s milieu in the London Association had certainly been non-violent, so how did he end up the leader of such a large armed force? Thompson notes that in 1837 London Workingmen’s Association members like Cleave, Hetherington and Vincent quickly dropped support for the Poor Law reforms as soon as they left the influence of London’s utilitarian Radicals, and it seems clear from Vincent’s experience that this process was because of the intense interaction that he had to nurture with the local communities during his travels. Sometimes Vincent’s calls for insurrection read like simple crowd pleasers. When travelling to Newport he wrote:

I could not help thinking of the defensible nature of the country in the case of foreign invasion! A few thousands of armed men on the hills could successfully defend them. Wales would make an excellent Republic.

There was also a dual emotional and political response to the poverty he saw, conditions far worse than those amongst skilled workers in London or the artisans and petty-bourgeoisie of Bath. It was during this tour that Vincent began speaking about economic distress rather than purely abstract political rights, and this was clearly because he was horrified by what he had seen. During one of his fact gathering walks in Ledbury he

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130 NA: HO 40/49, f. 711.
131 NA: HO 40/49, f. 717.
132 Thompson, The Chartists, pp. 32-33.
133 Western Vindicator, 6 April, 1839.
134 Pugh, ‘Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire’, pp. 182-3
gave two girls money which they immediately spent on buying food for their starving father. He wrote:

One thing I am now convinced of, that if we do not have an almost immediate political and social change, A BLOODY REVOLUTION MUST TAKE PLACE. The people will not starve much longer. Let their tyrant rulers beware!  

This was a significant statement in a region that still held on to direct action as a method of protest and political action. Riot combined with union organising had been crucial in the cloth-weavers’ struggle against mechanisation a generation before. A foreshadowing of the Luddite movement was the Wiltshire Outrages of 1802, in which the skilled shearmen, the well-paid cloth finishers, whose skill affected the quality of the final product, backed by a strong union, took matters into their own hands and destroyed machinery, mills and factories.  

Formed as a collective of unions across the West of England and the West Riding, the Brief Institution, their union, operated as a federation:

In each of the principal manufacturing towns there appears to be a society composed of deputies chosen from the several shops of workmen, from each of which town societies, one or more deputies are chosen to form what is called the Central Committee which meets as occasion requires at some place suitable to the local convenience of all parties. The power of this Central Committee appears to pervade the whole Institution.

The structure is interesting, since it is similar to the central committee formed in Stroud in 1839. Although it is not known for certain if Gloucestershire ever joined the Institution, they certainly would have known and worked with it, and there would have

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133 Western Vindicator, 23 March, 1839.
137 Cited in Randall, Before the Luddites, p. 131.
been men and women old enough to advise their children and grandchildren.\textsuperscript{138}

Trowbridge had also been a centre of unionism before the Wiltshire Outrages, and it was a centre of militancy during Chartism, as well.\textsuperscript{139} In 1838, some of the men in Vincent’s retinue explicitly sought to unionise the local workers: in March in the mining town of Radstock, ‘persons calling themselves Chartists and Unionists’ walked ‘the streets during the market time’ and set them against ‘their employers and those in authority’ and on the following Monday the mines were deserted, with another strike a few days later.\textsuperscript{140} The Chartists were all stalwarts of the Bath Association: one of the Bartlett brothers, Phillips, and a man named Hayward.\textsuperscript{141} In April 1839 the \textit{Vindicator} accused a Tory magistrate of ordering an attack on their newsvendor in the town and destroying 9s worth of papers. The report ended ominously:

\begin{quote}
\ldots we have to request our friends in the village of Paulton and Timsbury, adjoining, on no account to put their threat into execution of PAYING THESE FELLOWS WITH INTEREST. We will manage them.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

The combined unionist and Chartist struggle in Radstock was still on-going the following October.\textsuperscript{143}

Vincent’s constant interaction with this constituency made him open to a different discourse, more emotive, physical and merged with a different political logic that saw direct action and insurrection as legitimate forms of action.\textsuperscript{144} The emotions that Vincent

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\item\textsuperscript{138} Randall, \textit{Before the Luddites}, p. 134.
\item\textsuperscript{139} Randall, \textit{Before the Luddites}, p. 134.
\item\textsuperscript{140} NA: HO 40/47, f. 858.
\item\textsuperscript{141} Pugh, ‘Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire’, p. 181.
\item\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Western Vindicator}, 20 April, 1839.
\item\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Western Vindicator}, 5 October, 1839.
\item\textsuperscript{144} Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta, (eds.) \textit{Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements} (Chicago, 2001).
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witnessed and responded to, his anger with the Tories of Devizes or his horror at the poverty displayed on his travels, were an important part of movement building. A good example of this is one of Vincent’s most direct advocacies of arming. After describing in great and vivid detail in the pages of the *Vindicator* the severe (and life-threatening) beatings he had received during the second Devizes riot, Vincent expounded the necessity of arming in a way that presented it as a way of defending Chartism’s moral political position, rather than as an advocacy of insurrection:

I am more than glad the visit occurred; it has taught us a good lesson — THAT THE ARISTOCRACY WILL COMMIT MURDER RATHER THAN GIVE THE PEOPLE FOOD; AND THE RIOT TELLS US, IN LANGUAGE WE CANNOT MISTAKE, TO PROVIDE ARMS FOR OUR SELF-DEFENCE. CHARTISTS! TAKE, FOR ONCE, A LESSON FROM YOUR FOES.\(^{145}\)

The shared experience of crowd violence must have made this line convincing. But this communication was also symbolic, with the procession and the arming a very clear statement of the unity of purpose, and the physical power, of both the leadership and the body of the local Chartists. This camaraderie is clear from Vincent’s description of the riot as a military skirmish:

Mr. Roberts and myself jumped upon the hustings. A horn blew in the rear of the hustings immediately, when a stone struck me on the back part of the head and knocked me out of the waggon. The horns now blew in all directions, and an indiscriminate attack was made upon us with large bludgeons heavily loaded with molten lead. When I recovered from the effect of the blow, I found our friends defending the waggon, and Mr. Roberts standing in it. I saw many well-dressed persons directing the attack, armed

\(^{145}\) *Western Vindicator*, 13 April, 1839.
with pistols. After receiving several blows, I again got up to the waggon, and we remounted it, but found it impossible to speak. The battle had now become general. Our flag was taken and retaken several times. On descending from the waggon I was almost entirely separated from my friends. I observed a well-dressed individual look at me — he retired quickly, and in a moment I was assailed by about twenty bludgeon men. A few friends perceiving my danger (one of whom, I believe, was young Tucker, of Bath) immediately rushed to my assistance, and by a desperate effort we soon regained a larger body of our friends. I was entirely separated from Roberts and Carrier. I was now standing by a flag. A rush was made to obtain possession of it; but our friends bravely and successfully defended it and bore it off in safety.

Vincent was likely not exaggerating, as pro and anti-Chartist newspapers agreed that the riot was a violent event centred on the wagon and the flags. Electoral events often involved various forms of violence, with recent research showing that far from disappearing it was still common in the mid-nineteenth century, and not just in rural towns like Devizes. Historians have suggested that this violence can be attributed to ‘boorish masculinity’, while Radicalism’s close connection with pub culture gave it a pugilistic tendency. Vincent did use inns as key organising centres, while his rhetoric and singling out of the second march to Devizes as an event only for men were clearly attempts to appeal to this culture. His repeated mentioning of friends, singling them out, underlined this sense of solidarity, camaraderie and sociability. However, veneration of

146 Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 9 April, 1839; The Standard, 3 April, 1839; The London Dispatch, 31 March, 1839.
violence was as much an appeal to broad communal customs as it was to specifically masculine practices, and as Jutta Schwarzkopf notes whenever ‘Chartists rioted, women were also involved’. In his letter to Lovett read out in the Convention, Vincent wrote that in Cirencester some Tories who were pelting him with stones received a ‘good thrashing’ from a number of women.

Even if only men were present, the appeal to self-defence and direct action was likely to resonate with much of the community, many of whom would have now had personal experience of Vincent. As Henry Maehl noted in a study of violence in the north east during the same period, what began as rhetoric around self-defence evolved into a sincere belief that the government was planning on attacking the movement, followed by advocacy of more aggressive measures on the part of the Chartist leaders. In the west, not only did Vincent do nothing to stop violence, but he accepted this political position as his own and in pursuing it used it as a means of communicating Chartism’s unity against the varied crimes of the local aristocracy. The diffuse agency behind this, neither purely Vincent nor the Chartist grassroots, was jointly responsible for this position. The result was an intensification of conflict in the region. Upon hearing of the riot, Vincent’s friend William Edwards of Newport supposedly threw down his newspaper and declared that ‘every Whig and Tory ought to have a nail driven through his b----y heart’. It also seems to have convinced Russell, the MP for nearby Stroud, that suppression using military force was now necessary, and he began to leave less to the initiative of magistrates. By the beginning of May, Russell was receiving reports of arming and illegal meetings from across the region, and became far more willing to deploy troops to ensure

150 BL: Addl. MS 34,245 A, Vincent to Lovett, 13 March, 1839.
152 Cited in Chase, *Chartism*, p. 69.
no breach of the peace. A Royal Proclamation was signed on May 3rd, empowering magistrates to outlaw any Chartist meeting at will, specifically allowing the harassment of Chartist meetings in inns and other public houses, underlining their importance to Chartist organising. On May 7th, Russell circulated a printed document to magistrates telling them to ‘take all adequate Precautions, and employ an adequate and fully sufficient Force’ for the suppression of illegal meetings, especially those at which arms were present. Local magistrates clambered to ban the *Vindicator* as it produced more articles on the themes of republicanism and self-defence.

The impact of this was the breaking the Radical alliance in Bath. By Whit Monday 1839 a Chartist procession in the city was greeted by special constables and the army, called out by the Radical Council. Unlike the previous Whit Monday, cannon did not fire in the Chartist honour, but the guns present were used to intimidate them. Soon after Whit Monday a Catholic Bishop’s ricks at his farm close to Bath were burnt in response to him refusing to hire Chartists. By August 1839 the Association was organising Tiverton and Radstock in preparation for the planned general strike, reporting to London that the workers of Bath were ‘afraid to think that a strike will not take place.’ In October, a handbill entitled ‘To the Middle Classes of England’ was distributed by the Working Men’s Association in Bath as well as Westbury and Trowbridge, which threatened that:

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154 Eileen Yeo, ‘Culture and Constraint in Working-Class Movements, 1830-1855’ in Yeo and Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture*, pp. 155-186.
155 NA: HO 41/13.
156 Ashton, ‘The Western Vindicator’, p. 71
158 NA: HO 40/47, ff. 1006-1009.
159 BL: Add. MS 34,245 B, G.M. Bartlett to the Council of the Convention, August 1839.
should the people of England be put down…THEY WILL DISPERSE IN A MILLION OF INCENDIARIES…your warehouses – your homes – will be given to the flames, and one black ruin overwhelm England.160

Following the Newport rising, which the state had good reason to suspect Vincent and the Vindicator’s editors had known about in advance, a letter was sent by the Mayor of Bath to the Home Secretary requesting a military force in response to armed Chartists present in the city.161 In the same month, a crowd listened to Association stalwarts Phillips, Mealing, Charles Bolwell and George Bartlett, with Phillips and Bolwell talking about the need to arm. A police spy claimed that Bartlett advocated physical force in a speech, although he denied it, and the three were arrested for sedition in December with Bartlett convicted at the end of the month.162

Just as the leadership sought to combine their own politics with the everyday experiences and concepts of his constituency, the reverse was also the case, and their own political and organisational principles underwent great modification. By March, Vincent turned his back on drinking tea with Bath’s middle class in favour of beer in the inns of the deprived cloth producing regions. After this he had been turned by his experience of poverty and his intense contact with the population of the west of England and the south of Wales, uniting in purpose with the Chartist constituency and advocating a political position that they had formed together. Chartist leaders were not the primary actors in the process of politicising their constituencies or creating the national polity, but were also themselves acted upon as an integral part of this process. Everyday life was

160 NA: HO 40/47, f. 797.
not just manipulated by the leadership but had a constitutive role in the process of leading; to be a leader was to simultaneously be led.

**Conclusion**

Following Vincent’s career in the south west between 1837 and 1839 illustrates the context within which itinerant political lecturing was enmeshed. Vincent was doing his utmost to understand and exploit the economic and social destitution caused by the region’s deindustrialisation, but this required more than arriving, speaking and then convincing the audience that the Chartist national polity coincided with their own demands and grievances. The merger of the broader Chartist political culture with the specific cultures of Bath and the west of England was a multifaceted venture that required Vincent to use the infrastructure of those cultures – everyday sites like the pub or the home, relationships like friendship and family and activities like sociability – to attain his ends. The space created for public debate was therefore vast but also informal, and in this informality it became democratic.

The means through which this community was organised highlights why it is important to consider men like Vincent in terms of the fuller practices of activism rather than just rhetoric, lecturing and symbolism. The broad extent and impact of his work, and the various methods he used, makes an identification of the itinerant organiser solely with lecturing too narrowly focussed. It also illustrates how a distinction between formal and informal organising overlooks the clearly successfully methods adopted by men like Vincent. As well as speaking he inducted them into the national movement by distributing literature, providing contact details for other local and national Chartists and provided plans for the creation of Associations and organising of meetings. To achieve
what he set out to do, he needed to draw himself into the lives of these people, speaking
to them directly and taking part in their culture. Because of this he was in recurring close
contact with the inhabitants of the towns he visited, and it was this that caused him to
begin to adopt an economic as well as political critique of the situation in 1839. With
very little control exerted over him by the Convention, Vincent’s interaction with the
society and culture of the west and his independence from the moral force LWMA led
him towards physical force. In Humphrey Southall’s discussion of political lecturing,
including a brief discussion of Vincent’s 1839 tour, he suggests that Chartism’s national
rhetoric and programme ‘distinguishes the political from the social and the cultural.’
This study of Vincent suggests otherwise. The political programme, rhetoric and
organisation of Chartism required local culture and society for its dissemination. But in
this dissemination, it underwent evolution and change, never solely directed by either
Vincent or his constituency. If politics really were separate, it is difficult to see how
Vincent’s own politics could have changed so much in so short a time.

Vincent and the Bath Association shifted their politics from class-conciliation to direct
action targeting manufacturers because, as Lowery put it, the speaker and the audience
were ‘as one’, with the result being a fluid and seemingly quite evenly distributed
influence over who controlled the direction the movement headed in. This unity was a
matter of action as much as speech, however. Vincent’s politics shifted from one of class
alliance in a broad pro-reform coalition to a position that centred on social conditions
and conflict with the ruling classes not because he was a demagogue, nor because of a
simplistic reaction to economic distress. Vincent adopted a social conflict position of
Chartism because of the myriad new cultural practices, political ideas and social relations
that he had been exposed to, but also as part of a broad field of debate and interaction in

163 Southall,’Agitate! Agitate! Organize!’, p. 191.
which he was part of a communal process of discourse that was never cleaved from social conditions. Being a travelling activist also meant making friends and developing a close emotional link with a region and its people. His varied day-to-day experience of the region was part of a complex tapestry that needs to be analysed more holistically than through focussing on political culture or economic destitution alone.
Chapter Three: ‘The sworn foe of fleas!’: Humour, Satire and Sexuality in the Life and Letters of Henry Vincent

Introduction

Vincent’s tour in 1839 indicates that he was familiar with and enjoyed working-class sociability, and interacted closely with the Chartist rank-and-file. This chapter will further this research by looking at early Chartism’s interaction with bawdiness, sexuality and popular literature. Close study of Vincent’s correspondence with John Minikin from the beginning of his tours in 1837 to his time in jail in 1841 will illustrate that the pair possessed a ribald sense of humour, and were interested in sexual adventurism and exploration, particularly influenced by the works of Byron and Shelley. Similarly, study of the satirical content of Vincent’s *Western Vindicator* and his friend and mentor John Cleave’s publications will reveal the continuing existence of satire in the Georgian style, characterised by aggressive humour focussing on excessive expenditure, sexuality and debauchery, illustrating that it did not completely die out in the 1820s.¹ In these aspects, Vincent strongly resembles the ‘unrespectable Radicals’ of Iain McCalman’s research of

the decades leading up to Chartism. As McCalman highlights, up until the early 1830s London Radicalism interacted relatively freely and openly with infidelity, pornography and obscenity, to the extent that a division between the ‘rough’ and the ‘respectable’ is difficult to observe. Vincent’s journalism and private life, along with that of his friend Cleave, affirms McCalman’s suggestion that the style and populism of these obscene and pornographic papers was continued into the late 1830s.

As a result, Vincent’s case study both confirms and seems to contradict some of the conclusions reached by Anna Clark’s Struggle for the Breeches. Here it was argued that the egalitarian potential of the movement declined as Chartists sought to defuse the idea that the working class were immoral and undeserving, by striving to ‘overcome the indiscipline and sexual antagonism that had plagued plebeian cultures.’ This was achieved through melodramatic critiques of the aristocracy that sought to present women and children as the passive victims of exploitation from the upper classes and legitimate political actors only because it gave them opportunity to return from the world of exploitation to the domestic sphere. Much of Vincent’s public discourse, in the form of statements addressed to women and the satirical content of the Western Vindicator, clearly correlate with this moralism. However, when read alongside his letters, Vincent clearly saw bawdiness and sexuality as legitimate aspects of working-class culture and masculine identity. The double nature of Vincent’s newspaper and his private life suggests nuance.

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3 McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp. 219-21.
5 Clark, Struggle for the Breeches, p. 220.
in Chartism’s engagement with popular culture and its moral politics. Far from solely aiming to express civility and domestic virtue, Chartism also sought to engage with the bawdy. The result was a malleable discourse that could criticise the immorality of the ruling classes while simultaneously appealing to ‘low’ culture.

The first two sections of this chapter will be used to set the scene for Vincent’s letters by discussing the nature of his social network. The first section will look at the moral rhetoric of the London Working Men’s Association (LWMA) and compare it to the seedier aspects of some of its members’ political and private lives, including infidelities, pornography, piracy and obscenity. It will discuss the sensational and increasingly successful nature of Cleave and Henry Hetherington’s popular press in the 1830s and show how, taken together, the business and private lives of these men were far less lofty than the Address and Rules of the LWMA would seem to suggest. The second section will look at the rhetoric of the London Union of Compositors (LUC), which like the LWMA represented elite workers and which also adopted a highly moralistic tone. Despite this, their sense of workplace masculinity and sociability was bawdy and irreverent. The third section will focus on the letters of Vincent to his friend Minikin. It will be argued that rather than eccentric, Vincent was illustrating the taste for humour exhibited by his co-workers, the sexual culture of London’s West End where he and Minikin had lived, and the taste for Byron and Shelley common amongst Radicals. The final section will combine these two topics with a discussion of Cleave and Vincent’s successful foray into satire, highlighting how humour was an important element in the cross-pollination between Chartism and popular culture. Like Cleave’s satire, which merged popular culture with political critique, Vincent’s possessed a double nature of both presenting the working class as more virtuous and intelligent than upper-class politicians, while simultaneously appealing to their lewd and bawdy sensibilities.
The Chartist movement was notable for its discourse of self-improvement. This was particularly true of the activists clustered around London’s Radical publishing scene that, in 1836, founded the LWMA, and were affiliated with Francis Place and several middle-class Radicals. The organisation’s demand for political reform was in many ways secondary to their plans for moral reform, to the extent that, in Brian Harrison’s words, ‘apart from its exclusively working-class membership, the L.W.M.A.’s aims resembled those of the early teetotallers.’ The Associations were spread before the emergence of the Charter: the primary point of these organisations was in creating members morally and intellectually capable of bringing about social and political reform. This meant that although in London the organisation had very little influence, its missionary work not only propagated its beliefs but also, as the previous chapter outlined, formed the infrastructure for early Chartism.

The ‘Address and Rules of the London Working Men's Association’ was written in 1836, and prior to and during the early Chartist agitation was carried by the LWMA’s missionaries and mailed out by its secretary, Lovett, for men and women across the country to emulate. It is quite clear in its gender and sexual politics:

In forming Working Men's Associations, we seek not a mere exhibition of numbers; unless, indeed, they possess the attributes and character of men; and little worthy of the name are those who have no aspirations beyond mere sensual enjoyments - who,

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Good sexual and domestic behaviour was secured through education and declining drunkenness; in theory, the LWMA sought well-behaved, organised and temperate elites in the towns missionaries visited. Surviving addresses from other WMAs reveal this address’s influence: the tone of enlightened, well-behaved members was common to all, and the above passage was copied nearly word for word by Liverpool’s WMA. Stalwarts such as the newspaper editor Henry Hetherington, along with Cleave and Lovett, were all abstainers. The high-minded nature of the ‘Address’ suggests rather strongly that any misdemeanour by a member would be treated seriously. The LWMA, and the men within it, displayed the clear signage of respectability: sobriety, education and commitment to family.

This had not always been the case, and the complicated nature of sexuality within many of the LWMA’s key members requires surveying. In the early 1830s, many of the founders of the LWMA had been members of the National Union of the Working Classes. Through this they were affiliated with Richard Carlile, a Radical journalist and controversial sexual theorist. Carlile represented the most vocal and controversial of the libertarian Radicals who saw sexual morality a matter of individual liberty, but nevertheless he was no pornographer and considered his own ideas to be reflections of

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respectable artisan culture.\textsuperscript{12} Hetherington and Cleave were opposed to his popular book of sex theory and practical advice, \textit{Every Woman’s Book}, because of its support of Malthusianism, alongside their opposition to Carlile’s second ‘moral marriage’ to Eliza Sharples in 1830, a speaker at Carlile’s Rotunda theatre.\textsuperscript{13} Fundamental to Carlile’s beliefs, drawn from Shelley’s essay ‘Even Love is Sold’, was the idea that if a man and woman stopped loving one another they should simply be free to end the relationship and begin anew.\textsuperscript{14} Nevertheless when Carlile’s son Richard (who had taken sides with his mother, Jane) published a half-priced pirated edition of his father’s book in 1834 (his brother Alfred published another copy in 1838), he offered the apology that he had done so because he knew that otherwise Cleave and Hetherington, despite their anti-Malthusianism, would pirate it (Richard and Alfred were also pornographers, a trade their father disapproved of).\textsuperscript{15} Although they did not do so, Cleave and Hetherington did continue to publish birth control literature throughout the Chartist period.\textsuperscript{16} Indeed despite his criticism of Carlile’s second marriage, in 1840 Cleave moved his mistress into his family home while his wife was still alive, and she had a nervous breakdown soon after. Carlile reported this in correspondence as Cleave seeking to put his wife in an asylum so that he could sleep with her servant.\textsuperscript{17}

Cleave’s infidelity had repercussions for his moral politics. In 1841, Cleave, along with a number of moral improvement Chartists including Hetherington and Lovett, sent a draft of the first address of their new organisation, the National Association of the United

\textsuperscript{14} Bush, \textit{What is Love?}, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{15} Bush, \textit{What is Love?}, p. 50
\textsuperscript{17} Chase, ‘Cleave, John’; Hollis, \textit{The Pauper Press}, p. 149.
Kingdom for promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People, to Francis Place. Upon receiving this, and angry to see Cleave’s signature on such a document, Place wrote the following notes on his character to Lovett:

Cruel in the extreme towards his wife whom he always boasts of as his delight, his friend, his companion and his helpmate…without her being so, he never could have had the means of acting so barbarously towards her as he did. His conduct was disgraceful beyond expression towards his daughters; and yet he is here put forward, as an expounder of and a principal person to teach and maintain morality. His name is a blur upon the paper, a name to make men doubt its sincerity, and to consider it as a cunningly devised piece of hypocrisy [sic].

