THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE *PORCUPINE*

Provincial Power and the Satirical Press, 1860-1880

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Lucy Sarah Kilfoyle

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ABSTRACT

Newspapers and periodicals produced in Victorian London have been researched extensively but journalism history scholars readily admit that knowledge and understanding of the wider, provincial press, as it evolved during the nineteenth century, remains patchy. This project helps remedy this historiographical gap by means of an extended investigative case study into an obscure and hitherto largely untapped primary source. The *Porcupine*, a weekly satirical journal launched in Liverpool in 1860, was a *Private Eye* for the "top hat and crinoline" generation. Independent and provocative, this self-styled public watchdog set out to hold truth unto power and to stir up local political debate. Aimed at the burgeoning bourgeoisie, the journal was liberal, Liberal and liberated. Its creators championed and practised the principles of scrutiny, transparency and accountability. They were "doing" investigative and campaigning journalism way ahead of the town's more orthodox newspaper pack. Countless comic periodicals emerged and rapidly folded during this hyper-entrepreneurial period. The *Porcupine*, however, lasted a remarkable fifty-five years, remaining commercially viable in a highly competitive environment. This suggests that it must have been *en pointe*, meeting a contemporary public demand. The question is: how, why and to what effect? What, if anything, does the existence and apparent popularity of the publication reveal about the socio-political function of the home-grown regional press and about the nature of public discourse - of freedom of thought and expression at their most arch - at the local level? The aim of this study is, in part, to resurrect the journal both as an historical source and as a subject of academic interest in its own right. It demonstrates that provincial satirical journals like the *Porcupine* represent intriguing counter evidence which challenges conventional *mentalité* views of Victorian values and power dynamics. The primary objective is to use the publication as an analytical prism and ontological testbed for the examination of the three conceptual features which defined the provincial serio-comic periodical: political philanthropy, "townology" and satire as freedom of thought and expression. Focusing upon the journal's heyday in the 1860s and 1870s, the research uncovers stimulating new insights into the practice of political satire during the period and proposes new interpretations of the *Porcupine* and its world. Ranging over interconnected aspects of print, urban, business and municipal culture, it makes the case for the importance

of the provincial satirical periodical as a politically-motivated discursive practice. In the process, it argues for a reassessment of satire's place in the grander narrative of democratic deliberation and dissent in the nineteenth century.

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PREFACE

#JESUISPORKY[1]

I know of no systematic study of what can be and often has been a very obvious and
useful element of social control of government, satire.[2]

A number of startling events have rendered this project unexpectedly *au courant*. Not far
into the research process, an obscure French satirical magazine surfaced dramatically – for
the very worst of reasons - in the public consciousness. The *Charlie Hebdo* shooting of 2015,
an Islamist terror attack, resulted in the deaths of twelve Parisian journalists. The tragedy
triggered a global but ultimately inconclusive debate about the purpose and method, the
morality and ethics, of satire. Literary theorists, lawyers, philosophers and sociologists
queued up to pontificate. The 'Je suis Charlie' slogan emerged as a defiant re-affirmation of
freedom of thought and expression and of solidarity, as well as an exhortation that we better
understand and value the socio-political function of satire. Prior to that defining moment,
some scholars had long recognised satirical news as more than entertainment; as an
intellectually, culturally and politically significant genre, with a potentially powerful role to
play in a well-informed, deliberative democracy. For the most part, however, it had been an
arcane and seemingly trivial subject. Suddenly, everyone was an expert and everyone had an
opinion. The views expressed revealed, however, that historical satire, ancient and modern,
is generally poorly understood, with ignorance and confusion surrounding its traditional
nature and purpose. In practice today, it is most commonly conflated with clever but benign
humour; with glib comedy designed to make its audience cynically laugh at, rather than rail
and agitate against, society's absurdities and injustices.

Geo-political developments since then have ensured that the concept of satire as an
intellectual practice and political force, a rhetorical tool for analysis, challenge and dissent,
has remained on the discursive agenda. In the liberal West, the shock polling outcomes of
2016 – the Brexit vote in the UK and the US presidential election – not only reflected the

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[1] 'Mr Porcupine', the fictional editorial persona of the *Porcupine*, occasionally referred to himself as 'Porky'.
[2] B. Crick, review of K. Cameron (ed.), *Humour and History* (Oxford: Intellect, 1993) in *Political Quarterly*,
Vol.66, Issue 1 (Jan-Mar 1995), pp. 118-19; Crick was disappointed that the series of lectures published did not
prove to be the 'methodology of political satire' he had hoped.

hitherto unthinkable rise of nationalism and populism in the Western world but ushered in the dawn of a "post factual" or "Alt" *actualité*. Such was the rapid rise and rise of this surreal new reality, that the *Oxford Dictionaries'* word of the year in 2016 was "post-truth". The discourse triggered by these bizarre shifts and the concomitant discussions surrounding "fake news" and "fake history" have continued to play out, within and without academe and across the disciplinary spectrum. Has satire run its course? ask the talking heads. With political fact now often stranger than satirical fiction, is there any place or call for a genre which historically has been all about creatively subverting the truth and making reality ridiculous or grotesque?

The same period has seen an associated heightening of the perennial and always controversial debate about the manner in and extent to which historians ought to engage with modern politics and public affairs. The provocative *History Manifesto*, published in 2014, represented just the latest in a long line of intermittent justifications and calls to arms.[3] When historians in the US entered the febrile public debate in the run up to the 2016 presidential election, they were roundly and rudely shouted down – a distinct disincentive to emerge from their ivory towers. Calls nonetheless continue for history scholars to overcome their aversion to public engagement, often invoking the ideas of Michel Foucault. Garland argues that the 'one continuing concern that directs all of [Foucault's] histories' was 'the idea of using history as a means of critical engagement with the present'.[4] Foucault's provocative and seemingly counter-intuitive 'genealogy' or 'ontology of the present' involved beginning his analysis 'from a question posed in the present'.[5] Foucault explained why he wrote history: 'Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if it means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing a history of the present'.[6]

The following thesis is no exercise in the application of Foucauldian theory. It does, however, open up new historical perspectives on the current state of democracy through a more nuanced understanding of what might be described as its proto-democratic past. At the dawn of the twentieth century, political sketch writer and satirist Hector Hugo Munro suggested that that which passed for enlightened British democracy was merely an illusion.[7] Today, the world over, there is a rapidly expanding gap between the rhetoric and the practice

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[3] J. Guldi and D. Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[4] D. Garland, 'What is a "history of the present"? On Foucault's genealogies and their critical preconditions', *Punishment and Society*, Vol. 16 (2014), pp. 365-84.
[5] L. Kritzman (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 262.
[6] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 31.
[7] H.H. Munro, 'The Comments of Moung Ka' in *The Collected Short Stories of Saki* (Ware: Wordsworth Limited Editions, 1993), pp. 492-94.

of democratic governance. That the traditional print press in the English regions has become an endangered species is symptomatic of this. We flatter ourselves that we are so much more enlightened, more politically progressive and instinctively "democratic", than the stiff, class-obsessed Victorians. In 2015, LSE scholars suggested that 'There is an urgent need to move beyond a nineteenth century set of ideas about democracy and governance – the so-called British Political Tradition – that should by now have long been consigned to history'.[8] This Whiggish take on the past is far too pat and self-regarding. There are broad and useful lessons to be learned from an historical investigation into a form of socio-political discourse – journalistic satire - which, far from being anachronistic, can in fact (as will be shown) be timeless, universal and, at its best, a motivational and democratising 'element of social control of government' as per Crick, cited at the beginning of this preface. As the following thesis sets out to demonstrate, the readers of the Liverpool *Porcupine* would have been amongst the first to appreciate and embrace a #JeSuisPorky slogan.

BRIEF NOTE ON STYLE AND TERMINOLOGY

The convention of authorial anonymity poses challenges when it comes to discussing historical press articles.[9] For reasons which will become apparent, *Porcupine* articles cannot be attributed by default to its long-serving editor, Hugh Shimmin. For the purpose of accuracy and brevity, therefore, use is made throughout of the journal's editorial persona – 'Mr Porcupine' – when referring to what might be regarded as the "collective voice" of the journal in unattributable articles. Reference is occasionally made to the *Porcupine* "project", when it is important to distinguish between the text itself and the ideas and practical business surrounding its production, and to "Shimmin's journal", when "the journal co-owned and edited by Shimmin" proves unwieldy. Liverpool is referred to as both a town and a city; although it was not granted official city status until 1880, it was recognised long before then as a "city of Empire" and has been widely recognised as such in the historiography of the nineteenth century.[10] "Political culture" is a conceptually vague term and Angus Hawkins's no-nonsense definition is assumed here: 'the varied and shifting beliefs, values, and attitudes of those throughout society, both governors and governed, which informed the understanding

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[8] D. Richards and M. Smith, 'The Strange Resurrection of the British Political Tradition', *British Politics and Policy at LSE* (27 May 2015).

[9] D. Liddle, 'Salesmen, Sportsmen, Mentors: Anonymity and Mid-Victorian Theories of Journalism', *Victorian Studies*, 41 (1991), pp. 31–68.

[10] S. Haggerty, A. Webster and N. J. White, *The Empire in One City? Liverpool's Inconvenient Imperial Past*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.32. Briggs applied 'city' to any 'large town [or] densely populated district'.

of power, status, and authority'.[11] "Serio-comic" is used interchangeably with "satirical" (the grounds for this will be explained) and "mainstream press", to denote newspapers and journals which followed the orthodox cultural and political currents. Finally, although an unsatisfactory label, retrospectively applied, "Victorian" is used throughout as convenient adjectival shorthand for "nineteenth-century".

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[11] A. Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: 'Habits of Heart and Mind'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 16.

CHAPTER ONE

'Shooting Folly as it Flies'

The Journalist's Checklist: Who, What, When, Where, How and Why?

> [F]or what hindrance, hurt, or harm doth the laudable desire of knowledge bring to man, if even from a sot, a pot, a fool, a stool, a winter-mitten, a truckle for a pully, the lid of a goldsmith's crucible, an oil bottle, an old slipper, or a cane chair?[1]
>
> We must embrace new reflection and abstraction; we must seek new justifications for our work.[2]

This thesis is concerned with satire and democratic thought, and the Realpolitik through which they manifested themselves at the local level, during the mid-Victorian period. It explores the concept of Liberalism as 'a modern practice of politics' which is contingent upon freedom, knowing and political rationality, and also as a mode of governmentality, where governmentality is understood to include the conduct and activity of the governed citizenship, beyond the nation or sub-nation state, and of self-governance, in a participatory democracy.[3] It does this by examining the role played by one arm of the independent press in the civic discourse and municipal governance of the nineteenth-century urban imaginary. Specifically, it focuses upon the satirical periodical *Porcupine* and upon Liverpool, in order to explore the exercise of 'soft' power – construed as intellectual, cultural and moral direction, influence and suasion. In the process, it recovers contemporary conceptions and applications of those liberal precepts and practices which have come to be associated with good governance in a modern system of representative democracy: transparency, scrutiny and accountability.

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[1] L. Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, originally published 1759-1767 (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1996), p. 137. *Tristram Shandy* was one of Hugh Shimmin's favourite novels.
[2] V21 Collective, 'Manifesto of the V21 Collective: Ten Theses' http://v21collective.org/manifest-of-the-v21-collective-ten-theses/ [accessed 1 December 2017].
[3] E. Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. xii; M. Foucault, 'Governmentality' in G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

By means of the ebullient exercise of freedom of thought and speech, Victorian journals of an independent and critical bent both practised and preached these concepts with acuity and perspicacity. As the example of the weekly *Porcupine* will demonstrate, satirical periodicals produced in and for the provinces were not passive reflectors of political thought and action. Their architects were not simply contrarians or oppositionists. They were purveyors and interpreters of information, uniquely placed, through a powerful convergence of local omniscience, disinhibited liberty of expression and cultural appeal, to function as active mediators and drivers of a new, more collectivist, urban liberalism which, in embracing such concepts as cooperation, trade unionism and municipal socialism, anticipated the Labour Movement.[4] As Paul Nord observed, their localised journalism 'brought a new perspective on urban political economy… Because of their role in the civic lives as well as the political and commercial lives of their cities, [they] were often drawn into an ideological transformation from classic economic liberalism to a more collectivist municipal progressivism'.[5] At their best they can be shown to have acted not only as opinion shapers but also as influential agents of social and political change within the context of mid-nineteenth century ideas, philosophies, ideologies and mores. The most impactful examples did not merely serve as discourse platforms, although they did this very effectively. They were dynamic agents in themselves. As such, they serve as barometers of liberalism as a political practice designed to find new, orderly ways of dealing with capitalism and mass democracy.[6]

Drawing upon and synthesising a range of hitherto unassimilated sources, this study brings new material, new angles and new interpretations to the existing historiography. Exploring the whys and wherefores of Liverpool's *Porcupine* project contributes to more refined understandings of print culture, localism and political discourse in nineteenth-century Britain.[7] This is important, as some scholars have been too ready to accept uncritically generalisations about the mid-Victorian comic periodical; inappropriately and prejudicedly to compare and contrast provincial examples with the hegemonic *Punch*; and to assume that such publications existed and functioned as diverting cultural niche projects, rather than socio-political constructs.[8] No close systematic study has been attempted into an extra-

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[4]C.P. Scott, 'The Function of the Press', *Political Quarterly* (1831), pp. 66-9; L.T. Hobhouse, *The Labour Movement* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1893), pp. 45-6.

[5] P. D. Nord, 'The Victorian City and the Urban Newspaper' in R. R. John and J. Silberstein-Loeb (eds), *Making News: The Political Economy of Journalism in Britain and America from the Glorious Revolution to the Internet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 74.

[6] Fawcett, *Liberalism*.

[7] A. McAllister and A. Hobbs, Introduction, *International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 5:1 (2009), p. 7.

[8] L. Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1918); J. Gardiner, *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), pp. 19-36.

London example of the satirical periodical. The power play between the independent urban press and municipal governance, of the kind exemplified by the *Porcupine*, has hitherto not been examined other than incidentally. Patrick Joyce touched upon the integrality of the genre with the liberal city when he coined the neologism "townology" to convey a sense of the satirical periodical's omnipresence and omniscience.[9] Similar ideas surrounding "knowingness" have been explored by others.[10] This research aims, in part, to build upon these hypotheses.

The work of Joyce acts as a touchstone throughout. Many of the findings and arguments substantiate and illustrate the themes he outlined in *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City*, his study of the politics of urban space and Foucauldian governmentality. Almost all of those aspects of the Victorian city examined by Joyce – understanding and naturalising the governed, concrete and abstract circulations, performed liberalism and the light of publicity, the moral city and the social city, knowing and moving around the city – found expression in the *Porcupine* or were manifested by it.

The same might be said of satire as theorist Elliot Oring has said of humour: 'humor [*sic*] is often considered to be trivial, and it seems that serious talk about humor is regarded as participating in that triviality. A presumption seems to exist that the consequential cannot emerge from a contemplation of the trivial'.[11] Yet, as Oring has pointed out, humour and laughter are human universals.[12] Modern scholars have contended that, because it is concerned with an imaginative search for truth(s), satire is a form of popular philosophy. The third Earl of Shaftesbury, Hamann and Kierkegaard have all been cited as examples of modern philosophers who displayed a keen interest in the nature of humour and ridicule, an appreciation of their rhetorical power and of their potential as tools for moral criticism.[13] However, while eighteenth-century satire has been taken seriously, there is relatively less work on later periods.[14]

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[9] P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London & New York: Verso, 2003), p. 204.

[10] K. Layton-Jones, *Beyond the Metropolis: The Changing Image of Urban Britain, 1780-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 128-150.

[11] E. Oring, *Engaging Humor* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), pp. ix-x.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] L. B. Amir, *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014).

[14] E.g. V Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006); D. Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); M. Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture, 1790-1822* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

This research project does not aspire to offer full-blown revision history of the kind articulated by George Kitson Clark.[15] It does make a contribution to the broader 'Task of Revision' by avoiding some of the shortcomings of Victorian studies identified by the earlier historian: the tendency to buy into the easy generalisations passed down from contemporaries and earlier scholars, for example; to provide history with a false (or non-existent) background; to mistake contemporary 'dogmatic statements of fact' for truths; to accept 'one-sided accounts' of events and developments; to rely too heavily upon Marxist interpretations; or to avoid becoming too emotionally engaged.[16] Nor does this study represent an exercise in literary studies, although the partial aim is to foreground a particular genre of text and this will naturally involve some degree of literary analysis and discussion of reader reception and response. What follows does and can claim to rise to the challenge of recovering aspects of nineteenth-century history which have been neglected – not least the socio-political function of mid-Victorian satire.

WHY THE LIVERPOOL *PORCUPINE*?

Liverpool's *Porcupine* suggested itself as a case study by way of an intriguing, if problematic, aside. In 1998, John K. Walton and Alistair Wilcox published a well-received compilation of the writings of a reputedly idiosyncratic Liverpool journalist, Hugh Shimmin.[17] Many of these had first appeared in the journal Shimmin co-founded, co-owned and edited for two decades, the *Porcupine*. In their preface, the editors focused upon the significance of Shimmin's writing for scholars of social, economic and cultural history, and only in passing suggested there might be more to Shimmin's work. He was, they noted, 'a fiercely satirical commentator on the Liverpool political scene, above all at local government level'.[18] This ought to be considered, they proposed, if his contemporary influence was to be evaluated. The proposition was intriguing because it suggested that a mine of evidentiary material relating to local political history remained overlooked. It was problematic because – as will be explored - it conflated Shimmin with his journal. It was both intriguing *and* problematic by dint of the fact that the *Porcupine* is remembered not as a serious arm of the political press, but as a 'comic' periodical and a mere 'provincial' one, at that.

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[15] G.Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, 8th ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1962), pp. 1-27.
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] J.K. Walton and A. Wilcox (eds), *Low Life and Moral Improvement in Mid-Victorian England: Liverpool through the Journalism of Hugh Shimmin* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991).
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Few historians have followed up Walton and Wilcox's work. Stephen Donovan and Matthew Rubery have placed the investigative journalism of Hugh Shimmin and John Hollingshead (an early *Porcupine* contributor) in the same league as that of a Henry Mayhew or a James Greenwood.[19] Liverpool Central Archives has described the *Porcupine* as one of the Victorian city's most 'significant publications'.[20] Online republication of a selection of its articles has helped to raise its profile.[21] For the most part, however, the journal has long garnered little other than passing reference in the historical record.

Figure 1.1

Liverpool Sketches, a compilation of early *Porcupine* articles by Hugh Shimmin (1862): Front Matter
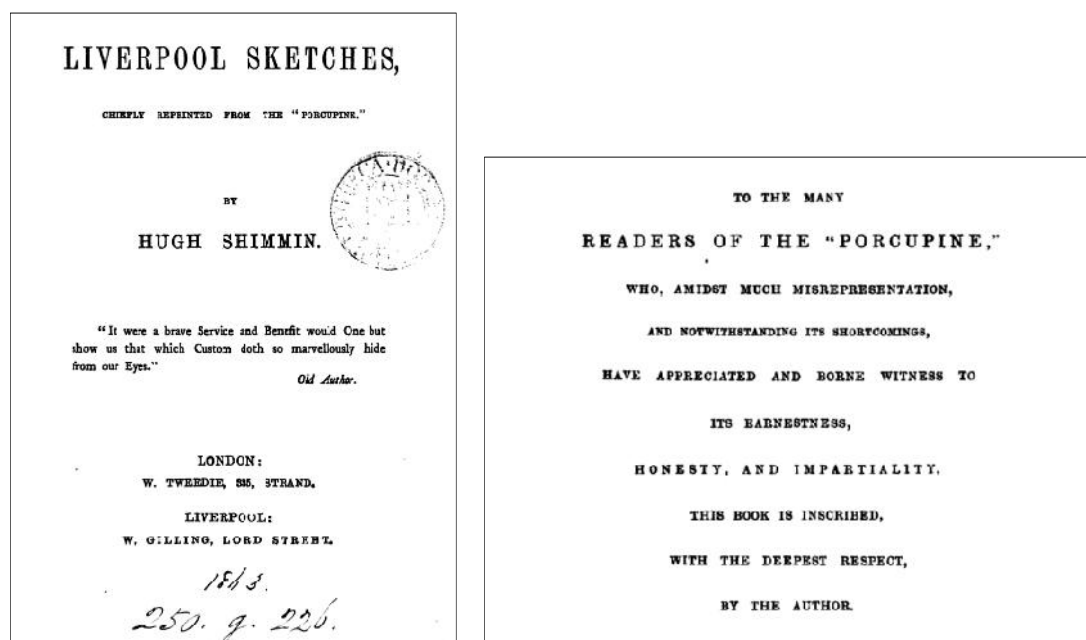
Implicit in the journal's neglect is an assumption that the *Porcupine* was a marginal publication, one of many hundreds of politically inconsequential Victorian provincials which existed on the periphery of a thriving conventional newspaper press. Scholarly attention has tended to focus upon partial and specific readings of the journal's content.[22] Indicative of the

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[19] S. Donovan and M. Rubery (eds), *Secret Commissions: An Anthology of Victorian Investigative Journalism* (London: Broadview Press, 2012), pp. 63-78; S. Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 23-180.

[20] Liverpool Central Library Archives, https://liverpool.gov.uk/libraries/archives-family-history/local-studies/ [accessed 24 July 2017].

[21] 'The Liverpool Porcupine (Revisited)', http://victorianpress.wixsite.com/liverpoolporcupine [accessed 31 May 2017].

[22] A. Wilcox, *Living in Liverpool: A Collection of Sources for Family, Local and Social Historians* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011); A. Wilcox, *The Church and the Slums: The Victorian*

lack of attention is the short entry on Shimmin in the *Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422-1992*, which contains three factual errors. These are minor mistakes but they do point to a certain lackadaisical indifference.[23] This is an effect, in part, of the journal's limited availability and accessibility. Liverpool's Central Library Archives hold but a third of its back catalogue (1860-1880); the British Library, alone, houses an entire run (1860-1915). At both repositories, access to hard copy volumes of the paper is discouraged. In a vicious cycle of marginalisation, the journal has not been digitised. The publication's obscurity also has to do with questions of materiality: the ephemeral nature of the print press, communal reading habits and recycling practices in the nineteenth century.

The *Porcupine*, peaking as it did in popularity and influence during the 1860s and 1870s, offers a fitting resource for studying a period of particular importance in British society, politics and journalism. In the twentieth century, W. L. Burn suggested that (post-Chartist, pre-New Liberal) mid-Victorian Britain enjoyed an 'Age of Equipoise'.[24] History scholars 'are still apt to acquiesce in notions of a mid-Victorian consensus, stability, and, even, complacency'.[25] This interpretation has since been convincingly challenged by social and labour history scholars.[26] In his conceptual study of Liberalism, Edmund Fawcett associated the decades between 1830 and 1880 with youthful confidence and energy.[27] The evidence of the *Porcupine* lends credence to this interpretation, demonstrating through its discourse how the 1860s and 1870s represented a shifting, unsettled, transitional period between the past and the future, in politics and journalism, science and morality, conservative and progressive ways of thinking and being. The pace of change was rapid and bewildering. Standards and customs were in flux in this no man's land between tradition and modernity, as anxious liberal progressives sought to keep up with technological advancement, to reconcile incompatible or contradictory impulses and aspirations and to negotiate new social contracts. The economic bubbles of these decades resulted in mushrooming population growth (around 25% in Liverpool, between 1861 and 1881)[28] and all that this entailed in the urban centres. It

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Anglican Church and its Mission to Liverpool's Poor (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

[23] D. Griffiths (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422-1992* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 1992).

[24] W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study in the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London: Unwin University Books, 1964).

[25] M. Chase, review of M. Hewitt (ed.), *An Age of Equipoise? Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000) in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Summer 2002), pp. 673-76.

[26] Hewitt, *Age of Equipoise,* 2000.

[27] Fawcett, *Liberalism*, pp. 27-136.

[28] W. Farrer and J Brownbill (eds),'Liverpool: Trade, Population and Geographical Growth' in *A History of the County of Lancaster*, Vol.4 (London: Victoria County History, 1911), pp. 37-38.

is for this reason that scholars past and present have opted to focus upon the 'Mid-Victorian period' as a defining window in time.[29]

The period 1860-1880 also represented a significant phase in the evolution of the print media, the soft political power of the local free press peaking in the vibrant, self-governing, extra-London urban centres.[30] Facilitated by the lifting of the 'taxes on knowledge', supported by the growth of liberal ideology and democratic impulse and boosted by such developments as the increase in the electorate following the 1867 Reform Act and the anticipated increase in the reading public, following the Education Act of 1870, provincial periodicals proliferated.[31] That Shimmin's journal emerged and thrived during this window in time was thus no mere happenstance; its appearance and early impact were a direct result and reflection of broader social, cultural and political conditions. It was *these* decades of the *Porcupine's* history, shaped and driven by the force of Shimmin's bumptious character and indomitable will, which contemporary readers later recalled with nostalgia and respect. It was during *these* years that the journal was at its most dynamic as an organ of Liberal thought and activism. The press in the 1860s and 1870s sat on the cusp between the 'Old' journalism and the 'New'. Innes Shand wrote contemporaneously of a 'revolution' in periodical literature, during these two decades.[32] Journalism history often tends to skate over these decades, but they made for the most fertile period of press entrepreneurship, and warrant greater attention, if the social and political *Zeitgeist* between Chartist radicalism and reformed Liberalism and democratic populism is to be appreciated.[33]

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

The 'Age of the Print Press' has spawned a vast canon of literature, beginning with the ambitious surveys and analyses of contemporary chroniclers.[34] Since then, the significance

[29] G. Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971); W.E. Mosse, *Liberal Europe: The Age of Bourgeois Realism 1848-1875* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974); K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[30] A. Walker, 'The Development of the Provincial Press in England c. 1780-1914', *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2006) pp. 382-84.
[31] Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, pp. 275-77.
[32] I. Shand, 'Contemporary Literature (No.1): Journalists', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 124 (December 1878), pp. 641-62.
[33] A. J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 104.
[34] T. B. Gilmore, and W. B. Carnochan, 'The Politics of Eighteenth-Century Satire', *PMLA*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (1971), pp. 277–80;.M. Duffy (ed.), *The English Satirical Print, 1600-1832* (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1986); H. Barker, 'English Press 1760-1815' in S. Burrows and H. Barker (eds), *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America: 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); J. Grant, *The Newspaper Press: Its Origins – Progress – and Present Position* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1871); J. Grant, *The Metropolitan Weekly and Provincial Press* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872); H. Fox Bourne, *English*

of the *newspaper* press to life in Victorian Britain and its territories has been rehearsed in scholarly works and papers, as well as in more popular 'Grub Street' histories and fiction.[35] Additional insights into, and diverse interpretations of, the Victorian press have emerged through women's, labour and business histories, and via cross-disciplinary scholarship within the fields of media and communication, literary, cultural and political studies.[36] All of this work belongs to an expanding bibliography which reflects the richness and diversity of the relationship between the burgeoning Victorian press, modernising mass culture, new technologies and reforming and democratising liberal and Liberal politics (high and low, hard and soft, national and provincial).[37] The secondary literature includes 'biographies' of those Victorian newspapers deemed to merit academic inquiry.[38] Their purported historical significance has sometimes been determined by the availability and accessibility of source material and much of the historiography has been preoccupied with London-produced and London-centric titles and models, or has presumed to extrapolate from the metropolitan experience. Substantial studies of newspapers produced outside of the capital are less common, limited to those few regional newspapers – the independently-minded *Manchester Guardian* is a good example – which achieved wider renown, longevity and impact or, at the other end of the spectrum, to iconoclastic papers which happened to have caught the imagination of local historians.[39]

Until recently, far less attention had been paid to that other, equally defining example of the nineteenth-century print press: the (weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly) periodical.[40] The problem was not scarcity or obscurity of evidence. On the contrary, the sheer wealth of

Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism 1820-1887 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1887); T.H. Escott, *Masters of English Journalism: a Study of Personal Forces* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1911).

[35] C. Seymour-Ure, *The Press, Politics and the Public* (London: Methuen, 1968); S. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* , 3rd ed. (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1981); K. Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); G. Muhlmann, *A Political History of Journalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); A. King and J. Plunkett (eds), *Popular Print Media, 1820-1900* (London: Routledge, 2004); G Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (eds), *Newspaper History: from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable and Company, 1978); B. Clarke, *From Grub Street to Fleet Street* (Brighton: Revel Barker, 2010); G. Gissing, *New Grub Street* (London: Smith, Elder, 1891).

[36] J. Curran and J. Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 5-122; J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992); J. Curran, 'Media and the Making of British Society, c.1700-2000', *Media History*, Vol.8. Number 2 (2002), pp. 135-54; M. Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); H. Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow: Longman, 2000).

[37] A. G. Jones, 'Local Journalism in Victorian Political Culture' in Brake et al. (eds), *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, (London, Macmillan, 1990), pp. 63-70; A. G. Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Ashgate, 1996).

[38] J. W. Robinson Scott, *The Story of the Pall Mall Gazette* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950); H.R.G. Whates, *The Birmingham Post, 1857-1957; A Centenary Retrospective* (Birmingham: Birmingham Post and Mail, 1957).

[39] C.P. Scott (ed.), *1846-1932: The Making of the Manchester Guardian* (London: Frederick Muller, 1946); W. H. Mills, *The Manchester Guardian: A Century of History* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1921); D. Ayerst, *The Manchester Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971).

[40] R. T. Vanarsdel, *Victorian Periodicals – Aids to Research: A Selected Bibliography* (Victorian Research Web, July 2010).

primary source material made daunting the task of systemising and analysing it.[41] Interest has grown over the past few decades, with the emergence of specialist scholars and the establishment of academic collaborations dedicated to the inter-disciplinary study of the 'Victorian Periodical'.[42] Bibliographies, indices and directories, ambitious cataloguing drives and digitisation projects have brought some accessibility and order to the mass of primary source material available and serve as useful research leads and reference tools, although these remain selective, often overlap and sacrifice depth (and sometimes, accuracy) to breadth of coverage.[43] The proliferation of electronic resources throws up a new set of challenges.[44] 2017 saw the publication of a clutch of periodical-focused texts and essay collections which help to position journals such as the *Porcupine* within a broad theoretical and thematic framework.[45] Despite all of this welcome progress, press scholars admit that the historiography of the Victorian periodical remains uneven. Moreover, interest in the field still tends to be driven by scholars of literature (the periodical as text), rather than of history (the periodical as contemporary evidence). All bar one of the twelve essays in *Encounters in the Victorian Press* (2005), most of which dealt with the political role of the press, were written by literary scholars.[46]

Research into the sub-genre which was simultaneously satirical and provincial has been even more limited and ad-hoc.[47] Donald Gray demonstrated the type's contemporary ubiquity in 1970, his list of over two hundred comic periodicals remaining one of the most extensive and reliable of sources, although still not exhaustive.[48] The main primary and secondary sources used to inform the present research are footnoted below.[49] A London bias and the conflation

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[41] John North estimated in the *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900* that in excess of 125,000 titles were launched during the Victorian period.

[42] S. Mitchell, 'Victorian Journalism in Plenty', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37 (2009), pp. 311-21; L. Voracheck, review of J. Shattock (ed.), *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (Winter 2017), p. 830; The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals (RSVP) was founded in 1968 and the European Society for Periodical Research (ESPRit), in 2009.

[43] D. Griffiths (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422-1992* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1992); L. Brake and M. Demoor (eds), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland [DNCJ]* (Gent: Academia Press and London: British Library, 2009); A. King, A. Easley and J. Morton (eds), *Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-Century Periodicals and Newspapers* (Oxford: Routledge, 2016).

[44] Mitchell, 'Victorian Journalism in Plenty', pp. 316-19.

[45] R. Matthews, *The History of the Provincial Press in England* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); A. Easley, A. King and J. Morton (eds), *Researching the Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press: Case Studies* (London: Routledge, 2017); Shattock, *Journalism and the Periodical Press*.

[46] L. Brake and J.F. Codell (eds), *Encounters in the Victorian Press; Editors, Authors, Readers* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[47] A rare exception is J. Savory and P. Marks, *The Smiling Muse: Victoriana in the Comic Press* (London: Associated University Presses, 1985).

[48] D.J. Gray, 'A List of Comic Periodicals Published in Great Britain 1800-1900, with a Prefatory Essay', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, Vol.5, No. 1 (March 1972), pp. 2-39.

[49] T. Dawson, 'The Pamphlet Literature of Liverpool', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1864-1865*, Vol. XVII (1865), pp. 131-35; R.W. Lowe, *Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London and New York: John C. Nimmo, 1888), pp. 376-77; J.C. Morley and 'W.M.', 'List of Liverpool Periodicals', *Palatine Note-Book*, Vol. ii (1882), pp. 122-

of satire with graphic art and humour continue to determine the accessibility and use of the source material. This, in turn, has dictated the nature and extent of the academic research. It is notable that most of those British satirical periodicals of the period to have been digitised were produced in the capital.[50] Very few of those published in the provincial cities have yet been made available online, although several lasted far longer than their London counterparts. Two exceptions are the *Dart* (1876-1900) and the *Owl; a journal of wit and wisdom* (1879-1900), both produced in Birmingham and both digitised via the 19th Century UK Periodicals project.[51] Random volumes of Birmingham's *Town Crier; or, Jacob's Belles Lettres*, have also been republished as e-books.[52]

Amongst the scores of nineteenth-century British comic periodicals, only the hegemonic *Punch* (sub-titled the 'London Charivari', after the French publication upon which it was modelled) has been subject to extensive rumination, via contemporary memoirs and autobiographies and a panoply of micro-histories.[53] In academe, *Punch* has been analysed through a remarkable variety of thematic, theoretical and methodological filters relating to the history of science, Empire and fashion.[54] Joint projects and conferences have been given over to the journal and its multifarious global imitators have been scrutinised in depth.[55] Accessible online via multiple platforms*, Punch* has become the default choice for any examination of the 'satirical periodical' type.[56] Between 2013 and 2015, the University of Heidelberg digitised a number of European comic periodicals under the heading of 'art and

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23, 201-2; J. C. Morley, *The Newspaper Press and Periodical Literature of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Reprinted from the *Liverpool Mercury*, 1887), pp. 3-13; T.F.D.C., 'Dying a Natural Death', *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading* (November 1864), pp. 260-63*; Street's List of Newspapers Published in Great Britain and Ireland: List of Country Newspapers*, (British & Colonial General Advertising Offices, 1870); J.G. Muddiman and R. Austin, *Tercentenary Handlist of English and Welsh Newspapers, Magazines and Reviews (*London: *The Times,* 1920); 'The Provincial Press: Comic Newspapers', *Notes and Queries* (15 June 1872), pp. 479-80.

[50] *Fun* (1861-1900); *Tomahawk: a Saturday Journal of Satire* (1867-1870); *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal* (1867-1900) and *Moonshine* (1879-1900).

[51] The *Dart* was renamed twice, becoming the *(Birmingham) Dart and Midland Figaro* in 1881 and the *Birmingham Pictorial and Dart* in 1896.

[52] Via the Google Books Digital Library [https://books.google.co.uk/] and the Hathi Trust Digital Library [https://www.hathitrust.org/] digital libraries.

[53] M. Lemon, *Mr Punch: his Origin and Career* (London: Jas. Wade, 1870); A. Mayhew, *A Jorum of Punch: With Those who Helped to Brew It* (London: Downey & Co., 1895); M. H. Spielmann, *The History of "Punch"* (London, Paris, Melbourne: Cassell Publishing Co., 1895); P. Leary, *The Punch Brotherhood: Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London* (London: The British Library, 2010).

[54] R. Noakes, 'Science in Mid-Victorian Punch', *Endeavour* 26: 3 (September 2002), pp. 92-6; J.H. Wiener and R.D. Altick, *Punch: the Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841-1851* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1996); Shu-chuan Yan, '"Politics and Petticoats": Fashioning the Nation in Punch magazine 1840s-1880s', *Fashion Theory*, Vol.15, Issue 3 (2011), pp. 345-71: A. R. Young, *Punch and Shakespeare in the Victorian Era* (Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 2007).

[55] 'The British Punch Magazine as a Transcultural Format of Satire and Caricature', academic workshop held in Heidelberg, 13-15 November 2009; R. Scully, 'A Comic Empire: The Global Expansion of Punch as a Model Publication', *International Journal of Comic Art* (Fall 2012/3), pp. 6-35; H. Harder and B. Mittler (eds), *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2013).

[56] J.P. Navailles, '<Punch>, le journal satirique à l'anglaise', *Histoire*, Issue 149 (November 1991), pp. 62-4; S. Gier, *Die politische Karikatur und der Cartoon im „Punch" im viktorianischem Zeitalter* (Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, 2004).

satire' magazines.[57] Its British example consisted, predictably, of *Punch*.[58] When British comic periodicals other than the 'London Charivari' have received attention, the focus has been upon their graphic content.[59] Hence papers on the work of cartoonist Matt Morgan, who worked for both *Fun* and *Tomahawk*, two publications which will later be examined as *Porcupine* comparators.[60] Such analysis throws little light upon a serio-comic journal - the *Porcupine* - which remained *un*illustrated during its most successful decades.

Interest in the mainstream provincial press has grown in recent decades, particularly in relation to the rise and rise of the 'autonomous, self-governing' (Liberal and liberalising) Victorian city.[61] Summary or partial histories of the local press exist for numerous towns in nineteenth-century Lancashire and beyond.[62] Histories of individual titles have also been produced.[63] Liverpool has fared poorly, in this regard. Beyond some historical surveying of titles and a handful of fascinating but narrow studies conducted by amateur enthusiasts, no systematic research has yet been conducted into the evolution of Liverpool's print press during the modern period.[64] Journalist John Cooper Morley's two-part project, published in

[57] M. Effinger, 'Aufbruch zwischen Zeitkritik und Zensur', *Forschung: Das Mazazin der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft*, Vol. 37, Issue 4 (December 2012), pp. 16-21.

[58] http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/helios/fachinfo/www/kunst/digilit/artjournals/eng_zs.html [accessed 12 December 2017].

[59] R. Scully, 'The Other Kaiser: Wilhelm I and British Cartoonists, 1861-1914' , *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 44, Issue 1 (Spring 2011) pp. 69-98; R. Scully, 'William Henry Boucher (1837-1906): Illustrator and Judy Cartoonist', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 46, Issue 4 (Winter 2013), pp. 441-74.

[60] T. M. Kemnitz, 'Matt Morgan of "Tomahawk" and English Cartooning', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 19, Issue 1 (1975), pp. 5-34; C. Kent, 'War Cartooned/Cartoon War: Matt Morgan and the American Civil War in "Fun" and "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper"', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 36, Issue 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 153-81.

[61] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*.

[62] F. Leary, 'History of the Manchester Periodical Press' (unpublished manuscript, Manchester Central Reference Library, MSf052 L161, 1879); D. Fraser, 'The Nottingham Press 1800-1850', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* (1963), pp. 46-66; D. Fraser, 'The Press in Leicester c.1790-1850', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol.42 (1967), pp. 53-75; P.J. Lucas, 'The First Furness Newspapers: the History of the Furness Press from 1846 to c.1880' (M.Litt. dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1971); M. Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham: a study of Their Progress During the 'Golden Age' of the Provincial Press* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Graham, 1971); M. Haines, *The Newspapers of Burnley*, Burnley and District Historical Society (1991).

[63] A.J. Lee, 'The Management of a Victorian Local Newspaper: The Manchester City News, 1864-100', *Business History*, Vol. 15 (1973), pp. 131-48; 'Rochdale 150: 150 years of the Observer', <http://www.rochdaleobserver.co.uk/community/Rochdale_150/s/508735_150_years_of_the_observer> [accessed 1 March 2009]; C. Buckley, 'The Baron and the Brewer: Political Subsidy and the Last Years of the *Manchester Courier*', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol.1, No.1 (1987), pp. 44-9.

[64] J.A. Picton, 'Gleanings from Old Liverpool Newspapers, a Hundred Years Ago', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire [THSLC]*, Vol. 6 (1853-1854), pp. 109-26; T. Dawson, 'The Pamphlet Literature of Liverpool', *THSLC*, Vol. 17 (1864-1865), pp. 73-138; B., C.C, 'Liverpool Press: Past and Present', *Liverpool Daily Post* (10 October 1904); T. Ellison, *Gleanings and Reminiscences*, (Liverpool: Henry Young and Sons, 1905), pp. 309-14; J. Willox, 'The Press of Liverpool: Sir John Willox's Reminiscences', *Liverpool Courier* (6 January 1908); A.H. Arkle, 'Early Liverpool Printers', *THSLC*, Vol. 68 (1916), pp. 73-84; Anon, 'The Press of Liverpool: Origin and Development of Great Organs of Public Opinion' in *Liverpool: its Trade and Commerce* (Derby: for Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, 1918), pp. 94-5; G., J.M., 'The Press of Merseyside' in *Cox's Merseyside Album*, (Liverpool, 1930), pp. 66-9; J.R. Harris and B.L. Anderson, 'Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser: The Founding of an Eighteenth-Century Newspaper', *THSLC*, Vol. 116 (1964), pp. 229-35; A.C. Wardle, 'John Gore: Publisher', *THSLC*, Vol. 97 (1945), pp. 223-24.

the 1880s, still constitutes the most thorough attempt to compile a bibliographic index.[65] Whilst some of the more enduring of the town's newspapers have featured in broader examinations of press, society or culture during the period, Liverpool's nineteenth-century periodicals remain, for the large part, unexplored.[66] A collaborative academic venture launched in 2015 – the 'Liverpool Newspaper Heritage Project' – aims to address this gap by recovering and analysing the town's rich back catalogue of newspapers and periodical literature.[67] A selection of the Victorian town's leading newspapers is also set to be digitised by the British Library. Although this will not include periodicals, it should produce the serendipitous side effect of raising awareness of Liverpool's broader press history.

Figure 1.2
Newspaper hawkers selling the *Liverpool Mercury 1811-1900* (Image courtesy of The Bluecoat Press)

Produced in, for and about the city of Liverpool, the *Porcupine* was of its time and place and can only be properly understood in terms of its proud Victorian provincialism. Fortunately, making sense of the particular urban imaginary of which the *Porcupine* was both a cause and effect is readily done. A young 'city without ancestors' it may be, but Liverpool's history has been well surveyed and documented over time.[68] Thanks to its past antiquarians, there 'is no other large city, except possibly London, whose history is continuously better

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[65] Morley, *Newspaper Press*.
[66] Lee, *Origins*; Boyce, Curran and Wingate, *Newspaper History*; Koss, *Rise and Fall*; Clarke, *From Grub Street*.
[67] 'Liverpool Newspaper Heritage Project', 31 August 2016, https://liverpoolnewspaperheritage.wordpress.com/.
[68] W. Plomer (ed.), *Kilvert's Diary 1870-1879*, Vol. 1 (1989), p. 186; W. Dixon Scott, *Liverpool* (London: Black, 1907), pp. 6, 24.

documented from its foundation than that of Liverpool'.[69] Dozens of nineteenth-century observers recorded their impressions, perceptions and interpretations of Liverpool's physical character, its people, its ethos and its changing fortunes. The work of contemporary local memoirists and history scholars in the first half of the century still provides an excellent grounding for any study of Liverpool's later Victorian period.[70] Such material is supplemented and complemented by any number of less obvious sources such as the many popular visitors' guides to Liverpool produced during the period, which typically contained a wealth of historical and contemporary detail unavailable elsewhere.[71] The papers printed in Liverpool's longstanding *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, stretching over more than 150 years, offer micro detail and colour.[72] The flowery ruminations of Dixon Scott or the celebratory hagiography of such Edwardian 'booster' historians as Ramsay Muir and city librarian George Chandler remain useful, if judiciously approached.[73] All of these sources form an invaluable analytical backdrop to the study of a periodical which was, by default, critically introspective about urbanising Liverpool, its nature, its past, its identity and its reputation.[74]

Liverpool's more recent historiography has been dominated by economic and social research and a definitive history of the nineteenth-century port town has yet to be attempted.[75] The

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[69] G. Chandler, *Liverpool* (Liverpool: B. T. Basford, 1957), p. 449; W. Enfield, *An Essay towards the History of Leverpool* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1774); Anon, *A General and Descriptive History of the Ancient and Present State of Liverpool* (Liverpool: J. M'Creery, 1796); J.Corry, *The History of Liverpool from the Earliest Authenticated Period down to the Present Time* (Liverpool: William Robinson, 1810); H. Smithers, *Liverpool, its Commerce, Statistics, and Institutions; with a History of the Cotton trade* (Liverpool: T. Kaye, 1825); R. Brooke, *Liverpool as it was During the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century, 1775 to 1800* (Liverpool: J. Mawdsley & Son, 1853).

[70] T. Baines, *History of the Commerce and Town of Liverpool* (London and Liverpool: Longman, Brown and Green, 1852); J. Aspinall, *Liverpool a Few Years Since: by an Old Stager*, originally published in the *Liverpool Albion* (Liverpool: Adam Holden, 1852); J. Stonehouse, *Recollections of Old Liverpool, By a Nonagenarian* (Liverpool: J.F. Hughes, 1836); H. Smithers, *Liverpool: its Commerce, Statistics, and Institutions* (Liverpool: T. Kaye, 1825); T. Baines, *The Port and Town of Liverpool, and the Harbour, Docks, and Commerce of the Mersey, in 1859* (London: Longman & Co. and Liverpool: Benson and Mallett, 1859); J.A. Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool, Historical and Topographical, including a History of the Dock Estate* (Liverpool: Gilbert and Walmsley, 1875), p. 583; J. Stonehouse, *Streets of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Edward Howell, 1869); 'Memorials of Liverpool etc', *The Athenaeum* (25 January 1873); 'Memorials of Liverpool etc', *The Academy* (8 April 1876); 'Picton's Memorials of Liverpool', *The Saturday Review* (21 June 1873); J.A. Picton, 'Letter to the Editor', *Free Library* (16 February 1861).

[71] J. Hopkinson, *Memoirs of a Victorian Cabinet Maker* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969); M. Oliphant, *John Drayton; Being a History of the Early Life and Development of a Liverpool Engineer* (London: R. Bentley, 1851); H. Crow, *Memoirs of the Late Captain Hugh Crow* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme et al; Liverpool: G. & J. Robinson, 1830); T. Raffles, *"A burning and shining light": Being a Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Spencer* (New York: Sheldon, Lamport and Blakeman, 1856); T. Kaye, *The Stranger in Liverpool, Or, an Historical and Descriptive View of the Town of Liverpool* (first published in 1812).

[72] *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (THSLC) Archive via https://www.hslc.org.uk/archive/.

[73] R. Muir, *A History of Liverpool* (London: Williams and Norgate for University Press of Liverpool, 1907); W. Dixon Scott, *Liverpool* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907); I.C. Taylor, *Liverpool Social History 1820-1870*, Liverpool History Resources Committee (1972).

[74] 'What Others Think of Us', *Porcupine* (5 September 1868); 'Is Liverpool Philistinistic?' *Porcupine* (23 January 1869); 'A Hint for Liverpool', *Porcupine* (14 October 1871); 'Dull Liverpool', *Porcupine* (7 June 1873).

[75] R. Munck (ed.), *Reinventing the City: Liverpool in Comparative Perspective* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003); J. Belchem (ed.), *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character & History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University

best studies of nineteenth-century urbanism to have adopted a case-study approach have tended to bypass Liverpool in favour of other towns.[76] It is a deficit acknowledged and rued by most scholars with interest and expertise in the city's evolution.[77] The essays published as *Liverpool 1660-1750: people, prosperity and power*, however, provide a useful background to any study of nineteenth-century Liverpool, as does Arline Wilson's work on William Roscoe's life and times, analysed within the framework of 'commerce and culture' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[78] Given the cause and nature of the city's Victorian eminence much of the modern literature has focused upon Liverpool as either a global port, an economic powerhouse, or both.[79] Margaret Simey's sociological research into Liverpool's social and cultural, political and economic heritage remains useful as it is accessible and employs Shimmin as a credible source and subject.[80] Graeme Milne sensibly combined urban, maritime and commercial history to offer a more integrated analysis in *Trade and traders in mid-Victorian Liverpool*.[81] The history and heritage of Liverpool received a welcome boost in the 2000s, with a spate of research activity inspired (and funded) by Liverpool's successful 2008 European Capital of Culture bid.[82] The Centre for Liverpool and Merseyside Studies network, focused upon 'the cultural and historical legacy of the sub-region' and 'drawing in academic and research partners', held a series of themed annual conferences between 2004 and 2009 but its outputs are unclear and it appears to have

Press, 2006); M. Benbough-Jackson and S. Davies (eds), *Merseyside: Culture and Place* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).

[76] D. Cannadine (ed.), *Patricians, Power and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Towns* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982); D. Fraser (ed.), *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982); J. Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns 1830-1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); Briggs, *Victorian Cities*; S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class, Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000); K. Layton-Jones, *Beyond the Metropolis: The Changing Image of Urban Britain, 1780-1880* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016). For a late Victorian example: A. Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain* (New York: Century, 1895).

[77] J. Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*, 2006 ed., (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

[78] D.E. Ascott, F. Lewis and M. Power (eds), *Liverpool 1660-1750: People, Prosperity and Power* (Liverpool University Press, 2006); A. M. Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

[79] F.E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: an Economic History of a Port 1700-1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971); S. Marriner, *The Economic and Social Development of Merseyside, 1750-1960* (London: Croom Helm, 1982); B.L. Anderson and P.J.M. Stoney, *Commerce, Industry and Transport: Studies in Economic Change on Merseyside* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1983); T. Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987) and *Liverpool: City of the Sea* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997); A. Jarvis, *Liverpool: A History of "The Great Port"* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

[80] M. B. Simey: *Government by Consent*, (London: Bedford Square Press/NCVO, 1985); *Democracy Rediscovered: a Study in Police Accountability* (Merseyside: Pluto Press, 1988); *Charity Rediscovered: a Study of Philanthropic Effort in Nineteenth-Century Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992); *The Disinherited Society: a Personal View of Social Responsibility in Liverpool during the Twentieth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

[81] G.J. Milne, *Trade and Traders in Mid-Victorian Liverpool: Mercantile Business and the Making of a World Port* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

[82] N. Murray, *So Spirited a Town: Visions and Versions of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

petered out as a formal organisation.[83] More recently, attempts have been made, with disputed success, to revisit Liverpool's history through the prism of Empire.[84] Modern histories of crime, violence and policing in the Victorian town have provided rich if partial accounts of its past.[85] Indeed, one of these relied heavily upon the *Porcupine* as a source.[86] Aspects of the nineteenth-century city have also been recovered through women's and feminist history.[87] In recent decades, Liverpool has been micro-studied via the history of its libraries, football, race and racism, religion, migration, poverty and philanthropy.[88] Even the history of the town's electricity supply has been investigated.[89] Most recently, texts such as Alistair Wilcox's 'Living in Liverpool' reader offer an interesting, primary evidence-based entrée into the city's social and cultural past.[90] Such material feeds usefully into the present analysis, given that the *Porcupine* consciously concerned itself with the minutiae of the town's *train-train journalier*.[91]

Treatment of Liverpool's nineteenth-century political history has been partial, lopsided and/or incidental to other investigative foci.[92] Researchers specialising in Liverpool local

[83] J. Dawson and A. Gilmore, *Shared Interest: Developing Collaboration, Partnerships and Research Relationships between Higher Education, Museums, Galleries and Visual Arts Organisations in the North West: A Joint Consultancy Research Project*, Renaissance North West, Arts Council England North West and the North West Universities Association (2009).

[84] Haggerty, Webster and White, *Empire in One City?*; J. Belchem, review of Haggerty, Webster and White, *Empire in One City?* in *Reviews in History*, No. 737, http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/737 [Accessed 12 March, 2018]; the annual conference of the now defunct 'Centre for Liverpool and Merseyside Studies' in 2006 was themed 'Liverpool and Empire 1700-1970'.

[85] M. Macilwee, *The Gangs of Liverpool* (Wrea Green: Milo Books, 2006) and *The Liverpool Underworld: Crime in the City 1750-1900* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Z. Alker, 'Street Violence in Mid-Victorian Liverpool' (Ph.D. thesis, Liverpool John Moores University, 2014).

[86] J.E. Archer, *The Monster Evil: Policing and Violence in Victorian Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

[87] J. M. Bone and C. Hillam (eds), *Wives and Whores in Victorian Liverpool: Varieties in Attitude towards Medical Care for Women* (Liverpool: Liverpool Medical History Society, 1999); M. Kanya-Forstner, 'Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 18 (2/3) (1999), pp. 168-88; A. Brabin, 'The Black Widows of Liverpool', *History Today*, Vol. 52, Issue 10 (October 2002), p. 40; L. Williams, ''At large': Women's Lives and Offending in Victorian Liverpool and London' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 2014).

[88] E. Glasgow, 'Two Public Libraries in Victorian Liverpool', *Library History*, 19(2) (2003), pp. 129-42; D. Kennedy, 'Locality and Professional Football Club Development: The Demographics of Football Club Support in Late Victorian Liverpool', *Soccer and Society*, 5(3) (2004) pp. 371-91; J.N. Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005); B. Singleton, '"Heave half a brick at him": Hate Crimes and Discrimination against Muslim Converts in late Victorian Liverpool', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs,* 37(1) (2 January 2017), pp. 1-13; J. A. Klapas, 'Geographical Aspects of Religious Change in Victorian Liverpool, 1837-1901' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1977); A. Wilcox, 'The Anglican Church in Victorian Liverpool and its Work with the Labouring Poor'(Ph.D. thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2004); C. G. Pooley, 'The Residential Segregation of Migrant Communities in Mid-Victorian Liverpool', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 2(3) (1977), pp. 364-82; A. Miller, *Poverty deserved? Relieving the poor in Victorian Liverpool*,(Birkenhead: Liver Press, 1988).

[89] G. Woodward, 'Electricity in Victorian Liverpool 1851-1901', *Engineering Science and Education Journal*, Vol. 1, Issue 4 (August 1992), pp. 183-91.

[90] A. Wilcox, *Living in Liverpool*.

[91] Glasgown and J. Newell, *Philip French Curry and the Popular Politics of Mid-Victorian Liverpool*, European Research Institute (2001); R.B. Rose, 'John Finch: a Liverpool Disciple of Robert Owen', *THSLC* (1957), pp. 159-184.

[92] As will be shown, 'Mr Porcupine' expressed views upon all of these subjects.

government and elections during all or part of the period have produced invaluable work.[93] Numerous papers have been published under the auspices of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire and there has been some focus upon Liverpool in wider examinations of urban politics.[94] Nonetheless, a definitive social and political history of Victorian Liverpool has not been attempted since Philip Waller's forensic *Democracy and Sectarianism* several decades ago.[95] The work of John Belchem into Victorian Liverpool and its politics has been highly influential.[96] Due in large part to his theorising, interest has grown in particular aspects of the city's political exceptionalism - its sectarian heritage, for example, or its susceptibility to militancy in the later twentieth century.[97] Liverpool's nineteenth-century politics in the round – its popular political culture, political practice and partisan politicking - remain poorly understood and sometimes misinterpreted. Hence the frequent and erroneous modern refrain that Liverpool has never, historically, been a 'Tory Town' when, on the contrary, it was decidedly (and atypically) receptive to Conservatism for large parts of the nineteenth century; or that the Conservatives in Liverpool were 'a party hidebound by old traditions and wedded to elitist notions of political power' when in fact they boasted the common touch and were often far more popular with the working man than were their Liberal counterparts.[98]

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In keeping with the Rabelaisian epigraph at the start of this chapter and as befits the close analysis of any serio-comic miscellany, this study draws flexibly upon an interdisciplinary range of approaches and emphases, influences and traditions, including philosophy and

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[93] B.D. White, *A History of the Corporation of Liverpool 1835-1914* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1951); C. D. Watkinson, 'The Liberal Party on Merseyside in the Nineteenth Century' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1976); N. Collins, *Politics and Elections in Nineteenth-Century Liverpool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); D. B. Rees, *Local and Parliamentary Politics in Liverpool from 1800-1911* (Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 2000); Belchem, *Merseypride,* 2006; J. Belchem (ed.), *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992).

[94] D. Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: The Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976).

[95] P.J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A Political and Social History of Liverpool 1868-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1981).

[96] J. Belchem, *Popular Politics; J. Belchem, Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

[97] F. Neal, *Sectarian Violence: the Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914: an Aspect of Anglo-Irish History* (Liverpool: Newsham Press, 2003); D. Frost and P. North, *Militant Liverpool: a City on the Edge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013); J. Ball, ''Militant Liverpool' as Liverpool Exceptionalism: The Rise, Fall and Character of the City Council, 1983-1987', *THSLC*, Vol. 166 (2017), pp. 145-86.

[98] This renders all the more intriguing the study of an oppositional, Liberal-leaning publication such as the *Porcupine* (which provides a counter narrative of Liverpool as a 'Tory Town' – see, for example: 'The Mayoralty and What it Means', *Porcupine*, 16 October 1869); J. Allen, review of M. Roberts, *Political Movements in Urban England, 1832-1914* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 54, No.3 (Spring 2012), p. 560.

sociology, linguistics and business studies, political theory and practice, literary and communication studies. In doing so, it responds to recent calls in academe for 'new speculative and synthetic methods … that might equip us to speak and to know outside the verificationist Victorian frame'.[99]   The same spirit of eclecticism determines the use of primary and secondary source material, which are frequently juxtaposed so as to capture some of the complexity and range of Victorian commentary, and to act as a reminder that there is no single 'neutral' perspective on the historical issues examined.

The use of literary theory and criticism is justified on the grounds that these provide the most systematic framework for analysis and that the historicity of the 'provincial comic periodical', as a peculiarly nineteenth-century genre, is not in doubt. Literary theory alone does not suffice, however. Historian and political scientist Martyn P. Thompson has put forward the hypothesis that any attempt to recover the historical import of a literary text must draw upon a *range* of approaches. Modified versions of both reception/reader response theory - involving literary interpretations and evaluations – as well as the history of political thought and intellectual history - are best suited to the task.[100] Thompson claims that these two complementary approaches have much in common in terms of their genesis, preoccupations and influences. Germane to any study of the satirical periodical is Thompson's suggestion that more attention be paid to the practical and commercial imperatives which determined the transmission of political thought from author to reader, and to the role played by cultural institutions in the 'selection, criticism and promotion' of texts.[101] So as to obtain different perspectives, the analysis will adopt the approach advocated by Thompson, which combines the use of both the pragmatic text theories favoured by the reception theorists *and* the substantialist text theories favoured by the historians of political thought.

Thompson contended that three phenomena impede a full understanding of literary history: the neglect of authorial intentions, a 'confused conception of historicity' and 'the insistence that a historian adopt the role of present-day critic'.[102] This exploration of the *Porcupine* aspires to avoid these pitfalls. The following chapters contain little literary critique *per se*. As Thompson has argued, the roles of literary historian and literary critic must be separated

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[99] 'Manifesto of the V21 Collective: Ten Theses' http://v21collective.org/manifest-of-the-v21-collective-ten-theses/ [accessed 1 December 2017].
[100] M. P. Thompson, 'Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning', *History and Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (October 1991), pp. 248-72; Thompson discounts other theories (Marxist literary history, the structuralist and formalist schools of thought, substantialist text theory *à la* Gunter Grimm or pragmatic text theory *à la* Jauss) as being too reductionist, too narrow in focus, too limited or too relativist in isolation.
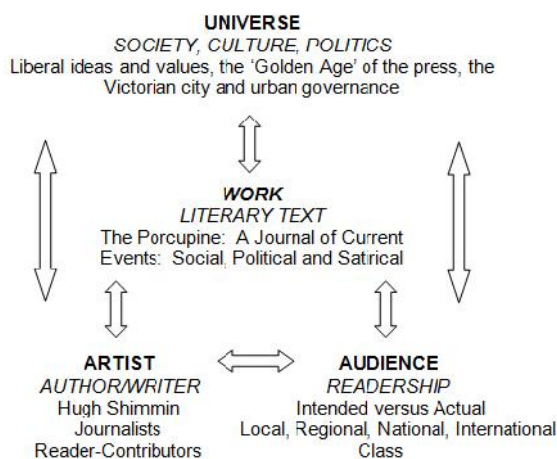[101] *Ibid.*, p. 269-70.
[102] *Ibid.*

out.[103] The aim ought to be 'to offer explanations of past activities in terms of their pastness' and 'these will be narrative explanations of activities, understood as unique, particular and unrepeatable'.[104] The *Porcupine's* literary merits or demerits are not critiqued other than incidentally. The production and consumption of the ideas the journal's creators sought to convey are the points of inquiry here and these are best explored through an examination of the relationships between author and reader, context and text.

Organising such a range of information and ideas coherently presents a challenge. Terry Eagleton's characterisation of the evolutionary stages of modern literary theory, framing the historical separations, is helpful: a Romantic 'preoccupation with the author', followed by a New Critical 'exclusive concern with the text', followed, in turn, by a 'marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years'.[105] None of these literary approaches took account of the social and cultural context of a work, however. More useful as an organisational scaffold is literary critic Meyer Howard Abrams' quadripartite model of universe, work, artist and audience (Figure 1.3).[106] This provides a comprehensive framework which allows for an holistic analysis. Ideally, all of the four elements should enjoy equal weighting in the analytical process, although this rarely happens in practice.[107] Efforts are made here to achieve balance by using Abrams' model to organise the content.

Figure 1.3
Conceptual framework for analysis, based upon Abrams' theorem

UNIVERSE
SOCIETY, CULTURE, POLITICS
Liberal ideas and values, the 'Golden Age' of the press, the
Victorian city and urban governance

WORK
LITERARY TEXT
The Porcupine: A Journal of Current
Events: Social, Political and Satirical

ARTIST
AUTHOR/WRITER
Hugh Shimmin
Journalists
Reader-Contributors

AUDIENCE
READERSHIP
Intended versus Actual
Local, Regional, National, International
Class

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[103] *Ibid.,* p. 262.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] T. Eagleton, 'Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory', *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 64.
[106] M. H. Abrams, 'Orientation of Critical Theories' in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 6.
[107] *Ibid.*

The present expository chapter makes the case for the research, the subject chosen and the thematic and methodological approaches adopted. Chapters Two and Three are concerned with the conception and realisation of the *Porcupine* project, within its context (its 'universe'). As a 'scene setting' exercise, 'Of Time and the City' is descriptive and explicatory and explores what the journal's creators were setting out to achieve.[108] 'Perfectly Original Notwithstanding' uses comparative analysis to position the *Porcupine* within the wider print and press culture of the day. Chapter Four, 'Victorian Power Matrices', investigates the 'artist'. It sets out to recover information about the talent underpinning the *Porcupine* and turns to prosopography to investigate the social and cultural networks to which it belonged. Chapters Five and Six are concerned with the text (the 'work'). Both foreground the *Porcupine* as a 'work', allowing for close reading and analysis. Predicated upon ideas surrounding commerce versus culture, Victorian morality and reputation, and the evolution of modern capitalism, 'Merchant Princes or Leviathan Rogues?' is thematically driven. 'Procrastinating, Peddling and Patching' is argumentative, in so far as the findings lead it to challenge the general consensus surrounding the so-called 'civic gospel'. In examining audience and audience reception, Chapters Seven and Eight hone in on the *Porcupine's* readers (the 'audience'). 'The People One Has to Write For' conducts quantitative and qualitative analysis of the empirical evidence available and demonstrates how it is possible to conceive of the *Porcupine's* readership as more than an imagined community. 'A Paper I Have Never Liked' interprets the evidence for reader response within the context of the satirical periodical as a mediator and widener of public opinion. The concluding chapter, 'Laying Pathologies Bare', revisits the original themes and points of inquiry, synthesising the findings and discussing their potential significance and application, before projecting ahead to where the research might lead.

THEMES AND ISSUES

Three phenomena - political philanthropy, townology and satire as freedom of thought and expression - will be shown to have been both distinguishing leitmotifs of the provincial satirical periodical and the source of its power.

The idea of political (as opposed to 'social') philanthropy in the nineteenth century has not received a great deal of discrete attention, although it has been touched upon in relation to

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[108] *Ibid.*, p. 408.

the Rowntree family.[109] Victorian philanthropy is most commonly associated with charitable activity and the burgeoning 'social science' movement, well-intended and worthwhile forms of action which nevertheless often served in effect to prop up existing conditions and arguably undermined calls for concerted policy development, structural change or constitutional reform.[110] Political philanthropy represented the desire of conscientious middle-class individuals to contribute not only money or time to deserving causes but also ideas, energy and pressure to policy debate and formulation. It is best construed as a type of 'performed citizenship' on the part of those who, though enfranchised, stood outside of the formal power structures. Hugh Shimmin's philosophy on this was very clear and is discussed in Chapter Four. The *Porcupine*, as a satirical periodical, emerged as both a cause and effect of it. The journal provided a means by which to preach, perform and practise, in a virtuous circle, the self-same political philanthropy which motivated it. Satirical provincial periodicals were well-positioned to challenge the status quo by challenging social philanthropic theory and practice. Because they were not part of the conventional newspaper press, they were not part of the Establishment. Instead, they proudly presented themselves as being of, for and by the communities they served. In this way, their creators included themselves amongst the 'political citizen' activists they sought to inform and inspire.[111]

Social, cultural and political immersion was a precondition and defining characteristic of the most enduring of the satirical provincial journals. The following chapters will show how a unique form of local intelligence enabled these publications to muscle their way into political discourse in ways which could not be ignored. Patrick Joyce's ontological concept of townology, and the knowingness motif associated with it, will be appropriated to suggest the way in which local periodicals like the *Porcupine* not only had their fingers on the pulse in terms of what was going on in public affairs but also intimately understood what motivated local men and institutions.[112] This involved knowing, understanding and intuition; it required a constant monitoring of the urban environment and an appreciation of the behavioural and interpersonal dynamics at play. For crusading investigative journalists-cum-agitators, attention to detail and to nuance was vital, if they were to offer credible, authoritative, substantiated analysis of local public affairs. The analogy of schoolroom 'withitness' is apt, given the formative function of the nineteenth-century periodical 'as it compete[d] with other arts and social forces in the emancipation of man from his natural, religious, and social

[109] J. S. Davies and M. Freeman, 'A Case of Political Philanthropy: The Rowntree Family and the Campaign for Democratic Reform', *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, Article 7 (2005), pp. 95-113.

[110] H. Cunningham, 'Philanthropy and its Critics: a History' in B. Morvaridi (ed.), *New Philanthropy and Social Justice: Debating the Conceptual and Policy Discourse* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), pp. 17-32.

[111] M. Roberts, *Political Movements in Urban England, 1832-1914* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 14.

[112] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 204.

ties'.[113]   By dint of being a satirical journal, the *Porcupine* adopted for itself (and was understood by contemporaries to play) a highly self-conscious educative purpose and role. Knowingness was also a question of scale. 'Mr Porcupine' wrote routinely about the wider Lancashire hinterland but there was no doubting his focus upon Liverpool as the core.[114] From this standpoint, the journal was uniquely positioned to navigate and to mediate between macro and micro politics.

Knowingness was not contingent upon local journalists being on the 'inside track' of public affairs. On the contrary, crucial to the success of the Victorian serio-comic periodical was the location of its creators on the periphery of local 'society' and outside of formal municipal governance, which allowed for critical distance, perspective and independence. It will be demonstrated how the outsider status of the *Porcupine's* creative collaborators – the very marginalisation which then and since has often been used to downplay their discursive role – in fact became a virtue and a condition for success.   To use Joyce's terminology, the journal became a 'technosocial' solution to 'technopolitical' challenges, where 'techno' is understood to function 'outside the political'.[115] Its legitimacy was rather derived from such 'entities' as 'public opinion' (grounded in the liberal thinking of local, civic and other imagined communities and understood as an element of dynamic political discourse), 'the people' and 'the democracy'.[116]

The idea of 'apartness' is also central to the third exploratory trope; namely, satire as freedom of thought and expression (and thus as an indicator of liberal consciousness and action) in a proto-democratic age. Satire, its purpose and method, are explained and discussed at some length, as are nineteenth-century attitudes towards it.   Contrary to the clichéd Victorian stereotype, the creators of serio-comic periodicals enjoyed remarkably uninhibited levels of freedom to challenge and to criticise. They acted as noisy Greek choruses which exhorted readers to engage with the world around them and – as will be shown - their sharpness and wit was well-received by the common man. Victorian 'freedom' represented not only the right but also the responsibility to choose between ways of living, thinking and being and the satirical periodical helps to explain the seemingly paradoxical notion of 'ruling through freedom' – as Joyce put it: 'the practice of freedom as the

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[113] J. Kounin, *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 74; T. L. Good and J. E. Brophy, *Looking in Classrooms* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 127; H. R. Jauss and E. Benzinger, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', *New Literary History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, A Symposium on Literary History (Autumn 1970), p. 37.
[114] 'The Upstart Towns of Lancashire', *Porcupine* (23 August 1862).
[115] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 7, 101.
[116] Joyce. *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 99, 120-121; J. Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of 'Public Opinion'*, 1867-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

performance of contradiction was intrinsic to the *strength* of liberalism' (original emphasis).[117]

Satire is an elusive concept. Appealing to the emotion as well as to the intellect, it is often more readily perceived or intuited than described, posing a challenge for objective historical analysis.[118] Conal Condren cautioned against attempting *any* essentialist definition in pursuit of historical understandings: 'such an approach can amount to stacking the evidential cards and is precisely why we should not start off by defining our terms'.[119] Characterising satire as a 'critical impulse' which 'might be best defined by function and by origin or characterised conceptually', Condren identified 'an element of censoriousness' and 'some degree of denigration' as common denominators.[120] Other scholars have avoided absolute definitions entirely, preferring to characterise 'that which is satiric' as a set of identifiable techniques: humour (exaggeration, understatement, incongruity, deflation, linguistic games, surprise); irony; invective; mock encomium; the grotesque; comic juxtaposition; mock epic/mock heroic; parody; inflation (extreme overstatement); diminution (extreme understatement). The *Porcupine* made liberal use of all of these devices. For literary theorists such as Jane Ogborn and Peter Buckroyd, satire can be either a method or a genre, depending upon the author's ultimate purpose.[121] Others again regard satire as 'more an attitude or stance' and much has been written about the satiric 'mood' or 'tone'.[122] The twentieth-century philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin highlighted satire's communicative role, examining it 'as a dialogic [i.e. discursive], relativistic [i.e. relative or correlative] *mode*'.[123] Ian Jack and Brian Connery conceived of satire as protest or denunciation 'become art'.[124] In the 1920s, Frances Russell construed satire as 'opposition to vice and folly' borne of intentional or unintentional deception.[125] Arthur Pollard referred to satire variously as 'a social mode', a 'critical idiom' and a 'distorting mirror'.[126] Bloom and Bloom focused upon 'satiric "intention", shaped by a moral-didactic impulse'.[127] The reality is, satire can be all of these and interpreting and responding to it is a highly subjective process. Some terms of reference are nonetheless required. For the purpose of this thesis, the terms '(a) satire', 'satiric' and

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[117] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 102.
[118] E.A. Bloom and L.D. Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Voice* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 15.
[119] C. Condren, 'Satire and definition', *Humor*, 24(5) (2012), p. 396.
[120] *Ibid.,* p. 392.
[121] J. Ogborn and P.Buckroyd, *Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 15.
[122] R. Harris, 'The Purpose and Method of Satire', *Virtual Salt*, 24 October 2004, https://www.virtualsalt.com/satire.htm.
[123] M. O'Cinneide, 'Satire: Victorian Literature', *Oxford Bibliographies*, 27 November 2013.
[124] I. Jack, *Pope* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), p.17; B.A. Connery, Introduction to the Transaction Edition of M. Hodgart, *Satire: Origins and Principles* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), p. 1.
[125] F. T. Russell, *Satire in the Victorian Novel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), pp. 23-4.
[126] A. Pollard, *Satire: The Critical Idiom (*London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1970).
[127] Bloom and Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Voice*, p. 21.