Place himself finished his note by adding that ‘[i]n a mere trading concern I should say nothing about him, but in a case like this, anything can surely be more out of place, nor more incongruous.’ This concession illustrates a disjunction between private conduct, public moralism and the requirements of business that seems a common attitude amongst these Radicals. Place’s clear distinction between trade and morality suggests that these men held morality to be a multifaceted affair, as does the willingness of men like Hetherington and Lovett to still work with Cleave. This attitude is further indicated by Cleave and Hetherington’s roots in London’s pornographic underworld. William Benbow, a pornographer and pirate in the 1820s and later Chartist prisoner, was a business associate of Cleave’s between 1830 and 1835, and his premises in Holborn were a meeting place for the NUWC. ‘Bawdy, bon ton, anti-establishment and ‘crim. con” publications of the sort produced by the suppliers of pornography and obscene literature were being advertised in Hetherington’s Poor Man’s Guardian in 1834, and during this time

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18 Place to Lovett, 30 March 1841, Radical Politics and the Working Man in England, Series One (Hereafter RPWME 1) The Francis Place Papers in the British Library, Department of Manuscripts, (Brighton, 1978), Reel 50.
Cleave was also a close associate of William Strange, to whom McCalman attributes the obscene publication *The Confessional Unmasked*, printed in 1836.\(^\text{19}\)

As McCalman suggests, Cleave and Hetherington likely learned a thing or two from these associates. *Cleave’s Weekly Police Gazette*, published between 1834 and 1836, had a circulation of 40,000 copies, and like Hetherington’s work combined sensational crime reporting with political news and commentary.\(^\text{20}\) Throughout the 1830s both men knew that sex and violence sold, and both consequently were successful businessmen. Hetherington’s *The Destructive and Poor Man’s Conservative*, founded in 1833, was a more sensational compliment to the crusading *Poor Man’s Guardian*. Although articles on police and court news were present from the first issues, by June 1833 Hetherington was receiving letters from readers demanding a greater content of exciting stories. On June 15\(^\text{th}\) he inserted a note acknowledging these requests, and in the same issue reported on William John Bankes, the Tory MP for Dorset, who had been discovered late at night in a churchyard near Parliament with a soldier, the panels of both men’s trousers being open.\(^\text{21}\) Criminal reports were present and prominent in almost every issue from that point on, and space was found for them only at the expense of useful knowledge and parliamentary reports. As with Bankes, Hetherington was interested in reporting on the illicit behaviour of supposed moral arbiters and the unpopular Metropolitan Police became one such target. Stories appeared of a married constable with children who seduced a fellow-constable’s fiancée and another constable who raped a 15-year-old girl in his care.\(^\text{22}\)

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\(^{21}\) *The Destructive and Poor Man’s Conservative*, 15 June, 1833.

\(^{22}\) *The Destructive and Poor Man’s Conservative*, 7 September, 1833.
Although such stories served a clear political purpose in maligning the police and politicians, they were also salaciously entertaining. Rapes, affairs, seductions, murders, executions and robberies were a weekly staple, with sex and murder the most prized topics, regardless of the subjects or of any clear moral statement. Illustrative of this is the story of Mr. Mirgers, arrested after being found concealed in someone else’s house:

It appeared that a few evenings ago the defendant was struck by the charms of Sarah Rain, Mr. Worman’s buxom servant, who was standing at the door. Mutual glances were exchanged, the defendant was emboldened to speak, and after a little blushing on the part of Sarah, an appointment was made for Friday night. Sarah waited for him in amorous suspense, and at ten o’clock, or thereabouts, the gay Lothario made his appearance. He treated her to a bottle of wine, which they discussed in the kitchen. Their amour was, however, disturbed by the unexpected return of Mr. Worman, upon which Sarah told her lover to run up stairs. He did so, and to render his safety double sure, actually got out upon the top of the house. There, unfortunately, he was espied by the police, who considered he was a housebreaker, and therefore knocked at the door, and after a little trouble took him into custody. Mr Mirgers then unfolded his plain, unvarnished tale, but Sarah declared she had never seen the man before. The defended was nonplussed at this, be he speedily recovered himself, and having pulled off his boots, displayed his bare feet, the socks for which were found in the bed down stairs, as well as Mr. Mirger’s spectacles and snuff-box.23

Mirgers was released with a caution, while the buxom Sarah lost her job. Unlike the stories about Bankes or the Metropolitan Police, the farcical story could only have been included to titillate and amuse. In 1834 The Destructive came to an end, but Hetherington replaced it with the broadsheet Two Penny Dispatch. Having learned what people wanted,

23 The Destructive and Poor Man’s Conservative, 26 October, 1833.
he bluntly stated that the new paper ‘shall abound in…Murders, Rapes, Suicides, Burnings, Maimings, Theatricals, Races, Pugilism…it will be stuffed with every sort of devilment that will make it sell.’ The paper was a crucial chronicler of the early Chartist movement after being renamed *The London Dispatch and Social Reformer* in 1836, but it still maintained regular articles on murders, suicides and coroner’s reports, alongside columns on moral improvement and political reports.

Hetherington and Cleave’s experimentation and innovation in the period immediately after the relaxation of the stamp duty went a long way towards defining the modern press. The *Police Gazette*, argues Virginia Berridge, was an important point in the development of the hugely popular working-class Sunday papers of later decades, and Hetherington and Cleave’s innovation in combining satire, sensation and politics commodified the Radical press. However, as Ian Haywood has argued, in the short-term and like Hetherington’s *The Destructive* and later *Dispatch*, the *Police Gazette’s* merger of festivity and radicalism created a hybridised discourse of populist Radicalism. Building on this, Edward Jacobs has argued that Cleave’s ‘politicization of everyday life’ was achieved through the physical layout of the page, which allowed the reader to link quotidian stories of crime or debauchery with news of political corruption. At the same time the *Police Gazette* clearly wanted to be taken seriously, adopting the broadsheet format more common to stamped papers like *The Times*. As with Peter Bailey’s assessment of respectability as calculated and situational, the LWMA’s aloof moralism

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seems context specific, not held by these men as a universalism.\textsuperscript{29} The bawdy and sensational allowed access to a wide audience and complimented rather than contradicted moral and political comment, and was therefore a legitimate tone for Radical politics.

Writing about the earlier London Corresponding Society, the organisation which Francis Place believed had done a great deal to encourage respectability amongst the working class, Michael Davis outlines how it sought to counter conservative propaganda by presenting itself as civil and well-organised.\textsuperscript{30} The LWMA’s well-kept minute book and its restrictive entry policy illustrate how it also attempted to avoid the image of ‘mob culture’. But these efforts to present a sense of civility and correspond to the respectable ideal were clearly ignored, when necessary, by the more morally pragmatic Cleave and Hetherington, who identified how an appeal to ‘low’ culture could be incorporated within the Radical political program. Nor were these men always particularly transgressive. Cleave and Carlile certainly were with respect to their wives, but their newspapers were responding to a working-class culture they felt legitimate enough to supply with muck-raking, satirical and scandalous newspapers. Behind the moralistic Radicalism of the 1830s and the LWMA’s seemingly rigid moral politics was a great deal of flexibility.

\textsuperscript{29} Peter Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks stand up? A role analysis of mid-Victorian working-class respectability" \textit{Journal of Social History} 12:3 (1979), pp. 336-53.

‘The connexion of language studiously decorous and well-chosen, with ideas grossly filthy and disgusting’: Humour amongst a working-class elite

As a compositor, Vincent was in the same skilled strata as many of the founder members of the LWMA, as well as the same specific line of work as many Radicals across the continent. Of the main members of the Association, Arthur Dyson and Robert Hartwell were both compositors, and it was Hartwell who suggested Vincent for membership in the LWMA in November 1836. James Watson was also a compositor, and Cleave and Hetherington were both trained as printers. These were ‘respectable’ trades, which required intellect and skill, reflected in the LWMA’s elitist political position. The culture of such skilled workers and their organisations was outlined by Iowerth Prothero:

The usual term in England was ‘respectability’, a term which impinged on a number of aspects – proper training for lads, keeping wages at a decent level and not working for low pay, keeping out unqualified workmen, maintaining aged members, and burying the dead, and not bring a society into discredit through bad language, defective work, or letting the employer down…Accordingly, trade societies adopted a high moral tone, as defenders of principle and opponents of selfishness.

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Printing and compositing were both highly skilled occupations, but also highly variable. Texts with accents or italics required extra work, for which a compositor expected higher pay. Much of the trade became specialised around certain printing operations, for instance with newspaper printing, with its flexible hours, or texts from Asia, with their unusual typefaces. This flexibility made negotiation with employers paramount, and in 1805, a basic wage scale was agreed between compositors and their employers.\textsuperscript{33} This scale was periodically renegotiated to take into account changes in practice, and the increasing importance of Parliamentary business became one such issue, as it caused overtime and rushed jobs. The London Union of Compositors was formed in 1834 to form a united front in the negotiations for a special Parliamentary wage scale. In total, seven printers handled this business, with Spottiswoode’s printing appeal cases, Acts of Parliament, and Proclamations, but Andrew Spottiswoode was the only employer to refuse not only the new scale but also to acknowledge the LUC.

Vincent was almost certainly a member of the LUC since it co-ordinated the trade dispute which saw him leave Spottiswoode’s. Like the LWMA, the Union was moralistic and elitist, writing in its 1837 address that ‘poverty is the parent of every vice, but more especially of dissipation’, going on to argue that the poor moral state of the working class caused them to ‘crouch to the wealthy and powerful’.\textsuperscript{34} These men certainly resented many of their fellow workers:

\textit{…as it is said the greatest enemies of a man are those of his own household, so the greatest enemies of the labouring classes are the labouring classes themselves. They are poor and ignorant, ill-treated and robbed; and yet they are so lost in slothfulness, so sunk

\textsuperscript{34} Annual Report of the Trade Council to the Members of the London Union of Compositors (London, 1837), pp. 4-5.
in self-enjoyment and irrationality, that they permit themselves to be plundered and
wrongfully imprisoned, sometimes without a murmur, or at most but with a sullen groan
and threat.\footnote{Annual Report, p. 4.}

During the dispute sixty workers, including Vincent and Arthur Dyson, a fellow LWMA
member, left. They were soon replaced by compositors from other parts of the country
who were willing to accept Spottiswoode’s terms:

To a man whose mind is rightly constituted, and who desires to enjoy the good opinion
of his fellow-men, the Council cannot conceive what inducement the employ of Mr.
Spottiswoode can offer, that individuals should thus forfeit their self-esteem and subject
themselves to the reproaches of the Trade…wilful ignorance or selfish considerations
have induced certain compositors to remain in that office…selfish and inconsiderate, they
made no steps to procure the compliance of their employer; but exhibited a vacillation
and timidity which only served to strengthen him in his purpose.\footnote{Annual Report, p. 8.}

These workers were equally incensed when employers failed to treat them with the
respect skilled men deserved. Spottiswoode not only replaced the workers who left, but
also sought to blacklist them, telling them they would never work for him again and
passing a booklet around the rest of the London trade.\footnote{Howe, The London Compositor, p. 367.}

In a reply published in the London Dispatch Arthur Dyson lambasted Spottiswoode, writing that although each other
employer agreed to the pay scale: ‘You ALONE remain inexorable; you ALONE are
insensitive to the appeal of your fellow men.’\footnote{London Dispatch, 1 October, 1836.}

‘…nothing in…your circular contained, will subject me in the opinion of any honourable
mind, to an imputation of having acted with impropriety, whatever result you may have
desired in *circulating* my name." 39 The dispute was about honour as much as it was about wages and working conditions.

The high moral tone of the compositor’s union and dispute certainly correlates with Prothero’s description of a respectable artisan, and the affair must also have been a formative experience for Vincent. The LUC’s highly idealised view of their trade, and the discourse of respectability outlined by Prothero, overlooks a far more complicated and murkier picture, and one that again invokes Bailey’s argument that respectability was situational. Cleave’s *London Satirist* once printed a column detailing life in a printing office, which seems a far more honest, diverse and detailed account of everyday masculinity:

Mark the diversity of talent among them. That thin, stopping figure, with sharp face, high nose, and dark motionless eyes, has a genius for setting advertisements. He is the uncontrolled master of that department. That fine-looking fellow with an oval border of whiskers round his face, and corresponding curve of his leg, the wit, orator, and gay Lothario of the establishment, has a taste which the foreman himself does not disdain occasionally to call to counsel. The greasy-looking individual with a bald head, if you keep whisky from him, and him from whisky (no easy task by the-by), will set you a column of close dig without one typographical error. The demure gentleman, with his nose stuck in his composing stick, has a genius for ‘scheme work,’ which technical phrase designates what the vulgar call tables, &c. 40

This depiction of the office is complemented by a similarly affectionate but non-idealised account from Charles Manby Smith of his time as a journeyman printer. Particularly

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39 *London Dispatch*, 1 October, 1836.
40 *Cleave’s London Satirist and Gazette of Variety*, 2 December, 1837.
notable is a customary wedding celebration that took place in one of these seven Parliamentary print offices in 1837. An older, recently widowed, ‘irascible alcoholic’ worker paid a woman sixteen shillings a week to marry him, and a carnivalesque party was called to celebrate, with the office decorated with evergreens, ribbons, ‘true-lovers’ knots and transfixed hearts’. A ‘band’ played using the tools and frames in the office, and there was a mock wedding procession in fancy dress, with the ‘most horrible disguises’ being ‘generally those which elicit most mirth, and…therefore most in request’. The ‘tallest, stoutest and strongest fellow in the house’, wearing blackface, was chosen to represent the bride, with ‘two stuffed mountains of bosoms’. He was expected to faint and ‘go into hysterics’ at every opportunity, and in doing so through his strength repeatedly floored the bridegroom (or in this case a stand-in, since the bridegroom was too old for the physical jokes). Finally, the party ended with everyone removing their costumes while dancing to a fiddler.

Obscene but intelligent wordplay was a crucial part of the day’s events, bookending the celebration. At the beginning congratulations were ‘poured in upon [the bridegroom] thick and fast, couched in language which it would be inadmissible to repeat, all received with good humour and evident relish’. It ended with a long, obscene speech, which used technical terms in the printing trade to form puns and innuendo. The speech was expected to be as clever and disgusting as possible, exhibiting ‘the connexion of language studiously decorous and well-chosen, with ideas grossly filthy and disgusting.41 The party was evidently customary, with specific roles, and even specific segments in which the style of comedy would shift, from mock ceremony to physicality to obscenity.

Clearly, these skilled workers gathered at times for raucous parties, just as they
sometimes gathered for sober political and moral discussion. Such acts were important in
trade societies as with political societies, wherein conviviality was utilised as a means of
strengthening organisations, enforcing solidarity, and building trust. Sociability and
solidarity was engendered on the shop floor, through the ‘hidden curriculum’ that any lad
had to learn. Apprentices were used as lookouts for men engaged in illicit behaviour, as
well as being utilised as the procurers of alcohol, especially for special events like
weddings or the accession of an apprentice to journeyman status. Benjamin Franklin
remembered how, when moved from the printing machines to the composition room in
his printing house in London, he was required to pay for 5s worth of beer for his new
colleagues. He protested, since he had already paid when he was a printsman, and soon
found himself the victim of the chapel’s ‘ghost’, who ‘haunted those not regularly
admitted.’ Ralph the ghost was a custom that would continue a century later:

Every chapel is haunted by a spirit, called Ralph. When any man resists the decision of
the chapel, and it is determined to enforce it, Ralph, or the spirit, is said to walk; and
whatever mischief is done to the resisting party to enforce submission, which is always
performed secretly, is invariably imputed to Ralph, or the spirit. Sensibly, Franklin: ‘…found myself obliged to comply and pay the money, convinced of
the folly of being on ill terms with those one is to live with continually.’ The men of the
printing trade fiercely protected their independence and sense of self-worth as men, yet
at the same time they had a culture that was extremely boisterous, and as a matter of

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43 Christiane Eisenberg, ‘Artisans’ Socialization at Work: Workshop Life in Early Nineteenth-Century
45 Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography: With a Narrative of his Public Life and Services (New York, 1856), pp. 78-79.
custom used humour, bullying and bawdiness as a means ensuring sociability and solidarity. This was the case within many trades, but it is worth underlining that these men were literate, well-read and well-educated, qualities that allowed a clear exchange between their work practices and their work culture. Cleave notes in the article about the printing office that men like the ‘gay Lothario’, who knew how to construct a good joke or tell a sensational story, were called upon to help when their expertise was required. The wordplay and puns of wedding celebrations similarly illustrate how work skills and the culture of humour bled into one another.

However, it would be a mistake to argue that the discourse of the LUC illustrates the respectable ideal whereas the practices of the compositors illustrate the opposite. An integral element in building the sense of unity and solidarity valued by the LUC was the culture of drinking, practical jokes and bawdiness. It is therefore questionable if these workers ever saw a real distinction between their own sense of self-respect and the more boisterous aspects of their lifestyles, just as Cleave and Hetherington both understood that moral improvement and politics did not necessarily have to be divorced from humour, fun and sensation. This also suggests why men like Cleave and Hetherington, just like Carlile or Benbow before them, who had trained as printers before establishing their own presses, were inclined towards iconoclasm, irreverence and sensationalism when they owned their own presses and edited their own publications. The culture of their workplaces was translated into a rich satirical, irreverent and sensationalist print tradition that was attuned to working-class politics and culture.
‘I know of no greater pleasure than the companionship of one of the fairest flowers of creation’: The Vincent/Minikin correspondence

Vincent was one of the first members of the LWMA, having been inducted a few months after the Spottiswoode dispute in November 1836, and went on to become a signatory of the People’s Charter. In 1837 he set off with Cleave on his first national lecture tour, and the two men became good friends. Whenever he left London he also began writing to his cousin and best friend, John Minikin. In total fifty-one letters were exchanged between 1837 and 1842, of which Vincent’s have been preserved but the replies from Minikin have not. In 1837 Minikin lived in Covent Garden and by 1841 ran a Coffee House named the Cambrian Hotel on Great Russell Street, wherein he employed Henry’s sister as a domestic servant. Henry often entrusted to him the task of relaying information to his mother (John’s aunt), and instructed him to give his regards to assorted family and friends, but Minikin was also connected to the local Radical scene. Although Vincent once noted that he disagreed with some of the six points and so was not a strict Chartist, Minikin contributed articles to Vincent’s newspapers, the *Western* and later *National Vindicator*, conducted London business for Vincent, Lucy and the *Vindicator’s* Bath based editor, Francis Hill, and also corresponded with Francis Place.  

He also knew the Cleave family well enough for Vincent to ask him to see them and give them his regards, and Vincent also mentioned other London Radicals in the letters, such as Henry Hetherington. The two men were therefore of the generation that Francis Place believed to have grown up within a firmly moral London middling class, who had the benefit of education and literacy established and maintained by Radical societies aiming to inculcate better morals.

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46 Hill and Cleave sent some letters to Minikin, preserved in the Vincent Collection at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester. See VIN 2 and VIN 3.  
Although on the tour to propagate the principles of the LWMA through the establishment of several Working Men’s Associations, and with that spread the *Address and Rules*, it is notable from these letters that Vincent had considerably enjoyed the attention he received from women, had a highly active sexual imagination, and routinely engaged in rude humour. Robert Gammage noted that his famed abilities as an orator elicited a sexual response:

> With the fair sex his slight handsome figure, the merry twinkle of his eye, his incomparable mimicry, his passionate bursts of enthusiasm, the rich music of this voice, and, above all, his appeals for the elevation of woman, rendered him an universal favourite.\(^{48}\)

On and off the hustings, he enjoyed the presence of women, and seems to have been a popular partner in turn. In the second letter he sent to Minikin, from Huddersfield during a lecture tour in 1837, he instructs him to ‘Tell the girls there is a profusion of bright eyed Yorkshire Radical lasses’.\(^{49}\) In the next letter, written from Birmingham, Vincent wrote:

> We took a beautiful walk yesterday - I had the honour of having for my companion a highly intelligent and accomplished young lady, Miss Douglas - in whose good society you may give me credit for high enjoyment - for I know of no greater pleasure (always excepting the advocacy of Democratic and philosophical principles) than the companionship of one of the fairest flowers of creation.\(^{50}\)

\(^{49}\) LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/3, Vincent to Minikin, 4 September, 1837.
\(^{50}\) LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/6, Vincent to Minikin, 18 June, 1837.
At other times he was simply demeaning, and the frankness seems a deliberate attempt at being provocative, as with an unnamed woman from Huddersfield. After interrupting a letter writing session one Sunday afternoon, he continued the next morning:

**Monday Morning** – I was obliged to give up writing yesterday in consequence of a piece of green silk and a pair of piercing eyes kindly volunteering to walk out with me over the beautiful hills that surround this delightful little town – How would I refuse such kindness?  

Provocation was one of his favoured forms of humour. Like the men in Charles Manby Smith’s account, he enjoyed wordplay and sent to Minikin well-constructed jokes. A good example is one he made in describing to Minikin the events at the tea party in Bath that was discussed in the previous chapter:

I have lots of sweathearts Married! And single. Some of the ladies joke and say they are afraid there will not be ‘a bit of me left’ ... I should tell you that when I leave Bath I shall leave at least three Henry Vincents behind me! Now don’t laugh! I don’t mean to say, to use a holy phrase, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh – but made namesakes by the aid of a little holy water and a few mystical words pronounced by one of God almighty’s Lambs the parsons! – There is Henry Vincent England Henry Vincent Jones and Henry Vincent Young – Do you call that nothing?

Not only does the joke mock baptisms and the Chartist convention of naming children after prominent leaders, but it is carefully constructed to briefly leave Minikin with the thought that Vincent has fathered three children, some with married women. There are

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51 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/10, Vincent to Minikin, 26 August, 1838.  
52 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/12, Vincent to Minkin, 2 October, 1838.
two prominent innuendos used for this end, the phrases ‘a bit of me left’ and ‘bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh’, both with seminal and bodily implications.