'satirical' should be taken to refer to any piece of self-consciously 'witty' prose or verse that has a critical, invariably morally-inspired, purpose. The *Porcupine's* architects would have had no quarrel with such a characterisation.

CHAPTER TWO

Of Time and the City

Recovering a Forgotten Periodical: The *Porcupine* Project 1860-1879

Histories or biographies of newspapers are most difficult to research and write.[1]

Although the evidential material is plentiful, it is neither possible nor desirable to produce here a comprehensive 'biography' of the *Porcupine*, which would necessarily come at the expense of analysis. Moreover, the journal is more historically interesting for what it did than for what it was. It is more appropriate to conceive of it as an ideological project, facilitator or performance, rather than a mere textual source. Nevertheless, the business of assessing the purpose and role of this journalistic enterprise is contingent upon a thorough understanding of its genesis and its nature. What *was* the *Porcupine*, according to contemporary conventions and genre expectations (context), to its creators (author), to the source itself (text) and to its original audience (reader)? What, furthermore, do the timing and location of its emergence signify? Ought the journal to be understood as a cause or effect of societal and political change, or both, or neither?

This chapter sets out to address these questions. First, it provides a brief introduction to and description of the *Porcupine* during its acknowledged 'heyday', with particular regard to the way in which the journal evolved during this prime. Second, it explores the context of the journal's conception and launch. Third, it offers interpretations of the ideas and motivations which originally inspired and powered the *Porcupine* project. This last is particularly important. As Martyn Thompson observed, literary history as the aesthetics of reception and impact (*Rezeptionsästhetik and Wirkungsästhetik*) tends to minimise the significance of the artist.[2] It offers a valuable but one-sided approach and authorial intent ought not to be overlooked in the search for meaning. One group for whom authorial intended meanings are of fundamental importance to critical analysis are the Anglo-American theorists of the 'new'

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[1] J.O. Baylen, review of S.L. Eddy Jr, *The Founding of the Cornhill Magazine* (Muncie: Ball State University, 1970) in *Victorian Studies*, Vol.16, No.2 (December 1972), p. 245.
[2] Thompson, 'Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning', p. 269.

history of political thought. This school - exemplified by the work of intellectual historians such as Skinner, Poecock and Oakeshort - has tended to place an emphasis upon *historical* (as opposed to *literary*) understandings and interpretations of texts, which are construed rather as 'complex speech acts' than as artistic works. Against this theory, the approach advocated by the 'intentionalists' has much to offer the literary historian in terms of helping to recover a writer's intended meanings, provided that hermeneutic 'rules' are followed. The historian must, according to Quentin Skinner, 'focus not just on the text to be interpreted, but on the prevailing conventions governing the treatment of the issues or themes with which that text is concerned'.[3] He or she must also remain conscious of the author's 'mental world, and the world of his empirical beliefs'.[4]

Discussion of the nature of satire and of the *Porcupine* as (a) satire provides an analytical backdrop. Attention then turns to the politically discursive function performed by serio-comic journals in the rapidly evolving urban centres and to making the case for a reappraisal of Victorian satire and its use as an analytical tool. It is also demonstrated how the *Porcupine's* subtitle, 'social, political and satirical', accurately reflected its nature as an exercise in performed citizenship, socio-political philanthropy and freedom of thought and expression, respectively. This is the basis for the exploration to follow; many of the points of fact and argument made will be developed in subsequent chapters.

A PROVINCIAL SERIO-COMIC PERIODICAL

The *Porcupine* has been held up as a prime example of the "comic periodical" type.[5] Yet it has been received and perceived in a remarkable variety of ways, over time and geography, from 'a funny pennyworth' (Bury, in 1863) through 'the principal critical weekly in Liverpool' (New Zealand, in 1880) to 'a scurrilous Merseyside magazine of long, long ago' (Liverpool, in 2002).[6] A sampling is provided in Appendix 1. It does not fit easily into press categorisations; sometimes a 'newspaper', sometimes a 'journal', it was in fact a curious hybrid. This poses methodological and conceptual problems, because the bibliographic sources and secondary literatures have not always dealt with these formats in consistent or predictable ways. The first task, then, is to dispense with labels and to establish the precise nature of the *Porcupine* as a material text.

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[3] Q. Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', *New Literary History*, Vol.3, No.2 (1972), p. 406.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 407.
[5] B. Maidment, 'Satirical Magazines' in Brake and Demoor (eds), *DNCJ*, pp. 556-7.
[6] 'From Our Correspondent', *Bury Times* (10 October 1863); 'The Critic', *New Zealand Observer* (2 October 1880); 'Eccentrics Come out of the Closet, Pyjamas Still On', *Daily Post* (22 April 2002).

A cursory scan suggests an unexceptional example of mid-to-late nineteenth-century provincial journalism. The journal was launched in Liverpool on Saturday, 6 October 1860. Comprising sixteen pages, it sold each week for a penny. Some caution must be exercised in reviewing how the *Porcupine* self-identified. It styled itself, somewhat tautologically, as a 'Journal of Current Events: Social, Political and Satirical'. Its primary remit was local public affairs. The 'social' in the sub-masthead did not refer to local 'society', although elements of local community gossip did seep into the journal. Rather, it came closer in intended meaning to 'civic'. It is useful in this regard to apply Patrick Joyce's conception of the liberal city not as 'a society' (i.e. a static 'thing' representing 'social order') but as 'the social' (i.e. a dynamic process involving agency and leading to 'social ordering').[7] In keeping with Enlightenment tradition, the *Porcupine* performed the two established journalistic functions identified by Paul Nord: a 'fact function' (informing discourse) and a 'forum function' (facilitating discourse).[8] Satirical expression would serve a simultaneously defensive and offensive purpose, alternately softening and sharpening the blow of the political diatribe. The editorial 'Mr. Porcupine' was conceived as the free-thinking court jester – a dramatic and literary device long associated with satire, which served as a useful form of popular branding and allowed writers, under editorial disguise, to be less inhibited in exercising their freedom of expression.[9] It was a defining feature of Victorian satirical journalism, with a long history. Sylvanus Urban of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mr Spectator of the *Spectator* and William Cobbett's Peter Porcupine (the last of whom will be discussed in due course) all served the same purpose in the eighteenth century.[10] 'Mr Porcupine' was more than a mere literary device. In his monitoring role, he was the liberal self, who was 'reflexive' and 'self-watching' and always keen to rationalize and explain his own thought processes and conclusions to his reading public. He was also watchful and protective of the world around him: 'In liberalism rule is ceded to a self that must constantly monitor the very civil society and political power that are at once the guarantee of freedom and its threat'.[11]

The *Porcupine* also conformed to type in declaring 'a specifically satiric aim, to joust against cant and pretension wherever they lurked in the society and politics of the moment'.[12] The satirical periodical *Fun*, launched in 1861, had Socrates, 'half choked by a giggle', declaring: 'The Truest Wisdom is Wit – the greatest Philosophy is Folly – the mightiest Weapon of

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[7] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 6-7.
[8] Nord, 'The Victorian City', p. 83.
[9] B. Maidment, 'The Presence of *Punch* in the Nineteenth Century' in H. Harder and B. Mittler (eds), *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair* (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2013), pp. 13-44; E. R. Pennell, 'The Modern Comic Newspaper: the Evolution of a Popular Type', *Contemporary Review* (October 1886), pp. 509-23.
[10] Wiener and Altick, *Punch*, 1997.
[11] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 4, 121.
[12] *Ibid.*

Mankind a laugh!'[13]   *Tomahawk*, established in 1867, made gleeful play of a leitmotif inspired by the popular 'Frontier' and 'Western' fiction found in 'penny dreadfuls' during the period: 'we are out upon the war-path … we are bitter enemies of the whole tribe of Sham'.[14]

Figure 2.1

Porcupine title page and enlarged detail of a Liver bird being roasted over a spit, 4 October 1862

The *Porcupine* was aimed at the town's (largely maritime, mercantile and manufacturing) "middle classes", a broad demographic which in mid-Victorian Liverpool ranged from the merchant princes to the lowliest of office clerks; from the astonishingly wealthy to those

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[13] Preface, *Fun* (21 September 1861).
[14] 'Our Preliminary War Whoop', *Tomahawk* (11 May 1867).

living hand-to-mouth; from the cultured and progressive to the uncouth and reactionary. Publicity (understood as public exposure and awareness-raising) lay at the heart of the journal's ethos.[15] 'Mr Porcupine's' mission was to act as a self-styled watchdog of municipal government and civic governance; to root out and highlight neglect, corruption, exploitation and incompetence wherever it occurred in local public life and office: 'We shall attempt to shoot folly as it flies, and our quills will be directed against the vulnerable points of ignorance and vice …'.[16] Urban freedom, suggested Joyce, depended upon 'conditions of a political legibility and visibility'.[17] Practising, preaching and, if necessary, forcing openness thus became a virtuous act. Transparency was a central *Porcupine* motivator and theme: '[Porcupine] has expended years of his valuable life in the attempt to put everything in the proper light. Sometimes the public sees it; sometimes the public don't'.[18] The journal thereby fulfilled its role, alongside such technologies as street lighting (light) and policing (surveillance), as a 'technology of transparison'.[19]

"Shining a light" took many forms. Vice in the form of drinking and gambling, and to a lesser extent, prostitution, and "viciousness" as the antithesis of "respectability", were discoursed upon in both the abstract and the concrete.[20] Pet peeves – practices involving exploitation, abuse or outright wrongdoing for personal or professional gain, to which 'Mr Porcupine' returned again and again – included flummery ('meaningless or insincere flattery or conventions'); flunkeyism; burkery ('to suppress or get rid of by some indirect manoeuvre' – in turn from 'to murder, as by suffocation, so as to leave no or few marks of violence'); jobbery ('the practice of using a public office or position of trust for one's own gain or advantage'); nepotism; quackery; and puffery ('exaggerated or false praise' – particularly with regard to the commercially co-dependent relationship between the press and its subjects).[21] These colloquial terms did not merely represent the jargon of political discourse. They reflected the code of knowingness between author and reader. That most of these phrases have fallen into misuse points to their historicity and thus to their evidential interest.

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[15] J. Bentham, 'Of Publicity', Chapter II, in M. James, C. Blamires & C. Pease-Watkin (eds), *Political Tactics: The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). doi:10.1093/actrade/9780198207726.book.1.

[16] Leader, *Porcupine* (6 October 1860).

[17] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 100.

[18] H. Shimmin, *Liverpool Life: Its Pleasures, Practices and Pastimes* (London: Egerton Smith & Company, 1857*)*; 'The Right Light', *Porcupine* (4 August 1866).

[19] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 109, 125.

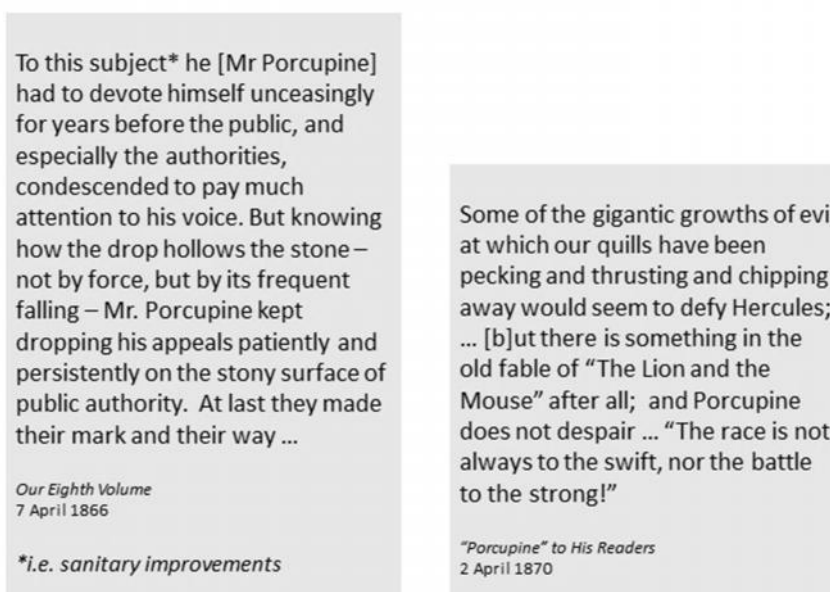[20] M. Huggins, *Vice and the Victorians* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

[21] E.g. 'Jobbery! Oh! Dear No!' *Porcupine* (26 January 1861); 'Jobbery in Which All Join', *Porcupine* (17 May 1862); 'Fulsome Flummery', *Porcupine* (9 November 1867); 'Peculiarities of Puffery', *Porcupine* (15 March 1873); 'A Burked Assault Case', *Porcupine* (11 May 1876); 'Gambling and Quackery', *Porcupine* (27 January 1877).

Aaron Matz coined the term 'satirical realism' to describe a merging of the two modes in fiction towards the end of the Victorian period.[22] His interpretation of satire as 'an intrepid and aggressive form of representation', as 'a tragic and not comic mode' and as a genre which 'zooms out from the local to the universal' is consistent with the *Porcupine*.[23] Matz's ultimate conclusion, that satirical realism did not set out, through judgement and dissent, to correct, is not.[24] Improvement (social and municipal, rather than constitutional) was 'Mr Porcupine's' stated goal:

> 'What is Porcupine? He is above all things a Reformer. Looking around him, in Liverpool, he saw at one time that scarcely anything existed which did not need reform. Of political reforms he rarely treats. Not that he considers them unimportant, or that he is without his own distinct and deliberate views regarding them, but he believes he can do most good in Liverpool by confining his attention principally to social and municipal and, if you like, parochial reforms.'[25]

Figure 2.2
Porcupine on tenacity, 7 April 1866 (left) and 2 April 1870 (right)

To this subject* he [Mr Porcupine] had to devote himself unceasingly for years before the public, and especially the authorities, condescended to pay much attention to his voice. But knowing how the drop hollows the stone – not by force, but by its frequent falling – Mr. Porcupine kept dropping his appeals patiently and persistently on the stony surface of public authority. At last they made their mark and their way …

Our Eighth Volume
7 April 1866

*i.e. sanitary improvements

Some of the gigantic growths of evil at which our quills have been pecking and thrusting and chipping away would seem to defy Hercules; … [b]ut there is something in the old fable of "The Lion and the Mouse" after all; and Porcupine does not despair … "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong!"

"Porcupine" to His Readers
2 April 1870

Like the editor of London's *Moonshine* (1879-1902), who promised, 'While there is a single wrong unremedied, we shall continue to write…', 'Mr Porcupine' vowed to pursue this

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[22] A. Matz, *Satire in an Age of Realism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. x.
[23] *Ibid*, pp. xi-xiii.
[24] *Ibid*, p. xiv.
[25] 'Our Seventh Volume', *Porcupine* (1 April 1865).

agenda until his goals had been met: 'then, and not till then, shall our epitaph be written'.[26] The *Porcupine* project thus became a marathon. Shimmin et al. were unapologetic about their reliance upon repetition and reinforcement to drive messages home and sustain campaigns. They made a virtue of their dogged pursuit of certain subjects. Tenacity was a virtuous journalistic weapon, which paid off in time (Figure 2.2). That the journal was to continue for over half a century raises interesting questions about contemporary assessments of liberal 'progress'.

Like earlier periodicals such as the *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist* in the late 1830s and 1840s, the *Porcupine* is most accurately described for analytical purposes as 'serio-comic', rather than 'comic'.[27] Essentially a miscellany, it comprised essays, reviews, didactic 'sermons', sketches, fictional short stories, poems, squibs, quips, jokes and puns. The content was formulaic and middle-brow. Significantly, from the point of view of evaluating authorial intent, the *Porcupine* project was a collective effort which relied from the outset upon freelance contributions.[28] Admiring contemporaries suggested the journal was something of a pioneer in this use of 'fugitive' copy, although the practice was in fact well established by the mid-century.[29] Nonetheless, Shimmin 'inaugurated a departure', in his eclecticism.[30] Thanks to the input of multiple contributors, the *Porcupine's* coverage was wide-ranging: politics and municipal governance, local trade and commerce, foreign affairs and domestic policy (diplomatic crises, trade wars, international aid during times of famine, for example), popular philosophy and 'social science', culture and the arts, both fine and popular. It contained no hard 'news' content, other than as a springboard for criticism.

'Mr Porcupine's' rhetoric was pointed and accusatory. An 'equal opportunities' satirist, he undertook 'to oppose evil because it is evil, without consideration of whose evil it is or against whom it was perpetrated'.[31] He cited Juvenal in justification of this: 'Quicquid agunt homines … nostri farrago libelli' – anything was potential grist to the satirist's mill.[32] In practice, this meant that the *Porcupine* was as ready to use its quills to lambast Liberals as it was to pillory Conservatives:

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[26] Editorial, *Moonshine* (5 June 1879); 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).

[27] T. R. Ellis III, 'The Dramatist and the Comic Journal in England, 1830-1870' (PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, US, 1968), p. 121.

[28] 'Notices to Correspondents', *Porcupine* (6 October 1860).

[29] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).

[30] Untitled, *Decatur Daily Democrat* (15 August 1882).

[31] Harris, 'Purpose and Method'.

[32] Juvenal, *Satires*, 1/1: 85-86 in S. Morton Braund (ed.), *Juvenal: Satires, Book 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 45-74; see W. Nash, 'The Value of Juvenal' in W. van Peer (ed.) *The Quality of Literature: Linguistic Studies in Literary Evaluation* (Amsterdam/New York: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008), p. 139.

"A great deal of talent on it," says Mr. Tory; "but it libels our men most malignantly."

"Clever, very," says Mr. Radical, "… Indeed, I think *Porcupine* told the truth about the Phantom Association; but it's awfully scurrilous."[33]

Shimmin and his colleagues were, in fact, very sensitive to allegations of scurrility – evidence of the way in which they saw their form of subversion as a "cut above" those comic periodicals which were heirs to the cruder and lewder pamphlet literature of old.[34] They also followed the unwritten code of satiric 'chivalry', declaring from the outset that the *Porcupine* would not delve into public men's private lives, middle-class domestic privacy being sacrosanct during the period:[35]

> Scurrilous writing is reproachful writing, which is either false, abusive, excessively severe, uselessly personal, or malevolent. By this definition we are prepared to be judged. If we libel – if we bully – if we castigate brutally – if we drag private life into public, without public justification – or if any single line in our pages is inspired by personal spleen, - then, like the Quaker, give us a bad name, and we shall soon be worried to death. But, if keeping within the fair field of satire, and only wielding the fair weapons of sarcasm, we are still libelled as scurrilous, then let the unlashed remember that "scurrility" is a very easy cry for the lashed to raise when they smart beyond endurance under the thong of truth. Let them understand that satire is the salt of public life. Let them recognise the duty of all good citizens to side with the satirist, and not with the abuses which he attacks.[36]

An individual's public business was fair game, and 'Mr. Porcupine' was brutal about 'the wretched, stumbling, faltering, trembling type into which our public men are degenerating'.[37] This places the nature of 'progress' during the period into further relief, raising interesting questions about attitudes to modernity and about that cycle which sees each generation convinced that previous generations had and did things 'better'. Liverpool's town councillors and Members of Parliament provided limitless fodder. Series which set out to critique or to parody individual public figures included: 'The Council in the Nursery' (1864); 'Pen Portraits of Liverpool Town Councillors' (1866); 'How I got onto the Town Council' (1870 and 1872); 'Porcupine Quills for Local Statesmen' (1861?); 'The Town Council "Spelling Bee"' (1876); 'As Ithers See Us' (1877); 'The Comic Council' (1878); and 'Porcupine's Valentines' (annually). A typical 'fly on the wall' guide to municipal proceedings would

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[33] 'What is Scurrility?', *Porcupine* (2 November 1861).
[34] D. Cavanagh and T. Kirk (eds), *Subversion and Scurrility: Popular Discourse in Europe from 1500 to the Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).
[35] 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).
[36] 'What is Scurrility?' *Porcupine* (2 November 1861).
[37] 'Ring out the False – Ring in the True', *Porcupine* (28 December 1867).

criticise the calibre of the town's political leaders, the way in which council business was conducted and the deleterious impact of growing partisanship upon both.[38] Epistolary series such as 'Letters to Men in Danger' (1871) were a standard satirical feature ('Jacob's Letters to respectable men' which appeared in Birmingham's *Town Crier* were described by one contemporary as 'excellent in purpose and tone').[39] Other bodies associated with municipal and wider civic governance - the Mersey Docks Board, the Select Vestry, the West Derby Board of Guardians, the Liverpool Financial Reform Association, the police and the various courts - also inspired a vast amount of the *Porcupine's* copy.[40] Liverpool's mainstream press was routinely critiqued and the clergy, often powerful public actors in their own right, also came in for unsparing commentary.[41] The city's commercial class (the 'inhabitants' of the Exchange Flags and the Chamber of Commerce, for example), the oligarchical elite who governed Liverpool through both hard and soft power mechanisms, frequently found itself the subject of 'Mr Porcupine's' acid pen. Shimmin described the town's merchants as 'adventurers, gamblers, thimble-riggers, "welchers", duffers, impostors, Pharisees [and] humbugs'.[42] The treatment conveyed his sense not only of the self-deluded pomposity and grasping self-interest of many of Liverpool's decision-makers and opinion formers but also of their bumbling incompetence; classic satiric deflation was used to undermine their political credibility. In a hierarchical society, in which public status and reputation played a huge part, this appears bold indeed. It certainly challenges some of the more orthodox understandings of Victorian deference.

Unusually for a journal of its kind, the *Porcupine* was, as one observer suggested at the time, 'a paper to be read, not merely to be 'looked at''.[43] Plain in appearance, it featured a neat, regular layout and font style, gothic-type headings and no illustrations proper, other than a few experimental, crudely executed woodcuts in its very early editions (Figure 2.3). The decision not to include cartooning was a conscious one, both commercially and artistically driven. 'Mr Porcupine' understood the potential power of graphic satire, expounding upon this in an article comparing the cartooning of (Liberal) *Punch* favourably to that of (Conservative) *Judy*. The 'political meaning' of the cartoons published in *Punch*, he wrote, was 'no less interestingly instructive' than was 'amusing and entertaining the humorous art of them'.[44] They were full of cleverness and common-sense and did not resort to invective.

[38] 'Inside the Council Chamber', Series, *Porcupine* (27 April 1861 – 18 May 1861).
[39] T. Smith, *Memorials of Old Birmingham* (Birmingham: Walter J. Sackett, 1864), p. 10.
[40] E.g. *Town Crier: Or, Jacob's Belles Lettres*: 'Leaves from the Diary of an Ex-Alderman' (Volume 5); 'Opinions of the Retiring Councillors' (Volume 7).
[41] E.g. 'Liverpool Preachers', *Porcupine* series, 1864-1865.
[42] 'Ring out the False – Ring in the True', *Porcupine* (28 December 1867).
[43] J. C. Brenan, 'The Second City in the Land', *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading* (July 1869), pp. 206-7.
[44] 'The "Punch" and "Judy" Cartoons', *Porcupine* (12 October 1878).

Richard Doyle, John Tenniel and John Leech were all cited as masters of the craft. *Fun's* cartoons, argued 'Mr Porcupine', were full of political rancour and lacking in wit: 'judged as political squibs meant to distort motives, wrench truth from its bearings, and exalt one side by abusing rather than satirising the other'.[45] Just once or twice did the *Porcupine* lament its 'no illustrations' policy.[46]

Figure 2.3
A rare instance of the *Porcupine* experimentally using illustration, 12 January 1861

Old-fashioned in aesthetics, in other respects the journal anticipated a recognisably modern form of journalism, signalling its emergence into a rapidly developing press culture. 'Mr Porcupine's' editorials and 'Porcupine Papers' prefigured today's op-eds and extended comment pieces. The short, unheaded snippets produced under the headings of 'Snarls', 'Spines', 'Welts' and 'Odd Notions', were Victorian NIBs, or 'news in brief' items; the so-called 'squibs', satirical variations of the same. The '[Our] Insane Contributions' feature, which appeared in the first few volumes of the journal, were used to make pithy, often snarky, points about local governance, commerce and culture.[47] 'Mr. Porcupine's Valentines', penned annually by Shimmin himself, served a similar function.[48] Humorous and straight verse, often very close in subject and style to the Victorian broadside or street ballad and thus a connector to wider cultural reference points, was another *Porcupine* staple.[49]

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[45] *Ibid.*

[46] 'Porcupine's Cartoon', *Porcupine* (9 December 1871).

[47] 'Our Insane Contributions', *Porcupine* (27 October 1860).

[48] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).

[49] V.E. Neuberg, 'The Literature of the Streets' in *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, Vol.1 (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1976), pp. 191-209.

Figure 2.4
Early *Porcupine*: layout and style, 29 December 1860 (left) and 2 February 1861 (right)
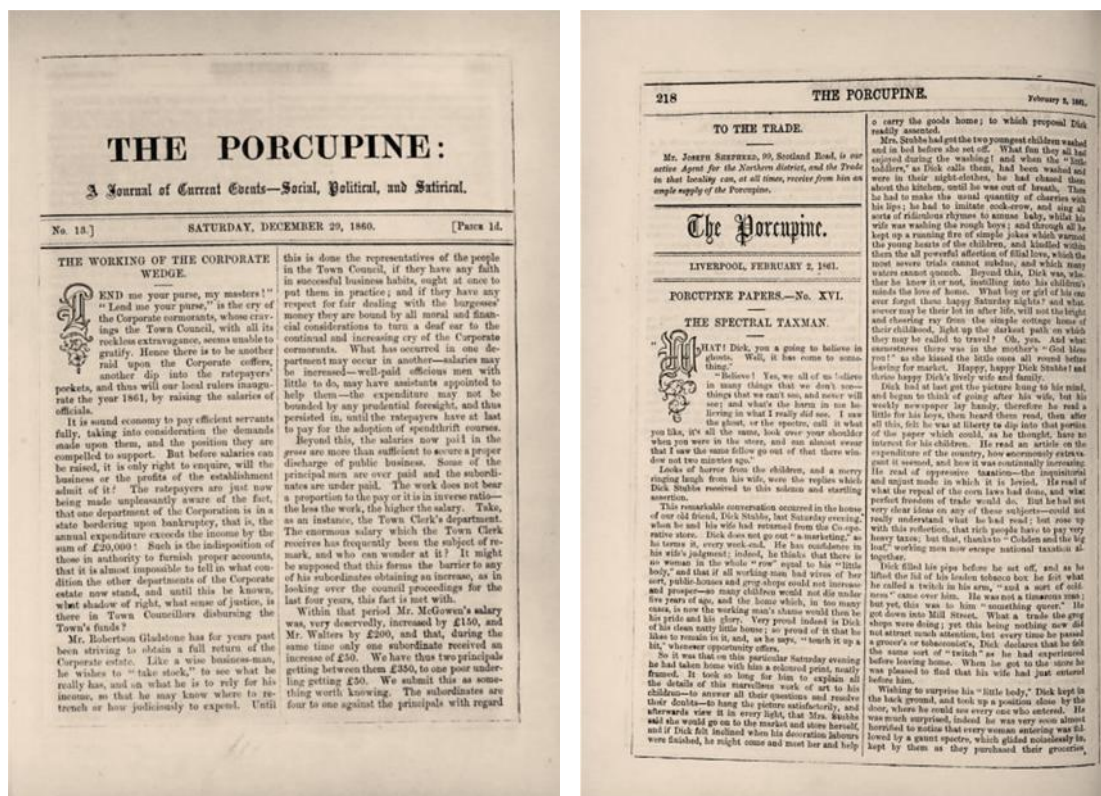
The *Porcupine* evolved in both substance and presentation. It is generally acknowledged that *Punch* lost its strident political edge over time.[50] The *Porcupine* underwent a reverse process, in line with a contemporary conceptual shift in comic theory highlighted by Frank Palmeri, 'from an emphasis on character and sentiment …to a focus on wit and intellect'.[51] In its early days, Shimmin's journal was light-hearted – even flippant – in tone, consistent with the conventions of the comic periodical type. 'Mr Porcupine' in his earlier incarnation had a droll and pithy style: 'He has a manner compared with which unbuttered sawdust is succulent and refreshing,' he wrote of one town councillor, in 1865.[52] 'Mr Porcupine' was also versatile. There was pure farce in a serialised account of the Financial Reformers' fictional jolly to Greece.[53] Black humour formed the basis of many articles.[54] Others

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[50] F. Palmeri, 'Cruikshank, Thackeray, and the Victorian Eclipse of Satire', *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Autumn 2004), pp. 767-68; 'Local Gossip', *Bradford Observer* (3 December 1869).
[51] Palmeri, 'Victorian Eclipse', pp. 767-68.
[52] 'Mr John Yates, of Castle-Street Ward', *Porcupine* (1 April 1865).
[53] 'How the Financial Reformers Undertook to Govern Greece', *Porcupine* (November 1862-January 1863).
[54] 'The Child-Crushing Machine at Sheil Park', *Porcupine* (15 April 1865); 'The Child-Crusher at Sheil Park', *Porcupine* (22 April 1865).

exhibited a more gentle form of satire.[55] The *joie-de-vivre* which characterised the first few volumes of the journal was to be short-lived, however. Within half a decade of its launch, the initially mirthful brand of satire began to evolve into something more earnest and consciously 'political', as its creators not only matured but became frustrated by the stubborn persistence of the social ills they had worked with energetic good humour to expose. The *Porcupine's* creators recognised, articulated and justified the gradual change in tone and authorial intent:

> It may be that Porcupine began his career in idler and merrier mood than he continued it. Perhaps he once thought it would be doing quite enough good service if he were to set people laughing at things which deserved ridicule, and thus at once to promote mirth and discourage humbug. Perhaps, as he progressed along, he found that even satire must have its seriousness and its sadness, and that there are things in life at which one cannot always laugh … he began to admit into his consideration many themes and objects which were essentially of graver interest … Porcupine hopes and believes that, while he has grown a shade more serious than when he began, he has not forfeited any of his mirth-moving power.[56]

The following year, 'Mr Porcupine' reiterated his revised outlook and purpose:

> We have grown graver, perhaps, with our years, and have left much of our broader mirthfulness behind us. Well, that is not an unnatural result of experience. Life does not always present itself in a funny aspect; and Porcupine is free to own that when his task was newer it did not look quite so serious in his eyes as it has since come to be.[57]

This was a frank and sincere reflection of experience. 'Mr Porcupine' had no intention of parting ways with his satirical roots - 'we do not want to be too grave' - but he was knowingly moving into more heavyweight political territory.[58]

By 1870, the mood of the editorial leaders had become even more sober.[59] It is no coincidence that this was the year Shimmin was imprisoned for libel, an experience which affected him profoundly (see Chapter Eight). As always, 'Mr. Porcupine' was anxious to justify his altered thinking to readers.[60] The marked alteration in tone and objective presented new editorial risks and challenges. The Romantic poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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[55] 'The Society of Letters and Philosophy', *Porcupine* (16 February 1861).
[56] 'Our Seventh Volume', *Porcupine* (1 April 1865).
[57] 'Our Eighth Volume', *Porcupine* (7 April 1866).
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] 'Porcupine to His Readers', *Porcupine* (2 April 1870).
[60] *Ibid.*

had held, with good reason, that satire without humour became problematic: 'when serious satire commences, or satire that is felt to be serious, however comically drest, the free laughter ceases; it becomes sardonic'.[61] Wit which was too hostile or caustic, or tipped over into bitterness, ceased to be satire at all.[62] This was a fine line which the wiser, more jaundiced *Porcupine* had to tread and it did not always succeed. One reader was not impressed by the change. The journal had, he wrote in 1879, 'latterly … been given over almost entirely to sham philanthropy.'[63] (This was harsh - accusations of sham were charges against which 'Mr Porcupine' always defended himself with indignation.) The evidence suggests that this metamorphosis was both a cause and effect of the eventual distancing from the journal of some of its early contributors, paving the way for those remaining to focus upon 'Mr Porcupine's' socio-political objectives.[64]

The grounds for focusing upon the *Porcupine* during its first two decades under Shimmin's stewardship were rehearsed in Chapter One. Nonetheless, it ought not to be overlooked that the *Porcupine* long outlived its original proprietor-editor, remaining in print for over thirty-five years, following Shimmin's death in 1879. As previously noted, the journal's fifty-five year life span marks it out as one of the most enduring of the comic periodicals of the Long Nineteenth Century (a fact overlooked by a number of modern scholars, at least one of whom has characterised the journal as 'ephemeral').[65] The question of the *Porcupine's* longevity poses something of an interpretive quandary. If the received wisdom is correct and the early success of the journal was so deeply rooted in the personality, and contingent upon the agenda, of Shimmin, how and why did the *Porcupine* survive for so long after his untimely death? If its fifty-five year lifespan is taken as an indicator of the journal's contemporary significance, why has it disappeared into virtual historical oblivion? It has been neither possible nor appropriate to trace the second, thirty-five year phase of the journal's trajectory here but research conducted by this author set out to explore and explain the apparent paradox, by examining the internal and contextual factors which determined the journal's fate - its adaptation, transformation, decline and inevitable demise - post 1879.[66] It proved to be a fascinating story of commercial and cultural evolution; a case study in the impact of the New and Daily Journalisms and in a fin-de-siècle *mentalité* which paved the way both for modern consumer culture and for subsequent conceptions of democracy –

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[61] T.M. Raysor (ed.), *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 442.
[62] R.G.G. Price, *A History of Punch* (London: Collins, 1957), p. 139.
[63] 'Talk of the Day', *Liverpool Review* (18 January 1879).
[64] See Chapter Five.
[65] M.A. Crowther, review of J. H. Treble, *Urban Poverty in Britain 1830-1914* (London: B.T. Batsford Press, 1979) in *Urban Studies*, Vol. 17, Issue 1 (February 1980), pp. 101-2.
[66] L. Kilfoyle, ''Racy' News and 'City Gossip' - The Demise of the Satirical Periodical in late Victorian England: a Provincial Case Study', 20 August 2018, Liverpool Porcupine [Revisited], http://victorianpress.wixsite.com/liverpoolporcupine.

participatory, deliberative, representative. Crucially, it revealed that in gradually abandoning satire in order to survive, the refashioned *Porcupine* essentially abandoned its politics.[67]

GENESIS OF A MID-VICTORIAN PRESS PROJECT

The *Porcupine* was typologically representative of a wider sub-genre. In 1900, writer and journalist Thomas Anderton published a history of nineteenth-century Birmingham. His explanation of the thinking behind the founding of that city's *Town Crier* in 1861 might have been written for Shimmin's Liverpool journal, so closely does it accord with the *Porcupine's* conception:

> One reason why the Town Crier came into existence was because it was felt that there were certain things, and perhaps certain people, who could be best assailed and suppressed by ridicule. They could be laughed and chaffed rather than reasoned out of existence. Certainly the paper was not established with any idea of profit, nor for the gratification of indulging in scurrilous personal attacks. It only dealt with public affairs and with men in their public capacity. Indeed, I may say that all the men connected with the Town Crier at its starting were interested in the good government and progress of the town, and they used the influence of the paper for the purpose of removing stumbling blocks, and putting incompetent and pretentious persons out of the way.[68]

The circumstances which gave rise to the *Porcupine* project and the authorial intent which underpinned it are imperfectly understood. The impression often given in the historiography is that Hugh Shimmin singlehandedly founded the journal.[69] This scenario is feasible; many jobbing printers diversified into the local press, in the early and mid-century decades.[70] Shimmin was a bookbinder-stationer by trade and, having dabbled for some years in local freelance journalism, was well-placed to start up a journal.[71] Yet he did not initiate the venture. The *Porcupine* project was the brainchild of a group of talented young bucks – a 'little society of literary men, artists, musicians, actors' – who styled themselves the Savage Club and were based in London.[72] This loose gaggle of Bohemians toured the provincial towns and cities, putting on self-penned theatrical performances (Figure 2.5). It was during

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[67] See Walker, 'Development of the Provincial Press', pp. 384-85.
[68] T. Anderton, *A Tale of One City: The New Birmingham* (Birmingham: "Midland Counties Herald" Office, 1900), p. 84.
[69] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 144.
[70] Clarke, *Grub Street*, p. 152.
[71] See Chapter Five.
[72] 'Savage Club', *Liverpool Mail* (13 April 1875).

Figure 2.5
Local newspaper advertisements for Savage Club performances in Liverpool

Advertisement, *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 August 1860   Advertisement, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 22 August 1862

such a visit to Liverpool that the idea for the *Porcupine* was conceived.[73] The *local* 'coterie of congenial spirits' who helped found the journal and each of whom 'contributed his quote to the weekly number', included 'Hugh Shimmin, Thomas Cope, S. Campell, J. H. Nightingale, C. Millward, and others'.[74] Edward Russell, the owner and editor of Liverpool's Liberal *Daily Post*, was later revealed by local chronicler Benjamin Guinness Orchard to have been another 'of the seven really clever men who early co-operated'.[75] It remains unclear whether Shimmin was invited to come on board as inaugural editor, whether he had a proprietorial stake in the project from the outset, or invested only after agreeing to edit the

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[73] 'The "Porcupine"', *Liverpool Daily Post* (6 October 1860); 'The Late Hugh Shimmin by One Who Knew Him', *Argus* (18 January 1879).

[74] 'The Late Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Daily Courier* (13 January 1879).

[75] B. G. Orchard, *Liverpool's Legion of Honour* (Birkenhead: published by the author, 1893), p. 607; Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, p. 68.

paper.[76] What is clear - and significant - is that several contemporary press watchers prematurely believed that the *Porcupine* was to be head-quartered in the capital.[77] These accounts were incorrect but the misapprehension does serve to highlight the strength, in its formative days, of the *Porcupine's* London links and influences. These and their ramifications are studied in Chapter Four.

Figure 2.6
Liverpool Lion title page, from Issue 1, 10 April 1847 (image via Trafford Books Auction Catalogue)
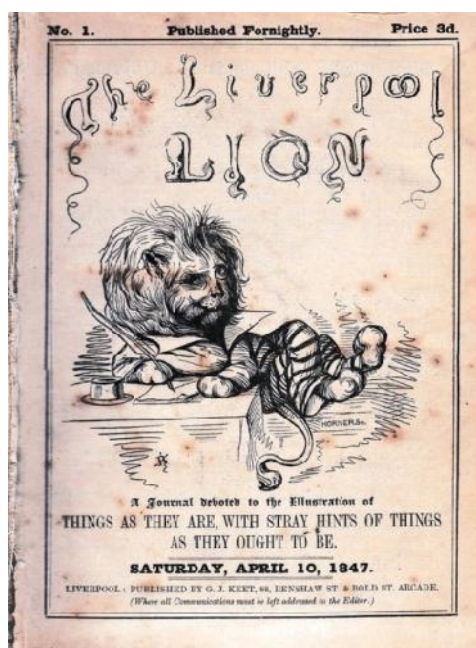
A number of onlookers assumed the *Porcupine* to be the successor to an earlier Liverpool publication, the *Liverpool Lion* (Figure 2.6).[78] One Savage Club member involved in the founding of the *Porcupine*, William Brough, had launched this short-lived 'comic bantling' with his late brother, Robert Brough, in 1847.[79] A 'smart little weekly joker', the *Lion* had been, according to Athol Mayhew, 'one of the earliest, if not the first country imitation of *Punch'*.[80] In describing the *Lion's* local relevance and appeal, contemporary litterateur Edmund Yates highlighted the importance of its localism – that is, its performed townology:

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[76] M.B. Simey, *Charitable Effort in Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1951), p. 53.
[77] 'From Our London Correspondent', *Inverness Courier* (20 September 1860); 'From Our Own Correspondent', *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser* (26 September 1860).
[78] 'The "Porcupine"', *Liverpool Daily Post* (6 October 1860).
[79] 'Obituary; Death of Robert Brough; Comic Jester and Dramatist', *New York Times* (10 July 1860).
[80] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 144.

> The *Liverpool Lion* was a new feature in the annals of the Mersey's pride. The merchant-princes, the brokers, the shipping-agents, the great outfitters, and the rest of them had gone through life without much conception of fun. They looked through the pages of *Punch* … while understanding little about them. But here was a revelation of wild humour brought into their very midst; here were caricatures which every one recognised, allusions which all understood.[81]

According to Yates, the earlier Liverpool journal had been characterised by 'bright wit', 'strange … fancy' and a 'readiness to seize upon topics of the hour, and present them in the quaintest garb'.[82] The *Liverpool Lion* folded when the Brough brothers decamped to London in the late 1840s and Yates recalled subsequent attempts by some of the Savages, himself included, to start up periodicals in London. The *Comic Times*, launched in 1855, quickly ceased publication; the *Train,* which came out in 1856, survived just a couple of years. Both of these ventures failed due to lack of capital and this was recognised and lamented by those involved. That the *Porcupine* later survived and thrived up in the "provinces" attests to the timeliness and appropriateness of its creation, as well as to the commercial astuteness with which it was conducted.

Literary historian Gilbert Highet's list of the 'motives of the satirist' - personal grudges, a sense of inferiority and injustice, a wish to amend vice and folly, a desire to make an aesthetic pattern and idealism - still serves as a useful checklist against which to unpick the motives of the early *Porcupine* collective.[83] They shared no single, unified vision. For Shimmin and the several men involved locally in its development, the journal offered an opportunity to discourse upon society and politics in Liverpool. In providing a public information service and platform, the venture was a political one.[84] Most of the London-based contributors saw in the project a chance to exhibit their writing prowess and wit, to extend their personal reputations and, by way of an added benefit, to do a little philanthropic good.

The decision of the *Porcupine's* creators to launch a 'serio-comic' publication was both natural and risky. It was natural, in so far as a number of the journal's founding contributors were professional humourists who already possessed considerable experience of the comic periodical genre, or else were rising stars, as writers, performers and/or producers, in the field of dramatic satire. The decision constituted a risk because although launching an

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[81] E. Yates, *His Recollections and Experiences* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1884), p. 314.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] G. A. Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 238-44.
[84] 'The Late Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Daily Courier* (13 January 1879).

independent comic periodical could be done with minimal financial outlay, keeping it afloat in those speculative times was a hit-and-miss affair. As has been noted, a number of the *Porcupine's* start-up contributors had already been involved in failed, short-lived satirical press ventures.[85] For all parties, the *Porcupine* project was a labour of love, driven by conviction, ambition and enthusiasm, rather than by commercial imperative. After twenty-five years in operation, the business, including premises, was sold for just £750.[86]

The *Porcupine's* founding in 1860 was no accident – it was a result and reflection of a particular *Zeitgeist* and a set of optimal conditions: 'circumstances conspired in the fifties to boost the provincial press to hitherto undreamt of activity'.[87] The mid-Victorian era saw an explosion of periodicals, thanks to the press freedoms and opportunities which ensued as a result of the incremental relaxation of the "taxes on knowledge" between 1853 and 1861, rapid advances in design and technology (rail transportation and telegraphy, for example) and growing literacy. It was a time of journalistic experimentation and entrepreneurship, with new titles emerging (and folding) at a rate of knots during the 1860s and 1870s[88]. Ten comic papers were started up in London alone, in 1867.[89] Richard Altick computed that by 1873, 889 different press publications of various kinds 'were being issued in the provinces'.[90] This was almost certainly an underestimate.

The *Porcupine* emerged as a product of and dynamic response to defining social, political and philosophical trends. Werner Mosse suggested in the 1970s that the mid-Victorian generation produced very little original thought.[91] Yet the *Porcupine* launched into a decade that would be profoundly influenced by the seminal works published in 1859 by Samuel Smiles, Charles Darwin and John Stuart Mill.[92] The stimulating ideas and possibilities generated by such discourse shaped Liberal Victorian thought and action in the latter half of the century and fed, explicitly and implicitly, into the public imagination. It was an exciting, worrying transitional time – in politics, in science and social science, in educational theory and practice, in religion, in the press and in urban civic governance. The late 1850s saw the final petering out of the radical journalism which thrived before, during and after the Chartist

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[85] A. Watson, *The Savage Club: A Medley of History, Anecdote and Reminiscence* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907), pp. 23-4.
[86] c. £40,000 spending-power today, calculated using the National Archives Currency Convertor, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/.
[87] G. Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (London: Fontana Press, 1989), p. 249.
[88] A. Ellegård, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Göteborgs Universitets Årsskrift, 1957).
[89] 'The Comic Periodical Literature of the United States', *American Bibliopolist* (August 1875), p. 200.
[90] R. D. Altick, 'The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No.4 (Dec 1958), p. 356.
[91] Mosse, *Liberal Europe*, p. 41.
[92] S. Smiles, *Self-Help* (London: John Murray III, 1859); C. Darwin, *On the Origin of the Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), J. Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: J.W. Parker and Son, 1859).

movement, anticipating new forms of popular politics and literature.[93] Malcolm Chase has drawn attention to a conscious decision, on the part of the leading Chartist publication, the *Northern Star*, to reject the satirical tradition.[94] In the following 'brief hiatus between censorship, corruption and economic controls and the commercialisation associated with publishing for a mass audience', the Old Journalism was gradually giving way to the New, resulting in experimental, sometimes "clunky" hybrid publications which combined early Victorian values and attitudes with more 'modern', progressive ideologies and approaches.[95] Humour was also changing by the 1860s and 1870s. It was becoming more sophisticated, with critics placing a higher value on the 'comic qualities of astringency, brilliance, and point' and preferring 'the pleasures of intelligence to those of sentiment'.[96]

The 1860s and 1870s were also the decades of the ebullient, self-governing Victorian city. The *Porcupine* emerged as a response to the increasing importance of autonomous, local - that is, civic - government, from the 1840s until the 1870s. Geoffrey Best cited Liverpool as 'an example of municipal self-government at its most independent and admirable', a claim which will be explored.[97] The power of urban governance at this time is often overlooked but practical politics for most ordinary mid-Victorians was, and was perceived as, local. It was the discourse of the town hall rather than the discourse of Westminster, which they understood to determine their everyday lives, their well-being and their pockets.[98] Provincial satirical periodicals were not playing amateur politics; they were engaging with the real reigns of extra-parliamentary power, rooted in parochial affairs.[99] Theirs was the kind of 'everyday' power, resistance and common-sense identified by Patrick Joyce as essential to liberal governmentality.[100] Part 'literature of exposure', part 'shame of the city' literature, these journals had all of the 'political bite' of their US counterparts, despite the earlier claims to the contrary of Victorianist Asa Briggs.[101]

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[93] J. Allen and O. R. Ashton (eds), *Papers for the People: A Study of the Chartist Press* (London: The Merlin Press, 2005); I. Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics, and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004). According to Joan Allen, the *Newcastle Chronicle* was an exception.

[94] M. Chase, 'Building Identity, Building Circulation: Engraved Portraiture and the *Northern Star*' in *Papers for the People*, pp. 3-24.

[95] P. Elliot, 'Professional Ideology and Organisational Change: the Journalist since 1800' in Boyce, Curran and Wingate, *Newspaper History,* p. 182.

[96] D.J. Gray, review of R.B. Martin, *The Triumph of Wit: A Study of Victorian Comic Theory* and R.G. Collins, *Literary Humor of the Nineteenth Century* in *Victorian Studies* (Summer 1977), pp. 425-8.

[97] Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain*, pp. 53-62.

[98] F.M.L. Thompson, review of Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* in *Urban History Year Book*, Vol.8 (May 1981), pp. 184-5.

[99] This comes through in J. Foster's Marxist study of Oldham, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London: Methuen, 1977).

[100] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 8.

[101] Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 32.

The *Porcupine* began as – and remained – a proudly and self-consciously provincial publication, with a municipal focus. Produced in, for and about the Liverpool community, its 'local matter supplied by writers resident in the neighbourhood', it was a contributory cause as well as an effect of the city's heightened self-awareness and growing self-confidence. [102] As 'Mr Porcupine' articulated in 1861:

> We have for the most part confined our attention to Liverpool, believing it much the wider course to kill all the giants and ogres in our own immediate territory, before starting off to perform a similar reform movement in other places.[103]

He set out to achieve in microcosm what radical journalist and activist William Cobbett, the original 'Peter Porcupine', had earlier aimed to do at the national level. 'I am no citizen of the world,' Cobbett had written, 'It is quite enough for me to think about what is best for England, Scotland and Ireland'.[104] The *Porcupine's* creators opted to concentrate upon Liverpool affairs not because they had to but because they consciously chose to act as local siphons and determinants of intelligence and opinion. Like the Birmingham producers of *Moonshine*, they 'were all more or less interested in or concerned with the most important matters that were then going on in the town'.[105] The local locus of the provincial serio-comic periodical thus became a declared virtue and strength, an exercise in and demonstration of the performed townology discussed in Chapter One. It was also an astute commercial move, as one contemporary recognised: 'I think that the proprietors have shewn their sense in publishing it at Liverpool instead of here [in London], as it will certainly stand a better chance of standing its ground there than in London'.[106]

If, as a typological example, the *Porcupine* appears unexceptional, its birthplace was not. Liverpool has been increasingly recognised as an anomaly in urban British history, its "apartness" explained by particular interlocking and overlapping aspects of the town's nineteenth-century history: its remarkable rise and fall as a maritime and mercantile city, of course, and its concomitant identity as an ethno-diverse employment and migratory hub but also its complex Irish heritage and its essential conservatism and Conservatism.[107] The town on the Mersey was both like and unlike Britain's other flourishing towns. It faced similar problems of urbanisation, but its economy was singular, rooted in trade and commerce,

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[102] 'Town Talk', *Merthyr Telegraph and General Advertiser* (29 September 1860).
[103] 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).
[104] Cited in I.Dyck, *William Cobbett and Rural Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 42-43.
[105] T. Anderton, *Tale of One City*, p. 87.
[106] 'Town Talk', *Merthyr Telegraph and General Advertiser* (29 September 1860).
[107] Belchem, *Merseypride*, 2006.

rather than industry and manufacturing. Liverpool was at its zenith during the 1860s and 1870s, a brash and confident "get rich quick" town and a speculator's paradise. Commerce famously came before culture and this had an impact upon the evolution of the town's press. Whilst Liverpool had a couple of flourishing daily newspaper titles and played host to a disproportionate number of commercial papers and advertisers, the town produced around that time no intellectual or critical reviews of note. The *Porcupine* thus filled a gap.

Liverpool's so-called "exceptionalism" is no retrospective conceit. The evidence of the *Porcupine* indicates that Liverpool was - and was perceived - as "other". Shimmin recognised this: 'many things are said in these pages which I dare say would not be true of any other town... I describe, not town-life in general'.[108] 'Mr Porcupine' was highly introspective, on behalf of his city.[109] He frequently compared Liverpool to Manchester, confirming the historicity of the perceived comparison and competition between the two cities. Often, *Porcupine* writers provocatively suggested that Manchester was better governed than Liverpool.[110] This discourse demonstrates that Liverpool and Manchester have long behaved in the manner of fractious siblings but also that throughout their modern histories, rational and reasonable men have exhorted the wisdom of the two conurbations working in harmony by capitalising upon their respective, complementary strengths. A short but pointed article, published in October 1868, is a case in point:

> [T]he Manchester domestic fowl bird … need not crow over the Liver. They are birds
> of a feather, after all, so let us have no more spiteful nonsense of this sort… Let us …
> be charitable in judging of each other, while stricter in judging ourselves. And let us,
> bearing off these miserably captious criticisms, emulate each other in those works of
> charity and enterprise and nobleness for which our common home – South Lancashire –
> has gained some small renown already.[111]

The *Porcupine* continued an established tradition of local political raillery. F.B. Wright printed *Liverpool, A Satire* in 1808, for example; James Scott Walter, *Liverpool in Eighteen-Hundred and Twenty Five: A Satire,* in 1825.[112] Local historian John Davies' short paper on nineteenth-century 'comic histories' of Liverpool used Shimmin's journal as one of three examples, positioning the journal's two serialised versions ('The Comic History of

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[108] H. Shimmin, *Liverpool Sketches* (London: W. Tweedie, 1862), p. viii.
[109] 'Liverpool's Character', *Porcupine* (22 December 1877); 'A Liverpool Man in a Liverpool System', *Porcupine*, (14 May 1864).
[110] 'Manchester v. Liverpool', *Porcupine*, (2 March 1872); 'Manchester Showing the Way', *Porcupine* (21 April 1877).
[111] 'The "Pot" versus the "Kettle"', *Porcupine* (3 October 1868).
[112] R. Brooke, *Liverpool as it Was During the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century* (Liverpool: J. Mawdsley & Son, 1863); J.A. Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool*, Vol. 1, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1875).

Liverpool' which appeared throughout 1863-1865 and 'Liverpool: Its Marvellous Rise and Progress', published in 1877) within a wider national and local satirical tradition.[113] As Davies observed, comic histories were a 'stock in trade' of journalists and political satirists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, later *Porcupine* contributor Gilbert à Beckett having set something of a trend in 1847-1848, with his *Comic History of England*.[114] Unlike à Beckett, however, Shimmin sought to achieve more than serving up history in a 'palatable' form. The comic histories published in his journal were 'very thinly, if at all, disguised critical, satirical commentaries on Liverpool politics'.[115] Not only were specific individuals (the Earl of Derby, Alderman Cooper and the Mayor Roger Haydock, for example), institutions (the Town Council and West Derby Board of Poor Law Guardians) and various interest groups (the Welsh "jerry builders") pilloried; Liverpudlian philistinism, the town's slave trade heritage and the perceived stupidity of the local ruling elite were all presented in unedifying ways. These series served as more than mediated histories.[116] The unapologetic satire contained within them was a particularly pointed kind of political narrative, achieved by means of an attention-grabbing approach.[117] It constituted a deceptively light-touch means to a serious political end.

Shimmin's journal has been referenced and catalogued as the '*Liverpool' Porcupine,* although the city's name never appeared in its masthead.[118] This external imposition is interesting, given the assumed historical hegemony of the London press. The *Porcupine*'s creators did not highlight its 'provincial' credentials. Others saw fit to typecast the paper as place-specific, thus potentially limiting its appeal to a wider geographical audience. In the event, The *Porcupine* 'brand' acquired prominence through diffusion. Although views on its potential reach vary, there is evidence it was distributed and read (and its articles poached for republication) far beyond Liverpool. As one contemporary observer reflected, the journal 'achieved much more than a local reputation', over time.[119]

In the canon of Liverpool's mid-Victorian press history, the *Porcupine* stands out in contemporary lists of pedestrian titles.[120] The association of satire with the porcupine was an

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[113] J. Davies, 'Political Satire: Nineteenth-Century Comic Histories of Liverpool', *THSLC*, Vol. 157 (2008), pp. 93-112.

[114] G. A'Beckett, *A Comic History of England* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1846).

[115] Davies, 'Political Satire', pp. 93-112.

[116] L. Howsam, 'Mediated Histories: How Did Victorian Periodicals Parse the Past? *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (Winter 2017), pp. 802-24.

[117] *Ibid.,* pp. 111-12.

[118] E.g. J. H. Quinn, *Library Cataloguing* (London: Truslove & Hanson, 1913), p. 195.

[119] J. Millward, *Myself and Others* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923), p. 27; see Chapter Six.

[120] E.g. 'County Newspapers' in *Street's List of Newspapers*, p. 21.

old one, as evidenced by the oft-quoted sixteenth-century poem by Joseph Hall.[121] The metaphorical link was appreciated by contemporaries: 'Liverpool at this period possessed two critical weekly journals. Their nature was sufficiently indicated by their respective titles – the *Tomahawk* and the *Porcupine*'.[122] The *Porcupine* followed a tradition of naming satirical periodicals after wild, menacing or exotic fauna.[123] Such press titles proved to be a source of novelty, amusement and debate.[124] In 1866, the *Australasian* referred to the *Porcupine*, when it reported that 'the list of English journals is increased by the *Earwig*'.[125]

In its simplicity, the nomenclature of Shimmin's journal proved to be an apt and effective one, serving simultaneously as editorial declaration, literary and political allusion, metaphorical leitmotif, encoding device and brand. The choice of motif was central to conveying the defining characteristics of the journal and thus in orientating the interpretation of its readers. As a branding exercise, it served to signal authorial intent and not only to engage a readership but to encourage it to become complicit in the terms of that engagement. This was consistent with the 'paradigm of journalism' outlined by Martin Conboy, which entailed 'an active community of readership in which politics and public communication combine with radical intent'.[126] The journal's success and survival would depend upon that community. The inaugural issue (including a leitmotif-reinforcing piece of mock correspondence from 'Hedgehog') was scattered with metaphorical allusions: 'our shafts', 'the king of quill drivers', 'pointed weapons' and references to impaling. To the many common metaphors of satire - 'thorns, darts, knives, rods, poison' - were added the *Porcupine's* 'quills' or 'spines'.[127] The *Porcupine* was also anthropomorphised as a husband and father, paving the way for the introduction of the editorial 'Mr Porcupine' persona as an embodiment of the 'elusive civic pride of the Victorian middle class' described by Simon Morgan as an 'important expression of … identity' and 'a means of cementing its dominance in local affairs'.[128] The Victorian love of pun and word-play suggests that the metaphorical or figurative significance of the journal's title would not have been lost upon its original audience. The imagery was embraced and reinforced by friends and foes alike. A scathing

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[121] J. Hall, *Virgidemiarum* (1597); for an interesting discussion of the 'satirist as porcupine', based upon the writing of seventeenth-century German Latinist Jacob Balde, see, G. Manuwald, 'Der Satiriker als Stachelschwein, Samson und Arzt zu Jacob Balde, Lyr.3.32' in G. Freyburger and E. Lefèvre, *Balde et la satire romaine* (T bingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2005), pp. 66-82.

[122] A. Brereton, *The Life of Henry Irving,* Vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), p. 71.

[123] Gray, 'Comic Periodicals', pp. 2-39.

[124] 'Literature of the Week', *Hampshire Advertiser* (12 August 1876); 'Occasional Notes', *Pall Mall Gazette* (19 February 1889); 'Art and Literary', *Stirling Observer* (6 July 1865).

[125] 'Literary and Artistic Gossip', *Australasian* (6 October 1866).

[126] M. Conboy, *Journalism: A Critical History* (London: Sage, 2009), p. 101.

[127] Bloom and Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Voice*, p. 17.

[128] S. Morgan, 'John Deakin Heaton and the "Elusive Civic Pride of the Victorian Middle Class"', *Urban History*, Cambridge University Press (2017), p. 3.

attack on the 'spiteful' *Porcupine*, published in another Liverpool publication, made fierce play of 'the monster's horrid prickles'.[129]

The journal's nomenclature reflected broader traditions and trends. By the mid-1800s, press titles had long been not only statements of editorial positioning but also indications of how independent news gatherers and brokers saw their evolving roles within the cultural and political sphere, consciously self-defining and thus creating an embryonic public discourse for journalism in which press practitioners were making and shaping public opinion through their interrogation of power. By the nineteenth century, those titles which involved metaphorical allusions signalled increasing self-confidence and boldness on the part of their creators. 'Rather than reporting the world,' wrote Martin Conboy, 'they were intruding upon aspects of it which were not by rights theirs to access'.[130] The idea of 'intrusion' raises interesting questions about the assumed role of the 'fourth estate'. The *Porcupine* and other serio-comic periodicals like it enjoyed no public mandate to speak for 'the people' but, as liberal press organs, claimed a right and a responsibility to conduct 'citizen journalism'. In his fin-de-siècle history of *Punch*, Athol Mayhew referenced a number of short-lived satirical publications which preceded or followed the *Porcupine*'s appearance on the local scene.[131] The *Liverpool Lion* had roared; the *Liverpool Lantern* had shone a light; the *Liverpool Wasp* had stung. These publications set out to do more than record or inform; they intended to shock, to stir up and to excite. Their inventiveness prefigured the thinking of the father of the 'New Journalism', William Thomas Stead, who in answer to the charge of sensationalism argued that the journalist needed to 'shout' in order to arouse and command attention.[132] The *Porcupine*'s inventors shared a similar philosophy.

The Liverpool journal's title evoked a further shared cultural and political context with readers. Philip Waller wondered how far William Cobbett, 'the original Porcupine', had served as an inspiration and 'heroic model' model for Shimmin.[133] Cobbett had been a radical English pamphleteer, journalist and politician who used his pen to rabble-rouse in post-revolutionary America, before returning to England. He employed the pseudonym *Peter Porcupine* in America in the early 1790s and launched two short-lived publications – *Porcupine's Gazette* and *Porcupine* – in Philadelphia in 1797 and in London in 1800, respectively. Cobbett's subversive embrace of a sobriquet initially intended as an insult

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[129] '"Porcupine" and the Liberal Trumpeter', *Liverpool Daily Post* (8 July 1868).

[130] Conboy, *Journalism*, p. 43.

[131] A. Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, pp. 144-5.

[132] G. Boyce, 'The Fourth Estate: the Reappraisal of a Concept' in Boyce, Curran and Wingate, *Newspaper History*, p. 25.

[133] P.J. Waller, review of Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life*, 1991 in *Urban History*, Vol. 19, 2 (1992), p. 302.

proved an effective means of identification and self-promotion.[134] One writer of popular history has suggested that decades after Cobbett's death in 1835, Shimmin named his newspaper *The Porcupine* 'by odd coincidence'.[135] It was no coincidence. He and his collaborators set out to cultivate comparisons with Cobbett's original publication, partly in tribute to the man's independent journalistic approach (if not unreservedly to his politics), and partly as a means of establishing credibility or implying pedigree. The obituary written for Shimmin by his closest colleagues posited unequivocally that he had been an heir to the original Peter Porcupine.[136] Contemporary evidence indicates that the *Porcupine's* readership understood that for which Cobbett stood. From this, it is reasonable to surmise that they appreciated the Liverpool journal's satirical pretentions.

NO LAUGHING MATTER: SATIRE AS A CRITICAL IDIOM

Journalistic (as distinct from fictional or dramatic) satire during the nineteenth century constituted a unique discursive genre and 'Mr Porcupine' believed himself to be its master: 'nobody knows better than the Porcupine what a splendid weapon is that gleaming sword of satire in the hands of him who knows how to use it'.[137] Charles Knight explained the challenge of exploring it as an 'expository form', which involves defining the literary character of journalistic satire and delineating its distinguishing characteristics.[138] The key interpretive question becomes: 'what distinguishes satire in a journalistic medium that, like satire, is historical and frequently dialectical?'[139] In providing one of the most clear and unequivocal descriptions with particular reference to the *historical* press, Knight summarised the role of satire as a journalism of scepticism or even despair over man's inability to resolve challenges and crises, concerned with 'the nature of political discourse itself' and thus characterised by its employment of 'indirections, concealments, and strategies' to attack poor communication.[140] The idea of attack or assault upon the 'elements of communication' is particularly pertinent to the *Porcupine*, which repeatedly identified poor communication as a feature of Liverpool governance.[141]

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[134] M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *See Porcupine, In Colours Just Portray'd ...* (Philadelphia: M.L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1796).
[135] J. Bernhard, *Porcupine, Picayune, and Post: How Newspapers Get Their Names* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2007), p. 110.
[136] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[137] Editorial Leader, *Porcupine* (1 April 1865).
[138] C. A. Knight, *Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.234-49.
[139] *Ibid.,* pp. 233-34.
[140] *Ibid.*
[141] See Chapter Six.

With the exception of the most frivolous, crude or scurrilous examples of the genre, the Victorian comic periodical performed a socio-political function.[142] Ann Taylor Allen explored this idea in a study of two German satirical journals of the nineteenth century, *Kladderadatsch* and *Simplicimuss*; the *Porcupine*, as a prime English example, confirms the serio-comic periodical as a feature and indicator of wider European liberalism.[143] Underpinning any examination of political satire - particularly the *Porcupine's* brand of it - is the notion that its effect lies in the suasional power of language to create jarring dissonances. Charles Knight suggested that '[s]atire's distortions and fictions point to the disparity between language and action … in the discourse of political satire, ad hominem arguments are not fallacious; they are central to the nature of the political debate, which often has little to do with substantial issues'.[144]

Two articles support and illustrate this hypothesis particularly well. Over two consecutive weeks in April 1865, the *Porcupine* published a pair of items regarding a 'Child-Crushing Machine' in one of Liverpool's parks. These afforded the journal an opportunity to take a gleeful swipe at the perceived callousness and ineptitude of Town Hall councillors and officers alike, who, 'doubtless feeling that Liverpool was not destroying children fast enough – by smothering them in bed, or stifling them in courts, or driving over them with spring-carts – resolved to assist in the great work of reducing the surplus population'.[145] Said 'machine' – newly installed park gates, which 'Mr Porcupine' deemed absurdly dangerous – was 'very ingenious in design, and will be, no doubt, effective in execution. It is rather a nice idea, too, to trap children during play'.[146] The second article extended the tasteless joke, suggesting that the 'inventor' of the gates be honoured for his services to the city.[147] Both pieces were utterly facetious. There was also something derivative about the articles, almost certainly inspired by Jonathan Swift's eighteenth-century skit, *A Modest Proposal*, in which the Irish satirist proposed eating poor men's babies as a convenient means of solving Ireland's connected overpopulation and hunger problems.[148]

For all this, the 'child-crushing' articles serve as striking examples of *Porcupine*-style satire at its most trenchant. The tone was cocky; the self-righteousness, absolute. For good or bad, it was a fearless, contrivedly devil-may-care form of expression. Crucially, it dealt in

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[142] Altick, *English Periodicals*, pp. 255-64.
[143] A. Taylor Allen, *Satire and Society in Wilhelmine Germany: Kladderadatsch and Simplicimuss, 1890-1914* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1884).
[144] Knight, *Literature of Satire*, pp. 234-49.
[145] 'The Child-Crushing Machine at Sheil Park', *Porcupine* (15 April 1865).
[146] *Ibid.*
[147] 'The Child-Crusher at Sheil Park', *Porcupine* (22 April 1865).
[148] J. Swift, *A Modest Proposal: for Preventing the Children of Poor People From Being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Publick* (1729).

politics, hard and soft.   The articles outlined above act as a fitting introduction to an examination of the comic periodical brand of popular satire – its purpose, nature, method and effect as a 'culturally situated discursive practice'– and an evaluation of what the findings might hint, confirm or dispute about existing conceptions of the mid-Victorian urban mind-set which wrote, read and formed the targets of this feisty kind of ephemeral literature.[149] The *Porcupine's* 'Child-Crushing Machine' articles were not substantively about park gates. They constituted an attack upon municipal governance.

Modern scholars have proven that the Victorians embraced fun and amusement to a fault.[150] 'Mr Porcupine' did not set out to provoke laughter for laughter's sake, however, and satirical wit ought not to be confused with humour. Donald Gray drew a distinction between laughter as a 'holiday' or release from judgement and 'laughter with a serious purpose'.[151] Note that early *Punch* has been described as 'the most serious comic paper in the world'.[152]   The *Porcupine* project was more 'serio' than 'comic'. It is useful to apply Ogborn and Buckroyd's differentiation as a litmus test: '[i]n any kind of satirical writing what is valued is 'wit', sharpness of observation and cleverness of language – this gives the work a cutting edge, which can amuse and entertain while it criticises'.[153]   Whilst 'humour is spontaneous; wit is thought out'.[154]   There is a significant amount of acknowledged overlap and scholastic attempts to produce neat distinctions can become highly esoteric.   It is easy to fall into the trap of eliding the two, to the detriment of clear analysis.   Taylor Allen's otherwise rigorous examination is undermined by the conflation throughout of humour and satire.[155]

In so far as Shimmin's journal was concerned with people's individual behaviours and collective actions in relation to each other and to the world around them, its satire was a social phenomenon.   Ronald Pearsall articulated this in the 1970s: '[w]it is always intentional, and needs a subject, an object and an observer. It is therefore essentially social … a transmitter'.[156] Whenever it deals with institutions, norms, conventions, standards, codified theories or practices in relation to the *polis*, satire (even ostensibly 'social' satire) is,

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[149] P. Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin's Publishing Co., 2003), p. viii.

[150] B. Nicholson, 'Victorian Meme Machine', British Library Digital Scholarship, http://www.digitalvictorianist.com/blog/; S. Fisher, 'Finding Humor in Victorian England', 6 October 2014 [https://www.laserfiche.com/simplicity/finding-humor-victorian-england/]; R.B. Mowatt, *The Victorian Age* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1939), pp. 150-62; M. Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp. ix-xxiii.

[151] D.J. Gray, 'The Uses of Victorian Laughter', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (December 1966), pp. 146-47.

[152] D. Anderson, 'Studies in Illustrated Journalism: The Rise of the Comic Paper', *Magazine of Art*, Vol. 14 (1891), p. 155.

[153] Ogborn and Buckroyd, *Satire*, p. 13.

[154] R. Pearsall, *Collapse of the Stout Party: Victorian Wit and Humour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 7.

[155] Allen, *Satire and Society*.

[156] Pearsall, *Collapse*, p. 2.

by definition, a political mode. Satire has always, in fact, been a fitting vehicle for politics. As Matthew Hodgart suggested, '[o]f the many possible topics of satire the pre-eminent one is politics, the most challenging, dangerous and rewarding to the satirist'.[157] Politician Alan Herbert, a writer and humourist himself, delivered a light-hearted 'theory of humour' speech in 1950. In this, he highlighted the links between the British sense of humour ('whether … creditable or discreditable') and politics: 'fun is much mixed up with our political character and our most prized political virtues, a sense of proportion and a dislike of extremes'.[158] Whilst satire and humour ought not to be conflated, the complementarity of both to political discourse is evident.

The satirical nature of the *Porcupine* is not immediately apparent to the uninitiated modern eye, because the journal had a bewildering habit of juxtaposing straight reportage and commentary with sardonic or comic pieces. Turning to the etymological root of the word satire (the Latin 'satura': a satisfying dish of mixed fruit) is helpful in this regard, highlighting the 'classical' nature of the *Porcupine* as a satirical text, and how the freelance-based journal is best understood as *a* satire, comprising a diverse medley of voices, ideas, styles and moods.[159] This is a construct consistent with Koenraad Claes' reminder that the periodical itself is the text of periodical scholars, not individual articles.[160] The structural mingling of news and analysis with facetious pieces had the effect of forcing the reader to pay close attention and to stay intellectually alert to the journal's shifts and contradictions. Had the *Porcupine* comprised satirical articles alone, it might have fallen into the trap highlighted by the nineteenth-century novelist Anthony Trollope: '[t]he satirist who writes nothing but satire should write but little – or it will seem that his satire springs rather from his own caustic nature than from the sins of the world in which he lives'.[161] In satire, observed Donald Gray, '[i]t is the fact of the mixture which matters … always, in every comic journal which won an audience large enough to keep it alive for a year or so, empty fooling was ballasted by comment on matters of large interest and significance, and comment on important matters relieved by empty fooling'.[162] Thomas Wooler's radical, satirical *Black Dwarf* (1817-1824) had duly taken its motto from the celebrated Alexander Pope: 'Satire's my weapon; but I'm too discreet, To run a-muck an tilt at all I meet'.[163]

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[157] M. Hodgart, *Satire: Origins and Principles*, originally published 1969 (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 2010), Introduction.
[158] A. P. Herbert, *The English Laugh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, July 1950), pp. 4-5.
[159] Condren, 'Satire and Definition', p. 379.
[160] K. Claes, 'How to Describe Obscure Periodical Contributors: a Case Study from the *Lady's Magazine*', CHASE DTP workshop, Periodical Studies, University of East Anglia, 13 May 2016.
[161] A. Trollope, *Autobiography of Anthony Trollope* (London: Blackwood, 1883), p. 161.
[162] D.J. Gray, 'Uses of Victorian Laughter', p. 164.
[163] Conboy, *Journalism*, p. 98.

Frank Palmeri has written about 'new hybrid forms' of satire but the *Porcupine's* admixture was not novel; it was a necessary precondition of a particularised brand of periodical satire.

'Mr. Porcupine' appealed to man's better private and social instincts, as well as to the human sense of ridicule.[164] As writer Elizabeth Pennell recognised in the 1890s, the satirist 'uses applause as a legitimate part of his armoury' (a technique adopted and explained in the *Porcupine*).[165] Critics and scholars have accepted Philip Searby's implication that the *Porcupine's* was a negative brand of satire; that the journal was merely oppositional, carping from the side-lines but failing to offer workable remedies.[166] This interpretation ignores the many instances of constructive criticism offered by the journal. The *Porcupine* did in fact offer correctives and alternatives, even going so far as to propose detailed and evidenced policy solutions on a wide range of social and economic issues. Half of the Shimmin essays Walton and Wilcox chose for republication were grouped under the heading of 'improvement'.[167] A characterisation which comes very close to describing and explaining the essential conformity of the *Porcupine's* brand of socio-political satire comes from Thrall et al.: 'a literary manner which blends a critical attitude with humor [*sic*] and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved. The true satirist is conscious of the frailty of institutions of man's devising and attempts through laughter not so much to tear them down as to inspire a remodelling'.[168] In line with conventional theory ('satire is implicitly constructive, and the satirists themselves … often depict themselves as … constructive critics'), 'Mr Porcupine' set out to be a 'critical friend' to local politicians, communities and institutions.[169] Many associate satire with cynicism but it is important to note the essentially optimistic nature of journalistic satire as a cultural practice.[170] Bloom and Bloom put it well: 'We understand that satire is often personal, vindictive, opportunistic. But we also understand that it is frequently idealistic in more than assertion, that it can be unabashedly didactic and seriously committed to a hope in its own power to effect change'.[171] Shimmin himself reminded readers of '[t]he old adage, that you never know what you can do until you try'.[172]

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[164] Pennell, 'Modern Comic Newspaper'.
[165] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[166] P. Searby. 'Electioneering in Lancashire before Secret Ballot III - Gladstone in the West Derby Hundreds: The Liberal Campaign in South West Lancaster in 1868', *THSLC*, 1959, Vol. 111, p. 159; Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life*, pp. 1-32.
[167] Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life*, pp. 175-243.
[168] W. Thrall et al. (eds), *A Handbook to Literature* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), p. 436.
[169] R. Harris, 'Purpose and Method'.
[170] F. Palmeri, *Victorian Eclipse*.
[171] Bloom and Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Voice*, p. 16.
[172] H. Shimmin, *The Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy: An Address* (Liverpool: Thomas Brakell, 1866), pp. 15-16.

There is an alternative way of regarding any alleged inability or unwillingness on the part of the Victorian comic periodical to provide political answers. It goes beyond the debate surrounding the power of satire in the abstract. According to one school of thought, much of the criticism levelled at satire is fallacious, because it is based upon a misunderstanding of what satire sets out to achieve.[173] The satirist ought not to be expected to propose solutions: his 'business' is 'diagnostic, not therapeutic'.[174] Some analysts have gone further, suggesting that the satirist, whilst perspicacious, is often not equipped, intellectually or temperamentally, to provide remedies.[175] A more nuanced theory proposes that the 'satirist does not need to state specific moral alternatives to replace the villainy he attacks because the morality is either already present in the lip service his target pays to virtue, or it is apparent by implication'.[176] This complements Leonard Feinberg's view that responsibility for remedy or improvement ultimately lies with the reader and the way in which he or she chooses to respond to the attack.[177] Frank Palmeri regarded an '*absence* of mediation' [*emphasis added*] as an essential feature of satire, in contrast to comedy, which is based on accommodation, and he applauded satire's polemical nature.[178]

The difficulty of reconciling the literary theory with the empirical evidence becomes apparent. In so far as he claimed to bring 'common sense' to debate, the bourgeois 'Mr Porcupine' did represent 'norms' and 'moderate positions'. He did seek to mediate. Although he became more cynical with age, 'Mr Porcupine' remained, until the last, an optimist. Consistent with liberal Christian values, Shimmin and his colleagues believed in the potential for moral redemption and personal self-improvement. Indeed, this was the driving force behind the *Porcupine* project; the journal's satire was predicated upon a belief in man's capacity to change himself and his (Liverpool) world for the better. Whether they felt the ills of the world to be a cause or effect of man's behaviour is more difficult to establish. According to Ernest Myers, writing in the early 1880s, '[to] Dickens foolish and unjust institutions and prejudices are the cause of men's unhappy lot; to George Eliot they are only the symptoms of it'.[179] Thanks to the multiplicity of voices appearing in the *Porcupine*, both sides of this argument were represented over time. Thus the morally lax culture of the day, as 'Mr Porcupine' saw it, was attributed both to failures within the system and to the behaviour of immoral or amoral individuals acting as free agents. This represented debate, rather than ambivalence.

[173] L. Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 273.
[174] *Ibid.*
[175] *Ibid.,* pp. 259-74.
[176] Harris, 'Purpose and Method'.
[177] *Ibid.*
[178] Palmeri, 'Victorian Eclipse', pp. 754-5, 768.
[179] E. Myers, 'English Satire in the Nineteenth Century', *Fraser's Magazine* (December 1881), p. 757.

The concept of satire as a duality – a 'compound of sweet and bitter things'; a combination of 'honey and medicine' – has long been a common one.[180] It accords with the Victorian psyche, with its noted capacity to rationalise contrasting and even conflicting views.[181] 'There's not a string attuned to mirth/But has its chord in melancholy,' wrote occasional *Porcupine* contributor Tom Hood, in 1877.[182] One contemporary analyst argued that the satirist required both a 'sense of the ridiculous' and a 'sense of grievance'.[183] In 1886, an observer claimed that 'the present is an over-serious age' but that 'the many find plenty to laugh at in their own times'.[184] Another contemporary, who had little time for the current run of comic writing, concluded that: 'Our literature … is overrun with sham comicality and sham pathos'.[185] A key question in 1893 for James Russell Lowell (who held that the satirist's 'duality of … mind … constitutes his intellectual advantage' but 'is the defect of his character') was 'whether the vices and follies of men were to be washed away, or exploded by a broadside of honest laughter'.[186] The Horatian-Juvenalian spectrum, named after the two celebrated ancient satirists, is often used to divide satirists up into two broad 'types'. The 'Horatian' satirist is traditionally an 'urbane man of the world … moved to laughter rather than rage'.[187] Wise and tolerant, modest, naturally ironic and humorous, he is a people lover. The 'Juvenalian' satirist, on the other hand, is the 'upright person who looks with horror on the corruptions of his time, his heart consumed with anger and frustration'.[188] Full of resentment and savagery, he is a people hater. Edwardian writer and critic Gilbert Cannan differentiated between 'French' satire (à la Voltaire) and 'English' satire (à la Swift): 'Swift was out to kill, Voltaire to cure. Voltaire had a panacea, Reason; Swift had none'.[189] Due to the *Porcupine's* freelance policy, 'Mr Porcupine' did not conform to any of the polarisations but they are useful, from the point of view of identifying the *Porcupine's* influences and antecedents and locating its brand of satire within literary tradition.

If the aim of the satirist (in line with his 'consciousness-raising role' as per Bloom and Bloom) was merely to highlight and diagnose the social and political ills of the world, then

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[180] Harris, 'Purpose and Method'; T.F.D.C., 'Dying a Natural Death', *Sharpe's*; Simpson, *Discourse of Satire*, p. vii.
[181] W.E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 394-430.
[182] T. Hood, *Poems: Humorous and Pathetic* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1877), p. 32.
[183] Myers, 'English Satire'.
[184] Pennell, 'Modern Comic Newspaper'.
[185] 'Political Pasquinade and Comic Literature', *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. 62 (October 1863), p. 368.
[186] J.R. Lowell, 'Humor, Wit, Fun and Satire' in A. Mordell (ed.), *The Function of the Poet and Other Essays* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), p. 38.
[187] 'Influence of Horace and Juvenal' in K. Kuiper (ed.), *Prose: Literary Terms and Concepts* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012), p. 166.
[188] Ibid.
[189] G. Cannan, *Satire* (London: Martin Secker, 1914), pp. 11-56.

arguably - as will be demonstrated - the *Porcupine* succeeded.[190] If it was to change the world, the jury must remain out until the journal's influence and impact is examined in later chapters. In any case, as has been argued, effecting change was not necessarily a measure of the quality of (a) satire. For all of its shock value, Swift's *A Modest Proposal* is not considered to have wrought any meaningful ideological or policy change. Yet, by dint of having discomfited its original readership, it is still regarded as a prime example of quality Georgian satire. It has not been possible to establish whether the *Porcupine* succeeded in embarrassing the Town Council into resolving the 'Child Crushing Machine' problem described at the beginning of this chapter. Yet the outcome becomes academic, if we accept the view of satire scholars and practitioners alike, that the role of the satirist is to identify and highlight society's ills, not to prescribe their remedies. It was enough for the *Porcupine* to raise the matter in the most provocative of terms, and this it did with aplomb.

TOWARDS A REASSESSMENT OF VICTORIAN SATIRE?

The findings in respect of the *Porcupine* would serve little other than antiquarian purpose, if satirical journalism were found to have been an unpopular, fringe or esoteric genre. The analysis will show that it was not, and that there is a case for a reappraisal of Victorian political satire as a culturally-situated form of intellectual discourse. Primary source evidence confirms that Victorian satire was accessible and engaging. The popular literary "greats" of the period used it freely and there is ample evidence of an audience conditioned to satirical expression. Liberal and liberated by definition, nineteenth-century satire was consistent with liberal thinking and tensions (such as individual freedom versus social responsibility).

It is true that the *Porcupine* emerged long past the acknowledged eighteenth-century "golden age" of modern satiric writing, with its daring fiction and biting pamphlet literature.[191] According to Chauncey C. Loomis, writing in the 1960s about the 'plight of the Victorian satirist', satire was neither popular nor respected by the mid-nineteenth century.[192] Victorians, he argued, were suspicious of a genre which went against the grain of the collective middle class psyche.[193] As Leonard Feinberg explained, in a can-do age, '[n]o one

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[190] Bloom and Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Voice*, p. 18.

[191] Hence the scholastic focus upon the Georgian period. See, for example: G. Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[192] Palmeri, 'Victorian Eclipse of Satire', p. 766.

[193] H. Grisewood et al. (eds), *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: an Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Sylvan Press Ltd, 1949); Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, 1957.

likes a complainer, even when he is right' and satire subsequently bore a 'bad name'.[194] Robert Bernard Martin attributed distaste for the comical to the puritanical streak in a middle class obsessed with behaviour and surface decorum: 'It was dangerous to laugh because laughter revealed the fundamental dislocation of both the individual and society.'[195] As satire's *raison d'être* was exposure of this very dislocation, it was bound to discomfit many. Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that serio-comic journalism was becoming moribund as early as the demise of *Punch's* London predecessor *Figaro* in 1839 ('in no sense … a lovable paper').[196] This perception persisted for decades.[197] In 1863, occasional *Porcupine* contributor Andrew Halliday wrote scathingly about the "dumbing down" of comic journalism.[198] Referring to the 'rich humour', 'keen wit' and 'brilliant sarcasm' of Thomas Hood, Douglas Jerrold and William Thackeray, respectively, Halliday grumbled that these qualities had since 'degenerated into nonsense, - sheer, wilful nonsense'.[199] He cattily singled out the writers of the London-produced *Comic News* (1863-1865) for particular scorn: '[They] are not eclectics. It never occurs to them that there are certain affairs of life which are serious and do not admit of being joked about. Until these latter days, comic literature always had an aim and a purpose beyond the mere object of amusing the public.'[200] Note that three of Halliday's fellow *Porcupine* Savages wrote for the journal he lambasted and that his sentiments bore a remarkable resemblance to the *Porcupine's* articulated editorial view. The period was rich in similarly negative criticism.[201]

All of this appears to support the received wisdoms surrounding the supposed Victorian dislike, distrust and dismissal of satire. These wisdoms are reductive, however, and predicated upon those contemporary and later conflations, discussed earlier, of the humorous with the satirical. Certainly, there is truth in Muireann O'Cinneide's claim that 'Victorian literature is not generally notable for satire as a distinct form' and there is no question that Victorian satire had its confirmed detractors – it could be, after all, subversive and radical.[202] There is equal truth, however, in O'Cinneide's qualification that satire 'served as an instrument of sociopolitical protest' and as a medium of free thought, and that an appreciation of the satiric 'mode' was neither a secret nor a guilty pleasure during the

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[194] Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire*, pp. 263-69.

[195] Martin, *Triumph of Wit*, p. 5.

[196] Altick, 'English Periodicals', pp. 255-64.

[197] E.M. Palmegiano, *Perceptions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals* (London, New York, Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013), p. 750.

[198] A. Halliday, 'Comic Literature', *Temple Bar: a London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*, Vol. 9 (November 1863), pp. 590-99.

[199] *Ibid.*

[200] *Ibid.,* p. 597.

[201] T.F.D.C., 'Dying a Natural Death', *Sharpe's*; A. C. Swinburne, 'Byron' in *Essays and Studies*, 3rd ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875), p. 252.

[202] M. O'Cinneide, 'Satire: Introduction' in *Oxford Bibliographies*, 27 November 2013.

period.[203]   The *Porcupine* shows that urban discourse in the latter half of the nineteenth century was fluid, free and tolerant. Not only did the Victorians "do" political satire but they did so very effectively. The sheer prevalence of the serio-comic periodical suggests this. One of those contemporaries to champion satire as a progressive force for good was writer James Hannay. *He* identified his generation's key talents as follows: Albany William Fonblanque (1793-1872), 'a satiric reasoner'; William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863),'a satiric painter'; Charles Dickens (1812-1870), 'whose satire is embodied in a huge element of comic and grotesque fun'; Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), 'the bitter and the dignified'; William Edmondstoune Aytoun (1813-1865), specialist in 'jolly contempt'; and Douglas Jerrold (1803-1857), who 'has real satiric genius'.[204] All of these men were politically conscious individuals. Fonblanque was a political journalist and Disraeli, of course, one of the leading political lights of the century. Dickens, Trollope and Thackeray represent three of the literary masters.   None were satirists per se but all three were critical social commentators who used satire to excellent effect in their hugely popular fiction.

It is significant that, from the point of view of cultural conditioning to satire and of audience expectation, the work of these influential novelists generally debuted serially in the popular periodical press. Satire, as a dynamic, communicative form, focused upon the present and relying upon the repetition and reinforcement of ideas, was very well suited to the booming ephemeral literature of the day. Journalistic satire was not written for posterity; it had an immediate practical purpose. Matthew Hodgart has written eloquently about 'satire's predilection … for camouflaging itself among the everyday, for speaking to the moment, and thus for integrating itself as deeply as possible into the society which both breeds it and suffers its criticism'.[205] The serio-comic periodical represented the 'day-to-day functions [of satire] … in contemporary social and discourse contexts', serving as a 'public sphere' in which 'radical positions could be articulated'.[206] Martin Conboy has imagined this 'public sphere' as 'a crucible in which people could become aware of a range of alternative strategies for understanding and changing the world as they found it'.[207] The importance of 'outward display' in the 'public sphere' manifested itself in civic pride.[208] Concerned as it was with understanding and changing the world, absorbed privately (in drawing rooms and over breakfast tables) and publicly (in libraries and reading rooms), the satirical periodical was both topical and domestic.

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[203] M. O'Cinneade; J. A. Wagner-Lawlor (ed.), *The Victorian Comic Spirit: New Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).
[204] Hannay, *Satire and Satirists*, pp. 204-40.
[205] Connery, *Satire: Origins and Principles*, p. 6.
[206] P. Simpson, *Discourse of Satire*, p.viii; Palmeri, 'Victorian Eclipse of Satire', p. 754.
[207] Conboy, *Journalism*, p. 101.
[208] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 119.

Figure 2.7
Facetious self-promotion, *Porcupine*, 15 December 1860

Dull Evenings made Merry.

Solitaire, cards, dancing, all may be very well in their way, but the only *certain cure of a dull evening* is a perusal of the *Porcupine*, so be penny wise instead of pound foolish. Hear what the Premier says on the subject—"After being bored to death by dreary speeches and political worries, I find nothing refreshes my faculties like a perusal of the *Porcupine*. Its mingled wit and wisdom have furnished me with many happy ideas, which have both amused and amazed the House."

Substantial circumstantial evidence hints at the widespread enjoyment of satire amongst the middle classes. It may not have been *de rigueur* to approve of satire but many intelligent, educated, middle class Victorian thinkers were receptive to it. Memoirs and correspondence reveal that writer Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) - known for her intelligence if not for her humour - appreciated it tremendously.[209] Charlotte and her clever siblings liked nothing better than to poke fun at the affectations and absurdities of those they encountered in social settings. Charlotte admired Fonblanque and idolised Thackeray (until, at least, she met him), sharing his appreciation of the eighteenth-century Laurence Sterne, of *Tristram Shandy* fame (Chapter Four). She laughingly wrote to one of her correspondents that 'I could not sit all day long making a grave face before my husband. I would laugh, and satirize, and say whatever came into my head first'.[210] Her letters are peppered with allusions to *Punch* and the French *Charivari* and requests that her publishers send her the latest editions of the comic journals put out by Thomas Hood and Douglas Jerrold. In the 1850s, writing to another of her friends, Charlotte welcomed the fact that her father had subscribed to *Fraser's Magazine* (rightly described by C.C. Loomis as 'almost always satiric').[211] Moreover, it was not only in the parlours of genteel but straitened clergymen that satire found an appreciative audience. Clever satire was received well in the highest of political and literary circles. Known regular readers of *Punch* included leading English and American literary figures, as

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[209] M. Smith (ed.), *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol. I-III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995/2007), p. 11.

[210] CB to EN, 12 March 1839, in Smith, *Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol.1, pp. 187-78.

[211] C.C. Loomis Jr. 'Thackeray and the Plight of the Victorian Satirist' in *English Studies: A Journal of English Letters and Philology*, Vol.49, No's 1-6 (1968), p. 7.

well as Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.[212]   National politicians, too, appreciated and
practised the genre.[213] Reporting on Parliament in 1862, 'Mr Porcupine' noted with approval
that 'the keen satire … called forth loud applause'.[214]

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE *PORCUPINE*

The function of satire, as an alternative form of moral and social regulation, has long been
equated with governance and government in a deliberative democracy. The "fourth estate"
role of the serio-comic became a matter of principle and a moral mission, when the satire
was made necessary by ineptitude or corruption in the realms of law and order, religion and
politics.[215] By creating and forcing transparency, conducting scrutiny and holding the local
political class to account, Shimmin and his colleagues performed a checks and balances role.
By constantly challenging the limits of local rule, they encouraged 'liberal rule as an ethics
of governance'.[216]   By raising awareness, provoking debate and encouraging action, 'Mr
Porcupine' politicised a Liverpool readership more preoccupied, by his account, with making
money than with the interests of the local community at large. In a town which had not
succumbed to the wider radical movement, this was significant. If we accept a measure of
(democratic) freedom - the "liberty of complaining", so to speak - as a prerequisite of
political satire, it follows that the existence of the *Porcupine* project stands as evidence of
freedom of thought and expression in the mid-Victorian age, which through a process of
"reverse engineering" (of disentangling the subversions in order to get as close as possible to
the substantive ideas and arguments) can reveal a great deal about social norms and
boundaries.

There has never been any consensus on the optimum socio-political conditions for satire. As
Brian Connery observed: '[t]o the extent that satire inclines towards transgressiveness or
may even be defined in part by its transgressiveness, some rules must be in place for it to
transgress. The more rigid and/or comprehensive those rules are, the bigger the potential
explosion that satire can produce'.[217] In the early 1880s, Elizabeth Pennell - a friend of the
famously transgressive Oscar Wilde - suggested it was where and when feelings of freedom,
security and confidence were most high in society that people could afford to laugh at or

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[212] C. Jansohn, *In the Footsteps of Queen Victoria: Wege zum Viktorianischen Zeitalter* (M nster: LIT Verlag,
2003), p. 70.
[213] A. Briggs, 'Victorian Images of Gladstone' in P.J. Jagger (ed.), *Gladstone* (London and Rio Grande:
Hambledon Press, 1998), p. 46.
[214] 'Two Penn'Orth of Parliament', *Porcupine* (1 March 1862).
[215] Connery, *Satire: Origins and Principles*, Introduction.
[216] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 101.
[217] Connery, *Satire: Origins and Principles*, p. 5.

ridicule life's absurdities.[218] Others, then and since, have suggested the polar opposite – that satire springs from and flourishes within crisis conditions or circumstances of extreme repression.[219] It thus becomes a form of 'cultural chaos'.[220] The reality for the *Porcupine* lay somewhere between these extremes. Despite persistent notions of Victorian conservatism and conformity, the journal emerged and thrived within what was in many respects a liberal and tolerant intellectual environment. At the same time, its creators were motivated by perceived moral, social and political fluxes and crises. The transitional mid-nineteenth-century urban climate, characterised by tensions between the old and the new, proved fertile ground for satirical expression.

Donald Gray identified topical coverage of both hard and soft politics as a consistent feature of comic periodicals throughout the nineteenth century: 'One might say that our great grandfathers took their politics so seriously that they seemingly never tired of laughing at them under the auspices of their comic weeklies'.[221] The provincial serio-comic journal became 'famous for [its] unsparing commentaries on local politics and politicians'.[222] The Liverpool *Porcupine* and the Birmingham *Owl*, sought 'to tickle the man in the street and sting a town councillor. For … they are all greatly occupied with politics'.[223] Like their German counterparts, *Kladderadatsch* ('cautiously liberal') and *Simplicissimus* ('more radically subversive'), they set out to create 'a climate of critical dissent'.[224] Their purpose was to inform in an engaging and entertaining way but also to provoke, outrage or embarrass so as to spur on municipal and civic change. They thus became a form of political persuasion.[225] Their treatment of matters political varied. The *Porcupine*'s metropolitan comparator *Fun* (discussed in Chapter Three) was a Liberal publication.[226] It tempered hard-hitting, class-blind criticism with kindness and geniality but was 'no less effective' for it, according to one contemporary, 'in exposing abuses and pointing out the way to amendment'.[227] Yet *Fun* was not 'political' in the way the *Porcupine* aspired to be; it had, wrote linguist and literary historian Alvar Ellegård, 'no pretensions as an organ of opinion'.[228] The introductory 'leader' in the first edition set the facetious tone: 'And now

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[218] Pennell, 'Modern Comic Newspaper'.
[219] Cannan, *Satire*, pp. 11-56.
[220] B. McNair, *Cultural Chaos: Journalism, News and Power in a Globalised World* (London: Routledge, 2006).
[221] R. D. Altick, 'Nineteenth Century English Periodicals', *Newberry Library Bulletin*, May 1952, pp. 255-64.
[222] J.K. Walton and A. Wilcox, 'Shimmin, Hugh' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[223] 'Fun That Londoners Miss', *T.P's Weekly*, Volume 1 (28 November 1902), p. 78.
[224] E.F. Timms, review of A. Taylor Allen, *Satire and Society* in *Modern Languages Review*, Vol. 82, Issue 1 (January 1987), pp. 252-253.
[225] See G. Cordery and J. S. Meisel (eds), *The Humours of Parliament: Harry Furniss' View of Late Victorian Political Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2014).
[226] Gray, 'Comic Periodicals', pp. 2-39.
[227] 'Fun', *Era* (3 April 1870).
[228] Ellegård, *Readership*, II, Directory, p. 21.

our first blow shall be at cowardly old custom'.[229] The second of *Porcupine's* most obvious metropolitan comparators, the radically Conservative *Tomahawk* (also discussed a little later) had a more overtly missionary purpose. In the later estimation of Walter Graham, it combined 'a good deal of genuine amusement with a zealous effort at social reform'.[230]

The *Porcupine's* self-identification as 'social, *political*, and satirical' [*emphasis added*] appears to be at variance with the assertion made in the inaugural editorial: 'we are not a Political Porcupine'.[231] It also echoed the earlier *Liverpool Lion*: 'Politics: We have none'.[232] The apparent inconsistency is readily explained. At a time when most serious periodicals tended to identify with political alliances, causes or parties, not least because they were often affiliated to or patronised by them, the Liverpool journal remained non-partisan and patronage-free ("independent" in the long-established political sense of the word) and made a repeated virtue of the critical independence this afforded. Indeed this, implied Shimmin and his collaborators, was what set it apart from the rest of the town's press.[233] Although variously described by contemporaries and later scholars as Radical, Liberal, Independent and even Conservative, 'Mr Porcupine' asserted party political neutrality, claiming 'to be impartial in severity and in praise; to espouse no political cause, but to judge freely of all political men'.[234] The *Porcupine* was thus far from apolitical; its creators simply reserved the right to cast their critical eye without fear or favour: 'Porcupine declines to fight under any banner. He is a Free Lance …. He never pledges himself to rush to arms at the trumpet call of any party'.[235] Shimmin et al. had grave reservations about the wisdom of the party political system at municipal level and 'Mr Porcupine' made great play of his refusal to be type-cast:

> Taper vowed we were subsidized by the Tories; Tadpole was in a position to state that we were regularly bribed by the Liberals; McPhail insinuated that we were all Papists in disguise; O'Hoolaghan threatened us with personal vengeance if we did not cease to act as the paid scribes of the Orangemen … [236]

At election times, local and national candidates of all political hues used the journal to address the electorate directly.

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[229] 'Introduction', *Fun* (21 September 1861).

[230] W. Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1930), p. 366.

[231] Leader, *Porcupine* (6 October 1860).

[232] *Liverpool Lion,* No. 1 (10 April 1847), inside front cover.

[233] E.g. 'The Puff Preposterous', *Porcupine* (25 May 1861), 'The Mercury and the Mayor', *Porcupine* (15 July 1865); 'The Daily Post's Defence of the Health Committee', *Porcupine* (28 April 1866): '"Kept" Newspapers', *Porcupine* (1 May 1875).

[234] 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).

[235] *Ibid.*

[236] 'Our Eighth Volume', *Porcupine*, 7 April 1866.

Figure 2.8
'Mr Porcupine' on his political neutrality, 16 April 1870
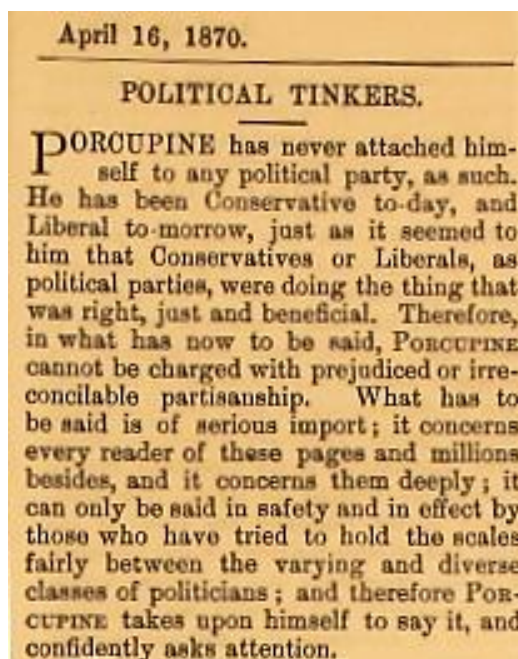
In light of all this, Alastair Wilcox's description of the *Porcupine* as one of the most important 'pro-Liberal' papers in the town requires some qualification.[237] The *Porcupine* project was certainly conceived, realised and progressed by several members of the local Liberal camp, several of whom will be discussed in Chapter Four.[238] Nevertheless, to assume that the involvement of such Liberals pointed to a particular editorial stance would be to misunderstand the nature of satire and of the *Porcupine* as a vehicle for such satire. The journal did not represent a fixed ideological position. Not all of the *Porcupine* contributors were "card-carrying" Liberals. A number of the more thespian types were apolitical, prepared to touch upon politics only when it served their entertaining purpose. Others again belonged, ideologically, to the opposite camp. Savage Club member William Tegetmeier, for example, was a 'firm Tory, profoundly opposed to the campaign for women's rights and all extensions of the suffrage from 1832 onwards'.[239] That Tegetmeier, though a deist, did not subscribe to Christianity, signals just how eclectic and non-conformist a mix of thinkers was involved in the *Porcupine* project. Freedom of thought, judgement and expression was the 'secret of *Porcupine's* success' and this was reiterated at every

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[237] Wilcox, *Church and the Slums*, p. 10.

[238] 'Thomas Cope', *Liverpool Mercury* (19 September 1884); 'Death of Mr. Thomas Cope', *Pall Mall Gazette* (19 September 1884); 'The Liberal Triumvirate of England', *Galaxy*, Vol. 7 (1869), pp. 35-44.

[239] J. A. Secord, 'Tegetmeier, William Bernhardt' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004-2014).

opportunity.[240] Like the *Owl* in Birmingham, 'Mr Porcupine' did not hesitate to offer a platform to non-Liberal contributors, if he adjudged them to have something worthwhile to contribute to debate, or to praise the actions of non-Liberal public actors, if they were deemed to have acted commendably in the interests of the city.[241] This policy of inclusivity extended to contributions. It was common knowledge in Liverpool that many of those who wrote for the *Porcupine* were in fact local (and even national) political luminaries - of all party colours - keen to express anonymously or via satirical means, that which they felt unable or unwilling to say outright in public.[242] The *Porcupine* project thus became a shared exercise in liberal thought and independent action, offering contributor-readers an intellectual and creative outlet of unprecedented autonomy.

Subsequent chapters will examine the extent to which the *Porcupine* came to serve as an active agent of political change. Within six months of the journal's launch, 'Mr Porcupine' and his collaborators were claiming to have intervened successfully in the machinations of local politics:

> Have we not brought out Gladstone for South Lancashire? Has not William Earle grown civil? … Did we not satisfy the rival pretensions of Graves and Haydock? Did we not give good advice to Charles Turner, and has he not made up his mind to stick to the Dock Board in consequence ...[243]

This was all very tongue-in-cheek but evidence will be brought forward to support Thomas Hay Sweet Escott's assessment that the *Porcupine* - under Shimmin - did succeed, over time, in '[a]cquiring decisive influence'.[244] Significantly, numerous local Tory grandees shared this view.[245] Many conceded, upon Shimmin's death, that he had been 'one of the best known and most influential men in the borough. His paper, the Porcupine, has long been a power' and 'many glaring abuses had succumbed to his vigorous attack...'.[246] Such contemporaries wrote about Shimmin the individual but any political power wielded by the editor, a mere middle-class tradesman by profession, derived from his ownership and management of the journal: 'there is no doubt that Mr. Shimmin used to be very much feared. People felt his power...'.[247] Intriguing, if gossipy, claims such as this encourage new

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[240] 'Porcupine's New Volume!' *Porcupine* (2 April 1864).
[241] 'To Our Readers', *Porcupine* (6 April 1878).
[242] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[243] 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).
[244] Escott, *Masters*, pp. 293-94.
[245] Sir William B. Forward, *Recollections of a Busy Life: Being the Reminiscences of a Liverpool Merchant 1840-1910* (Liverpool: Henry Young & Sons, 1910), p. 208.
[246] 'Talk of the Day', *Liberal Review* (18 January 1879).
[247] 'Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Post* (29 January 1867).

understandings and interpretations of the role played by the provincial serio-comic periodical, challenging some of the modern analysis which has assumed that it was too lightweight and sensationalist, too inconsequential, to be taken seriously as historical evidence.[248] The *Porcupine's* distracting comic credentials notwithstanding, its usefulness as 'an excellent authority' on, and player in, contemporary politics was recognised in its time and ought to be appreciated, today.[249]

The evidence of the *Porcupine* suggests that the provincial satirical periodical can be as usefully read as a Foucauldian ontology of the present, as a portal into the past.[250] Current debates surrounding localism, independence, devolution, subsidiarity, city regionalism and constitutional change at local and sub-regional level echo the questions of identity and self-determination which preoccupied Shimmin and his peers. 'Independence for Lancashire', a facetious *Porcupine* article published in June 1861, was just the first in a series of pieces on the theme.[251] In it, the writer demonstrated contemporary notions of democratic autonomy. Parochialism and philistinism, political tribalism and sectarianism, gentlemanly conduct, the importance of collaboration in the interests of the city and of frank and robust debate, Liverpool's image and reputation further afield – all of these were touched upon in 'Provincial Prejudice', a meandering comment piece published in 1869.[252] This urged local men to set petty, self-interested differences and prejudices aside, for the sake of a unified and progressive Liverpool culture, open to a diversity of views and influences. This was - and remains - the discourse of multiculturalism, integration and inclusivity. The themes of 'Liverpool Powerless', a short but effective article published in November 1873, were the need for local self-determination; the power of corporate interests over the public interest; Liverpool playing 'second fiddle' to Manchester; and the role, responsibilities and effectiveness of Liverpool Members of Parliament in representing the city.[253] All of these issues resonate powerfully today.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has established the nature of the *Porcupine* as a political project, text and technology, discussing what the journal represented to different people and exploring the

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[248] B. McConnell and L. Matthews-Jones, 'Argyle Street Bridewell: Walking the Beat with Liverpool's Nineteenth-Century Police Force', *Journal of Victorian Culture Online* (22 February 2013).

[249] 'Notes – Political and Otherwise', *Hull Packet and East Riding Times* (22 March 1883).

[250] J. R. Moore, *The Transformation of Urban Liberalism: Party Politics and Urban Governance in Late Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[251] Various articles on 'Independence for Lancashire' were published throughout June and July 1861.

[252] 'Provincial Prejudice', *Porcupine* (30 January 1869).

[253] 'Liverpool Powerless', *Porcupine* (8 November 1873).

historical significance of the timing and location of its emergence in social, cultural and economic terms. It has also floated the idea that the serio-comic periodical represented a degree of intellectual and creative freedom and tolerance not usually associated with the po-faced, conformist Victorian stereotype and that this was key to the successful reception of its political discourse. In addition, it has drawn upon both pragmatic and substantialist text theories to posit the provincial satirical periodical as a connector between the socio-political past and the socio-political present in the ways outlined by Martyn Thompson:

> [T]he great service of the 'new' history of political thought has been to show just how wide the gaps are between past and present interpretations. The great service of reception histories (as histories of political literature) will be to show the ways in which these gaps have been created. In doing so, they will provide the historical threads which connect past meaning and present significance.[254]

The initial lines of analysis and argument will be extended. The next task is to further contextualise the *Porcupine* - to establish its typological 'universe' - by examining the broader contemporary canon of periodical literature within which it functioned.

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[254] Thompson, 'Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning', p. 272.

CHAPTER THREE

'Perfectly Original Notwithstanding'

The *Porcupine* in Print and Press Culture

> Liverpool is certainly literary, although the newspapers are not up to much; but there is a weekly comic journal, "The Porcupine", which combines the best features of "Punch", "Fun," and "The Tomahawk," and is perfectly original notwithstanding.[1]

This chapter positions the *Porcupine* within its broader journalistic context (theoretically, within its cultural-political 'universe'). Was the journal an anomalous curio; an idiosyncratic "one-off"? Was it simply yet another 'local *Punch*'? If so, was it a good or a poor example by the standards of the time and what are the ramifications of this for the historian seeking alternative insights into and interpretations of the period? Not only will this process serve to shed some light upon the *Porcupine's* individual merit, as a subject of study in its own right ('rather than as a "quarry" or value-free source of information and illustration', as Annemarie McAllister and Andrew Hobbs expressed it).[2] It will afford further opportunity to elucidate the rather inchoate understandings, then and now, of the Victorian comic periodical. It will also counter some of the generalisations surrounding the trope of Victorian sensationalism. Whilst sensation (carried over from the chapbooks and broadsides, ballads and songbooks long popular with the "masses") undoubtedly appealed to Victorian tastes and came to pervade popular culture via fiction, the performing arts and the news media, there were contemporary voices who disdained the race to the bottom they observed in the popular print press.[3] 'Mr Porcupine' was amongst them. [4] In order to pursue these arguments, it will first be necessary to establish the creative and intellectual lineage of provincial serio-comic periodicals. Understanding their genealogy is an important task in

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[1] Brenan, 'The Second City in the Land', pp. 206-7.

[2] McAllister and Hobbs, *Regional and Local Studies*, p. 7.

[3] 'Press "Sensation"', *Porcupine* (11 August 1877); J.H. Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830s-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 28-53.

[4] M. Diamond, *Victorian Sensation; or, The spectacular, the Shocking, and the Scandalous in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Anthem Press, 2003); I. Corfe, 'Sensation and Song: Street Ballad Consumption in Nineteenth-Century England' in P.R. Rooney and A. Gasperini (eds), *Media and Print Culture Consumption in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Victorian Reading Experience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 131-45; A. Gabriele (ed.), *Sensationalism and the Genealogy of Modernity: a Global Nineteenth-Century Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

and of itself but it also helps to rationalise the reasons for which local satirical journals have been overlooked or misrepresented in the historiography.

The contemporary estimation of John Churchill Brenan, quoted in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, provides a fitting starting point for a contextualisation of the *Porcupine*. The visiting playwright was generally underwhelmed by Liverpool's press but singled out the *Porcupine* for explicit, positive comment. In Brenan's view, Shimmin's publication had a winning, if derivative, formula and, significantly, it did not rely upon illustrations to engage readers. It made, in short, for a sufficiently satisfying read to attract the attention and admiration of a middle-class non-Liverpolitan. By drawing the comparisons he did and stressing the journal's cultural merit, Brenan contextualised the *Porcupine*, albeit from a subjective perspective. In doing so, he demonstrated how this now-obscure periodical was received by some contemporaries, at least, as a legitimate and representative example of the press literature of the day – which, moreover, bore comparison with some of the century's "biggest hitters" in the comic periodical sphere.

NO *PUNCH* PRETENDER: LINEAGE

The satirical journals in the provincial centres did not evolve from the same source as their purely humorous contemporaries; they belonged to a different typology altogether. Many of the more lightweight and scurrilous (sometimes semi-pornographic) types of comic periodical throughout the period grew out of the cheap print press of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Populist journalism of this kind would evolve through the New and Daily Journalisms into the tabloid press of the twentieth century.[5] Drawing upon satirical and journalistic traditions reaching back into antiquity, satirical periodicals in the *Porcupine* vein did not share a genealogy with the New Journalism championed by William Stead and incubated through the publication he edited, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. With its 'emphasis on increased circulation', its 'techniques of sensationalism', its 'striking typographical devices' and its marketing ethos, the New Journalism emerged as a result of new technologies and new markets in a modernising industrial world. The *Porcupine* shared some aspects of it, such as idealism and the drive for social reform through campaigning.[6] Shimmin was dead by the time Stead formulated his lofty "Government by Journalism" ideal, but all of the evidence suggests that he would have had sympathy with Stead's 'social

5 H. Örnebring and A. M. Jönsson, 'Tabloid Journalism and the Public Sphere: a Historical Perspective on Tabloid Journalism', *Journalism Studies*, 5:3 (2004), pp. 283-95.
[6] Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 26; see also M. J. Score, 'The Development and Impact of Campaigning Journalism in Britain, 1840-1875: the Old New Journalism?' (PhD thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2015).

Gospel', which conceived of the responsible editor fearlessly determined to champion 'the disinherited and the outcast' and saw the potential of the press to 'remove the injustices which exist beneath the fair foundations of … wealth and commerce in Britain'.[7] Satirical journalists had long seen themselves as courageous warriors. For Shimmin and his early collaborators, however, fuelled by righteous indignation and a desire to effect change, fearlessness related to journalistic inquiry, political and commercial independence and freedom of expression. It did not relate to daring and the chase for popular appeal.

In life, Shimmin had not shared Stead's sensationalist instincts (see Chapter Four). Satirical exaggeration of expression did not equate to sensationalism. Arguably, the satire associated with the Old Journalism sprang from principle and reforming zeal and the sensationalism associated with the New Journalism, from commercially-driven populist imperatives. Sensationalism was, for Shimmin, neither a justifiable means to an end nor an end in itself. The bald reality, provocatively presented, would suffice. The *Porcupine* anticipated Henry Labouchere's *Truth* (1877-1957), with its focus upon politics and finance and deployment of 'satirical commentary which came close to the more aggressive classical traditions'.[8] The Victorian writer, critic and educationalist Matthew Arnold shared the view of many that getting at the truth was not a primary concern for the New Journalists.[9]

The *Porcupine* was not averse to innovation. 1872 saw the introduction of 'two first-rate and experienced New York "interviewers"', who would acquaint readers with 'many a "Dicky Sam" who but for the discovery of the science and art of "interviewing," would go to his grave unknown and unappreciated by his fellow-townsmen'.[10] Shimmin et al. were not interested in novelty for novelty's sake, however. The experiment was driven by a desire to conduct more searching journalism. For the most part, the *Porcupine* disapproved of the emergent New Journalism. Shimmin would have been horrified by the morally and ethically dubious journalistic methods which saw Stead imprisoned in 1885 for abduction and indecent assault.[11] In 1877, in a comment piece entitled 'Newspaper Swill', 'Mr Porcupine' expressed his disapproval of the yellow journalism creeping its way into the press, with its voyeuristic predilection for scandal and 'spicing' columns 'with literary garbage'.[12]

[7] Stead, 'Government by Journalism', pp. 673-74; Baylen, 'New Journalism', pp. 368-72.
[8] M. O'Cinneide, 'Satire: Victorian Literature' in *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, 27 November 2013.
[9] Arnold, 'Up to Easter', pp. 629-43.
[10] 'Porcupine's "Interviewers"', *Porcupine* (10 February 1872); 'An Interview with a Poor-Law Guardian', *Porcupine* (24 February 1872).
[11] Mr. Justice Henry Charles Lopes' Sentence: The Old Bailey (November 10, 1885); quoted in A. Plowden, *The Case of Eliza Armstrong: A Child of 13 Bought for £5* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974).
[12] 'Newspaper Swill', *Porcupine* (8 February 1877).

Christopher Hamlin's description of Shimmin as a 'muck-raking' journalist is thus unfounded.[13]

The philosophy of 'Mr Porcupine' accorded with the press liberalism articulated by Victorian author and journalist Eneas Sweetland Dallas, in his exposition and defence of the Old Journalism.[14] Robert Bernard Martin referred to a mid-century 'hiatus' in Victorian comic literature when he wrote: 'many of the late Victorians actually seem to have a good deal more in common with such eighteenth-century writers as Sterne or Swift or Fielding than they do with their own immediate predecessors'.[15] In motivation and ethos, the *Porcupine* had much more in common with early *Punch* and *Punch's* predecessors.[16] As an organ of public opinion, Shimmin's journal continued in the awareness-raising, rabble-rousing tradition of the late Georgian opinion sheet or pamphlet, and of early nineteenth-century radical journalism of the kind exemplified by Wooler's satirical *Black Dwarf*.[17] The *Porcupine*'s human interest stories had their roots in the popular political journalism which emerged during the War of the Unstamped Press in the 1830s.[18] More grandiosely, as a self-conscious arm of the "fourth estate", the journal aspired to belong to the school of 'politically interventionist journalism' outlined by the *Times'* Leader writer, H. Reeve, in 1855: 'Junius … set the example of that union of accurate and secret political information, consummate ability, daring liberty, and pungent and racy style, which has ever since distinguished the highest organs of the newspaper press'.[19]

John Brenan's reference to *Punch* is to be expected. Some quarter of a century later, Athol Mayhew devoted the entire final chapter of his *Punch* history to imitators and 'derivatives' of the iconic magazine founded in London in 1841.[20] *Punch*, as the definitive comic periodical of the nineteenth century, set a template and a benchmark which endured long after the publication was held to have lost much of its early intellectual and creative edge.[21] All comic or satirical Victorian periodical literature has been held up and critiqued against the original, ever since. This was inevitable but has distorted the historiography.

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[13] C.Hamlin, 'James Newlands and the Bounds of Public Health', *THSLC*, Vol. 143 (1994), pp. 117-39.

[14] E. S. Dallas, 'Popular Literature: The Periodical Press', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, (1) January 1859, pp. 96-112 and (II) February 1859, pp. 180-95.

[15] R.B. Martin, *The Triumph of Wit: A Study of Victorian Comic Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. vii.

[16] S. Halliwell, 'Comic Satire and Freedom of Speech in Classical Athens', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. III (1991), pp. 48-70.

[17] Conboy, *Journalism*, p. 98; 'Black Dwarf (1817-1824)' in Brake and Demoor (eds), *DNCJ*, p. 57–8.

[18] Wiener, *Americanization of the British Press*, p. 43.

[19] H. Reeve, 'The Newspaper Press', *Edinburgh Review*, cii. October, p. 472.

[20] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, pp. 132-50.

[21] E. Yates. 'Comic Literature', *Temple Bar: A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*, Vol. IX (November 1863), pp. 590-599: 'The wit, humour and sarcasm of former years – that golden age of comic literature when Hood, Jerrold, and Thackeray contributed to it – have degenerated into nonsense, - sheer, wilful nonsense'.

Mayhew did not see fit to include the *Porcupine* in his extensive examination of *Punch* imitations. This may have been an oversight but it might also be interpreted as a reflection of the fact that the Liverpool journal was regarded, by some of its original audience, to be significantly different (arguably superior) to the many second rate *Punch* facsimiles which emerged. Suggesting that the *Porcupine's* limited circulation in London ought to be increased, one reader wrote in 1863: 'it deserves it, methinks, better than any of our funny pennyworths, and certainly better than the dearer *Punch*. Our cheap comic periodicals are too funny – violently and excruciatingly comic, and poor old *Punch* is not half funny enough'.[22] The view of a single appreciative correspondent cannot be assumed to represent general reader reception but it does support other source evidence which suggests that the Liverpool journal was equal to punching above its weight. Irish politician and writer Justin McCarthy, for one, was of the opinion that the *Porcupine*, under Shimmin, boasted considerable talent.[23] Whilst McCarthy acknowledged the broad similarities, he did not consider the Liverpool publication to be a poor man's *Punch*. He made a point of stressing that the *Porcupine's* original creators had not presumed to rival *Punch*.[24] The *Porcupine* had its detractors – usually the local targets of its criticism – but none of these resorted to comparing it unfavourably with *Punch*. The Liverpool journal was judged, for good or bad, on its own terms.

There are additional grounds upon which to dispel any assumption that the *Porcupine* was little more than a crude, provincial pastiche of the 'London Charivari'. Brian Maidment has identified two characteristics which were common to the *Punch*-inspired comic periodicals. Firstly, the recognised strategy of 'developing a branded satirical persona (i.e. a 'fictional editor' device) to serve as a "voice" or collective identity of the periodical and its contributors'.[25] Care of 'Mr. Porcupine', the Liverpool journal fulfilled this criterion. Secondly, their reliance upon feature cartoons and quality caricatures.[26] The *Porcupine* did not fall into this category.

There is no doubt that the *Porcupine's* so-called 'letter press' drew upon the *Punch* model in terms of satirical style and technique and there were contemporaries who did regard the Liverpool journal as '*Punch*-lite'.[27] Moreover, there is one respect in which *Punch* undoubtedly served as a model and inspiration for the Liverpool venture. *Punch* set out to be respectable, at a time when periodical comic literature was still held to be somewhat vulgar

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[22] 'From Our Correspondent', *Bury Times* (10 October 1863).
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] J. McCarthy, *An Irishman's Story* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904), p. 115.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] Maidment, 'Presence of *Punch*', pp. 13-44.
[27] See Chapter Two.

and too personal in attack.[28] Indeed, suggested Richard Noakes, 'what chiefly distinguished Punch from its predecessors, and what secured its long-term success, was the elevated tone of its humour'.[29] Noakes drew attention to the determination of Mark Lemon, *Punch's* first editor, to keep 'to the gentlemanly view of things', in line with changing bourgeois tastes.[30] It is useful to compare this to the editorial declaration in the very first issue of the *Porcupine*: 'Being a married Porcupine and a paterfamilias, the pages of our journal will never excite the blush of modesty or the scorn of virtue,' and to points made in the introduction to the second volume: 'we hope we have not hurt any one too much, and that all will admit we have dealt no coward's blow. Every man's private life and private opinions may go safe and unassailed for us'.[31] Similarly, Birmingham's *Town Crier* 'was not established ... for the gratification of indulging in scurrilous personal attacks. It only dealt with public affairs and with men in their public capacity'.[32] The *Porcupine*, like *Punch* and the *Town Crier*, was not in the business of crass insult. Overall, however, *Punch* stood in a league of its own.

Henry Miller argued that the conceptualisation of *Punch* as a 'national' institution has been overstated. The iconic journal 'tended to focus on the high politics of Westminster and the passing social fads of London ... The provinces, which were so important in Victorian Britain, are largely absent'.[33] As a result, *Punch* did not understand the provinces, nor the provinces *Punch*. Thus local comic periodicals, which 'did not simply focus on parochial or municipal affairs, but on national, and occasionally imperial and international, issues' might be seen as different but not necessarily secondary or inferior to, the London original.[34] They caution against conflating London opinion with national opinion. Provincial satirical journals occupied their own, bespoke space in the cultural and political sphere, reaching audiences to which a *Punch* was unable and unwilling to cater.[35] Political grandee William Ewart Gladstone recognised this, theorising that 'the provincial press is better informed and more powerful than the contemporary journalism of London'.[36] Assessed on these terms, the extra-London version of the serio-comic periodical might be judged to have been complementary to *Punch*, in so far as it offered alternative perspectives on broader, national and even universal issues and met a demand for information and locally-angled analysis

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[28] H. Miller, 'The Problem with Punch', *Historical Research*, Vol. 82, No. 216 (May 2009), p. 287.
[29] R. Noakes, 'Punch and Comic Journalism in Mid-Victorian Britain', in G. Cantor et al., *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 97.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] Leader, *Porcupine* (6 October 1860); 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).
[32] Anderton, *Tale of One City*, p. 86.
[33] Miller, 'Problem with Punch', p. 286.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] A. Hobbs, 'When the Provincial Press Was the National Press (c.1836-c.1900)', *International Journal of Regional and Local History,* 5, 1 (2009), pp. 16-43.
[36] J. Hatton, *Journalistic London, Famous Pens and Papers of the Day* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), p. 35.

which the London-based comic periodicals were unable to meet. It follows that it now has something additional to offer the historian seeking to avoid the persistent conflation of London with national opinion.

Press historians have recognised the hitherto overlooked significance of provincial journals, particularly the comic or satirical ones, which still tend to be regarded as 'a mine of social history', rather than as discourses in their own right.[37] The persistent focus upon *Punch* 'blinds the historian to other, regional comic papers of Britain in the same period'.[38]   The most successful of the provincial comic periodicals were far more political than the 'London Charivari', making a virtue and a strength of their parochialism – that is, their townology.[39] Moreover, whereas *Punch* is held to have become "middle-of-the-road" relatively rapidly, they maintained their fierceness. What is most striking about the Liverpool *Porcupine*, Birmingham's *Town Crier* or the *Free Lance* in Manchester, is that they were so free and uninhibited in their use of satire as a "discursive weapon".

METROPOLITAN CONTEMPORARIES

The weekly *Fun* was launched just a year after the *Porcupine*. In it, 'parody and satirical verse could be found alongside political and literary criticism, and sports coverage'.[40] *Fun* was held by some contemporary reviewers to be 'the only successful rival of Punch' and even a 'dangerous opponent'. [41] Again and again, *Fun* was compared favourably to the 'London Charivari', its letter-press striking one observer as being 'generally superior to "Punch"'.[42] Nine years into publication, it continued to receive glowing reviews.[43] Over time, it achieved 'institutional status of its own'.[44] The Liverpool (Free) Public Library subscribed to it.[45] Significantly, *Fun* was founded by Henry James Byron, one of the early contributors to the *Porcupine*, to cater to the more Liberal and radical audience to which

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[37] L.W. Brady, '"Penny A Liners" and Politics: the Growth of Journalistic Influence?', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, No.11, (February 1971), p. 17.

[38] Scully, 'Comic Empire', pp. 6-35.

[39] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*.

[40] 'Fun', <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/projects/disraeli/funstoryboard.html> [accessed 3 December 2014].

[41] *Bookseller*, 1865, p. 289; H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism*, Vol. 2 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1887), p. 298.

[42] T.D.F.C., 'Dying a Natural Death', *Sharpe's*.

[43] 'Fun in Literature', *Era* (3 April 1870).

[44] 'Fun', <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/projects/disraeli/funstoryboard.html> [accessed 3 December 2014].

[45] *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum, and Walker Art Gallery, of the Borough of Liverpool*, (Liverpool: Henry Greenwood, 1879), p.6; *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum, and Walker Art Gallery, of the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool: J.R. Williams & Co., 1888), p. 7.

Punch no longer appealed.[46]   It is tempting to speculate whether the early success of the *Porcupine* in Liverpool is partly what inspired Byron to begin the London-based venture. Byron was not the only *Porcupine* alumnus to be involved in the *Fun* project; William Jeffrey ('Jeff') Prowse also contributed, 'evolv[ing] from his grotesque inner consciousness "Nicholas," the disreputable old sporting tout'.[47]   In fact, the *Porcupine* and *Fun* had a string of contributors in common (see Chapter Four). *Fun* was to stand the test of time, remaining in print for thirty years.[48]

Like the *Porcupine*, *Fun* sold for a penny. Like *Punch* (and the *Porcupine*), *Fun* 'presupposed a considerable level of political awareness and understanding from its readers'.[49] Unlike the *Porcupine*, however, it has been judged to have 'appealed to the lower to lower middle classes' and to have been 'politically to the left …of 'Punch''.[50] Nevertheless, *Fun's* creators may have regarded *Porcupine* as competition, to judge by its occasional jibes at the Liverpool journal, usually alleging plagiarism.[51] This kind of intra-industry point scoring was not unusual. It was common amongst the intellects and egos in the print culture world and the public exchanges between satirical periodicals could be particularly cutting.[52] *Fun* was just one of several periodical publications which occasionally attempted to cast aspersions upon the *Porcupine's* integrity and quality. The *Orchestra* suggested the Liverpool journal was odd.[53]   According to the *Musical World*, it would publish any old rubbish.[54]   The *National Reformer* criticised the *Porcupine* for sloppy reporting.[55] Notably, none of these journals was strictly provincial – each was produced in the capital for national distribution. That these particular publications felt it necessary and appropriate to criticise the Liverpool journal hints that it was regarded as potential competition, throwing further light upon contemporary evaluations of the *Porcupine's* position within the broader press canon.

Brian Maidment summarised the ways in which *Fun* modelled itself upon *Punch*: by successfully styling itself into a brand; by putting out volumes of its cartoons; by basing its humour upon 'the travesty of public discourses'; and by employing a wide range of literary

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[46] Scully, 'Comic Empire', p. 12.
[47] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, pp. 139-40.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] B.M., 'Fun', in Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ,* pp. 237-8.
[50] Ellegård, *Readership*, p. 37.
[51] 'Answers to Correspondents', *Fun* (24 August 1867).
[52] 'The Tomahawk', Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition <www.ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/ttw.html> [accessed 3 December 2014].
[53] 'In the Liver's Nest', *Orchestra* (28 June 1872).
[54] 'Puffing a Creed'*, Musical World* (2 June 1877).
[55] 'Rough Notes and Readings', *National Reformer* (30 June 1872).

methods, tropes and devices.[56] So closely did *Fun* resemble *Punch* in substance and style, that Jerry Don Vann described it as 'perhaps the second most important comic periodical in the Victorian period'.[57] This was no automatic consensus amongst contemporaries, however. In the opinion of some, *Fun* never quite matched up to its inspiration.[58] Nonetheless, the *Punch* brotherhood was wary of this upstart rival. Thackeray referred to it semi-derisively as "Funch" but Richard Scully has noted how he routinely 'called for its latest edition to be passed around the editorial dinner-table in order to match its quality and content'.[59] That *Fun* is today more widely recognised and utilised, as an historical source, than its Liverpool contemporary is mainly due to the fact that it has been digitised, scholars having at some point made the case for rendering it more accessible.

Figure 3.1
Title Pages: *Fun*, Volume 1, March 1862 (http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00078627/00001/2j, University of Florida Digital Collections) and *Tomahawk*, 11 May 1867 (© Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition, 2008)
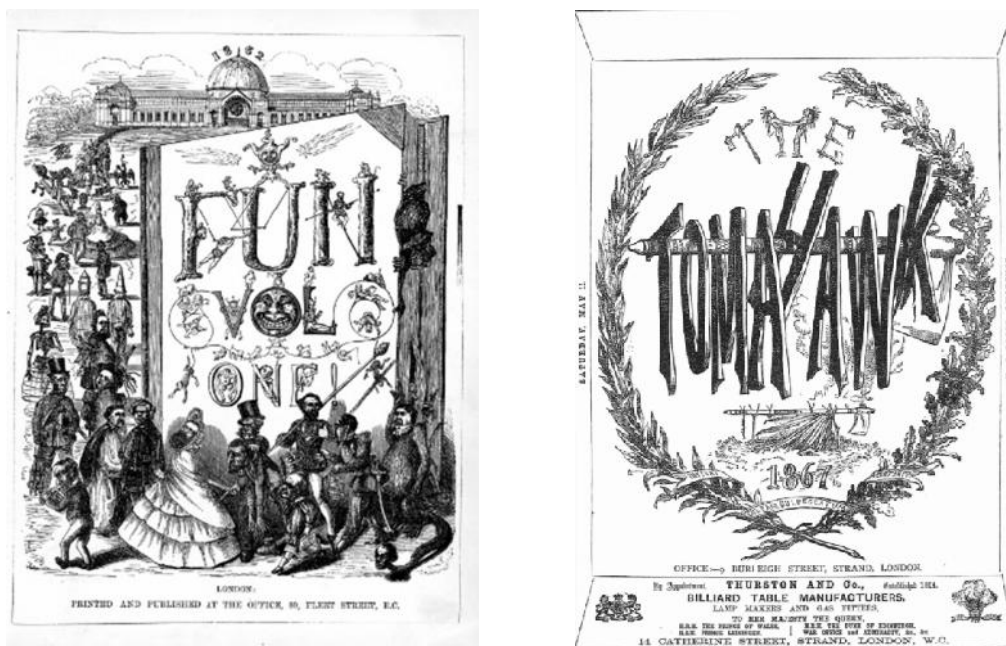
Tomahawk, launched (like *Fun*'s Conservative sister journal, *Judy*) in 1867, has also been digitised. Considered by press history scholars old and new as 'a formidable rival' to *Punch* and as 'of undisputed significance', this 'Saturday Journal of Satire' was co-edited by Arthur

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[56] Maidment, 'Presence of *Punch*', pp. 13-44.
[57] J. Don Vann, , 'Comic Periodicals' in J. Don Vann and R. T. VanArsdel (eds), *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 287.
[58] Price, *History of Punch*, p. 85.
[59] Scully, 'Comic Empire', p.12.

à Beckett and gifted illustrator Matt Morgan, both of whom worked upon *Fun* and the former of whom contributed copy to the *Porcupine*.[60] Its writing staff were Bohemian and most of its contributors had previously collaborated on earlier comic periodicals and theatrical projects.[61] The cross-fertilisation of talent in the mid-century, when it came to entrepreneurial experiments in comic and satirical literature, is discussed in the following chapter.[62]

Tomahawk set out to tackle 'meanness', 'injustice' and 'humbug', promising - consistent with its warrior metaphor - to 'scalp' anyone guilty of 'deceit and fraud'.[63] Regarded by Athol Mayhew as a 'model of what such a paper should be', the journal was an immediate success, shooting up 'with meteoric brilliancy'.[64] Donald Gray described *Tomahawk* as 'an interesting, relatively trenchant journal, well-written, well-illustrated, and its first issue, more contentious than most similarly well-produced journals'.[65] In its prime, '*Tomahawk* distinguished itself from its rivals through greater attention to social issues and foreign affairs and through a more emotional, less party-political response to political issues'.[66] The similarities with the socially-conscious, emotion-fuelled, campaigning *Porcupine* are evident. Despite this, the early *Porcupine* team may well have taken issue with comparisons to *Tomahawk*. Some members of the Savage Club were said to have been indignant at having been mistakenly described as the producers of the latter, which, according to one of them, 'seemed to imagine that abuse and vulgarity would pass for wit'.[67] *Tomahawk* differed from the *Porcupine* in one key respect; its success has been attributed not only to its editorial leadership but also to its graphics.[68] At 2d, *Tomahawk* cost more than its cheaper rivals, including *Fun* and the *Porcupine* (but less than *Punch*, at 3d). Arthur à Beckett claimed in 1903 that it in its prime, it frequently outsold *Punch*.[69] Despite its supposed success, *Tomahawk* folded after just three years – reportedly narrowly avoiding some kind of financial and social scandal. The real reason for its 'mysterious and abrupt end' remains unclear.[70] The *Porcupine's* staying power appears all the more impressive.

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[60] Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, p. 299; Scully, 'Comic Empire', p. 12.
[61] T.M. Kemnitz, 'Matt Morgan of "Tomahawk" and English Cartooning, 1867-1870', *Victorian Studies* 19:1 (1975), pp. 5-34.
[62] See Chapter Six.
[63] Preface, *Tomahawk: Volume 1* (London: Office of the Tomahawk, 1867).
[64] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 141.
[65] Gray, 'Comic Periodicals', p. 35.
[66] 'The Tomahawk', Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition <www.ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/ttw.html> [accessed 3 December 2014].
[67] J.E. Preston Muddock, *Pages from an Adventurous Life* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1907), p. 171.
[68] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 142.
[69] A.W. à Beckett, *The à Becketts of 'Punch': Memories of Father and Sons* (New York: E.P. Button and Company, 1903).
[70] Scully, 'Comic Empire', p.12; 'The Tomahawk', Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition. <www.ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/ttw.html> [accessed 3 December 2014].

Fun and *Tomahawk* are more appropriately construed as comparators, rather than competitors, of the Liverpool journal. Produced for, about and by Londoners, they were not serious rivals to the Liverpool publication. They shared talent and offered different discursive perspectives. From the point of view of their freelance contributors, keen to see their work as widely disseminated as possible, they represented opportunity.

THE PROVINCIAL COMIC PRESS: COMPARATORS OR COMPETITORS?

The *Porcupine's* provinciality places it in a sub-genre further narrowed by geography. Serio-comic periodicals proliferated in provincial towns and cities during the mid-century.[71] As one late Victorian commentator noted, 'you must go to Birmingham, or Liverpool, or Newcastle, or Glasgow, for a paper that is solely comic or satirical'.[72] Most of these journals were formulaic in format, short-lived and, frankly, of dubious quality. Some - *Daylight* in Norwich (1879-1909); *The Yorkshireman* in Bradford (1875-1899); Swansea's *The Ferret* (1870-1879); or *The Western Figaro* in Plymouth (1881-1902) - proved successful and enduring. Progressive Birmingham spawned a raft of serio-comic periodicals, including the *Birmingham Town Crier, or, Jacob's Belles Lettres* (1861-1919), the *Birmingham Dart*, in various guises (1876-1911) and *The Owl* (1879-1911). Booming Manchester had the *Free Lance* (1866-1880), the *City Lantern* (1874-1884) and the *City Jackdaw* (1875-1880). Significantly, the *Porcupine* predated and outlived almost all of its main provincial comparators. It was one of just three to stand out in 1871, according to the *Birmingham Mail* at that time:

> I could fill a column with the names of defunct comic periodicals. The Birmingham
> Town Crier, the Liverpool Porcupine and the Manchester Free Lance are, I think, the
> only instances where provincial papers of this kind have achieved a lasting success.[73]

Provincial serio-comic periodicals around the country fulfilled in and for their respective cities, the same function fulfilled by the *Porcupine* in and for Liverpool. 'Townologically' focused upon their respective locales and communities, these publications did not represent competition to the *Porcupine*. Recognised in their time as 'strictly and intensely local', they were all proud products of their respective socio-political milieus.[74] They focused, like the *Porcupine*, upon municipal and civic governance, setting out to bring truth and common

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[71] Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, p.116.
[72] T.P. O'Connor & H. Jackson (eds), *T.P.'s Weekly*, Issues 1-30 (1902), p. 78.
[73] 'The "Mail Bag"', *Birmingham Mail* (16 September 1871).
[74] 'The Irwell', *Pall Mall Gazette* (14 November 1874).

sense to bear upon public discourse. These publications were 'often wittier, more partisan, and certainly more concerned with and observant about city life' than the lauded *Punch*.[75] Like the *Porcupine*, some enjoyed a sub-regional and even regional reach, indicating wider demographic footprints than has hitherto been apparent. The *City Lantern* served 'Manchester and district'.[76] The *Dart* circulated 'in Birmingham and Suburbs, in Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, West Bromwich, Smethwick, Coventry, Leamington, Warwick, Derby, Tamworth, Burton-on-Trent, and all the Towns of the Midlands'.[77] Like the *Porcupine*, they attracted readers and contributors from across the social, political and economic spectrums. The Bishop of Manchester read the *Free Lance*.[78] Lydia Becker, the Secretary of the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage, contributed a paper to it in 1868.[79] Finally, just like the *Porcupine*, these publications sometimes provoked the ire of their subjects. The *Free Lance* was accused by a reader complaining to the *Lancaster Gazette* of being 'a cloak for attacks upon private individuals'.[80] Most provincial satirical periodicals were, unlike the *Porcupine*, illustrated – sometimes very competently so. One exception was the *Town Crier,* which also opted to abandon graphics after some initial experimentation because, as a contemporary reviewer explained, 'the art of wood engraving was not at that time in a flourishing condition in Birmingham'.[81]

Jacob Wilson's *Town Crier* began as a two penny monthly but became weekly in the late 1880s. It set out, in 1861, to follow the comic periodical blueprint, promising 'to spare the conquered and to subdue the proud'; to speak 'truth with a smile'; and to 'play the devil!'[82] The *Town Crier* made quite an impression, according to contributor Thomas Anderton: 'it created some stir by its original and, in some respects, unique character, also by the general smartness and humour of its contents'.[83] It was a long-term success: two decades into publication, it was judged to have 'held its own against subsequent competitors up to the present time'.[84] Anderton credited the journal with having 'something to do, indirectly at least, with the making of Modern Birmingham'.[85] Indeed, referencing it was 'one special reason why' Anderton had opted to devote 'some consideration and space to the Birmingham

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[75] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 204.
[76] 'The City Lantern', *Manchester Guardian* (26 September 1874).
[77] Front page notice, *Dart and Midland Figaro*, 1880s.
[78] Papers of Can. Nathaniel Woodard, 15 May 1874, Manchester Cathedral Archives, Mancath/3/1/1/2/1/14.
[79] Letters to Lydia E. Becker, 21 Mar 1868-29 Nov 1868, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M50/1/3.
[80] 'The Free Lance Ilk', *Lancaster Gazette* (23 November 1878).
[81] T. Smith, *Memorials of Old Birmingham* (Birmingham: Walter J. Sackett, 1864), p. 10.
[82] Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), *Eneide*, VI, Line 853 in A.S.Kline, *The Aeneid Book VI* (UK: Poetry in Translation, 2002), p. 168; Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), *Satires*, Book I, Satire I, Lines 24-25, in W. Smart, *Horace Literally Translated* (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co.,1830), p. 120; W. Shakespeare, *King John*, Act II, Scene 1, Lines 133-135 (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1916), p. 24.
[83] Anderton, *Tale of One City*, p. 84.
[84] *Ibid.*; R. K. Dent, *Old and New Birmingham: A History of the Town and its People* (Birmingham: Houghton and Hammond, 1880), p. 594.
[85] Anderton, *Tale of One City*, p. 84.

press' in his history of the city.[86]   Anderton was biased but he was not alone amongst contemporaries in his positive assessment of the 'true humour', superior ability and power to influence with which the *Town Crier* was conducted.[87]

Figure 3.2
Provincial comparators
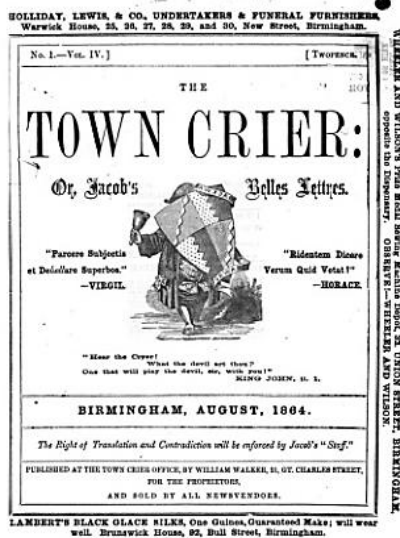
The Town Crier: or, Jacob's Belles Lettres
Birmingham, August 1864
(Public Domain)

The City Lantern
Manchester 1874-1884
(undated online advertisement for private copy)
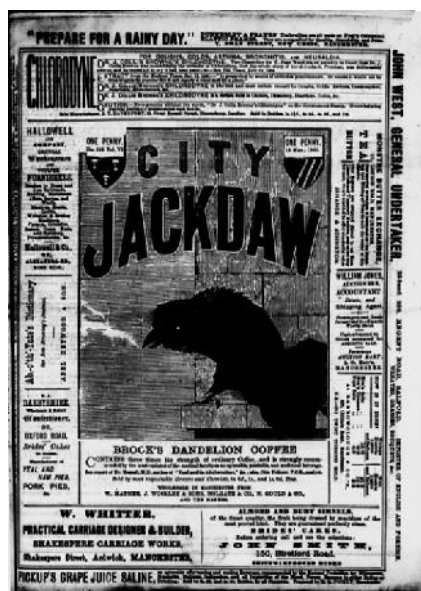
The City Jackdaw
Manchester, 1 April 1880
(courtesy of Special Collections, Manchester Central Library)

The Dart
Birmingham, 4 January 1884
(courtesy of the British Library)

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[86] *Ibid.*
[87] Smith, *Memorials of Old Birmingham*, p. 10.