It seems that Vincent was not simply exaggerating and emptily boasting, since there is evidence that Minikin was aware of Vincent’s sexual relationships back in London. He may have had a relationship with a woman he referred to as ‘Mrs. V’. The first mention of her came in September 1837, when Vincent requested Minikin ‘remember me’ to her, amongst other friends in London.51 Later, when on tour he wrote: ‘You’ll give my love to Mrs. V. tell her, though absent, my affections are as strong as ever. Tell her although my body is in Yorkshire my heart is somewhere under her apron-strings’.54 After his arrest, he told Minikin: ‘Tell Mrs. V. of Kentish Town that I cannot Sweetheart her now’.55 The mention that particularly suggests a sexual relationship was from October 1838, when he told Minikin to tell her that ‘Absence makes the heart grow fonder’, before adding: ‘And asking you that I bear in mind your favourite motto Discretion is the better part of valour’.56 Again, the precise nature of this relationship cannot be known, but it was definitely not a nickname for either Vincent’s sister Aley or his mother, since both are mentioned elsewhere in the same letters.

Later, during the first few days of Vincent’s imprisonment in May 1839, there are passages that jokingly refer to a shared experience in Regents Park, a short walk from Minikin’s coffee house on Regents Street and Vincent’s home in Cromer Street, opposite Euston Station:

51 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/3, Vincent to Minikin, 4 September, 1837.
54 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/10, Vincent to Minikin, 26 August, 1838.
55 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/14, Vincent to Minikin, 14 May, 1839.
56 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/15, Vincent to Minikin, 2 October, 1838.
Give lots of love to all friends – but especially to the young lasses – and if when walking through Regents Park (right angle) you see a young damsel, with sweet hazel eyes, intellectual forehead, lips that would turn an anchorite or a stoic and teatotaler to sin – neatly dressed in lavender silk – and a white satin bonnet – reading a gilt edge copy of Shelley’s Queen Mab – go up to her – kiss her for me – and tender my warmest love.57

Whoever this woman was, Vincent joked that she was so attractive Minikin’s wife wouldn’t mind if he did kiss her. The joking continued into the next exchange of letters. John enquired what Vincent meant by the suggestion that one must walk through the park at the ‘right angle’, while Mary Ann Minikin chided him, seemingly in jest:

A pretty fellow you are to ask “what’s the time o’day for the right angle”? You ought to have guessed that. Why, the soft and balmy hour of evening to be sure. When the sun has left us, and “the moon doffs his nightcap and squints through to the sky”; that’s the time o’day, Master M - and as for the insinuation of Mary Ann, Saying “twill come out,”

“life though sweet is short, what thou dost do quickly”; ask her how she knows but what I have done58

There are a number of ways to interpret this in the context of the sexual culture of the West End. In response to organised police forces and their efforts to clear the streets of prostitutes, many in the West End responded by advertising their services more subtly by acting more genteelly and dressing well, with aggressive soliciting fading out in the 1830s.59 In areas like Regent’s Park streetwalkers could receive upwards of a pound from well-heeled customers, and Vincent’s description is similar to one given by A.J. Munby

57 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/15, Vincent to Minikin, 21 May, 1839.
58 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/16, Vincent to Minikin, 1 June, 1839.
describing a prostitute on nearby Regent Street in the 1850s, ‘arrayed in gorgeous apparel’. This woman therefore may well have been a prostitute, but may also have been simply reading a book and mistaken by Vincent and Minikin for one. She may also have been a target of deliberate harassment by the two men, a problem that would become associated with the West End throughout the century.

The mention of Queen Mab in passing is also intriguing, since it clearly links Vincent back to the Radicals who pirated and distributed romantic poetry because of their liberalism and eroticism. Queen Mab was an epic poem by Shelley that was originally privately published but was soon extensively pirated by Carlile and Benbow, amongst others. In the work the fairy Queen Mab comes to earth, showing a past of oppression and the utopia to come in the future, brought about by the virtues progress would grant humanity. The security of these pirated editions was ensured by Shelley’s inability to legally prevent its distribution, since it was considered immoral and therefore illegal, and he was denied copyright. The pirated copies, printed by men like Carlile and Benbow, were cheap and became established working-class favourites for decades. George Bernard Shaw referred to it as the ‘Bible’ of Chartism, but as well as outlining a general theory of humanity’s progress ‘Even Love is Sold’, an extensive note toward the end, plead for love to be freed from the tyranny of marriage and for women to be allowed to

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62 McCalman, Radical Underworld, p. 211.
63 Percy Bysshe Shelley, Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem (London, 1823).
pursue the natural appetites of sexual passion.\textsuperscript{65} The note was a strong advocacy of free love:

Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear: it is there most pure, perfect, and unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence, equality and unreserve.\textsuperscript{66}

That Vincent described the attractive woman in Regent’s Park holding a copy of the book highlights how it was both a sincere moral and political plea for sexual leniency but also as a sexualised and titillating work in itself. Vincent may have held and practised such ideals, but he was still capable of crudity. Writing from prison of the gifts he had received from his admirers, he facetiously invited Minikin to come visit him to see him wearing them:

You will find me in a stylish morning gown sent to me by a pretty little lassie (God help her); with a paper-cap, cut à la Napoleon; and sundry other little nick-nacks made by the sweet-little-teasing-bewitches! - I shall pay them all, in kind, for all their little kindnesses when I get “among them” again.\textsuperscript{67}

This attitude towards women who were making him gifts out of a sense of solidarity would not have been well-received if it became public knowledge, but was nevertheless acceptable in the private context of Vincent and Minikin’s risqué humour. As Jutta Schwarzkopf outlines, the public interaction between Vincent and female Chartists was


\textsuperscript{66} Shelley, \textit{Queen Mab}, p. 147.

\textsuperscript{67} LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/16, Vincent to Minikin, 1 June, 1839.
one that used the discursive template of an extended family, with Vincent cast as a brother and the activists as sisters.\textsuperscript{68} The gifts of clothing formed a material complement to the addresses women regularly wrote to prisoners.\textsuperscript{69} This respectable and polite rhetoric was certainly something Vincent encouraged along with his general encouragement of female activism. Only a few months earlier Vincent had rhapsodised in the pages of the \textit{Western Vindicator}:

\begin{quote}
The object of the Working Classes in forming Female Associations, has been repeatedly declared, and is simply this: - they know the influence which women justly exercise over the other sex, and they are desirous, by extending them sound political knowledge, to give that influence in political matters a proper direction… They seek, too, in women, not mere machines to do their drudgery and satisfy their passions, but intelligent companions, capable of giving and receiving pleasure by the development of their ever acute, but too often uncultivated minds.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

Similarly, in May after seeing some female workers at a coal mine he wrote:

\begin{quote}
There must be something wrong in a state of society which necessitates women to leave home for the iron manufactory and the coal-pit; and the effect of such a system upon civilization and knowledge must be very prejudicial. Compelled to abandon home, the little children run about where they please, with no one to train their minds or to administer to them sound moral and religious instruction.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}

The \textit{Vindicator} printed a number of addresses and correspondence that supported the notion of women ripped from the idealised family. Of the colliers, one writer alluded to

\textsuperscript{69} Schwartzkopf, \textit{Women in the Chartist Movement}, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Western Vindicator}, 23 March, 1839.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Western Vindicator}, 4 May, 1839.
the common melodramatic trope of the fallen woman: ‘women are not COMPELLED
to do this work, they have actually their CHOICE; either to do it or starve, or something
worse.’\textsuperscript{72} The Cheltenham Working Men’s Association addressed Women’s Associations
elaborately and disarmingly in terms of the domestic ideal:

What is it can add energy to the mind of man? What is it can soothe the drooping spirit
of the patriot victim? What is it can nerve the arm of man, and rouse the coward slave to
action? What is it but the cheering smile, the endearing caress, the kind and benevolent
entreaties, the affectionate voice of female loveliness.\textsuperscript{73}

The extent of his support for women’s activism, stated time and again in print and on the
platform, and his popularity amongst female activists suggests that there were two quite
different acceptable gender identities, one private and the other public.\textsuperscript{74} In his political
pose he is aligned with that outlined by Anna Clark and Schwarzkopf, in which women’s
activism was seen as auxiliary, providing emotional, intellectual and logistical support for
men, and therefore largely confined to the home.\textsuperscript{75} On the other hand the frank attitude
expressed to Minikin suggests that Chartism retained a largely privately expressed sexual
culture. Thompson glosses over this when discussing the ‘interest and enthusiasm of
women’ evident in the letters to Minikin, but what seems clear is that sexual interaction,
even if limited to flirting, was acceptable amongst activists and between leaders and the
grassroots of the movement.\textsuperscript{76} Her later insistence that women were not involved in
Chartism simply because of male personality is correct, but this argument also runs the

\textsuperscript{72} Western Vindicator, 11 May, 1839.
\textsuperscript{73} Western Vindicator, 17 August, 1839.
\textsuperscript{74} For his support for Female Radical and Chartist Associations, and some of the space in the Vindicator
given to their correspondence and addresses, see Western Vindicator, 15 June, 29 June, 20 July, 17 August, 24
August, 31 August, and 28 September, 1839.
\textsuperscript{75} Schwarzkopf, Women in the Chartist Movement, pp. 89-122.
\textsuperscript{76} Thompson, The Chartists, p. 133.
risk of overlooking Chartism’s sexual culture, both in literature and in practice.\(^7^7\)

Vincent’s public interaction with women, his private demeaning of them and his apparent sexual liaisons all need to be considered in light of the evident, albeit subtle, sexual culture of London’s Radicals.

The sexual practice reported in these letters was part of a broader effort to develop a sexual self-identity, which evidently borrowed heavily from the literary culture of those London Radicals. The performative, boastful aspects to Vincent’s letters bear comparison to the Gregory Watt/William Creighton correspondence analysed by Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob. In these intensely scatological letters from the 1790s, the pair experimented with sexual and gender roles ‘for the sheer pleasure of it’ spurred on by their Radicalism, Romanticism and the context of the French Revolution.\(^7^8\) The Vincent/Minikin correspondence was by no means as scatological as the Watt/Creighton letters, but there were obscene passages. In August 1840, Vincent discussed with Minikin the news that the Queen was pregnant:

> The papers say that our Queen is in an “interesting position” Mercy on me! – I have seen ladies in very interesting positions ere this – but I was never mean enough to make the matter public…I sometimes stand on my head for joy of the thought of these “interesting positions”\(^7^9\)

A month later, Vincent recounted not only a sex dream, but the cause of its unfortunate interruption:

\(^7^9\) LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/33, Vincent to Minikin, 11 August, 1840.
I was dreaming that an angel lay in my arms, and that her swelling bosom was beating
against mine, and propelling my sluggish blood, with a sort of steam engine force,
through my veins. I was just in the act of kissing the sweetest and prettiest lips that ever
eye beheld or heart desired, when I was suddenly aroused by a tremendous stab on my –
why should I blush? – bottom! Minikin! it was the stab of a flea!.. You know how mild I
generally am – but, under circumstances like these, you will not be surprised that I forgot
myself, and lost my temper. I resolved to murder him. I thrust my finger slyly down to
my seat of honour, approached my gentleman cautiously – and – and- smashed him! I sent
him suddenly to his account “with all his imperfections on his head!” – after burying him
in my what-d’ye-call-it – I snoozed off again – but my fair angel disliking my want of
gallantry in such an “interesting position”, returned no more! Curse the flea! Henceforth
I am the sworn foe of fleas.\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/34, Vincent to Minikin, 2 September, 1840.}

As Lisa Sigel has illustrated, body humour was not in the decline throughout the
nineteenth-century, and Vincent’s elaborate narrative suggests that he had some skill and
familiarity with such jokes.\footnote{Lisa Sigel, \textit{Governing Pleasures: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815-1914} (New Brunswick, 2002).} Yet crudity and boasting was not all there was to this
relationship, since along with jokes there were occasionally highly emotive passages.
When Vincent had to end one of his letters because some Bath friends arrived in his
room and teased him by suggesting that Minikin was a woman, considering how often
the two spoke, Minikin wrote a reply in which he expressed hope that Vincent did not
find his letters boring and inconvenient. Vincent replied by forcefully informing Minikin
of the importance in which he placed them.\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/12, Vincent to Minikin, 21 May, 1839.} Similarly, when in jail and evidently
depressed, Vincent wrote of himself as a jailed bird who ‘loves his mates the more when
he is forcefully torn from them.’\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/15, Vincent to Minikin, 2 October, 1839.}
A few months later, Vincent wrote another letter gushingly informing Minikin of his importance to him.84 Being emotionally open and coherent was no issue between the two men, and although Vincent’s effusiveness in his declarations of love suggests an air of performance, Minikin’s status as a long-term emotional confident and political advisor suggests that these expressed feelings were genuine. Vincent’s ‘affective style’, to use Hunt and Jacob’s phrase, therefore rested on a triad of emotionality, bawdy humour, and boasting. It is clear that Vincent’s boasts to Minikin were an attempt to establish a sexual identity which was further utilised as a homosocial bond, but this was coupled with genuine affection, Vincent’s talent for storytelling and finely crafting jokes, and coloured by misogyny.

The political situation, and Vincent’s popularity, was also an integral part of his self-identity. In their analysis of the Watt/Creighton letters, Hunt and Jacob point out that although lived vicariously, ‘the French Revolution did have a somatic effect that resonated outward into many of life’s domains’.85 Similarly, the excitement of the Chartist period, and Vincent’s central position within it, allowed him to experiment with his sexual and political self-presentation, and here we can see the clearest link between Vincent and the culture of pirated literature and interest in sex that was still alive in the 1830s. His private boasting of combined sexual and political successes seems to have been a conscious construction on Vincent’s part of a Byronic hero, and it gave him intense pleasure when he was received as such.86 The foundation for this was likely the clear reciprocation of his interest in women, since his sexuality was publicly acknowledged and written in to the pageantry. On a visit to Trowbridge in September 1838, Vincent was greeted in the streets by flags and a crowd of 10,000. Later:

84 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/23, Vincent to Minikin, 28 February, 1840.
85 Hunt and Jacob, ‘The Affective Revolution in 1790s Britain’, p. 510.
I was presented with a handsome green silk scarf by a pretty smiling young lady who
trembled from head to foot. She put it round me herself in the presence of the
assembled thousands for and on behalf of the single ladies of that town. **Do you call
that nothing?**

This was not the first time he had been presented with a gift like this. At the all-female
meeting at Hartshill Gardens in Bath, for instance, Vincent was presented with a gold
watch by the assembled women. The act is comparable to other acts of symbolic
practice noted in the historiography of Chartism. In this case, the expensive silk
represented the women’s roles as labourers within the declining weaving industry, the
green represented Radicalism, and their selection as single women represented the
sexuality of youth, and the evident eligibility of Vincent. This bears some relation to
Peter Bailey's work on parasexuality, his example being the Victorian barmaid, a sexual
object even when not participating in overt sexual relationships or activities. The girl
and the single women are presented in terms of their Radicalism, class and availability,
but in being the object of the presentation so too was Vincent's attractiveness, youth and
status as a well-known politician being celebrated and implicitly sexualised. In these cases
the division between public and private expressions of sexuality broke down, and far
from a brother Vincent is presented as a suitor.

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87 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/11, Vincent to Minikin, 23 September, 1838.
89 Particularly those on clothing: Paul Pickering, ‘Class without Words: Symbolic Communication in the
Chartist Movement’ *Past and Present* 112:1 (1986), pp. 144-162; James Epstein, ‘Radical Dining, Toasting
and Symbolic Expression in Early Nineteenth-century Lancashire: Rituals of Solidarity’ *Albion* 20:2 (1988),
pp. 271-291; Epstein, ‘Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early
Nineteenth-Century England’ *Past and Present* 122:1 (1989), pp. 75-118; Katrina Navickas, “‘That sash will
pp. 540-65.
90 Peter Bailey, 'Parasexuality and Glamour: the Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype' *Gender and History*
Immediately after describing the presentation of the scarf to Minikin Vincent quoted Byron:

Oh that they had one rosy mouth!
I’d kiss them all from north to south.\textsuperscript{91}

It was through his literacy and Radical milieu that Vincent found the resources with which to present himself to Minikin. His sense of humour and desire to boast did not stand in opposition to either his intellect or his fascination with books. The quote is a slight paraphrasing of a line in Canto VI of \textit{Don Juan}, in a stanza advocating sexual love as a humanist virtue.\textsuperscript{92} It is significant that Vincent memorised this line, albeit incorrectly, since Canto VI was the most controversial of the epic poem. Byron wrote the entire poem between 1818 and 1823, and delays between the publishing of the cantos were largely due to accusations that they were immoral.\textsuperscript{93} Byron was important as both a political and erotic writer. For mid-Victorians, ‘the introduction of anything from the corpus of Byronic material could be counted on automatically to release an erotic response’.\textsuperscript{94} The Chartist Thomas Frost, a printer and associate of the pornographer and publisher William Dugdale, testified that during the period Radicals still toasted, read and aped Byron, and the influence of Byron in the work of Thomas Cooper has also been studied.\textsuperscript{95} More than an author, men of Vincent's generation saw his work as influencing ‘not only the novel, poetry and drama, but fashion, social manners, erotic experience, and

\textsuperscript{91} LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/11, Vincent to Minikin, 23 September, 1838.
\textsuperscript{92} Byron, \textit{Don Juan}, Canto VI, Line 27.
gender roles.\textsuperscript{96} He also unites the early and late Chartist periods, since the \textit{Northern Star} began printing a regular ‘Beauties of Byron’ column in 1845, attesting to his continuing popularity and his status as a master that the small army of amateur working-class poets needed to emulate.\textsuperscript{97}

The influence is also clear, in terms of Vincent’s politics, personal life, and means of plotting his travels, both in the \textit{Western Vindicator} and in his private correspondence. Gammage noted that:

No man was ever more ingenious than Vincent in turning to advantage a sentence from the work of a favourite author. So entirely did he appropriate and weave it into the thread of his discourse that it was almost impossible to feel that it was other than his own.\textsuperscript{98}

It is easy to see how a man who arranged type prior to going to press could develop such a talent, and \textit{Don Juan} is evidently one of the literary frameworks that Vincent applied to his own life, imagining himself as a man, like Juan, both appealing to women and easily seduced by them.\textsuperscript{99} His almost predatory discussions with Minikin about women but his evident care about his friends and family suggests a comparison with the description of Byron as ‘a good friend, but bad acquaintance’.\textsuperscript{100} Similarly, his success as a politician is spelled out to Minikin quite clearly, measured in almost every letter in terms of rapturous applause and the numbers of men and women in attendance at his many meetings.

Mention is made of his friends’ important work, but above all Vincent holds himself as the Romantic hero-type: ‘invariably solitaries, and...fundamentally and heroically

\textsuperscript{96} Elfenbein, \textit{Byron and the Victorians}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{97} Mike Sanders, \textit{The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History} (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 77-78.
\textsuperscript{98} Gammage, \textit{History of the Chartist Movement}, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{100} Donelan, \textit{Romanticism and Male Fantasy}, p. 82.
rebellious.\textsuperscript{101} The Chartist Byron may have figured ‘primarily as a champion of liberty at all costs’, but evidently a complimentary reading of him as a sexual champion was still allowed.\textsuperscript{102} Clearly, literacy and Radicalism did not extinguish bawdy humour and sexual activity as Place suggested, but more than this Radicals and Chartists admired books from which they could draw out erotic and sexually libertarian themes. From the culture of the compositors to the wider Radical scene, Vincent’s love of good jokes and boasts of sexual adventurism was unlikely to be eccentric.

‘I never will soil my fingers by pulling his nose; nor degrade my foot by kicking him’: Chartist Satire

Jokes were an important part of the culture of compositors and printers, and as is clear Vincent enjoyed humour, both publicly and privately. His sense of humour found another expression in his public life, since it became an integral part of his writing and editorial style when he founded \textit{The Western Vindicator} in 1839. Radical compositors and printers were particularly inclined towards establishing their own newspapers, and of the printers and compositors in the London Association, Hetherington, Cleave, and Watson all published their own papers, with Robert Hartwell joining them by publishing \textit{The Chartist} in 1840. By 1839 Vincent was spending a large amount of time in Bath and, with several friends he had made there during his tours bought a press and began producing his own newspaper, \textit{The Western Vindicator}.\textsuperscript{103} This final section will compare Vincent’s work to that of his friend Cleave, who left sensation to Hetherington’s \textit{London Dispatch} and himself moved into satire. It will show that the tendency towards bawdy populism

\textsuperscript{101} Peter L. Thorslev, \textit{The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes} (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 66.

\textsuperscript{102} Elfenbein, \textit{Byron and the Victorians}, p. 87.

was continued by Cleave into the Chartist period and was adopted by Vincent, where it was used to both define the Chartist community and attack political enemies in the West of England and South Wales.

Humour and satire has been overlooked as a major element of the Chartist movement, with Romanticism and melodrama the focus of much research of Chartist poetry and fiction. This is not purely a problem with Chartist studies, as humour in the Victorian period has focussed on literary and middle-class culture, the music hall, pantomimes and clowning, but not ‘newspaper jokes - the most pervasive and commercially successful form of humour in the country.’ Similarly, histories of satire tend to end in the 1820s. Vic Gatrell’s study of Georgian satire notes that by the 1820s scurrilous prints ‘lost their bite’, having ‘capitulated…to the deepening respectability and correctness by which modern manners were tamed.’ Richard Hendrix, in his study of the Black Dwarf, argued that satire had died out by the Chartist period, and in correcting him Iain McCalman highlighted, but did not expansively study, a bawdy tradition that continued long after the 1820s. Of Victorian Satire, Punch has been studied extensively and in a variety of contexts. It has tended to be read as a shift from radical satire to a more polite and

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106 Gatrell, City of Laughter, p. xxi.
moderate form in the 1850s, yet as Nicholson notes it has been overused as a resource on Victorian humour.\(^\text{109}\)

Ian Haywood’s study of the bawdy populist tradition and the mixture of politics with ‘low’ culture from the 1830s onwards is instructive, although again it does not go into detail about satire and humour.\(^\text{110}\) Cleave’s *London Satirist and Gazette of Variety* (later *Penny Gazette of Variety, Gazette of Variety* and finally *Penny Gazette of Variety and Amusement*) was founded in 1837, a year after Cleave had merged his *Police Gazette* line with Hetherington’s *Two-Penny Dispatch*. The resulting *London Dispatch* was left to Hetherington to edit, with Cleave moving from sensationalism to satire. The lessons Cleave had learned about page-layout from the *Police Gazette* came in useful for the new paper, which like its antecedent had a satirical print below the banner on the front-page every week. An article on the same subject as the print sometimes appeared alongside it, and would often be the topic of the editorial, as well. These prints were always political, and tended to function as the most explicitly visible piece of political commentary. The *Police Gazette* employed Richard Seymour, the illustrator of *The Pickwick Papers*, and C.J. Grant. By the point of the *Satirist*’s founding, Seymour had shot himself but Grant was retained and became its illustrator.