The (*Birmingham*) *Dart* (*and Midland Figaro*) was sub-titled a 'Journal of Sense and Satire'.[88] It was 'commenced as a Liberal Organ, freely criticising the action of public men'.[89] As Chapters Five and Six in particular will demonstrate, what Aled Jones said of the *Dart* applies with equal validity to all of its serio-comic contemporaries, particularly the *Porcupine*: 'A reading of the Dart in 1892 not only disturbs the city's own preferred progressive narrative, but it can also suggest different ways of reading the history of Britain in the nineteenth century … Some 60-70% of the editorial content … is concerned with the affairs of individuals in a cluster of streets in the city centre'.[90] Whereas 'Mr Porcupine' wrote about The Cellar (Liberal) and The Garret (Tory) cliques in Liverpool, the *Dart* wrote about 'The Caucus' – the Birmingham Liberal Caucus. Another serio-comic periodical, the *Owl*, a 'journal of sense and satire', emerged from a band of local journalists known as the 'Birmingham Owl Club', which flourished in the mid-1870s. Retrospectively described by a Birmingham historian as 'lively', the *Owl* promised readers that its 'hooting' and 'screeching' would 'be pitched in no uncertain key'.[91] Although known, like the *Porcupine*, as a 'Liberal bird', it claimed to be impartial, progressive, committed to serving Birmingham's interests and cross-party: 'On local matters we shall gladly welcome and support any movements, from whoever they may emanate that promise to be for the good of the town.'[92] The provincial serio-comic periodical thus became a byword for the Victorian concept of inclusive progress.

Manchester had its own variants. The most significant of these was the 'incisive and able' *Free Lance* ('A Journal of Humour and Criticism'), established in December 1866. This periodical, like the *Porcupine*, was 'eminently alive to the city interests at all times and on all points' and maintained both influence and circulation throughout its career.[93] Notably, the *Free Lance* was taken by some contemporaries to have been modelled not on *Punch* but on the *Porcupine*.[94] It had been in publication for two years when 'Mr Porcupine' acknowledged its style and approach with parental approval.[95] In evidence of the *Porcupine* having had an even wider cultural impact, it was also considered to have been the 'great

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[88] 'The Birmingham Dart (Ninth Year)', *Dart* (24 October 1884).

[89] Dent, *Old and New Birmingham*, pp. 595-96.

[90] A. Jones, 'The Dart and the Damning of the Sylvan Stream: Journalism and Political Culture in the Late-Victorian City', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 35.1 (2002), p. 5.

[91] H.R.G. Whates, *The Birmingham Post, 1857-1957; A Centenary Retrospective* (Birmingham: Birmingham Post and Mail, 1957); 'To the Public', *Owl* (30 January 1879).

[92] 'To the Public', *Owl* (30 January 1879).

[93] *Lancet*, Vol.1 (1869), p. 375; 'Pins and Needles', *Judy* (4 November 1874); W.A. Shaw, *Manchester Old and New*, Volume III (London: Cassell and Company, 1894), p. 69.

[94] 'European Intelligence: Manchester, March, 1867', *Freeman's Journal* (22 June 1867).

[95] 'What Others Think Of Us', *Porcupine* (5 September 1868).

prototype' for *The Ferret*, a 'Journal of Wit and Humour', produced in Swansea and for the 'racy and pungent' *Dawn*, launched in Edinburgh.[96]

Figure 3.3
Comparison of typographical style and layout: *Porcupine*, 29 December 1860 and *City Jackdaw*, 23 March 1877
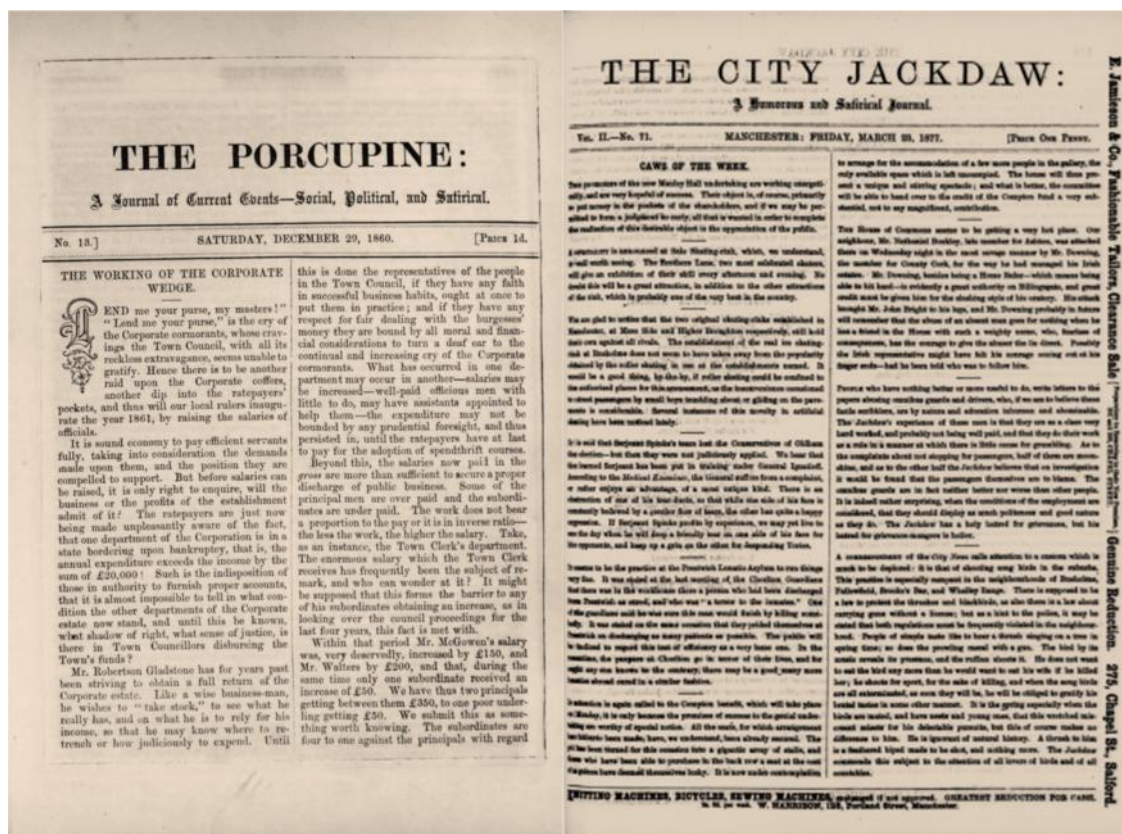
Two additional satirical publications emerged in Manchester in the mid-1870s. The 'very readable' *City Lantern*, ('A humorous and Satirical Journal'), was, according to contemporaries, produced 'by a first-class literary staff'. Unlike many of its peers, it did set out to emulate *Punch*.[97] In 1876, some of its producers broke away to start up the *City Jackdaw*, also a 'Humorous and Satirical Journal', with a focus upon municipal politics. 'Mr. Alderman King Dethroned; Tory Tactics at Stockport; Councillor Potts on himself; Benjamin's Mess. See "CITY JACKDAW",' read a typical advertisement.[98] With poetry, articles, sections on the theatre and regular features such as 'Caws of the Week', the *Jackdaw* was remarkably similar in content (as well as in layout and style) to the

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[96] 'The Ferret', *Newspaper Press* (1 December 1871); 'The Dawn', *Dundee Courier* (14 April 1871).
[97] 'The City Lantern' (Advertisement), *Manchester Guardian* (26 September 1874); 'Random Shots', *Owl* (2 March 1883); *Owl* title page logo: 'The Punch of the North'.
[98] Advertisement, *Manchester Guardian* (15 November 1878).

Porcupine.[99] It was put out by Abel Heywood and Son, the Manchester dynasty with Chartist roots established in the 1830s. The extensive output of this publishing house included 'Jottings from the Irish Church (Reprinted from the "Porcupine")', issued in November 1868. This hints at unexplored links between the journalistic fraternities in Liverpool and Manchester.[100] That both the *City Lantern* and *City Jackdaw* attracted sufficient audiences to co-exist in direct competition for the next few years bolsters the case for a renewed reassessment of Victorian satire.

PORCUPINE AND THE LIVERPOOL PRESS

John Churchill Brenan's low opinion notwithstanding, Victorian Liverpool *did* have a press – and a dynamic and entrepreneurial one at that, reflecting the buoyancy of its community and its economy. In 1882, in the preamble to his first attempt to draw up a chronological list of Liverpool's periodicals past and present, John Cooper Morley observed:

> Many [metropolitan periodicals] sink out of sight as rapidly as they appear, without leaving behind them the slightest trace of their existence. This remark applies to the case of Liverpool. During the present century several periodicals have appeared and vanished, and have doubtless been forgotten.[101]

Morley, a newspaper man himself, was inspired to carry out his research by a claim that Liverpool's periodical production was second only to London's.[102] Morley was not alone in having been impressed by the quantity (and often the quality) of Liverpool's press output. Later in the period, Thomas Hay Sweet Escott wrote: 'Of all the provincial capitals, Liverpool is that in which individual newspaper reputations of national distinction have been most conspicuously or frequently achieved', going on to describe the emergence of the "serious" press in the town – including the *Liverpool Journal,* the *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Mercury* – in the first half of the century. Significantly, Escott included Shimmin in his collection of local press luminaries.[103] He wrote with the benefit of hindsight, which allowed him to evaluate the *Porcupine* not only with the objectivity of time but after the emergence of popular journalism for the masses, which many still held to be somewhat unsavoury.

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[99] ProQuest has digitised the *City Jackdaw*, 19 November 1875 (Vol. 1, no. 1) - 2 April, 1880 (Vol. 6, no. 229); Image: Vol. 2, Issue 71, (23 March, 1877).
[100] 'Just Published', *Porcupine* (21 November 1868).
[101] Morley, 'List of Liverpool Periodicals', pp. 122-23, 201-2.
[102] Morley, *Newspaper Press*, p. 3.
[103] Escott, *Masters*, pp. 292-4.

Nonetheless, Escott's inclusion of a journal, elsewhere dismissed as a mere comic periodical, in a retrospective survey of the town's leading newspapers, is suggestive.

Figure 3.4
Liverpool newsagent's displaying titles, late 19th/early 20th century (Image courtesy of The Bluecoat Press)

Morley and Escott wrote about the local press. L. W. Brady put the hybrids that were both provincial *and* satirical into useful perspective: 'The provinces (north of St. Albans), the provincial British cities especially, had an entire range of comic, literary, and satiric journals. What is surprising … is their non-national quality …. They were proud or unaware of their provincialism, and proud of their city'.[104] Brady suggested that their closeness to their subjects resulted in material which, 'pompous and revealing', is rendered all the more historically valuable by its very naivety and prejudice. By means of appropriate example, he cited the *Porcupine*.[105] Regional comic periodicals proliferated during the 1860s and 1870s and the *Porcupine* was routinely namechecked in lists.[106] Looking back in 1895, writer Athol Mayhew credited the towns and cities outside of London with spearheading serio-comic journalism: 'the provinces, never backward in journalistic enterprise, were early to the fore with local satirical sheets and county comics'.[107] Liverpool was no exception. A survey of the local press canon reveals that the town did not want for would-be satirists and aspirant literary comics. The launch of the *Porcupine* in 1860 followed in a local tradition dating

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[104] Brady, '"Penny a Liners" and Politics', p. 17.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] 'Echoes of the Week', *Sydney Herald* (24 May 1866).
[107] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch,* p. 144.

back to the late 1820s (see Figure 3.5). The vast majority of these titles proved to be very short-lived and few details about them, much less extant copies, have survived. The weekly *Figaro in Liverpool*, which launched on 14 January 1833 and sold for one penny, has been described in the historiography as 'a miscellany of radical satire which features allusions to local Churchmen, magistrates, journalists and Owenites'.[108] All but forgotten now, the *Liverpool Era* - at some point unknown incorporated with the *Liverpool Compass* - was considered sufficiently significant to merit a mention in one particular survey of the comic periodicals of the time.[109] They all came out weekly or fortnightly, costing a penny or two. The earlier publications were little more than four page pamphlets; the later ones extended to eight and – later again, following the relaxation of the various "taxes on knowledge" – to twelve and sixteen pages.

Figure 3.5
Sampling of comic and serio-comic Liverpool predecessors to the *Porcupine*

⟩ *The Cabinet of Life, Wit and Humour* (1829)

⟩ *Figaro in Liverpool,* inspired by *Figaro in London* (1833)

⟩ *The Brazen Head* (1834)

⟩ *Paul Pry in Liverpool* (1834)

⟩ *Dicky Sam, The Lancashire Herald* (1835)

⟩ *The Tartar* (1835)

⟩ *Leporello in Liverpool* (1835)

⟩ *Liverpool Satirist* (1836)

⟩ *Rambler's Budget of Literature and Fun* (1837)

⟩ *Hocus Pocus* (1841)

⟩ *Liverpool Lion* (1847)

⟩ *The Original: A Periodical Established by a Few Young Men as Amusement for their Leisure Hours* (1849)

⟩ *Jones or the Liverpool Charivari* (1849)

⟩ *The Croaker: A Penny Punch for Dicky Sam* (1852)

The titles speak for themselves; they all aspired to be witty publications and most were overtly fashioned upon the same 'Figaro' and 'Charivari' templates, originally imported from the Continent, which had inspired *Punch*. *Leporello in Liverpool* was cited by Richard

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[108] J.H. Wiener, 'Unstamped British Periodicals 1830-1836', *Bibliographical Society*, Issue 44 (1970), p. 17.
[109] T.F.D.C., 'Dying a Natural Death', *Sharpe's*.

Altick as an example of how, in the 1830s, 'no clear-cut dividing line existed between the comic press and papers with a strong partisan or ideological bias'.[110] He elaborated: 'Such papers served up dishes seasoned to the individual editors' tastes, the common element being satire on one level or another, political, social, or personal'.[111] Altick was writing about periodicals which existed a full generation before the *Porcupine* but he may very well have been characterising the later Liverpool journal. This supports the proposition made in Chapter Two, that the *Porcupine* was, in some essential respects, a throw-back to earlier press forms, representing older journalistic traditions and practices during a period of transition and modernisation in the print media. The idea of Shimmin's paper drawing, like *Punch*, upon earlier nineteenth-century traditions in comic journalism thus has some traction.[112]

Porcupine's reassuringly old-fashioned quality during a period of relentless progress may have been part of its appeal. Not only would this explain the enduring popularity of *Punch*, long after it had become a little dull; it throws some light upon the *Porcupine's* success, even as it harked back to the aesthetic and moral superiority of early *Punch*. Resistance to change during the "Long Nineteenth Century" is generally imagined in terms of radical, Luddite action on the one hand and arch, reactionary Conservatism on the other but it manifested itself culturally in far more subtle ways. As Elizabeth Pennell suggested in 1888: 'In … [humour] …the English are the most conservative of men. Slow to understand a new joke, they are equally slow to part with one that has been mastered'.[113] The Liverpool journal's creators recognised this. They understood audience expectation and set about meeting it. The challenge for *Porcupine* thus became not to 'out-do' *Punch* or *Fun* (when it emerged) but rather to emulate the best of their communicative strategies. John Churchill Brenan's estimation - that the Liverpool journal succeeded in combining the best of the most successful comic periodicals of the day - rings true.

The short-lived *Liverpool Lion*, introduced in Chapter Two, is by far the most significant of the *Porcupine's* predecessors.[114] Self-styled as 'a journal devoted to the illustration of things as they are, with stray hints of things as they ought to be', it was cheerfully conceived and perceived, according to Athol Mayhew, as '[o]ne of the earliest, if not the first country imitation of Punch'.[115] Early reviews of 'this playful little thing' were very positive: 'our

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[110] Altick, *Punch*, p. 2.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] Noakes, 'Punch and Comic Journalism', p. 96.
[113] Pennell, 'Modern Comic Newspaper'.
[114] See Chapter Six.
[115] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 144.

local Punch … contains several good things, quite worthy of his London exemplar'.[116] In 1957, R.G.G. Price described William Brough's 'first literary effort' in the *Lion* as a bitter, 'unreasonable', 'anarchical' but 'brilliant' attack upon the 'propertied classes'.[117] Brough was neither as anarchic nor as class conscious as his brother Robert, who died in 1860.[118] Yet it is important to consider Price's evaluation in light of some of the "anti-establishment" writing - invariably attributed to Shimmin - published in the *Porcupine*. In 1848 the title of the *Liverpool Lion* was changed to *The Lion or Lancashire Charivari, 'Wit, Humour, and Satire'*, but it ceased publication shortly thereafter.[119] If the *Porcupine* was indeed conceived as a *Lion* 'rebooted', it emerged from a legitimate conviction that it would meet a local demand and be well received. Clearly, the Broughs had not only understood contemporary print culture. They had also been responding to the increasing importance of local – that is, municipal and commercial – governance in a town like Liverpool. Henry Miller inferred the townology argument when he used the *Liverpool Lion* to illustrate a point about the difference between *Punch* and its provincial counterparts in the 1840s, using their respective pictorial coverage of Irish affairs: 'Punch was worried about the threat of separation and public order in Ireland, whereas the Lion saw the Irish issue through local eyes'.[120] This is significant given that the *Porcupine*, the *Lion's* supposed successor, made a virtue and a strength of its local perspective.[121]

If, by the late 1860s, *Punch* had competition in the capital, the *Porcupine* enjoyed an effective monopoly in Liverpool's satirical market. Although a handful of local rivals emerged during its first two decades, the established journal saw them all off: *Tomahawk* (1864), possibly an experimental forerunner to the London-based publication of the same name); *Motley,* a 'Literary, Critical and Comic Journal' (1864); *Pan* (1865); *Buck in the Park* and the *Town Crier*, 'a humorous and satirical journal' (both 1875); and the *Liverpool Touchstone* (1878). A Welsh language *Punch – Y Punch Cymraeg* – was launched in Liverpool in 1863, to be circulated in North Wales and to cater to Liverpool's sizeable migrant Welsh population. A discussion of *Motley* during a Liverpool Town Council meeting caused some mirth at the *Porcupine's* expense. Press admittance was discretionary and the editor of the new publication had sought permission to send a reporter to the meeting. The mayor made clear that he did not hold *Motley* to be a serious organ of the press but he sought the opinion of colleagues:

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[116] 'Reviews', *Liverpool Mercury* (20 April 1847); 'The Liverpool Lion', *Liverpool Mercury* (18 June 1847).
[117] Price, *History of Punch*, p. 288.
[118] E. Richardson, *Classical Victorians: Scholars, Scoundrels and Generals in Pursuit of Antiquity (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 112-25.
[119] 'Local Intelligence', *Liverpool Mercury* (22 February 1848); Morley, *Newspaper Press*, p. 8.
[120] Miller, 'Problem with Punch', p. 295.
[121] 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).

– Do you call that a newspaper? (laughter).

Mr. Aspinall suggested that a list of the papers usually represented in the Council should be furnished. *Motley* seemed to him to be very like one paper that was represented there (laughter).

Alderman Cooper. – Why it's like *Porcupine* (renewed laughter).[122]

After further banter and discussion, it was agreed that the reporter for *Motley* be admitted and he took his seat to much 'tittering'.[123] This amusing vignette offers an insight into the relationship between the local satirical press and Liverpool's ruling elite. It also highlights the determination on the part of these small, left-field periodicals assiduously to monitor municipal business. As will be discussed a little later, for all their affected superiority, local political figures were distinctly wary of such publications, particularly the *Porcupine*, as it evolved into something of a local institution.[124]

K.C. Spier's *Liverpool Lantern,* launched in 1877, was of a different order. This 'Critical and Humorous Journal', described by a contemporary as 'one of the first of the more ambitious weekly comics', was set up in direct opposition to Shimmin's.[125] Like the *Porcupine*, the *Lantern* cost one penny. Like the *Porcupine*, it was classified as a 'satirical' newspaper and summarised as a 'Social, Municipal, General' miscellany.[126] Unlike the *Porcupine*, however, Spier's paper was most appreciated for its illustrations[127] It appealed to a slightly different audience demographic – those looking for diversion and humour in graphic form, rather than for witty or intellectual discourse. The *Lantern* was edited by Liverpudlian Robert Crompton, a writer, journalist and dramatist who enjoyed links to the local performing arts, was a Dickens enthusiast and had started out writing freelance for the *Porcupine*.[128] The *Lantern* folded after five years and no other viable serio-comic contenders emerged to rival the *Porcupine*.[129] Shimmin's journal had hit upon a recipe for success, with sustained demand for its content and style and a sufficiently loyal readership to ensure its commercial viability. Its hitherto inexplicable longevity might be seen as both a cause and effect of its particular formula in terms of content, style and presentation. This in turn suggests that the views espoused by 'Mr Porcupine' carried some weight; in so far as they met with a receptive audience, they must have reflected and/or shaped local public opinion. It is an indication of their historical usefulness.

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[122] 'Motley', *Liverpool Daily Post* (14 January 1864).
[123] *Ibid.*
[124] 'Talk of the Day', *Liberal Review* (18 January 1879).
[125] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 145.
[126] *Newspaper Press Directory and Advertiser's Guide* (London: G. Mitchell & Co., 1879).
[127] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 145.
[128] Millward, *Myself and Others*, p. 19; R. Crompton, *Poems* (Liverpool: Walter Henry Peat, 1866).
[129] Gray, 'Comic Periodicals', p. 23.

As a mélange of news, essays, musical and theatrical reviews, the *Porcupine* must also be understood within the broader local press context. It certainly was by contemporaries, who routinely included it in lists of 'country' (that is, regional) newspapers.[130] Some of Liverpool's mainstream papers and periodicals published humorous and satirical content. The town's press canon also featured a succession of specialist journals focused upon political discourse, science, history or literary and dramatic criticism. Almost all of these proved to be fleeting. A single exception and potential rival emerged towards the end of Shimmin's reign. The weekly *Liberal Review of Politics, Society, Literature and Art* launched in 1878 and was edited for a time by local political-commercial grandee, William Rathbone. Incorporated into the *Liverpool Review of Politics* in 1883, it remained in print until 1904. The journal appears to have attempted to move into the *Porcupine's* territory with articles and series such as 'The Charities of Liverpool' (1878), 'Interviews with Great Men (Imaginary)' (1881-1882), 'Liverpool On a Saturday Night' (1881-1882) and 'How the Other Half Lives', a description of Liverpool slum life (1882). It also carried satirical accounts and pen portraits of local political figures. So familiar does some of this writing read, it raises the possibility that several *Porcupine* contributors may have defected to the *Liberal/Liverpool Review* in the 1880s, as the *Porcupine's* star waned following Shimmin's death. The *Review* came too late to trouble the *Porcupine's* original editor, however.

Under Shimmin, the *Porcupine* held itself aloof from the local mainstream press, so as to critique and disparage their performance with articles such as 'The Courier Does a Whopper', 'The "Mercury" Does Something to Be Ashamed Of' and 'The Daily Post Does a Puff'.[131] A sarcastic editorial piece published in 1862, regarding 'our family paper' the *Albion*, a Liberal publication for which Shimmin had written as a young man, drew a clear distinction between the *Porcupine* and Liverpool's newspaper press.[132] 'Mr Porcupine' wrote critically and at length about all aspects of the art and craft of journalism, as practised both locally and nationally.[133] He wrote about the 'inferiority in every respect … of our own local newspapers' and accused them of lacking 'originality and enterprise'.[134] He took delight in facetiously monitoring the competition between the city's dailies and regularly charged them with scurrility, irresponsibility, bias and puffery.[135] He also accused them of poaching from the *Porcupine* and routinely took credit for having persuaded them to pick up an issue or cause. 'Mr Porcupine' regarded the local "fourth estate" as part of the problem of

[130] E.g. *Street's List of Newspapers*, p. 21.
[131] 'The Courier Does A Whopper', *Porcupine* (4 May 1861); 'The "Mercury" Does Something To Be Ashamed Of', *Porcupine* (15 June 1861); 'The Daily Post Does a Puff', *Porcupine* (21 March 1863);
[132] 'Our Family Paper and Its Family Principles', *Porcupine* (19 April 1862).
[133] E.g. 'Types of the Press', *Porcupine* series beginning 5 July 1862.
[134] 'Our Daily Papers: What they Are and What they Ought to Be', *Porcupine* (7 April 1866).
[135] E.g. 'The Battle of the Dailies', *Porcupine* (17 and 24 May 1862).

poor governance, rather than as part of the solution. The conclusion to be drawn from all of this is that although the *Porcupine* shared some cultural space with other local publications in terms of content and – to a degree – style, it did not sufficiently encroach upon their specialisms to threaten or be threatened by them. On the contrary, it continued to flourish as one of a kind.

CONCLUSION

By comparing and contrasting the *Porcupine* with its local, provincial and metropolitan equivalents, and clarifying its genealogy, this chapter has begun to evaluate the publication's significance. On balance, Shimmin's journal was more typical than atypical of its genre, and slots unproblematically (in its first decade, at least) into the broad comic periodical category. Yet those features which set it apart from its local and metropolitan comparators and competitors, not least its earnest missionary purpose and its conscious rejection of illustration, enabled it to carve out a standalone identity. Whilst inspired by (early generation) *Punch*, there is little evidence that the *Porcupine* merely sought to emulate the great original. The Liverpool journal co-existed quite comfortably with metropolitan "rivals" such as *Fun* and *Tomahawk* and catered to a different audience to its provincial comparators. That the journal was unique in the Mersey town, batting off any competition which arose, might be seen as both a cause and effect of its success in reaching and retaining a readership other publications could not. It also goes some way towards proving the journal's significance, as a platform and conduit for public discourse in mid-century Liverpool and beyond.

It follows that the *Porcupine* lends itself to additional, sometimes alternative, interpretations of print culture, provincialism and practical politics - as well as epitomizing such Victorian ideals as opportunity and success - in the historiography of nineteenth-century Britain. Whilst the contextualised text does not confound the received wisdoms, it serves to challenge some assumptions and to cast new light upon others. John Churchill Brenan was quite correct to describe it as 'perfectly original notwithstanding'. The human source of that originality is explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Victorian Power Matrices (Or: The Art of Social Networking)

Mapping the Men Behind the *Porcupine*

> The "free-lance" style of criticism on all subjects which was from the first adopted, and the miscellaneous range of its writing, enlisted contributors of all ranks and conditions, and of all opinions. Perhaps no journal in this or any other town has had in its time so many contributors. There is scarcely a public man of any mark in the town who has not in his turn been on the list.[1]

Consistent with the quadripartite model set out in the introduction, this chapter focuses upon authorship. For most scholars, the profile of the Liverpool *Porcupine* in its prime has been synonymous with that of Hugh Shimmin. Certainly, the popularity and longevity of the *Porcupine* was both a cause and effect of Shimmin's growing public profile within the town and vice-versa. He became the public face of the *Porcupine* and the journal, his local trademark: 'As people pointed him out to each other, they said, not "There's Shimmin," but "There's Porcupine".'[2]   However, the *Porcupine* was at no point owned by Shimmin alone. Nor was the journal's very first editorial leader, which established 'Mr Porcupine's' voice, written by him.[3]   As Chapter Two began to chart, from its planning, through its launch and during its long life, the *Porcupine* was a collaborative effort, underpinned by a complex associational culture. Class and party blind, it acted as a facilitator and hub, bringing together creative minds, encouraging the cross-fertilisation of views and serving as a platform for performed townology.

Nineteenth-century Britain was a 'journalising society'.[4]   There were initially no fixed roles and anyone could dabble, in that transitional period between journalism as a "cottage industry" and journalism as a commercial industry proper. As *Fraser's Magazine* observed

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[1] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[2] 'The Late Hugh Shimmin', *Argus* (18 January 1879).
[3] 'Mr Porcupine Comes of Age', *Porcupine* (3 April 1880).
[4] S. Bennett in J. Don Vann and R. T. VanArsdel (eds), *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1978), p. 21.

in 1847, 'barristers with scarce briefs, physicians with few patients, clergymen on small livings, idle women, rich men, and a large crop of aspiring noodles; the professional authors formed but a small item in the sum total'.[5] Many 'journalists' were moonlighting printers, writers, orators, proto social scientists, dramatists, litterateurs, reformers, preachers, poets or politicians. Those who wrote journalistically for a living tended to do so prolifically, contributing freelance copy to a wide variety of publications. The *Porcupine's* motley assortment of contributors epitomised this trend. Identifying Shimmin's collaborators poses a challenge but it is possible to create an impressionistic profile of the men (and it was almost entirely men) behind the *Porcupine*. This is a worthwhile exercise for two reasons. Firstly, as Joel H. Wiener put it, it is 'imperative to become more knowledgeable about the human element behind journalism'.[6] In a sectoral form of history from below, we need to know more about the 'lesser known figures' of journalism and the unsung role they played, in their thousands, in modernising and democratising society. Secondly, intellectual history (including the history of opinion) and political history - Establishment, elitist history - have tended to focus upon the authorised, self-referential and self-reinforcing "great and good" figures of the past, thereby neglecting the endeavours and achievements of lesser known but potentially significant individuals or cohorts.[7] Interest in so-called submerged histories has grown, but qualitative judgements are still made and the tendency persists to assume that those individuals whose stories have not been passed down must have been inconsequential 'bit part players' in the grander historical narrative. By gleaning some rudimentary information about the forgotten characters who played a role in Liverpool's nineteenth-century press culture, this chapter demonstrates how it is possible to enhance our understanding of how influence was peddled and public opinion shaped, and by whom, during the period.

The *Porcupine* was greater than the sum of its parts. Press networking in the nineteenth century had a vital, self-sustaining dynamism of its own, 'the professional writing life [of the journalist] … made possible through intricate networks of writers, editors, publishers and academics'.[8] After having identified some of the men behind the *Porcupine*, this chapter turns to the methodology of prosopography to negotiate the concept of networking as a discursive process and that of networks, as social and cultural "anatomies" of society. Drawing upon the 'materialist and historically specific' analysis of literary and media

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[5] 'The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* (March 1847).
[6] J. H. Wiener, 'Sources for the Study of Newspapers', in Brake et al (eds), *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 163.
[7] Kitson Clark, *Making of Victorian England*, p. 18.
[8] J. Shattock, 'Professional Networking, Masculine and Feminine', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2011), p. 128.

theorist Friedrich Kittler, Laurel Brake has outlined various methods of research into journalism networks: people-centred or biographical approaches; genealogical approaches (family dynasties, for example); approaches based upon publishing and/or printing empires; and approaches based upon the relation of proprietors to institutions such as political parties, religious groups or publishing houses. The *Punch* "brotherhood" is a prime example.[9] *Fun's* network has also been studied.[10] The *Porcupine's* contributors, too, belonged to a complex matrix of interpersonal connections, theatrical, literary, religious, social, geographical and political.[11] The case for the adoption of digital network theory and techniques in historical research as 'a particularly fruitful way to generate new insights and questions' has been eloquently made.[12] By employing the theories and methodologies of Social Network Analysis (SNA) to map the connections and affinities between the journal's creators, what follows contributes to the developing historiography of how connections between individuals, titles, interest groups and institutions related to society and culture, generally, and to the flourishing periodical press, specifically, during the Victorian period.

MANY 'MR PORCUPINES'

Contemporaries believed that anyone who was anyone in Liverpool wrote for the inclusive and eclectic *Porcupine* at some time.[13] It has been possible to identify in excess of fifty individuals who were involved in the *Porcupine* project, at some point, in some capacity, during its first two decades (Appendix 2). These ranged from metropolitan Bohemians to Liverpolitan "citizen journalists". They included jobbing writers, dramatists, playwrights and pantomime writers, poets, local and national politicians, diplomats, medical men and scientists, librettists, business- and tradesmen, humourists, lawyers, clerks, chartered accountants, architects and civil engineers. Many more contributors remain unknowable and it is *not* possible to calculate whether those identified represented 10%, 50% or more of the

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[9] Leary, *Punch Brotherhood*.

[10] E. S. Lauterbach, '"Fun" and its Contributors: The Literary History of a Victorian Humor Magazine' (Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1961).

[11] L. Brake, '"Time's Turbulence": Mapping Journalism Networks', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 2011), p. 115.

[12] R. Gould, 'Uses of Network Tools in Comparative Historical Research' in J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer (eds), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 242; C. Wetherall, 'Historical Social Network Analysis', *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 63, Supp. 6 (December 1998), pp. 125-44; D. Griffiths and P. Lambert, 'Applications of Social Network Analysis on Historical Data', University of Stirling (15 May 2013); 'Negotiating Networks: New Research on Networks in Social and Economic History', Institute of Historical Research (25 June 2018); Brake, '"Time's Turbulence"', p.117; *Visualizing Historical Networks*, Centre for History and Economics, University of Harvard, http://histecon.fas.harvard.edu/visualizing/index.html [accessed 1 November 2016].

[13] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).

total complement of contributors. The findings thus cannot be deemed in any way scientific, but they are still suggestive.

Shimmin cultivated an extensive team of freelancers, to whom he remained loyal.[14] According to 'Mr Porcupine', they repaid this with reliability: 'our contributors … know what we require and give it to us at a fair price'.[15] Contributions were also sought and submitted speculatively.[16] Non-attribution renders challenging any quest to identify a journal's contributors, much less to match them to individual articles. It caused confusion for contemporaries like Thomas Anderton: 'When [the Birmingham *Town Crier*] first appeared many were the guesses made as to its promoters and contributors, and, so far as these came to my knowledge, not one proved correct'.[17] In Liverpool, an indignant 'Mr Porcupine' warned 'boasters' not to exploit such confusion by laying false claim to being *Porcupine* contributors.[18] In 1871, it took solicitors some time to discover that Shimmin was not the author of a controversial piece over which their client was threatening to sue.[19]

Authorial anonymity was the default policy, at a time when 'intellectual bias against journalists' persisted.[20] It allowed unknowns to secure publication and protected contributors behind a shield of collective editorial responsibility. Yet it could also foster calumny and deprive writers of recognition. *Fun* wrote of Jeff Prowse, a *Porcupine* contributor: 'as an anonymous journalist he surrendered all share in the public repute won by his writings, which were indeed often attributed to others'.[21] The practice was increasingly questioned as the press industry professionalised and some of the jobbing journalists involved with the *Porcupine* project were not enamoured of it. When they launched a short-lived magazine in 1856, it was established policy that 'all the articles were to be signed by the authors'.[22] According to one of those involved, this had more to do with personal advancement than with the ideals of transparency and accountability: 'We agreed unanimously that anonymity was the bane of literature, and that, if we made no money by our venture, at least we would advertise our names'.[23] Shimmin was happy to respect the privacy of those who wrote for his journal by following convention: he 'used often

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[14] 'The Late Hugh Shimmin', *Argus* (18 January 1879).
[15] 'Astonishing Events in the "Porcupine" Office', *Porcupine* (3 September 1864).
[16] 'Notices to Correspondents', *Porcupine* (13 October 1860).
[17] Anderton, *Tale of One City*, p. 84.
[18] 'A Warning to Boasters', *Porcupine* (27 July 1861).
[19] 'Alleged Libel on the Birkenhead County Court', *Liverpool Mercury* (19 April 1871).
[20] Koss, *Rise and Fall*, p. 7.
[21] 'William Jeffrey Prowse', *Fun* (30 April 1870).
[22] Yates, *Recollections and Experiences*, p. 326.
[23] *Ibid.*

laughingly to say,' wrote a close colleague, 'that if he were to publish a schedule of his contributors, he would very soon set the whole town by the ears'.[24]

For the most part, articles went unattributed, writers using the third person plural or assuming the 'Mr Porcupine' persona. Some regular *Porcupine* contributors adopted *noms de plume* or generic pseudonyms: 'Bohemian', 'A Working Man', 'Our Loose Quill', 'A Poetic Town Councillor', 'Zoilus', 'A British Philistine'. Very occasionally, by-lines *were* provided. Notices for a future series of 'Porcupine Papers' in 1866 stated that these would be produced by eminent writers, and the *Porcupine* promoted the series by flagging an impressive twenty-six-strong 'List of Contributors already engaged' (Figure 4.1).[25] The first few articles were duly attributed. Just two were written by women. The 'Porcupine Paper' by-lines were abandoned, without explanation, less than half-way through the series. It may be that some of the flagged contributors did not subsequently deliver. What this fleeting glimpse into the journalistic practice of the paper confirms is that content of note ought not to be automatically attributed to Shimmin.

Figure 4.1
Notices, *Porcupine*, 14 April 1866 (top) and 19 May 1866 (bottom)

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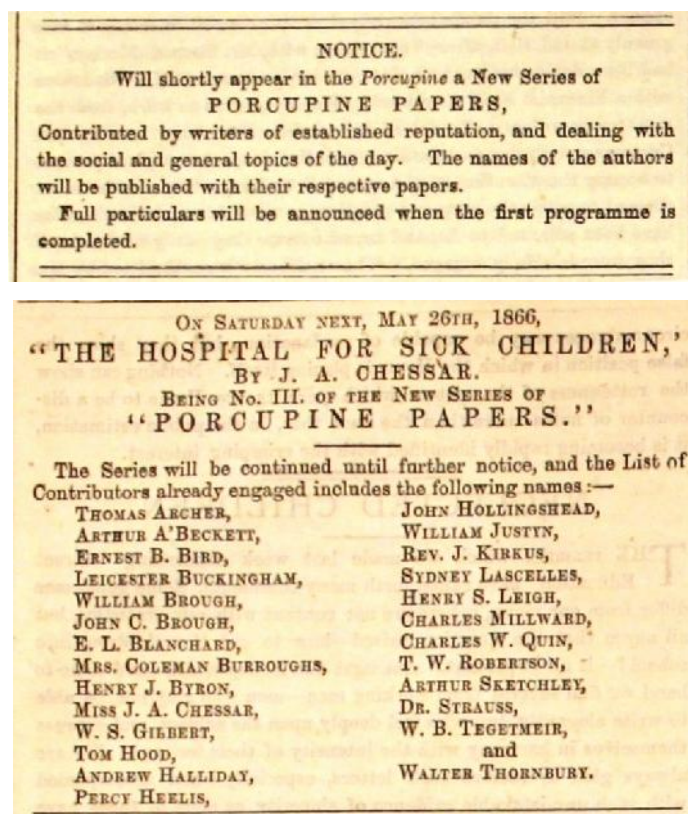
[24] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[25] Repeated notice, *Porcupine* (7 April 1866 - 28 April 1866).

One of the Porcupine Papers, 'Mrs Brown on Safe Investments', provides a typical example of the sometimes hidden connections between the London and provincial press. It was penned (under his pseudonym 'Arthur Sketchley') by the dramatist, novelist and general humourist George Rose, who was well connected in Bohemian circles. Rose was best known and celebrated for this fictional Mrs Brown creation and the humorous monologues he wrote (and performed around the world) in her idiom. An 'illiterate old woman of the lower middle class', who mused upon current affairs and described her ridiculous travels, the Mrs Brown persona was an unoriginal device - a variation on Dickens' Sarah Gamp - but proved to be tremendously popular with 'the masses'.[26] From May 1865 until his death in 1882, Rose produced scores of 'Mrs Brown' papers and 'novelettes', with titles such as 'Mrs Brown up the Nile' (1869) and 'Mrs Brown on Women's Rights' (1872), most of which first appeared in *Fun* and many of which were collected into thirty-two published volumes. The *Porcupine's* 'Mrs Brown' article represents an early example which appears to have been overlooked. For the Liverpool journal to feature its own, original 'Mrs Brown on…' piece was quite a coup.

MAPPING THE *PORCUPINE* NETWORK

The *Porcupine's* diverse team of contributors constitutes a first rate exemplar of Victorian press networks or journalism networks, social phenomena which Laurel Brake has synonymised as 'a range of connections', 'vistas of affiliation' and 'dynamic[s] of interlocking structures'.[27] The biographical details of the journal's known contributors reveal that they were all intricately connected via a complex web of personal, familial, institutional, ideological and/or professional ties. Social Network Analysis is a particularly appropriate means by which to study the Victorians. Social allegiances and alliances powered middle-class Victorian society. As Laura Kriegal has noted, 'instances of the word "network" conjuring a chain or system of interconnected things multiplied in the nineteenth century'.[28] Moreover, the parallels between conceptual and physical networks during the period are obvious, the exchange of ideas and opinion becoming more rapid and fluid as the century progressed, thanks to revolutionary developments in transport and communication technologies. As Tom Standage suggested in his history of the telegraph, this Victorian internet differed from its modern digital counterpart only in so far as it was based upon a

[26] W.C. M. Kent, 'Rose, George (1817-1882), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 49 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1900), pp. 230-1; K. Koenigsberger, *The Novel and the Menagerie: Totality, Englishness and Empire* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2007), pp. 32-5.
[27] L. Brake, '"Time's Turbulence"', pp.115-27; L. Brake, 'Victorian Networks and the Periodical Press', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Volume 22, Number 2 (Summer 2011), pp. 111-14.
[28] Kriegal, 'Looking Forward', p. 267.

more obviously visible web – of cables, wires, tracks and tubes.[29] Not only was Shimmin's journal the product of a matrix of social, cultural and political connections; in both content and style, it served as a thoroughly 'modern' networking platform in its own right. Series such as 'Our Telegraphic News' signalled 'Mr Porcupine's' embrace of the latest communications technology.[30] The long-running 'London Letter' feature - considered to be one of the journal's strengths - was a collaborative effort, cobbled together by up to a dozen correspondents in London and despatched to Liverpool, initially by post and later by wire. The short, interactive 'Notices to Correspondents' (a common press feature at the time) read like Victorian 'Twitter' postings.

Figure 4.2
'Porcupine People' Database

Data Values:

È   Name

È   Dates [Birth and Death]

È   Birthplace

È   Geographical Links [Lived/Worked/Played]

È   Education [Institution and/or Place]

È   Politics

È   Religion

È   Worked as … [Trade(s) and/or Profession(s)]

È   Interests

È   Theatre Links

È   Plays [Written/Performed/Produced]

È   Press Publications

È   Literary Projects [Other]

È   Friends/Colleagues/Collaborators

È   Clubland Connections

È   Pseudonym/Nickname/AKA

È   Father [Name and/or Profession] - *Class*

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[29] T. Standage, *The Victorian Internet: the Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-Line Pioneers*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 1998).

[30] 'Our Telegraphic News', running *Porcupine* feature during the 1870s.

The first Entity Relationship Diagram – or ERD - (Figure 4.3) focused upon spatial, locational or geographical networks. The *Porcupine* drew its 'townological' identity and strength from its local insight and analysis. Yet was it produced by *local* players? Whence came 'Mr Porcupine's' interests, information and influences? First birthplaces were mapped, followed by geographical links, both domestic and foreign, representing places where a given individual spent any significant amount of time, at educational institutions, at work or at play. The clustering clearly highlights the London connections. Almost a third of the identified contributors were born in the capital. An additional third studied or lived there in childhood and/or adulthood. All thus knew the city well and benefitted from its status as a commercial, political and intellectual hub. This is unsurprising; all roads have led to London since Roman times. Yet did it signal the cultural hegemony of London and the London literati during the mid-Victorian era? Was one of the keys to the *Porcupine's* success the fact that it was underpinned in its crucial early years by the metropolitan elite? Certainly, the journal's longstanding 'London Letter' feature (discussed later in this chapter), was held to be one of its draws. If so, this raises interesting questions about the London-centric worldview and London-centric media bias lamented in public discourse today.[31] Alternatively, the findings might be taken to support the theory that the provincial press could maintain its own agenda and authority, using London connections without becoming subservient to the capital. The *Porcupine's* contributors do not appear to have been preoccupied with London, not least because many of them were keen travellers or theatrical tourers, who knew the provinces. Those who studied the capital and wrote at length about it – John Hollingshead in *Ragged London* (1861) and *Underground London* (1862), Thomas Archer in *The Terrible Sights of London* (1870) and George Thornbury in *Old and New London* (1872), for example – were all Londoners born who wrote critically about the environment and society they knew best. The *Porcupine's* 'London Letter' betrays little sense of superiority on the part of its writers. Nonetheless, there was a contemporary sense of the great metropolis looking down upon the provinces and 'Mr Porcupine' defiantly challenged this.[32]

There were also more foreign links than had been anticipated, which debunks the myth of the *Porcupine* having been a doggedly parochial publication and throws up some interesting side questions about mobility and communications. A number of the journal's contributors were not only very well-travelled but experienced foreign correspondents. It is reasonable to assume that much of the coverage or analysis of foreign, military and diplomatic affairs

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[31] P. Atkins, 'Can we Make our Media Class Less London centric?', *Open Democracy UK* (9 May 2017).
[32] E.g. 'Jottings of a Liverpudlian in London', *Porcupine* (22 January 1876); 'London v. The Provinces', *Porcupine* (1 December 1877).

which appeared in the *Porcupine* was not filtered through the London prism (or later, news agencies) but came direct from those with interest and expertise. As has been noted, no national press, as such, existed during the mid-century; the London and the provincial press were quite separate and independent entities, with different loci and audiences.[33] Yet based upon the ERD and consistent with the proposition put forward in Chapter Two, it is reasonable to hypothesise that without the input of its London-based, cosmopolitan contingent, the *Porcupine* is unlikely to have survived beyond its first few years.

Figure 4.3
Sample *Porcupine* ERD 1: Geographical Networks

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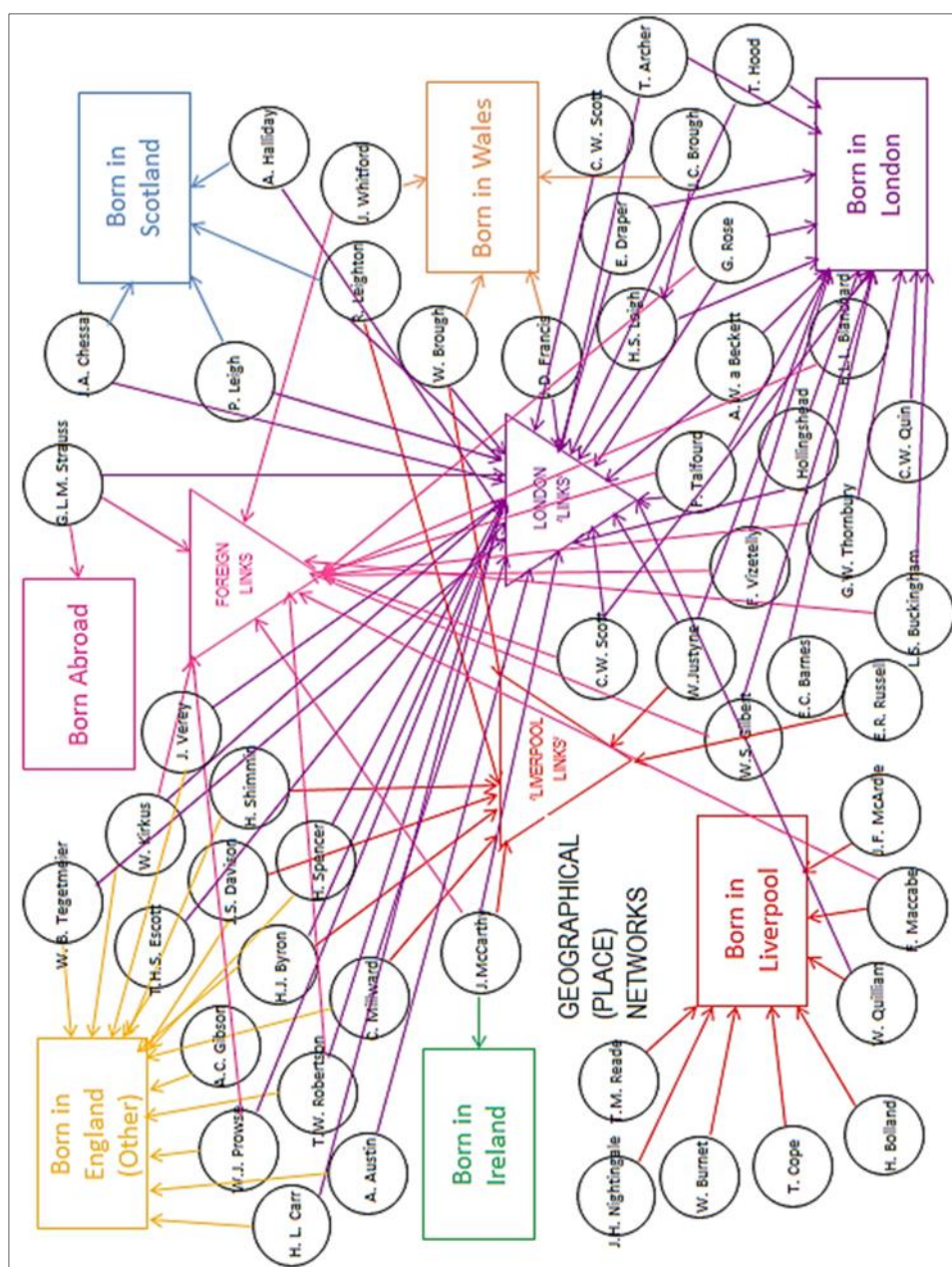
[33] Hobbs, 'When the Provincial Press Was the National Press', pp. 16-43.

The second ERD (Figure 4.4) focused upon the print press and culture. The first task was to map jobbing journalists connected with the *Porcupine*. Next were added their links with other so-called comic periodicals, then with mainstream periodical publications, and then with newspapers or journals considered culturally or politically significant. Finally, "clubland" connections were added, as this form of social and cultural "tethering" was tremendously important in nineteenth-century literary and political circles.[34]

Space limitations prevented the inclusion in this ERD of published texts, individually or collectively produced, which reveal a great deal about the range of talent and interest which lay behind the *Porcupine*, whilst highlighting the commonalities which characterised its creative community. A number of the *Porcupine's* contributors – Justin McCarthy, Thomas Archer, John Hollingshead, Andrew Halliday, Thomas H.S. Escott, Thomas Hood – worked professionally and prolifically as *auteurs* during their lifetimes. Leicester Buckingham's literary output included histories and geographies and Henry Sambrooke Leigh penned several volumes of verse. Robert Leighton became a successful children's author. The canon of those who published just one or two works includes such diverse titles as *The Book of One Hundred Beverages* (Tegetmeier, 1851), *The Comic English Grammar* (Percival Leigh, 1852), *Life of J.M.W. Turner* (George W. Thornbury, 1861), *Paid in Full* (Henry James Byron, 1865), *The Wonders of Optics* (Charles William Quin, 1868), *The Practical Solution of the Great Sewage Question* (William Justyne, 1870) and *The Origin of Mountain Ranges* (Thomas Mellard Reade, 1886).

Dynamic partnerships bound these men personally and professionally together, constantly forging new relationships, reinforcing existing ones and creating opportunities for further shared ventures. As a young man, Andrew Halliday researched and wrote the 'Beggars' chapter in the 1861 volume of Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*.[35] Charles Millward collaborated closely with William Schenk Gilbert (of subsequent 'Gilbert and Sullivan' fame) and, in 1851, with Joseph Nightingale (see p.121). In 1870, John Cargill Brough and Thomas Archer together penned a drawing-room comedy entitled *An Eligible Situation*. Alexander Craig Gibson (1813-1874), Cumbrian doctor, geologist, folklorist and writer, wrote chapters on geology and mineralogy for Harriet Martineau's *Guide to the*

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[34] J. Hatton, *Clubland, London and Provincial* (London: J.S. Virtue and Co.,1890); W. C. Lubenov, *Liberal Intellectuals and Public Culture in Modern Britain, 1815-1914* (Woodbridge; Rochester, N.Y: Boydell, 2010), p. 105; B. Black, *A Room of His Own: A Literary-Cultural Study of Victorian Clubland* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012); A. Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in late-Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); S. Thévez, *Club Government: How the Early Victorian World was Ruled from London Clubs* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

[35] Halliday's 'bit of poetry' – 'Robin' - which appeared in the *Porcupine's* 1864 Christmas edition, received a decidedly ambivalent review in 'Mr Porcupine's' journal, when the verse later appeared in Halliday's 'Every Day Papers' compilation; see *Porcupine* (3 February 1866).

Lakes, published in 1855. Examples of wider artistic collaborations are discussed below. This associational culture saw the *Porcupine's* contributors also writing for its comparators and competitors in London, as well as for non-comic newspapers and periodicals. Arthur Gilbert à Beckett, for example, worked over time for *Punch*, *Tomahawk* and the *Glow-Worm* but also for the *Sunday Times* and the *Naval Military Magazine*.

Figure 4.4
Sample *Porcupine* ERD 2: Press and 'Clubland' Networks
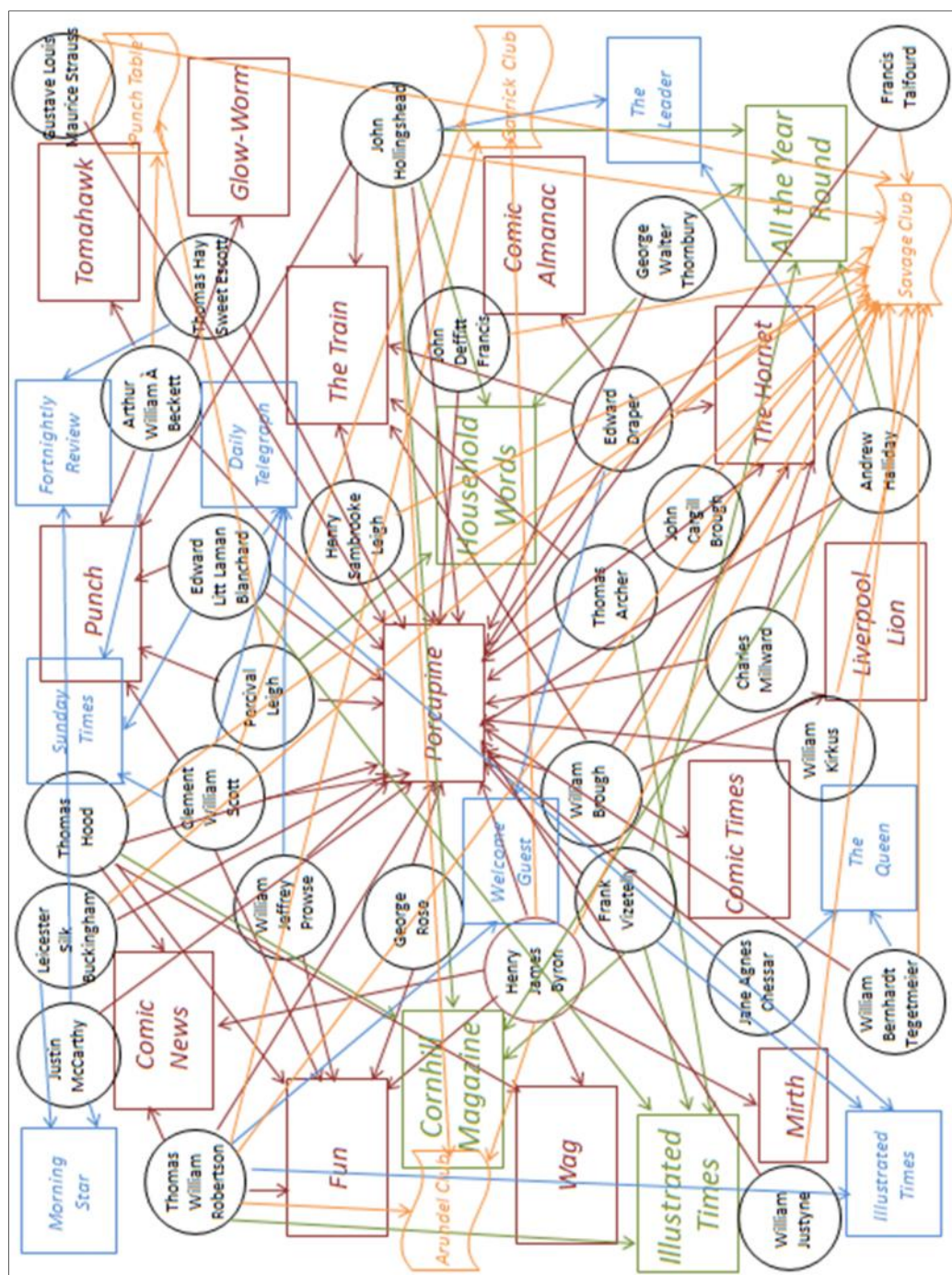
The SNA process revealed unexpected connections, direct or at a step removed, between *Porcupine* contributors and some of the century's greatest thinkers and doers. Edward Russell, Justin McCarthy and Gustave Louis Strauss all came to know William Ewart Gladstone as a friend and/or political colleague and Thomas Archer wrote a biography of him. Thomas Mellard Reade and William Bernhardt Tegetmeier were associates of Charles Darwin. George Thornbury had ties with John Ruskin. He was also one of several *Porcupine* contributors – including Hollingshead, Halliday, Brough, Francis, Leigh and Nightingale – to know Charles Dickens. Clement William Scott married into the du Maurier family and counted Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw amongst his acquaintance.

Patrick Joyce wrote about the city as 'a place of free circulation'.[36] The *Porcupine* network represents an imagined urban community, independent in itself of geography, which circulated ideas within and between cities. The linkages depicted indicate direct, confirmed connections, and provide a clear idea of the extent to which mid-Victorian journalists – from lowbrow hacks to highbrow litterateurs – relied upon shared interests and support networks. They also hint at the negotiation and transference of power, influence and opportunity within the field of periodical writing. The sheer messy complexity of this information circuit speaks for itself, indicating the rich cross-fertilisation of knowledge, talent and ideas, of which the *Porcupine*, as the common denominator, was a conduit and happy beneficiary.

Elizabeth Williamson observed that digital analysis has the potential to 'churn out new angles and a new approach, or promote for further study aspects that previously had seemed marginal, or had been hidden entirely'.[37] Working up network visualisations for the *Porcupine* duly exposed commonalities and differences which might otherwise have been overlooked. Through systematically entering the dates of birth of the known *Porcupine* contributors, for example, it emerged that the vast majority of the journal's known writers had been born within just five years of each other, signalling a clear generational network and all that this might imply in terms of shared influences and values, experiences and opportunities, within the broader framework of the nineteenth-century mind-set.[38] Logging and mapping the known religious affiliations of each member of the *Porcupine* brotherhood, for the purpose of examining 'faith networks' (if any existed), revealed that a noticeable proportion were converts to Roman Catholicism. This may or may not be significant but it is an example of one aspect which may well merit further investigation, particularly in light of

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[36] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 14

[37] E. Williamson, 'Networks, Case Studies and the Big Picture: Some Reflections', *Early Modern News Networks*, 31 August 2013, https://earlymodernnewsnetworks.wordpress.com/2013/08/31/networks-case-studies-and-the-big-picture-some-reflections/.

[38] W.E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1957); Grisewood, *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*.

Liverpool's sectarian character during the period, set against the *Porcupine's* notably non-factional coverage of politico-religious affairs.

The data manipulation process also confirmed that the *Porcupine* was the product of a large thespian network, a cause and effect of strong links to the leading theatres in both London and Liverpool. The contribution of dramatists to the journal, though not necessarily on theatrical subjects, was extensive. This was entirely typical: modern scholars have recognised that 'an astonishingly high proportion' of satirical journalists were dramatists, 'though mercifully comic journalism is a good deal better than Victorian stage comedy, suffering as both do from formula-writing'.[39] Virginia Berridge noted that the 'language of political discourse' in *Reynold's Weekly* (1850-1900) was 'similar to that in theatre and popular fiction'.[40] Popular journalism in the nineteenth century – satirical journalism in particular – moved into the space formerly occupied by other cultural forms, thus representing an important shift in discourse platforms. The press publication – the journal or newspaper – became a choice of expression. By 1886, creatives appreciated the potential of this blossoming popular medium to 'exert a far more extended influence than was ever possible to theatrical performances … People go to them [newspapers] for the peculiar fun and pasquinades that once were to be had in greatest perfection in the theatre'.[41] This observation is doubly pertinent to the present research. Firstly, because it provides further confirmation that the *Porcupine* conformed to generic type. Secondly, because this study is concerned with studying the *Porcupine* not as an arts review but as running social and political commentary. What sense to make of political reportage and analysis provided by a cohort of artistes acting as self-appointed arbiters of public opinion? A vested interest group? An awkward squad of Bohemian oppositionists? Getting at the truth of this is crucial to assessing the import of the *Porcupine's* content.

THE SAVAGE CLUB, THE LONDON LETTER AND THE WIDER WEB

> a centre for intercommunication of thoughtful minds, and to offer the example … of
> brotherly love and mutual assistance among the members of the literary profession.[42]

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[39] Ellis, 'Dramatist and the Comic Journal', 1968; Pearsall, *Collapse*, p. 160.
[40] M. Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers: Socio-Historical Perspectives* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 87; citing V. S. Berridge, 'Popular Journalism and Working Class Attitudes 1854-1886: A Study of Reynold's Newspaper, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper and the Weekly Times' (PhD Thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 1976).
[41] Pennell, 'Modern Comic Newspaper'.
[42] 'The Savage Club', *Register of Facts and Occurrences Relating to Literature, the Sciences, and the Arts* (July 1861), p. 17.

'Mr Porcupine' was keen to announce, in his inaugural issue, an illustrious 'literary staff' comprising John Hollingshead, Leicester Buckingham, William Brough, Francis Talfourd, Henry Byron and other 'well known essayists, poets and wits'.[43] The mid-Victorians were not immune to celebrity culture and early reviewers of the fledgling comic periodical picked up on these names, as intended.[44] Spencer L. Eddy, writing about the founding of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, pointed to the success of a magazine 'depending upon … a famous literary personage in the editorial chair'.[45] The 'cachet' of such an editor would attract 'a superior class of writers'.[46] Shimmin, as editor, was not publicly known but many of his leading launch contributors were and there is no doubt that these brought a measure of credibility to the provincial journal in its vital early years. All of these named collaborators were members of the London-based Savage Club. At least a quarter of those identified as having contributed to the Liverpool journal belonged to this Bohemian fraternity, most coming to the *Porcupine* project with prior personal or professional links to Liverpool. The 'Savages' were judged by their literary peers to have brought talent and repute to Shimmin's paper: 'each contributed his quote to the weekly number, and of course this arrangement secured variety and freshness to the contents'.[47]

Founded in 1857 as a pub or salon network, and named after a 'shady, satirical poet' of the eighteenth century, the Savage Club comprised an exuberant band of talented young creatives.[48] By definition, they were not amateurs; membership was restricted to 'men who, as a profession, produce works in literature and art, and who, although even if not habitually and professionally engaged therein, have produced works of acknowledged merit'.[49] Most of them were already established, by 1860, as writers and/or performers; a snippet in the *Liverpool Mercury*, appearing in 1859, referred to William Brough as 'one of the celebrated Brothers, who have local as well as metropolitan fame'.[50] Regarding themselves as a 'goodly company, leading lights in the world of intellectual Bohemia', the Savages became famous in literature and the performing arts; their names, according to one former early member, as 'familiar as household words'.[51] From raffish beginnings, the Club grew in popularity, respectability and influence and by the 1870s was inviting high society to grand banquets in the capital.[52] The Prince of Wales attended at least one of these lavish events; his parents,

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[43] Editorial, *Porcupine* (6 October 1860).
[44] 'From Our Own Correspondent', *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser* (26 September 1860).
[45] Eddy, *Cornhill Magazine*, pp. 9, 19.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] P.V. Bradshaw, *Brother Savages and Guests* (London: W.H.Allen, 1959), p. 2.
[49] Watson, *Savage Club*, p. 33.
[50] 'Local Intelligence', *Liverpool Mercury* (9 March 1858).
[51] W. Jerrold (ed.), *A Savage Club Souvenir (*privately published, 1916), p. 10; 'The Savage Club at the Royal Amphitheatre', *Liverpool Daily Post* (7 August 1860); Watson, *Savage Club*, p. 33.
[52] 'The Savage Club at the Mansion House', *Observer* (7 March 1880).

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, 'honoured' at least one of the Savage's theatrical performances in London with their presence.[53]   William Gladstone dined with the Club in 1879. He recorded that the dinner went on for too long and 'the clouds of tobacco were fearful' but that the gathering was 'most interesting' and it 'was impossible to speak ill of so quick and sympathetic an audience'.[54]

Figure 4.5
'Members of The Savage Club', Liverpool, 1860. © National Portrait Gallery, London

Ten of the Savages pictured above contributed to the Porcupine*: Lionel Brough (1836-1909); William Brough (1826-1870); Leicester Silk Buckingham (1825-1867); Henry James Byron (1835-1884); Edward Draper; Andrew Halliday (1830-1877); John Hollingshead (1827-1904); Charles Millward (1830-1892); William Jeffrey Prowse (1836-1870); and William Bernhardt Tegetmeier (1816-1912).*

The early Savages were not motivated by money and status (and therefore "anti-types", in many respects, of the Victorian, male, middle-class ideal). Having rejected more traditional lifestyles and career routes, many of them spent their lives struggling financially (the finances of the Club itself were notoriously precarious).[55] Writing was, for them, a calling and the *Porcupine* one outlet amongst many for their artistic and intellectual expression. They came from across the political spectrum: Whigs and Tories, Radicals and

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[53] Watson, *Savage Club*, p. 41.
[54] P.J. Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 515.
[55] W. Jerrold, Introduction to *A Savage Club Souvenir*, pp. xi-xii; see also N. Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Conservatives.[56] The Savages were not particularly diverse from a socio-economic point of view, however. Although they were prepared to "slum it" for the sake of their art and ambition, they were middle-class and educated; few came from downtrodden circumstances. On the contrary, thanks to illustrious social, professional or family links, many of the Savages rubbed shoulders with some of the literary and political greats of the century. William Brough was brother-in-law to Trollope and counted Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton and Douglas Jerrold amongst his wedding guests in 1851.[57] Jeff Prowse, a close friend of Tom Hood (who became editor of *Porcupine's* "rival", *Fun*, in 1865), inherited his literary talent and tastes from his mother, an intimate of Keats. John Hollingshead wrote financial reform articles for William Gladstone's brother, counted Samuel Smiles amongst his personal friends and was mentored and employed by both Charles Dickens (on *Household Words*, later *All the Year Round*) and William Makepeace Thackeray (on the *Cornhill Magazine*).[58] Hollingshead was one of several *Porcupine* Savages to have become known as Dickens' 'Young Men' in the 1850s.[59]

This first generation of Savages shared multiple characteristics. None were, or were in a position to be, full-time satirists. This was the norm, according to Hannay in 1855: 'We have novelists, and essayists, and journalists, who are satirical; but where is our Satirist?'[60] Many of them were often reluctant jokers, 'professional humourists' with 'other strings to their bows', compelled by circumstance to produce laughs to order.[61] Some regretted or resented that this prevented them doing justice to their talents. It is indicative that 'Robert Brough compared his usual work to that of a shoemaker when he asked that his 1855 collection of satirical political parodies, 'Songs for the Governing Classes' (written 'in a Seasonable Spirit of "Vulgar Declamation"'), be taken more seriously than the burlesques and comic fiction by which he made his living'.[62]

Gilbert Cannan proposed that the satirist, a 'literary adventurer', was essentially a failed or disillusioned poet, 'condemned … to a prosaic use of his art'.[63] There may be some truth in this. Yet those Savages who wrote for the *Porcupine* were not bitter, and Paul Menair's suggestion that hard-pressed 'Bohemians' did not identify with or express comradeship with

[56] 'The Savage Club', *Register of Facts and Occurrences*, p. 17.
[57] 'Brough Souvenirs', *Liverpool Daily Post*, reprinted in *The Musical World* (2 April 1870).
[58] J. Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, Vol.I (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1895), p. 72; J. Hollingshead, *Ways of Life* (London: Groombridge, 1861).
[59] P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men': George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates, and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1997).
[60] J. Hannay, *Satire and Satirists* (New York: Redfield, 1855), p. 228.
[61] Pearsall, *Collapse*, p. 160.
[62] Gray, 'Uses of Victorian Laughter', p. 159.
[63] Cannan, *Satire*, pp. 11-56.

the working poor was a little harsh.[64] The Savages were kind, compassionate and socially conscious men. They routinely put on fund-raising performances, 'ever ready in the good cause of lessening others' ills'.[65] The well-received show they put on in Liverpool in 1860 was in aid of the widow and children of their recently deceased fellow Savage, Robert Brough.[66] In 1862, at the height of the Lancashire Cotton Famine, the Savages arranged, 'at their own expense, to play in Manchester and Liverpool for the benefit of the fund for the relief of the unemployed cotton operatives'.[67] One local paper noted with approval their 'liberality'.[68]

Many individual *Porcupine* Savages took an active interest in the "condition of the people". *England's Workshops*, an earnest investigation into working conditions in mills and factories around the country, published in 1864, was researched and written collaboratively by Strauss, Quin, Brough, Archer, Tegetmeier and Prowse, *Porcupine* contributors all.[69] John Hollingshead, one of the most overtly political of the Savages, became known for his philosophical Radicalism, his support for the principles of Mill and Bentham and his admiration for John Bright.[70] As a young man inspired by the social investigators of the day, as well as by Dickens, he sought through his writing to expose the plight of the poor and downtrodden. As a staff member of *Punch*, Hollingshead wrote 'chiefly on the subject of social reform'.[71] In 1846, he wrote 'Saturday Night in London' for *Lloyd's Entertaining Journal* and his sketch of city life entitled 'Poor Tom, a city weed' appeared in Dickens' *Household Words* in 1857. A series of *Morning Post* articles – 'London Horrors' – was republished as *Ragged London in 1861*. Most of the fourteen articles collected as *Rubbing the Gilt Off* dealt (according to a Hollingshead who sounded conspicuously like 'Mr Porcupine') with 'political and social questions, from my point of view; and their collective title … is given to them because their design is to strip away shams and abuses [which] look dignified and imposing from the outside'.[72]

[64] P.D. Menair, 'Savages in the City: British Bohemia and the Ideal of Artistic Squalor, 1840-1870' (PhD Thesis, B.A. Weslyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, US, 1987), p. 9.

[65] 'The Savage Club at the Royal Amphitheatre', *Liverpool Daily Post* (7 August 1860); 'The Cavern Scene in the Burlesque of "The Forty Thieves," Performed at the Lyceum Last Week by the Savage Club', *Illustrated London News* (17 March 1860).

[66] 'Forthcoming Performance by the Savage Club', *Liverpool Daily Post* (21 August 1862).

[67] 'Theatre Royal, Liverpool', Programme (23 September 1862).

[68] 'Forthcoming Performance by the Savage Club', *Liverpool Daily Post* (21 August 1862).

[69] Notes and Queries review cited in *The Bookseller* (31 March 1864).

[70] Anon., *Cartoon Portraits and Biographical Sketches of Men of the Day* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1873), pp. 46-7.

[71] Price, *History of Punch*, p. 368.

[72] J. Hollingshead, *Rubbing the Gilt Off: A West End Book for All Readers* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1860), pp. xi-xii.

The early history of the Savage Club has been well documented and biographies, autobiographies and memoirs exist for many of those Savages connected with the *Porcupine*.[73] Through such sources, a profile emerges of a certain 'type'. Talented, prolific, and progressive, these were men for whom, as Charlotte Brontë put it, 'conventionality [was] not morality'.[74] Most were natural born satirists, well-equipped intellectually, temperamentally and creatively to meet the demands of the genre. According to his peer Aaron Watson, Jeff Prowse made 'no pretence of being more than a journalist, or, at the most, a magazine writer; but there was distinction, there was power, there was a fine feeling and large grasp of mind in all that he did'.[75] According to Pearsall, Percival Leigh had been 'intelligent and allusive, expecting scholarship in [his] readers… He was a character, and as Victorian journalism moved into the middle years characters were harder to come by'.[76] What all of these 'Mr Porcupines' had in common was intelligence, energy and a lack of deference. They were also, recognised some contemporaries, men who took discourse seriously: 'The Broughs … knew a play upon words was useless unless it conveyed a play upon ideas'.[77] That they were jobbing writers who struggled to eke out a living was no reflection of their talent but a fact of life at a time of pre-industrialised journalism.[78] *Fun* expressed regret that the able and creative Prowse had not been in a position to devote himself to literature.[79] Lord Acton's suggestion that the Savages were 'more or less' literary people 'not quite in Society' and their Club 'a sort of natural help society for men without careers', reveals more about his snobbery and wider Victorian attitudes to Bohemianism than about his subject.[80]

The Savages worked collaboratively. It is unusual to have a detailed account of the process of journalistic writing in relation to provincial periodicals in the mid-century and it is very fortunate that several consistent descriptions exist of the preparation of the *Porcupine's* 'London Letter', a weekly potted summary of developments and events in the capital described by contemporaries as 'the first of its kind', 'brilliant', the 'best London letter of all the provincial papers' and the source of the journal's widespread reputation.[81] Athol Mayhew described this longstanding feature as a 'concoction', in which 'a dozen Savages

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[73] J.E. Muddock, *Pages from an Adventurous Life* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1907); Watson, *Savage Club*; P.V. Bradshaw, *Brother Savages and Guests: A History of the Savage Club* (London: W.H. Allen, 1958); A. Halliday (ed.), *The Savage Club Papers* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867); E. A. Ward, *Recollections of a Savage* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1923); W. Jerrold, *A Savage Club Souvenir* (privately published, 1916); Hatton, *Journalistic London*, 1882.
[74] C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1847), Preface.
[75] Watson, *Savage Club*, p. 116.
[76] Pearsall, *Collapse*, p. 164.
[77] 'William Brough', *Orchestra* (18 March 1870).
[78] Watson, *Savage Club*, p. 2.
[79] 'William Jeffrey Prowse', *Fun* (30 April 1870).
[80] Lubenov, *Liberal Intellectuals*, p. 182.
[81] Watson, *Savage Club*, pp. 58-9; Millward, *Myself and Others*, p. 27.

would assist with an independent and not wholly relevant paragraph apiece'.[82]   One evocative account of how it was written appeared in 1889:

> Millward came in late, and said, "Boys, I've only an hour to catch the mail. Is there any news?" In a moment everybody took pencil and paper and began scribbling; Byron dashed off something piquant about the theatre; Tom Archer, an item of literary news; Tegetmeier, about a scientific discovery; Dr Strauss dotted down the exact strength of the Prussian army; Leigh contributed an epigram in verse; Halliday tore off the page of a letter just received from his brother, General Duff, then American Consul of Glasgow; Barnes and Francis made up a list of the most promising pictures for the coming exhibition of the Royal Academy; Edward Draper, a sketch of an Old Bailey trial; Archer, a report of the Crystal Palace concert; and in half an hour Millward and myself were driving to the Euston Station with a London letter, written by some of the cleverest men in the Metropolis, each an expert in the department about which he had contributed a paragraph. I have seen this done, not only once, but scores of times. It was one of the customs of the old Savage Club.[83]

Stephen Fiske, another Savage Club member, later added Tom Robertson, Andrew Halliday and Frank Vizetelly to the list of those involved in the ritual production.[84] When time permitted, Millward took the contributions home to edit, using his daughter Jessie as a scribe. 'How well I remember that "London Letter"!' she wrote:

> Like so many writing men, my father loathed the manual labour of pen and ink, and when I grew old enough he used me as an amanuensis. The political parts used to bore me to death, but I revelled in the work when we came to the theatrical criticisms.[85]

This patch-worked approach made for an eclectic mix of information and gossip, provided by 'experts'.[86] It confirms that Shimmin did not dictate to his London colleagues but trusted them to deliver. Indeed, he had no option but to do so, if he wished to keep these valuable collaborators on side.

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[82] Mayhew, *Jorum of 'Punch'*, p. 145.
[83] 'The Savage Club', *Star* (26 July 1889).
[84] Watson, *Savage Club*, pp. 58-9.
[85] J. Millward, p. 27.
[86] *Ibid.*

Figure 4.6
Extract from: 'Our London Letter', *Porcupine*, 25 October 1873

The Savage Club have again migrated to new premises, and this time I think they will be more than satisfied with their change of abode. They have secured a fine suite of rooms, with every possible convenience, at Evans's Hotel, over the famous "Evans's" rooms. The tariff is arranged on the most liberal scale with the proprietor of Evans's Hotel, and the "Savages" will now be enabled to have supper in their own rooms, in place of going to the "Albion" and other hostelries to meet each other after the theatres. The opening dinner took place last Saturday, upwards of eighty sitting down, with Andrew Halliday, the president, in the chair. During the dinner the president received a congratulatory telegram from Liverpool, signed by the secretary and other "Savages" exiled by duty to the banks of the Mersey.

The role of the Savages ought not to be overstated. An acquaintance of Shimmin was correct to assert that these 'intellectual young bloods … did much to float [the journal] on the tide of public favour' but there is evidence to suggest their involvement was ad hoc and limited, after the initial burst of promotional excitement.[87] Some contemporary reminiscences suggested the engagement of these 'founding' contributors was in fact fairly short-lived: 'it was first intended [the project] should be largely supported by metropolitan contributors. *This part of the scheme came to nothing* [*emphasis added*]...'[88] The London set 'dropped off, one by one' and several of the original Savage contributors died tragically young within a few years of the *Porcupine's* launch.[89] The 'London Letter' was produced into the late 1870s but individual Savage contributions do appear to have thinned out before then.

From the outset, 'Mr Porcupine' cast a wider net, attracting contributions from some of the most influential thinkers and respected creatives of the time. In February 1861, the journal gave advance notice of an article from 'our contributor, Mr. Herbert Spencer'.[90] The celebrated philosopher and polymath (1820-1903) wrote prolifically for provincial periodicals before he attained national recognition. The advertised article – 'Smothering a

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[87] 'The Late Hugh Shimmin', *Argus* (18 January 1879).
[88] 'Death of Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Post* (13 January 1879).
[89] 'The Late Hugh Shimmin', *Argus* (18 January 1879); See also 'Bonnie Bohemia', *London Society*, Vol. 29 (January 1876), p.24.
[90] 'A Note by Mr. Porcupine', *Porcupine* (23 February 1861).

Child' – was published two months later.[91] A future poet laureate, Alfred Austin, was just starting out when he contributed 'Phyrne' to the *Porcupine* in May 1864 and he would go on to pen additional poems for the journal. Two notable political *Porcupine* alumni were Justin McCarthy and Sir Edward Richard Russell. As a powerful journalist, national politician and Liberal historian, Irish-born McCarthy was to become 'one of the most useful and respected upholders of the liberal politics of the time'.[92] 'To "The Porcupine" I became a regular contributor in verse as well as in prose,' he wrote, 'and I continued to write for it after I had left Liverpool.'[93] McCarthy was proud to have belonged to the *Porcupine's* team of writers and in his dotage, referred to Shimmin as having been 'a very valued old friend of mine'.[94] London-born Russell achieved local renown as the longstanding editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*.[95] He was a friend of Gladstone and a Liberal Member of Parliament for a Glasgow seat from the mid-1880s. He came to move, like McCarthy, in the highest political circles. Russell, too, was an early regular contributor to the *Porcupine*. Yet another illustrious politically-motivated and -influential contributor was Member of Parliament Samuel Plimsoll, whose work is discussed a little later. He contributed copy to the journal in gratitude for its championing of his endeavours to secure shipping law reform.[96]

PERFORMED TOWNOLOGY: THE 'LOCAL' NETWORK

It has been noted how provincial periodicals, rooted in their locales, had their own unique strengths and features - were different from but not inferior to their metropolitan counterparts – and how Shimmin made a virtue and selling point of this.[97] A local network duly played an important role in ensuring the *Porcupine's* relevance, authority and credibility.

The journal was predominantly locally owned. Its three original co-proprietors, Hugh Shimmin, Charles Millward and Thomas Cope, personify its eclecticism. Shimmin would oversee the Liverpool end of the project. Liverpudlian-born Millward was something of a jack-of-all-trades: a roving 'journalist, actor, lecturer, author of pantomimes, and political agent' who combined entrepreneurial activity in London with writing scripts for regional

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[91] 'Smothering a Child', *Porcupine* (13 April 1861).
[92] 'Justin McCarthy' in *1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.17, 11th ed., Cambridge University Press, pp. 200-201.
[93] McCarthy, *Irishman's Story*, p. 115.
[94] McCarthy, *Irish Recollections* (New York and London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), p. 205.
[95] E.R. Russell, *'Personal Books' 1866-1893*, Liverpool Central Library Archives, 920 RUS/1-6.
[96] *Biograph and Review*, Vol. 4 (1880), p. 363.
[97] 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).

theatre.[98] He freelanced, for many years, for the *Liverpool Mercury*. A founding member of the Savage Club, Millward provided the continuous, most long-term link between Bohemian London and the Liverpool press and his connection to the *Porcupine* became known and celebrated over time.[99] The theatre was Millward's passion but he dabbled in a variety of commercial ventures, not least the business of tombstone masonry[100]. He was not a natural businessman and spent most of his life on the verge of penury. One contemporary summed him up as follows: 'a man of no particular talent, but of great resource and much adventurousness of spirit … It was Millward who kept the [Savage] Club so much to the front of Liverpool newspapers … He was one of those men who, most disadvantageously for themselves, combine literature with trade when their real bent is toward literature'.[101] Fame and fortune were to elude Millward.[102] In 1874, it was speculated that he was in the running to buy the *Hornet*, a satirical publication edited by Savage Club members Stephen Fiske and Henry S. Sampson (the latter would go on to become the editor of *Fun*, one of the *Porcupine's* most obvious comparators).[103] There is no evidence that Millward did subsequently buy the *Hornet* but the rumour is telling for what it reveals about the closeness of those involved in the comic periodical community. Millward continued to part own the *Porcupine* until the mid-1880s and to contribute copy until the end of that decade.

Thomas – 'Tom' – Cope was a different kind of character altogether. A local merchant prince (in tobacco manufacturing), he typified the wealthy man of means in the urban centre that was Liverpool. Like Shimmin, he was a Liberal, an education advocate and an active local philanthropist. An obituary notice published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1884 flagged up Cope's links with both a Liverpool Savage Club and the *Porcupine*.[104] A Liverpool Savage Club, co-founded by Lionel Brough, William Brough's brother, did exist in the 1860s (see Figure 4.7) but it appears to have been a loose social affiliation rather than a constituted organisation and - unlike imitation Savage Clubs elsewhere - it fizzled out following Lionel Brough's departure for London.[105] There is evidence of Cope having been more than a mere sleeping partner in the *Porcupine* project; one local paper suggested that he

[98] Millward. *Myself and Others*, p.27; W. Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, Vol. II, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd, 1900), pp. 92-3.

[99] 'About Town', *Sporting Times: A Review of Racing, Literature and Drama* (18 January 1873).

[100] T. Caitling, *My Life's Pilgrimage* (London: John Murray, 1911), p. 438.

[101] Watson, *Savage Club: a Medley*, p. 98.

[102] Tinsley, *Random Recollections,* pp. 92-3.

[103] 'London Gossip', *Irish Times* (9 December 1874).

[104] 'Death of Mr. Thomas Cope', *Pall Mall Gazette* (19 September 1884).

[105] 'Dramatic and Musical Chronology', *Era* (5 January 1868); '"Au Revoir" to "Uncle Lal"', *Pall Mall Gazette* (31 July 1889); J. Johnson, 'Laughter and the Love of Friends: a Centenary History of the Melbourne Savage Club 1894-1994 and a History of the Yorick Club 1868-1966', Melbourne Savage Club (1994); see also 'A Liverpool Savage Club?!' *Porcupine* Revisited, 15 June 2016, http://victorianpress.wixsite.com/liverpoolporcupine/single-post/2016/06/15/A-Liverpool-Savage-Club.

wrote extensively for the publication, during his association with it.[106]   Cope used this experience to later found a company magazine, *Cope's Tobacco Plant*.

Figure 4.7
The Liverpool Savage Club, *Liverpool Mercury*, 18 December 1863

Many additional local voices rang out through the *Porcupine's* pages, ranging from experienced litterateurs to amateur "citizen journalists". According to several contemporary sources, John Francis McArdle was the journal's main literary humourist, and reportedly responsible for much of its enduring 'incisive style'.[107] He worked closely with Shimmin, employed for a time as his 'working editor'.[108] The Irish-Liverpudlian, born in 1841, fitted the profile of the *Porcupine* writer very well. Well-known in his day and described by one theatre critic as 'a clever and versatile author', McArdle penned provincial pantomimes, sketches, lyrics and musical scores.[109] There was much more to this genial playwright than mere entertainment for entertainment's sake, however. Links between Victorian pantomime and regional identity and politics have recently been explored and McArdle, whose work has been described as 'satirical', serves as an example.[110] He was 'a brilliant (jobbing) journalist' who, steeped in radical Irish roots, wrote on a wide range of subjects in a wide range of forums, including the Irish Nationalist weekly newspaper, *The Nation*.[111] McArdle worked for the local *Liberal Review* on topical subjects such as medical provision.[112] In 1873, he published a *Catechism of Irish History*. He wrote the lyrics to 'When the Pigs Begin to Fly', a 'comic song related to women's rights', published in Liverpool circa 1875

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[106] 'The Late Mr. Thomas Cope, J.P.', *Liverpool Mercury* (19 September 1884).

[107] Mayhew, *Jorum of Punch*, p. 144.

[108] 'John Francis McArdle', *Biograph and Review* (1880), p. 362.

[109] C. E. Pascoe, *Dramatic Notes: An Illustrated Handbook of the London Theatres* (London: David Bogue, 1879), p. 257; R. J. Broadbent, *Annals of the Liverpool Stage* (Liverpool: Edward Howell, 1908), p. 296.

[110] J. Davis (ed.), *Victorian Pantomime: A Collection of Critical Essays* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); J. A. Sullivan, *The Politics of the Pantomime: Regional Identity in the Theatre, 1860*-1900 (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press and Society for Theatre Research, 2011).

[111] J. Denvir, *The Life Story of an Old Rebel* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1910), pp. 10-26.

[112] 'A Patient in Search of a Doctor', *Liberal Review (*July-September 1872).

and his anti-war song 'By Jingo' (circa 1877, first published in the *Porcupine*) proved popular and enduring.   An article McArdle wrote for the *Era Almanack* in 1877, an exuberant tongue-in-cheek treatise on dramatic theory, stands as testament to his literary range and facility.[113] A curious news item from 1881, describing how McArdle had been charged with threatening to shoot a theatre manager over a perceived professional grievance, is suggestive of the archetypal bohemian, with a fiery temper and a propensity to drink.[114] The *Owl's* obituary to McArdle respectfully played this down, depicting a man of considerable intellectual and creative talent.[115]

Henry Bolland represents a far more staid example of the local *Porcupine* journalist. A respected pillar of the community, he worked for many years as a chartered accountant in the bankruptcy court. He became recognised as an expert in insolvency law and in 1869, produced a guide to the then new Bankruptcy Act.[116] Bolland wrote as a kind of 'specialist correspondent', typifying the 'pioneering' freelance approach adopted by the journal.[117] Another example of how Shimmin commissioned work from experts is a series of thirteen forthright articles, appearing under the heading 'The Architecture of Liverpool' between 1865 and 1866.   These and other series were penned by Thomas Mellard Reade, an esteemed, award-winning Liverpool architect, geologist and civil engineer.[118]

Other local characters known to be closely involved in the *Porcupine* project epitomise the multi-tasking, energy and versatility of press contributors during the period, whilst highlighting the smallness of the cultural milieu they inhabited. Joseph Henry Nightingale, for example, was a Liverpool-born journalist and farce-writer. He was also partner in Lee and Nightingale, 'advertising agents, newspaper correspondents and printers', a company which lasted well into the twentieth century. Few traces of Nightingale remain but it is known that as early as 1851, he produced a one-act farce, *Bloomerism: or The Follies of the Day*, with his old friend and colleague, Charles Millward.[119] Nightingale corresponded with Charles Dickens.[120]   Successful and well-known in local social circles, he was one of Dickens' Liverpool acquaintances.

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[113] 'A Nasological Drama', *Era Almanack* (1877), pp. 30-31.
[114] 'Threatening to Shoot', *Birmingham Daily Post* (4 January 1881).
[115] 'La Podrida', *Owl* (2 March 1883).
[116] 'The New Bankruptcy Act', *Liverpool Mercury* (16 August 1869).
[117] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[118] C.N. Reilly to A. L. Reade, 1928, in 'The Works and Papers of Aleyn Lyell Reade', University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives, ALR.B.4.11; H.B.W. 'T. Mellard Reade', *Nature*, 80 (3 June 1909), p. 404.
[119] J. Nightingale and C. Millward, *Bloomerism: or The Follies of the Day* (London: National Acting Drama Office, 1851).
[120] G. Storey (ed.), *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, Vol 12: 1868-1870 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 345, 415, 511.

As an incubator of talent and a training ground in independent thought, the *Porcupine* acted as a stepping stone into literary or journalistic pursuits for many young men. This was recognised; an 1898 advice guide for aspirant young writers suggested they try submitting work to periodicals such as the *Porcupine*, the *Manchester Spy* or the *Birmingham Owl*.[121] Under Shimmin in the mid-1870s, Robert Leighton 'learnt the arts of book-binding and printing, and he is among the few persons who can make a book from beginning to end – that is to say, can himself write, print, and bind it'.[122] Leighton became a journalist, editor and successful writer of fiction for the young. He also worked later on the *Daily Mail* for Lord Northcliffe, the 'Original Press Baron' and a high profile proponent of the New Journalism.[123] As a young man born into a wealthy, watch-manufacturing Methodist family of Manx heritage, William Henry Quilliam worked on the *Porcupine* to help fund his legal studies. It was, wrote a modern biographer, an 'experience that was to stand him in good stead throughout his life'.[124] Quilliam converted to Islam in 1887, eventually became 'the Sheikh of Islam in Great Britain', and founded the country's first official mosque in Liverpool. He used the journalistic skills acquired at the *Porcupine* to produce his own highly successful weekly publications during the 1890s and 1900s, *The Crescent* and *Islamic World*.[125] Both of these served as vehicles to promote Islam.

A further example of the *Porcupine's* more 'exotic' and consequential known contributors is trader John Whitford who, in the mid-1870s, sent the *Porcupine* dispatches from Africa. These first-hand accounts of his experiences were collated and published as *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa*.[126] Whitford explained in his preface that he had decided to republish the articles due to popular demand: 'so many readers, in various parts of the world … requested the whole to be reprinted'.[127] This suggests something about the reach of the *Porcupine*, although allowances must be made for exaggeration for marketing purposes. *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa* was republished in 1967 and Antony Hopkins' introduction to the second edition highlighted both the historical uniqueness and significance

[121] L. Wagner, *How to Publish a Book or Article, and How to Produce a Play: Advice to Young Authors* (London: G. Redway, 1898), p. 157.
[122] 'Some of our Own Writers: Robert Leighton', *Kind Words for Boys and Girls* (undated), pp. 20-21.
[123] W. R. Hall Caine, *Lancashire: Biographies & Rolls of Honour* (London: Richard J. James, 1917) p. lx; A. Bingham, 'The Original Press Baron: The Role and Legacy of Lord Northcliffe', University of Sheffield, 2013, pp. 1-7.
[124] R. Greaves, *Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam* (Markfield: Kube Publishing, 2010).
[125] 'Quilliam, William Henry' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004-2014).
[126] J. Whitford, *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa* (Liverpool: The 'Porcupine' Office, 1877).
[127] *Ibid.*

of Whitford's writing and its relationship to the *Porcupine*.[128] Such was the calibre of writer Shimmin was able, at his most powerful and 'connected', to bring on board.

RE-READING SHIMMIN

It was to effective networking skills that Shimmin owed his gradual acquisition of power and influence. From an early age, he cultivated the contacts which would pave the way for his press career. Mixing in his late teens with educated and politically aware individuals at night school boosted his confidence, raised his awareness of the power of the written word and afforded him opportunities to try his hand at writing and speech-making.[129] The contacts made through his early forays into freelance journalism for Liverpool's *Mercury* and *Albion* newspapers introduced him to the creatives who would foster the founding of the *Porcupine*. His editorial role and attendant growing local profile led him, in turn, to associate with Liverpool's most powerful politicians, activists and reformers. This fed into his journalism in a virtuous circle of growing "insider" knowledge and influence.

Understanding Shimmin and accurately interpreting his motives matters. It is the difference between receiving a given *Porcupine* article as the idiosyncratic, unreliable product of resentment, envy or grievance, or as the legitimate communication of a considered set of values, ideas and arguments. It also forms a part of setting the record straight. Following Shimmin's death in 1879, the *Liverpool Lantern* was one of several local publications to hope that '[w]hen the municipal and social history of Liverpool comes to be written, it will be found that he played a prominent and important part in the events of his time, and his deeds will be appreciated when those of greater men have been forgotten'.[130] The *Lantern* hoped in vain. Shimmin has been misrepresented in the historiography. The impression which emerges is of a humorless and bitter man with an inferiority complex, whose journalistic writing was cynically sensational; who failed to go beyond mere description or to offer constructive criticism; and whose politics were the politics of personality, lacking any ideological basis. He is remembered as a "Mayhew-lite" social-investigative hack who lacked objectivity, originality and reliability, rendering any evaluation of his writing problematic and its historical significance, minimal.[131] Shimmin wrote, opine some modern scholars, 'as a conscientious, concerned, somewhat indignant observer', whose strength lay

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[128] J. Whitford, *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967).

[129] See 'Liverpool Mechanics' Institution', *Dublin Journal of Temperance, Science, and Literature*, Vol.II (1843).

[130] 'The Death of Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Lantern* (18 January 1879).

[131] Donovan and Rubery, *Secret Commissions*.

Figure 4.8
Unconfirmed photograph of Hugh Shimmin, discovered by the author, with two confirmed portraits for comparison, below[132]

'Mr Shimmin' [PG/8655/3902], undated
Image with kind permission of Manx National Heritage

Enlarged detail

'Hugh Shimmin'
Source: *Liverpool Review*, 18 January 1879
(very likely based on the photograph, right)
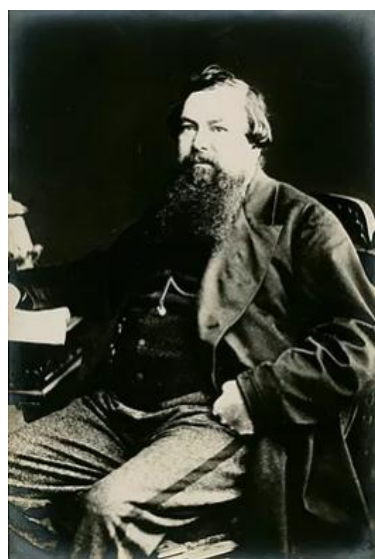
'Hugh Shimmin – seated at a desk' [PG/8068/10]
Provenance (photographer and date) unknown
(Image with kind permission of Manx National Heritage)

in the 'clarity' of his descriptions, not in 'sophisticated social analysis'.[133] His 'shortcomings as an observer, even more as a thinker' were 'profound'.[134] Historians of

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[132] For efforts to establish the provenance of the portrait and whether it did depict Hugh Shimmin, see 'A Minor "Forensic" Challenge: Can you help me?!', 25 March 2016,
http://victorianpress.wixsite.com/liverpoolporcupine/single-post/2016/03/25/A-Minor-Mystery-Can-you-help-me.
[133] C.R. Defonso, review of Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life* in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), p. 135.

Liverpool's *political* past have tended to downplay Shimmin's analysis, on the grounds that he was, at best, an unsophisticated commentator and, at worst, an indiscreet and touchy crank, motivated by personal pique. [135] One modern assessment, that Shimmin's 'main claim on our attention' was as 'a lively narrator of popular entertainments', was simply wrong.[136] In 2013, English and cultural history students in Liverpool, having studied an 1857 Shimmin article on 'Police, Prisoners and Prisons' during a visit to one of the city's former bridewells, peremptorily decided: 'We didn't take Shimmin's writings as authentic in its descriptions of the poor; rather the stories were sensationalised for the middle-class readership and reveal more about the values of the author than the inhabitants of the city slums'.[137] Such dismissiveness misrepresents Shimmin, who articulated a conscious determination to 'resist … the sensationalism of the world'.[138] It took no account of the more informed view of John Archer, who classed Shimmin amongst the most 'talented chroniclers of English urban working-class life in the 1850s' and argued that the same series of police articles constitutes 'the closest a twenty-first-century reader can get to police on duty in 1857, not just in Liverpool but in any other major city in the country'.[139] Indeed, Archer is one of very few modern historians to have proposed that Shimmin's opinions merit serious attention: 'His subjective viewpoint does not, for historians, invalidate him as an accurate historical source'.[140] The challenge for historical inquiry is to work through Shimmin's biases. The interesting historical question concerns the basis upon which he held them.

The local obituaries written for Shimmin suggest that his reputation requires some rehabilitation. By his staunchest admirers, Shimmin was recognised as 'one who has laboured hard, according to his lights, for the general good, having gradually fitted himself by self-cultivation for the function of public instructor, and made his way into the profession of literature by the sheer force of original merit and pungency as a writer on social subjects'.[141] Many years after his death, he was ranked alongside other local 'apostle[s] of light and leading … in this modern Tyre'.[142] People inevitably speak well of the dead but the eulogies for Shimmin were not simply hagiographies; a number of them sought to chart his biographical journey and to explain his psyche. They are revealing on several counts.

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[134] P.J. Waller, review of Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life* in *Urban History*, Vol. 19, Issue 2 (October 1992), pp. 302-3.

[135] White, *Corporation of Liverpool*; Searby, 'Electioneering in Lancashire', p.159; Collins, *Politics and Elections*, p. 104.

[136] A. Kidd, review of Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life* in *Social History*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (May, 1992), p. 383.

[137] McConnell and Matthews-Jones, 'Argyle Street Bridewell, 22 February 2013.

[138] Shimmin, *Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy*, p. 6.

[139] J.E. Archer, *The Monster Evil*, pp. 222-3.

[140] *Ibid.*

[141] 'Death of Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Post* (13 January 1879).

[142] 'Some Liverpool Men of Mark: Great Crusades Recalled. Fifty Years' Review', *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury* (10 April 1915).

Firstly, because they were so numerous, confirming that Shimmin was not a marginal figure in his day but a local celebrity. Secondly, because they came from across the political spectrum. Even Liverpool's Conservative *Courier* newspaper saw fit to write about him with respect and appreciation, acknowledging that he was, in his prime, a Liverpool notable: '[p]erhaps no man's name and figure were better known in Liverpool than those of Mr. Shimmin'.[143] Thirdly, because they often directly contradict some of the received wisdoms now embedded in the secondary literature. Much of the negativity and scepticism surrounding Shimmin appears to stem from reference to a fleeting exchange in 1868 between two of 'Mr Porcupine's' Liberal targets: '[Shimmin] is an encumbrance on our party – I wish he would go over to the other side'.[144] In citing this and further referring to Shimmin's supposed 'jealousy', 'vituperativeness', and 'many hatreds', Philip Searby fell into two methodological and interpretive traps: namely, the tendency to extrapolate reductive generalisations from single biased sources, and the uncritical acceptance of a standard contemporary response to satire: 'over and over again, Victorian reviewers and critics explained away satire by saying that the satirist was ill-natured'.[145] The writer and thinker William Hazlitt said of William Cobbett: 'He is made up of mere antipathies'.[146] According to one acquaintance, Shimmin made as many 'troops of friends' as he amassed enemies 'by the score'.[147] Like any self-respecting editor of a satirical journal, he divided contemporary opinion.[148]

As has been said of the admired Liverpolitan reformer William Roscoe before him, Shimmin rose from obscurity to work hard and with integrity, 'turning the whole force of his talents and influence to advance and embellish his town'.[149] The biographical details of Shimmin's formative years have been well-documented.[150] Born in 1820 on the Isle of Man but raised in Liverpool, he began life 'with no advantages of birth, fortune or education'.[151] His father, a stonemason by trade, was an alcoholic; his long-suffering and protective mother, a pious Wesleyan. One of Shimmin's jobs during his younger teenage years was rent collecting in Liverpool's slums. An apprenticeship introduced him to the world of bookbinding, printing

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[143] 'The Late Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Courier*, 13 January 1879.

[144] Correspondence: Alfred Billson to George Melly, 29 November 1868, Melly Family Papers, Liverpool Central Library Archives, 920 MEL; See: 'Mellyism', *Porcupine* (28 November 1868, 5 December 1868, 19 December 1868); '"Mellyism" in Parliament', *Porcupine* (20 March 1869).

[145] G. Kitson Clark, *Making of Victorian England*, pp. 1-27; Searby, 'Electioneering in Lancashire', p. 159; Loomis, 'Thackeray and the Plight of the Victorian Satirist', p. 3.

[146] W. Hazlitt, 'On the Character of Cobbett', *Table-Talk: Essays on Men and Manners* (1822).

[147] 'Death of Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Lantern* (18 January 1879).

[148] 'Notes and Queries Society and the Late Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Isle of Man Times* (22 March 1879).

[149] A. Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008); 'Death of Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Post* (13 January 1879); W. Irving, *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Esq*, originally published 1819-20, (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1843), p. 12.

[150] See: A. Wilcox, 'The Unknown Shimmin: Themes from a Mid-Victorian Liverpool Observer', (MA dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1990).

[151] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).

and publishing and as an older teen he set about obtaining an education through the opportunities afforded by the Mechanics' Institute and the Mental Improvement Society. By his mid-twenties, Shimmin had the wherewithal and confidence to buy the bookbinding firm for which he worked. He began writing as a journalistic freelancer in his thirties, producing well-received social investigation pieces and political sketches for the *Liverpool Mercury* and the *Liverpool Albion.* Many of these and later articles were subsequently collected and published.[152]

Figure 4.9
'In Memoriam: Hugh Shimmin', transcribed from the *Liverpool Lantern*, 18 January 1879

An able wielder of the might pen,
After brave years of honourable strife,
Rests from his labours for his fellow men,
Called from strong wrestlings with "a working life".

A man of modest, unassuming worth,
Who on our recognition slowly grew,
As one who tilled *his* portion of God's earth
With earnest effort and a purpose true.

A valiant advocate of human right;
A tireless foeman of unholy deeds:
To him who helped the weakest in the fight
The calls of justice ranked before the creeds.

No "tenth transmitter of a foolish face"
From him received the tribute of a cringe:
Deeming desert the stamp that spoke the race,
He brushed rank by, as only outward fringe.

A sturdy Saxon of the ancient mould,
When men like Cobbett knew and claimed their own:
A genuine Englishman – bluff, brusque, and bold:
Warm at the heart, and honest to the bone.

As so we leave him – sleeping in his bed;
Laid with his peers – among the peerless dead: -
Our souls confessing, as we turn aside,
A *man* departed when Hugh Shimmin died.

Bookbinding remained Shimmin's main source of income throughout his life. He was proud of and committed to his profession and by 1871, employed some forty staff in substantial premises (see Figure 4.10).[153] Even before the *Porcupine* was founded, however, writing had

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[152] E.g. *Liverpool Life: Its Pleasures, Practices and Pastimes* (Liverpool: Egerton Smith, 1856); *Liverpool Life: The Courts and Alleys of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Egerton Smith, 1856); *Pen and Ink Sketches of Liverpool Town Councillors* (Liverpool: Edward Howell, 1857/1866), *Town Life* (London: William Tweedie, 1858).
[153] H. Shimmin, Appendix to September Report, 'Bookbinders' and Machine Rulers' Consolidated Union', Manchester 1848-1855, Liverpool 1848-1855, p. 204; 'The Liverpool Bookbinders' Soiree', *Liverpool Daily Post*

become his vocation.[154]   Shimmin was a competent journalist and a good editor. Basic though his education had been, he was remarkably well read: his 'wide and various culture and reading … often astonished those who met him'.[155]   Contemporary reviewers typically described his work as 'cleverly conducted, well written, and never flag[ging] in interest'.[156] Although a natural raconteur, Shimmin's *oeuvre* in the round displayed the typical strengths and weaknesses of the autodidact.   Moreover, he was not a particularly imaginative man. He rarely wrote simply to entertain; writing was a means to an educational or social reform end: 'I never spent my own time or wasted the time of those who listened to me in simply trying to amuse people'.[157]   Because of this, the creative expression achieved through his didactic journalistic satire was often of a more caustic than playful nature.

Figure 4.10
Advertisement for Shimmin's premises, *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 May 1884

Shimmin personified satire as freedom of expression. His journalistic "philosophy", inspired by the Victorian thinker Jeremy Bentham, was unoriginal but sincerely held: 'Publicity the true cure of social evils'.[158]   In many respects Shimmin was an anachronism; a throwback to those early seventeenth-century satirists who 'were looked upon rather as censors and

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(17 March 1866); 'Ways and Means?' *Finishers' Friendly Circular*, No. 16 (August 1849); Oral testimony from Hugh Shimmin, p.43, c.189, *Children's Employment Commission (1862): Fifth Report of the Commissioners, with Index* (Hansard, 1866); 'Advertisements and Notices', *Liverpool Mercury* (27 May 1884).
[154] 'Death of Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Post* (13 January 1879).
[155] 'The Late Hugh Shimmin', *Argus* (18 January 1879).
[156] 'Recent Literature', *Scottish Review* (July 1860).
[157] Shimmin, *Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy*, p. 5.
[158] Shimmin, *Liverpool Life*, Title Page; Bentham, 'Of Publicity', Chapter II.

moralists than as movers of laughter'.[159] Alan Kidd recognised this in 1992: 'He writes to condemn. His is the voice of the Victorian moralist'.[160] Shimmin's many Liverpool sketches were not intended merely to titillate the middle-classes, but to shock and shame both subjects and readers into reaction. He was held by contemporaries to have succeeded in this mission, making the *Porcupine*, according to Escott, 'the organ of the most advanced progressives, and the pioneer of sweeping changes, social, sanitary and municipal'.[161] Shimmin's social analysis was far more sophisticated than he has been given credit for. His essays often contained considered and argued suggestions for the ways in which local conditions might be improved through civic and municipal effort. In February 1859, he delivered a paper to the Historic Society on the subject of 'Home Education of the Industrial Classes: *How it May be Improved*' [*emphasis added*].[162] In 1865, a well-attended and well-received lecture on the working man's 'Saturday Night' 'enforced various lessons of practical reform'.[163]   That Shimmin's criticism was intended to be constructive is indisputable.

Figure 4.11
The softer side of Shimmin: inscription to his wife, in her copy of Shimmin's 1857 'travelogue' *Rambles in the Lake District* (reproduced with the kind permission of the private owner)
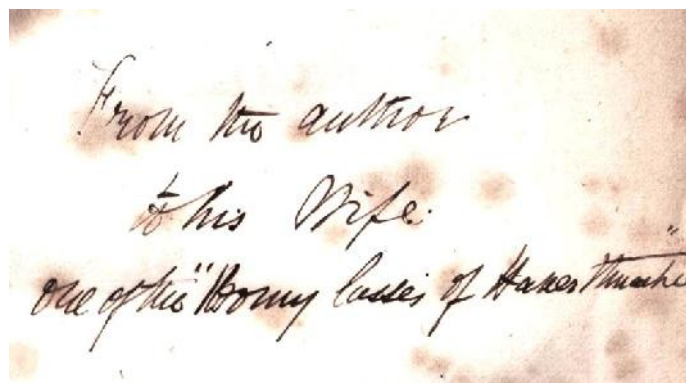
Far from being curmudgeonly or sour (the satirist as ill-natured), Shimmin was a natural wit, with a hearty sense of fun. In company amongst friends, he liked to act and sing and tell stories. His 'humour and power of mimicry often kept his friends in a roar'.[164] Although he led the *Porcupine*, over time, into more serious territory, more seriously addressed, he was

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[159] J.R. Lowell, 'Humor, Wit, Fun and Satire' in *The Function of the Poet and Other Essays* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), pp. 35-6.
[160] A. Kidd, review of Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life*, pp. 383-4.
[161] T.H.S. Escott, *Masters of English Journalism: A Study of Personal Forces* (London: T.Fisher Unwin, 1911), pp. 293-4; W. B. Forwood, *Recollections of a Busy Life: Being the Reminiscences of a Liverpool Merchant 1840-1910* (Liverpool: Henry Young and Sons, 1910).
[162] E.g. Home Education of the Industrial Classes: How it May be Improved', *Liverpool Mercury* (11 February 1859); 'Home Education', *Kendal Mercury* (15 January 1859).
[163] Saturday Night', *Liverpool Mercury* (4 January 1865).
[164] 'Early Recollections of Mr. Shimmin', *Liverpool Weekly Albion* (18 January 1879).

no puritanical type. On one occasion, he was called as a witness in a London plagiarism trial involving a preacher. His nonchalant responses and witty retorts to the patronising counsel delighted his audience and his facetious claim that his favourite Sunday reading was *Tristram Shandy* came 'like a shot from a catapult':

> The cross-examiner was not great at enjoying other people's humour, and several others of the Investigators drew long faces. But the majority roared with mirth, and the great Binney, who was sense-of-humour incarnate, nearly rolled off his chair.[165]

The celebrated nonconformist reformer, Reverend Dr. Thomas Binney, taken by the *Porcupine* editor, invited him to dine with him that evening. Shimmin's reference to Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is revealing, given that its author had been influenced by those eighteenth-century satirists supreme, Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. Shimmin later referenced the novel, in a facetious *Porcupine* piece on banking.[166] Shimmin's mischievous sense of humour baffled some contemporaries: he 'was famed for humorous mystifications. One of his oddest traits was that he never objected to make himself out as bad as he could possibly be; he enjoyed the impression made upon others by this, as much as anyone else would have enjoyed producing a good impression'.[167] The ability to unnerve became, for Shimmin, as it had for Pope before him, a source of fear-induced power. According to one peer, 'a number of the leading public men of Liverpool were so frightened of what he would say about them if they fell into his disfavour that they used to invite him to their houses to dinner in order to conciliate him'.[168]

The satirist is often construed as an "outsider" or "minority figure" and Shimmin fitted this bill.[169] As a result of childhood migration, social mobility and temperament, he was both of and yet not of his social milieu. This had a direct effect upon the way in which he saw and processed the world, which in turn dictated his understanding of political participation. Although a Manx 'immigrant', Shimmin was passionate about Liverpool, his brand of performed townology rooted in a strong personal attachment to the urban imaginary which had shaped, inspired and motivated him since early childhood. In 1840, not yet twenty years old but having served the requisite apprenticeship as a journeyman bookbinder, Shimmin earned freeman of the city status. Local citizenship recognised him as a respected tradesman and a valued member of the community. Given his disadvantaged childhood and youth, this

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[165] E. Russell, *That Reminds Me* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), pp. 274-277.

[166] 'The Shandean Bank', *Porcupine* (16 November 1867).

[167] A.W. Moore, *Manx Worthies or Biographies of Notable Manx Men and Women* (Isle of Man: S. K. Broadbent and Company, 1901), Chapter V.

[168] 'Talk of the Day', *Liberal Review* (18 January 1879).

[169] Pollard, *Satire: The Critical Idiom*, p. 3.

Figure 4.12
Shimmin's signed 'Oath', 27 July 1840 (reproduced with the kind permission of the private owner)
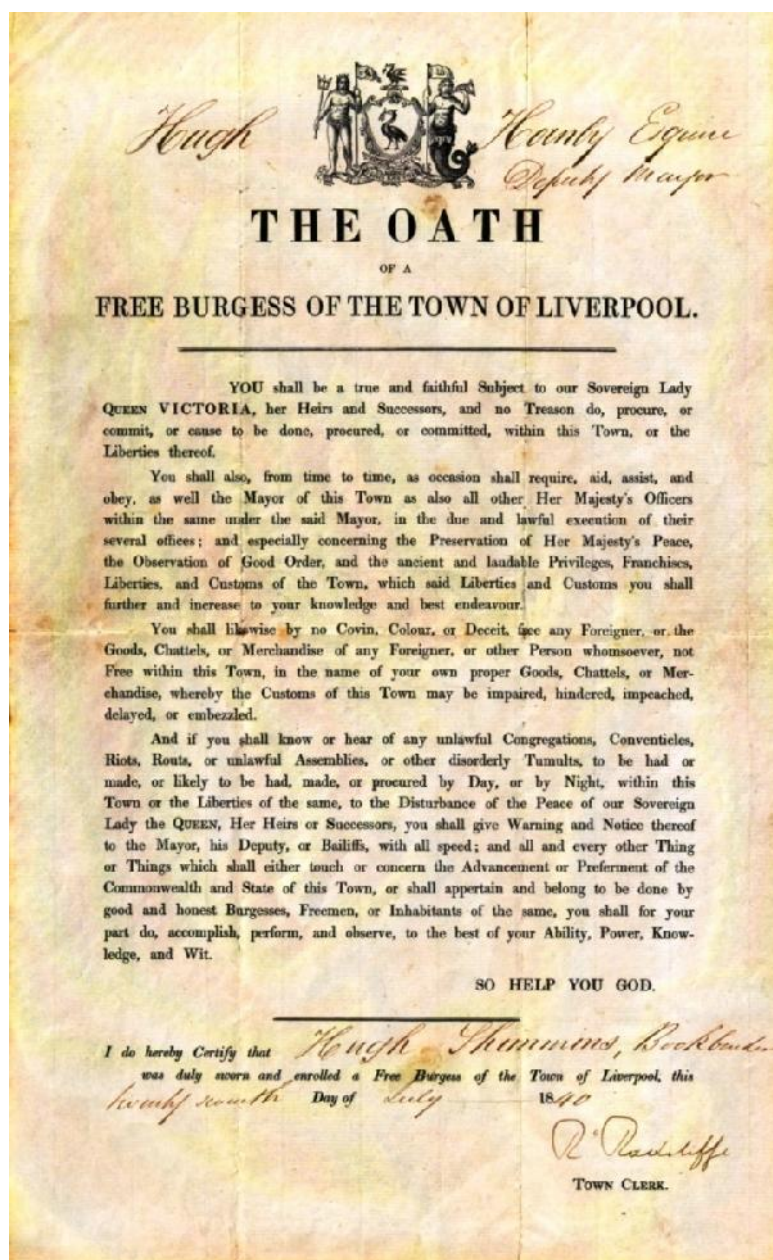
validation proved to be a proud moment for the future proprietor-editor of the *Porcupine*. It goes some way towards explaining Shimmin's fierce lifelong loyalty to his adopted hometown and his desire to see it thrive. He took his standing as a free burgess of Liverpool literally and seriously, fulfilling throughout life the roles and responsibilities set out in his sworn oath. The *Porcupine* project might be construed as the unconventional means by

which Shimmin was able to 'do, accomplish, perform, and observe' to the best of his 'Ability, Power, Knowledge, and Wit' those 'Things which shall either touch or concern the Advancement or Preferment of the Commonwealth and State of this Town'.[170] Shimmin's knowingness was acknowledged by contemporaries to be 'one of [his] most valuable qualifications': 'In his treatment of local subjects … no man in Liverpool was more behind the scenes of official and social life than he was, and no one had so happy a faculty of always knowing where to go for the best information upon any subject'.[171]

Shimmin moved up in the world during the 1840s and 1850s and by the launch of the *Porcupine*, was comfortably middle-class by the standards of the day.[172] Yet freeman status and the possession of a respectable trade, company and home were not enough to guarantee acceptance into Liverpool's most preeminent social and political circles. Snobbery had a great deal to do with this but the other barrier was Shimmin's stubborn independence, his unwillingness and inability to follow the pack. He subscribed to a bourgeois set of values but was too "knowing" – and too honest – to ignore the contradictions, inconsistencies and inequities he observed. It has been stated or implied that Shimmin chafed at being socially excluded and had a chip on his shoulder.[173] The evidence does not fully support this. Certainly, he was sensitive to social humiliations and exclusions. As a young night school student, he had been painfully aware of his shabby working clothes, which, according to an acquaintance, he felt 'were not a passport to the kindly feelings of the other scholars'.[174] In adulthood, he smarted at being condescended to.[175] Yet the outpouring of tribute following Shimmin's death, as well as positive retrospective testaments to his character and achievements, are not indicative of a man who was dismissed by his peers as a bitter maverick. On the contrary, he came to be respected by many of his local contemporaries, some of whom routinely turned to him for advice.[176] Upon his death, members of Liverpool's political elite acknowledged 'the loss which the Council has sustained by the removal of one who, though his voice had never been heard in their deliberations, had so frequently stimulated them to action by his pen'.[177]

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[170] Extracted from 'The Oath of a Free Burgess of the Town of Liverpool'.
[171] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879)
[172] 1851 England, Wales & Scotland Census, Enumeration District: 21FFF/Series: HO107/Piece Number: 2188/Folio: 349/Page 25; 1861 England, Wales & Scotland Census, Registration District: West Derby/Piece Number: 2735/Page Number: 10/Folio Number: 7; 1871 England, Wales and Scotland Census, Enumeration District: 4/ Series: RG10/Piece Number: 3808/Folio Number: 90/Page: 10.
[173] Searby, 'Electioneering in Lancashire', p. 159.
[174] 'Early Recollections', *Liverpool Weekly Albion* (18 January 1879).
[175] *Ibid.*
[176] 'The "Porcupine" Libel Case', *Bradford Observer* (3 May 1870).
[177] 'The Town Council and Mr. Shimmin', *Liverpool Weekly Albion* (18 January 1879).

The very thing which set Shimmin apart from many of his peers - his ambivalent social and political status - proved advantageous. It positioned him to maintain the critical distance required of the satirist. He made a virtue of existing on the periphery; success as an independent journalist depended upon this. He refused to be boxed into any ideological corner or to play political games. By temperament and by choice, he was not a team player and he disavowed partisanship: 'I care very little for sides or party,' he said in 1865.[178] As a natural individualist, Shimmin went against the grain in a town long characterised by tribalism: 'His politics were those of personality and municipality', wrote Margaret Simey, 'and he set aside and scorned the great sectarian divide which dominated the political outlook of so many of his contemporaries'.[179] Shimmin was also held by admirers to have 'had the broadest charity towards those of widely divergent theological belief', and mixed and worked positively with community leaders of all faiths.[180] This raises interesting questions about conformity and social pressure during a supposed "age of individualism". Shimmin's independence did not endear him to the local ruling elite: 'The political attitude he assumed struck many of us as rather too defiantly individual'.[181] Shimmin was not the only local political thinker to be marginalised or side-lined for refusing to play tribal politics, however. Enlightened Liverpool politician, town councillor James Allanson Picton, also paid the price for being an independent thinker: 'Although a Gladstonian Liberal in politics', he 'believed that party loyalties should not influence the conduct of local affairs; on certain matters he voted with the Conservative members of the town council. His colleagues were not so minded, and it is probable that his Liberalism prevented his appointment as mayor [or] alderman'.[182]

As his public standing grew, Shimmin came to associate with the Liverpool "Establishment" but he was never beguiled by it and never became in thrall to it. He remained in touch with the "ordinary" man and was thus equipped to write with the authority of first-hand experience, and with equal measures of compassion, empathy and censure. Shimmin may have been gruff in his manners but contrary to the implications of Walton and Wilcox, amongst others, he was not socially gauche; he was unaffected and plain-speaking.[183] Having been born into poverty, he was able to reach across the socio-economic divide to communicate with the working classes, a major advantage to the investigative journalist, in

[178] Shimmin, *Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy*, p. 14.
[179] Simey, *Charitable Effort*, p.75; 'Letters from H. Shimmin (Book binder and Stationer) a committee member, concerning religious divisions amongst members', 16 January 1878 – 9 April 1878, 'The Royal Liverpool Seaman's Orphan Institution', Liverpool Maritime Archives and Library, D/SO/5/17-20.
[180] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[181] 'The Late Hugh Shimmin', *Argus* (18 January 1879).
[182] S.C. Orchard, 'Picton, James Allanson Picton' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), https://doi-org.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35527.
[183] Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life,* 1991.

an age of strict class division. This came naturally to him: 'It all depends on the way you go about it. To me they are and ever have been friendly and communicative…'.[184] He scoffed at the aloofness of many social scientists, who too often regarded the poor as interesting but inferior "specimens".[185]

Shimmin's attitude towards Liverpool's lower classes was sometimes ambiguous and sometimes condescending. 'He never forgot the poor' but his views were consistent with the brand of faith-based, Liberal thinking to which he subscribed.[186] Having moved up in the world, Shimmin regarded the poor as "other" and did not feel any particular solidarity with them. Whilst he defended the interests of the working man, he was less interested in his constitutional rights. Certainly, he believed that the poor could be feckless and lacking in self-respect. Yet - unlike *Porcupine* contributor John Hollingshead, who expressed more hardline, less compassionate views - Shimmin did not hold them entirely responsible for their lot.[187] Like his direct contemporaries Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, he held the causes of and solutions to poverty-related vice to be socio-political. He emphatically disagreed with the common trope that '[t]he Poor you have always among you. This is regulated by the laws of political economy'.[188] In Shimmin's view, 'Providence has as much, if not more, to do with the worldly condition of men as the laws of political economy have'.[189] Where Shimmin departed from Marxist thinking was in his Liberal faith in moral and personal individualism and free will. Rather than defending the faults and foibles of the struggling classes, he evinced paternalistic tough love. He was a friend to the disadvantaged precisely 'because he never pandered to their vices, nor petted, nor cajoled them to gain at their expense either popularity or profit'.[190] An equal opportunities critic, he was as brutally honest to and about Liverpool's lower orders as he was to and about its middling classes.

Shimmin represented the archetypal Victorian Liberal - specifically, the "Smilesian" self-made man - his worldview a product and illustration of the kind of nineteenth-century thought epitomised by Radical turned reforming Liberal Samuel Smiles in his 'bible of mid-Victorian liberalism', *Self-Help*.[191] Indeed, Shimmin's sole foray into semi-autobiographical fiction was sub-titled 'The Story of a Man Who Helped Himself.'[192] This doctrine placed personal choice, discipline and autonomy front and centre of a middle-class values set

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[184] Shimmin, 'Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy', p. 25.
[185] *Ibid.,* p. 26.
[186] 'Hugh Shimmin'*, Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[187] J. Hollingshead, *Ragged in London in 1861* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1861), Preface.
[188] H. Shimmin, 'Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy', p. 30.
[189] *Ibid.*
[190] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[191] S. Smiles, *Self Help* (London: John Murray III, 1859).
[192] H. Shimmin, *Harry Birkett: The Story of a Man Who Helped Himself* (London: William Tweedie, 1860).

influenced by both Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism, with their respective focuses upon salvation and efficiency. It fed into and off the Victorian work ethic and the temperance movement, both of which Shimmin championed. A product and reflection of his age and adopted class, his broad Liberal ideology was - to use political philosopher John Gray's characterisation - 'individualist, egalitarian, meliorist' and 'universalist', and rooted in a strong belief in 'moral worth and status'.[193] As a proud new "first generation" member of the bourgeoisie, Shimmin regarded himself as a success story and role model; someone who, through the application of the best of mid-Victorian values, had overcome disadvantage and adversity to thrive at home, at work and in local (Liverpool) society. The *Liberal Review* suggested that his life 'taken as a whole may profitably be studied by those who are about to enter upon the battle of life'.[194] Shimmin's life might also be fruitfully studied by historians seeking to understand the "ordinary" Liberal man in an age of bourgeois realism.

As both individual and editor, Shimmin was far more politically motivated than the historiography has allowed. He has been variously labelled a 'radical liberal', a 'Tory radical', a 'Liberal Anglican' and a 'working-class advocate'.[195] It is unsurprising that some have resorted to dubbing him a political 'gadfly'.[196] In fact, attempting to categorise Shimmin is not helpful. Victorian Liberalism was an extremely broad church, its members ranging from 'old Whigs to Radicals'.[197] Many Liberals, suggested Katrina Forrester, were 'democrats only by necessity'.[198]

Shimmin's passionate desire to expose incompetence and corruption, to hold local government and business fraternities to account, to champion the working man's interests and to find workable means of tackling social and economic inequalities reflected a progressive mind. He despised self-interest, venality and hypocrisy but more importantly (evidence of his knowingness), he saw through them in the first place. This is what brought Shimmin into conflict with the local Liberal party. He considered himself a 'friend to good municipal government and true Liberalism'.[199] Exhibiting an instinctive appreciation of the distinction made by Patrick Joyce between liberalism as 'governmental freedom' and 'liberal politics, ideas or institutions', he had little time for 'sham' Liberalism, 'technical' Liberalism

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[193] J. Gray, *Liberalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. xii.
[194] Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life*, p. 3.
[195] T. Lane, *Gateway of Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987), p. 71; G.C. Fidler, 'The Liverpool Labour Movement and the School Board: An Aspect of Education and the Working Class', *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, Vol.9, Issue 1 (1980), pp. 43-61; A. Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 39.
[196] Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, p. 197.
[197] K. Forrester, 'What Was Liberalism?' *The Nation*, Vol. 300, Issue 2/3 (12 January 2015), p. 32.
[198] *Ibid.*
[199] 'Liberal Boobyism', *Porcupine* (6 November 1869).

or 'Liberal Boobyism'.[200] With 'a provokingly quick eye for the faults of his own party, and a puckish delight in placing these in odious and ridiculous light', Shimmin refused to act as a blindly loyal party cheerleader.[201] In early 1868, he wrote or approved an article entitled 'Liverpool Liberalism'. In it, the local version of that particular brand of mid-Victorian ideology was described as 'a sickly, withering, dried-up stalk' and its local practitioners as 'our snob Liberals … our genteel, Whiggish, "well-meaning", feebly-respectable nondescripts' whose 'presence chills the life and energy out of every political gathering'.[202] It was small wonder that 'Mr Porcupine' became the nemesis of a local Liberal establishment he held to be unprincipled, arrogant and motivated by partisan expediency. Shimmin ascribed this hostility to defensiveness: 'So far had this gone that when *Porcupine*, himself an avowed Liberal, actually ventured to satirize or to censure men of the Liberal party, said men and their friends and followers and *claqueurs* could hardly contain themselves for amazement and wrath'.[203]

Shimmin was likened by admirers to that 'archaic English Tory', William Cobbett; to the popular and radical Chartist leader of the 1840s, Thomas Livesey; and to Joseph Hume, a Tory radical who acted as a parliamentary irritant.[204] What this trio had in common was their independence and their (relative) radicalism. John Archer described Shimmin as a 'radical Liverpool journalist' but many contemporaries understood radicalism as something quite extreme: 'subversion, total excision and overthrow, not of one order of polity for another, but an utter destruction of the present state of things'.[205] Shimmin was radical in expression, rather than in ideological substance.[206] Like Joseph Cowen on Tyneside, his 'radicalism' was 'the politics of opposition'; like Cowen's, his independent spirit antagonised his local Liberal caucus.[207] Typical of the later nineteenth-century Liberal tradition, Shimmin had no wish to overturn the existing order; he wanted to improve it. He was no socialist; he was a moral suasionist who did not see unlimited state activity as a panacea and believed the priority of

[200] P. Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 2, 15; 'More Sham Liberalism', *Porcupine* (25 October 1862); 'Hard Liberalism', *Porcupine* (31 July 1869); 'Liberal Boobyism', *Porcupine* (6 November 1869).
[201] 'Death of Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Post* (13 January 1879).
[202] 'Liverpool Liberalism', *Porcupine* (18 April 1875).
[203] 'Our Seventh Volume', *Porcupine* (1 April 1865).
[204] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879); E. Tangye Lean, *The Napoleonists: A Study in Political Disaffection 1760-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 206; A.J.P. Taylor, *An Old Man's Diary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 96; P. Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 131; 'Hume, Joseph (1777-1855)' in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); M. Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); M. Taylor, 'Joseph Hume and the Reformation of India, 1819-33', in G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (eds), *English Radicalism, 1550-1850* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 285-308.
[205] 'Domestic Politics', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 8 (1820), p. 329.
[206] J.E. Archer, 'The Violence We Have Lost: Body Counts, Historians and Interpersonal Violence in England', *Memoria y Civilizacion*, 2 (1995), p. 185.
[207] J. Allen, *Joseph Cowen and Popular Radicalism in Tyneside, 1829-1900* (London: Merlin Press, 2007), p. 103.

any crusade should be to reform individual lives. Yet Shimmin's belief in cooperation, collectivism and trade unionism, as bulwarks against capitalism, revolution and Communism, are evident.[208]   In 1846, he attended a Mental Improvement Society debate, 'Have *Trades Unions* been on the whole beneficial?' Although not yet a member of the Society, Shimmin spoke to the meeting, causing quite a stir with his eclectic potpourri of references:

> His then rather crude and wild ideas rather startled the members. He quoted some of the more pronounced ideas of Carlyle's "Chartism" and "Past and Present," and Douglas Jerrold's writings and the debate became so hot and fierce that it was adjourned for another night's discussion.[209]

Shimmin spoke with the idealism of youth, and his views became more conventional over time. In an article he wrote for the *Liverpool Mercury* in 1856, he referred with a touch of condescension to 'a gruff-looking mechanic – probably a Chartist'.[210] His 1859 moralist novella, *Harry Birkett*, contained 'very little Chartism, or Socialism, or Philosophy', as far as one reviewer was concerned.[211]

Shimmin is best understood as a political philanthropist. The nineteenth century is celebrated in retrospect as an age of "social science" but Shimmin stood amongst many contemporary sceptics.[212] He wrote cuttingly about the fashionable trend that was Victorian philanthropy and about serial board members who played no active role in furthering the social and charitable causes they supposedly espoused.[213] With a particular interest in child welfare, 'Mr Porcupine' wrote extensively about child poverty and education.[214] He championed conventionally philanthropic causes and organisations. For Shimmin, however, philanthropy was about much more than charitable largesse; it was about civic responsibility and performed citizenship.[215] He outlined his theorem on 'political philanthropy' in a well-received paper he delivered and published in 1865. In his view, philanthropic activity and

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[208] H. Shimmin, 'Liverpool Co-Operative Association', *English Leader* (24 September 1864); 'Important to Working Men', *Liverpool Daily Post* (19 October 1864); 'Liverpool Co-Operative Provident Association', *Liverpool Mercury* (19 August 1864); 'Co-Operation' (*Porcupine*, 8 July 1871).

[209] 'Early Recollections', *Liverpool Weekly Albion* (18 January 1879); Shimmin subsequently became a member of the Society.

[210] H. Shimmin, 'The Cornwallis Street Baths' in *Liverpool Life*, pp. 51-8.

[211] 'Harry Birkett', *National Magazine* (April 1860), pp. 322-3.

[212] 'Philanthropic Cliques of Liverpool', *Porcupine* (1 June 1861).

[213] Lane, *Liverpool: City of the Sea*, pp. 46-7; 'Philanthropic Cliques of Liverpool', *Porcupine* (1 June 1861); 'Byways of Benevolence' (Series), *Porcupine*, (1867); 'Philanthropic Cant', *Porcupine* (1 December 1860); 'Decay of Public Spirit', *Porcupine* (15 July 1876).

[214] L.Kilfoyle, 'Beyond Her Benny: Reimagining the Street Arab in Victorian Liverpool', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 166 (2017) pp. 80-1.

[215] Z. Magubane, 'Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa', (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 75.

the formulation of legislation and policy were (or ought to have been) two sides of the same coin. Informed and evidence-based social science should feed into social policy: 'the efforts of philanthropists, however great the individual exertion, however self-sacrificing and noble, will avail little unless they be united to or are made to work in harmony with legislative enactments'.[216] Shimmin practised what he preached. A hyperactive, "hands on" reformer, he engaged energetically in public affairs and threw himself with gusto into public policy debate and formulation. Throughout adult life, he mentored, tutored and advocated for disadvantaged youngsters.[217] Demonstrating that 'a journalist could … be a practical man', he became involved, in different capacities and to different extents, with an extensive range of influential local bodies and causes and held leading roles in a number of organisations.[218] The journalistic part of his politically philanthropic crusade involved combating 'the lethargy of public opinion' by awareness-raising and campaigning.[219] Through such exposure (i.e. transparison), suggested Margaret Simey, 'Shimmin succeeded where all the jeremiads of the philanthropic had failed, in rousing the middle classes to the dangers of the situation'.[220] In accordance with Liberal theory, the 'quickening power of knowledge' would then lead to 'individual exertion'.[221] By urging Liverpool's middle classes to give time and deliberation, as well as money, to the pressing issues of the day, Shimmin performed and advocated participatory democracy of a very literal kind. In this way, the *Porcupine* became a vehicle for 'participatory government by journalism'.[222]

As a journalistic activist, Shimmin slots into an evolving tradition of exploratory 'social inquiry' documentarians focused upon poverty and 'low life'.[223] In this he followed in the footsteps of Henry Mayhew and Charles Dickens, was contemporary with Frederick and James Greenwood at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and anticipated George R. Sims (connected to *Fun*), William Stead, with his controversial brand of New Journalism, and Mary Higgs, who produced *Social Investigation by a Lady* at the turn of the twentieth century.[224] 'Mr

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[216] Shimmin, 'Sanitary Aspects of Philanthropy', p. 7.
[217] 'The Boy Burglars', *Liverpool Mercury* (27 March 1865); 'Toxteth Board of Guardians', *Liverpool Daily Post* (26 October 1866).
[218] 'Rodney Ward', *Liverpool Mercury* (16 October 1880); Shimmin's memberships included but were not restricted to: Literary and Dramatic Society; Liverpool Bookbinder's Society, Liverpool Historic Society; Liverpool Reformer's Union; Liverpool Social Science Association; Liverpool Domestic Mission, Liverpool Co-Operative Provident Association; St George's Industrial School for Boys; Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society; Children's Infirmary; Royal Commission on Friendly and Building Societies; Douglas Rocket Corps (isle of Man); Liverpool Convalescent Institution; Seamen's Orphanage (30 of the boys attended his funeral); Liverpool Institute; Free Public Library; Bluecoat Hospital; Hospital for Consumption and Chest Diseases; Blue Coat Brotherly Society; Liverpool Ragged Schools.
[219] Shimmin, *Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy*, p. 9.
[220] Simey, *Charitable Effort*, p. 53.
[221] Shimmin, *Sanitary Aspect of Philanthropy*, p. 9.
[222] M. Martel, 'Participatory Government by Journalism: Class Periodicals and the Local State, 1880-1914', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Spring 2018), pp. 18-47.
[223] Donovan and Rubery, *Secret Commissions*.
[224] M. Higgs, *Glimpses into the Abyss* (London: King & Son, 1906).

Porcupine' interacted directly with some of his fellow social investigators. In 1870 and 1871, he engaged in a robust series of public exchanges with the medical reformer Joshua H. Stallard, who in 1866 had published *The Female Casual and her Lodging*.[225] In Liverpool, Shimmin took inspiration from Thomas Whitehead, who - under the pen name Peter Knib - wrote for the *Liverpool Albion* in the 1850s. Shimmin served, in turn, as a role model for young local journalist Hugh Farrie, who in the 1880s would write such series as 'Toiling Liverpool' for the *Liverpool Daily Post* and would later go on briefly to own and edit the *Porcupine*.[226]

CONCLUSION

Three confident conclusions can be drawn, on the basis of the evidence and analysis presented in this chapter. First: the *Porcupine* was neither a one-man band nor an obscure backstreet venture, but a collective enterprise involving an impressive spread of intellect and talent over many years. Second: Hugh Shimmin was not the two-dimensional caricature of later lore. He was a complex and able man who understood the practical politics of his time and turned that understanding to effective use. Third: the collaborative and inclusive nature of the *Porcupine* project was undoubtedly one of the keys to its success. Thanks to its local 'citizen journalists', the journal featured all of the townological characteristics and strengths of the provincial paper but it also benefitted from the input of urbane, well-educated, cultured and expert correspondents from Liverpool and beyond. It thus straddled the divide between the "provincial" and the "metropolitan" and this goes some way towards solving the riddle of why the *Porcupine* survived where others fell. The calibre of men involved puts paid to any preconceived notions of the *Porcupine* having been parochial or amateur. Many were intelligent and able individuals, successful in their respective fields. Many were well-travelled. Many are now considered, in different spheres and for different reasons, to be historically significant figures. That the metropolitan involvement of the Savages appears to have waned over time is academic. By then, the *Porcupine* was established, with a clear identity, regular readership and men keen to write for it. By then, Shimmin had created a power matrix of his own. How and to what effect 'Mr Porcupine' used that agency, within a paradigm of liberal governmentality, is explored in the following two chapters.

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[225] 'Dr Stallard on Pauperism', *Porcupine* (31 December 1870 – 28 January 1871); J.H. Stallard, *The Female Casual and her Lodging* (London: Saunders, Otley, 1866).
[226] Hugh Farrie, 'Toiling Liverpool', *Liverpool Daily Post* (9-19 March 1886).

CHAPTER FIVE

Merchant Princes or 'Leviathan Rogues'?

The Comic Periodical as Self-Styled Arbiter of Commercial and Municipal Morality

Deus nobis haec otia fecit[1]

It is difficult for men to see wrong where their pockets are concerned …[2]

Liverpool … enjoys an unenviable pre-eminence in the unnecessary superfluity of its moral and material temptations to wrong-doing … the acquisition of wealth, or, failing that, the maintenance of an appearance of wealth, is universally regarded as the one aim of existence.[3]

Understanding Victorian morality is key to understanding urban liberalism in the "moral" or "social" city. Patrick Joyce framed liberal governmentality as something inevitably involving contradiction and conflict and processed both as and in moral struggle. Through challenge and resistance, 'Mr Porcupine' entered into a moral struggle both with local power and – as a self-reflective and self-reflexive liberal subject performing his citizenship – with himself.[4] Through the *Porcupine's* fact and forum functions, he represented a 'free civil society' in which governance was achieved through a focus upon 'conduct in the world of consumption', 'conduct in the aesthetic sphere' and 'extra-political dimensions of conduct'.[5] His criticism of the local political-industrial complex, when it came to pressing socio-economic issues such as corruption in business or poor sanitation, thus became more than a manifestation and expression of his political philanthropy. It became a performance in Liberal morality.

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[1] Liverpool's town motto, taken from the Roman poet Virgil and loosely translated as: 'God has bestowed these blessings on us'; see S.A. Harris '*Deus nobis haec otia fetit*: Some Notes on Liverpool's Motto', *THSLC*, Vol. 116 (1964), pp. 1-17.
[2] W.T. Harries. 'Landmarks in Liverpool History', 3rd ed. (Liverpool: Philip Son & Nephew Ltd, 1949), p. 64.
[3] 'Liverpool's Character', *Porcupine* (30 June 1877).
[4] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp.15, 101-2, 121.
[5] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 17.

This chapter and the next are concerned with individual morality and collective ethics played out through the Realpolitik of commerce and local governance in the mid to late nineteenth-century town. Consistent with the theoretical and methodological framework set out in the introduction, they involve a foregrounding and close reading of the *Porcupine* as a "work" (i.e. text) within the context of the wider conceptual "universe" it inhabited. Focusing in turn upon the interconnected Victorian themes of Liberal morality and the so-called "civic gospel", they serve to explore the connections between authorial intent and reader reception via some of the major issues with which Shimmin's journal engaged. In the process, they offer reflections upon business and trade culture (with particular reference to the triumphalist narratives surrounding Liverpool), observations about the evolution of municipal socialism and analysis of the ramifications of their interrelatedness for local governance and for the distribution of power during the period.

ON (IM)MORALITY

Paul Johnson has framed the nineteenth century as the period in which the modern economics of the market, generally, and non-responsible capitalism, specifically, took definitive root.[6] Victorian Britain's rise and rise as an economic powerhouse blew fresh wind into the sails of that age-old philosophical conundrum: how to square "a" good life with "the" good life. Many thinking middle-class Victorians, caught up in the heady materialism of the age yet still immersed in religious orthodoxy and practice, were preoccupied with the question of (im)morality, as - to quote twentieth-century historian and biographer David Cecil - 'darkly and irresistibly the huge force of material progress rushed onwards towards no set end'.[7] Hugh Shimmin and his contributors were no exception. 'Mr. Porcupine' cast himself as a moral guardian; as 'the confessor, the conscience-keeper of society', he took his mission seriously.[8] Unlike the historian, he explained, the responsible journalist had 'to deal with the "living present", to defend its interests and its rights, to batter its abuses, to point its moral'.[9] Indeed, it was the journalist's primary duty to act: 'he has to deal with the future, insomuch that if he does not make some impression upon it for good, he has practically not lived at all'.[10]

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[6] P. Johnson, *Marking the Market: Victorian Origins of Corporate Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[7] D. Cecil in H. Grisewood, *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*, p. 24.
[8] '"Porcupine's" Fourteenth Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1872).
[9] 'Our Seventeenth Volume', *Porcupine* (3 April 1875).
[10] *Ibid.*

Given this sense of vocational purpose, the Porcupine's coverage of Liverpool's commercial activity and culture sprang from a clear moral imperative. The journal's writers provided running commentary upon every conceivable aspect of the business or trading life of the town, both pre-empting and responding to key themes and developments. This content was not only topical; it was dynamic, in so far as it fed both into and off local attitudes and behaviours by means of a continuous discursive interchange, a companion and complement to the vibrant platform culture which pervaded public halls and spaces during the period.[11] Nor was the coverage merely passively reactive (the characteristic most usually associated with the satirical journalism of the day); by means of persuasive analysis and argument bolstered by intimate knowledge and understanding of local public affairs - its townology - the *Porcupine* helped either to promote or to stymie political-cum-commercial agendas.[12]

For all this, the journal's extensive coverage of commercial (im)morality has been overlooked in favour of its well-thumbed social observation articles. The purpose of the present chapter is, therefore, to explore this particular strand of the journal's campaigning activity, to deliberate upon its broader historical significance and to suggest some of the ways in which it might offer new understandings and interpretations of wider economic, political and cultural developments - and contemporary attitudes towards them - during the latter half of the century. An important caveat must be established from the outset. This chapter is not concerned with outright commercial criminality, a subject which has been researched from legal, economic and philosophical perspectives.[13] There is less literature on the more amorphous and subjective theme of what would now be deemed corporate or business ethics - that is, probity in commercial practice - and it was into this "grey area" that the *Porcupine* most combatively delved.