Grant’s retention of the older grotesque style of drawing was acknowledged by Thackeray in his attack on the popular literature of the working class, ‘Half-a-Crown’s Worth of Cheap Knowledge’:

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Rude woodcuts adorn all these publications, and seem to be almost all from the hand of the same artist - Grant by name. They are outrageous caricatures; all squinting eyes, wooden legs, and pimpled noses, forming the chief points of fun.\footnote{111 Fraser’s Magazine, 17 March, 1838.}

Clark’s style made much use of elongated or fattened features and the marks of gluttony, red noses and copious amounts of food. A recurring theme and target of the paper’s first few months was the upcoming Lord Mayor’s procession, which Cleave attacked as a waste of money. Grant chose to illustrate this by depicting John Bull, a recurring character particularly relied upon in the first issues. In Figure 6, Gog and Magog, the Guardians of the City of London, whose images are held as emblems during the Lord Mayor’s Procession, watch over the banquet for the new Queen while John Bull watches on, illustrating the sovereignty of the people by sitting on the throne and his own exploitation by displaying his empty pockets. Miles Taylor has noted that Cleave and Grant’s depiction of John Bull as a ‘victimized taxpayer’ is firmly in the Hanoverian tradition that would soon be eclipsed by the plump, self-satisfied John Bull that referenced the different political concerns of the post-Chartist period.\footnote{112 Miles Taylor, ‘John Bull and the Iconography of Public Opinion in England c.1712-1929’, Past and Present 134:1 (1992), 93-128, pp. 108-10.} By utilising this older style of satire, where prints were prominent, Cleave was pursuing a different imagery than the Northern Star which instead published portraits of prominent Radicals in an effort to equate itself with respectability and prominent aristocratic politicians.\footnote{113 Malcolm Chase, ‘Building Identity, Building Circulation’, in Allen and Ashton (eds.), Papers for the People, pp. 25-53.}

Cutting enough to hit its mark but not obscene enough that it would invite repression, Cleave and Grant were developing a satirical form with a wide-reach, but unlike pornography or the more obscene satire of earlier eras didn’t need to be smuggled or hidden from view.
The environment for newspaper publishers was not a particularly liberal one. Because of stamp duty any explicitly political commentary and news reporting required obfuscation. In the Police Gazette, Cleave ‘hid’ the political news in the centre pages and presented crime reports on the front page in order to avoid the tax.\textsuperscript{114} This was continued in the London Satirist, where the editorial tended to follow a health column (a commonplace of the period’s popular literature) that gave advice on topics such as constipation and worms. This structure meant that the entire front-page could consist of one of Grant’s prints coupled with material lifted from popular literature, such as the frequent plagiarism of Dickens that occurred in these papers.\textsuperscript{115} This would present an attractive and inviting front page, which nevertheless directly pertained to the topics of the political articles inside. In October 1837, for instance, Cleave ran a long article about the preparations for the Lord Mayor’s procession, where the authorities were concerned

\textsuperscript{115} For instance, the entire front page of one issue is the last chapter of The Pickwick Papers: Cleave’s London Satirist and Gazette of Variety, 4 November, 1837. See also Louis James, Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850: A Study of the Literature Produced for the Working Classes in Early Victorian Urban England (London, 1963), p. 45.
about the Aldermen of the City of London’s inability to ride horses competently. The accompanying image of the Aldermen preparing their mounts for the Queen’s visit, mocks them in three ways (Figure 7). Most clearly, they are gluttonous fools named Gobble, Guzzle, Gorge and Munch, who are trying to eat their own mounts, none of which are horses. Their class distinction is highlighted by Guzzle hoping to ‘astonish the “SWINISH MULTITUDE”’ while Munch will ride his goose through the ‘poultry’. Sir Robert Peel, held by Tories and anti-Catholics like Cleave as having ratted over the passing of the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Bill, is shown on a rat.

Figure 7: ‘Aldermen taking a lesson of Equestrianism, previously to the Royal Visit.’ Cleave’s London Satirist and Gazette of Variety, 28 October, 1837.

Equally often the humour was designed simply to entertain. The ‘Quips and Cranks’ column presented jokes along with anecdotes and statistics. In contrast to the images and editorial, these were not usually topical or political, and were usually clipped with attribution from other British and American newspapers and periodicals, and eventually
Cleave had enough specifically American material to create a ‘Jonathanisms’ column.\(^{116}\) In his study of the American joke column, Nicholson has argued that their popularity and increasing ubiquity in the late nineteenth-century offers a valuable insight into the day-to-day humour of Victorians.\(^{117}\) The earliest example he has identified appears in the Northern Liberator in September 1839, but a number of these jokes are taken from a column Cleave had published a week earlier; Cleave would produce dozens of columns of American jokes over the following years.\(^{118}\) This was an astute move, as by the 1830s American culture was gaining popularity, particularly in London and notably in the theatre, where many established American actors went to secure a greater name for themselves.\(^{119}\) In the Satirist’s weekly column of theatre listings and previews, Cleave reported on Thomas D. Rice’s hugely successful Jim Crow act in the Surrey and Adelphi theatres, both with a lower-class clientele. The act would become an important trans-Atlantic cultural exchange, with British writers providing material for Rice, who also married the daughter of the Adelphi’s owner.\(^{120}\) Cleave took note of this and quoted the New York Times, the Daily News and the Evening Star’s glowing reviews of his first appearances since returning from Europe, concluding that ‘his popularity in London has of course had the effect of increasing his reputation at home’.\(^{121}\) Exploiting the growing craze, he regularly advertised Jim Crow’s Songster, ‘with a large portrait of Mr. Rice in the popular character of MR. CROW’.\(^{122}\)

In America between the 1840s and 1870s, the satirical and subversive potential of the Jim Crow act became exploited by its performers, who included not only political and social

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\(^{116}\) Cleave’s Gazette of Variety, 17 November, 1838.


\(^{118}\) Cleave’s Gazette of Variety, 31 August, 1839; Northern Liberator, 7 September, 1839.


\(^{121}\) Cleave’s London Satirist and Gazette of Variety, 21 October, 1837.

\(^{122}\) Cleave’s Penny Gazette of Variety, 10 February, 1838.
issues in the act but also sexual and pornographic topics that would have ‘been taboo on the legitimate stage or in the press.’ A similar process occurred in Britain, where the act was appropriated and developed throughout the century. In his memoir, performer Harry Reynolds observed that British minstrelsy divided into two traditions, one an ‘Ethiopian’ form that presented itself as a representation of plantation traditions, another a form that simply used blackface as a way of illustrating the act conformed to particular comic conventions. Cleave seems to have interpreted it in the latter form, and as with the columns of American jokes, Cleave became an innovator in adapting the Jim Crow act for British topics. ‘Jump Jim Crow’ was by far the most popular song of Rice’s act for British audiences, and Cleave singled this out, in its first appearance changing the lyrics to mock the Whig Prime Minister, Home Secretary and Chancellor (Figure 8).

The phrase ‘Jump Jim Crow’ went on to become associated in Cleave’s work with any sort of political inconsistency, whether by Whigs or Tories Cleave was therefore one of the first people to retool the Jim Crow act for a distinctly British comic style. Like the sensationalist crime reporting of the mid-1830s and even the obscene and satirical publications of the 1820s, by reworking popular forms of entertainment into satirical commentary he sought to radicalise the working class by appealing to them on their own terms while also being popular enough to fund a stable paper that also included drier political and moral commentaries. This dual nature meant consternation from some, but support from others, including Place, who told Cleave that: ‘It is true as you say you have been told that your publication is a disreputable one. I have on more than one occasion

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125 Cleave’s *London Satirist and Gazette of Variety*, 2 December, 1837.
126 For two good examples, see: Cleave’s *Penny Gazette of Variety and Amusement*, 15 February, 1840; Cleave’s *Penny Gazette of Variety and Amusement*, 5 June, 1841.
lately asserted the contrary to a number of influential men.\textsuperscript{127} Although disapproving of the woodcuts, he went on to specifically praise an article that explained the proposals for the Penny Post which meticulous highlighted the inefficiencies of the old system while extolling the virtues of the new. The article’s novelty was its presentation as a play with Queen Victoria, the Postmaster General and Lord Melbourne as the key actors, with the Queen having to explain to the ignorant Melbourne the new system.\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{three_jim_crows.png}
\caption{‘Three Jim Crows’, Cleave’s London Satirist and Gazette of Variety, 2 December, 1837.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{127} RPWME 1: Francis Place to John Cleave, 2 April, 1839, Reel 50.
\textsuperscript{128} Cleave’s Gazette of Variety, 23 February, 1839.
Cleave was an influential friend of Vincent’s. After the 1837 tour that made them close, Vincent frequently visited Cleave and his family, and Minikin and Vincent’s mother knew him as well. Through this relationship, and likely also the fact that Vincent was one of his readers, Vincent was strongly influenced by Cleave’s papers. Like Cleave’s papers, the Vindicator exploited the same loopholes in the Stamp Acts, avoiding printing ‘news and occurrences’ by printing tracts by Tom Paine and others, news in the form of letters, poetry, satire, and even dream sequences.\(^{129}\) Cleave was involved financially, selling around 200 copies in his Shoe Lane shop by June, and the Vindicator, like the Gazette and Satirist series, was priced at 2d and used the more expensive broadsheet format.\(^{130}\) Vincent also borrowed the Jim Crow joke from Cleave, twice printing poems that used the song’s structure to satirise the state of the nation.\(^{131}\) However, there were also clear differences in the form the satire took: the Vindicator tended to avoid woodcut printing due to the expense, with the front-page usually consisting of a long editorial written by Vincent. Increasingly, Vincent’s strengths as a writer came to the fore, as the paper utilised imaginative satirical forms.

Although the ‘Life and Rambles’ column which documented his tour throughout the south west started with a satirical exchange of letters between himself and the Queen, such targets were anomalous since the Western Vindicator avoided the kind of national events that Cleave targeted.\(^{132}\) In merging fun, festivity and politics Vincent was pursuing the same strategy as he had in the tea parties of Bath or the pubs of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, and because of this, Vincent’s jokes were targeted at local politicians and events, and required an awareness of not only those events but also previous issues of the Vindicator. One particular target was Thomas Phillips, the Mayor of

\(^{130}\) LHSAC: LP/VIN/3/5/2, Francis Hill to John Minikin, n.d.
\(^{131}\) Western Vindicator, 30 March, 6 April, 1839.
\(^{132}\) Western Vindicator, 9 March, 3 June, 1839.
Newport. To avoid accusations of libel, Phillips was scatologically re-imagined as Thomas Philpotts, who in turn was regularly lampooned in the *Vindicator* for his simian appearance, mental defects and womanising (Figure 9). A spoof report of a trial was included, where Philpotts – or the ‘Chimpanzee’ as the *Vindicator* called him – brought a libel suit against Vincent.

The plaintiff, who conducted his own cause, opened the pleadings by briefly remarking – “Mr. Mayor, and gentlemen of the Jury, it is a true adage, that he who advocates his own cause has a fool for a client” – (Hear, hear, from the Jury). “I shall, therefore, simply state gentlemen – very simply indeed – that this action is brought by my own very magnificent self, for recovery of damages in being stigmatised as a Baboon and a Chimpanzee, whereas, in truth and in fact, I am only a harmless Monkey.”

Later, a witness who was present at his birth was sworn in to provide evidence for Philpotts. She insisted that Philpotts’ father referred to him as a ‘baboon’ upon first seeing him. Upon cross-examination, the *Vindicator* reported that she told Philpott: ‘Is sure the word baboon was used; knows the difference between a baboon and a monkey; the former has no tail, the latter has; there appeared a slight protuberance in plaintiff, though exceedingly minute.’ At the end of the trial, the Jury returned and announced that: ‘We find the plaintiff to be a real Chimpanzee; in fact, a complete Baboon; and we earnestly recommend him as an invaluable acquisition to any Zoological Society.’ Following this, ‘the plaintiff fell into an hysterical fit, foamed and grinned horribly, and bit and scratched the policemen’. Two weeks later, the *Vindicator* reported the Chimpanzee’s suicide and the resulting coroner’s inquest. Here, the Chimpanzee’s sexuality was mocked, through invocation of the fallen woman motif:

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133 *Western Vindicator*, 15 June, 1839.
Witness…[w]as a servant to Mrs. Matthews, in whose house deceased lodged; deceased, was very kind to her when they first met; soon after felt *excruciatingly* ill; deceased for some time gave witness medicine, but the *malady* increasing in virulence, witness went, by deceased’s order, to Mr. Jukes, a druggist, who was to supply all requisite medicines at his, (deceased’s) expense. That witness’s mistress discovering her extreme illness, and observing, by the labels on the pillboxes and phials, that Mr. Jukes supplied the medicines, applied to him and learnt the nature and extent of her cruel malady, which led to her immediate discharge, with only 9s., amount of wages then due…[the witness] through the retch, *lost* her virtue – her situation – her character – and her constitution – irrevocably and hopelessly lost forever (Here the poor girl fainted, and was carried out of Court).134

The ongoing joke about the Chimpanzee – he would return again as a ghost ‘fighting in the tap-room of the Castle Inn’ – spoofed melodramatic conventions to attack a prominent local politician in the same moralistic but also bawdy terms as Cleave’s papers. The use of formats familiar to the audience as a means of delivering jokes allowed, as with Cleave, a merging of popular culture with political critique. In one article written in the style of a play, Vincent is depicted outside the Abbey in Bath giving a reasonable speech advocating the people arming for self-defence when attacked, at which point Captain Carrell enters with a troop of policemen:

Carrell (evidently much confused) exclaims:- “Lobsters preserve me! – is that Vincent I see? Is that Vincent’s voice I hear? Shade of the ridiculous! I got blazing drunk last night with the hope that he was killed in Devizes.”

134 *Western Vindictor*, 6 July, 1839.
Carrell is depicted as a drunkard (or at least mentally infirm) panicking about Vincent’s presence. It is repeatedly made clear that the source of this worry is the fact that Lord Powerscourt’s ball will be held that night, and he fears not only a disturbance but also the possibility that he will be unable to attend. As he wanders off to the police station, he mutters to himself: ‘There’s a ball to-night – there’s a ball – there’s a –’. In one column of fake correspondence, Phillips supposedly wrote to Vincent demanding to know whether or not Vincent had threatened to ‘pull my nose’, Vincent published the following apology:

I, the undersigned, solemnly declare, that, having the most ineffable contempt for Thomas Phillips, jun., I never will soil my fingers by pulling his nose; nor degrade my foot by kicking him.

Figure 9: The Chimpanzee, Thomas Phillips, Mayor of Newport, one of the Vindicator’s few woodcuts. From the issue of 17 August 1839, long after Vincent’s arrest.

135 Western Vindicator, 13 April, 1839.
136 Western Vindicator, 29 June, 1839.
Like some of the jokes that Vincent crafted when writing to Minikin, this fake correspondence was carefully structured to give maximum impact to the punchline; in this case the joke is most effective if the reader genuinely thinks, or at least can imagine, Vincent would say such a thing and get away with it. These ‘festive distortions of almost every element of a respectable newspaper’ were a core element in the work of T.J. Wooler and the content of his Black Dwarf, a Regency-era paper that Vincent read and which was likely a strong influence. Just as Wooler’s merger of the serious and the humorous sharpened the critical impact of both types of article, the proximity of satire to the Vindicator’s variety of serious content juxtaposed an immoral upper class with an intellectual and moral working class. The intellectual culture of the working class was evident throughout the Vindicator, with columns on science and history, extracts from Paine or Volney, and extensive adverts from bookshops such as Cleave’s contrasting with the stupidity, naivety and excessive drunkenness of the aristocracy.

This was also the case with the Vindicator’s spoof report on Powerscourt’s ball. As with his treatment of Phillips, Vincent was keen to encourage rumour and innuendo to present Powerscourt as a debauched simpleton. Powerscourt was a favourite target of Bath’s Radicals since Roebuck lost the ‘Drunken Election’ to Powerscourt in 1837, when the Tories bribed the electorate with alcohol, leading to drunken disorder. The enmity between the two men grew, and in March 1839, Roebuck and Powerscourt fought a duel after Roebuck claimed Powerscourt had insulted him during ‘some drunken exhibition.’ It was this reputation that the Vindicator was clearly playing off of with its reports on the ball. The article opened by noting Powerscourt’s abilities as a politician:

‘As an orator he possesses extraordinary powers – he never wearies members of “the

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137 Gilmartin, Print Politics, pp. 94-95; Ashton ‘The Western Vindicator’, p. 64.
138 The Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 5 March, 1839.
house,” *for he never speaks,* and he seldom votes incorrectly, *for he never votes at all!* The article went on to drop references to humour popular amongst the working and lower-middle class – once again, Jim Crow and Dickens – while making sly comment on the taste of the upper class. Wishing to ‘do the thing properly’, the two Radical interlopers:

…mounted a new Jim Crow hat, velveteen jacket, leather smalls, blue stockings, half boots, and tied a swinging blue hankerchief round our necks; and having been told by Sam Weller that when a man’s at Rome he must do as Rome does, we put our bright round tobacco-box into our jacket pocket, together with a couple of short pipes.

After the first dance refreshment were brought over, ‘glasses of gin, wine, rum, cake, and a few pots of half-and-half’. As the two disguised Radicals observed Powerscourt ‘we could not help pitying his lordship, for he had two such fat girls on his knees.’ Next, Powerscourt was called upon to sing:

Don’t mention Roebuck’s name to me –  
Its sound I never hear  
But it causes my thing legs to shake,  
And my heart to quake through fear.  
’Tis time that I defeated him,  
With other people’s pelf,  
But if another contest comes  
I shall be laid on the shelf.

This gave the ball a melancholic mood until somebody proposed another dance. Powerscourt acceded to requests to dance ‘Dusty Bob to Lady H’s Black Sal’. Dusty Bob,

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139 *Western Vindicator*, 13 April, 1839.
the archetypal dustman and his companion, Black Sal, a black woman usually depicted in exaggeration, were common tropes in Victorian literature. The song that the pair danced to, the ‘liter-rary dustman’ is a recurring title, the text of which often mocks the intellectual aspirations of the lower orders.\(^{140}\) The irony of Powerscourt dancing to the song would not have been lost on the readership.

When everyone sat down again they immediately ‘partook of heavy, gin, wine, &c.’ This drinking led to sexual immorality and physical violence amongst a group described in the imagery of Georgian grotesque humour:

> We had well nigh a regular row. For there was a little stumpy fellow, with bandy legs, who had brought a carroyt-haired six-foot girl to the ball – he had gone down the room to light his pipe and fetch her a glass of gin, when Col. Daubeney, taking a cowardly advantage of his absence, had talked some soft nonsense to her in a corner.

When the man returned he demanded instant satisfaction. The Colonel replied coolly:

> ‘Sir, I know not who you are. But mark me, I consider every lady in a ballroom…is public property.’ The Colonel was promptly punched in the mouth, leading to a general fight that the two disguised Radicals watched, laughing. The night eventually ended with Powerscourt ‘so gloriously drunk that several of the ladies were laying him gently on the floor at one end of the room, after which they carried him out.’\(^{141}\)

Core to Vincent and Cleave’s style of journalism are liberal references to popular culture, particularly in the form of popular humour, and the use of satire as a means of completely inverting the established social order, showing the working class as the

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\(^{140}\) Brian Maidment, Dusty Bob: A Cultural History of Dustmen, 1780-1870 (Manchester, 2007).

\(^{141}\) Western Vindicator, 13 April, 1839.
virtuous observer and the authorities as clueless and debauched. This use of humour can be viewed in light of Bakhtin’s work on the carnivalesque, when the dispossessed would get together and challenge established power-relations and hierarchies through mimickery, humour and festivity. This is also analogous to E.P. Thompson’s notion of ‘counter-theatre’, or the theatrical means through which the lower classes gathered to resist upper classes and craft their own sense of self and political independence. Fundamentally, these attitudes seem key to the forms of satire developed in Cleave’s *Satirist* and Vincent’s *Vindicator*. In both cases, context is key: references to ‘the Swinish Multitude’ or Gog and Magog require awareness of politics and current events in Cleave’s work, while Vincent’s attacking of the Newport magistrates clearly requires some understanding of their personalities and even what they look like. But in clearly cleaving between the Radical working-class audience and the figure of fun in the form of a magistrate, an Alderman or Lord Powerscourt, Cleave and Vincent use the local context to build the sort of subversive identity that Thompson and Bakhtin discuss.

For both Cleave and Vincent, jokes were allowed to run on, for instance Cleave with his constant reworking of the Jim Crow lyrics, or Vincent with the attack on the ‘Chimpanzee’. The effect of this was to produce a reward for the loyal reader, who would develop a solid understanding of in-jokes, and thanks to the ‘hear/read’ system practiced in places like pubs, homes or workshops would likely share these jokes with a large number of other people. This was another means of building a Chartist community, but when viewed alongside more political and moralistic content, Cleave and Vincent’s jokes allowed readers to come to the clear conclusion that the people were more intelligent and better behaved that their ‘betters’. As with Cleave’s mixture of popular

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144 Ashton, ‘The Western Vindicatory and Early Chartist’, p. 68.
pleasure and politics, and the equally populist and radical *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* and *Reynold’s Weekly Newspaper*, Vincent’s satirical pose in the early years of Chartism points to a vibrant culture of humour, and appreciation of rather than displeasure for bawdiness. In the *Vindicator*, Vincent found a literary form that, like his socialising during his 1839 tour, allowed clear connection of politics and day-to-day culture. This was not just because of his astute appreciation of the value of popular culture, but, as the letters to Minikin reveal, because that was a culture he engaged in as well.