The journal's "morality" discourse adds most constructively to the historiography of business culture when it is seen to counter or at least cast doubt upon the received wisdoms surrounding contemporary attitudes towards the new commercial realities. John Lea has observed that both society and the criminal justice system were as reluctant to intervene in business crime, as they were to intervene in family (i.e. domestic) violence. In an age of individualism on the one hand and capitalist growth on the other, both the home and business

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[11] C. Beard, *Commercial Morality in 1867: a Sermon, Preached in Renshaw-street Chapel, Liverpool, on Sunday Morning, November 10th, 1867* (Liverpool: Adam Holden, 48 Church Street, 1867); M. Hewitt, 'Aspects of Platform Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Nineteenth Century Prose*, Vol. 29, No.1 (Spring 2002), pp. 1-32.

[12] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 204.

[13] S. Wilson, 'Regulating the Moral Economy: Law, Morality and Regulation', *British Journal of Criminology* (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1073-90; G. Robb, *White Collar Crime in Modern England: Financial Fraud and Business Morality, 1845-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); W.A. Thomas, review of Robb, *White-Collar Crime* in *Business History* 35:4 (1993), pp. 210-11.

were considered sacrosanct and they required protection from outside interference and regulation. Personal and free market forces must take priority.[14] 'Mr Porcupine' did not subscribe to any such "light touch" creed. Whilst the privacy of (middle class) family life must be respected - 'we deal only with *public* topics', and 'every man's private life and private opinions may go safe and unassailed for us' - commerce was a public undertaking and if the state (at either local or national level) failed to root out and tackle wrong-doing in this sphere, then it was a journal's right and duty to take up the cudgel.[15] 'Mr Porcupine's' coverage questioned the consensus asserted with confidence by earlier historians, that most Mid-Victorians were in thrall to the doctrine of *laissez-faire* free trade, that honesty characterised a commercial culture which was 'Athenian' in 'its blend of intellectual adventure and moral conservatism.[16] The generalisations and assumptions underpinning this analysis were far removed from the day-to-day realities he observed.

COMMERCE AND CULTURE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LIVERPOOL

If the nineteenth century was the era of British trade and commerce, then booming, bustling Liverpool might be described as one of the poster towns of the new capitalism. Philip Waller provided a striking flavour of impressions of the town and its culture dating back into the late eighteenth century: 'One ecclesiastical visitor in 1795 was amazed by "this large, irregular, busy, opulent, corrupted town; where so many men and so many women use so many ways and means of gaining and spending so much money"'.[17] Later visitors noted with bewildered fascination the obsession with money and money-making.[18] Commerce was Liverpool's very *raison d'être*, both a cause and effect of the town's remarkable rise and rise as a leading maritime centre. In trade and shipping, and associated services, the town vied with London.[19]

In Liverpool, an urban community long governed by an oligarchy of so-called "merchant princes", the political and the commercial were symbiotic, the town's rapid economic growth - and thus its political self-awareness and confidence - centred upon its booming trade. Liverpool's commercial track record was less than edifying, however – slave trading,

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[14] J. Lea, 'White Collar Crime in Nineteenth Century Britain', History of Crime and Punishment, http://www.bunker8.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/history/SO827.htm [accessed December 2015].

[15] Leader, *Porcupine* (6 October 1860); 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, p. 2.

[18] R. Michaelis-Jena and W. Merson, *A Lady Travels: Journeys in England and Scotland, from the Diaries of Johanna Schopenhauer (1803)* (London: Routledge, 1988); J. G. Kohl, *Travels in England and Wales* (London: Nutt, 1844); H. Taine, *Notes on England* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1874).

[19] Marriner, *Development of Merseyside*, p. 35.

privateering, press ganging and war profiteering had all contributed to the town's mushrooming prosperity.[20] 'Mr Porcupine' refused to buy into any sanitised version of the town's recent commercial history, making a point of drawing attention to its more ignominious aspects. The town's historical philistinism and reliance upon "unethical" practices had in fact been recognised long before the enlightened campaigner William Roscoe announced his aspiration to see Liverpool evolve into a 'Florence of the north'. A verse written by the polymath George Perry in 1771, celebrating Liverpool's maritime success, came with a warning against hubris attached. Only through 'frugal industry', 'honour', 'innocence', 'modesty' and 'virtuosity', urged Perry, might 'Leverpolia' avoid the fates of those ancient maritime commercial cities of Tyrus and Carthage.[21] Liverpool struggled to shake off its poor reputation.[22] John Belchem has been one of numerous voices to suggest that throughout the Victorian period, Liverpool repositioned and rebranded itself 'as a kind of city state dedicated to culture [and] civilisation' as well as commerce.[23] Many Victorians would not have recognised Belchem's positive characterisation. One visitor to the town in 1851 concluded that it remained a fast-living, risk-taking community, with 'less of the materials of a metropolis than many other towns of less commercial importance'.[24] As late as 1882, Matthew Arnold used the opening of the Session of University College, Liverpool, to exhort the Liverpool merchant class to value education: 'Money-making is not enough by itself. Industry is not enough by itself. I speak now of the kinds of stimulus most in use with people of our race, and above all in business communities such as Liverpool'.[25] Shimmin's journal was dealing with an entrenched commercial culture.

'MR PORCUPINE' AS MORALIST

The *Porcupine's* coverage of trade and commerce was as extensive as it was critical, addressing all six of those 'levels of ethical concern' identified by business history scholars: the individual, the firm, the industry; national, international and global.[26] It ranged over topics as diverse as local commercial institutions; individual trades, professions, industries and the organisations associated with them; financial services; business practice(s); industrial

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[20] Harries, *Landmarks*, 1949; Karl Marx wrote about the 'accumulation of wealth by a variety of such "primitive" methods' in *Capital* (1887 in English), Vol.1, Part VIII, Ch. 26.
[21] G. Perry, 'The Prophecy of Commerce' in Enfield, *History of Liverpool*, p. 23.
[22] J. Belchem, 'A Historical Perspective on Commerce and Culture in the City', *Commerce and Culture: The City Tribune* (29 July 2014).
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] S. Sidney, *Rides on Railways* (London: W. S. Orr & Co., 1851), p. 166.
[25] M. Arnold, 'Liverpool Address' in K. Allot (ed.), *Five Uncollected Essays of Matthew Arnold* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1953), pp. 79-93.
[26] R.T. de George, 'A History of Business Ethics' in *Business Ethics*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999), pp. 345-6.

relations; and the political economy in the abstract. There was no mistaking 'Mr Porcupine's' low editorial opinion of the local mercantile-cum-political class. Throughout one series of essays, they were variously described as: 'demons'; 'devilfish of commerce'; 'titans of speculation'; 'thugs of the sea'; 'commercial Belshazzars'; 'leviathan rogues'; 'possessed with devils'; 'unconvicted felons and traitors'; 'commercial knaves'; 'adventurers and dummies'; 'our modern trading transmuters' (i.e. alchemists); those possessed of 'evil' or 'fiendish' genius who 'love darkness rather than light' and ought to be watched 'with lynx-eyed vigilance'; 'Cagliostro'; and 'some hundred men' of which the Liverpool Exchange ought to be purged.[27] In 'Mr Porcupine's' view, too many members of this class represented a self-interested clique of uncultured, money-grubbing philistines with dubious moral compasses. Modernity, as distinct from "progress", took on negative connotations: 'They are modern in their ideas. They see money in everything; that no one can be anything without it; and, therefore, to make and get money is their sole aim'.[28]

For years, the *Porcupine* attempted to alert readers to the spread of this malaise.[29] The in-house philosophy was unambiguous: 'exposure and ridicule are well-calculated to secure the remedy which the claims of legitimate traders and the reputations of general commerce alike demand'.[30] The approach involved latching onto an abuse (or abuser) and tenaciously highlighting it (or him) until appropriate remedial action was taken. As was observed earlier, repetition and reinforcement were key:

> Some of the gigantic growths of evil at which our quills have been pecking and thrusting and chipping away would seem to defy Hercules; … [b]ut there is something in the old fable of "The Lion and the Mouse" after all; and Porcupine does not despair … "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong!"[31]

'Mr Porcupine's' change of discursive tenor was discussed in Chapter Two. Consistent with this, in its early years the journal's treatment of commercial (im)morality was jocular and somewhat detached. 'Stray Quills: Concerning Going into Business, and the Art of Bill-Discounting' was more facetious than righteous: 'It is not necessary to have any peculiar qualifications to commence business; a pleasing exterior, a smooth tongue, and an absence of money being the chief requisites'.[32] A very early 'Commercial Report' was nothing of the sort; rather, it took a satirical look at the various trade sectors, relying upon puns and jokes of

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[27] H. Shimmin, *The Demonology of Trade* (Liverpool: "Porcupine" Office, 58 Cable Street, 1869).
[28] 'Good for Grabber', *Porcupine* (29 May 1875).
[29] 'Morals in the Market-Place', *Porcupine* (23 November 1867).
[30] Shimmin, *Demonology*, Preface.
[31] '"Porcupine" to his Readers', *Porcupine* (2 April 1870).
[32] 'Stray Quills', *Porcupine* (27 April 1861).

dubious merit.[33]   The feeble punch-line of a whimsical article entitled 'Our "Commercial Morality" at Panes to Make a Show of Itself" was based upon word play.[34] As disillusion set in, the tone of the writing soured.[35] 'Mr Porcupine' dedicated the entire introductory leader to his tenth volume to a passionate indictment of the twisted "moral compass" of what he dubbed 'the Town of the Fraudulent Balance sheet':[36]

> When we began our work it struck us that Liverpool was conspicuous for rapacious money-getting, for profligate money-spending, and for snobbery … People began to doubt whether the whole system of Liverpool commerce, and especially the system of Liverpool banking, was not simply a playing of knaves on the weakness of fools … Liverpool commerce seemed to be founded on this principle: there were two parties to every transaction – the Rogue and the Dupe.[37]

Little, he lamented, had changed in the eight years since he embarked upon his mission. A long and angry exposition on the subject of the recent collapse of a local bank followed: 'But why should they [the reckless bankers] feel shame? … Liverpool commercial opinion does not, we suppose, think very harshly of them… The worst of the men whose conduct brings about all this misery and ruin would be a popular hero and idol in Liverpool, next week, if he only contrived to come out with a new fortune, gotten anyhow, to spend…'.[38] The journal reaffirmed its commitment to seeing its moral 'mission' through, until 'snobbery, money-worship and commercial profligacy ceased in Liverpool'.[39]

The *Porcupine's* criticism extended to the personal conduct of individual commercial types at all tiers of the commercial food chain, from shipping magnates, through the retail and clerk classes, down to skilled and unskilled manual workers. This warrants comment, as the *Porcupine's* content has most often been characterised as focusing predominantly upon the social and the domestic conditions of "the people", comprising both the (labouring) poor and, at the bottom of the pile, the socio-economic 'residuum'.[40] 'Confessions of a Liverpool Warehouseman', would, promised the journal in summer 1867, prove 'interesting to merchants and brokers', offering an insight into 'many curious and instructive incidents in

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[33] 'Commercial Report', *Porcupine* (29 December 1860).
[34] 'Our "Commercial Morality" at Panes to Make a Show of Itself', *Porcupine* (10 October 1868).
[35] 'The Cottage Owners' Greed' , *Porcupine* (29 February 1868): slammed the 'selfishness, inconsistency and impertinence' of local slum landlords - 'these glib and oily and unctuous owners' - who were attempting to bully the Corporation into awarding them public subsidies for improvements to their sub-standard properties.
[36] 'Our Tenth Volume', *Porcupine* (4 April 1868).
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] J. Harris, 'Between Civic Virtue and Social Darwinism: the Concept of the Residuum' in D. Englander and R. O'Day (eds), *Retrieved Riches: Social Investigation in British History, 1840-1914* (Leicester: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 67-102.

his career, dealing with his friends and foes, his struggles and triumphs; and showing how he made his money, and how he lost it'.[41] The series ran for almost thirty 'chapters', ostensibly the memoirs of a man who had travelled to Liverpool as an impressionable youth and found himself working in the dock warehouse industry. It constituted a critique of commercial culture and practice. Whilst the articles did provide a detailed insight into working conditions, they also sketched out the gradual corruption of the first person narrator as he caught the fever of greed which pervaded the morally lax docks environment. Shimmin reportedly received threats and abuse for publishing the series.[42] Other trades and professions - the cotton-broking industry, for example, and "Great Grog", the alcohol-related trades - also felt 'Mr Porcupine's' quills. A twenty-four-part satirical series on the pawn broking trade, 'My Uncle and His Relations', ran between 1875 and 1876. In it, 'Avunculus' wrote facetiously about an exploitative business which was a fact of economic life in Victorian Liverpool; both a contributory cause and symptom of the vicious poverty cycle. This series, too, drew forth the wrath of members of the trade, who accused the *Porcupine* of misrepresentation and causing reputational damage.[43] The town's exchange – Exchange Flags, known locally as 'Change' or 'the Flags' – was one of the institutions which most routinely came in for scrutiny and harsh criticism. As far as Shimmin and his colleagues were concerned, Liverpool's trading hub, a nineteenth-century "Wall Street", was a nest of vipers, where speculation was little more than sanctioned gambling and the corporate structures (such as joint-stock companies) and processes (such as limited liability) which fuelled it, licences to indulge in questionable practices.[44] Change became, for the *Porcupine*, symptomatic and emblematic of all that was wrong with a local commercial culture riddled with 'trickery and bounce'.[45]

The satirical voice was used to heighten impact. Throughout 1867 and 1868 (in a rare instance of the *Porcupine* succumbing to casual, cultural anti-Semitic stereotyping), the venal 'Moses Moneegetter (Merchant)' persona was used to convey the 'Wisdom of the Moneegetters'. In one article, the 'creed' of this imagined community was laid bare: 'A man's moral worth, in the present generation, is his moneyed worth ... Thus if a man had one thousand pounds and another man ten thousand pounds, the moral worth of the latter might be said to be exactly ten times as great as the former'.[46] In a twisted perversion of supposedly established values, 'Mr Moneegetter' stressed the importance of feigning

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[41] Advertisement, *Porcupine* (27 July 1867).

[42] 'Confessions of a Liverpool Warehouseman: Chapter XIV', *Porcupine* (9 November 1867).

[43] 'The Coming Pawnbroker', *Porcupine* (24 July 1875); 'Pawnbrokers' Assistants', *Porcupine* (21 August 1875).

[44] 'Stock Exchange Gambling', *Porcupine* (14 December 1872).

[45] '"The Morality of the Flags"', *Porcupine* (8 April 1865).

[46] 'The Wisdom of the Moneegetters. No. III', *Porcupine* (27 April 1867).

contempt for 'filthy lucre', whilst advising his audience to convince Liverpool society of their 'moneyed worth', if they wished to be considered honest, successful, estimable and worthy of reverence. In 1868, Moses Moneegetter 'chastised' the Chamber of Commerce – which had undertaken to investigate the matter of 'commercial morality' – for failing to embrace the fact that '[Liverpool] society has agreed to worship wealth'.[47] He explained, 'it does seem to me absurd to be holding meetings and making speeches condemnatory of a state of things which we all do our best and utmost to promote'.[48] In the article, the risk and debt averse individual was mocked, his 'old world notions' at variance with the 'enterprising spirit of the age'.[49] 'Moneegetter' roundly dismissed supposedly cherished values: 'To my mind, the talk about truth, integrity and honour – unless they are to be understood as identified with money-making – is mere nonsense'.[50] The true theme of the piece – the hypocrisy of the money-worshipping commercial classes – emerged in the concluding paragraph. This was hard-hitting satire, indeed.

Widespread alarm surrounding commercial morality reached a peak in the late 1860s and early 1870s (due in large part to the financial panic triggered by the disastrous 1866 collapse of the London wholesale 'bankers' bank' Overend, Gurney and Company).[51] The *Porcupine* provided running commentary upon and analysis of the travails of Liverpool's finance sector, particularly its failures.[52] In 1867, 'Mr Porcupine' angrily described 'Liverpool's trading system' as 'rank without ripeness, quickened without sun' and 'crude at the surface, rotten at the core'.[53] Much of the article was given over to a familiar *Porcupine* trope – the lack of consequences: 'Nothing can be more demoralising and degrading than the manner in which Liverpool public men rise and fall and rise again'.[54] Significantly, the writer did not see the problem as structural, but rather as 'owing to a deep defect of morals. What we call business other communities call swindling. The people we often honour as leading citizens and public benefactors would be treated as robbers and impostors in other countries …'.[55] This directly contradicted claims made elsewhere in the *Porcupine* that the problem was systemic. The inconsistency is explained by the freelance policy of the journal, which allowed for a range of diagnoses and prescriptions. 'Mr Porcupine's' position supports the

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[47] 'Moses Moneegetter and the Chamber of Commerce', *Porcupine* (8 February 1868).
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] G. Elliott, *The Mystery of Overend & Gurney: A Financial Scandal in Victorian* London (London: Methuen, 2006).
[52] 'The Stoppage of the Liverpool Royal Bank', *Porcupine* (26 December 1867); 'Liverpool Banking and Liverpool Bankers', *Porcupine* (16 & 23 November 1872); 'Speculation and Peculation', *Porcupine* (16 November 1872).
[53] 'The "Royal" Road to Ruin', *Porcupine* (23 November 1867).
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.*

proposition made by later scholars that as the century progressed, the new class "enemy" became, in socio-political terms, the *nouveau riche* capitalists, rather than the landed aristocracy.[56] The theory is bolstered by another article published in 1866, which highlighted the double-standards which applied to the 'wholesalers' (the financiers and merchants, supported by Liverpool's Liberals) and the 'retailers' (the smaller-scale traders, championed locally by the Conservatives) in the event of financial difficulties.[57] The title of 'Shopkeeping Herrings and Mercantile Whales', which appeared in 1870, speaks for itself.[58] A review of the year 1867 was used not only to focus upon Liverpool commerce but also to comment upon the growing imperviousness to immorality of Liverpool citizens.[59] After citing a number of scandals – the collapse and stoppages of various Liverpool banks; the failure of the legal system[60] – the writer went on to describe 'Liverpool commerce of the modern kind' as a cruel, reckless and debauched 'harlot'.[61] He was keen to make two points; the one diagnostic, the other qualifying. Firstly:

> [T]he fault lies in the system – in the whole life of our modern commerce. It is a life of adventuring, for the most part, of pawnbroking, of gambling. Our Liverpool commerce is one huge Hombourg or Baden-Baden. Honest trade is discouraged; honest profits are scorned: steady systems of every kind are flung contemptuously aside.[62]

Secondly: honourable trading families still existed in Liverpool – and these had nothing to do with the current culture of commerce. The article concluded with the suggestion that – seeing as the current commercial system had failed, 'even when wholly disencumbered of the trammels of morality' – 'a revision of the whole code and principles of our commercial system', no less, be introduced.[63]

This final call, smacking of both wistfulness and naivety, highlights the fundamental idealism of Shimmin and his colleagues, their yearning for simpler times and their bewilderment at and resistance to the rapid changes taking place: 'Perhaps, it we tried another system, and reverted to our old-fashioned moral code, we might make of the time

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[56] F.M.L. Thompson, *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1-22; W. D. Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain 1750-1990* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

[57] 'Monetary Mysteries', *Porcupine* (5 May 1866).

[58] 'Shopkeeping Herrings and Mercantile Whales', *Porcupine* (2 April 1870).

[59] 'Ring out the False – Ring in the True', *Porcupine* (28 December 1867).

[60] Note: including the collapse of Barned's Bank, the run on the Alliance Bank and the stoppage (not the first) of the Royal Bank of Liverpool.

[61] 'Ring out the False – Ring in the True', *Porcupine* (28 December 1867).

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] *Ibid.*

that is coming a Happy New Year'.[64] Notwithstanding some of the critical views expressed about the historical sources of Liverpool's wealth and status, nostalgia for a perceived golden past featured frequently: 'The old British merchants would have absolutely scorned proceedings which are now as common as "the Flags" themselves'.[65] As recently as 2007, it was suggested that 'historians are increasingly coming to agree that earlier reports of the death of the moral economy in nineteenth-century Britain have been greatly exaggerated'.[66] This must remain conjecture. Clearly, Shimmin and like-minded peers believed their particular town to be in its moral death throes.

One field which 'Mr Porcupine' sought to clean up was the maritime trade and the *Porcupine* became the bane of the local shipping industry. For years, the journal followed and championed the work of Samuel Plimsoll, popularly known as the 'sailors' friend' and 'the father of shipping law reforms'.[67] Plimsoll shared Shimmin's 'concern for local justice' and for 'the problems afflicting labour in dangerous trades'.[68] The MP for Derby between 1868 and 1880, he campaigned tirelessly for better shipping legislation and regulation with regard to maritime safety. Party politicking, not to mention the obstruction of self-serving, ship-owning political colleagues, ensured a rough ride – and the *Porcupine* recorded and analysed every development in forensic detail, whilst offering its own diagnoses, prognoses and prescriptions. A survey of the journal's content between 1873 and 1877 reveals *dozens* of articles dealing supportively with Plimsoll and his cause. One of the later discrete references to Plimsoll conveys the *Porcupine's* tacit approval of the man ('Jack's friend') and his endeavours: 'Richly did that minority [of unscrupulous shipowners] deserve the lash he laid about their shoulders'.[69] The *Porcupine's* 'Plimsoll' coverage serves not only as a reminder of the contemporary conflation of legal, political and commercial interests. It also illustrates how the journal saw and judged everything in moral terms. For 'Mr Porcupine', the issue of maritime safety (and by implication, of sound political economy) was very simple: shipowners ought to do the right [i.e. moral] thing by the working man. All too often, they did not. Shipping magnate Charles McIver is recorded as having been a stickler

[64] *Ibid.*
[65] 'The Morality of the Flags', *Porcupine* (8 April 1865).
[66] J. Taylor, 'Company Fraud in Victorian Britain: The Royal British Bank Scandal of 1856', *English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXII, No. 497 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 700-24.
[67] 'Mr. Plimsoll', *Thames Star* (3 June 1898).
[68] A. McConnell, 'Plimsoll, Samuel (1824–1898)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., Sept 2013 http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22384 [accessed 17 Nov 2015].
[69] 'Forwood on Plimsoll', *Porcupine* (16 June 1877).

for safety.[70] As Friedrich Engels observed in 1845, however: 'Liverpool, with all its commerce, wealth, and grandeur yet treats its workers with […] brutality'.[71]

An article entitled 'Ocean Thuggism' featured in the *Porcupine* in January 1869. In it, the writer - identifiable in this case as Shimmin - extended an examination of 'shoddy shipping' through that of ship overloading to that of ship scuttling. Referring to 'recent heavy losses at sea', he posited that this made no sense 'in the face of improvements in science and navigation'.[72] He conceded that persistent bad weather was in part to blame but 'it is also true that there is a great increase in the number of vessels which are sent to sea in a condition palpably unfit to cope with its dangers, and of vessels which are wilfully destroyed or cast away in order that insurances effected far beyond the legitimate value of the property so insured may be realised'.[73] Shimmin sought better regulation. He suggested that given the intrinsic riskiness of the shipping business, both the 'precautions taken by underwriters' and the 'requirements of the law' were 'lax and insufficient' and called upon both underwriters and the legislature to take action.[74] Under the existing, inadequate supervisory regime, no ship could be prevented from embarking upon a voyage. This, he contended, was unconscionable: 'we put no legislative embargo upon the overloading of ships, and the risking of property and life on a very large scale, when it is found that the force of competition and the eagerness to get rich makes men oblivious of the safeguards which are the right of the community'.[75] Shimmin called for government intervention: why could ships not be inspected, like mines and schools and Poor Law boards? On the matter of abandoned or apparently scuttled vessels, he urged that enquiries be far more rigorously evidence-based and pay much greater attention to the issue of insurance, so that it might be established whether the motive was, in fact, plunder and/or insurance fraud. Proving that the *Porcupine* - counter to the claims of many later scholars - did offer constructive criticism, Shimmin described in specific detail the kind of information that might be laid before a legal enquiry:

> [W]hat amount has been insured by the ship-owner on the freight; how much advanced to him by the charterer of the vessel on account of the freight; for how much the vessel herself is insured; what was her first cost; whether the whole of the sixty-four sixty-fourths into which every ship is divided belonged to him, and, if not, whether his co-owners have any separate insurances on their shares; and whether he has indirectly

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[70] W. M. Fowler, *Steam Titans* (New York, London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 263.

[71] F. Engels, *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, originally published in German in 1845 and English in 1892 (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 78.

[72] 'Ocean Thuggism', *Porcupine*, (9 January 1869).

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid.*

effected insurances in the name of his insurance brokers or other parties. The question should also be asked if the ship or any portion of her be mortgaged, and whether the mortgagee has not effected an insurance to cover his advances, irrespective of the insurance effected by the owner, as instances have been known where the owner has transferred the ship to his son, to enable him to become the mortgagee, both parties insuring – one as owner, the other as mortgagee.[76]

In its willingness to hold Liverpool's leading industries to account, the *Porcupine* pushed on an open door. The town's shipowners, in this instance, did not enjoy a particularly good name with other traders. Yet 'Mr Porcupine's' intervention did not signify a lack of originality; on the contrary, it testified to his judgement and ability as a satirist. In identifying and articulating commonly held views, he gave voice to the non-elite, who expressed their appreciation in letters to the editor. In spelling out causes, effects and proposed solutions, he raised the level of informed debate.

CORPORATE CULTURE AND THE CONCEPT OF REPUTATION

The *Porcupine* was at its most perspicacious and trenchant when addressing failure and corruption in business culture. An excellent illustration of this comes by way of a series of mirthless articles published in 1869 and later republished in book form, entitled 'The Demonology of Trade'.[77] These scathing critiques, describing and analysing a range of sharp commercial practices - from the misuse of accommodation bills to insurance fraud, "dodgy" banking deals to reckless trading, the exploitation of company law and loose regulation to the abuse of bankruptcy loopholes - were about Liverpool trade from a local perspective but as contemporary reviews demonstrate, resonated with a much wider audience. The cast of characters lambasted, including Mr 'Bumptious', Mr 'Bilker' and Mr 'Chizzelem', were ostensibly fictional stereotypes but were no doubt instantly recognisable to 'Mr Porcupine's' local audience. The final essay in the series, 'The Moral', provided clarification as to the journal's targets: men who 'make a trade of destroying ships in order to pocket the insurances'; who 'having bartered their souls for gold, have no scruple, when the opportunity offers and the price is high enough, to sell the safety and honour of their country'; who 'having violated every principle of justice in their own private affairs, are still retained on the magisterial bench'; who 'varnish up an insolvent business, palm it upon the public for half-a-million, and retire with the plunder to some gay foreign capital'; who

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[76] *Ibid.*

[77] Shimmin, *Demonology*, 1869; note that the text has been globally misattributed in catalogues to William Cobbett (see, for example, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/6096839).

'outwardly great in charity and good works, are inwardly ravening wolves'; who 'robbing widow's houses for six days, make long prayers on the seventh – staining the name of benevolence, dishonouring the temple of God'.[78] The writer whipped himself up into a lather: 'Bah! The very catalogue is sickening.'[79]

The descriptions and allegations contained in the *Demonology of Trade* papers revealed how one part of Liverpool society regarded many amongst the city's 'wealth creating' business elite (most of whom doubled up as local politicians): that is, with contempt and even outrage. This is significant. Most of the literature on Liverpool's economic heyday is celebratory (even triumphalist), tending to downplay the "darker side" of the city's success and the poor contemporary reputation, within the town, of Liverpool's mercantile class. Provincial satirical periodicals such as the *Porcupine* offered a real-time challenge then, and offer a corrective, now, to an accepted business culture narrative. The 'Demonology' papers formed part of a much wider assault, which included lengthy series on such subjects as 'Building Society Management', many facetiously entitled pieces such as 'Barnacles and Black Diamonds' and 'Bubbel, Birst, & Co.', and hard-headed analyses with unambiguous titles such as 'The Science of Scuttling'.[80]

James Taylor has argued that, in cases of outright commercial criminality, the judicial process 'was not the sole, nor even principal, means by which reputations were destroyed'.[81] Shame and dishonour, social and/or professional ostracism, created via exposure, ridicule or humiliation in a conformist and stratified society, were equally damning. This argument, whilst valid to a degree, is open to challenge. Much of the *Porcupine's* analysis turns such a thesis on its head. One of the most objectionable characteristics of irresponsible, immoral or incompetent merchants and money-brokers was, suggested 'Mr Porcupine', their capacity to bounce back unscathed from such difficulties – essentially, to be rewarded for failure and wrongdoing. Indeed, this was a perennial bugbear of the *Porcupine*. One article on 'commercial adversity' (i.e. business failure) used that favourite of *Porcupine* targets – Exchange Flags – in order to reinforce the point: 'on the "Flags," … [t]here is hardly any appearance of suffering at all. Gentlemen keep up their houses, their equipages, their society, their spirits … What are the commercial morals by which all this sort of thing is

[78] 'The Moral', *Porcupine* (17 April 1869).
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] 'Building Society Management', *Porcupine* (1868-1869); 'Barnacles and Black Diamonds', *Porcupine* (13 February 1869 & 27 March 1869); 'Bubbel, Birst, & Co', *Porcupine* (12 February 1870); 'The Science of Scuttling', *Porcupine* (29 January 1870).
[81] J. Taylor, 'Commercial Fraud and Public Men in Victorian Britain', *Historical Research,* 78, 200 (2005), p. 230.

permitted?'[82] An article concerning 'unmitigated scoundrels', published in 1872, made precisely the same point.[83] A later article, calling for more rigorous checks and balances within companies, suggested that cheats and swindlers were becoming ever bolder and more arrogant, 'living in luxury on [their] ill-gotten gains'.[84] This was no idiosyncratic view, although it took mainstream papers such as the *Manchester Guardian* until the final decade of the century to become unreservedly critical of unbridled private enterprise.[85] Patrick Joyce held the 'performance of political reason' and reputation as a 'public phenomenon' - and the associated notions of openness and publicity - to be 'crucial to the implementation and articulation of liberal modes of rule'.[86] On this basis, Liverpool was no model of liberalism.

To the uninitiated, the *Porcupine's* coverage of commercial (im)morality can appear myopic and obsessive, but placed into wider historical context, its prescience becomes apparent. The formative years of the *Porcupine's* creators, and the decades of the journal's conception and subsequent 'heyday', fall loosely within that period (1848-1875) described by the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm as 'The Age of Capital'.[87] By the mid-century, free market forces were set on their unstoppable course. The 'Spirit of Commerce', to quote Walter E. Houghton (repeating a well-worn Victorian catchphrase), was all-pervasive; indeed, it was the 'paramount principle in the nation at large'.[88] That the Mid-Victorian generation was one pre-occupied with money-making and material gain - conceived as liberal "progress" - was no later or abstract estimation. Contemporaries criticised and celebrated the fact in equal measure; many were confused or ambivalent about it; all recognised it as a defining, catalysing and enduring feature of the age. According to Matthew Arnold, in 1871, 'the love of industry, trade and wealth; the love of the things of the mind; the love of beautiful things … of these three factors of modern life, your middle class has no notion of any but one, the first'.[89] In 1885, the Scottish economic historian William Cunningham wrote about 'the importance of material prosperity as an element in our social life … What Carlyle called the 'cash nexus' is the most prominent characteristic'.[90]

Whilst 'the practicality of the profit motive had become clear … [m]orally and philosophically … big trouble was brewing'; the Spirit of Commerce, particularly when 'un-

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[82] 'How We Bear It', *Porcupine* (30 June 1866).

[83] 'Unpunishable Criminals', *Porcupine* (13 April 1872).

[84] 'Commercial Checks', *Porcupine* (18 October 1873).

[85] 'The Morality of Money-Getting', *Pall Mall Gazette* (26 February 1867); Nord, 'The Victorian City', p. 14.

[86] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 120.

[87] E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital* (UK: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975).

[88] W. E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957, p. 183.

[89] M. Arnold, *Friendship's Garland*, 1903 Popular Edition (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1871), p. 136.

[90] W. Cunningham, *Modern Civilisation in Some of its Economic Aspects* (London: Methuen & Co., 1896), p. vi.

countered and un-enlightened', was growing problematic.[91] How, for example, to square liberal individualism with moral absolutism? How, more prosaically, to fend off temptation? Chris Otter has described the precariousness of the uneasy balance: 'The self-governing liberal subject was master of the baser instincts and passions, a creature of thrift, energy, perseverance and, critically, reflexive evaluation of its own civility; one's civility was always a work in progress, a telos threatened by countless deviations'.[92] The *Porcupine's* writers were not alone in perceiving this tension. By the late 1860s, the subject of commercial morality was a hot topic, fuelled by 'anxieties about the expansiveness of late-Victorian commerce' and 'society's ambivalence to the rise of plutocracy'.[93] Geoffrey Russell Searle went so far as to describe the fundamental dilemma - 'how to reconcile […] economic convictions with […] ethical principles' - as '[t]he central predicament of the British people during this period'.[94]

The Victorian period marked the unstoppable rise of globalisation. Liverpool had enjoyed a head start in so-called merchant capitalism; as early as the 1770s, it was referred to as 'a town, which has for many years been distinguished by its foreign commerce'.[95] A form of proto-capitalism - joint-stock companies and trading on the London Stock Exchange, monopolistic practices and market manipulation - was already established by the late 1600s. Yet the nineteenth century was *the* transformative period of global industry and finance, with both production and services built upon complex systems of "virtual" capital and unashamedly driven by the profit motive. As a result, notions of "property" - and the power attached to it - shifted from land to capital.[96] José Harris and others have highlighted the centrality of these (changing) perceptions of property and their impact.[97] The period saw a concomitant paradigm shift from 'production and habits of saving' to 'consumption and habits of expenditure'.[98] Society struggled to adapt to 'a transformed, and increasingly liberalized and yet under-regulated economy'.[99] Furthermore - and germane to any examination of commercial morality as understood by 'Mr Porcupine' - speculation emerged

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[91] Y. Brook, 'The Morality of Moneylending: A Short History', *Objective Standard: Reason, Egoism and Capitalism*, Vol.2, No. 3 (Fall, 2007), p. 26; S. T. Coleridge quoted in G.R. Searle, 'Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), *Introduction.*

[92] C. Otter, 'Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City', *Social History*, Vol.27, No.1 (Jan, 2002), p. 2.

[93] E. B. Michie, 'Buying Brains: Trollope, Oliphant and Vulgar Victorian Commerce', *Victorian Studies*, 44.1 (Autumn 2001), pp. 78, 94.

[94] Searle, *Morality and the Market,* Introduction.

[95] Enfield, *History of Leverpool*, Preface; J. Fulcher, 'Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction', (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[96] H. de. B. Gibbins, *The Industrial History of England* (London: Methuen & Co., 1897), p. 145.

[97] J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 96-7.

[98] Michie, 'Buying Brains', p. 77.

[99] S. Wilson, 'Regulating the Moral Economy: Law, Morality and Regulation', *British Journal of Criminology* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 1075.

as a key feature of modern capitalism.[100] This was, in short, an era of high-stakes, high-risk enterprise, which upended old certainties and securities and changed long-held attitudes and behaviours.

In common with the majority of Liberal thinkers at the time, Shimmin and his colleagues had no problem with wealth-creation per se. Indeed, commerce could be a force for good. An article published in late 1867 dealt with the *nouveau riche*, snobbery or "caste prejudice", social ambition and status. What is noteworthy about it is the concluding argument, which appears at first glance to contradict the *Porcupine's* usual position: 'We believe that even the race for wealth of the present day is destined to produce a beneficial influence on the face of society'.[101] This stance was consistent with the Liberal self-help orthodoxy of the day, which held that an example might be set by the self-made man who, 'dependent upon his own individual qualities and strength', remained true to himself and did the right thing by others, as a morally responsible social being. Wealth, in such cases, became a deserved reward but not an end in itself. The problem for the *Porcupine* was that the practice did not match the theory. With the right to make money, went the responsibility to acquire, use and spend it wisely and what would today be termed "ethically". 'Mr Porcupine' was keen that capitalism should, to use David Itzkowitz's phraseology, 'possess a moral component'.[102] He was also aware of the limits of private enterprise and the need for public regulation and intervention. The *Porcupine* thus advocated a form of responsible capitalism which corresponded to the theoretical 'centrality of altruism to Victorian life' highlighted by intellectual history scholar, Stefan Collini.[103] In this respect, and despite its evident nostalgia for the past, the *Porcupine* was ahead of its time in promoting a crude form of "philanthrocapitalism" as a means of ensuring a moral equilibrium in commercial life.

To the journal's frustration, there appeared to be very little appetite for this, locally. John Lea has posited that by the mid-nineteenth century, 'merchants had […] learned the importance of restraint and trust as the two key elements of business culture'.[104] This conflicted with the cult of Mammon in a town such as Liverpool, where, he argued 'for the bourgeoisie the underlying unity of economic interest [was] moderated by aggressive competition between companies as well as conflicts between various types of capital'.[105]

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[100] *Ibid.*
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] D. C. Itzkowitz. 'Fair Enterprise or Extravagant Speculation: Investment, Speculation, and Gambling in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Autumn 2002), pp. 121-47.
[103] S. Collini, 'The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol.35 (1985), pp. 39-40.
[104] J. Lea, 'White Collar Crime in Nineteenth Century Britain', *History of Crime and Punishment*, http://www.bunker8.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/history/SO827.htm [accessed December 2015].
[105] *Ibid.*

Walter E. Houghton flagged up another obvious contradiction: the 'social spirit [of the age] … was hardly compatible with the commercial spirit. The cutthroat competition of the time bred a hard and ruthless selfishness that was arraigned by the Victorian moralists'.[106] One socially-prescribed way in which the advantaged and the affluent could act as moral agents was through philanthropic activity. Whilst endorsing the principle, the *Porcupine* challenged the local practice of philanthropy, alleging it had become little more than a social trend intended to make the town's wealthy elite feel and look good.[107] Again and again, the journal criticised Liverpool's merchant princes - its "millionaires" - for their lack of charity; their failure to give something back to the town which had made them. Middle-class tradesmen, it suggested, were far more generous.[108] This idea of the 'fallacy of philanthropy' is consistent with the findings of later studies.[109] Increasingly, the wealthy lived and spent outside of the city, 'reluctant to pay for the city's educational and cultural facilities in the way the Rathbones had advocated'.[110]

This is linked to a further, unedifying conclusion which has been reached by Searle and others and is supported by the *Porcupine's* contemporary analysis – namely, that the 'morality' of middle-class Victorian Liverpudlians only extended as far as their own experience and interest. More inclined to beat their breasts when the social and practical consequences of commercial greed affected their personal convenience and comfort, they were less motivated to take action on the welfare of the urban poor than has hitherto been supposed. In theory, individual and/or corporate reputations were integral to the civic politics of booming provincial cities such as Liverpool. In theory, the *Porcupine's* form of "soft" or "pure" moral suasion appealed to the better instincts or social cravings of the town's commercial movers and shakers – or, if that failed, exploiting their fear of community condemnation. According to scholars like Collini, a man's word was supposedly still his bond. Reputation, 'grounded in character', acted as a safeguard in a rapidly changing commercial environment: 'it was, at all levels, an economic world in which reputation played a powerful part: to be known as a man of character was to possess the moral collateral which would reassure potential business associates or employers'.[111] Yet this was all part of the publicity-associated 'performance' described by Patrick Joyce.[112] The

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[106] Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, p. 192.

[107] 'Philanthropic Cant', *Porcupine* (1 December 1860).

[108] 'A Hint for "Merchant Princes"', *Porcupine* (10 August 1872); 'Generosity of Merchant Princes', *Porcupine* (11 October 1873); 'Tradesmen v. Millionaires', *Porcupine* (4 December 1875).

[109] P. Gombert, 'The Fallacy of Philanthropy', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.32, No.1 (March 2002), pp. 29-66.

[110] G.J. Milne, 'Maritime Liverpool' in J.Belchem (ed.), *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 285.

[111] Collini, 'Idea of "Character"', pp. 39-40.

[112] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 124.

Porcupine set out if not to debunk this as a myth, then to expose the ways in which trust and reputational status were being so grossly abused and the so-called 'stoic-Christian code of honour', as it has subsequently been dubbed, eroded.[113] Liverpool's merchant princes held themselves to be models of 'gentlemanly capitalism' à la Daniel Defoe but the *Porcupine* found this absurd.[114] Chippy, class-conscious articles with titles such as 'The Word "Gentleman"' and 'What is a Gentleman?' poured scorn upon the notion that wealth and social status accrued through trade or inheritance equated to gentlemanliness: 'To say that a man was a gentleman originally, did not imply any moral qualities on his part: it simply implied that he was born of a certain rank, and entitled to the privileges of that rank … The truth is, that the term is still a caste term, and the character of the man designated by it not to be judged from it'.[115]

Analysis conducted by José Harris throws further light upon the behaviour of Liverpool's mercantile class. Harris confirmed that, during the period, merchants and manufacturers made up the largest group of investors.[116] She also found that the period saw a significant increase in the middle-class rentier class (who lived off dividends, pensions and shareholding interests). This had inevitable consequences, identified in George M. Trevelyan's earlier description of a *nouveau riche* who came to represent 'irresponsible wealth detached from the land and the duties of the landowner; and almost equally detached from the responsible management of business'.[117] The conduct of Liverpool's financiers and shipping magnates and cotton brokers as described by 'Mr Porcupine' becomes a case-study in this phenomenon.

Shimmin and his colleagues believed fervently in the historical truism that is the Victorian work ethic: '[f]or the respectable Victorian … work was the chief sphere in which moral worth was developed and displayed'.[118] For some, this was a self-flattering illusion. Many amongst the middle-classes envied and aspired to be like the "idle rich" – 'at the heart of the bourgeois dream was the ideal of gracious living, symbolised by the country house' – thus the impetus to "get rich quick".[119] For self-help evangelists such as Samuel Smiles and his mentor Thomas Carlyle, work was 'a moral categorical imperative' and 'the character-

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[113] B. and K. McKay, 'Manly Honor: The Victorian Era and the Development of the Stoic-Christian Code of Honor', *The Art of Manliness*, 6 November 2012, https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/honor-during-victorian-era/.

[114] Gibbins, *Industrial History*, p. 145: 'Trade is so far from being inconsistent with a gentleman that in England trade makes a gentleman'.

[115] 'The Word "Gentleman"', *Porcupine* (13 July 1867); 'What is a Gentleman?' *Porcupine* (5 October 1867).

[116] Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, p. 106.

[117] Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 586.

[118] Collini, 'Idea of "Character"', pp. 39-40.

[119] Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, p. 190.

forming qualities of labour' were 'more important than the material rewards'.[120] They had no truck with any avoidance of work. Diligence, persistence and perseverance were moral virtues and those who sought to make money quickly and easily, rather than by honest graft, behaved immorally. They believed an 'ethical basis of prosperity' could be established via the 'voluntarist' philosophy of a 'capitalist entrepreneurial ethic'.[121] 'Mr Porcupine' concurred. Yet Charles Darwin's findings caused an inconvenient twist, when his notions of the 'struggle for existence' and the 'survival of the fittest' were appropriated and used to satisfy that which Werner Mosse described as 'the major intellectual needs of evolving bourgeois-capitalist society'.[122] This, argued Mosse, proved pernicious: '[E]volution … provided, as business in particular was not slow to notice, 'scientific' justification for many of its practices' – not least because it 'could be readily identified with competition'.[123] Moreover, 'to numbers of its devotees … evolution appeared happily synonymous also with moral selection … The successful man of affairs was thus authorized to consider himself the embodiment also of moral excellence'.[124] It was a gentleman capitalist's charter, which sprang from the same source mentality as ideas about the deserving and undeserving poor. 'Mr Porcupine' deplored these complex new sophistries, which allowed the town's merchant princes to delude themselves.

There were exceptions to the rule and the *Porcupine* singled these out for praise: 'there are still 'great names' in Liverpool trade – the Heywoods and Brights and Andersons and Rathbones and Littledales'.[125] This is noteworthy, as Shimmin and his writers have been accused by some modern scholars of being merely contrarian. Similarly, the journal was as keen to champion examples of good commercial practice as to expose and lambast poor ones. It wrote approvingly, for example, about commercial cooperation. Whilst this is unsurprising (Shimmin was actively and publicly involved in the Cooperative Movement in the town), it reflected wider opinion and was entirely consistent with the moral values espoused by the journal and recognised by later historians such as Searle: 'Undoubtedly, one reason why cooperation, as an alternative to individualistic capitalism, won so much respectful attention during the mid-Victorian years was not so much its purely economic

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[120] Mosse, *Liberal Europe*, p. 46.
[121] *Ibid.,* pp. 41-59.
[122] *Ibid.*
[123] *Ibid.*
[124] *Ibid.*
[125] These were cut of the same cloth as entrepreneurial industrialist and philanthropist William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925), often held up as a man who exemplified how the 'Victorian values of liberalism and non-conformity permeated all aspects of society, not excluding industry and business': see I.C. Bradley, *Enlightened Entrepreneurs: Business Ethics in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2007).

advantages as the fact that, resting on altruism and benevolence rather than on greed and acquisitiveness, it seemed to be a morally superior mode of activity'.[126]

As a practising Christian, 'Mr Porcupine' also believed in redemption: 'The man whom we have castigated to-day because we believe him to have done wrong, we are ready to commend to-morrow if we see that he is trying to do right'.[127] According to Searle, both utilitarianism and political economy – he distinguished between the ideologies – 'took the calculating individual as the unit of their analysis'.[128] The *Porcupine* did likewise, its conception of the 'calculating individual' (and his capacity to do the right thing), an optimistic and Liberal one. That is why 'Mr Porcupine' persisted in his moral mission. 'Mr Porcupine's' refusal to concede to the moral relativism of the age became an acknowledged hallmark of the journal. He did not represent the majority or "popular" view. '[T]o some,' as Philip Waller put it, 'the rhythms of trade were a clatter to the conscience; but others regarded commerce without apology'.[129] The fact remains that Shimmin and his colleagues did expose some of the undeniable historical truths identified by Waller as features of the time and place, such as the shipowners' scant regard for the safety, health and well-being of the seamen and dock workers, speculation run riot and "civic neglect" on the part of the town's ruling oligarchy. Waller might almost have had the *Porcupine* in mind when he conceded that 'as fortunes were made and lost some sensed that Liverpool was captured by parvenus'.[130]

LIVERPOOL: A LENS ON MODERN CAPITALISM?

Evidence of 'Mr Porcupine's' success as an active moral agent is persuasive. Certainly, having recovered from their pessimism of the late 1860s, Shimmin and his colleagues were claiming credit by the mid-1870s for having made a decisive impact over time: 'Mr. Porcupine has seen his labours bearing fruit in many ways which are full of encouragement. …Times have changed now; the heart of the nation has been fairly aroused to the real existence of evils which were before either doubted or denied…'.[131] The Liverpool journal was bound to exaggerate its influence. What might be cautiously argued, however, on the basis of the journal's own commercial survival, is that its content did find an appreciative audience.

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[126] Searle, *Morality and the Market*, Introduction.
[127] 'Our Seventh Volume', *Porcupine* (1 April 1865).
[128] Searle, *Morality and the Market*, Introduction.
[129] Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism*, p. 2.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[131] 'Our Seventeenth Volume', *Porcupine* (3 April 1875).

There are numerous hints of this: an article highlighting a sharp business practice known as 'the double account sales dodge' (the "fiddling" of sales ledgers) was welcomed by one reader, who wrote in to say: 'I was rejoiced to read your article in last Saturday week's issue about "Grabber", as it strikes at one of the most flagrant commercial immoralities of even the present day'.[132] There is also some indication of the contemporary reception of the 'Demonology' essays, the journal reporting that the series had been very well received, with 'numerous and urgent requests' for the articles to be more widely disseminated.[133] Shimmin advised that the *Demonology of Trade* articles had been republished by the *Figaro* journal in New York, indicating a wider circulation of the essays than has been apparent.[134] He reprinted a letter of gratitude, written on behalf of 'honest men', received from a local businessman.[135] This can be taken as a bona fide piece of correspondence; 'Mr Porcupine' was in no mood to play with his readers. Publication of the articles in pamphlet form would, suggested the writer, 'no doubt do good, and it would be well if copies were sent to the London papers'.[136] That the *Demonology of Trade* compilation was published by popular public demand was reiterated in the book's preface.[137] Shimmin was very quick to comply with requests for a published collection; the book appeared within just weeks of the last essay's appearance in the *Porcupine*, on 1 May 1869. The following month, a brief but complimentary review of *The Demonology of Trade* appeared in the *Manchester Courier*.[138] The concluding *Demonology* essay, 'The Moral', provides evidence of the essays having successfully reached (and rattled) their targets.[139] It also provides instances of appreciative feedback from 'upstanding' businessmen.[140] Elsewhere, the *Porcupine* claimed credit for positive developments. By 1868, the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce had established a 'committee on commercial morality': 'We are glad to find that the strictures of Porcupine upon Liverpool commercial morality have had the effect of stimulating the leading bankers and substantial merchants and brokers into activity'.[141]

As stated at the outset, the *Porcupine* had no public mandate to act as a "moral guardian". It was a self-styled role which reflected the personal values, views and prejudices of its creators. Moreover, the *Porcupine's* overarching position on commercial (im)morality was

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[132] 'Good for Grabber', *Porcupine* (29 May 1875); 'Good for Grabber' (II), *Porcupine* (12 June 1875).
[133] 'The Demonology of Trade', *Porcupine* (24 April 1869).
[134] *Ibid.*
[135] *Ibid.*
[136] *Ibid.*
[137] Shimmin, *Demonology of Trade*, 1869.
[138] 'The Demonology of Trade', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (23 June 1869)
[139] Shimmin, *Demonology of Trade*, p. 53.
[140] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[141] 'Commerce at Confession', *Porcupine* (25 January 1868).

unsophisticated and monomaniacal: Liverpool was in thrall to money-making and corruption was rife. Greed - 'this canker eating up our life'[142] - and excess, giving rise to ruthless competition and a scorn for the "old fashioned" values of 'honour, truth, honesty, love and compassion', were the two deadly sins which lay perniciously at the root of the town's moral sickness.[143] Patrick Joyce has suggested a shift in the mid-century from a fear of corruption to a fear of stagnation, from moral to more 'psychological' and 'social' understandings of human behaviour but the evidence of the *Porcupine* does not support these neat characterisations.[144] All of this must be set against the fact that most Victorians were moral idealists who yearned for simple solutions in an increasingly complex world.[145] The *Porcupine* writers were independent, unremitting and uncompromising. The editorial line was strong and consistent and there is every reason to believe that Shimmin practised what he preached.

The *Porcupine's* moral campaigning drew its credibility and authority from its townology. Its contributors knew - or researched at length - their subject matter (an aspect explored in the following chapter). Unlike many of his journalistic peers, 'Mr Porcupine', in satirical mode, had the advantage of unapologetic polemic on his side. Shimmin et al. saw things in uncompromisingly black and white terms and were consistent and defiant in an age of duality, ambiguity and uncertainty. The journal's writings on the subject of (im)morality may appear naïve or reductive in retrospect. As was intimated in the introduction, they have been dismissed as such. Yet they represented a very real and sincerely-held school of thought – and one which resonated with many in the port town on the Mersey and beyond. Searle identified Chalmers, Malthus, Stuart Mill, Carlyle, Smith, Bentham, Owen and Kingsley amongst key contemporary thinkers who expressed reservations about the new economic order.[146] 'Mr Porcupine' was no John Stuart Mill but he did have a clear moral compass and, in his capacity as a self-declared activist, a determination to explore practical applications and solutions. For all of these reasons, 'Mr Porcupine' must be regarded as a serious actor, and his outpourings considered detailed evidence of the 'intensity' with which, according to H.G. Nicholas, mid-Victorian England 'sought to reconcile material development and public probity'.[147]

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[142] 'The Greed of Gain', *Porcupine* (21 December 1867); 'Manx Greed', *Porcupine* (25 August 1869).
[143] Sloth – that is, the reluctance to work hard, across *all* classes – also played a part, although this was less explicitly addressed.
[144] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 117-18.
[145] C. Dawson in Grisewood, *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*, p. 29.
[146] Searle, *Morality and the Market,* Introduction.
[147] H.G. Nicholas in Grisewood, *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*, p. 132.

CONCLUSION

There is a case to be made that the *Porcupine's* treatment of commercial (im)morality is of wider historical import than the simply parochial. The contemporary Manchester reviewer of *The Demonology of Trade* concluded that the book constituted 'a valuable contribution to the literature of commerce, and as such will be cordially welcomed'.[148] The same assessment might be applied to the *Porcupine's* 'commercial morality' *oeuvre* in its entirety. 'Liverpool,' wrote the *Illustrated London News* in 1886, was 'a world city rather than merely British provincial'.[149] Despite his somewhat self-regarding and rose-tinted view of Liverpool's social and economic progress, local political actor William Bower Forwood was quite correct to state in his 1910 memoir that: 'the growth of the city and its commerce has [since the 1860s] been fully commensurate with the growth of the country'.[150] Whilst it is important not to extrapolate too much from the Liverpool experience, it is equally important not to downplay the town's contemporary eminence and significance. Nineteenth-century Liverpool may have been construed as a self-contained and somewhat idiosyncratic "city state" but popular notions of the town's exceptionalism, however valid, have skewed perceptions of its broader positioning. It was a Lancashire town and a provincial metropolis but scholars have also highlighted Victorian Liverpool's central role as a key node in the emerging global economy between 1870 and 1914, as well as the part played by the 'local merchant class' in 'the growth of the colonial system'.[151] Urban and maritime historian Graeme Milne has described how Liverpool in the nineteenth century had far more in a common with a Hamburg or a Marseilles, than with its English counterparts (note 'Mr Porcupine's' negative construction of this resemblance to 'Hombourg', on page 150).[152] Within this context, studying the *Porcupine's* critique of the town's moral compass in matters of commerce potentially reveals something about the conditions in which the modern global economy took root and flourished; at one interpretive level, Liverpool's commercial history becomes a history of global capitalism in microcosm. Understanding hearts and minds in the city – particularly the awkward, dissenting ones, represented by 'Mr Porcupine' – thus paves the way for a fuller, more nuanced appreciation of modern capitalism's far from seamless rise and rise. Eric Midwinter recognised this grander narrative in respect of the city's commercial past: 'even a brief and cursory resume of some aspects of Liverpool over

[148] 'The Demonology of Trade', *Manchester Courier* (23 June 1869).
[149] 'Liverpool: Port, Docks, and City', *Illustrated London News* (15 May 1886).
[150] Forwood, *Recollections*, p. 32.
[151] S. Wilks-Heeg, 'From World City to Pariah City? Liverpool and the Global Economy, 1850-2000' in R. Munck (ed.), *Reinventing the City? Liverpool in Comparative Perspective* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), pp. 36-50.
[152] G.J. Milne. 'Maritime Liverpool' in J. Belchem (ed.), *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 257-8.

the last century or so become a glance through a lens that reveals glimmerings of regional, national, and world history.'[153]

Liverpool's commercial history is also its municipal history; the Victorian city represented a micro industrial-political complex. The following chapter explains how this played out in practical government and governmentality.

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[153] E. Midwinter, *Old Liverpool* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), p. 12.

CHAPTER SIX

Procrastination, Peddling and Patching

Porcupine, the 'Water Question' and the celebrated Civic Gospel

> Liverpool in all its innocence did not know how scarce water was until told: but like the poor man who was made really ill by being perpetually told he looked so, the town has at last become thirsty.[1]

> Amongst the characteristics of our local representative government, it is remarkable how very little beyond the traditional routine work is done by the spontaneous action or independent investigation of those who are entrusted with the administration of affairs. Nearly every improvement that takes place is produced by some powerful agitation, public calamity, or strong popular feeling.[2]

This chapter is concerned with civic governance and the complex admixture of interests, priorities and motivations which fed into the discourse surrounding it. It illustrates Paul Nord's point about how 'the empirical realities of industrialization, rapid population growth, and environmental degradation … led many urban newspapers to question the ideology of economic liberalism and individualism and to offer instead a more social, more collectivist understanding of modern urban political economy and community'.[3] The consistent and persistent sub-text of the *Porcupine's* running commentary and agitation – weaknesses and failings in municipal planning and management – offers scholars of the period a detailed insight into how critically-minded contemporaries viewed the 'mechanisms of rule'.[4] Provincial satirical periodicals were uniquely positioned to intervene in contemporary debate, to negotiate the space between municipal governance and public opinion and thus to

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[1] 'The Water Difficulty Solved', *Porcupine* (29 July 1865).
[2] 'Sanitary Stagnation', *Porcupine* (1 Feburary 1873).
[3] Nord, 'The Victorian City', p. 75.
[4] L. Frohman, review of Joyce, *Rule of Freedom* in *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol.39, Issue 2 (August 2004), pp. 248-450.

become acknowledged actors within the local political dynamic.[5] Their confrontational 'articulation of dissent' counted.[6]

The *Porcupine's* work on the so-called Water Question serves as a key case study in the broader question of liberal governmentality and townology; a prism through which to examine contemporary attitudes towards the messy reality of local politics and the incubation of a 'new urban ethos' in the modernising cities.[7] Focusing predominantly upon the journal's 'Our Water Supply in Peril' series, published in the early 1870s, what follows tests the *Porcupine's* contemporary analysis against some of the received wisdoms surrounding the so-called 'civic' or 'municipal' gospel; a Whiggish history of progress which, as Christopher Hamlin observed, has 'become part of the triumph of rationality over superstition, recognition over denial, utopian over ideological apology, activism over complacency'.[8]

The common consensus, due in large part to the legacy of late Victorian and early Edwardian "booster" historians (Ramsay Muir is an obvious Liverpool example), is that England's large towns and cities were the modernising powerhouses of the late nineteenth century, with Britain boasting 'a pre-eminent place amongst those nations that first embraced modern values of public service and accountability'.[9] According to this account, the middle and closing decades of the century marked the emergence of an enlightened spirit of municipal socialism rooted in civic pride and aspiration and characterised by 'skills, forethought and enterprise' on the part of progressive movers and shakers.[10] This is not a narrative which 'Mr Porcupine' recognised; his Water Question coverage suggests that Liverpool was, as a corporate entity, no Joseph Chamberlain-led Birmingham and the city's leaders, not quite the municipal visionaries that Whiggish interpretations have since made them out to be.[11] There were contemporaries who recognised that like a Glasgow or a Chicago, Liverpool delivered public services by stumbling default, rather than by design, 'in spite of [itself], and without the application of any organic municipal energy'.[12] Still nascent in the 1860s and 1870s,

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[5] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom,* p. 204.

[6] J. Leppänen, 'A Political Theory of Dissent: Dissent at the Core of Radical Democracy' (Academic Dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2006): 'One requirement of dissent is that it is articulated or voiced'.

[7] Nord, 'The Victorian City', 2015.

[8] C. Hamlin. 'Muddling in Bumbledom: On the Enormity of Large Sanitary Improvements in Four British Towns, 1855-1885', *Victorian Studies* (Autumn 1988), p. 55.

[9] See 'From "Old Corruption" to the New Corruption? Public Life and Public Service in Britain, c.1780-1940', Conference prospectus, Oxford Brookes University, 24-25 January 2019.

[10] Anon., 'Souvenir of the Opening of the Vyrnwy Water Works' (Liverpool Corporation, July 1892); see also G. Tyack, 'The Public Face' in P. Waller (ed.), *The English Urban Landscape* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 303.

[11] J. Ralph, 'The Best-Governed City in the World', *Monthly Magazine* (June 1890), pp. 99-111.

[12] A Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great* Britain (New York: Century, 1893), pp. 71-2.

municipal socialism was contested and resisted.[13] An outcome of municipal enterprise and municipal trading, it was 'a reflection of events, a commentary upon them, and a justification of responses already evoked, rather than a novel initiating force'.[14] This alternative account challenges blanket theories of a national municipal-socialist trend.[15] It also suggests that there may be scope for a broader or revised interpretation of "civic gospel" history.

The Water Question debate throws light upon the multi-faceted nature of the Victorian city. Urban sanitation has most frequently been framed as a public health issue. Yet the contemporary discourse surrounding it was equally concerned with engineering (science), finance (capitalism) and power (democracy) - all defining markers of "progress" in a modernising world and all filters through which the *Porcupine* examined the Water Question. Sanitation infrastructure becomes a leitmotif for more substantive issues. In writing about the 'sanitary city' and the 'hygenisation of the city', Patrick Joyce highlighted the importance of free circulatory systems, physical and ideological, to the well-being of the nineteenth-century liberal town.[16] Asa Briggs described the urban sanitation systems established during the nineteenth century as 'one of the biggest technical and social achievements of the age'.[17] Yet he also described this 'outstanding feature' of the modern city, with its 'network of pipes and drains and sewers', as physically and metaphorically 'hidden'.[18]

By shining the light of transparency upon governance, the *Porcupine* forced the issue to the surface, thereby fulfilling its variously-conceived roles as an 'urban institution', a technology of 'publicity' or 'transparison' and 'an irritant in the city's dominant narrative of modernisation'.[19] Its efforts were paralleled in Birmingham, where the *Dart,* the *Town Crier* and the *Owl* provided 'the most forceful oppositional readings of the city's water scheme, and of the notion of civic progress it symbolised'.[20] These journals substantiate Aled Jones's contention 'that there were at least some voices in late-Victorian [England] that contested the values that were a century later to be embedded in [monuments] to triumphant … urban progressivism'.[21] Ironically, the counter narratives offered by such submerged

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[13] H. Fraser, 'Municipal Socialism and Social Policy' in R.J. Morris and R. Rodger (eds), *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History 1820-1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), pp. 258-80.
[14] J.R. Kellett, 'Municipal Socialism, Enterprise and Trading in the Victorian City', *Urban History Yearbook*, 5, (1978), p. 44.
[15] Belchem, *Merseypride,* 2006.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 62-97.
[17] A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 16-17.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] Frohman, review of Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, pp. 448-450; Jones, '*Dart* and the Damning', p. 15.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[21] Jones, 'Dart and the Damning', p. 3.

textual histories provide some of the most authentic, if trickily oppositional and unflattering, readings of Victorian progress.

'MR PORCUPINE' ON WATER: COVERAGE

In 1874, 'Mr Porcupine' identified the issue of water – its sourcing, supply, use and cost – as having been one of the publication's most pressing preoccupations throughout the previous twelve months:

> One subject of great public interest has … been kept before the town in our columns in a manner which may have seemed obnoxiously persistent by the unthinking, but which has now been justified by the confessions of those who are responsible in the matter. We speak of the Water Question.[22]

He did not exaggerate. The *Porcupine* had been rigorous in its scrutiny of the so-called 'Water Question' – and with good reason. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the issue throughout the nineteenth century, or public awareness of it.[23] The Victorian era may have been celebrated as an age of progress but it was concomitantly an age of overwhelming urban squalor, as the masses gravitated towards expanding industrial and commercial towns woefully ill-equipped, both infrastructurally and strategically, to provide basic amenities.[24] Where this "paradox of progress" was concerned, Liverpool was exceptionally bad.[25] A visitor to the town in 1871 reflected a widely held view when he wrote: '[a] worse watered, a worse cleansed, a worse spot for choice places … than Liverpool was never found in olden or modern times'.[26]

Writing about nineteenth-century investigations into and analysis of public health, Tom Crook used the *Porcupine's* 'narrative accounts' as evidence that '[i]t was not all about numbers'.[27] It is a common misconception that the *Porcupine* dealt solely in emotive description, when - as this chapter will show - the reality is that its writers championed empirical evidence. The *Porcupine's* Water Question coverage was exhaustive, antagonistic, forensic in detail and dogged. The scrutiny fell into three broad categories: policy, process

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[22] 'Our Easter Dues', *Porcupine* (4 April 1874).
[23] Dawson, 'Pamphlet Literature of Liverpool', p. 128; Dawson listed a publication entitled *Hydromania*, produced by a 'Shopkeeper in Liverpool' in 1848.
[24] T. Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (London: Phoenix, 2005), pp. 20-32.
[25] R. Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1907), p. 317.
[26] 'The Sewerage of Liverpool', *Porcupine* (7 January 1871).
[27] T. Crook, *Governing Systems: Modernity and the Making of Public Health in England, 1830-1910* (Oakland California: University of California Press, 2016), p. 95.

and people. No aspect of the subject was considered too trivial or too technical and Shimmin and his colleagues worked hard, in exploring issues ranging from major infrastructure challenges to the micro detail of domestic plumbing, to explore and relate the theoretical and practical arguments. The water 'copy' was not penned solely by Shimmin.[28] Whilst he and his collaborators all agreed that the town's water supply problems were acute, they did not always concur on the causes or the solutions. Still, the journal's overarching editorial position remained clear and consistent: the municipal authorities were not doing enough, quickly, competently or imaginatively enough, to secure for the town an adequate and sustainable supply of water or to meet its sanitary needs. 'Procrastination', 'peddling', and 'patching' were the order of the day.[29] The consequences of such poor, lackadaisical governance would, warned the journal, be dire.

Figure 6.1
Water Question Coverage: 1860-1879
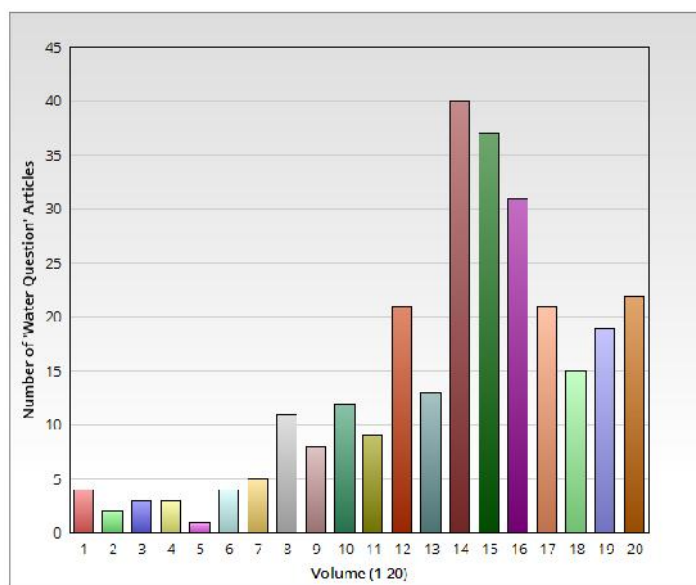
This graph is based upon the identification of almost 300 *Porcupine* sanitation articles spanning nineteen years. Volumes 14-16, (April 1872 to March 1875 inclusive), saw a spike in coverage. This did not correlate to any particular development or crisis; it was not a response to a drought or an epidemic, for example. The *Porcupine* was not simply reacting to events or jumping onto a pre-existing discursive bandwagon. It was pro-actively pushing a "public interest" agenda.

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[28] 'Sewage and Water Closets', *Porcupine* (17 November 1866): Shimmin would never have written '[i]n Liverpool the wants of the poor and rich are amply cared for'.
[29] 'Leaks to Press', *Porcupine* (12 June 1875); 'Our Water Supply in Peril: Defeated', *Porcupine* (14 March 1874).

A forty-seven-part series, 'Our Water Supply in Peril', ran unbroken between August 1872 and May 1874. Representing one of the most tenacious press campaigns to run under Shimmin, it constitutes an excellent example of townology in action. Offering readers a near weekly, rolling critique of municipal action (or inaction) on the subject of water, the series sprang from a determination to keep the subject front and centre of public consciousness and to hound municipal actors into action. It might reasonably be supposed that Shimmin did pen substantial portions of the 'Peril' copy; he hinted as much in the editorial cited at the beginning of this chapter.[30] Notwithstanding the uncompromising, often querulous tone of many of the articles, as an exercise in citizen-cum-investigative-cum-campaigning journalism, the 'Peril' series was rigorous and fair. Its authors set out to deal even-handedly and realistically with their subject. They remained, for the most part, non-partisan and were happy to give praise where praise was deemed due. They appealed to decency, to logic and to common sense.

Crucially, and consistent with the knowingness theorem, the *Porcupine* worked hard through the series to drive informed debate. Although the Victorians remained ignorant about many aspects of science (they did not yet fully understand the nature of waterborne diseases, for example), the educated middle classes embraced rational, scientific approaches.[31] Shimmin and his collaborators were typical in this regard. They drew upon parliamentary findings, statistical analyses, engineers' reports and recommendations, published data, Council and Water Committee minutes and statements, as well as (it ought to be said, as these formed a vital component of townology) upon local intelligence and gossip. They endeavoured, as informed amateurs, to bring clarity and reason to the debate. This was in stark contrast, they alleged, to the town hall authorities, whom 'Mr. Porcupine' lambasted for their ignorance. Indeed, he alleged, this ignorance was wilful, councillors persistently refusing to seek expert opinion, or to heed it when proffered. As a result, he posited, their decision-making could be obtuse.[32] One angry 'Peril' instalment – 'Stinting the Poor' – concerned the proposed reintroduction of communal standpipes into the town's slum streets and courts. 'Mr Porcupine' was outraged that the Council would entertain this backward and short-sighted step: 'To undo the work of improvement, to go back a generation, and restore that which we condemned! Have we learned nothing from the past?'[33] It is ironic but not surprising that it was the satirical press which called for the better use of expertise in the Council's decision-making. Resistance to the professionalisation of public life and administration was rooted in complacency and self-interest.

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[30] 'Our Easter Dues', *Porcupine* (4 April 1874).
[31] 'Pollution of Our Drinking Water', *Porcupine* (8 March 1875).
[32] 'Our Water Supply in Peril', *Porcupine* (16 November 1872).
[33] 'Our Water Supply in Peril: Stinting the Poor', *Porcupine* (15 February 1873).

That it was difficult to keep up with the evidence during a time of rapid scientific advancement was no excuse. It was incumbent upon civic leaders to stay informed. In May 1875, two cross readers wrote in to the *Porcupine* on the subject of the pollution of the mains water supply by water-closets. One, claiming to represent 'a general feeling of indignation', expressed himself appalled by the failure of the authorities to take timely action: 'I ask why, with such convincing proofs, have the Health and Water Committee allowed an evil so fraught with danger to continue year after year?'.[34] The second correspondent provided a partial answer. He recalled the matter having been raised years previously, admitted to having dismissed its plausibility, along with many others (including Dr William Stewart Trench, Liverpool's second Medical Officer of Health, along with the borough engineer at the time), but now recognised the evidence was irrefutable and urged that action be taken.[35] Shimmin and his collaborators were always anxious to highlight the evidential basis for their own analysis.[36] They were also keen to stress their reliance upon professional advice: 'A large volume might easily be filled with evidence … We will simply give two or three instances of recent opinions expressed by men of undoubted eminence and authority'.[37] Such 'men of eminence and authority' included the esteemed and influential former borough engineer James Newlands. Considered pioneering in his own time, having done 'for sanitation [in Liverpool] what Duncan had done for social and preventative medicine', Newlands developed a friendship with Shimmin and acted as an unofficial consultant advisor to 'Mr Porcupine'.[38]

Through its policy of enlightened inclusivity, the *Porcupine* democratised the discursive process. In 1874, 'a large ratepayer, who for many years has taken a deep interest in public questions', entered the debate: 'From the time you have given to, and the deep interest you have taken in, all matters connected with our water supply, I venture to address you upon some points which I think have not received that attention which their importance deserves'.[39] The correspondent proceeded to make a number of detailed suggestions, which Shimmin saw fit to publish verbatim, without comment. This may have been the same correspondent – signing himself 'One Behind the Scenes' – who, later that same year, wrote with some evident technical knowledge about the Rivington pipe line system.[40] It is notable that one reader-correspondent to whom the journal gave a regular platform was William Bennett. A 'pronounced Conservative', regarded in hindsight by some as 'one of the most

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[34] 'Fever Medicine, as Dispensed by the Water Committee', *Porcupine* (8 May 1875).
[35] 'Pollution of our Drinking Water', *Porcupine* (8 May 1875).
[36] 'Our Water Supply in Peril', *Porcupine* (17 August 1872).
[37] 'Our Water Supply in Peril: The Constant and Intermittent Systems', *Porcupine* (2 November 1872).
[38] Midwinter, *Old Liverpool*, p. 110.
[39] 'The Water Question', *Porcupine* (3 January 1874).
[40] 'The Rivington Pipe Line', *Porcupine* (9 May 1874).

notable citizens of Liverpool', Bennett enjoyed a forty year career in Liverpool politics.[41] He came to be known by his peers for his interest in 'sanitary matters' and sat on the Water Committee for over twenty five years. Retired and living in Morecambe Bay, he resigned as alderman in 1873, only to return to public office (and to the Water Committee) in 1875. It was during this two year interlude that Bennett took to writing to the *Porcupine*. Years earlier, in an 1857 pen portrait, a more playful Shimmin had cast Bennett as an obsessive bore on the subject of the town's water supply but had acknowledged with respect his 'more than hydropathic devotion' to the subject.[42] Bennett's letters to the *Porcupine* editor provide a rare example of a local politician (albeit a temporarily exiled one) using the journal as a forum through which to air his personal views. Bennett was obsessed with Liverpool's well-water sources and insisted, until long after the physical evidence had proven otherwise, that they were sufficient to meet the town's needs. That Bennett was temperamentally an eccentric is clear but Brian White's characterisation of him as an oppositionist and 'a man of more prejudice than knowledge' is arguably unfair.[43] Recognising Bennett's passion, Shimmin was quite happy to give column space to his ideas and arguments, as long as they contributed meaningfully and in good faith to public discourse. In this way, the *Porcupine* fulfilled its forum function.

THE WATER QUESTION AND PERFORMED TRANSPARENCY

For all of this, the main historical interest of the 'Peril' series does not lie in the scientific or technical arguments advanced by either experts or amateurs. It lies, rather, in an interpretation of the series as 'performed transparency' and political philanthropy.[44] If, as Owen Roberts proposed, 'Liverpool Town Council was … preoccupied with the water question for much of the 1870s', the general public were not kept informed about this activity.[45] Over and over again, the *Porcupine* lambasted the culture of secrecy within the Council: its habit of operating behind closed doors; of going through the motions with the press, issuing bland statements which revealed little to nothing about the discussions taking place and the decisions being reached; of failing to be upfront with the public about the extent and nature of the challenges faced. Shimmin's journal logically observed that this approach led to suspicion and distrust on the part of the watching citizenry.

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[41] 'The Late Alderman Bennett', *Liverpool Mercury* (19 September 1885).
[42] Shimmin, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, pp. 53-5.
[43] White, *Corporation of Liverpool*, p. 56.
[44] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 126.
[45] O. Roberts, 'The Politics of Health and the Origins of Liverpool's Lake Vyrnwy Water Scheme, 1871-92', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (December 2000), p. 312.

Cautions such as this were well-intentioned. The 'Peril' series set out to offer constructive criticism. Casting himself as a "critical friend", Mr. Porcupine's declared that his aim was to 'assist' the Water Committee in finding workable solutions to complex problems. The *Porcupine's* reputation for being oppositional for opposition's sake is unjustified. As has been discussed, the motivation of Shimmin and those who wrote for the journal sprang from a philanthropic impulse which was more political than social. They were keen to support social improvement, as were all good Liberal activists but recognised the need to tackle root causes, rather than symptoms. What was needed was strategically-planned structural, legislative and regulatory change – and only good urban governance could achieve that. Journalistic exposure would help to push the necessary reforms.

The *Porcupine's* Water Question content must be understood in the correct context. As has been stated, a charge repeatedly levelled against the Liverpool publication is that it exaggerated the town's social evils for sensation's sake.[46] This is unwarranted; an anachronistic critique which was not expressed by contemporaries and which erroneously aligns the *Porcupine* approach with the 'New Journalism' rather than with the older forms of journalism in which it was rooted. The journal's reportage and critical commentary took inspiration from the intrepid work of London's early social scientists and chroniclers. In describing local squalor, Shimmin and his colleagues saw no need to embellish; the facts, however luridly conveyed, spoke for themselves. 'The Mysteries of the Courts', a series published between November 1862 and March 1863, is a case in point. This set out to investigate the living conditions experienced by the residents of Liverpool's hidden courts and back-streets. It returned repeatedly to the subject of the inadequate water provision in these grim enclaves and its disproportionate and unjust impact upon the poorest classes: 'but we were surprised to find tenants there were *without water* [original emphasis]. They had been in this position for three months … the people have to steal the water they want'.[47] The situation in No. 6 Court, off Thomas-street, was graver still: '*These houses have been without water for nine months*! [again, the emphasis is original] … The fact that the families here have had to beg, borrow, or steal water for nine months, calls for prompt action'.[48] The series also gave a few of these historically elusive inhabitants a rare, if indirect, voice on the subject. A woman found washing some crockery 'had a small tub or bowl on a stool, and what it contained seemed more like puddle than water, and she complained bitterly of the sufferings they had to undergo for want of water'.[49]

[46] Walton and Wilcox, *Low Life*, pp. 30-31.
[47] 'The Mysteries of the Courts: An Oriel Prospect', *Porcupine* (24 January 1863).
[48] 'The Mysteries of the Courts: Thomas-street', *Porcupine*, (29 November 1862).
[49] *Ibid.*

The history of Banastre Street, in the slum district of Vauxhall, serves as proof positive that the *Porcupine* was not alarmist. In 1840, the town's inaugural medical officer of health, Dr Duncan, had described the dreadful sanitary state of one of its courts to a Parliamentary Select Committee on the Health of Towns.[50] According to later research, by the mid-1840s 'the 52 inhabitants of Banastre Street had but one tap among them … Each tap operated for a little over an hour three times a week, sometimes at six in the morning. Moreover, a householder might pay up to £10 a year for this sporadic privilege, a massive account even by today's rating'.[51] In 1849, the *Liverpool Journal* wrote about 'filthy Banastre Street' in relation to cholera.[52] Over two decades later, the *Porcupine* angrily asked why the beleaguered inhabitants of this long-standing "grot spot" were still being short-changed over sewer arrangements.[53] As journalists who took pride in and drew credibility from their knowingness (including their familiarity with the town's recent local history), Shimmin and his collaborators had identified an area of desperate need and were outraged that such squalor persisted in a locale which had for so long been recognised as an incubator for disease and premature death. Indignation, not sensation, was the motivating force.

A brief survey of the Liverpool's water supply history suggests that this woeful state of affairs could not be attributed to impotence on the part of municipal government. By 1860, the year of the *Porcupine's* launch, water had long been a controversial subject in the town – a veritable "apple of discord", its history a 'record of wrangling, opposition, and counter-opposition during nearly a hundred years', according to Liverpool's Edwardian historians.[54] The 'apple pips' of discord had been sown in the eighteenth century, when proposals to bring water in to the town from private outside sources had initially been opposed. Until the mid-1840s, the supply, provided from local wells and boreholes by two private companies, was both inadequate and prohibitively expensive.[55] These two firms, which made huge profits on their business, alternately colluded and competed, their territorial workers occasionally resorting to "Wild West" style brawling in the streets.[56] The resolution of this problem through the eventual municipalisation and extension of the supply did not represent, as some earlier scholars claimed, a joint determination between 'the Corporation and the townspeople … to strike against the monopoly of the two companies and make the water supply a public

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[50] 'Report from the Select Committee on the Health of Towns; together with the minutes of evidence taken before them, and an appendix, and index', Minutes (384), *Hansard* (1840), p. 149.
[51] Midwinter, *Old Liverpool*, p. 102.
[52] 'Cholera: A Walk Through the Cholera Districts of Liverpool', *Liverpool Journal* (24 November 1849).
[53] 'Banastre-Street Sewer', *Porcupine* (29 June 1872).
[54] Shimmin, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, pp. 29-34; F. Hird, *Lancashire Stories*, London: TC and EC, c. 1912 (Liverpool: Book Clearance Centre, 2005), pp. 76-9.
[55] Midwinter, *Old Liverpool*, p. 101.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

concern'.[57] It resulted from the shame and shock caused by the findings of the 1844 Royal Commission into the condition of populous towns, from top-down legislation and from the pressure brought to bear by the public health movement.[58] As Asa Briggs put it, the 'sanitary idea' was originally pushed by enthusiastic amateurs, not political leaders.[59]

The history of the 'first phase' of Liverpool's modern water supply and the rancorous political debate surrounding it in the late 1840s have been well documented.[60] A plan to build a reservoir at Rivington Pike, considered extravagant and unnecessary by the 'economists' on the Council, grew fraught as projected and actual costs mounted.[61] The controversy weakened party political allegiances and caused several prominent pro-Rivington worthies to lose their local government seats. Yet the Rivington Pike debacle was short-lived and did not threaten the natural political order over the longer term.[62] Eventually, the scheme was 'quietly adopted' and 'party unity … restored'.[63] The outcome did not constitute a municipal triumph: 'there was, in fact, no real alternative'.[64] It took a full ten years to come to fruition and when the pipeline went live in 1857, the reservoir failed from the outset to provide an adequate, constant supply of water.[65] Controversy rumbled on around escalating costs and the "anti-Pikist" councillors continued to be obstructive. Water remained a contentious, politically sensitive and problematic issue into the late 1880s and it was not until 1892 that Liverpool finally secured a sufficient and safe supply from North Wales.[66] It is significant that 'Mr Porcupine's' antagonistic Water Question commentary began where the Rivington Pike debate tapered off, challenging the subsequent claim that 'by 1860 Liverpool, in water-supply and sanitation as in social medicine, was regarded as an example to the nation of what could and what must be accomplished'.[67]

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[57] Hird, *Lancashire Stories*, pp. 76-9.
[58] 'Liverpool's History and its Impact on the Natural Environment', Part 2. National Museums Liverpool http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/archaeology/historic-characterisation-project/Liverpool-Part-2.pdf [accessed 10 May 2017].
[59] Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 22.
[60] G.H. Pumphrey, *The Story of Liverpool's Public Services* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1940), pp. 120-34.
[61] White, *Corporation of Liverpool*, pp. 56-7.
[62] Collins, *Politics and Elections*, pp. 55-6.
[63] Collins, *Politics and Elections*, p. 67; Picton, *Memorials*, p. 507.
[64] White, *Corporation of Liverpool*, pp. 56-7.
[65] 'Liverpool 1847-1997: A Healthy Place to Live?' National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside (undated publication).
[66] 'Deficiency of Water at Liverpool', *Financial Times* (7 March 1888); S. Sheard, 'Dr. John Stopford Taylor, MOH for Liverpool, 1877-1893: the Politicisation of Public Health', University of Liverpool http://www.evolve360.co.uk/Data/10/Docs/13/13Sheard.pdf [accessed 10 May 2017].
[67] Midwinter, *Old Liverpool*, p. 114.

TOWARDS A REASSESSMENT OF THE 'CIVIC GOSPEL'

The so-called "civic gospel" is predicated upon an assumption of civic empowerment. It follows that making sense of a contemporary narrative which alleged civic impotence involves some interrogation of the balance of power between central and local government during the period. Robert Owens observed that 'the initiative for reform came very much from the town council itself rather than from the government'.[68] This, according to the *Porcupine*, was the problem; Liverpool Town Council was unable or unwilling to seize the nettle.

That the Rivington Pike supply almost immediately proved insufficient was only partly due to demand outstripping supply as Liverpool's population mushroomed. There were other, more complex reasons for its failure. Some later observers have rightly attributed it not just to 'inadequacy' but also to waste in transit 'through defective fittings *which the Corporation did not possess statutory powers to abandon*' [*emphasis added*].[69] This qualification goes to the heart of what remains an open question about municipal autonomy and capability during the supposed age of the self-governing city. By the early twentieth century, the power and potential of local government - particularly when it came to the efficient and economic delivery of public services and amenities - was taken as a given.[70] It is difficult to reconcile this confident *fin-de-siècle* assessment with the ambiguous historical record. It is broadly agreed that the incorporated nineteenth-century town or city enjoyed unprecedented levels of autonomous self-government, particularly following the enactment of the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, a 'charter of self-government … sound in principle, luminous in character, and pregnant with possibilities', as late Victorian Alfred Davies put it.[71] Geoffrey Best conceived of the mid-century period, until into the 1870s, as the 'peak' of municipal potential, highlighting the importance of local (private and municipal) acts over permissive general statutes: 'local acts almost necessarily meant local action'.[72] In his view, corporations were laws unto themselves, their self-determination rooted in an individualism which was not to be overtaken by collectivism until the 1880s. Yet Best wrote about possibilities, not guaranteed action. The enabling powers routinely lapsed, before councils were able or willing to marshal the necessary political support and resources.[73] When this

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[68] Roberts, 'Politics of Health', p. 309.

[69] A. Cox, 'History of the New Liverpool Water-Supply. Lake Vyrnwy, North Wales', *Graphic* (14 July 1892).

[70] W. Cunningham, *Western Civilisation in its Economic Aspects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 245.

[71] A.T. Davies, *The Relation of Municipal Action to Morals* (London: The Church of England Temperance Society, 1899), p. 3.

[72] Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain*, pp. 56-7.

[73] J. Sheail, 'Government and the Perception of Reservoir Development in Britain: An Historical Perspective', *Planning Perspectives*, 1:1 (1986), pp. 47.

happened in Liverpool, as it routinely did, it incurred 'Mr Porcupine's' spluttering wrath: 'Another year is to elapse before powers to obtain a new water supply are to be sought!'[74] The *Porcupine*'s stance on this issue supports Christopher Hamlin's portrayal of local government 'run by a shopocracy of small businessmen, too self-interested and narrow-minded to see the long-term benefits of sewer systems and water supplies and unwilling to accept (or pay for) the expertise of engineers, chemists, or medical professionals'.[75] This reinforces the conclusion reached by Asa Briggs, who argued that 'the story of twentieth century local government has *not* been a story of 'ever-onward progress' and that the 'chief lesson of the Victorian city for the "urbanist" is in what to avoid'.[76]

According to accounts which focus upon the role of national government, the responsibility - and thus the credit or blame - for progress on the Water Question lay predominantly with power-mongers in Whitehall and Westminster. In reality, whilst central government did shape policy and pass permissive legislation (through its major Reservoir-Bills, for example), it took a passive approach to their implementation.[77] Its involvement was usually piecemeal and uncoordinated and the regulatory framework, 'weak and hands-off'.[78] Although parliamentary select committees played an authorisation and scrutiny role, they rarely intervened in local government unless called upon to act as arbiters in disputes which had national dimensions and/or had reached crisis point – arguments over contested water catchment areas, for example, or conflicts between municipalities and private sector interests and agencies. The *Porcupine's* Water Question coverage, focused upon local developments and decision-making and with relatively little to say about the role of Parliament and Government other than as a regulatory (and salutary) fact of life, bolsters the argument that the power and the initiative lay – and, more importantly, was recognised by contemporaries as lying – with the municipal leadership of the town. Whether this was deemed desirable is open to debate. 'Mr Porcupine' made clear what he thought of the national "light touch" policy:

> That Government interference has long been required no one who has studied the water
> question will doubt. It is required to prevent such patching and peddling as our own
> Water Committee have been guilty of.[79]

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[74] 'More Delay and More Danger', *Porcupine* (29 August 1874).

[75] Hamlin, 'Muddling in Bumbledom', p. 57.

[76] Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 16-17.

[77] D. Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976), p. 154; Sheail, 'Government and the Perception', p. 55.

[78] J. Hassan and P. Taylor, 'The Politics of Water in Early and Mid-Victorian Britain: The Experience of Bolton', Manchester Metropolitan University, Department of Economics Discussion Paper No. 96-01 (1996).

[79] 'Our Water Supply in Peril: The New Scheme', *Porcupine* (9 May 1874).

This was not a call for centralised control; the Government was not the *Porcupine's* target audience. Rather, it was an attempt to shame, goad and warn municipal actors into getting to grips with their responsibilities: 'In national affairs such negligence and indifference would never be permitted'.[80] Still, it is a telling indictment of devolved urban governance that a frustrated 'Mr Porcupine' was on several occasions forced to wonder whether national intervention might be preferable to the bumbling of the local authorities. Municipal socialism this was not.

Liverpool was no flagship on water matters, despite early progress on other aspects of sanitation.[81] The town may have been pioneering in buying out its private water companies under a local Act in 1847 but the corporation had in fact been empowered to construct waterworks since the 1780s. For decades, those 'powers had lain dormant'.[82] Moreover, the town had, like the other urban centres, long been in a financial and regulatory position to make headway.[83] Notwithstanding the alarming expense of major infrastructure projects and the subsequent wariness of electorally expedient political leaders, Liverpool was a wealthy city, and reform was a matter of moral and ethical priorities. One late Victorian essayist reflected widespread recognition of this: 'In many quarters it is considered more noble to have lowered a rate than to have uplifted a community'.[84]

The reluctance of ratepayers does not fully explain Liverpool's faltering progress. John Hassan and Peter Taylor have attributed many of the delays in finding local sanitation solutions in the various urban centres to 'party political squabbles', citing the case of Bolton as an example.[85] The *Porcupine's* coverage of the water supply issue post 1860 suggests not controversy but complacency. It also suggests frustration on its authors' part with the spreading bureaucratic machine and all that it entailed in the way of sharp practice and low-level corruption: 'This is not red-tapeism, but something much worse'.[86] By the 1860s, the committee system of delegation was well established in the larger municipalities and the *Porcupine's* most rigorous scrutiny and harshest invective were reserved for Liverpool Corporation's Water Committee. 'Mr Porcupine' repeatedly questioned the commitment, motivation, wisdom and decision-making capacity of this body. It was, he concluded, unable and/or unwilling to recognise the gravity and urgency of the water issue. Its members were too susceptible to the influence of external vested interests (builders and landlords, brewers

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[80] 'What Other Councillors Say', *Porcupine* (1 November 1873).

[81] F. Dolman, *Municipalities at Work: The Municipal Policy of Six Great Towns and its Influence on Their Social Welfare* (London: Methuen & Co., 1895).

[82] Picton, *Memorials*, p. 249.

[83] J. Sheail, 'Government and the Perception', p. 53.

[84] Davies, *The Relation of Municipal Action to Morals*, pp. 3, 5-7.

[85] Hassan and Taylor, 'Politics of Water', p. 120.

[86] 'The State of the Sewers', *Porcupine* (18 September 1872).

and publicans) and all too frequently motivated by personal and professional self-interest. They failed to make use of the "scientific" evidence available, demonstrated poor collective judgement and maintained a culture of secrecy and obfuscation. Too many members sat on the Committee for the perks and status. They were also, in his view, too motivated by party politics. Such attitudes and behaviour were anathema to 'Mr Porcupine' and his associates, who held a recognisably "modern" take on the nature of public service and on what constituted good democratic practice.

Asa Briggs regarded good municipal governance as an effect of the 'civic gospel', the 'fruits' of which 'included a sweeping reorganisation of the functions and finances of local government'.[87] Where 'Mr Porcupine' was concerned, it was the very culture which needed to change. There are distinct shades of Dickens' Circumlocution Office in the *Porcupine's* satirical portrayal of the Water Committee.[88] Shimmin's formative influences stretched back into the late eighteenth-century and - the progressiveness of 'Mr Porcupine' notwithstanding - his personal values were rooted in the early Victorian, "Dickensian" era.[89]

Liberal-leaning Shimmin was not setting out to score partisan points. Throughout most of the period in question, the majority of the Water Committee members were Conservative but 'Mr Porcupine' did not seek to make party political capital out of this fact, paying closest attention to the two individuals who, in their capacity as successive (Liberal) chairmen of the Committee, acted as its leaders, representatives and public spokesmen.[90] Henry Christie Beloe ('King Beloe') and John Hays Wilson both enjoyed long and successful careers as local politicians and both were later recognised for their work on the 'Water Question'.[91] 'Mr Porcupine's' judgement of these two individuals fluctuated. Just weeks after praising Wilson for his energy, 'Mr Porcupine' was lambasting him: 'Mr. Wilson appears to be so obstinately bent on carrying a Water Bill to Parliament this session that he is deaf to all remonstrance; and it is to be regretted the Council did not restrain his impetuosity'.[92] A councillor or alderman was only ever as good as his last action or decision and 'Mr Porcupine' was not prepared to allow local politicians to ride complacently upon their reputations.

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[87] Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 184.
[88] C. Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, first published 1857 (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1996), pp. 96-113.
[89] H. House, 'The Mood of Doubt' in Grisewood, *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*, p. 75.
[90] 'Liverpool Town Council', *Liverpool Mercury* (10 November 1874).
[91] 'A Perilous Retrogression', *Porcupine* (16 December 1865).
[92] 'The Rejection of the Water Bill', *Porcupine* (20 December 1873); 'The Poll on the New Water Bill', *Porcupine* (21 February 1874).

'Mr Porcupine' rarely deigned to comment upon the ordinary members of the Water Committee. A scathing article entitled 'What Other [Water Committee] Councillors Say' began, 'Practically nothing. Many of them literally nothing'.[93] Most commonly, he cast general, non-specific aspersions upon members' motivation, competence and financial probity. He also questioned their commitment by drawing attention to frequent mass non-attendance at Committee meetings.[94] In his view, the complacent, self-serving mentality shared by too many town councillors went to the very heart of their poor performance as public servants. Three quarters of the Water Committee members lived in salubrious outer suburbs and townships beyond the urban core, safely removed from the worst of the squalor caused by lack of water. Many also benefitted from an iniquitous water subsidy enjoyed by those outlying districts served by Liverpool's municipal supply. That town councillors were reaping the rewards of short-sighted legislation they had themselves drafted, added insult to injury. Even the more measured, more diplomatic *Liverpool Mercury* saw fit to comment upon this.[95]

It was perceived indifference on the part of the Water Committee, an 'atrophy of the sympathies' leading to practical stasis, which the *Porcupine* held to be most objectionable.[96] In summer 1870 Shimmin printed a piece of correspondence, whose author commended the journal for its 'able article' on the subject of free baths for the poor.[97] The bulk of the commentary which accompanied this reader's letter was given over to an attack upon the apathetic inaction, born of vanity and indifference, of 'Water Committee men and those who have the power to confer a boon upon the people'.[98] Another reader-correspondent thanked the journal for its 'independent and fearless advocacy' but despaired of the Health Committee's seeming paralysis on the subject of drains and sewers: 'they neither move backwards nor forwards, and seem quite content to let very bad alone'.[99]

This inaction is what so frustrated 'Mr Porcupine'. Politics scholars have tended to describe Liverpool's 'dichotomous social structure' in neutral terms, inferring that the disconnect between the needs and priorities of the citizenry and those of the local oligarchy was inevitable.[100] Sociologists have blamed residential segregation, taking little account of the fact that the middle classes frequently passed through and worked close by the slum areas or

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[93] 'What Other Councillors Say', *Porcupine* (1 November 1878).
[94] S. Sheard, 'Water and Health: the Formation and Exploitation of the Relationship in Liverpool, 1847-1900', *THSLC*, Vol. 143 (1993), p. 158; 'Our Water Supply in Peril', *Porcupine* (12 October 1872).
[95] 'The Liverpool Water Supply', *Liverpool Mercury* (5 December 1973).
[96] Scott, 'Function of the Press', pp. 66-9.
[97] 'More Bathing Wanted', *Porcupine* (6 August 1870).
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] 'The Liverpool Sewers', *Porcupine* (13 July 1872).
[100] Collins, *Politics and Elections*, p. 45.

that, for most of the period, 'Liverpool was a walking city for all but the very rich'.[101] The evidence of the *Porcupine* challenges Patrick Joyce's idea of 'liberal' walking around 'the republic of the streets'.[102] It was the sociologist and historian Margaret Simey who baldly identified indifference as a cause and effect of the city's growing inequality gap.[103] It is difficult to ignore this idea of fundamental and longstanding apathy towards social welfare, particularly in light of the commercial philistinism associated with Liverpool throughout much of its modern history.[104] Until the late 1840s, 'water was available only to those who could pay for it, and business interests came before those of the public health'.[105] 'Mr Porcupine' wrote angrily about this, following a workhouse fire which saw the dock warehouses prioritised over pauper lives.[106] Tellingly, it was the Liverpool Guardian Society for the Protection of Trade, rather than the Town Council, which in 1845 conducted a rigorous inquiry into the water supply matter.[107] The Rivington Pike scheme had been debated almost wholly in terms of the economy, not of social or political philanthropy.[108] By the 1860s, according to the *Porcupine*, it was less concern for others than discomfort and inconvenience to themselves, which spurred the town's ruling elite into action on the water supply, 'the pragmatic evidence of the senses, as well as the realisation that fever cared not for social gradation'.[109] The councillors' detachment fed into and off their ignorance: 'They might learn many profitable lessons if they would make an occasional visit to courts and alleys'.[110] Such ignorance signalled outright immorality:

> [No] scruples appear to trouble the Water Committee. No thoughts of wrong and inconvenience to the poor, no thoughts of hindrance to the work of amelioration. Seemingly the question has never been seriously considered either by the Council or committee.[111]

According to Hanlon's (misattributed) razor, one ought not ascribe to malice that which can be explained by stupidity but incompetence, for Shimmin and his colleagues, was as

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[101] R. Rodger, 'Slums and Suburbs: The Persistence of Residential Apartheid' in P. Waller (ed.), *The English Urban Landscape* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 234; C.G. Pooley, 'Choice and Constraint in the Nineteenth-Century City: A Basis for Residential Differentiation' in J.H. Johnson and C. G. Pooley (eds), *The Structure of Nineteenth Century Cities* (London & Canberra: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 222.

[102] Joyce, Rule of Freedom, p.17, pp. 210-239.

[103] M. Simey, *Charity Rediscovered*, p. 51.

[104] 'Account of the State of Society and Manners in Liverpool', *Monthly Magazine*, No. 67 (January 1801).

[105] 'Liverpool 1847-1997: A Healthy Place to Live?' (undated) National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

[106] 'Fire and Water', *Porcupine* (20 September 1862).

[107] White, *Corporation of Liverpool*, p. 40.

[108] Collins, *Politics and Elections*, p. 58.

[109] E. Midwinter, *Old Liverpool*, p. 101; 'The Constant and Intermittent Systems', *Porcupine* (2 November 1872).

[110] '"Cadging" Water', *Porcupine* (9 November 1872).

[111] *Ibid.*

inexcusable as indifference.[112] On several occasions, 'Mr Porcupine' accused the Committee of bungling the legislative process. He was appalled, for example, by a new Water Bill (relating to plumbing) being drafted and debated by the Council in late 1873: '[i]t is evident that the Bill will have to be amended in several respects before it will be satisfactory to the town, or worthy of submission to Parliament'.[113] He was right. The much reworked Bill was eventually rejected locally under the provisions of the Borough Funds Act, leaving the Corporation back where it had begun. The exercise had been a shambles, as Shimmin observed with bitterness, rather than *schadenfreude*.[114] Moreover, '[h]ad they gone before the town with a Bill for increasing the supply, there would have been a clear issue to determine; but this Bill had no distinct object, and was based on no sound principle'. 'Mr Porcupine' had a warning and a prediction for the Water Committee members: 'The ratepayers … will not accept a crude, incomplete, harassing and unjust measure such as the committee have been endeavouring to promote … the proceedings of the committee will in future be jealously watched. They will be looked upon with suspicion. They will be an unpopular committee, and their seats in the Council will be in danger'.[115] Shimmin and his colleagues occasionally went further, to accuse the municipal authorities of flouting the law. Professing incredulity, in 1874, that the Corporation was seriously debating a return to an intermittent water supply, 'Mr Porcupine' was unequivocal in his judgement that councillors were 'acting illegally' in failing to provide a 'constant', 'abundant' and 'wholesome' supply of water, as decreed under the terms of the 1847 Water Act.[116] Such cavalier behaviour would, he argued, cause Liverpool to become a national laughing stock. In a calculated barb, he suggested that the town might take a lesson or two from "rival" Manchester in how to conduct such business efficiently.[117]

None of this unedifying detail squares with the idea of an enlightened civic creed having captured the Liverpool imagination. Urban historian Derek Fraser argued that the socially useful role of municipal corporations in urban improvement and their responsibility for urban community welfare were recognised and accepted relatively early in the century.[118] Eric Midwinter went so far as to suggest a 'semi-socialist sentiment' existed in Liverpool by the mid-1840s, long before the emergence of a coherent 'municipal gospel' in the 1870s.[119] The implication, that a culture of forward thinking was well established, is open to debate.

[112] Believed to derive from Robert A. Heinlein's devil theory fallacy in 'Logic of Empire', *Astounding Science-Fiction* (March 1941).
[113] 'The New Water Bill', *Porcupine* (6 December 1873); 'Ratepayers! Awake!' *Porcupine* (24 January 1874).
[114] 'Defeated', *Porcupine* (14 March 1874).
[115] *Ibid.*
[116] 'How is Liverpool to be Supplied in the Future?' *Porcupine* (21 March 1874).
[117] 'The Council Meeting', *Porcupine* (17 August 1878).
[118] Fraser, *Urban Politics*, p. 154.
[119] Midwinter, *Old Liverpool*, pp. 103-6.

Like other urban centres, Liverpool did inch forward in fits and starts and at the close of the century, its waterworks were being held up globally as an example of cutting-edge engineering.[120] Its eventual achievements in sanitation have been retrospectively celebrated as a fine testimony to the town's pioneering tradition and the "municipal gospel" has been read into this account. Again, this is a romanticised interpretation. Liverpool's leaders throughout the period were merchants first, political practitioners second and ideologues, third.[121] The Corporation did not have at its helm a progressive Joseph Chamberlain, that 'pioneer of radical local government' who spearheaded Birmingham's Victorian improvement.[122] The evidence of the *Porcupine* suggests that those governing Liverpool were not the proactive, visionary municipal socialists of subsequent lore. In a characteristically backhanded compliment, 'Mr Porcupine' put it as follows: '[O]n the whole, they are an inoffensive body, and not at all of the tyrannical, revolutionary spirit they are represented to be by some individuals'.[123] These hapless councillors might be forgiven for feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of the water supply challenge. The *Porcupine* acknowledged this. However, there was no excuse for foot-dragging or downright inertia.[124]

In retrospect, 'Mr Porcupine's' accusations of apathy, incompetence and self-interest can appear unduly critical, particularly when set against the evidence of known historical outcomes. Myriad intangible factors were at play, not least that fundamental problem of Liberalism pinpointed by Asa Briggs, that 'economic individualism and common civic purpose were difficult to reconcile'.[125] Modern scholars have offered generous post facto interpretations of this 'muddling in bumbledom', pointing to the enormity of the difficulties facing towns.[126] The *Porcupine* evidence indicates that some contemporaries, at least, were far less understanding and forgiving. It suggests that progress came about as much by default as by design and that better outcomes might have been achieved, sooner, more cost-effectively, and with less human suffering, had the local ruling elite been more able and willing to rise to the 'municipal socialism' challenge. It begins to debunk the myth of a "civic gospel" construed as a universally adopted paternalistic philosophy driven by philanthropic impulse and political idealism.

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[120] Anon., *The Waterworks of Europe: III. London and Liverpool*, Philadelphia Commercial Museum (30 June 1899), pp. 36-50.

[121] 'Two or Three Things about Liverpool', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (July 1844).

[122] A. N. Wilson, *Victoria: a Life*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), p. 411.

[123] 'Our Water Supply in Peril', *Porcupine* (14 February 1874).

[124] 'A Conference', *Porcupine* (14 December 1872).

[125] Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 18.

[126] Hamlin, 'Muddling in Bumbledom', pp. 55-83.

THE *PORCUPINE*: A COG IN THE DEMOCRATIC MACHINE

Ordinarily, 'Mr Porcupine's' self-promotional boasts *vis-à-vis* his influence must be interpreted with caution. There is the additional risk with the study of any historical periodical, particularly a somewhat iconoclastic example, that, to quote press historian Michael Wolff, 'it becomes representative only of itself'.[127] Yet the *Porcupine's* claims with regard to the impact of its Water Question agitation were surprisingly understated, incidental and ambiguous. On balance, they appear credible. In April 1874, for example, 'Mr Porcupine' reflected peevishly upon his failure to convert people to the Water Question cause. [128] He contradictorily took credit, later in the same editorial, for having raised public awareness: 'The Water Committee may depend upon it that if their petty and insufficient scheme was peremptorily rejected … it was because the public had learnt from Porcupine at least this much…'.[129]

The evidence of the correspondence published by the *Porcupine* speaks for itself: 'I have read with great interest your warning articles on the water question, and I know your paper is looked upon with confidence relative to it', or, 'Do, Mr. Porcupine, give us the valuable assistance of your head and quills in enabling us to have a say in this important water-supply question'.[130] 'J.H.L' acknowledged that 'Mr Porcupine' was doing his 'best to ventilate the subject'.[131] The views of a self-selecting, editorially-screened sample of sympathetic readers offered little more than confirmation bias, and some of the letters may not have been bona fide missives but satirically-licensed devices. By this stage, however, the *Porcupine* had an established readership and had lost much of its earlier mischievousness. There is no reason to suppose such reader interactions were not genuine. Taken at face value, they suggest that the journal's 'large and ripe sanitary experience' was recognised and its campaigning endeavours, appreciated.[132] The fact that political veteran William Bennett saw the *Porcupine* as a useful vehicle for promoting his ideas and that Water Committee members occasionally felt compelled to write to the journal in defence of their actions, supports this proposition.

The journal also claimed to have led public discourse indirectly, by spurring the local mainstream press into action, 'our facts being used, our discoveries being appropriated, our

[127] M. Wolff, *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 391-92.
[128] 'Our Easter Dues', *Porcupine* (4 April 1874).
[129] *Ibid.*
[130] 'Water for Liverpool', *Porcupine* (27 November 1875); 'The First Step Towards a Water Supply', *Porcupine* (4 December 1875).
[131] 'Bathing Facilities', *Porcupine* (27 July 1878).
[132] 'Cesspools for Private Houses', *Porcupine* (22 December 1877).

suggestions rehashed, the reforms we proposed being urged, and the schemes we called for being demanded'.[133] 'Mr Porcupine' castigated the Liverpool newspapers for supinely regurgitating bland statements or summary reports issued by Council members and officers – 'stereotyped official statements … so bare and brief as they can be made'.[134] Whilst 'Mr Porcupine' conceded that the failure of the local press to report meaningfully upon the Water Question debate was in part due to the secrecy of the Water Committee, he could not excuse the feeble, half-hearted attempts of his journalistic peers to investigate and report.[135] He mocked the 'crude' approach of the *Daily Post* and derided the ignorance of the *Daily Courier*: 'So much for the Courier's grasp of the question'.[136] By such means, he criticised the quality of urban discourse - of communication - itself.

Evidence of a causal correlation between the *Porcupine's* Water Question agitation and developments in the Town Council is anecdotal but compelling. In late 1872, 'Mr Porcupine' inferred that chairman Beloe had responded, directly and defensively, to charges made by the journal.[137] He also claimed that it was the *Porcupine's* intervention which had embarrassed the councillors into taking action. Two months later, the journal reported further success: 'Three weeks ago we called attention to the deficiency of water in court houses. The committee have made an effort to respond'.[138] In 1876, the journal applauded the Council's decision to opt for increased pumping power at the Green Lane Well, pointing out that '[t]he course adopted is precisely what was strongly urged in Porcupine; and the notable speech of Mr. Bower was framed on very similar lines to those laid down in these pages last Saturday when dealing with the subject'.[139] These shrewd observations do more than make for useful reminders of the seeming omniscience and omnipresence of the "knowing" local satirical paper. They demonstrate how deeply embedded such journals could be in the everyday urban dynamic.

The journal influenced the local political process most effectively when it framed the Water Question as an electoral issue: 'The most important, and the most pressing, question at present before the municipal electors is that of the water supply; and, if they were thoroughly alive to the interests of the town, it would be upon this question that the electors would turn'.[140] Displaying an astute understanding of campaigning, Shimmin and his colleagues

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[133] 'Our Easter Dues', *Porcupine* (4 April 1874).
[134] 'Our Water Supply in Peril', *Porcupine* (26 April 1873).
[135] *Ibid.*
[136] 'The Chairman's Confession and Programme', *Porcupine* (30 August 1873); 'Our Water Supply in Peril', *Porcupine* (14 September 1872).
[137] 'Our Water Supply in Peril', *Porcupine* (28 September 1872).
[138] 'Action and Inaction', *Porcupine* (30 November 1872).
[139] 'The Water Question', *Porcupine* (4 March 1876).
[140] 'Before the Electors', *Porcupine* (18 October 1873).

advised voters to exercise their power wisely by demanding that candidates who had been Water Committee members must explain their 'past conduct' and declare 'their future policy' on the water issue.[141] In providing guidance as to the kinds of questions ratepayers ought to ask, the *Porcupine* offered a lesson in accountability:

> Three members of the Water Committee … seek re-election. What have they done to entitle them to support? Have they given attention to this subject, and displayed that knowledge of it, to be expected from men charged with the responsible office they have held from men who will be required to determine such serious issues? In Committee and Council they are silent, so that the public are left in ignorance of their sentiments. They ought not to be allowed at this close of term of office to escape the salutary practice of standing face to face with their constituents to give an account of their stewardship.[142]

The journal's persistent agitation clearly worked; in 1872, it took credit for having forced the Water Question onto the electoral agenda: 'It is a significant fact that every candidate for municipal office alludes in his address to the great importance of the water question and sanitary improvement. We might take this as a compliment, seeing that Porcupine is the only paper which has brought the peril of our water supply before the town'.[143] 'Mr Porcupine's' tenacity continued to pay off over the longer term. In 1877, Shimmin reported with satisfaction that the election in Great George Ward would 'be decided upon purely water-supply issues'.[144]

CONCLUSION

This outcome, for a journal committed to changing hearts and minds and to transforming the local political culture shaft by satirical shaft, was success indeed. Not only had it raised public awareness of a substantive social, economic and political issue; it had systematically used the weapon of transparency to force accountability upon the ruling municipal elite. Through its 'obnoxiously persistent' coverage of the Water Question, the *Porcupine* had fulfilled its 'disciplinary function' as per Joyce and thereby proven itself to be an essential cog in the local democratic machine.[145] As literary theory proposes, satire demands, and this chapter and the previous have demonstrated, this was due to the responsiveness of the

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[141] 'Public Opinion and Public Understanding', *Porcupine* (5 October 1872).
[142] 'Before the Electors', *Porcupine* (18 October 1872).
[143] 'Our Municipal Contests', *Porcupine* (26 October 1872).
[144] 'The Municipal Elections and the Water Question', *Porcupine* (27 October 1877).
[145] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 205.

journal's readers. The following chapter sets out to establish the nature and extent of that readership.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'The people one has to write for…'[1]

The *Porcupine's* Audience: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Mr. Porcupine was so greatly impressed by the forgotten records of the Mayor's hospitality that he resolved to place them before his 173,000 readers for their consideration and approval.[2]

Establishing the size and nature of the *Porcupine's* audience matters. There would be little justification for extensive historical investigation into the publication, if it were proven to have been obscure or anomalous or anachronistic. The *Porcupine's* longevity suggests that it must have enjoyed relatively robust circulation figures, but what can be discovered about the journal's contemporary reception and its subsequent place within the social, cultural and political ontology of late nineteenth-century Liverpool? Informed by the reception and audience history theories outlined in Chapter One, this chapter focuses upon readership, setting out to answer several key questions. Who read the *Porcupine*? How, why and to what extent? Is it possible to go beyond an imagined community and to identify some of the journal's actual readers?

Despite a growing body of research into nineteenth-century literacy and reading culture, misunderstandings and mythologies continue to surround access to and attitudes towards written discourse, particularly in relation to class and education.[3] The comic periodical poses additional challenges. It is possible, however, to obtain a clear sense of the journal's audience demographics. The findings suggest that the *Porcupine*, in its prime, was a respected and widely read medium of discourse, a local household name and a text which even reached occasionally, if randomly, into Europe and Empire. This challenges some of

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[1] 'The People One Has To Write For', *Porcupine* (16 May 1874).
[2] 'The Coming Mayor's Address', *Porcupine* (3 November 1860).
[3] E.g. J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); K. Halsey, 'Working-Class Readers in the Nineteenth Century: An introduction to the "Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945" (RED)' in R. Siegert (ed.), *Volksbildung durch Lesestoff im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: Voraussetzungen, Medien, Topographie* (Bremen: Edition Lumiere, 2012), pp. 49-66.

the received suppositions relating to the contemporary significance of the provincial serio-comic periodical.

DISTRIBUTION AND CIRCULATION: TOWARDS A 'GUESSTIMATION'

Establishing the circulations of mid-Victorian newspapers and periodicals is notoriously difficult. Modern scholars have followed early press historians in attempting to compile and contextualise the hard data available.[4] The so-called stamp returns, compiled by the Government for taxation purposes and the main basis for complex mathematical estimations, have been held to be 'completely useless as an indication of total circulation in the case of the chief press, and generally for periodicals chiefly bought by the population in the big towns'.[5] The Government's stamp tax applied to the "mainstream" press as purveyors of hard news. Unstamped papers and journals were, by definition, off the radar until the final repeal of the compulsory stamp duty in 1855. The unprecedented expansion and gradual professionalisation and commercialisation of the press in the latter half of the century did not result in any form of compulsory regulatory audit or record keeping. Well into the twentieth century, there was no systematic collection or analysis of data.[6] The *Porcupine* is a case in point. House of Commons newspaper returns for the year ending March 1867, for example, do list the journal but they do not include any figures because Shimmin's journal was not stamped, merely registered.[7]

An advertisement published in the *Porcupine* in 1864 and later republished in *May's Press Guide* described the journal's circulation as 'very large'.[8] In 1870, the circulation was described, in passing, by a disinterested Welsh journalist, as 'enormous'.[9] Neither of these claims can be substantiated. Similarly, the *Porcupine's* own feedback with regard to its circulation is generally unreliable.[10] As a satirical publication, Shimmin's journal delighted in the ridiculous (see Figure 7.1, below).

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[4] Altick, *English Common Reader*, Appendix C; A.P. Wadsworth, 'Newspaper Circulations, 1800-1954', a Paper read at the Manchester Statistical Society (Manchester, 1965); L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Ellegård, *Readership*; Lee, *Origins*, p. 178.

[5] Ellegård, *Readership*, p. 7; J. H. Wiener, 'Circulation and the Stamp Tax', in J. Don Vann and R. T. VanArsdel (eds), *Victorian Periodicals* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1978), p. 160.

[6] Lee, *Origins*, p. 178; Brown, *News and Newspapers,* p. 26.

[7] *Return of the Newspapers which have Furnished Copies to the Stamp Office during the Year ending 30 March 1867,* House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.

[8] 'The Porcupine', *Porcupine* (Christmas Edition 1864); Advertisement in F. L. May, *British and Irish Press Guide* (London: Frederick L. May and Co., 1875), p. 135.

[9] 'Great Zoological Meeting at Manders' Menagerie', *Wrexham Advertiser* (2 April 1870).

[10] *Ibid.*

Figure 7.1
'Notices to Correspondents', *Porcupine*, 13 October 1860

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

In answer to several hundred weight of letters, enquiring as to the success of the *Porcupine*, and wishing us all manner of kind things, we may as well answer right out that our success is beyond all doubt. The demand for copies last Saturday was something extraordinary. South John Street, where our office is situated, although a very wide thoroughfare, was for several hours, in the early part of the day, quite impassable either for vehicles or pedestrians. Thousands of people with money in their hands waited patiently, hour after hour, the issuing of our rapidly-repeated editions, and when these were completed, the crowd was still as dense as ever. Nor could room be made for the ordinary traffic of the streets until our Editor standing out from an upper window, at the serious risk of his life, explained to them how every ream of suitable paper in Liverpool had been used up, that Hoe's new improved double patent 70-cylinder printing Machine was hot with friction, and that all the hands in the place had been conveyed in cabs from the back door to the Infirmary, quite worn out with their stupendous exertions (for these we now publicly tender them our thanks). The crowds then began slowly to disperse. At one part of the day a rumour spread that there were three unsold copies of the *Porcupine* at the shop of Mr. Bradford, Church Street; and a great rush was immediately made in that direction. Lucky people who had obtained copies were followed by admiring crowds. The managers of the Woodside boats, for purposes of safety, were compelled to stop all persons from coming on board who had copies of the *Porcupine* visible upon them. One gentleman on 'Change who was supposed to possess two copies received no fewer than eighteen invitations to dinner on Sunday. All this, however, is of the past; our arrangements are now perfect.

The journal continued the tongue-in-cheek conceit in its second issue: '[W]e have to go to press at an early hour on Friday … in order to supply the hundreds of thousands of our readers in all parts of the world'.[11] One month after the launch of the journal, its creators joked that the volume of letters had 'prostrated our postman' and forced the journal to extend and extend its premises – 'and still the insatiate cry of an intelligent and discriminating public is "more Porcupines, more Porcupines"'.[12] Keen to attract readers and increasingly reliant upon advertising revenue as the century progressed, press publications had an obvious

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[11] 'The Mayor's Conversazione', *Porcupine* (20 October 1860).
[12] 'Notices to Correspondents', *Porcupine* (21 November 1860).

interest in presenting a positive, inflated impression of their reach; stimulating curiosity and even wonder about circulation was all part of a marketing strategy geared to attracting both readers and advertisers.[13]   Alan Lee cautioned against setting too much store by notices published in trade and advertising directories, which often conflated 'peak' with 'average' figures, 'or spoke of the number of "readers" rather than the copies sold'.[14] The *Porcupine*'s creators were keen to suggest a growing circulation, in an early notice designed to court advertising custom:

> As the circulation of the PORCUPINE already exceeds that of any other local weekly paper, and as the demand is increasing with each successive number, the facilities afforded through its medium recommend it strongly to the advertising classes.[15]

This may merely have been a clever promotional tactic but the fact that the paper did indeed begin to publish a full page of advertisements the following month suggests local businesses were sufficiently convinced of the *Porcupine*'s increasing reach to begin placing notices.

Figure 7.2
Porcupine promotion, aimed at advertisers, from the special 1864 Christmas edition (Note that 'political' was omitted from the journal's sub-title)
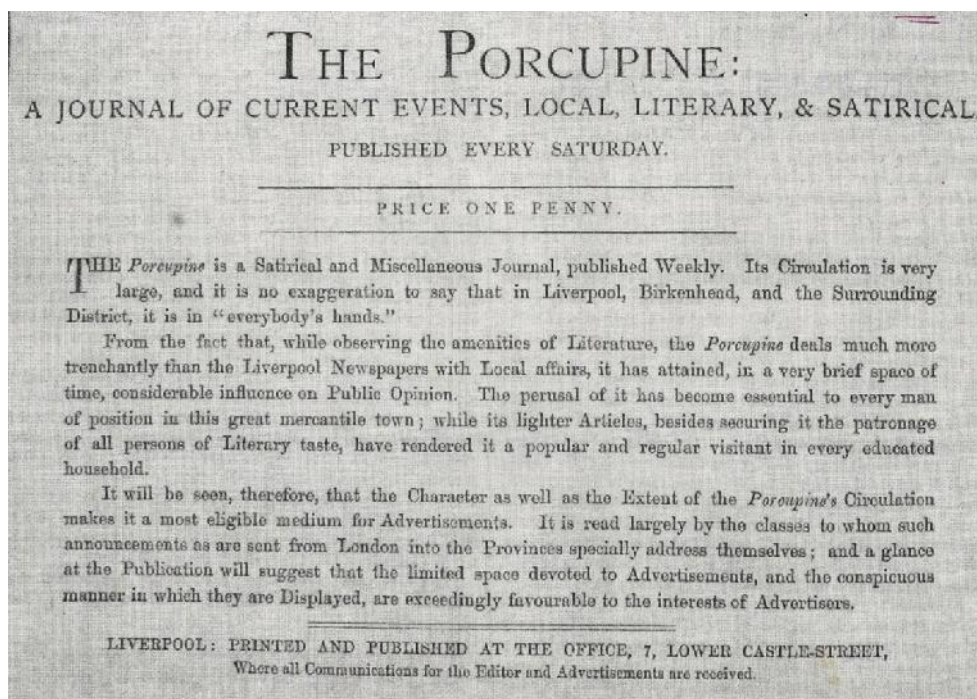
[13] Wiener, 'Circulation and the Stamp Tax', p. 149; Hampton, *Visions of the Press,* pp. 19-44.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] 'To The Trade', *Porcupine* (3 November 1860).

Marketing ploys notwithstanding, it is feasible that at the height of its popularity under Shimmin's stewardship, the *Porcupine* did enjoy impressive distribution figures for a publication of its type. There was a recognised market for the journal when it launched in 1860.[16] One local review predicted that, 'the *Porcupine* will certainly make a "hit" with the public … The editors and contributors of the *Porcupine* will find plenty of readers ... In a large town like Liverpool there is ample room and plenty of subjects for a satirical publication ...'.[17] This prognosis was warranted. As was noted in Chapter Three, the publication had no immediate local competition. As a weekly miscellany, it offered something for everyone, meeting different interests, preferences and needs. Shimmin contemporary and theologian James B. Mozley reminisced about how 'one would look at the lighter articles first and then at the learned ones'.[18] Nominally, if not entirely in practice, the *Porcupine* was a non-partisan publication and thus did not limit its audience to a particular political constituency.

There are several clues as to initial demand for the journal. Early editions of the *Porcupine* proved to be sought after, with reprints of the first issue ordered 'in compliance with numerous applications'.[19] Through notices 'To The Trade', a number of issues in the start-up months revealed teething problems with distribution. During November 1860, repeated appeals for patience were made to local newsagents, 'complaints having been made of the difficulty experienced by the trade in obtaining an ample supply of our weekly issue'.[20] It is difficult to establish whether a notice regarding reader correspondence (i.e. letters to the editor) put out within the first month of publication is yet another example of the *Porcupine*'s jocular approach to self-promotion, aimed at boosting sales, or a real indication of the paper's early reception. The tone and placement of the notice suggests the latter:

> CORRESPONDENTS will please to exercise forbearance. We find it utterly impossible to reply to ALL. For instance, on Thursday, 427 communications reached us, and the daily average exceeds 250. We have again to urge brevity, and request the name and address of each writer.[21]

An advertisement for the *Porcupine's* first Christmas edition advised prospective advertisers that 'a circulation of 30,000 copies will be guaranteed'.[22] They would thus 'find the

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[16] 'The Porcupine. Nos. 1 to 9. Liverpool', *Kendal Mercury* (8 December 1860).

[17] 'The Porcupine', *Liverpool Daily Post* (6 October 1860).

[18] W. E. Houghton, 'Victorian Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (1 July 1979), pp. 407.

[19] 'Notices to Correspondents', *Porcupine* (3 November 1860 and 10 November 1860).

[20] 'To the Trade', *Porcupine* (3 November 1860).

[21] 'To Correspondents', *Porcupine* (24 November 1860).

[22] 'Our Christmas Number', *Porcupine* (3 December 1860).

CHRISTMAS PENNY NUMBER of THE PORCUPINE the best medium of communicating with the public'.[23] This was no reflection of the regular weekly circulation of the still fledgling paper; a special issue might be expected to multiply sales and it cannot be taken as a given that the journal sold all of the copies it had printed. Moreover, the figure does not square with the *Liverpool Daily Post's* prediction that hundreds, rather than thousands, of local households would enjoy the edition.[24] Yet it does suggest that the *Porcupine's* early architects were confident of their market.

This market expanded steadily. Such was the initial audience interest that in January 1861, the *Porcupine* itself appeared to be struggling to obtain copies of one particular back issue.[25] Before the same year was out, the journal was reporting quick and steady growth and advising that it needed to free up advertising space as a result.[26] By early 1862, bound volumes were being marketed. This was common practice for publications which aspired to be taken seriously but it also serves as evidence that 'Mr Porcupine' was consolidating his readership and catering to those eager to catch up on missed early editions or to read consecutive issues in sequence.[27] A notice printed in March 1862 indicated satisfaction in the establishment and gradual increase of the paper's circulation.[28] There are other indications that the journal was busy expanding and streamlining its operation. Printing and publishing would be managed by William Hampson, the 'paper will be altered to the size of Punch' and the *Porcupine* office was to move to a prime location in the heart of Liverpool's business district.[29] A little over eighteen months into publication, the journal appeared to have resolved some of its initial production and distribution problems and to be optimistic about continued expansion: 'Improved arrangements for the printing of the Porcupine having removed all obstacles to the extension of its circulation, we are now enabled to give the trade FOURTEEN COPIES TO THE DOZEN' [*original capitalization*].[30]

In the absence of hard and fast quantitative data, it is necessary to turn to comparison, extrapolation and hypothesis, in a bid to 'guesstimate' the *Porcupine's* circulation. Between 1860 and 1870, for example, *Punch* is estimated to have sold 40,000 copies per week.[31] The 'London Charivari' stood in a league of its own, however.

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[23] *Ibid.*
[24] 'The "Porcupine" Christmas Number', *Liverpool Daily Post* (22 December 1860).
[25] Untitled, *Porcupine* (5 January 1861).
[26] 'Notice', *Porcupine* (28 September 1861).
[27] 'Notice', *Porcupine* (15 February 1862).
[28] 'Notice', *Porcupine* (22 March 1862).
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Untitled, *Porcupine* (17 May 1862).
[31] Ellegård, *Readership*, p. 35.

According to an advertisers' handbook published in 1889, *Fun's* weekly circulation by then was in the region of an inflated 95,000.[32] Alvar Ellegård estimated the journal's weekly circulation to have been some 20,000 in 1865 and 1870. Crucially, he calculated that 'at the price it can hardly have subsisted on less than a 10,000 – 20,000 circulation'.[33] Ellegård put the *Tomahawk*'s weekly circulation at an estimated 10,000.[34] Both *Fun* and *Tomahawk* were produced, published and circulated in London and subsequently had much larger potential audiences than the provincial *Porcupine*. Yet the financial conditions spelt out by Ellegård in respect of *Fun* applied equally to the *Porcupine*, suggesting that the audiences of *Fun* and the *Tomahawk* should not be assumed to have been significantly larger than that of their Liverpool equivalent. It is fair to assume that the *Porcupine* project had to be at least self-financing. It is also important not to assume that production and distribution costs at the time were greater in London than in the provinces, necessitating higher circulations to break even. For all its fierce declarations that it was not subsidised in any way by vested political or commercial interests, the *Porcupine* was not impervious to market forces and fiscal policy; an early notice advised that its creators would be taking advantage of the repeal of the paper duty to make improvements (i.e. using better quality paper).[35] James Curran studied the costs of establishing a publication in the mid-century decades and found that whilst journals could be launched with limited capital outlay, the net effect of increased *running* costs due to technological advances and the need to keep up with stiffer competition was to increase the circulations necessary to newspapers to stay afloat, as well as to increase the time it took for new publications to start breaking even.[36] Curran also highlighted the fact that 'any increase in … circulation, without a corresponding growth in advertising, merely increased (a newspaper's) losses, thereby forcing them to close it down'.[37] Curran cited the example of another comic periodical launched cheaply in 1862, the *Beehive*, which found itself 'crippled' by under-capitalisation.[38] Notably, the *Porcupine* was not forced to increase its own one penny selling price in order to remain viable. Within eighteen months of its launch, the journal was carrying three full pages of advertisements. Given that the *Porcupine* did *not* find itself in the position of having to fold, it might be inferred that the paper's circulation kept in step with its growing advertising base.

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[32] T. Smith and J. H. Osborne, *Successful Advertising: Its Secrets Explained*, 10th ed. (London: Smith's Agency, 1889).

[33] Ellegård, *Readership*, II, Directory, p. 21.

[34] *Ibid.,* p. 20.

[35] 'Notice', *Porcupine* (28 September 1861).

[36] Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, p. 38.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

By the end of the century – long after the paper's heyday – the *Porcupine* was claiming to be the 'provincial publication with the largest circulation outside of London'.[39] There is no reliable evidence for this claim but it does, along with the journal's longevity, signal commercial buoyancy. Allowing for the novelty of a new publication to have worn off after the first few years, it is reasonable to surmise that it managed to establish a sufficiently healthy circulation to remain viable over the long term. This is supported by the trade notice of a 30,000 circulation for the journal's first Christmas edition. A notional trebling of sales would place the *Porcupine's* average weekly circulation – in line with those of *Fun* or *Tomahawk* - at around 10,000.

From its inception, the *Porcupine* sought regular subscribers but in the absence of records, there is as no way of establishing the size and nature of the journal's subscription base or of calculating what proportion of the journal's circulation this might have constituted.[40] After stamp tax abolition in 1855, the one penny stamp (allowing free postage) continued to be available on an opt-in basis until 1870. That the *Porcupine* was not taking advantage of this in 1867, suggests it managed with private, locally organised distribution arrangements. Although the journal could be ordered for delivery or purchased direct from the *Porcupine* office, it was mainly targeted at passing custom, sold, according to contributor Justin McCarthy in his memoirs, 'at railway stations and in bookshops and by newsboys in the streets'.[41] Within months of its launch, the *Porcupine* had a couple of agents - trade distributors - dotted around Liverpool, catering with an 'ample supply' to the Northern and Eastern districts of the city.[42] Further depots were established at 8 Exchange Street East and 105 Brownlow Hill.[43] An additional Liverpool agent, based in Oldhall-street, was taken on in 1862 to serve the Central district.[44] Through such dispersal, the *Porcupine* became well-known across the town, if only by repute: 'who in Liverpool is not familiar with it?' asked the local *Argus*, in 1879.[45]

If the *Porcupine's* core (and target) readership was local, its contents reached a wider, provincial and ex-provincial audience. In 1862, Shimmin made explicit reference to the *Porcupine's* 'readers in other parts of England'.[46] In her later memoirs, the daughter of Charles Millward suggested the publication had 'achieved much more than a local

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[39] From letter-headed correspondence of W.J. Watmough (*Porcupine* editor, early 1900s), Liverpool Central Library Archives, M364 LWD/18/4.

[40] 'To The Trade', *Porcupine* (9 February 1861).

[41] McCarthy, *Irish Recollections*, p. 205.

[42] 'To The Trade', *Porcupine* (2 February 1861).

[43] 'To the Trade', *Porcupine* (23 March 1861).

[44] Untitled, *Porcupine*, (30 August 1862).

[45] 'The Late Hugh Shimmin', *Argus* (18 January 1879).

[46] Shimmin, *Liverpool Sketches*, p. viii.

reputation'.[47] Jessie Millward wrote with the benefit of hindsight and not, as a proud daughter, with objectivity. Moreover, having heard about a journal does not equate to having read it. Still, regional distribution networks were not as undeveloped as might be supposed.[48] In December 1860 the *Kendal Mercury* published a lengthy, very positive review of the first nine issues of the *Porcupine*, suggesting that some of its readers were – or were potentially – *Porcupine* readers, too.[49] By June 1861, a Mr W.E. Life was acting as the journal's 'Agent for Manchester' and by the following May, the paper had another agent, operating in Birkenhead, for the Cheshire district. Within a decade of its launch, the *Porcupine* was distributed as a matter of course in Cumbria.[50]

If the *Porcupine* reached provincial towns and cities beyond the region, it did so incidentally, on an ad-hoc basis or via a small number of private postal subscriptions, rather than through any established distribution mechanism. The number of any issues circulated in this way is likely to have been negligible. However, direct references to and articles and extracts from the journal (and mentions of Shimmin in his capacity as editor, or copies of his speeches) routinely appeared in a wide range of provincial publications throughout the North West, in North Wales and beyond.[51]

Evidence for the wider reach of the *Porcupine's* content must be balanced against conflicting contemporary impressions and assumptions about the journal's essential parochialism. The *Porcupine* articles republished as *Liverpool Sketches* would, opined the *National Magazine*, be 'new to most of our readers'.[52] In 1864, a Manchester journalist described the 'very well-sustained' *Porcupine* as nevertheless 'somewhat too local for general metropolitan appreciation'.[53] Certainly, features such as 'Lyrica Liverpudliana', a series in verse published in 1864, would have been impenetrable to those unfamiliar with Liverpool culture. Attributed portions of 'Mr Porcupine's' writing found their way into as diverse a range of London-based publications as *John Bull Magazine*, the (pre-Stead) *Pall Mall Gazette* and (particularly frequently) *The Musical World*. Publications produced in the capital also

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[47] Millward, *Myself and Others*, p. 27.
[48] As early as the 1820s, the *Kaleidoscope*, an offshoot of the *Liverpool Mercury*, wrote about its readers in 'various parts of this kingdom and of Ireland'; see 'One of the most interesting and extraordinary narratives on record', *Kaleidoscope* (13 March 1821).
[49] 'The Porcupine. Nos. 1 to 9. Liverpool', *Kendal Mercury* (8 December 1860).
[50] 'The Cumberland Racquet', *Cumberland Pacquet and Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser* (6 September 1870).
[51] E.g. 'At the last Liverpool Assizes', *Cheshire Observer* (18 January 1868), 'Death of Liverpool Journalist', *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough* (14 January 1879); 'Singular Libel Prosecution', *Sheffield Independent* (16 November 1869), 'From Our Correspondent', *Bury Times* (10 October 1863); 'Contemporary Press', *Preston Chronicle*, (22 January 1862); 'Poetry', *Kendal Mercury* (6 July 1861); 'Mr Plimsoll's Mission', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (7 March 1873); 'Literature and the Arts', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (4 January 1864); 'Brown's Popular Guide', *Isle of Man Times* (18 August 1877); 'London Gossip', *Irish Times* (9 December 1874).
[52] 'The Monthly Mirror of Fact and Rumour', *National Magazine* (December 1863), p. 96.
[53] 'Literature and the Arts', *Manchester Courier & Lancashire General Advertiser* (4 January 1864).

alluded to the *Porcupine* and reported upon its intermittent legal controversies, thereby raising awareness of the *Porcupine* "brand".[54] It is worth recalling, that numerous founding *Porcupine* contributors provided fairly illustrious links to London's literary, dramatic and journalistic scene. They (and their reputations) helped to promote the paper to London readers.

The provincial character and content of the *Porcupine* met with a mixed contemporary response, reflecting both negative interpretations of its perceived parochialism and positive assessments of its wider relevance and resonance. A London-based reviewer suggested that much of the journal's 'humour' was somewhat exclusive, accessible to local readers but confusing to the outsider: 'I have no doubt the Liverpudlians receive it in a spirit of faith, and are thereby much edified, but it is a hard matter for foreigners to digest'.[55] Other commentators viewed the relevance and accessibility of the journal differently. In 1869, an appreciative reader requested that a series of articles on the then highly-topical subject of commercial immorality be republished in pamphlet form in order to reach a wider – ideally, metropolitan – audience.[56] This did subsequently happen.[57] Another reader based in the capital, writing to the local press in Bury in 1863, was confident of the *Porcupine's* broader appeal.[58] This correspondent was under the impression that the *Porcupine* did not have much of a London circulation.[59] The following year, however, 'TFDC', writing for *Sharpe's London Magazine*, suggested the paper did enjoy some recognition in the capital: 'The Londoner may not be altogether unfamiliar with "The Porcupine"; which is at the present time published in Liverpool'.[60]

Circumstantial evidence of the *Porcupine's* availability in the capital comes from the publication of letters from readers living there. Over a series of issues in April and May 1867, for example, a lively and extensive exchange of views, on the subject of compulsory education, took place between the paper and a correspondent, 'R.M.', based in London.[61] In 1896 – long after Shimmin's tenure – a London correspondent for the *To-day* journal revealed that 'J. McK.P. sends me the *Liverpool Porcupine*'.[62] In fact, from as early as 1863, the *Porcupine* was made available for sale in central London. A notice entitled 'To Our London Friends' advised that arrangements had been made for the journal to be stocked by a

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[54] See Chapter Eight.
[55] 'In the Liver's Nest', *Orchestra* (28 June 1872).
[56] 'The Demonology of Trade', *Porcupine* (24 April 1869).
[57] Shimmin, *Demonology of Trade*, 1869.
[58] 'From Our Correspondent', *Bury Times* (10 October 1863).
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] T.F.D.C., 'Dying a Natural Death', *Sharpe's*.
[61] 'Compulsory Education', *Porcupine* (13 April 1867 – 18 May 1867).
[62] 'Club Chatter', *To-day*, Volumes 11-12 (1896), p. 148.

theatrical bookseller based in the Strand.[63] This was evidently a limited and informal set-up (perhaps little more than a favour done by one of the Savages Club's friends) but it does confirm that there was some attempt to attract and cater to a *Porcupine* audience in the capital. Moreover, the journal sought London advertising via an agency located in the heart of "Grub Street".[64] In a reminder that the city in, for and about which the *Porcupine* wrote was a "sailortown", the *Nautical Magazine* for 1874 advised maritime apprentices that the *Porcupine* was one of the periodicals which could be 'obtained on application at the [London] office of the Superintendent'.[65] It has not yet proven possible to recover any information surrounding the reported one-off publication of a London edition of the *Porcupine* in 1867.[66] This seems likely to have been an experimental venture - designed, perhaps, to test the water for an expansion or relocation or to increase circulation by further raising the profile of the journal in the South. Nothing came of it.

The *Porcupine*'s failure to expand its formal circulation much beyond the North West must be taken in context. The provincial press was not considered at the time to be inferior to that of London; merely different. Contemporaries recognised its growing popularity and prestige.[67] Lucy Brown has argued that provincial newspapers would have neither aspired nor expected to circulate in the capital and that there was no economic imperative for them to do so.[68] The urban serio-comic periodicals remained consciously local, exhibiting little sustained interest in geographical expansion beyond their sub-regions or in competition with London. Consistent with the claim of the early press historian Henry Fox Bourne, 'country papers … were chiefly important as retailers of such local news and promoters of such local interests as the London papers hardly concerned themselves with' and 'the district papers were made [in] many respects more attractive and valuable, for their districts, than the London papers could be'.[69] The *Porcupine* and its comparators, drawing upon their townology, exploited this. Their provincialism was thus proudly conceived and conveyed as a strength.[70] Travelling Liverpudlians associated the *Porcupine* with being "home", using the journal to immerse themselves back into local discourse: 'After an absence of several years from the "good old town,"' began a letter from 'Dicky Sam' [a colloquial nickname for a Liverpudlian], 'I was delighted to see the magnificent improvements in its principal streets, and I wondered if the many reports of commercial distress which had reached me when

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[63] 'To Our London Friends', *Porcupine* (21 February 1863).
[64] Untitled, *Porcupine* (5 September 1863).
[65] 'Apprentices', *Nautical Magazine* (1874), p. 994.
[66] Gray, 'Comic Periodicals', pp. 2-39.
[67] Shand, 'Contemporary Literature', pp. 641-62.
[68] Brown, *News and Newspapers*, pp. 43-7.
[69] Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, pp. 256, 276.
[70] 'Our New Volume', *Porcupine* (6 April 1861).

abroad were really founded on facts'.[71] Despite their localism, the regional papers still had the potential to prove interesting to readers in the capital, according to the *Literary Examiner* in 1868: 'Although the numbers of serials published in London is legion, we doubt not there is room for a brother from the provinces. Manchester is nearer to us than New York; and if serials from the latter city can live and thrive in London, why not from the former?'[72]

Although 'Registered at the General Postoffice [*sic*] for Transmission Abroad', the *Porcupine* did not circulate, as a matter of course, beyond England.[73] Note 'Mr Porcupine's' joshing response to one correspondent in 1860: 'Three numbers of the Porcupine can be sent to the Fejee Islands [*sic*] on the payment of 2d; but we question if they will ever reach there'.[74] The *Porcupine* did in fact reach foreign shores. Occasional contributor Jeff Prowse subscribed to it from France in 1868: 'I see *Porcupine* every week. You have no idea how pleasant it is to see *Porcupine* in a foreign land'.[75] Random *Porcupine* holdings in several academic institutions in the United States confirm that individual issues *did* find their way to America, albeit sporadically.[76] A 'reader of Porcupine hailing from "the good old town"' wrote from New York, in 1875.[77] 'D.L' wrote a letter to the editor from Brooklyn, in 1876.[78] Whilst correspondence from exiled Liverpudlians suggests that prior local knowledge of and even nostalgia for the city was a driver of readership, there is equal evidence to suggest that the *Porcupine* served as a pre-digital "chat room" (forum function) upon which readers elsewhere might chance.