**Conclusion**

Vincent’s revival of Georgian satire couched in the moralism and self-improvement of Chartist literature had the effect of pursuing the same critique outlined by Anna Clark. The pages of the *Vindicator* were positing the existence of a moral and intelligent working class, and these virtues were contrasted with the vices of the ruling classes. Yet when compared with Vincent’s private correspondence to Minikin, his move to satire seems equally animated by an awareness of the bawdiness of working-class culture, a feeling that humour about sexuality, the body and bad behaviour was legitimate, and that fun and entertainment were as important as education and improvement. Furthermore, the influence of his co-workers, the continuing interest in Byron and Shelley and their sexual libertarianism, Hetherington’s sensationalism and populism and Cleave’s bawdy sensibilities all suggest that Vincent was far from eccentric in his appreciation for a dirty joke and his interest in sex. This underlines the importance of seeking out, whenever possible, the quotidian affairs of prominent public figures, and the broad social networks in which literature is disseminated and produced. Just as George Loveless’s Radical literature was strongly coloured by his Methodism and his role in that community, Vincent’s sense of masculinity and sexuality was developed in the West End and directly
fed into the literature he produced in Bath. A study of Vincent was famed for his support of women’s activism, self-improvement and democracy, and on its own Vincent’s satire seems an acerbic but ultimately moralistic attack on the upper classes. His private life undercuts these interpretations, and suggests that Chartist culture was far from austere. Sex and jokes had a clear place in Chartism’s community and viewpoint.

The general merger of Radical literature and bawdy populism throughout the 1840s and into the 1850s was because these Radicals themselves, despite intellectual and often material distinction, still understood and appreciated popular culture, even in its lowest forms. With this it supports Iain McCalman’s suggestion that the London Radicals’ familiarity with obscene and pornographic literature informed his populism and, in turn, influenced the next generation of publishers and editors. It also correlates with Peter Bailey’s study of respectability that argues that it was contextual and situational, and the distinction between Vincent’s public engagement with women and his private discussions with Minikin suggest that space was allowed for more than one masculine and moral identity in the movement. Chartism’s deliberate projection of civility and decorum in order to combat negative representations of the working class was a key element in the movement’s self-representation, but Vincent’s letters suggest that this public discourse and symbolism does not reveal the entire story of working-class homosociality and masculinity. Vincent clearly enjoyed sex as a topic, and the nature of his friendship with Minikin, his sexual practices in the West End and when on tour, and the wider literary culture of London illustrate how multifaceted these men and women’s lives were.
Chapter Four: ‘To move in a dignified way and place my own character high above reproach’: Credit, Social Mobility and the Emergence of Popular Liberalism

Introduction

Following his support for physical force and his baiting of the politicians of south Wales and the west of England, Vincent was arrested on a warrant issued by the Newport magistrates in May 1839, in August being sentenced to a year’s imprisonment in Monmouth Gaol. By the following March he was sentenced to a second year, this time in Millbank Penitentiary. After turning to Francis Place, the well-connected London Radical, autodidact and tailor of self-made wealth, Vincent secured a better regime at Oakham Goal and, ultimately, early release. Under Place’s influence he began to turn his back on his past, and with books from his new mentor’s library Vincent resolved to become a respectable businessman, turning from his adventurism and antagonistic Radicalism to a progressive, nascent Liberalism centred on moral reform.

This single case can be seen as a microcosm for the wider transition towards a politics of Liberal consensus rather than class antagonism that took place over the mid-nineteenth century. Brian Harrison, reading Vincent’s letters to both Place and Minikin, has seen in him a Liberal and teetotaller illustrative of popular Liberalism’s roots in Chartism.\(^1\) In the broader historiography, and particularly during the 1990s, Radicalism, Chartism and then Liberalism came to be seen as having a continuous rather than conflicting relationship with one another, and Vincent’s transition from firebrand to conciliatory moderate is

therefore what could be expected from a figure at the dawn of the emergence of populism in the latter half of the century. This populism, as Patrick Joyce outlined, ‘points to a set of discourses and identities which are extra-economic in character, and inclusive and universalising in their social remit in contrast to the exclusive categories of class.’ In this narrative the creation of such a universalising discourse became a focal point of the state’s efforts to induct the working class into the national polity, although largely on the state’s terms.

Robert Hall criticised this approach by pointing out what a ‘troubled passage’ this transition actually was, with the illegal and confrontational aspects of Chartism having to be problematically stripped from memory in order for the emergence of populist Liberalism to work, while Anthony Taylor has criticised the idea that Liberal ex-Chartists’ memory of Chartism are reliable accounts of the relationship between the two positions. This transition has also been studied in the post-1848 period, when Liberalism was in the ascendency and Chartism was in decline, and in studying Ernest Jones’s electoral campaign in Manchester in 1868 Taylor has highlighted the political compromises that had to be made when Chartists entered the Liberal Party. A study of Vincent can further this criticism by establishing the subjective aspects of this transition. By presenting a narrative of Vincent’s move to a Liberal position in 1842, it will be possible to establish

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3 Joyce, Visions of the People, p. 11.
what he sought to change about his character, and not just which aspects of Chartism’s political position he had to reject. Place not only convinced Vincent that he needed to adopt particular intellectual positions but also that he needed to adopt certain behaviours and become an independent businessman. Against Place’s advice, Vincent also yearned to become an MP, and in this endeavour and in the establishment of a printing office in Bath he went heavily into debt. His alliance with Joseph Sturge, the middle-class leader of the Complete Suffrage Union (CSU), and his new status as an employer of labour made him vulnerable to charges that he was selling out the Chartist movement, and ultimately led to his ex-communication both from Bath’s Chartist community and from the national leadership. For Vincent, the political and personal transition to popular Liberalism was tumultuous, but it highlights two things that contradict aspects of Joyce’s account. Firstly, populism did not come about easily but, in the 1840s, was part of a highly contested ideological terrain. Secondly, the extra-economic nature of an individual’s discourse does not make economics irrelevant. Vincent’s socio-economic position was still a crucial limit to what he could achieve in his pursuit for a new political and personal identity.

This chapter will investigate this transition by discussing first the discourses, skills and ideas Place sought to teach Vincent in order for him to become both a good Liberal and a good businessman. In this first section it will be argued that Vincent rejected the form of activism seen in chapters two and three as a response to his imprisonment. His turn to Liberalism, ‘respectable’ morality, his marriage and his desire to become a businessman were motivated by his poor treatment in prison and his desire to avoid a third sentence. It will then move on to discuss Vincent’s attempts to become a small capitalist. Vincent saw being a respectable business owner as a core part of his new identity, but with no capital of his own he could only draw from credit networks. The nature of ‘good
character’ as something formed by credit and access to wealth will here be discussed.\(^7\)

The final section will look at his political career after jail. By 1841 the Bath Chartists and the city’s Liberals attempted to re-forge the alliance they had attempted in 1838. In this, Vincent consciously adopted a respectable identity rather than a mischievous, bawdy one, and in seeking financial support for his candidature was consciously appealing to wealthy middle-class backers rather than the pub-going working class. His shift in character and his newfound supporters led to his being viewed with suspicion by the Bath Chartists, who although united in the ends of forming cross-class alliance were wary of his commitment to Chartism’s independence. What is ultimately clear from this narrative is how the discourse of populism did not negate economic issues, and nor did cross-class alliances come without class distinctions.

‘I have no sweet young lasses here to wile away my time with, or with whom I might fall away from the staid and sober regions of studious solitude’: The Prison Letters

The lack of substantial study of Vincent has meant that the best resource on his time in prison is Brian Harrison’s 1973 article ‘Teetotal Chartism’.\(^8\) Harrison does not go into much depth about Vincent’s prison experience, reading it instead as the straightforward

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cause of his shift towards teetotalism and moral improvement Liberalism, noting that ‘like Lovett, prison sharpened his temperance zeal.’ When Vincent’s prison experience is looked at in detail it is possible to see, firstly, what motivated Vincent to abandon the bawdy, insurrectionary, working class led form of Chartism he espoused before prison in favour of populist Liberalism with middle-class leaders. Secondly, Vincent’s case reveals much about the methods of this process, and what characteristics his newfound mentor, Francis Place, thought required for Vincent to be a successful Liberal.

Vincent’s initial approach to prison was notably optimistic. In May 1839 he told Minikin:

You may be sure I shall not lay on my back and count the cobwebs that hang from the ceiling, and as I have no sweet young lasses here to wile away my time with, or with whom I might fall away from the staid and sober regions of studious solitude into the pleasing, yet, I fear, naughty Elysium of young love’s reliefs, there is but little dought I shall make an effort to climb the steep hill of improvement.

This was a struggle, as at Monmouth his study was restricted. As with most prisons, religious texts were viewed as the only acceptable form of literature allowed for prisoners. Generally, however, his first months in Monmouth seem remarkably lax.

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10 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/15, Vincent to Minikin, 21 May, 1839.
Vincent was able to regularly write for the *Vindicator*, promising on its front page the week after his arrest that he would write an address every week. Fellow prisoners smuggled out these articles, which Francis Hill, the paper’s business manager, signed with pseudonyms to throw the authorities off the scent.\(^\text{12}\) Thanks to the loyalty of these prisoners Vincent also managed to smuggle notes out to Minikin and his mother. Vincent and the Chartists arrested with him were allowed to socialise, and were also allowed access to the criminal class of prisoners, one of whom they taught to read and write. An article inserted in the *Vindicator* titled ‘Monmouth Gaol Fashionable News’, a spoof of the society pages of upper-class newspapers, suggests that in these early days his biggest problems were repetition and boredom:

> Mr. Vincent went to bed on Monday night, ditto Mr. Townsend, ditto Mr. Edwards.
> Ditto every night of the week ditto.
> P.S. Messrs. Vincent, Townsend, and Edwards, get out of their beds themselves every morning.
> We are happy to announce that the appetite of Mr. Edwards is excellent, it is truly delightful to see him drinking and eating his breakfast.
> It is a matter of great surprise in Monmouth, that Mr. Vincent, when he walks up and down his prison yard, puts one foot before the other.
> Mr. Townsend is universally admired by the ladies of Monmouth for the superiority of his address; and the fact of his opening his mouth when he speaks excites the greatest attention. – *Court Gazette*.\(^\text{13}\)

After his bail period he returned to Monmouth in July. Again he seemed upbeat, telling Minikin that he was looking forward to going to trial to give ‘the people proof of my

\(^{13}\) *Western Vindicator*, 15 June, 1839.
honest devotion to their cause. After this, it would not be until February 1840 that he spoke to Minikin again as Minikin’s letters to him had been confiscated. Vincent spoke of ‘severe privations’ and ‘petty annoyances’, complained of the ‘skilly, rotten potatoes, and bad bread’, but repeatedly assured Minikin that he was in good spirits, a claim that conflicts with the rest of the letter’s content. Vincent had been ill for the first three months of his sentence, and of the three Chartists incarcerated with him only Edwards had not been released. The letter’s tone also suggested anger and exhaustion, as Vincent had just received papers informing him he faced three more trials, making it possible that he would spend most of the decade in prison.

As he expected, the second trial on one of the Wiltshire indictments in March 1840 led to another year of jail, but this time he was to move to the notorious Millbank Penitentiary. Millbank, the national penitentiary, was built on the site on which Bentham intended to build his panopticon, and from the outset implemented a harsh regime of solitary confinement, hard labour, and poor food. Throughout the 1820s the prison was racked with rebellions by inmates who favoured the lack of discipline in the older prisons, while the poor diet and the building’s location on marshland led to outbreaks of disease that caused the jail to be temporarily closed. Although the regime was more moderate upon reopening, by the 1840s poor diet was an established part of prison discipline. It also possessed harsh policies on solitude and contact with the outside world. Millbank’s rules relating to correspondence and visits stated that a prisoner ‘may write one letter to his or her friends,’ and although four months later they could write again or receive a visitor, they could not do both. Love letters were not allowed, nor were

14 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/20, Vincent to Minikin, 31 July, 1839.
15 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/21 Vincent to Minikin, 15 February, 1840.
16 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/21 Vincent to Minikin, 15 February, 1840.
18 Ignatieff, A Just Measure of Pain, pp. 175-177.
letters from those deemed unrespectable. Francis Place felt that Vincent’s move to Millbank was a political decision, telling Lovett: ‘The reason assigned for his removal was that at Monmouth he could not be prevented writing and abusing the Government, so he was sent to the Penitentiary where he could be prevented.’

Place had known Vincent since 1836, when he entered the LWMA, and had already formed an opinion of him as being ‘honest’, albeit over-excitble. In April 1840, Henry’s mother visited John Cleave to complain about the conditions at Millbank. Cleave then wrote to Place to ask him to inquire about the rules of the prison with his contacts; Place then wrote to Serjeant Thomas Talfourd, the MP who had prosecuted Vincent and who now greatly regretted the treatment not only of him but of most other Chartist prisoners. Place told him that Vincent was ‘a very young man, an exemplary son and a good brother…misled by the temptation, flatteries and attentions paid to him’ during his tours of the west, and attached a petition for parliament.

This worked, and in June 1840 Vincent wrote to Place, seeking his aid in securing him better conditions following a transfer to Oakham Gaol, where Vincent was allowed more correspondence and visiting rights. Although in his last letter to Minikin during his time in Monmouth Vincent claimed to be ‘as happy as ever’, despite the prospect of being sentenced to another ‘year or two’, in his letter to Place two months later he was clearly tired and demoralised. Vincent complained that he could only read religious works the Chaplain had lent him, retarding his intention to improve himself in prison. He was

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20 RPWME 2: Place to Lovett, 4 June, 1840, Reel 33.
21 RPWME 1: Place to Lovett, Vincent, Hartwell, 2 December, 1838, Reel 50.
22 RPWME 2: Cleave to Place, 9 April, 1840; Place to Talfourd, 20 May, 1840, Reel 36; Robert Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (London, 1976), p. 178.
23 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/27, Vincent to Minikin, 28 March, 1840.
allowed to wear his own clothes, but otherwise was governed by the same rules as the other inmates. He had to eat with his fingers, and his food consisted of bread, gruel, potatoes and 1 ½ pounds of meat a week, which he found ‘insufficient, not as much in quantity as quality’, and told Place that he had requested permission to purchase extra nutritious food:

…for having been in prison so long upon the poorest sort of food I…do seriously feel the want of better…had I not been blessed with the best of constitutions I should have barely survived the first nine-months confined in the cell at Monmouth.  

In his first letter to Minikin from Oakham, he promptly complained about the food: ‘I really cannot drink the gruel – I am thoroughly sick of it.’ The diet was a common complaint of prisoners, and not least political prisoners who felt that they deserved better; in the 1840 interviews of Chartist prisoners arrested in 1839, they frequently complain of the poor diet and illness. In a petition written by Lovett for Parliament, he described ‘what was called beef soup…there was no other appearance of meat than some slimy, stringy particles, which, hanging about the wooden spoon, so offended your petitioners’ stomachs that they were compelled to forego eating it.’ Thomas Cooper ‘loathed the very sight of the meat.’ The diet was held to be sufficient, and in fact was attacked for being far better than the diet in workhouses, yet it was not balanced. Vegetables were not provided beyond potatoes, and when they were removed following blights prisoners frequently got scurvy.

24 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 22 June, 1840, Reel 34.
25 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/28, Vincent to Minikin, 12 June, 1840.
26 NA: HO 20/10.
Owing to his food, Vincent would have frequently had diarrhoea, piles, indigestion, parasites and flatulence, and his lowered immune system was complemented by cramped and unsanitary living conditions.29 Unsurprisingly, death and ill-health was a preoccupation of his. In March 1840, after hearing of his friend the wealthy solicitor W.P. Roberts’ conviction, he told Minikin that ‘I very much fear that two years will be the death of Roberts’.30 After the first few months in Monmouth he was confined to the infirmary and instructed to take ‘a bucket full of medicine’.31 At the end of February 1840 he was ill for two weeks, and had to ‘undergo the operation of cupping to relieve the over-flooded blood vessels of my head’, which most likely made him far worse.32 Even in Oakham the threat of death was very real, and Vincent was particularly moved by the death from starvation of a button-maker who stole a spoon simply to go to jail and receive regular food.33

Alongside fears about his diet and health, he also clearly craved social contact, and also probably sexual contact, as he informed Minikin in February 1840 that he missed the women of Bath.34 He was also clearly overjoyed to be writing to him once again, and was particularly anxious that his mother should be granted an order from the Secretary of State to visit him. His first letter to Minikin from Oakham expressed relief and exhaustion:

Being enabled freely to communicate with you, you can better conceive than I can describe the pleasure I feel in opening the correspondence. Intercourse with our friends is one of the most delightful enjoyments of human life; but how much is that enjoyment

30 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/26, Vincent to Minikin, 20 March, 1840.
31 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/21, Vincent to Minikin, 15 February, 1840.
32 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/23.i, Vincent to Minikin, 28 February, 1840.
33 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/35, Vincent to Minikin, 28 September, 1840.
34 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/23.i, Vincent to Minikin, 28 February, 1840.
enhanced when we are enabled to commingle our sympathies after a long and painful separation.\textsuperscript{35}

It is therefore clear that the context of Vincent’s turn to ‘temperance zeal’ was a period of anxiety, depression and exhaustion. His biggest fear by this point was the very real prospect that, with more indictments pending, he would be returned to prison soon after his release. He requested that Minikin accompany his mother on her visit, since ‘as far as you seeing me in London (perhaps for years to come) is out of the question – God only knows when I shall break through the multiplicity of my prosecutions.’\textsuperscript{36} He informed Place that he had ‘two or three more indictments pending’, and because of their political nature they would ‘follow me up to the grave.’\textsuperscript{37} Considering that the longest sentences in English prisons were three years in the 1840s Vincent was anticipating a remarkably long period in jail, with inevitably declining health and cut off from his friends, family and political action. Even Lord Russell thought a ten-year imprisonment ‘a punishment worse than death’.\textsuperscript{38} Alongside this, he faced bail of £500 with two sureties of £100, on the condition of good behaviour for five years. He requested Place aid him secure his liberty, limply asserting that he didn’t care for imprisonment but would be more useful for the cause if at liberty.\textsuperscript{39}

Once in Place’s care, Vincent’s experience of jail began to clearly improve. By June 27\textsuperscript{th} Place, with aid from Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, the Radical MP who supported Chartist prisoners, had managed to get Lord Normanby to grant Vincent special status, and Vincent was allowed better food, books and visitation rights.\textsuperscript{40} By July 20\textsuperscript{th}, Vincent’s

\textsuperscript{35} LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/28, Vincent to Minikin, 12 June, 1840.  
\textsuperscript{36} LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/28, Vincent to Minikin, 12 June, 1840.  
\textsuperscript{37} RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 26 June, 1840, Reel 34.  
\textsuperscript{38} Cited in Ignatieff, \textit{Just Measure of Pain}, p. 201.  
\textsuperscript{39} RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 26 June, 1840, Reel 34.  
\textsuperscript{40} RPWME 2: Place to Vincent, 27 June, 1840, Reel 34.
mother had been staying with him for three days, and he wrote to Minikin to thank him for books and food that he had sent him. ‘Upon my soul’, he added, ‘I wish I had you with me for a month.’ By September, he was allowed to stay awake until eight at night in the winter instead of four in the afternoon, ‘for which I feel truly thankful’, and he spent his days reading and writing. Vincent was now in a position where Place had gained for him far better conditions, and with his proven influence over Radical MPs and access to the Home Secretary Vincent was wise to maintain the correspondence. Well-connected political prisoners were a serious problem for the state, as they brought the attention of powerful men such as Talfourd and Duncombe, both MPs, onto a prison system that typically dealt with inmates with little influence and of low social position. Vincent’s use of these connections to resist the prison’s disciplinary regime should not be overstated, however. Ultimately the disciplinary regime of the prison succeeded in its function of reforming his character, albeit by following an unusual path.

In Michel Foucault’s account of the reformatory techniques of the prison the isolation that so clearly troubled Vincent was a major principle of the reformatory system:

…solitude assures a sort of self-regulation of the penalty and makes possible a spontaneous individualization of the punishment: the more the convict is capable of reflecting…the more lively his remorse, the more painful his solitude.44

41 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/31, Vincent to Minkin, 20 July, 1840.
42 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/35, Vincent to Minikin, 28 September, 1840.
43 Brown, English Society and the Prison, p. 140.
In the first months at Monmouth Vincent was surrounded by friends and with the *Vindicator* as his outlet had an avenue of resistance. Following Millbank, he discovered that isolation ‘provides an intimate exchange between the convict and the power that is exercised over him.’ Depression, disillusionment and a shift in politics were not unusual amongst the Chartist prisoners. The interviewer of Chartist prisoners commented in 1840 that ‘a very trifling encouragement’ would make Timothy Higgins ‘emigrate to the U.S.’ Thomas Cooper, who suffered under a similar regime to Vincent before being granted similar privileges following the intervention of Duncombe in March 1841, wrote his epic poem *The Purgatory of Suicides* in Stafford Gaol, and left a free-thinking atheist opposed to his former close ally O’Connor’s leadership. After his release in 1845 he sought to ensure that he was not returned to gaol by adopting a policy of absolute non-resistance, rejecting the Chartist rhetoric of self-defence and even arguing that it was morally wrong to kill someone attempting to kill one’s wife and child.

William Carrier, the physical force leader of the Wiltshire Chartists and a very capable ally of Vincent’s who was arrested in the wave of repression throughout the west, emigrated soon after his release in 1841, partly because his wife had an affair while he was in gaol. William Potts, another Wiltshire Chartist in this wave of arrests disappeared from the movement after his release. Robert Hall has highlighted how the leadership in the Ashton region

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46 NA: HO 20/10, Interview of Timothy Higgins.
suffered in prison between 1840 and 1843, often resenting the lack of aid and support from a grassroots they considered ungrateful.51

What is remarkable about Place and Vincent’s relationship is the manner in which Place takes on the role of the prison tutor, exhorting inmates ‘to contemplate their lives and repent the habits and mentalities that led to wrongdoing.’52 It was Place’s guidance that directed Vincent, like so many other imprisoned Chartists, towards changing his political position, and because of this their correspondence should be seen as part of the prison’s regime. Vincent’s sense of disillusionment, along with physical discomfort, isolation and a fear of remaining in prison motivated him to take up Place’s offer to ‘write to me as often as you please and at as much length as you please.’53 Immediately, Place began instructing Vincent on his manners, telling him that his writing style was ‘slovenly’.54 In the next letter Vincent thanked Place for his ‘hint on letter writing’, assuring him he ‘will endeavour to profit therefrom.’55 Unsurprisingly for a compositor Vincent was a remarkably good letter writer who made very few mistakes in his correspondence with Place and Minikin, but he was also familiar and often informal. What Place wanted to inculcate within him was not a convivial writing style but rather an officious, respectful one. Good letter writing was seen as central in the lives of the bourgeois tradesmen who relied upon coherence and saw non-ostentatious characters as dependable, and to the increasingly sophisticated and formalised everyday life of business.56 It was held that if

53 RPWME 2: Place to Vincent, 20 June, 1840, Reel 34.
54 RPWME 2: Place to Vincent, 20 June, 1840, Reel 34.
55 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 6 July, 1840, Reel 34.
letters were ‘respectful of social rules and customs, so too were their writers.’ Place’s archive is itself testimony to these beliefs, since he copied not only most of the letters he wrote, but also some of those he received: ‘as he did not write briefly the physical effort alone must have been considerable.’ The message got through to Vincent, as he evidently laboured over the next letter to Place, copying certain elements of Place’s own writing style, in particular his habit of restating at the beginning of each paragraph the topic that it was addressing.

Alongside this was a general education on works supplied by Place from his library. Vincent learned about geography, history and French, but was particularly taken with Godwin and political economy. Engaging in this reading was not just a political education but a matter of reforming moral character. Vincent took pains to make clear to Place that he was adopting a rational character, and abandoning the impetuousness and impatience Place attributed to both him and many of the younger Chartists: ‘My desire is to learn; and to do all the good I can in pushing on the improvement of my fellow workmen; and if occasionally I take a wrong step attribute it to my head rather than my heart.’ Like much of the working class Vincent had an interest in learning since his childhood, but this autodidactism was limited to widely available tracts like Cobbett and popular second hand copies of popular works such as Shakespeare; under Place’s


Thomas, ‘Francis Place and the Working Class’, p. 69.

RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 6 July, 1840, Reel 34.

RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 29 August, 1840, Reel 35.
tutelage, this education could become both more directed and more expansive. In particular, the utilitarian Place was keen to teach Vincent to reason, telling him bluntly that he would lose his vanity ‘if you should learn the art of reasoning…on a broad scale, as I hope you will.’

He went on to outline to Vincent how he could combat this ‘vanity’ by critically appraising Godwin, and firmly coming to his own opinions, through reason, on the works. Vincent wrote back to tell him that he was enjoying Political Justice, going so far as to claim that ‘I know not that I have ever derived more pleasure - and I hope instruction than from this book’, a statement that bears comparison with his earlier one to Minikin in which he claimed to find no better pleasure than the company of young women. By December, just prior to his release, Vincent declared himself to Minikin ‘a real down, upright, slanting, and octagonal Tee-totaller’, and claimed that ‘mind is appearing where previously all was mud - drunken mud’. The influence of Godwin was clear, as Vincent believed that mankind was fundamentally progressive and self-improving, but this progress was hindered by blind faith, submission to authority, and a mistrust of man’s ‘own powers’, all of which could be overcome if the population simply spent more time in rational reflection. Teetotalism was a means of achieving this, and Vincent announced not only his own pledge to stay off of all alcohol, but a political plan to advocate teetotalism amongst the working class: ‘The time now spent in drinking will then be spent in thinking, and…thought is Democracy!’

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62 RPWME 2: Place to Vincent, 9 September, 1840, Reel 35.
63 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 25 September, 1840, Reel 35; LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/6, Vincent to Minikin, 18 June, 1837.
64 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/40, Vincent to Minikin, 1 December, 1840.
65 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/36, Vincent to Minikin, 5 October, 1840.
Now strict teetotalism was central to his political philosophy, and during October he intended to write with Cleave the document that would become ‘the Teetotal Pledge’. At the end of December he expressed frustration with Lord Normanby, who thought that it was too early in Vincent’s sentence to grant him an early release. Vincent believed that Normanby had made a mistake, as Vincent only had twelve weeks left, and requested that Place should write to the Home Office on the topic. He considered the National Charter Association (NCA) ‘illegal’ (it technically was) and ‘childish’, and wrote that he had told one of the ‘Managers’ in Manchester that he wanted nothing to do with it. He then told Place that he still wanted to form associations in towns across the country, although in this case for the dissemination of ‘Political, Moral and Scientific Information’.66 The next day Place wrote to Talfourd, requesting that he again intercede in Vincent’s case, and help Place raise the issue with Normanby and the Home Office. Place gave assurances that Vincent was a reformed character, and planned to forward Vincent’s letters to him to Normanby in order that he see for himself.67 Although in February 1840 he had resolved to never plead guilty or ‘give heavy bail for my good behaviour’ standing instead in defiance ‘like a man’, by the following January Vincent was arranging the bail that would secure his release.68

Vincent’s denunciation of much of the Chartist body and his regret at his own behaviour is similar to the trajectory of prison narratives that were often encouraged by tutors as part of the disciplinary regime of the prison.69 As a political prisoner, Vincent was anxious and aggrieved by the denial of important aspects of his identity – the ability to

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66 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 31 December, 1840, Reel 36.
67 RPWME 2: Place to Talfourd, 1 January 1841, Reel 36.
68 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/21, Vincent to Minikin, 15 February, 1840; RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 26 January, 1841, Reel 36.
read and write, and his ability to be political active. He found the diet and illness intolerable and faced the very real prospect of several more years in several different prisons, with the possibility that he may not even survive. In this context his conversion to popular Liberalism, although no doubt following genuine reflection, was simultaneously a negotiation for his release. As he told Place in the letter requesting he appeal to Normanby:

If the other indictments are dropped, I will give no just cause for further proceedings. If I am proceeded against, therefore it will be from a sheer love of persecution. I shall act as the law allows every englishman [sic] to act. I am sure you would spit upon me if I act otherwise.\footnote{RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 31 December, 1840, Reel 36.}

Place suggested forwarding these letters to Normanby, in which case Vincent was making a direct appeal to the Home Secretary himself. For Vincent, moral improvement, teetotalism and Liberalism were arrived at as a compromise with the Home Office following the violence of incarceration: in releasing him early and dropping the indictments, his new politics were officially sanctioned as acceptable to the state. His experience underlines the extent to which repression and violence need to be kept in the accounts of the continuity of Radicalism and Liberalism, as well as the recurring, illiberal nature of the British state.\footnote{See John Saville, \textit{1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement} (Cambridge, 1990).} The stability and co-operation of the mid-Victorian years was partly bought by the successful repression of the Chartists of 1839, just as repression would follow the August 1842 strike wave and the agitation of 1848. However successful his intellectual transformation, outside of prison Vincent was to find that the petit-bourgeois, morally high-toned life that Place had steered him towards was to be one of great moral, political and fiscal complexity.
‘Robbed, plundered, cheated on all sides’: Credit, Debt, and Aspiration

In these last months in prison, as Place offered an avenue to release and the prospect of his indictments being quashed, Vincent wrote to Minikin asking for his help in changing his character:

I want to move in a dignified way - in a manner that shall excite attentions - elicit approval - win converts to our glorious cause - create no prejudice - dissipate old prejudice - and place my own character high above reproach - I have my own plans - but I must consult you.72

Vincent now had a project to become a respectable politician, unlike the one who advocated self-defence, drank in inns and spoke of revolution seen in the preceding chapters. A major part of this was Vincent’s turn to business. During one of their discussions of Godwin, Place advised Vincent to avoid itinerancy, stating: ‘I do not like travelling talkers, such as are now flourishing away in the North, stimulating in instructed men to commit mischief’, telling him instead to ‘turn at once to your business’.73 Vincent took this to heart, as a month later he reported that he expected ‘in conjunction with a friend to be in business in Bath soon after my release as a journal printer’.74 As part of this move to respectability he married John Cleave’s daughter Lucy less than a month after his release. This was almost certainly conducted for the benefit of his new image, since it was a rushed marriage to a woman whom he only mentioned once in passing in his previous correspondence to Minikin. It also seems to have been done in secret; John Cleave knew nothing about it and was angry that the relationship made it look like a

72 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/40, Vincent to Minikin, 1 December, 1840.
73 RPWME 2: Place to Vincent, 11 November, 1840, Reel 35.
74 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 31 December, 1840, Reel 36.
condition of his agitation for Vincent’s release was the marriage, although eventually the trio reconciled.\textsuperscript{75} A few months after the wedding, Lucy was pregnant. As part of his teetotalism, Vincent had also given up on drink completely.

Place had advised Vincent to act ‘discreetly’ if he wished to maintain his freedom, and warned him what was ‘likely to follow from any other course than that which I pointed out to him.’\textsuperscript{76} Vincent was duly overjoyed the following month when the Wiltshire indictments were quashed, and thanked Place for all his help.\textsuperscript{77} For Place, business was of great importance in the establishment of a respectable lifestyle. He praised the London Corresponding Society, of which he had been a member in the 1790s, for giving ‘stimulus to an immense number of men who had been but in too many instances incapable of any but the grossest pursuits, and seeking nothing beyond mere sensual enjoysments. It elevated them in society.’\textsuperscript{78} At a reunion of the Society in 1822 Place noted of many of his former associates that ‘they were now all in business all flourishing men’, a fact he attributed to the sort of education and correspondence that he himself had conducted with Vincent.\textsuperscript{79} Six months after his release, and annoyed that Vincent was once again travelling the country, Place re-iterated to Vincent:

\begin{quote}
Go to your own business and become a man of business, for the next ten years; you may perhaps at the end of that time be in a condition to do some public service. You will be quite in time for enacting the Charter, or for doing any other great National good.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{76} RPWME 2: Place to Talfourd, 1 January, 1841, Reel 36. \\
\textsuperscript{77} RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 2 February, 1841, Reel 36. \\
\textsuperscript{78} Francis Place, \textit{The Autobiography of Francis Place} (London, 1972), pp. 198-99. \\
\textsuperscript{79} Place, \textit{Autobiography of Francis Place}, p. 199. For more on Place’s opinion of these men and their families, see: Iain McCalman, \textit{Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840} (London, 1988), pp. 26-49. \\
\textsuperscript{80} RPWME 1: Place to Vincent, 4 June, 1841, Reel 50.
By the end of his imprisonment Vincent came to believe that business was a means of gaining the character and the material independence required to be an effective politician. It is necessary to unpack this by looking at the economic aspect of the identity Vincent was trying to craft for himself. Vincent’s status as the son of a gold and silversmith, his uncle’s intervention to get him a job at Spottiswoode’s, and the inheritance that allowed him to live independent of his mother suggests that others in his family were relatively wealthy.\textsuperscript{81} Vincent was therefore of the insecure lower-middle class, familiar with the independence of business ownership, but for whom there was always the danger of downward social mobility.\textsuperscript{82} Although there are examples of apprentice compositors going on to found successful businesses, Patrick Duffy suggests that owing to the great expense of starting up a printing office it was likely the case that less than five per-cent of compositors set up their own businesses, with many of these likely failing.\textsuperscript{83} Their best chances of advancement were by taking jobs in editorial or management positions, for which their skills were well-suited.\textsuperscript{84} However, Vincent was friends with two of the most successful examples of men who moved from print work to owning their own business. Cleave and Hetherington were examples of what intelligent working men in the printing business could achieve, and Vincent was now the son-in-law of the former. It seems likely that this influence inspired him.

Another means of advancement was marriage, but there is little to suggest that compositors married into the lower-middle class as Hobsbawm suggests was common amongst skilled workers.\textsuperscript{85} Instead movement within the working class rather than

\textsuperscript{82} Andrew Miles and David Vincent, \textit{Building European Society: Occupational Change and Social Mobility in Europe 1840-1940} (Manchester, 1993), p. 23.
\textsuperscript{84} Duffy, \textit{The Skilled Compositor}, pp. 117-18.
upward mobility was the norm for this group.\textsuperscript{86} Vincent was therefore probably an exception when he married into Cleave’s family. Cleave’s name on the banner of the \textit{National Vindicator} listing him as its main national distributor indicates that he was an investor in his son-in-law’s paper and business, a commonplace amongst middle-class families, but even before he became Henry’s father-in-law they were close, as the last chapter outlined.\textsuperscript{87} Unlike Place, Vincent never broke with Cleave over his infidelity, and John remained a friend, fellow activist and business partner. Cleave gave his shop’s proceeds from the \textit{Western Vindicator} to Vincent’s mother, and his letter to Place on Vincent’s mother’s behalf initiated Vincent’s move to Oakham. Vincent also began working with him on the Teetotal Pledge while in jail.

Vincent’s partner in the new business was Robert Kemp Philp, a printer and newsvendor from Bristol and an executive of the National Charter Association (NCA), which Vincent had denounced to Place as ‘childish’ and ‘illegal’. With Philp Vincent was planning to buy a printing office in Bath and print the new \textit{Vindicator}. It is noteworthy that Vincent’s start-up capital was borrowed chiefly from only a handful of people, one being a member of the city’s Council:

In Bath a Conservative paper has failed – in consequence of which a splendid assortment of type – enough for a very large newspaper – and sufficient for a first-rate general printing office, posting bills, cards, circulars, pamphlets, &tc &tc, including two presses, with “fittings up”, &tc &tc &tc, have been for sale. This valuable stock was


purchased by Tories – and cost £800 – and in consequence of the failure of the paper – and the Tories being hardup – it has been offered for £300! Well, certain friends of mine thought they would endeavour to secure it for me and my friend Philp, by raising the money in loans – sufficient time however was not allowed, and the chance would have been lost had not my lady friend in Bath, who once offered me money (and of whom you have heard me speak) stepped forward, and, with one or two others, paid down £125 – the worthy alderman Crisp issuing Bills for the remaining sum – so the stock is secured.88

The assistance of old ally Alderman James Crisp, a master hatter and veteran Bath Radical, suggests that Vincent and his paper was considered a useful element in the ultimately successful plan to re-elect Vincent’s friend J.A. Roebuck as the MP for Bath at the next election. Crisp was also a self-made businessman, rising from hat-making to becoming a hat manufacturer and politician, and was an important Radical during the Reform crisis who had worked on Roebuck’s 1832 election committee, breaking with him over his support for the Poor Law reforms but allying with him again after his loss to Powerscourt. Crisp’s support for Vincent was not new, and he had in fact been present at his first visit to the town and remained by his side throughout 1838, both men part of that year’s attempts to form a cross-class Radical alliance.89 His putting forward £175 was a very significant investment, suggesting that not only did he trust Vincent not to do or say anything that would send him back to jail, but that he was also seen as a politically reliable ally in the 1841 election campaign. Crisp and Roebuck’s support for Vincent had been controversial since the first meeting in 1837, with the Liberal Bath and Cheltenham Gazette hostile to Chartism and Vincent personally.90 Despite this and the repression of the Bath Chartist movement in 1839, alliance with the middle-class

89 Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 17 October, 1837.
90 Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, 17 October, 1837.
Radicals was once again a possibility. The common interest the Chartists and the Liberals shared was the long-term plan to return Roebuck, and the arrangements behind Vincent’s new business were one aspect of this.

There were a number of differences between the Western Vindicator and the new venture. In 1838 Vincent recruited a number of men from Bath and Bristol to work on the Western Vindicator, but importantly and unlike in 1841 they did not have to buy a press, as of those men George Payne was an experienced printer, publisher and newsagent from Bristol who had served two years in prison during the war of the unstamped.91 The founding of a newspaper was an expensive business, with Hetherington’s press worth £1500 in 1837. In 1843 Feargus O’Connor claimed that the initial outlay of the Northern Star was £2000, and in 1845 claimed that the presses alone cost £2340. In 1847, he claimed that he had drawn nearly £10,000 from his estates in order to finance the project.92 Payne’s involvement with the Western Vindicator therefore saved the men from raising substantial start-up capital. In 1839 Vincent was only an editor, but in 1841 he and Philp had to buy their own press and therefore run both a printing office and newspaper.

The importance of credit was already known to Vincent through practical experience, thanks to his editorship of the Western Vindicator. Julian Hoppit observes of the late eighteenth century, ‘[a]ll businessmen were creditors and all businessmen were debtors’, and this was certainly also true of Francis Hill, the Vindicator’s manager.93 By August 1839, the Vindicator owed £29-15s-5 ¾d, largely in printer’s bills, while it was owed in

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91 David Williams, John Frost: A Study in Chartism (Cardiff, 1939), p. 137.
Having a press to run every week, with a newspaper to be distributed every Saturday, meant Hill was ‘a prisoner of his investment’, unable to ever stop work. Credit was an absolute necessity in the newspaper industry, where its ability to overcome the obstacles for money circulation of space and time was a weekly lifeline. Indicative of this is the fact that the debtors labelled ‘good’ rather than ‘bad’ in a list sent by Hill to Minikin owed £15-5s-0d, only just under half of the total amount owed, and equal to the entire profits of an issue selling close to the full print run. In the event the Vindicator struggled on with financial aid from John Frost and Minikin, but this too was finite. Hill summed up the problem well when he complained to Minikin: ‘Robbed, plundered, cheated on all sides…getting into debt with the printer, often times receive about £8 from receipts, have to pay £16 – no capital to fall back on – is enough to make Lucifer himself sick and ill at ease.’ With no surplus capital to plug gaps and make up for delayed or non-existent debt payments, the Western Vindicator would only get pushed further and further into reliance upon its creditors.

These problems still remained in 1841, exacerbated by the fact that the National Vindicator was not as popular as the Western Vindicator had been. On top of this, the city’s Radicals and Chartists provided the office with little custom. Lucy expressed the problem in a letter to Place, when she told him that ‘Bath has not Radical printing enough in it to support two families almost without capital’, and told Place that one of the reasons Vincent was travelling so much was to drum up business. This was a serious problem as the Bath and Bristol region was also an extremely competitive environment. Both cities

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94 LHSAC: LP/VIN/3/5/1, Hill to Minikin, 28 August, 1839.
96 LHSAC: LP/VIN/3/5/1, Hill to Minikin, 28 August, 1839.
98 LHSAC: LP/VIN/3/6, Hill to Minikin, 10 October, 1839.
99 RPWME 2: Lucy Vincent to Place, 6 June, 1841, Reel 38.
had a large number of cheap presses, largely due to wandering apprentices who had never finished their time accepting half pay from their employers, thus driving down wages. In 1850 in Bath, the establishment wage was 25s, with 64 journeymen and 49 apprentices in work; in Bristol, the wage was 24-25s, with 120 journeymen and 100 apprentices, compared to the London wage of between 33s and 48s. Because of this provincial printers were cheaper than London, and were therefore the city’s ‘chief threat’. In 1841 Philp and Vincent’s business therefore combined a printing office in a highly competitive region with a newspaper with low circulation and, at only 2d, an extremely low price.

By July 1841 Vincent told Minikin that although the paper was ‘a losing speculation’, it was expanding its circulation, with good credit and ‘most demands regularly met’. But by January 1842, Henry’s mother-in-law, Mary-Ann Cleave, wrote to Place regarding Henry. She had moved to Bath to be with Lucy, who was ill, and also pregnant. The Cleaves had separated the previous year, but she evidently had independent wealth, since she had asked a third party, Mr Churchall, to write to John to ask for her ‘dividend’, which she received ‘immediately’. Part of this she used to pay rent, while she also pledged to pay Place two pounds she owed him. The crux of her letter, however, was about Henry, whom she found:

…in a good House well situated for business and with a good stack of printing materials, his business is increasing. He is putting up a steam press, and would do very well if he had a little capital to relieve him for a few months. He is making friends among the respectable people in the city who seem…to serve him in trade. Henry is embarrassed

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for about £250 which press him heavily until he can turn around – one or two friends
have helped him and he has written to Mr Leader asking the loan of a sum which he
feels confident he would be able to repay…I believe from what I have seen that if he can
overcome his temporary pressure he will do well. If you could speak a good word for
him to Mr Leader you will much oblige me. Henry will make any arrangement with Mr
Leader for the payment he has wrote all particulars to Mr Leader.104

In a very plain-spoken reply Place refused to help, pointing out that no matter how much
Cleave dressed it up, Vincent was already heavily in debt, ‘and again as you say, one or
two friends have helped him – and then you tell me he has written to Mr Leader…this is
a bad shewing just such a one as I expected, supposing it to be no worse than you seem
to think it is.’ He continued:

I have carefully observed the conduct of Vincent since he left London with his wife, I
have also carefully observed that of his partner Philp. I had a very strong desire to see
Vincent comfortably and respectably settled in the world, and had he proceeded as a
reasonable man would have done, so as to give me a reasonable assurance that he
deserved success, I would have gone great lengths to aid him. He has all along and in
every respect done the contrary. His conduct has been and is irrational and his
publication has been and is mischievous. The tendency of both is to excite ill blood to
produce extend and continue animosities…105

In attacking Vincent for taking on so much debt Place was utilising a double standard.
Credit was not only necessary for the appearance of success, but it was fundamental to
the operation of any sort of business and as such was central to all relations of
production and consumption. Yet for Place, it was a sign of irresponsibility and

104 RPWME 1: Cleave to Place, 29 January, 1842, Reel 50.
105 RPWME 1: Place to Cleave, 31 January, 1842, Reel 50.
immorality. Place would likely have been even angrier had Mary-Ann also mentioned that she was lending the pair a great deal of money. Jonathan Bairstow, an NCA Chartist visiting Bath wrote a letter to Thomas Cooper discussing the arrangement between Vincent, his wife and her mother, and criticising him in much the same way as Place:

‘Mrs Vincent is thought by all parties here to be young Harry’s master. She had lodgings in Bath – a guinea a week & there they flared up and spent mother Cleave’s…money.’

Bairstow’s implicit criticism that the Vincents were living a profligate lifestyle in a house that cost a pound a week by draining Mary-Ann of her money seems a reasonable one, yet Vincent’s house in Chandos Buildings was a classic example of the problem businessmen faced in constructing character:

An assumed identity sustained by the very commodities which it allowed consumers to purchase on credit, character was constituted in significant part by tradesmen’s continuous valuation and reevaluation of their customers’ status and social connections.

Contemporaneous political economists did make a distinction between money spent on production and money spent on consumption, but consumption was further divided into ‘productive’ and ‘unproductive’ forms. As Nassau Senior saw it, ‘[t]he characteristic of unproductive consumption is, that it adds to the enjoyment of no-one but the consumer himself.’ Productive consumption, on the other hand, ‘occasions an ulterior product.’

Nevertheless, conspicuous consumption of the sort Vincent was engaged in served a crucial social purpose: ‘[t]he duties of those who fill the higher ranks in society can seldom be well performed unless they conciliate the respect of the vulgar by a certain

106 NA: TS 11/600, Bairstow to Cooper, 1 July 1842.
107 Finn, The Character of Credit, p. 47.
display of opulence’. Credit ‘thus reflected character, but also constituted it’. In practice, such displays were an important aspect of all social groups, and even the poor used consumption to display social status. Mary-Ann’s invocation of their good building was an attempt to relay to Place the sense of respectability and good character that they hoped others read into their expensive house. Others in the city were likely to be in a similar situation. Margot Finn’s study of the Bath Court of Request books indicates that those in arrears to their landlords were dealt with with some leniency, resulting in a number of the city’s inhabitants paying for their homes on credit.

Place and Bairstow’s commentary on Vincent’s arrangements illustrate the manner in which credit was an alienating matter, turning individuals, like so much else, into objects of commodity exchange. Their attacks on Vincent ignored the fact that he needed credit to give the appearance of a successful business, which in turn brought more custom and opened up more lines of credit which would hopefully allow the business to survive and grow. This complex relationship meant that Vincent’s business life and his character became enmeshed, but it also meant that he could easily be dehumanised and objectified by men like Place and Bairstow as they assessed him:

Because of this completely ideal existence of money, man cannot detect what is counterfeit in any material other than his own person and must himself become counterfeit, obtain credit by stealth and lies, and this credit relationship both on the side of the man who trusts and of the man who needs trust, becomes an object of commerce, an object of mutual deception and misuse. Here there is still plain in all its clarity the mistrust that is the basis of economic trust, the mistrustful consideration of whether to

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112 Finn, ‘Debt and Credit in Bath’s Court of Requests’, p. 217.
give credit or not, the spying into the secrets of the private life, etc. of the person seeking credit; the betrayal of temporary difficulties in order to ruin a rival through the sudden shaking of his credit.\textsuperscript{113}

For Marx, people became objectified by such credit relations, which read money value not in money but in ‘human flesh and human heart’. The consequence was that ‘the man who has no credit not only has the simple judgement passed on him that he is poor, but also the moral judgement that he possesses no trust or recognition, thus that he is a social pariah, a bad man.’\textsuperscript{114} Vincent was trapped in a social relationship in which credit was necessary for the identity that would grant him more credit, and with that the possibility of life as a stable, independent business owner. This brought with it the alienation of moral admonishment and surveillance, paradoxically undermining his attempts to use his credit lines to form a good character.

Nevertheless, although Place and Bairstow partook in this alienation, Vincent’s social circle was willing to help him, both by trying to keep the business afloat and by bailing him out when it finally collapsed. Mary-Ann’s request for a loan was likely an emergency one, as the paper was wound up at the end of January, and by May, Vincent was, as in 1839, enlisting Minikin’s help in sorting through his debts. A man named Coe was claiming money, with Vincent complaining:

\begin{quote}
\textit{\£4 or \£5 must be the outside. I know that he offered that – and you can say that if he will not accede to that you will do nothing} - Why, it is Philp’s own debt – I am not morally bound for a farthing. He offered to give up the bill for \£5 – and unless the bill was given up, he would still hold a claim on one or both of us.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{114} Marx ‘On James Mill’, pp. 124-25.
The relationship between Philp and Vincent had completely broken down, although no-one makes reference to why their partnership had become so poisonous. In reference to a letter Philp had sent Minikin (and exhibiting the same sort of moralistic criticism Vincent himself was the target of) Vincent told him that: ‘Philp’s letter is like the man. He is an arrant villain,’ and that he was having trouble getting Philp to pay his half of the debts.\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/48, Vincent to Minikin, 30 May, 1842.} Vincent was also worried that Philp was seeking a discharge from his creditors independently of Vincent.\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/50, Vincent to Minikin, 22 July, 1842.} By the summer, Vincent had fled to Nottingham to escape his creditors: ‘I should tell you I am here because we expected the Writ, and I am anxiously waiting to be able to return.’\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/49, Vincent to Minikin, 13 July, 1842.} Bairstow reported that Philp had also fled because he was worried he would be imprisoned for his debts.\footnote{NA: TS 11/600, Bairstow to Cooper, 1 July, 1842.} In the event, Vincent seems to have borne the brunt of the repayments, turning to W.P. Roberts and Minikin for aid in paying off his creditors, with Minikin paying creditors 10s for every £1 lent.\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/49, Vincent to Minikin, 13 July, 1842.} Still in the same month, Vincent reported that ‘the writ is out’, and that he needed to pay off a man named Edwards. He instructed Minikin to ‘offer him half – and tell him if Philp will not pay him the other half at a future day I will.’\footnote{LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/51, Vincent to Minikin, 30 July, 1842.}

Credit possessed a multifaceted character as a means of pooling resources, a component of character and identity, but simultaneously a source of alienation and the demarcation of bad character. In trying to establish himself as an independent businessman, this double-standard was one of the problems he would have to negotiate. It is worth underlining Duffy’s suggestion that compositors who set up their own businesses were
likely to fail because of the expense.\textsuperscript{121} Even at the end of the century, many working-
class incomes ‘were so low that the chances of worthwhile saving were small’.\textsuperscript{122} The
ability to get the sort of capital together that Vincent would require would have been
beyond the reach of the savings of even skilled workers like the London compositors.
The establishment (non-piece work) wage in a London print office was 36s a week, and
whilst those on piece-work could make more from overtime and complicated or large
jobs, it would still require many years of saving to afford expensive fixed capital like a
printing press.\textsuperscript{123} Historians of the respectable skilled working class often highlight their
belief in independence, thrift and saving, but these were not avenues to the sort of
advancement that Vincent wanted.\textsuperscript{124} Saving provided nowhere near enough capital to
cover the start-up costs of a small business. Although Roberts, Minikin and his mother-
in-law all gifted him money when the business failed, this capital was clearly nowhere
near the amount that could be raised through credit or else they surely would have
provided it sooner. The establishment and extension of credit lines was therefore crucial.

Place’s attack in particular highlights the difficulty of navigating between the expectations
of good character and the reality of trying to attain it in practice. Following Place’s advice
Vincent saw business as a major component of his reformation, but this was a material as
much as a discursive aspect of his identity. The independence, good sense and
respectability granted by being a successful businessman would be lost to him, and with
this comes an important point to bear in mind: not all aspects of identity are extra-

\textsuperscript{121} Duffy, \textit{The Skilled Compositor}, p. 119.
economic, and there is a limit to what intellectual life and discourse alone can tell us about the efforts individuals go to in order to construct and develop their subjectivity. There was more to Vincent’s changing identity than teetotalism and Godwin. Forced after the failure of his business to become a travelling lecturer, Vincent had failed an important aspect of the course Place had laid out to him in prison, and as he predicted Place ‘spat on him’ for his failure. But the failure of his business also undermined another major element of this plan: the ability to be an independent activist, who could teach moral improvement and engage in uniting the working and middle-class wings of the Radicals through electoral campaigning. Entangled with Vincent’s struggles as a businessman, he was struggling to find the material resources to bolster his newfound Liberalism and his desire to enter Parliament. Along with this, there was another serious impediment in his transition to popular Liberalism: his friends and fellow activists were suspicious of his motives and his newfound middle-class allies, and utilised his new class status as a means of undermining him.

‘A change has come o’er the spirit of his dream’: Vincent as Pariah

As Malcolm Chase has argued, Chartism made a concerted effort to return candidates to Parliament. He identifies sixty-seven attempts to return either Chartists or candidates endorsed by the movement to Westminster between 1839 and 1860, of which Vincent’s attempt in Banbury in 1841 was the third. As he notes, the frequent convergence of Liberalism and Chartism in these elections should not be seen as an aberration, as both had the same Radical roots alongside similar language and aims. Yet in Vincent’s case the negotiations required to try and bring about a Liberal-Chartist alliance were

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126 Chase, ‘‘Labour’s Candidates’’, pp. 81-83.
127 Chase, ‘‘Labour’s Candidates’’, pp. 80-81.
complicated, and involved a substantially different form of activism from the type he practised in 1839. One aspect that needs highlighting in Vincent’s case is the expense that Vincent sought to project on these tours. Vincent consistently needed substantial amounts of money throughout these campaigns, and via Place sought loans and donations from Westminster Liberals. He impressed upon Place his credentials as a responsible businessman, advocate of moral improvement and convicted free trader in order to receive this money, but this in turn made Vincent politically vulnerable to Feargus O’Connor at the point at which he was aggressively attacking the New Move and what he saw as the threat of Joseph Sturge. What is clear from following Vincent’s first two electoral campaigns, in Banbury in 1841 and Ipswich in 1842, is that his attempt to bridge Chartism and Liberalism was undermined by both the financial cost and the unwillingness of the Bath Chartists to accept what seemed to them to be the imposition of middle-class leadership.

After his marriage and a few months rest, Vincent resumed his political career in March. Just prior to his release, his relationship with Place had been strong, with Place writing at the end of January that ‘I have seldom received a letter which has given me more pleasure than that which I have received from you today. Of your recently acquired knowledge you may be as I am proud.’128 Vincent soon returned to the road but this time as an evangelical teetotaller. During his bail period prior to his trial in summer 1839, Vincent took out a dissenter’s license so that he could legally give Chartist speeches. After his return from jail, he used it to develop a Chartist Church in Bath and give moralistic sermons around the country. In Northampton he ‘publicly administered the Tee-total pledge’, and also advocated the formation of libraries and lecture rooms. He added that he ‘rejoice[d] in being able to state that the public mind is much informed,

128 RPWME 2: Place to Vincent, 21 January, 1841, Reel 37.
and that it is on the march towards further improvement.\textsuperscript{129} Place was pleased with this, and noted that ‘your own improvement in really useful knowledge is proof to you of the immense value of such knowledge.’\textsuperscript{130}

Although Place was happy with this form of itinerancy, Vincent’s attempts to get elected vexed him. Before 1846 and the establishment of the National Central Registration and Election Committee, there was no centralised means of supporting Chartist candidates.\textsuperscript{131} As an independent with no official support, Vincent sought most of his funding from the middle classes. In June 1841 Vincent wrote to Place from his home in Bath to tell him that he had been called upon to contest Banbury in the upcoming election ‘with every prospect of success.’ He boasted that his lectures to the middle and working classes had been so popular, and the constituency was so small, that should there only be three candidates ‘my return is certain.’ He then told Place that ‘legal and other incidental expenses will not much exceed £100’, a substantial figure, and asked him to ask John Temple Leader, a reforming MP and aristocrat, for ‘pecuniary aid’. Notably, despite his teetotal politics Vincent had enlisted ‘Mr Barnes Austen, the great Brewer’ as one of his chief supporters in the constituency.\textsuperscript{132}

Place’s response sought to demolish Vincent’s enthusiasm by pointing out the flaws in his scheme. To begin, he focussed on the difficulty in ensuring voters pledged to him remained so, suggesting that the pledges were not a clear statement of voting intention but, in fact, a means of raising the price of their vote before it was sold to the Tories. He attacked him for his Radical’s naivety, telling him that ‘[y]ou talk like but too many others, as if honesty and patriotism were the rule among the electors, while the fact is

\textsuperscript{129} RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 23 March, 1841, Reel 37.
\textsuperscript{130} RPWME 2: Place to Vincent, 24 March, 1841, Reel 37.
\textsuperscript{131} Chase, ‘‘Labour’s Candidates’’, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{132} RPWME 1: Vincent to Place, 3 June, 1841, Reel 50.
that they who are honest go for nothing.’ He made it clear to Vincent that although £100 would ‘barely’ pay legal expenses, there would not only be a large number of other businessmen to pay but also ‘the master expense, the master crime, Bribery and this swamps all the others.’  

This exchange laid the seeds of Place’s sense of Vincent as morally irresponsible and reliant on other people’s money. After refusing to show the letter to Leader, Place finished by savaging Vincent, denouncing his itinerancy, telling him to return to his business and advising him to ‘leave off running about the country your wife with you, learning anything which can ever be of any use to either of you but much which is likely to tell in the contrary direction.’ The reply came from Lucy, since Vincent was in Wales and asked her to reply to his mail for him. Protesting that ‘I think he is not so much the creature of excitement as you seem to judge him’, she pointed out that ‘he has been hard-working night and day at his business’, adding that it was the limited wealth of the Radical community that was causing problems. After telling Place that she was with Vincent because she was sick and her doctor recommended it, she added: ‘I am happy to be able to state that I am sure Henry is really considerate as to his prospects in life, he is…persevering and industrious.’

This perhaps chastised Place into a change of heart, and he re-wrote to Vincent asking him for details about his campaign, with Vincent replying that there were no Tory candidates, and several Tories had pledged to vote for him rather than the Whig, Townsend. Vincent told Place he was ‘rather bothered’ in money matters, but, likely less confident in Place as a source of money, requested that he apply to the anti-Corn Law Committee in Westminster to send him money ‘if you can consistently with your general

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133 RPWME 1: Place to Vincent, 4 June, 1841, Reel 50.
134 RPWME 1: Place to Vincent, 4 June, 1841, Reel 50.
135 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 6 June, 1841, Reel 38.
policies’, asking for ‘but £30’. Place replied asking for Vincent to state what he stood for. Vincent replied that he was for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and for ‘free trade in all things’, and would vote for ‘every measure of reform that be proposed’. Only after that did he fleetingly mention that he was still a Chartist. He noted that several of his election committee were tradesmen, with ‘one or two men of fortune’, but ended the letter by claiming ‘£10 or £15 would save me’. Vincent went on to lose with 51 votes compared to the winner’s 124, but it is important to state that he was genuinely considering taking the seat. Vincent confided to Minikin the month before that although he had publicly promised workers that he would never take a seat in the ‘den’, and had planned to declare instead that ‘no respectable workingman could associate with such bad characters without injuring his reputation’, he was now wondering whether he should. The fact that he was so sure of his victory indicates that this was not mere fantasy and, importantly, that he planned funding a stay in Parliament through his own business and his various credit lines.

Simultaneously, Vincent had joined the National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People, founded in 1841 by Lovett, Cleave and Hetherington amongst others as a moral improvement organisation. The Northern Star, apprehensive about the formation of a Chartist organisation that could rival the NCA, promptly attacked the National Association as ‘a secret move’, which would have the effect of dividing the movement. A week later, Vincent’s name appeared on a long list of signatories of the National Association’s address, sent by Lovett to the Star for publication. Notably he was the first signatory other than the founder members,

136 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 13 June, 1841, Reel 38.
137 RPWME 2: Vincent to Place, 17 June, 1841, Reel 38.
138 LHSAC: LP/VIN/1/1/46, Vincent to Minkin, March 18, 1841.
139 Northern Star, 10 April, 1841.
suggesting no lack of enthusiasm on his part. The previous month Lovett had sat next to Vincent at the dinner to celebrate his release and return to politics. During his speech, Vincent neatly sidestepped the issue of his previous insurrectionary position by arguing that rather than ever being an extremist, in his political career he had always advocated nothing more than that which the Chartists requested of him. Problematically, however, after jail he had joined the NCA despite telling Place he did not want to since it was ‘illegal’ and ‘childish’, thereby putting one foot on both sides of a substantial, and steadily expanding, split.

As far as Place was concerned the NCA was extremist, but he approved of the National Association’s non-antagonistic moral improvement politics, telling Lovett that the address was ‘an excellent paper’, despite Cleave’s involvement. This was precisely the sort of organisation Place thought Vincent should become a member of, and judging by the intentions Vincent expressed in prison, his public alignment with Lovett and Cleave, his foundation of a Chartist Church in Bath and his advocacy of teetotalism, he had clearly begun supporting what Feargus O’Conor dismissively dubbed the ‘New Move’, of church, education and teetotal Chartism. Yet within a month a report appeared in the Star which detailed how Vincent had been called to a meeting in Bristol in which he was required to explain why he supported the New Move. After ‘much discussion and various explanations’, Vincent signed a rather terse declaration that noted he ‘approve[d] of the plan for bringing about an organisation proposed by Mr. Lovett and others’, but that he thought it ‘impracticable’ when opposed by the majority of Chartists. He then went on to say that the proposals in the address should only be put forward by the Executive, meaning the ‘managers’ of the NCA he had derided in his earlier letters to

140 Northern Star, 17 April, 1841.
141 Northern Star, 6 March, 1841.
142 RPWME 1: Place to Lovett, 30 March, 1841, Reel 50.
Place. He then assured the crowd ‘I shall do all I can to extend its operation’. The assembled meeting agreed that this was a satisfactory retraction.

O’Connor’s criticism of the ‘New Move’ was not because he was particularly opposed to teetotalism, education or Christian Chartism. As Dorothy Thompson highlights, the problem instead was that these ‘three movements appeared to be putting forward their programmes as alternatives to the National Charter Association rather than as organisations under the general Chartist umbrella.’ The danger was that the movement would become divided with a self-consciously respectable element, backed by middle-class reformers and MPs, positioning themselves external to the NCA and undermining Chartism’s greatest strength, the collective power of a national working-class movement. Vincent’s re-alignment with O’Connor and the NCA was instead a pragmatic decision when he realised the depth of feeling over the matter. However, his tepid renouncing of the National Association was reversed in October, when he re-published the address in the Vindicator, and once again appealed for unity. The Vindicator was considered an official Chartist paper, published with the authority of the Executive of the NCA, and thus the Star responded with condemnation, accusing Vincent of being:

…grieved that his friends, Lovett and Hetherington, should have fallen in their attempt to make themselves the end-alls and be-alls of the Chartist movements; should have found so few “rationals” among the working class to dangle at the tail of O’Connell, Hume, Roebuck, and the money lords.

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143 Northern Star, 15 May, 1841.
145 Northern Star, 9 October, 1841.
146 Northern Star, 9 October, 1841.
The charge of trying to sell out the movement to the middle class was a damaging one, with the experience of not only the Reform crisis but now the 1839-40 wave of repression making class alliances unpopular. Vincent’s bad management of the situation made him look capricious, with the _Star_ writing of him: “A change has come o’er the spirit of his dream”, which he has in no way yet accounted for’, and called for him to ‘give, publicly, some reason for the change’.147

Despite this attack, Vincent was not cast out of the NCA, and still had opportunity to continue another of the plans that he had formed in prison. At the end of July he wrote to Minikin about the ‘reorganising’ of the Bath movement, which had been severely disrupted by the 1839 and 1840 repression but was now re-establishing itself as a number of men returned from prison. Now, ‘[t]he middle classes are far more friendly, and many of them are coming over to us’.148 On the 19th December, the Bath Chartists organised a joint meeting with the city’s Committee of the Liberal Society, which was advertised as promoting the ‘union of the two classes who had hitherto been acting against each other, namely, the working and middle classes.’ The ban on the working classes using the Guildhall was lifted, and the Chartists and Liberals agreed at the meeting to mutually support one another’s programs, being the Charter and the repeal of the Corn Laws, respectively.149 O’Connor was advertised to speak at the joint meeting, although in the event he did not arrive in the city until six in the evening, and went on to address a meeting purely of Chartists. This meeting was recorded as being uncontroversial, with O’Connor praising Vincent as ‘the Benjamin Franklin of Chartism’.150 This was a compliment on many levels: Franklin was a compositor and printer as well as an intelligent, scholarly Radical and a hero of Vincent’s. Franklin’s status as the successful

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147 _Northern Star_, 9 October, 1841.
149 _National Vindicator_, 18 December, 1841.
150 _Northern Star_, 24 December, 1841.
owner of a printing business, having risen from an apprenticeship, a fact known to much of the audience who would have known of Franklin’s autobiography not least because Vincent frequently reprinted parts of it, also makes O’Connor’s phrase an implicit acknowledgement and celebration of Vincent’s position as a small capitalist. He went on to refer to Vincent’s uniting of the middle-class Radicals with the Chartists a ‘glorious victory over our foes’.\textsuperscript{151}

This strategy became problematic after the intervention of Joseph Sturge. In March, Vincent, his friend Roberts, and Philp signed their consent to the ‘Sturge Declaration’ at a conference at the rooms of the Bath Anti-Corn-Law Party, ‘alias Liberal Association’, the men with whom he had met in December with the implicit blessing of O’Connor.\textsuperscript{152} Sturge was a Quaker corn-miller and alderman in Birmingham, who following discussions at an Anti-Corn-Law meeting in Manchester in November 1841 drew a declaration for complete male suffrage. This declaration was then circulated, with signatories earning the right to attend a conference in Birmingham, where the CSU was founded.\textsuperscript{153} During the February 1842 conference, Sturge, his supporters and a number of Chartists, including Vincent, agreed that any future organising would adopt the whole Charter. However, there was serious disagreement over the replacement of ‘universal suffrage’ with ‘complete suffrage’, the abandonment of the Chartist name altogether, and the prospect of incremental reform rather than the wholesale adoption of the Charter’s six points.\textsuperscript{154} This split Bath’s Chartists. George Bartlett, a long-term friend of Vincent’s and one of the most influential Chartists in the city, was now a well-respected member of the NCA, an ally of O’Connor’s and a reporter with the \textit{Northern Star}.\textsuperscript{155} He submitted a

\textsuperscript{151} Gammage, \textit{Chartist Movement}, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Northern Star}, March 12, 1842.
\textsuperscript{153} Mark Hovell, \textit{The Chartist Movement} (Manchester, 1918), p. 243-44.
\textsuperscript{154} Thompson, \textit{The Chartists}, p. 264.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Northern Star}, 2 April, 1842.
hostile article reporting on Vincent’s speech during the meeting in which he pledged support of the declaration, which drew a prompt reply from Vincent, who felt that he and his friends had been defamed through Bartlett not reporting the fact that they would only support Sturge if Sturge supported the Charter. A public meeting was called to discuss the matter, with Bartlett defending himself by arguing that he included the ‘spirit’ of Vincent’s speech, if not the precise words.

The Star firmly came out on Bartlett’s side, but in attacking Vincent was keen to highlight how he was no longer of the same class as the main body of the Chartists. They noted that in the audience, ‘[m]any persons, who knew nothing of the proceedings, and some of them interested in Mr. Vincent’s printing establishment, were there to decide against Mr. Bartlett.’ After this, a ‘printer in Mr. Vincent’s employ’ proposed a resolution ‘written by Mr. Vincent’ attacking the Star and demanding Bartlett resign from being the district’s reporter. The resolution was also ‘seconded by a person in Mr. Vincent’s employ’.

The implication that Vincent was either paying his employees or threatening them into supporting him at a public meeting was one of the most serious ones that could be made about a democrat, subverting as it did the entire process that Vincent had been fighting for. Equally important, it also served to highlight the fact that Vincent was now an employer of labour, and no longer purely a worker. His previous celebration as the ‘Benjamin Franklin of Chartism’ was now inverted into criticism. After this, Vincent became a particular target for the Star, with only his friend Roberts, who still enjoyed the friendship of O’Connor, publicly defending him.

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156 Northern Star, 12 March, 1842; Northern Star, 19 March 1842.
157 Northern Star, 19 March, 1842.
158 Northern Star, 9 April, 1842; Northern Star, 23 April, 1842; Northern Star, 14 May, 1842; Northern Star, 25 June, 1842.
Although Bartlett had long worked with Vincent in Bath, he was now part of the body of the NCA for whom the idea of dropping the Chartist name was a class issue: ‘Loyalty to the name of the Charter and to the leaders of the Chartist movement meant loyalty to the experience of the past decade and to the men and women who had made up the agitation.’[^159] The battle in 1841 between the NCA and the Sturgites was a struggle over whether or not the working or middle class should lead the Radical movement. Bartlett was an abstainer and believer in self-improvement who like most Bath Chartist was supportive of an alliance, but his opposition to Sturge was due to a sincere fear that it would undermine Chartism’s independence.[^160] It was also quite likely an emotive issue, as Bartlett was one of the over 500 people imprisoned or transported in 1839-40, for whom the Chartist name and the full and immediate adoption of the six points had caused them serious privations and could not be abandoned easily.[^161] His attacks on Vincent, and Vincent’s own growing disillusionment with Bartlett’s ally O’Connor, meant that Bartlett had now established himself as the leader of the local movement. By June Vincent and Philp formed a new Chartist body meeting in a separate room from the traditional location at 3 Galloway Buildings, thus splitting the local movement between their faction and Barlett’s.[^162] This did not last long, however, and it was by the end of June that the *Vindicator* collapsed and Philp and Vincent fell out. During his trip that June, Bairstow wrote back to Cooper:

> They have 150 good paying members here; but Vincent’s treachery has been the means of destroying confidence in public men generally and dividing many from our cause. In Bath the Vindicator has been blown up – the entire concern sold – Vincent’s chapel shut up, his congregation dispersed, his friends curse him as a traitor and have now joined

[^162]: *Northern Star*, 18 June, 1842.
with Bartlett in the National Charter Association which is now likely to thrive in Bath.

Philp…has been spitting his venom against you and me here in Bath to a contemptible
clique of the Sturgites – but it is no go.163

The dispute over who was to lead an alliance of workers and the middle class was an
important one. If histories of the development of populist Liberalism were to extend
back to the early 1840s rather than starting after Chartism’s defeat in the 1850s, it would
be clear that its growth was in fact resisted during the apex of the Chartist movement. As
Neville Kirk illustrated with his critique of Gareth Stedman Jones, Chartists were anxious
about and hostile to middle-class Radicals for broad cultural, social, economic and
political reasons.164 Further, they were ‘uncompromising in their insistence that [lower
middle class] allies join the Radical movement on Chartist terms’, a position that James
Epstein refers to as a ‘counter-hegemonic ambition’.165 Vincent’s status as a small
producer was not incompatible with Chartism, and O’Connor’s comparison of him to
Franklin and his approval of the alliance between the Bath Liberals and Chartists is
illustrative of how various shades of the middle class could be incorporated into the
Chartist movement.166 The recurring attempts to ally the middle class of Bath to the
Chartists, broken by the 1839 repression but restarted when the local Chartists returned
from jail, is further indicative of this. Yet what O’Connor and other Chartist leaders
feared was a parallel reform movement that did not agitate under the Chartist banner and
that, without working-class leadership, would betray the workers in a repeat of the 1830s.

163 NA: TS 11/600, Bairstow to Cooper, 1 July, 1842.
164 Neville Kirk, ‘In Defence of Class: A Critique of Recent Revisionist Writing Upon the Nineteenth-
165 James Epstein, In Practice: Studies in the Language and Culture of Popular Politics in Modern Britain
(Stanford, 2003), p. 25.
also notes that the cross-class alliance within the Birmingham Political Union broke down because it “was
increasingly at odds with workplace reality”, in ‘An Alliance with the Middle Class: the Birmingham
Political Union and Early Chartism’ in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds.) The Chartist Experience:
In itself, Vincent being a capitalist was acceptable, but it was a means of attacking him when his loyalties started to be questioned.

After leaving Bath Vincent publicly aided Sturge in his campaign to be elected in Nottingham. But it is worth re-iterating his money troubles, the fact that he had moved to Nottingham to escape his creditors, and that he told Minikin he wanted to return to London. Vincent’s aspiration to become a respectable businessman had died by the time he reached Nottingham, but it was there that the next chapter of his life opened up, as he began charging for his lectures. Directly paid by the audience rather than granted a wage or expenses by a central organisation, he was now an insecurely employed freelancer. This was a completely different form of activism from his previous itinerancy, when he collected the ‘National Rent’ for centralised organising rather than himself. Now relying on political and moral lecturing, his following of Sturge seems partly an economic necessity rather than a purely political move. He acknowledges this to Minikin with a glum joke:

On Monday night here I had a chapel full – chiefly middle men… I am sort of…Punch among them, a knowing kind of fellow – some cheesemonger was heard to say “I likes to hear his blessed voice”…But why boast? “all that’s bright must fade”; and even popularity based on cheesemen may perish...

Regardless of his motives, in this effort he was once again on the same side as O’Connor, who pragmatically sent numerous lecturers to the city to aide Sturge’s efforts. However, they did not co-ordinate their efforts. During the sort of brawl with Tories at

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167 LHSAC: I/P/VIN/1/1/49, Vincent to Minikin, 13 July, 1842.
168 LHSAC: I/P/VIN/1/1/49, Vincent to Minikin, 13 July, 1842.
169 LHSAC: I/P/VIN/1/1/49, Vincent to Minikin, 13 July, 1842.
170 Gammage, Chartist Movement, p. 208.
the hustings that Vincent would have found exciting in 1839, he and Sturge ran away, leaving O'Connor to ‘fight like a dragon’, as Thomas Cooper put it. \footnote{171 Cited in Chase, \textit{Chartism: A New History}, p. 209.} Although Cooper, O'Connor and Vincent supported Sturge, Vincent’s traction as a Chartist had been weakened; ‘a mad O’Connorite named Cooper’, confronted Vincent during a speech and occupied the meeting with a crowd of hundreds of young men. \footnote{172 LHASC: LP/VIN/1/1/51 Vincent to Minikin, July 30, 1842.} In Leicester, Cooper occupied a stage Vincent was to speak at and said that although if ‘Sturge or Spencer visit Leicester, the people will hear them’, he refused to let the people hear ‘that little renegade’. \footnote{173 Gammage, \textit{Chartist Movement}, p. 205.} Vincent seemed bemused by both Cooper and O'Connor, telling Minikin that ‘Feargus is here, working like a gravedigger’, adding: ‘He is an odd fish. He reminds me of Will Shakespeare’s Autolycus,’ referring to the pedlar and comic thief in \textit{The Winter’s Tale}. \footnote{174 LHASC: LP/VIN1/1/48, Vincent to Minikin, 30 May, 1842.}

By the end of the summer of 1842, even as Vincent was desperately trying to pay off enough of his debt to avoid going to court, he was also preparing to stand as a candidate for the Ispwich election. With no money, this was not a sincere attempt at election like Banbury but instead seems part of a drive to gain notoriety for himself and, it seems likely, increase his worth as a travelling speaker. He was heckled during his concession speech by a Tory who accused him of being paid £2 a week by the Chartists to interfere with the election, and the editor of the Tory Ispwich Journal had accosted him before the show of hands to produce his property qualification, with Vincent claiming that it would be produced in due course. \footnote{175 \textit{The Ipswich Journal}, 20 August, 1842; \textit{The Suffolk Chronicle}, 20 August, 1842.} Without a business and with his credit lines in Bath broken by his bankruptcy and those in London broken by Place’s rejection of him, he simply
could not afford to take the seat.\textsuperscript{176} With no home, he also could not produce the property qualification and so would have been ejected if he had won. Nevertheless, amongst the local Liberals he was extremely popular, having not only won the show of hands but also gaining 478 votes threatening to dislodge the local Whigs. The fact that Vincent could not afford an election committee was held as proof of his good morals by his supporters in Ipswich. The \textit{Suffolk Chronicle} delivered a panegyric after the close of the election:

This grand “triumph of principle” has been achieved by the presence of Henry Vincent, whose highly moral and intellectual and, we may also add, truly religious addresses, kindled so mighty a flame of enthusiastic patriotism in the bosoms of all who heard him…Henry Vincent leaves the town with the knowledge of the fact that he carries away with him the hearty appropriation of a large majority of its inhabitants.\textsuperscript{177}

Bairstow, scathing of both Vincent’s political conduct and of his financial arrangements ended his letter to Cooper with the line, ‘Aha! Bah! This is the high moral-toned-Vincent writing about intelligence, teetotalism and principle fudge.’\textsuperscript{178} Vincent’s main failing was impatience and a poor eye for business; starting a newspaper by buying the press of a failed newspaper is an inauspicious start, and his enthusiastic pursuit of a seat in Parliament and vacillation between the NCA and the New Move suggests anxiety more than deliberate calculation. Alongside his failings, Vincent was trapped by circumstance. Lucy defended him to Place by pointing out that his electioneering in Banbury drummed up his failing business, his clumsy management of the political split seems motivated by a genuine desire to ally the various wings of Radicalism and Chartism, while his excessive

\textsuperscript{176} Chase, “‘Labour's Candidates’”, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{177} The \textit{Suffolk Chronicle}, 20 August, 1842.
\textsuperscript{178} NA: TS 11/600, Bairstow to Cooper, 1 July, 1842.
debt was necessary if his business had any chance of surviving. Bairstow’s opinion of the man and the opinion of the *Suffolk Chronicle* are therefore not contradictory. Vincent’s career in the years following his release illustrates just how high-moral-toned, populist Liberal politics were constituted in practice, funded by the credit of not only those of wealth and influence but also through the gifts of friends and family, and contested by the Chartist movement whenever it saw it as a threat but nurtured whenever it was seen as useful. This trajectory illustrates the complexities of intellectual and political transition and the dynamic and changing nature of identity. In its flux and redevelopment, identity still had to contend with social, cultural, political and material constraints.

**Conclusion**

Vincent’s path to becoming a Liberal, moral reformist Chartist who sought alliance between workers and the middle classes was a complicated one. At first, it is necessary to recognise that it arose from his interactions with Francis Place, his desperation to get out of jail and for the indictments against him to be quashed. Vincent’s rejection of his previous form of bawdy and defiant politics needs to be seen in the light of somebody who had undergone mental and physical deprivation in prison, and who sought to avoid prolonging his imprisonment by conceding to a form of Radicalism acceptable to men of influence like Place as well as the Home Office. His conversion was a means of ending the violence inflicted upon him.

The image of the respectable, independent businessman was a key part of this identity, but it was problematic for numerous reasons. The identity of a good businessman required credit lines that, once revealed, identified that businessman as irresponsible and immoral. On top of this, the shift from a worker to a small capitalist made Vincent

[179]RPWME 2: Lucy Vincent to Place, 6 June, 1841, Reel 38.
politically vulnerable, as it marked him out as an employer of labour. This could be compatible with Chartism, but as Bath’s Chartists became concerned that he was too close to Sturge and the New Movers it was used against him. The irony in Vincent’s story was that in many respects prison was a site where he could construct his self purely as he wanted, and the numerous plans he concocted while locked away, be it marriage, business, a new newspaper or his future political career, were steps toward this end. The world outside of prison was different; there, character and social mobility became a matter of material social relations, and with that the limits of ‘the self’ as being viewed largely from an ‘extra-economic’ point of view became clear.

Alongside this, the substantial differences between the culture of Vincent’s politics as he sought alliance with the Liberals and the culture seen in chapters two and three are important. Harrison and Hollis suggest that: ‘The middle-class co-operation of men like Vincent and Lowery, however, did not necessarily require them to make an immediate or complete modification of ultimate objective, nor did it require the abandonment of working-class-consciousness.” The issue is less that Liberalism was incompatible with support for universal suffrage than the fact that Liberalism required a change of behaviour, political strategy and tactics, material and cultural status, friendship networks and organisational form. The compatibility between Chartism and Liberalism should not just be analysed on political ideas alone, since in many respects it was a different form of activism. Vincent was no longer presenting himself as being of the working class by visiting their homes, eating and drinking with them or sharing jokes with them. Although he was still making speeches from the hustings, in presenting himself to Place as a moderate, sober, industrious and hardworking businessman he, along with his wife and his mother-in-law, were speaking to a different audience, in particular men like Leader

and the Westminster Liberals. In eliciting their financial support he presented himself as a free-trader before he pledged himself a Chartist. His oscillation between the NCA and the New Move, and then again between the NCA and the Sturgites, fed suspicions that he was in thrall to middle-class interests, even by the fellow activists in Bath who had known him for five years. As he began charging for entrance to his lectures in order to provide for himself and his family, he also moved further into the temperance and moral improvement lecturing that he would perform, often for middle-class audiences and associations, for the rest of his life.

The Vincent of 1839 was substantially different from the Vincent in 1841, and not just politically. Harrison was right to identify in Vincent’s story a microcosm for the gradual shift of certain Chartists towards populism and the broad, cross-class coalitions that formed Liberalism. Yet it is important to factor in the privations and problems that Vincent faced in this transition. It was brought about by the violence of prison, and entailed the achievement of social and cultural status that was ultimately materially beyond Vincent. The practice of organising parliamentary contests with Liberal backing required funding and a type of activism different from Vincent’s muckraking, acerbic journalism or his jovial, friendly approach to his constituents. His status as an employer of labour was exploited when he was seen to be endangering the independence of the Bath Chartist movement, and led to his exile from the city and de facto expulsion from the movement. Vincent’s new political subjectivity was a tumultuous transition that suggests whatever unity populism’s discourse offered, the practicalities were far from straightforward.
Conclusion

This study has contributed to a number of areas of historical scholarship. It has sought to shift the historiography on Radicalism and Chartism away from its focus on the autonomy of politics and the associated areas of ritual, symbolic practice and political identity. Although Gareth Stedman Jones’s thesis in ‘The Language of Chartism’ was not adopted wholesale – particularly his argument that Chartism did not adopt a language of class conflict – it did foster a number of rebuttals and critiques that conceded ground to him by acknowledging the role of communication and the crafting of political identity in the movement.¹ These studies have made crucial contributions to the field, and this thesis has not rejected the case for the importance to political movements of a sense of identity and community, or the role of discourse as a site of struggle in political history.

Instead this thesis has argued that this can be complemented by looking at prosaic, quotidian practice as an important category of historical research. Activism was hard work and for any political position or community to develop it needed travel, face-to-face communication and the utilisation of pre-existing social networks, be they family, friendship, Methodist brethren or a trade union. Like other enterprises it also required money, time and labour. This study has therefore argued that the matter of self-definition and the creation of political identity is not the single most important issue when it comes

to seeking to understand Chartism, or any other movement or organisation. Instead, we need to appreciate political subjectivity in material, practical and social terms rather than just in the imaginative sense of symbolism, identity and ritual. By utilising an approach that integrates culture with the quotidian, this thesis has shown that it was through these social networks that ideas were spread and mutated, and equally that those ideas reconstituted those social networks into associations with coherent political objectives.

This approach is therefore not an attempt to place the construction of meaning in a social ‘context’. The direction taken by James Epstein’s revision of the linguistic turn argued that:

> The sites of discourse and conditions governing those sites and injunctions – “context” if you like – are crucial to communication. Quite simply, meaning cannot exist independently of such conditions, nor can people’s efforts to transform the circumstance of their social and political existence. These conditions simultaneously constrain and enable; they are what make possible expressive agency and people’s use of repertoires of meaningful action.

Epstein was motivated in these aims by a desire to maintain ‘some sense of [language’s] relationship to the social world and to the active presence of human agents’, and in this was following the same aims as this study. In focussing on the sites of discourse – such as courtrooms, scaffolds, and coffee houses – Epstein shows how discourse was situated within wider power relations, with expression and identity themselves a form of struggle. However, the implication that follows this approach is that meaning should be foremost

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in our thoughts and society secondary; the courtroom or coffee house are only relevant because we know what was said inside of them. The consequence of this is falling back upon an autonomous view of politics. Instead, this thesis has argued that this distinction is not apparent in the everyday lives of these actors. Literature, discourse or identity are not only not privileged in day-to-day life beyond matters such as money, family or routine, but are in fact entangled with these everyday activities and relations. In four case studies this thesis has shown that acts like travelling, trying to balance an account book or working with and making friends are no less constitutive of politics than texts and oratory. Acts like reading, writing and speaking were clearly social acts even if they were also imaginative ones. Far from contextual the social, in these scenarios, is an integral aspect of the development and diffusion of ideas and political programs.

This thesis has been an in-depth study of Vincent, and an overlooked region, the south west and west of England. Focussing on his role in early Chartism has given valuable insights into the movement, but also to the man himself, as he remains without a modern biographer. Vincent was clearly a capable activist and writer, whose dedication to Chartism pushed him to his physical and mental limits and eventually to a lengthy jail sentence. The trajectory of his career as an activist provides an insight into Chartism’s malleability. His early work in Bath sought to ally the middle and working classes into the Radical alliance that had existed in the city during the pro-reform agitation at the beginning of the decade, but his contact with the dissolute cloth weavers and their families outside of the city influenced his turn to a discourse of economic and social critique rather than just a political one, buoyed by an acerbic moralistic critique of the ruling classes that appealed directly to working-class popular culture. This also led to a significant change of tactics, as he adopted a confrontational position of direct action, a position that landed him in jail. The experience of this propelled him back to a position
of class co-operation, where once again his political tactics, strategy and discourse changed.

These three studies of Vincent focussed on and expanded the key aspects of the study into the Tolpuddle Martyrs: the way that political ideas and culture are ingrained in social networks and practices, the influence that each sphere has on the other as a result, and the way that political change occurs because of exposure to different discourses, practices, economic conditions, and social networks. Politics is not a clear-cut reaction to socio-economic conditions, because it is simultaneously part of those conditions. This also means that symbolism, language and communication, in material or non-material form, cannot be studied in isolation, because society cannot be relegated to ‘context’. By following a form of social history that values everyday exchanges and interactions we can understand how political ideas and organisations emerge and are built or change or ultimately collapse. In practice culture, politics and society were indistinct.

This approach is therefore along the same lines as E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*, in establishing the social and cultural process that a particular class utilises to reach a political position where it understands itself as a class.6 The criticism of Thompson throughout the 1990s seemed to signal the twilight of his relevance and the sidelining of topics such as Chartism in favour of studies of identity.7 However, it is important to remember the political context of that historiographical switch. As Epstein notes, the ‘era of Thatcher and Reagan was not auspicious for socialist or class-based politics; historical perspectives influenced by former visions of political possibilities came

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into question.\textsuperscript{8} In Democratic Subjects Patrick Joyce notes that in ‘Britain, economic decline and restructuring have led to the disintegration of the old manual sector of employment, and of what was, mistakenly, seen to be a ‘traditional’ working class.’ He adds that changes in Britain ‘were mirrored elsewhere, but the greatest change of all was the disintegration of world communism, and with it the retreat of intellectual Marxism.\textsuperscript{9}

If the cultural and linguistic turns were presented as necessary because they were politically relevant, then it raises the question of whether such an outlook is still politically relevant. A return to Thompson is an attractive prospect following the disintegration of Neo-Liberalism and the return of class and inequality to public discourse. As a cultural materialist Marxist it can be legitimately claimed that he offers the clearest shared ground between modern cultural history and its forebears.\textsuperscript{10} The content of this study makes Thompson’s distinction between ‘culture’ and ‘not culture’ difficult to justify: culture is also bound with social relationships and is material in the sense that it requires some form of dissemination and embodiment, be it, to use two examples, through George Loveless’ itinerancy or Vincent’s printing press.\textsuperscript{11} Yet in many other ways Thompson’s treatment of the relationship between ideas and society is still relevant and describes what has been revealed in this thesis.

Regardless of his retention of this dialectic between culture and not culture, Thompson highlighted how the ‘metaphor’ of base and superstructure is inadequate to describe ‘the

\textsuperscript{8} Epstein, In Practice, pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{9} Joyce, Democratic Subjects, p. 2.
flux of conflict, the dialectic of a changing social process'. Even the vegetation metaphor, that sees ideas rooted in social context, is inadequate. Although biological metaphors imply growth and development, ‘these still exclude the human dimension…it is not that a tree cannot think but that, if it could think, its thinking could not change – however imperceptibly – the soil in which it is rooted.’ Although he retains the suggestion that material forces and imaginative forces are distinct, his fundamental point that nothing is untouched by culture just as nothing is untouched by social or economic relationships is borne out by this study. His treatment of the food riot, wherein ‘outrage to…moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action’, is illustrative of how at the practical level an apparently paradoxical relationship played out.\textsuperscript{13} The intercourse of economic disturbance and morality bred the moral economy, the chimera of economic relations and moral codes.

In this case, changes in socio-economic conditions cannot be divorced from their broader cultural situational. Nor can the socio-economic be seen as solely constitutive, but instead is a partner to the cultural and intellectual: ‘ideas and values are situated in a material context, and material needs are situated in a context of norms and expectations, and one turns around this many-sided societal object of investigation.’\textsuperscript{14} The intercourse between culture and not culture is therefore a constant one in which the border between the two categories is imperceptible. It is at this ill-defined border area, where language and ideas both inform and are informed by social conditions, that the material in this thesis is situated. Be it the role of friends and family in the exchange of literature, the discussion of ideas and the formation of political discourse, or the actual material

\textsuperscript{12} Thompson, \textit{The Poverty of Theory}, p. 289.
\textsuperscript{13} E.P. Thompson, \textit{Customs in Common}, (London, 1993) p. 188.
\textsuperscript{14} E.P. Thompson, \textit{Making History: Writings on History and Culture} (New York, 1994), pp. 358-64.
processes of political organising, such as travel or the operation or the publishing of a newspaper, culture and not culture are mutually dependent.

One of the anxieties expressed over cultural history has been the means through which symbolism and language has become foundational in the same way that the social and material was once criticised for being.15 Responding to these criticisms, Patrick Joyce has returned to the topic of materiality, using Latour, Deleuze and Foucault to outline an ontology that collapses distinction between the social and cultural.16 This revisionist drive poses an opportunity for a revisit of Thompson and his study of the close proximity of social being and consciousness, and with that an intervention into current theoretical debates in a manner sensitive to the return of class and of the clearly stratified nature of social relations in contemporary politics. This thesis, although not driven by theory, has illustrated how society and culture can be collapsed into one another, through detailed investigation into how distinctions between these categories and divisions exist uneasily in everyday practice.

It is therefore worth finishing by suggesting that study into the everyday, since this is the site at which a firm distinction between the cultural and non-cultural is least apparent, could form a politically relevant revisit of Thompson’s project that is also attuned to the innovative directions taken by historians since the cultural turn. The imperative in this case is to insert those aspects of everyday life that cultural history has excelled at researching but which Marxist social history overlooked. The power relations of social contracts like debt and credit, the material and intellectual formation of political

subjectivity, the role of ethics in individual and collective political identity, and the use of
gender and sexuality as a central part of political projects are all fertile ground for such a
project. The everydayness of the political affirms Thompson’s arguments that working-
class political consciousness drew from a vast field of cultural and social experiences, but
this was a mutually productive interaction, with no category clearly dependent on
another, no aspect of life in a purely reactive position. What this study has underlined is
the entwined nature of politics, culture and society and the importance of studying each
together rather than in isolation. There is a distinct opportunity in this approach to study
the innovations of cultural history in conjunction with the older, but still vital and
increasingly relevant traditions of social history. Most importantly, it offers a means of
understanding the day-to-day practices that individuals drew on during periods of
turbulence and transition not only to make sense of their world, but to change it.
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