For the most part, it was *Porcupine* content, rather than the material text itself, which migrated. Foreign newspaper archives reveal that articles were copied, with due attribution, in a wide variety of provincial Australasian and American publications.[79] The *Porcupine* and its actors also garnered occasional mentions, although these appear to have been second-hand filler items, intended to be of incidental interest to readers. Although Shimmin's death merited a snippet in the *New York Times*, this cannot be taken as evidence that he or his

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[71] 'Liverpool Progress', *Porcupine* (2 April 1870).
[72] 'The Sphinx', *Literary Examiner* (20 October 1868).
[73] Weekly advice published in the *Porcupine*.
[74] 'Notices to Correspondents', *Porcupine* (3 November 1860).
[75] W.J. Prowse in G.L.M. Strauss, *Reminiscences of an Old Bohemian* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1882), p. 243.
[76] E.g. The Newberry Library in Chicago, an independent research library since 1887, holds the first two volumes of the *Porcupine* (6 October 1860 – 28 September 1861) in its Special Collections.
[77] 'A "Dicky Sam" in New York', *Porcupine* (1 May 1875).
[78] 'Wood Pavements', *Porcupine* (22 April 1876).
[79] E.g. 'In addition', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, San Francisco (7 September 1866); 'The Liverpool Porcupine thus Castigates the *Church Herald*', *Boston Investigator* (2 July 1873); 'Foreign Gossip', *New York Times* (25 January 1874); 'The Liverpool Corner', *Georgia Weekly Telegraph* (14 October 1881); 'Literary Gossip', *Age*, Victoria, Aus. (26 September 1866); 'Kadina', *Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal*, SA, Aus. (3 October 1866); 'A Common Custom at Wigan', *Freeman's Journal*, NSW, Aus. (13 July 1872); 'Criticism', *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Victoria, Aus. (4 December 1877); 'English Journalism', *Wellington Independent*, NZ (6 October 1866); 'At Drury Lane', *Wanganui Herald*, NZ (28 December 1871); 'Gush', *New Zealand Times* (4 October 1877).

journal were known in America.[80] In 1867, a Sydney newspaper reported that in Manchester, 'a new flippant trifle, called the Free Lance, (an imitation of the Porcupine of Liverpool, a paper of a similar character), is enjoying a wide circulation'.[81] The parenthetical clarification suggests that the *Porcupine* was not a title with which most Australian readers were familiar.

A problem of interpretation arises with any attempt to speculate about circulation based upon the price of the *Porcupine*. The journal's creators were anxious to convince readers that its price was no reflection of its quality: 'Why do we sell the Porcupine for a penny', they joked, 'when everybody says it is worth a shilling?'[82] At one penny, the journal was positioned at the cheap and cheerful end of the periodicals market but even this was beyond the means of those struggling to meet basic needs and priorities: The 'penny … so often treated by Victorian propagandists as something universally affordable, was in fact a substantial sum to spend on something of casual interest'.[83] Moreover, a cheap press was not necessarily held to equate to a nasty press. Note the view expressed by Liverpool-based newspaper editor and proprietor Michael Whitty, in 1851: 'If instead of newspapers being sold for 6d. or 1s. they could be sold for a penny, I have no manner of doubt there would immediately follow the greatest possible improvement in the tone and temper of the political information of the people, and therefore of the political character and conduct of the people'.[84] The advent of the mass market halfpenny press in the later decades of the century meant that periodical reading matter became more accessible to more people but it is important to recognise the limited usefulness of comparing a daily newspaper to a weekly journal. There is evidence that there existed in the 1860s and 1870s a 'massive casual demand from people who either could not afford to buy a paper regularly, or did not choose to do so'; that is, people who would indulge in a paper or journal on high days and holidays, or 'on occasions of exceptional interest'.[85] The *Porcupine* 'Holiday' edition of December 1860 was 'enlarged to FORTY COLUMNS of original matter, making it almost a DOUBLE NUMBER'.[86] Three years later, the *Porcupine*'s creators charged two pence for their Christmas edition 'with Almanac', confident this would not put people off the purchase of a seasonal 'treat'. Special editions aside, the *Porcupine's* price remained constant over the years, impervious to market pressures.

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[80] 'Notes of Foreign News', *New York Times* (7 February 1879).
[81] 'European Intelligence, Manchester, March, 1867', *Freeman's Journal* (22 June 1867).
[82] 'Worth Knowing', *Porcupine* (3 November 1860).
[83] Brown, *News and Newspapers*, pp. 31, 48.
[84] *Report from the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index*, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1851 (558), p. xxiii.
[85] Brown, *News and Newspapers*, p. 30.
[86] 'Our Christmas Number', *Porcupine* (8 December 1860).

WIDER REACH: VICTORIAN READING HABITS

Scholars specialising in the history of newspaper and periodical consumption have highlighted the 'inadequacy of circulation as a guide to readership'.[87] Communal ownership and reading practices make any attempt to link the two 'problematic'.[88] Newspapers and journals were shared, loaned and read collectively, taken by public and coffee houses, and disseminated via reading clubs, libraries and learned societies. Shimmin himself alluded to these practices in *Harry Birkett*.[89] Because most papers were printed on tough rag paper, they were durable. A notice put out by the *Porcupine* in late 1861 advised readers of plans to 'improve the quality of the paper upon which the Porcupine is printed'.[90] Consequently, 'it was believed their circulation continued long after they had been sold to the customer'.[91]

Given contemporary communal reading practices, it has been estimated by various scholars using different methodologies, that in mid-Victorian England a newspaper or journal would be read (or listened to) by anywhere between three and twenty individuals. Taking the most conservative of these estimates (three) and applying it to a "guesstimated" *Porcupine* circulation of 10,000 copies weekly, produces a total readership of some 30,000 (at twenty readers per copy, the figure would equate to a colossal 200,000). There is little point, given the hypothetical nature of the figures in question, in trying to be too empirical about this but in 1861, the total population of Liverpool, including children, stood at just short of 444,000[92]. High illiteracy rates, due to the town's disproportionately large "lumpen class" demographic, meant that the functionally *literate* population was considerably smaller. Literacy rates and reading habits in nineteenth-century Liverpool are poorly understood, however. Popular conceptions of early Victorian Liverpool as a town of uncultured and uneducated types are not wholly borne out by contemporary evidence. As early as 1815, American author Washington Irving, who lived there for a time, observed a reading culture: 'Go [to the Athenaeum] at what hour you may, you are sure to find it filled with grave-looking personages, deeply absorbed in the study of newspapers'.[93] Similarly, it ought not to be taken as a given that Liverpool's lower classes were not readers. In the 1850s the German journalist and writer Julius Rodenberg suggested the town's free public libraries were worthy of emulation: 'The crowd is very great, and the reading room is never empty from eight in

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[87] Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, p. 27.
[88] *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8.
[89] Shimmin, *Harry Birkett*, p. 15.
[90] 'Notice', *Porcupine* (28 September 1861).
[91] Brown, *News and Newspapers*, p. 27.
[92] Census, Preliminary Report, England and Wales, 1861, 'Table VIII: Houses and Population in the Principal Cities and Boroughs having defined Municipal and Parliamentary limits, 1851 and 1861', Online Historical Population Reports, University of Essex, http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/ [Accessed 20 January 2014].
[93] Irving, *Sketchbook*, p. 11.

the morning to ten at night; every hour which the working man has free, he betakes himself here in order to read … There on the wooden benches sits the sooty-faced apprentice in leather apron beside the grizzled master craftsman'.[94]

It is important not to assume that because 'Mr Porcupine' generally wrote about the poor, not to them, his journal was not read by them. Lucy Brown has pointed out that the mid-nineteenth century press made little effort to extend and diversify their audience by catering to the poorly educated (through the use of illustrations, for example).[95] The *Porcupine* fits this template yet it cannot be concluded from this that its target audience represented its actual audience. Given the reading practices which still prevailed in the 1860s and 1870s, and rapidly improving literacy rates, particularly following the 1870 Education Act, the journal was very likely read or heard - if only second hand - by the lower middle and working classes. Heightened class consciousness and growing debate around socio-economic and socialist reform issues are likely to have made the content of the *Porcupine* very interesting to the lower orders upon whose lives and lifestyles the journal frequently focused.

The practice of collective literacy is not the only reason the *Porcupine*'s contents may have reached a larger audience than is at first apparent. Periodicals have been assumed – almost by definition – to be disposable, ephemeral texts. Yet in Victorian Britain, thanks to the crossover between literature and journalism, they enjoyed a substance and permanence no longer associated with newspapers and magazines. Much of the great literature to emerge during the century – fiction, poetry, political essays and philosophical writing – first appeared, serialised, in newspapers or journals. Successful weekly and monthly periodicals were collated and bound into permanent volumes, as a matter of course. This was all about maximising exposure and the *Porcupine's* creators were adept at 'spreading it thinly'.[96] Articles could be reprinted verbatim (with attribution) in other general and specialist press publications; they could be recycled as public papers or speeches; and they could be collected into compilations and published in pamphlet or book form. Shimmin and his *Porcupine* collaborators exploited all of these opportunities.[97] In most cases, it was made clear that the writing had first appeared in the *Porcupine*. Thus did Shimmin achieve a two-fold objective: he ensured that 'Mr Porcupine's' position was more widely received, whilst promoting his journal and potentially attracting a larger audience. The impact of his views

[94] J. Rodenberg, *An Autumn in Wales, Country and People, Tales and Songs* (1856), translated and edited by W. Linnard (D. Brown and Sons, 1985).
[95] Brown, *News and Newspapers*, p. 30.
[96] J. Shattock, 'Spreading it Thinly', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* (1976), pp. 84-7.
[97] J. Whitford, *Trading Life in Western and Central* Africa (Liverpool: The 'Porcupine' Office, Castle Street, 1876).

upon local discourse, leading to local municipal action, was partly due to the exposure, reinforcement and consolidation they achieved through these wider means of dissemination and validation. The *Porcupine* thus served as a useful springboard and any attempt to establish its reach, if not its quantitative circulation, must take account of these widespread Victorian practices.

READING LIVERPOOL: AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS

In late 1864, the *Porcupine* assured potential advertisers: 'The perusal of [*Porcupine*] has become essential to every man of position in this great mercantile town; while its lighter Articles … have rendered it a popular and regular visitant in every educated household'.[98] The journal was, according to its creators, in 'everybody's hands' in 'Liverpool, Birkenhead, and the surrounding district'.[99] More specifically, it was 'read largely by the classes to whom such announcements as are sent from London to the Provinces specially address themselves'.[100] Like Walter Bagehot's 'multitude' in 1855, 'everybody', in this instance, did not refer to the popular masses – or to any 'masses'.[101] Contemporaries understood social groupings in different, often conflicting, ways. Bagehot's multitude could be 'the mass of influential persons' (a small but disproportionately important minority) but also 'all who think about intellectual matters', which might theoretically include rapidly growing numbers of working class autodidacts whose access to literature - and thus to knowledge and ideas - increased as the century progressed.[102] The *Porcupine's* 'everybody' was a shorthand reference to the burgeoning, aspiring middle classes in the town. Implicit was a suggestion that the journal was perused as a matter of course, in both the public and private spheres, by Liverpool's most prominent citizens. The notice thus offers a rare insight into how and by whom the *Porcupine* aimed to be received; namely, as a respectable, intelligent and indispensable source of "infotainment", by the "better sorts" who strove to keep up with their fashionable, progressive, metropolitan counterparts. The challenge is to establish whether the *Porcupine* succeeded in attracting its target audience. Who, precisely, read the *Porcupine* – and to what end and to what effect?

Contemporary observers had very different, sometimes outright contradictory, takes on the assumed reader of the *Porcupine's* brand of social commentary under Shimmin. One

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[98] 'The Porcupine', *Porcupine* (Christmas Edition 1864).
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] W. Bagehot, 'The First Edinburgh Reviewers', *National Review* (October 1855); Reprinted in *Literary Studies* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1884. Third Edition), pp. 1-40.
[102] *Ibid.*

reviewer of *Town Life* (a collection of Shimmin's pre-*Porcupine* sketches, published in 1858) suggested that 'to popularise this little volume among the working classes (to whom it is especially addressed) will be to do good'.[103] In fact, the book was not aimed at the working classes at all. It was 'addressed to the officers and members of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science' and offered 'excellent common sense and practical suggestions … to all those who take an interest in the social elevation of the working classes'.[104] Other contemporaries believed the 'book will be found interesting to all; but it is especially deserving the attentive perusal and careful consideration of the philanthropist' and that a 'perusal of the book will afford more information on this important subject than persons of ordinary leisure could possibly obtain from personal observation'.[105] Another, less complimentary reviewer wrote ambivalently that 'the book is written in a familiar, plain style that recommends it to those to whom it appears to be addressed'.[106] Clearly, there was no common consensus - even amongst original critics - upon Shimmin's (and by extension, the *Porcupine's)* intended audience.

Modern scholars have all reached the conclusion that the journal was aimed predominantly at a male, middle-class, mercantile audience: both those who wielded political and financial power in the town – the ruling oligarchy – and the burgeoning class of middle-ranking businessmen and associated white-collar professionals. This is broadly correct. Yet the same scholars have generally failed to examine the diversity of this broad church (with particular reference to Liverpool's exceptional demographic and political circumstances), to explore the possibility of the journal reaching beyond its target audience, or to assess the proportionality of the journal's impact and influence in relation to the quantity and quality of its readership.[107] This can be done. There is inevitably some need, as Lynn Pykett phrased it, to '"read off" the readers' consciousness from the text', but it is entirely possible to 'gain knowledge of the actual as well as the implied readers' of the periodical.[108]

It is important to recognise the distinction between two different types of nineteenth-century reader, as conceived by contemporaries and adopted by later scholars. On the one hand was the so-called 'common' or 'unprofessional' reader defined, according to Jonathan Rose, as 'a

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[103] 'Town Life', *Critic* (1 March 1858).

[104] 'Literature', *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser* (11 February 1858).

[105] 'Literature', *Morning Post* (6 March 1858).

[106] 'Reviews of Books', *Reynolds Newspaper* (7 February 1858).

[107] Kitson Clark, *Making of Victorian England*, pp. 6-8; Kitson Clark found the use of the term 'middle classes' problematic, misleading and irritating but conceded it was nevertheless a useful 'name for a large section of society' and one, moreover, the ubiquity of which derived from contemporary opinion.

[108] L. Pykett, 'Reading the Periodical Press: Text and Context', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Fall, 1989), p. 107.

reader who did not read books for a living' and drawn from the 'unknown public'.[109] Author Wilkie Collins flagged up the difficulty of identifying this 'unknown public', in 1858, attempting to guess at the 'social position, the habits, the tastes, and the average intelligence' of this elusive majority.[110] Despite admitting to knowing little about the true nature of this cohort, Collins did not hesitate to express a snobbishly low opinion of it, assuming that it read for amusement rather than for information and placed quantity of reading material before quality.[111] Furthermore, he attributed to such readers 'dense ignorance', 'petty malice' and 'complacent vanity' and concluded that this, the largest audience for periodical literature, was 'in a literary sense, hardly beginning, as yet, to learn to read'.[112]

By contrast, the 'professional' reader - belonging to the 'known' public - often read and wrote for a living, or relied upon the written word in his working life (literary and social critics, academics or clergymen, for example). Mostly, this type was drawn from the 'articulate classes' … 'whose writing and conversation make opinion'.[113] Collins recognised that the 'known' public was in fact limited. According to Walter E. Houghton, periodicals catering to this latter group were 'devoted to the serious discussion of ideas in all fields of knowledge or to a good level of entertainment' and 'commanded an influence and prestige without parallel, earlier or later'.[114] It was to this class of publication that the *Porcupine* aspired to belong. Such categorizations, though imprecise, do fall into a helpful pattern of conceptual correlations. These are depicted in the simple paradigm below (Figure 7.3), which helps to tease out some baseline indicators against which to assess the *Porcupine's* target and/or actual audience. The middle classes were a broad and evolving demographic and clearly straddled the "common-professional" divide. In the case of the *Porcupine*, the clear cut dichotomy between the 'professional' and 'unprofessional' reader may be inappropriate, given that much of its content was both contributed and read by reader-writers or writer-readers, for most of whom journalistic reading and writing was a complementary side-line or leisure activity, rather than a primary source of income and repute. Furthermore, where to place Liverpool's *nouveau riche* commercial class?

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[109] J. Rose, 'Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol.53, No.1 (Jan-Mar 1992), p. 51.
[110] W. Collins, 'The Unknown Public', *Household Words* (21 August 1858), pp. 217-22.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] *Ibid.*
[113] G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 6.
[114] W.H. Houghton, 'Victorian Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes', *Victorian Studies*, Vol.22, No. 4 (1 July 1979), p. 389.

Figure 7.3
Mid Nineteenth-Century Readerships

	'COMMON'	'PROFESSIONAL'
DEFINITION?	'any reader who did not read books for a living'	'influential persons' 'all who think about intellectual matters'
WHO?	'unknown' public	'known' public
MASS?	majority	minority
SOCIAL STANDING?	lower and middle classes	middle and upper classes
	'inarticulate'	'articulate'
IDENTIFIERS?	un- or poorly-educated	educated
METHODOLOGY?	audience histories	reception histories

Whatever the notional framework used, an attempt to identify actual readers is essential.[115] Certain cohorts can be eliminated. With the exception of its family-oriented Christmas specials, the *Porcupine* was not generally read by children or by significant numbers of women, although 'Mr Porcupine' was at pains to point out that his journal was suitable for breakfast table perusal.[116] An ostensibly whimsical article published in May 1874, entitled 'The Little Boys and their Boats' and subtitled 'A Story for the Young', was not intended for children at all; a parody of improving children's literature, it was an analysis and criticism of the fierce controversy surrounding the North American steamship companies at that time, who were locked in competitive, damaging trade battles.[117] The *Porcupine* was not – nor was it intended to be – read by "the masses"; ergo, it was not a popular publication, as generally defined. It was not read, as a matter of course, at the poles of the socio-economic spectrum in Liverpool; if the upper and residuum classes of the town had sight of it, this happened incidentally. William Ewart Gladstone subscribed to very many periodicals, including Liverpool publications; the *Porcupine* was not amongst them.[118]

This left the broad swathe comprising the middle classes and the "respectable" working classes. The *Porcupine's* primary target audience was Liverpool's commercial-political

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[115] Pykett, 'Reading the Periodical Press', p. 107.
[116] Leader, *Porcupine* (6 October 1860).
[117] 'The Little Boys and their Boats', *Porcupine* (1 May 1874).
[118] Gladstone Library, Hawarden, North Wales – Newspaper and Periodicals section.

elite; that articulate class of men, who served not only as opinion formers but practical "movers and shakers", throughout the period. This hypothesis is borne out by the advertising carried by the journal, which featured advertisements for products, services and events which appealed to the aspirational sections of local society. Upcoming series would be trailered as 'Interesting to Merchants and Brokers'.[119] The *Porcupine* was taken by the Exchange Newsroom, which catered to the town's trading class, and the journal itself routinely referred to 'our numerous commercial readers'.[120] The *Porcupine* published seasonal pages of candidates' election addresses aimed at eligible voters – by definition, pre-universal suffrage, the town's male, enfranchised minority.

Figure 7.4
Examples of formal affidavits sworn by supportive readers of the *Porcupine* in May 1870

Fortuitously, one of the *Porcupine's* least edifying hours - a major libel case - resulted in an invaluable log of actual readers midway through Shimmin's editorship, along with some pointers as to how they perceived and received the journal. The circumstances surrounding the creation of this list are explored in detail in the following chapter, but in 1869, scores of individuals based in Liverpool and throughout the wider Lancashire area signed a memorial indicating that they were appreciative readers of the *Porcupine* (Appendix 3). Some swore affidavits (Figure 7.4). The list included aldermen, town councillors and Members of Parliament, Justices of the Peace, local government officials, leading merchants and ship-

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[119] Advertisement, *Porcupine* (11 May 1867).
[120] 'Found – A President', *Porcupine* (29 October 1870).

owners, lawmen and clergymen; in short, the commercial and professional "great and good" of the town, including most of its older family dynasties. It comprised Liberals, Tories and Radicals, including the three parliamentary Members for the borough at that time. More than any other empirical evidence available, this roll call of self-declared readers confirms that the journal cut across partisan and socio-economic lines. For good or bad, 'Mr Porcupine' was indeed the independently-minded "equal opportunities" commentator he claimed to be. The list also confirms a happy correlation between the journal's intended and actual audience, lending weight to the case for the *Porcupine's* social, cultural and political significance.

That the Memorial list did not include the signatures of working class men ought not to be taken as evidence that they did not read the *Porcupine*. Some contemporaries considered the journal's content eminently suitable for the lower ranks. In November 1865, a rare female correspondent, describing herself as 'of the class who visits amongst the poor', wrote in to implore 'Mr. Porcupine' to 'issue some of your sensible articles on the Pawnbrokers, or other such subjects, in the form of tracts for the people … I know they would be sought after with avidity'.[121] Shimmin's response was somewhat surprising, given his enduring personal reputation as a social missionary and political philanthropist. Whilst 'anyone is heartily welcome to reprint these or any other articles for distribution amongst the poor', he explained, the journal was not prepared (or unable, perhaps) to meet the costs of republishing the essays. Shimmin was more financially shrewd, as a press manager, than might be otherwise apparent; he and his colleagues did not consider it the *Porcupine's* role to educate the poor *direct*, as it were, because these did not constitute the journal's target audience. From the point of view of authorial intent, 'Mr Porcupine' wrote predominantly about the working classes and the 'social residuum', not to or for them.[122] The aspiration was to enlighten the "haves" about the "have nots": 'One half of Liverpool does not know how the other half lives; and it was my hope … to remove some of that ignorance, or false knowledge of the peculiarities of "poor-life," which enervates and misleads our Social Reformers'.[123] Local maritime historian Tony Lane credited Shimmin with having helped to bridge the gap between Liverpool's two socio-economic worlds.[124]   This was consistent with John Hollingshead's view of London, where only 'the hardworking clergy', 'certain medical practitioners' and 'a few parochial officers' were familiar with the life of the 'underclass', because 'writers upon London reject it as too mean, too repulsive, or too obscure'.[125]

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[121] 'Strong-Minded Female's Want', *Porcupine* (25 November 1865).
[122] Englander and Day, *Retrieved Riches*, p. 61.
[123] Shimmin, *Liverpool Sketches*, Preface.
[124] Lane, *Gateway of Empire*, p. 128.
[125] J. Hollingshead, *Ragged London in 1861* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1861), pp. 7-8.
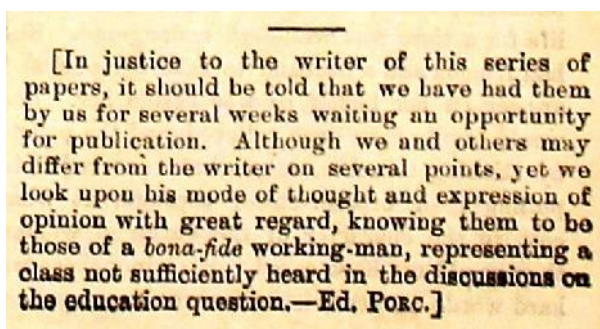
By 1872, it was taken as given that the *Porcupine* was indeed read by the labouring man: 'I do hope that the working classes who read the Porcupine …'.[126] 'A Working Man' was a regular contributor, in the 1870s.[127] Whether 'Working-Men's Ways' and other similar series were in fact penned by a working class writer is a moot point, given that the *Porcupine* adhered to the convention of authorial anonymity. An editor's note from 1877 (Figure 7.5, below) suggests that some were.[128] As a self-made man of humble stock, Shimmin may have penned these articles himself; they contain reflections upon many of his favourite themes. Whatever the identity of their author, the articles offer an intriguing insight into the *Weltanschauung* of an individual who believed himself to be well acquainted with the lives and lifestyles of the social and economic type he sketched. The 'Working-Men's Ways' series was wide-ranging in terms of subject matter: childhood and youth (and the formative influences upon them); the role and expectations placed upon women as wives, mothers and 'homemakers'; men in their capacity as workers and fathers; personal spending habits (essentially, economic literacy) and the pernicious part played by the informal credit economy in the lives of the poor; political attitudes and activism amongst the less well-educated; industrial relations, trade-unionism and the "power" of the working man. There was nothing satirical, note, about the writer's approach; his articles were intended to be received as serious exercises in observation and analysis. There is further evidence of *bona fide* "working class" involvement in the *Porcupine*. One particularly intriguing known contributor was Robert Coninsgby, an artisan (engraver) turned self-taught political philosopher and Liberal activist. Patronised by the *Times* newspaper, Coningsby was considered sufficiently interesting to feature in an American article in 1870 article entitled 'Some English Workingmen'.[129]

Figure 7.5
Editor's note to 'Education, Past and Present: By a Shipwright', *Porcupine*, 27 January 1877.

[In justice to the writer of this series of papers, it should be told that we have had them by us for several weeks waiting an opportunity for publication. Although we and others may differ from the writer on several points, yet we look upon his mode of thought and expression of opinion with great regard, knowing them to be those of a *bona-fide* working-man, representing a class not sufficiently heard in the discussions on the education question.—Ed. Porc.]

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[126] 'Hospital Saturday', *Porcupine* (21 December 1872).
[127] E.g.: 'Working-Men's Ways', *Porcupine* (28 February 1874 – 27 June 1874).
[128] 'Education, Past and Present: By a Shipwright', *Porcupine* (27 January 1877).
[129] 'Some English Workingmen', *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XXVI (October 1870), p. 460.

Just as the price of the *Porcupine* is not a reliable indicator of circulation and reach, it can only provide clues as to reader demography. As a weekly purchase, the journal sat comfortably within the means of the middling classes. Yet it was also accessible to many amongst the working classes. By 1863, even working youths could afford one of the penny weekly periodicals catering specifically to their age group.[130] Cost, in any case, was not an issue; the *Porcupine* could be read gratis. Municipal records confirm that the journal was stocked from its inception by Liverpool (Free) Public Library. During the library's first year of operation (1852-1853), there were reportedly '16,960 readers of periodical publications which are left lying on the tables … The average number of … readers of periodicals [is] 80' per day.[131] By 1873, this had risen to an average daily issue of 460 'Miscellaneous Reviews, Magazines, and Periodicals'.[132] At that time, the stock comprised 113 quarterly, monthly, fortnightly and weekly titles. The last of these categories included *Porcupine*, along with its metropolitan comparators, *Fun*, *Judy* and *Punch* (two copies of each). From its opening, the library was extremely well utilised to the point of overcrowding and in 1863, the Library Committee observed that 'to numbers of unemployed labourers, mechanics and others, [the library's books and periodicals] are of unspeakable advantage, as they enable them to spend many a tedious hour in a pleasant and profitable manner'.[133] In 1865, the Committee began to publish registered borrowers by occupation. Top of the list by far stood white-collar workers. The next cohort, consisting of those with over 100 borrowers, included grocers, labourers, millwrights and engineers, painters and plumbers, printers and compositors, shipwrights, smiths and warehousemen.[134] There is no way of ascertaining who amongst these library users – if any – read the *Porcupine*. The extant bound volumes do not appear to be well-thumbed but these are unlikely to have been the same copies used by weekly library users. All that can be safely concluded is that all of Liverpool's library visitors, regardless of age, gender or class, had access to Shimmin's journal. It was likely available, too, in the same working men's reading rooms and clubs which had nurtured Shimmin and about which 'Mr Porcupine' intermittently wrote.[135]

Two particular features of the *Porcupine* seemingly argue against lower class readers having been anything other than incidental amongst the *Porcupine's* audience – namely, the

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[130] A. Ellis, *Educating Our Masters* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company, 1985), p. 134.

[131] *Report of the Library and Museum Committee to the Town Council of the Borough of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Robert H. Fraser, 1853), p. 4.

[132] *Twenty-First Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum, and Gallery of Arts, of the Borough of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Henry Greenwood, 1873), p. 11.

[133] *Eleventh Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum, and Gallery of Arts, of the Borough of Liverpool* (Liverpool: George McCorquodale and Co., 1863), p. 13.

[134] *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum, and Gallery of Arts, of the Borough of Liverpool* (Liverpool: George McCorquodale and Co., 1865), pp. 18-20.

[135] E.g. 'Working Men's Reading Rooms', *Porcupine* (16 December 1871).

frequent highbrow allusions contained in its content and the journal's extensive coverage of the finer arts. Yet as Jonathan Rose observed, citing the growing number of 'worker intellectuals' who emerged as the century progressed, it is important not to make assumptions about the intellectual capacities or cultural tastes of Victorian readers.[136] The age of the 'self-made man' produced many autodidacts.[137] Shimmin, a prime example, 'was possessed of an indomitable thirst for learning'.[138] Charles Dickens, writing to a correspondent from Liverpool in 1869, expressed gratification that the working classes appreciated his work: 'One of the pleasantest things I have experienced here this time, is the manner in which I am stopped in the streets by working men, who want to shake hands with me, and tell me they know my books. I never go out but this happens. Down at the docks just now, a cooper with a fearful stutter presented himself in this way'.[139] Some sections of the Liverpool working classes may still have struggled with the printed word in the mid-century but William D. Rubinstein suggested that by 1820, 'the great majority of the British population' was 'certainly basically literate, including even women and the very poor'.[140] Geoffrey Best invoked research conducted by Robert K. Webb to caution against jumping to conclusions: 'The workman who was so illiterate that he had to be read to … was becoming rare by the sixties'.[141] More recent statistical analysis has shown 'male literacy was about 70 per cent in 1850, and 55 per cent of females could read'.[142] Moreover, an inability to read did not necessarily render an individual uncultivated or prohibit him or her from accessing oral readings of the written word in a variety of forums. It has been noted that Shimmin used his own *Porcupine* articles on education, housing, cooperation and sanitary reform, as the basis for lectures he delivered to diverse audiences. At the opening of the North-End Working Man's Institute, he gave 'a very interesting and practical address' on 'Working Men and their Homes'. This lecture 'was listened to with the greatest attention throughout, and at its close, as frequently during its delivery, the audience expressed their sympathy with the sentiments expressed, and their appreciation of the sound truths and "homely hits" it contained, by loud bursts of applause'.[143] Some of the journal's content, at least (particularly the many improving articles), did reach and inform the manual and labouring classes.

[136] Rose, 'Rereading the English Common Reader', p. 54; Rose, *Intellectual Life*.
[137] M. Lyons, 'New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers' in G. Cavallo and R. Chartier (eds), *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), p. 335.
[138] 'Death of Mr Hugh. Shimmin', *Liverpool Weekly Albion* (18 January 1879); Shimmin treasured throughout life the first book he was ever given, a 'Life of Dr. [Benjamin] Franklin' – see 'Early Recollections', *Liverpool Weekly Albion* (18 January 1879).
[139] Charles Dickens to Miss Hogarth, correspondence written from Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, April 1869.
[140] W.D. Rubinstein, *Britain's Century: A Political and Social History 1815-1905* (London: Arnold, 1998), p. 13.
[141] Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 246.
[142] Lyons, 'New Readers', pp. 313-14.
[143] 'Opening of the North-End Working Man's Institute', *Liverpool Mercury* (28 September 1859).

There is some possibility that the very poorest amongst the Liverpool community were also familiar with the *Porcupine*. A survey carried out in 1890 by the pioneering William Thomas Stead, into the provision of reading matter in workhouses around the country, found that in Liverpool, 'newspapers of any description are much appreciated by the inmates even if past date by days; also disused books and magazines. Any paper or printed matter will be accepted with thanks'.[144] Stead referred to cast-off publications. His review found that the Liverpool West Derby Union workhouse, housing some 2,200 paupers, subscribed to just four periodicals, monthly, and no newspapers.[145] Twenty five years earlier, 'Mr. Porcupine' had claimed that the workhouse subscribed to the *Porcupine*, thanks to the largesse of local taxpayers.[146] The writer had been being facetious. If the workhouse held any editions of the *Porcupine*, they are likely to have been random, dog-eared back copies.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has conjectured about the *Porcupine's* likely, implied or potential readership. Short of new evidentiary source material coming to light, it will never be possible to put a definitive figure upon the journal's circulation in its early years, to establish its reach or to characterise its precise audience demographic. Yet one fact has been established: the *Porcupine* was neither a marginal vanity project nor an idiosyncratic curiosity. Given the length of time it remained in print, it is reasonable to surmise that the journal fulfilled the criteria for commercial survival outlined by Deian Hopkin: 'good copy, reliable advertising, regular sales, and adroit accounting', along with the ability 'to command the loyalty of politically committed men and women over a prolonged period'.[147] It must have circulated, at its peak, at around 10,000. This was self-evidently a key factor in the periodical's success (as measured by both longevity and social and political impact). Any disproportionality between the *Porcupine's* readership and its contemporary impact is explained by the fact that it was the social and political status (the quality), as much as the number (the quantity*)*, of readers, which mattered to the success of an influential press publication. This was something the publication's astute creators understood. Recognising and meeting a very real demand in the local periodicals market, they offered an appreciative and supportive audience the right kind of publication, at the right time, in the right place. It is logical to conclude that the *Porcupine's* present obscurity is no automatic reflection of its reach, and thus its

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[144] W. T. Stead, 'Liverpool', *Review of Reviews* (January – June 1890), p. 270.
[145] *Ibid.,* p. 269.
[146] 'The Paupers and *Porcupine*', *Porcupine* (30 September 1865).
[147] D. Hopkin, 'The Left-Wing Press and the New Journalism' in J. H Wiener (ed.) *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 235.

influence and impact, in mid-nineteenth-century Liverpool. The following, final chapter stress tests this hypothesis.

CHAPTER EIGHT

'A paper I have never liked'[1]

Interpreting Reader Reception and Response

Vous avez des ennemis? Mais c'est l'histoire de tout homme qui a fait une action grande ou crée une idée neuve… Ne vous en inquiétez pas, dédaignez![2]

The office of a satirist, always a pleasant one, rises to the full height of luxury when the object of this satire visibly writhes under it.[3]

The previous chapter examined the *Porcupine's* audience and its potential reach. The present chapter turns to investigating how readers received and responded to the journal, by drilling down into the primary source material and using anecdotal evidence to explore its efficacy as a 'communications circuit'.[4] The findings feed directly into one of the main objectives of this study: to determine the historical significance of the serio-comic periodical by evaluating its contemporary influence and impact. The task comes with particular challenges, because the power of satire to effect meaningful change has long been contested. It has been considered a significant social force since antiquity, but Leonard Feinberg has been one of numerous modern critics to downplay its reforming role.[5] Regarding satire as a symptom, rather than a cause, of social values and mores, he has suggested that satirists work best when they express attitudes already widely and strongly held.[6] He also made a persuasive point regarding the essential conservatism of satire, the aim of which is rarely to

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[1] 'Talk of the Day', *Liberal Review* (18 January 1879).

[2] V. Hugo, 'Villemain - 1845 Décembre 7', in *Oeuvres Inédites de Victor Hugo*, Sixième Edition (Paris: J. Hetzel & Cie, 1887), p. 94: 'You have enemies? Why, that is the story of every man who has done a great deed or created a new idea… Don't worry about it; disdain it.' (author's translation).

[3] 'The Courier is Riled', *Porcupine* (3 August 1861).

[4] Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, 1982; R.Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' *Daedalus*, 111.3, Summer 1982, pp. 65-83.

[5] Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire*, p. 253.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

effect fundamental political or economic change.[7]   Others who share this view use such terms as 'social policing', 'status quo', 'maintenance of standards' and the 'reaffirmation of values' when analysing satire's role.[8]

There was no consensus, in the nineteenth century, as to the effect and effectiveness of satire. Many Victorians held that it was alienating: 'how much more potent is laughter than invective – inasmuch, as satire renders offenders obstinate and pugnacious, while ridicule disarms them; being that it is impossible to battle with the man who has the laugh on his own side'.[9] Moreover, as Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* demonstrated, satire need not be judged by outcomes. One crude way in which to gauge its cultural legitimacy involves asking two fundamental questions: first, does the reader see the purpose and second, does he appreciate the effect? The challenge for the historian is to find the evidential basis required to answer these.

THEORETICAL PREMISE

The reception theory developed by Jauss (and by others, with variations, such as Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish) provides a useful starting point for a systematic and theoretically underpinned assessment of the *Porcupine's* influence and impact. Jauss argued that the key to bridging the 'chasm between literature and history' was to discover literature's 'truly socially formative function'.[10] He flagged up the importance of the historical background of a literary text, stressing that a literary work does not emerge in an 'informational vacuum' but rather 'predisposes its readers to a very definite type of reception … The new text evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, connected, changed or just reproduced'.[11] Reader-response and reception theories are particularly appealing in the case of a periodical whose creators set out to educate and convert their audience, because they focus upon how it affects its readers.

In order to appreciate Jauss's rationale and how it might contribute to a contextualisation of the *Porcupine*, it is necessary to understand the 'horizon of expectations' as a generational and cultural (and therefore historically variable) framework. Jauss framed the concept philologically: at first reading, a text was understood with reference to the broader context

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[7] *Ibid.*
[8] Connery, *Satire: Origins and Principles*, p.4; Harris, 'Purpose and Method'.
[9] T.F.D.C., 'Dying a Natural Death', *Sharpe's*.
[10] Jauss and Benzinger, 'Literary History', p. 37.
[11] *Ibid.*

with which its contemporary audience was familiar.[12] Furthermore, he characterised the historical literary work as a (potentially) active agent of influence or change. As linguistics scholar Jinfeng Zhang has explained: 'narratives should not be seen as reflections of a historical moment, or imitations of "reality", but as actually intervening in historical struggle, and perhaps changing people's perceptions of the world in which they live'.[13] A literary work, he explained, created a dialogue.[14] The architects of the *Porcupine*, in penning an opinion sheet, set out to create a monologue, rather than an equal interchange of ideas, but such a publication (like any polemic) was bound - if it had any merit - to provoke dialogue and to feed off and into public discourse. The degree to which the *Porcupine's* creators succeeded in doing so must form part of any assessment of the journal's historical influence and impact.

In an experimental departure from more conventional routes into audience reception, what follows will focus upon negative receptions of and reactions to the *Porcupine*. The peculiar nature of the nineteenth-century serio-comic periodical renders this approach particularly apt. Criticism or complaint represented a point of collision, whether by accident or by design, of the two poles identified by literary theorist Wolfgang Iser – the artistic (the text created by the author) and the aesthetic (the realisation accomplished by the reader). It is through the resultant discordance and dissonance that contemporary attitudes towards freedom of thought and expression practised by the satirical-political press are most nakedly exposed.[15]

First impressions of the *Porcupine*, on the part of professional opinion hawkers, were generally positive. The list of London litterateurs who would be involved in the new venture gave cause for optimism. The *Liverpool Daily Post* saw a local demand and wished the venture well.[16] Within just weeks of its launch, the *Porcupine* was being classed on a par with the mighty *Punch*; an article about the new *Bazaar Journal and Fancy Fair Gazette* suggested the reader would 'find it as witty as Punch, and as lively as the Porcupine'.[17] Thanks to its 'lightness' and 'dexterity', its 'impartiality' and its 'absence of scurrility and malice', the *Porcupine* would, predicted one Lancashire journal after the first nine issues,

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[12] Jauss and Benzinger, 'Literary History', p. 18-23.

[13] J. Zhang, 'Translator's Horizon of Expectations and the Inevitablity of Retranslations of Literary Works', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 3, No.8 (August 2013), p. 1414; based upon H. R. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Trans. Timothy Bahti, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982).

[14] Jauss and Benzinger, 'Literary History', p. 10.

[15] W. Iser cited in M. P. Thompson, 'Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning', *History and Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Wiley for Wesleyan University, October 1991), p. 269.

[16] 'The Porcupine', *Liverpool Daily Post* (6 October 1860).

[17] 'Bazaar Journal and Fancy Fair Gazette', *Liverpool Daily Post* (7 November 1860).

'infallibly gratify the general public'.[18] The *Liverpool Daily Post* was confident that the first Christmas edition of 'our youthful and amusing contemporary' would be popular.[19] A year into the *Porcupine's* existence, the *Launceston Examiner* in far-flung Tasmania (further evidence of the journal's reach) described it as 'an excellent, satirical, jocular, Liverpool publication'.[20]

Over time, the *Porcupine* attracted plenty of contemporary admirers who predictably attested to its positive influence and impact. Yet to examine what amounted to "echo chamber" affirmation would serve little purpose in the quest to recover historical meaning. The point of the serio-comic brand of satire was not only to preach to the converted. Acting as an irritant was its very *raison d'être*; if the mainstream press sought to inform and stimulate public discourse, the aim of a satirical press concerned with folly and injustice was to discomfit and provoke, to challenge and unsettle. True to liberal form, it set out to make 'ignorance aware of itself'.[21] Publicity would feed the indignation of the public and embarrass wrongdoers into mending their ways. It was a difficult balancing act and satirical publications which did not achieve this end arguably failed in their purpose. Within this context, exploring hostile and defensive reactions to the *Porcupine* provides a fruitful means of deciphering and interpreting the journal's aspirations on its own conscious and sub-conscious terms, offering a more reliable guide to the effectiveness of the nineteenth-century provincial satirical periodical as political *provocateur* and agitator.

Contemporary hostility also serves as a particularly useful analytical prism through which to test the proposition that the *Porcupine* is best construed as an exercise in political philanthropy, in performed social and cultural knowingness and in satire as freedom of expression. The concept of 'intervention' highlighted by Iser and other members of the 'Konstanz school of reader-response aesthetics' is central, given that serio-comic publications had no public mandate to speak for the people.[22] 'Mr Porcupine' claimed to have the best interests of his town at heart; to fulfil his 'fourth estate' function by serving as a 'critical friend'. Did Liverpool's denizens subscribe to this? Did they welcome or reject his unsolicited intervention? The evidence suggests that from an initial position of wariness, the local community slowly came to embrace the *Porcupine* and the chapter offers some brief concluding observations upon what shifting attitudes towards Shimmin's journal signified, then, and what they might mean for historical interpretation, now.

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[18] 'The Porcupine. Nos. 1 to 9, Liverpool', *Kendal Mercury* (8 December 1860).
[19] 'The "Porcupine" Christmas Number', *Liverpool Daily Post* (20 December 1860).
[20] 'Our Monthly Summary', *Launceston Examiner* (19 December 1861).
[21] Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, p. 117.
[22] A. Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 216-17.

AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS AND RECEPTIONS

Two things must be established in respect of the broader comic periodical market into which the *Porcupine* launched. Firstly: by the early 1860s the genre was held by more literary-minded and snobbish types, to have "dumbed down" and thus to have had its day as a powerful socio-political force. The 'serio-comic' periodical went against the grain, in this respect. Secondly: periodical comic literature was culturally popular. As Richard Altick stressed, 'Punch was merely the one spectacular success in a genre which numbers literally hundreds of titles'.[23]

The *Porcupine* venture was always set to be a gamble. From the outset, the journal's creators had to work hard to win over a readership grown indifferent to the routine emergence and disappearance of second-rate 'comic' periodicals. Audience expectations prior to the *Porcupine's* launch were not high, some press watchers sceptical about the prospects of yet another experiment in local satirical journalism: 'The centralizing magnetism of London draws thither all the best thinkers and writers ... We hear of a facetious weekly journal to be started in Liverpool, the Porcupine. Will it not fail, as the Lion failed?'[24] A reviewer in South Wales was equally doubtful: 'I fear very much that it will not meet with [success], as speculations of the same sort have seldom answered'.[25]

Shimmin and his colleagues lost no time in heading off anticipated or actual audience criticism. In the second issue of the journal, 'Mr Porcupine' answered, point for point and with feigned nonchalance, charges which had reportedly been made against him following the launch edition:

> You are not illustrated like Punch,
> You abuse the Liberals,
> You do not praise the Tories,
> You are too serious,
> You are not sufficiently broad,
> You are vulgar.[26]

It was naturally too early for readers to have formed decisive opinions. The points of criticism outlined reflected the conductors' own editorial teething problems, as they established their style. Nevertheless, this pre-emptive approach - a disarming tactic - was to

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[23] Altick, 'English Periodicals', pp. 255-64.
[24] 'General Summary', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (27 September 1860).
[25] 'Town Talk', *Merthyr Telegraph and General Advertiser* (29 September 1860).
[26] 'Public Opinion', *Porcupine* (13 October 1860).

become a stock in trade of the journal, which was not only prepared to explain itself to detractors but took positive delight in doing so. Part of the journal's "performed town ology", it demonstrates the way in which 'Mr Porcupine' set about responding to or deflecting public disapproval and challenging its readers to think. That the journal was able to list a string of specific criticisms in its second issue bespeaks a high degree of self-awareness. Thanks to the knowingness upon which they prided themselves, Shimmin and his collaborators were alert to criticism picked up through word of mouth. 'Mr Porcupine' also reported that Edmund Yates had 'attempted to "write down" the success of our first number' in the *Illustrated Times*.[27] The controversial London novelist and mentee of Charles Dickens had indeed penned a very negative review: the *Porcupine* was 'a singularly dull publication', he wrote, which 'must have started with a first cargo of provincial ballast'; it would have to 'improve vastly', if it was to have any chance of success.[28] The upstart 'Mr Porcupine' airily dismissed 'the (Ex) Lounger at the Clubs' as a bitter and unpleasant pretender to literary recognition whose dissatisfaction he welcomed.[29] By the *Porcupine's* tenth issue, its architects were expressing confidence that they were on the right track, citing several examples of its demonstrable influence upon public affairs: 'These things, coupled with the highly-complimentary letters we have received from men every way qualified to express an opinion, afford great encouragement. As we have neither personal nor party interests to serve, and are alike indifferent to the smiles of one or the frowns of the other, these telling indications are the more gratifying'.[30]

Some of the early local targets of 'Mr Porcupine's' exposure or ridicule fought back. These included members of the local press. In 1861, a writer for the Tory *Liverpool Courier* (censured by the *Porcupine* for having done a 'sneaking thing') described Shimmin's journal as 'not witty' and 'pointless'.[31] Typically, Shimmin et al. exploited the opportunity to gloat: '*Porcupine's* conscience is easy. He knows that he did good service by impaling the *Courier* on one of his quills, and every wriggle adds to his delight'.[32] It is to be expected that the *Porcupine's* nominal press competitors might seek to discredit it. It has been noted that *Fun* occasionally did so: '"Martha." – Nobody wants you to be clever, but do try to be original; or apply to the Porcupine, which seems fond of plagiarisms'.[33] Another snippet concerned the *Porcupine's* publication of a 'Nicholas' article (penned by occasional *Porcupine* contributor,

[27] 'Club Law', *Porcupine* (20 October 1860).
[28] 'The Lounger at the Clubs', *Illustrated Times* (13 October 1860). Note that the 'Lounger of the Clubs' would a few years later describe the *Porcupine* as 'a very well-sustained comic periodical': 'The Lounger at the Clubs', *Illustrated Times* (2 January 1864).
[29] 'Club Law', *Porcupine* (20 October 1860).
[30] 'Our Own Influence', *Porcupine* (8 December 1860).
[31] 'The Courier is Riled', *Porcupine* (3 August 1861).
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] 'Answers to Correspondents', *Fun* (31 August 1867).

Jeff Prowse, who wrote *Fun's* celebrated 'Nicholas' pieces and may well have been happy for the Liverpool journal to further disseminate, and perhaps pay for, his work): 'the best punishment for such ignorance and dishonesty is the contempt of the public, to which we leave it'.[34]

Less trivial was a review published in the London-produced *Orchestra* in 1872. One of the most detailed contemporary analyses of the *Porcupine*, it offered a decidedly ambivalent take on Shimmin's journal and merits extensive quotation. The wit of Liverpool's comic papers was, wrote the author, 'fearfully and wonderfully fashioned', before continuing:

> the Liberal Review and the Porcupine are (I presume) intended to combine the attributes of the "arch wag" of journalism and the "trenchant blade." They are in alternate articles awfully funny and awfully severe. They walk up and down the backs of local functionaries; they throw hand-grenades into the Select Vestry, and the Dock Board, and the Watch Committee, and according as such communities may need bombarding; and they are profoundly and inscrutable [*sic*] satirical upon things in general. And these thunderbooms of satire are relieved by lambent flashes of humour – light *jeux d'esprit* in verse and allegory and dramatic dialogue. Most of it is very mystical matter. It is the sort of thing you must take without questioning: it is not for the human reason to analyse it.[35]

The writer implied that the *Porcupine's* content, full of 'limpid exuding' was mediocre.[36] Mild antagonism existed between the *Orchestra* and the *Porcupine* for years, suggesting it may have stemmed from some personal animus on the part of individual writers. It is difficult to establish which journal initiated the hostilities but a *Porcupine* article published in early 1866, 'A Funny Man on Liverpool', constituted a withering condemnation of an *Orchestra* contributor, 'Bohemian', who had written offensively about Liverpool and its people.[37] Anticipating later associations of Liverpool with excessive parochialism, introspection and defensiveness, it was permissible for 'Mr Porcupine' to criticise his own; it was not acceptable for outsiders to do so.[38] The writer of the 'Funny Man' article also pointed to the prevailing double standards which allowed the 'Orchestra paragraphist' to make an 'indecent allusion' to a local politician which would have outraged the town, had a Liverpool paper printed it.[39]

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[34] 'Answers to Correspondents', *Fun* (24 August 1867).
[35] 'In the Liver's Nest', *Orchestra* (28 June 1872).
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] 'A Funny Man on Liverpool', *Porcupine* (13 January 1866).
[38] See, for example: 'Hackwatch', *Private Eye*, Issue 1118 (2004), p. 5.
[39] *Ibid.*

Another arts publication displayed more venom towards the Liverpool periodical. In 1871, the *Musical World* had expressed hearty approval of Shimmin's journal: 'The *Liverpool Porcupine* has been using one of its many quills to excellent purpose … Bravo! Friend Porcupine – when we need a champion, may you be to the fore'.[40] Six years later, in an about face, the journal published a pointedly rude ditty:

> There was an old *Liverpool Porcupine*,
>
> Who said to some fools, "if for work you pine,
>
> Just each take a quill,
>
> And my sheet with trash fill;
>
> I'm a foolish and drivelling old Porcupine.[41]

The verse may have constituted a legitimate response to the *Porcupine's* declining *joie de vivre* in the 1870s. It is also tempting to speculate whether the sniping correspondents for the *Orchestra* and the *Musical World* were one and the same person. Whatever the case, actions spoke louder than words. Over the longer term and in keeping with widespread press practice, the *Musical World* frequently dipped into the *Porcupine* for snippets and articles to republish.

The significance of intra-trade squabbling and point scoring should not be overstated. It was very common within the Bohemian periodical press, a result and reflection of the complex social and professional networks discussed in Chapter Four. It is not unreasonable to infer, however, that the *Porcupine* was sufficiently influential and posed enough competition to make other periodicals keen to direct readers' receptions of the rather bumptious Liverpool pretender (which, with its strong thespian links, provided extensive coverage of all the arts). Other members of the wider press gave *Porcupine* a fairer and more respectful hearing. A writer for the *Sunday Times*, for example, indicated full agreement with the Liverpool journal on unscrupulous "jerry builders": 'This may be thought an exaggeration. It is nothing of the kind; it is the real sentiment of the debased builders of the present time'.[42] Other journalists again compared the *Porcupine* favourably to household-name titles such as the *Era* (1838-1939).[43] Most significantly, in terms of historiographical value, the paper was compared positively to the iconic *Punch*; according to some contemporaries, its 'fretful

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[40] 'Occasional Notes', *Musical World* (7 January 1871).

[41] 'Puffing a Creed'*, Musical World* (2 June 1877).

[42] 'Passing Events', *Sunday Times* (24 August 1873).

[43] Untitled snippet, *Bury Times* (10 October 1863); 'Local Notes', *Merthyr Telegraph and General Advertiser* (23 June 1876).

quills' were 'often as sharp' as those of the 'London Charivari'.[44] This fact, alone, raises the historical interest of the marginal Liverpool pretender.

Peer review and criticism, over the longer term, were mixed, even amongst professional colleagues who might be expected to share values and tastes. The pseudonymous everymen who wrote for the local *Liberal Review,* 'Jones', 'Brown' and 'Robinson', each assessed the *Porcupine* very differently. 'Jones' declared that he had never liked it, 'Brown' held it to have 'long been a power' and 'Robinson' was of the opinion it had been conducted with great ability.[45] Robinson also made a significant observation: 'those who have been in the habit of condemning it most heartily have been amongst its most regular readers, and amongst those who have derived the greatest amount of enjoyment from it'.[46] Not only does this corroborate 'Mr Porcupine's' own scoffing inference: 'It's a curious thing about such "gentlemen on 'Change," that, though they never see the Porcupine, they always know every article it contains'.[47] It also bears out the idea of the *Porcupine* having been for many a secret pleasure and/or concern. Moreover, if Shimmin's *Porcupine* obituary writer is to be believed, very many Liverpool individuals discreetly wrote for it: 'Perhaps no journal in this or any other town has had in its time so many contributors. There is scarcely a public man of any mark in the town who has not in his turn been on the list'.[48] All of this supports the argument that the contemporary significance of the journal has been submerged, many amongst its original "reader-writer" audience having been unable or unwilling to acknowledge its place in local social and political discourse, or their own engagement with it.

'Professional readers' – fellow journalists – had vested interests and agendas. The "common" man had only his Jaussian 'horizon of expectation' against which to judge Shimmin's journal. If citizen readers wrote letters of complaint or objection, 'Mr Porcupine' very rarely saw fit to publish them, unless they created an opportunity for him to offer a clever, self-affirmatory retort. The task of establishing reader reception is rendered more challenging by the journal's satirical habit of inserting *faux* correspondence, although manufactured letters do become identifiable to the practised eye.[49]

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[44] 'Punch and Porcupine' in T. L. Nichols (ed.), *Herald of Health* (London: Nichols & Co., 1881), p. 77.
[45] 'Talk of the Day', *Liberal Review* (18 January 1879).
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] 'The Courier is Riled', *Porcupine* (3 August 1861).
[48] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[49] 'An Indignant Contributor', *Porcupine* (20 October 1860); 'Contribution from an Alderman', *Porcupine* (1 November 1862); 'A Correction', *Porcupine* (6 April 1867).

Figure 8.1
'A Medley', *Porcupine*, 8 August 1868

THE PORCUPINE.

A MEDLEY.

THE spasmodic correspondent (we suspect he has not been working *alone* at the plot) who sent us "A Humble Tribute" has been at it again. He writes this time in a feigned hand, and as though he were in no way connected with the last effusion: had never seen it, in fact, and seems to say that he has had his PORCUPINES bound lately, and that the following lines were "suggested by the appearance of his landlady with the ponderous tomes." They are entitled

MY VOLUMES OF PORCUPINE.

"*Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils
Shrunk to this little measure?*"—*Julius Cæsar.*

AND is this PORCUPINE I see?
  Or doth my fancy mock, O?
The lusty yeoman can it be
  In drawing-room morocco?
O! that some wizard's hand were near,
  To take these tomes so taper,
And chase away their clothing dear,
  And bring them back in paper!
Yet why? Their stormy currents flow
  No weaker for the cover;
And this fair guise will serve to show
  That I'm a true book-lover.
And, should PORC-haters on it look,
  And prejudice so blinding
Perplex them how to call the book,
  They—well, they'll praise the binding!

O! PORC he comes down like the wolf on the lambs!
And his pages are gleaming with sharp epigrams!
And the tone of his talk shows such talent and ease,
'Tis sweeter than music that's borne on the breeze!
This bold Rhadamanthus, he gives it them strong:
He blights the foul buds of the Upas of Wrong;
If a humbug be greenly upgrowing at morn
'Tis withered ere evening by pitiless scorn.
His judgments, if not all infallibly right,
Are slashing, as fits his repute and his might;
And we beg him to go it again and again,
Till he leave not a monster unsmote by the pen!
On! PORCUPINE, on! like a steed in his pride,
And trample down jobs till thy fame is spread wide;
Till nowhere on earth is thy value unknown,
Thy beauties unbought, or thy trumpet unblown!

The way is long, the world is cold,
That man's heart must be stout and bold
Who sets his face against the bray
Of fools, to show a better way;
Who seeks a goal, nor heeds the storm;
Who treads that weary road *Reform*;
Who cares what griefs the poor annoy;
Who heeds a sweep or orphan boy;
Who turns from caste and clique and clan,
And wants to catch the ear of Man;
Who rudely strikes the sham and sneak,
And shows up robbery week by week;
Who touches sores where others shrink;
Who starts not from the cesspool's brink;
Who harps this tune in Labour's ear—
"A peasant need not *live for beer*."

I stood on my lodgings' staircase
  At the time when the day declines,
When my landlady opened the front door,
  And took in my PORCUPINES.
And I held my PORC to my bosom,
  With his muddles and jokes and jeers;
But I thought of the bill for the binding,
  With a wisdom beyond my years.
How gladly, O! how gladly!
  When these bound-up leaves were loose,
I have paid my hebdomadal penny,
  And enjoyed their rich abuse!
And whenever I turn these pages
  To refresh myself with a line,
The odour of many a nuisance
  Will arise from my PORCUPINE!
Yet ever I'll be PORC's keeper,
  For his fun's sake, the pleasant youth!
And perchance for something deeper:
  Some touches of tender truth.

Then, as now, satire was an acquired taste and not all contemporary readers appreciated the *Porcupine* approach. In doing so, some played into its hands, providing 'Mr Porcupine' with the very oxygen of publicity upon which he depended. Unimpressed readers simply dismissed the journal as second rate: '*Mr. Porcupine* makes use of the case to fill up his columns and amuse his readers in a piece of doggerel rhyme, which is evidently the production of a printer's devil, or some such important functionary, retained upon his

staff".[50] Personal axe-grinding aside, the *Orchestra* critic cited earlier revealed that problems of description and categorisation existed for contemporaries as they do now for history scholars. Some readers – even professional, literary ones – struggled with the eclecticism of the Liverpool publication:

> [T]here is a poem in the Porcupine this week – a journal whose title-page proclaims it to be "Political, Social, and Satirical." Now that poem perplexes me gravely; because I don't know which Porcupine attribute it professes. Is it a Political poem, or a Social poem, or a Satirical poem?[51]

Two indignant 'lay' readers, who had clearly misunderstood the *Porcupine's* brand of wit, were urged by the *Liverpool Daily Post* (generally indulgent of 'Our Liverpool Charivari'), to remember that the '*Porcupine* is intended to be a facetious publication. No one would think of addressing a remonstrance to *Punch*'.[52]

The *Porcupine's* political satire was an interactive form, demanding of its audience, requiring that its readers remain alert in line with satirical theory, 'to the conflict between the literal and the actual meanings of what is being said'.[53] There is evidence to suggest that the *Porcupine's* satire was positively understood by many of its followers. The whimsical satirical verse copied above (Figure 8.1), allegedly sent in by a regular reader, is a case in point. 'Mr Porcupine' made clever play of his 'intelligent and discriminating public' and courted it assiduously, setting out to forge an intimacy with those readers he considered to be right-minded.[54] It was naïve to count upon any "correct" reception of a given "message"; as Jonathan Rose argued, common readers 'create their own meanings, they mistake the "unmistakeable", they read very selectively'.[55] Nevertheless, Shimmin and his co-writers had a clear and confident idea of how their journalistic efforts were understood by their 'many readers', who had 'appreciated and borne witness to [the journal's] earnestness, honesty, and impartiality'.[56] It has been noted that satire could be alienating, as a form of attack.[57] Yet it was also flattering to those inferred to possess the same (superior) levels of intelligence and culture as the narrator.[58] In this latter respect, the serio-comic periodical was both exclusive and inclusive, creating foes whilst building up a loyal, appreciative

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[50] 'Pawnbrokers' Apprentices', *Liverpool Daily Post* (30 June 1863).
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] 'Porcupine's Happy Family', *Liverpool Daily Post* (24 December 1863); 'To Correspondents', *Liverpool Daily Post* (23 May 1861).
[53] Ogborn and Buckroyd, *Satire*, p. 16.
[54] 'Notices to Correspondents', *Porcupine* (21 November 1860).
[55] Rose, 'Rereading the English Common Reader', p. 66.
[56] Shimmin, *Liverpool Sketches*, Dedication.
[57] C. A Knight, *Literature of Satire* (Cambridge University press, 2004), p. 249.
[58] Pearsall. *Collapse*, p. 7.

following. Even this following could not be taken for granted, however. A 'well-expressed impeachment of ourselves' sent to the *Porcupine* in 1865 and published in full, provides an excellent example of the wariness felt by many towards the journal's brand of satire.[59] The correspondent was initially effusive in his praise:

> You are a power in the town which, for the good of the town, cannot be dispensed with. You can scent an abuse and run it down with the certainty of a sleuth hound. You claim to be a "hard hitter." You are. You are, moreover, a good hater, and you delight to call a spade a spade. You glory in the exposure of shame and humbugs ... But you do much else … let me tell you, it is for the advocacy of good, no less than the denouncing of evil things, that your influence is legitimately growing.[60]

'Andros' went on, however, to caution 'Mr Porcupine' against violating 'social decencies': 'The line must be drawn somewhere; and the drawing of that line, that is wherein the true genius shines'.[61] There was no humility in Shimmin's decision to publish this reader's letter. On the contrary, he launched a mocking and defensive attack upon the credibility of the writer, refusing to accept the correspondent's illustrations as examples of any lack of decorum.

Private individuals who had been named and shamed by the *Porcupine* occasionally sought to defend themselves (typically choosing to vent their spleen via other publications). Such critics were keen to rubbish the journal as 'a periodical which mistook impertinence for wit, and personalities for smartness, and whose quills were pointless'.[62] A virulent letter was sent to both the *Liverpool Mercury* and the *Daily Post* in 1868, in which the 'Liberal Trumpeter' described the *Porcupine* as 'spiteful', suggested 'none but fools' could understand its 'wit' and disparagingly dubbed 'Mr Porcupine', 'Mr. Fretful'.[63] Such examples provide compelling evidence that the *Porcupine* lived up to its prickly name. By lashing out at 'Mr Porcupine' as they did, his targets unwittingly helped to validate his very *raison d'être*, serving to legitimise and reinforce his place within the local press culture.

Public hostility was a cross which fearless journalists had to bear. The *Porcupine's* authors accepted that they risked causing offence and alienating a variety of parties, from 'Mr. Tory'

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[59] 'Porcupine's Violation of Social Decencies', *Porcupine* (4 November 1865).
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] 'The Procession to the Park and the Planting of an Oak', *Liverpool Mercury* (25 April 1864).
[63] '"Porcupine" and the Liberal Trumpeter', *Liverpool Mercury* (7 July 1868); '"Porcupine" and the Liberal Trumpeter', *Liverpool Daily Post* (8 July 1868).

to 'Mr. Radical'.[64] If the *Porcupine* were to live up to its satirical credentials, it necessarily had to remain outwardly unperturbed by criticism and complaint. Making a virtue of necessity, Shimmin and his fellow satirists affected to relish controversy and to accept hostility as an occupational hazard: 'Mr. Porcupine counts their hostility as a compliment, and in this respect a waste-paper basket full of abusive letters forms the measure of their degradation and of his usefulness'.[65] He claimed to be sanguine about the animosity his 'fourth estate' role sometimes attracted: 'Mr Porcupine … is … the last man on important public questions to surrender, either amidst threats or entreaties, that freedom of criticism which is the birth right of the English press'.[66] Attack merely served to nourish and galvanise the journal. In return, 'Mr Porcupine' could be positively condescending towards those who were unable or unwilling to embrace his approach: '[t]he gentleman … has either never read Porcupine, or else is incapable of appreciating the spirit in which it has always been conducted'.[67] The *Porcupine* scorned such readers as fools and ingrates.[68] Both the title and the conclusion of 'The People One Has to Write For' - 'calumny and abuse … are the rewards which a public writer must expect who does not mince matters or spare the culpable' - highlight the *Porcupine* writers' sense of vocation, in line with contemporary Liberal attitudes to serious, responsible journalism.[69] This was all part of a bravura performance. A more forlorn observation came closer to reflecting how Shimmin, the individual, truly felt about the trials and tribulations of his journalistic vocation: 'And this is the way in which the unhappy beings who have to conduct critical and satirical papers are invariably treated'.[70] It has been noted how 'Mr Porcupine' was humourlessly sensitive to charges of scurrility or sham. He also had no truck with accusations of hypocrisy or double standards. These were in fact extremely rare but it is interesting to consider a reflection made, following Shimmin's death, by a contemporary who suggested the *Porcupine* editor had been 'greatly overrated', 'more of a preacher than a practiser' and that 'people had closed their eyes to his faults'.[71] This oblique and rather mean-spirited allegation went unsubstantiated. Moreover, there is no evidence of others - even Shimmin's confirmed critics - claiming he practised double standards. The unsupported insinuation highlights the downside of townology as an ontology in which familiarity could breed contempt.

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[64] 'What is Scurrility?' *Porcupine* (9 November 1861).

[65] 'Mr. Porcupine introduces his Thirteenth Volume', *Porcupine* (1 April 1871); 'To Our Readers', *Porcupine* (6 April 1878).

[66] 'Mercantile Muzzle Men', *Porcupine* (30 October 1869).

[67] 'Scandalton', *Porcupine* (27 August 1864).

[68] 'The People One Has To Write For', *Porcupine* (16 May 1874).

[69] K. Lawes, *Paternalism and Politics: The Revival of Paternalism in early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2000).

[70] 'Talk of the Day', *Liberal Review* (18 January 1879).

[71] 'Local: Notes and Queries Society and the Late Mr Hugh Shimmin', *Isle of Man Times* (22 March 1879).

POLITICAL HOSTILITY AS A COMPLIMENT

'Mr Porcupine' believed he had a right and a responsibility to flag up failings in local governance and commerce and consistently cited the public interest as a justification and a defence. His attitude echoed that of Frederick the Great of Prussia, a frequent target of Voltaire's satire in the eighteenth century: 'I think of such satires as Epictetus did: "If evil be said of thee, and if it be true, correct thyself; if it be a lie, laugh at it"'.[72] The virtuous, rational man or institution had nothing to fear of the *Porcupine*. This made Liverpool's public figures uncomfortable. Even if they were disinclined to acknowledge it, and sought to argue that 'Mr Porcupine' had indulged in unwarranted personal attack, individuals who cried foul against the journal could not argue with its reasoned philosophy. Shimmin, through his paper, became one of the banes of the local political establishment because he would not pay due deference and let well alone. It was this which both irritated and worried Liverpool's ruling oligarchy.

For all its declarations of non-partisanship, the journal was recognised as being Liberal-leaning and thus ostensibly on the winning side of contemporary local politics and public opinion. Despite the continued local survival of the Tories, Liberal thinking dominated municipal (as well as national) governance during much of the period in question.[73] As has been stated, the *Porcupine* in no way acted as a supine cheerleader for the Liberal party in Liverpool and it is important to reiterate the distinction between its support for Liberal values and causes and its preparedness to critique and criticise the Liberal forces at work in the town. The *Hull Packet* reported that 'Mr Joseph Arch[er] has been "shamefully treated" not by the wicked Tories, but by the ungrateful Liberals. So says the Liverpool Porcupine, an excellent authority'.[74] It is small wonder that Shimmin became a scourge in the eyes of some of the town's Liberal elite, who resented his refusal to follow any prescribed partisan script and were unable or unwilling to recognise his journal's self-styled role of critical friend. For some, Shimmin was a loose cannon; an incubus on the Liberal party. 'I wish he would go over to the other side,' wrote one political luminary, Alfred Billson.[75] The 'other side' did not want him either, however; 'Mr Porcupine' was just as caustic about local Conservative policy and machinations. A series of *Porcupine* articles in 1864, scrutinising both the Cellar (Liberal) and Garret (Tory) cliques, demonstrates the determination of the journal's authors to remain party neutral; to report upon political developments and political actors with

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[72] Frederick to Voltaire, 2 March 1775, cited in J. McGann and C.L. Sligh (eds), *Algernon Charles Swinburne, Major Poems and Selected Prose* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004) p. 487.
[73] Oral testimony from M.J.Whitty, Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Committee on Newspaper Stamps, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 9 May 1851, Q.607.
[74] 'Notes – Political and Otherwise', *Hull Packet and East Riding Times* (22 March 1883).
[75] P. Searby, 'Electioneering in Lancashire', p. 159.

neither fear nor favour. Shimmin's journal endured because it was concerned with political culture and governance, rather than tactical politicking.

Although loath to admit it, Liverpool's ruling class were fearful of the *Porcupine's* uncompromising scrutiny and blunt analysis. An angry correspondent, writing to a local newspaper in 1867, suggested Shimmin was despised and resented by local councillors who 'are all sweetness and affability in [his] presence … and yet … behind his back speak of him in the language of bitterness and gall … because they are afraid of being shown up and made the laughing-stock of the town!'[76] If Liverpool's political players trod in fear of 'Mr Porcupine's' acid quill, most were sufficiently astute not to show it.[77] Some, such as the Liverpool Postmaster, could not hide their indignation and protested to Shimmin directly.[78] In the *Porcupine's* early years the political class were reluctant to lend it too much credibility and few went out of their way to be overtly critical. Rather, in public they sought to downplay it by adopting a policy of indifferent dismissiveness. Political individuals occasionally made a point of treating the journal, in public, with gentle, scoffing derision or with humourless superciliousness which belied their wariness.[79] Some public figures were openly hostile. Amongst themselves, the West Derby Board of Guardians - routinely criticised in *Porcupine's* pages - snobbishly cast Shimmin as an irritating upstart about whose behaviour they ought not trouble themselves: 'we shall lower ourselves still more by noticing this'.[80]

James Allanson Picton was a notable exception. An early champion of the journal, in 1861 he wrote that 'I have read the Porcupine from the first, and in general with pleasure. I have admired its manly Stowell-Brownish tone, its contempt for cant, humbug, and puffing of every description'.[81] Like the sympathetic reader quoted earlier, however, Picton also warned the *Porcupine* not to let its standards slip.[82] In 1866, he advised colleagues that Shimmin had presented the Corporation with a bound copy of his *Pen Portraits of Liverpool Town Councillors*, first published in the *Porcupine*.[83] The biographical sketch as 'ante-mortem inquest' was a popular genre at the time.[84] Picton welcomed the collection as 'a very

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[76] 'Mr. Hugh Shimmin', *Liverpool Daily Post* (29 January 1867).
[77] 'Hugh Shimmin', *Porcupine* (18 January 1879).
[78] 'The Liverpool Letter-Carriers', *Porcupine* (29 May 1869).
[79] 'Town Council Meeting: "Motley"', *Liverpool Daily Post* (14 January 1864); 'Town Council Meeting', *Liverpool Daily Post* (1 November 1866); 'Markets Committee', *Liverpool Daily Post* (4 June 1863); 'Everton and Kirkdale Ward', *Liverpool Mercury* (27 October 1864).
[80] 'Toxteth Board of Guardians', *Liverpool Daily Post* (26 October 1866).
[81] 'The Free Library', *Porcupine* (16 February 1861).
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] Shimmin, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, 1866.
[84] J. Macleod, 'Noticing the Dead: The Biographical Sketch in Victorian Periodicals', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Fall 2017), p. 536.

valuable acquisition to the library' which would be appreciated by future generations.[85] Fellow councillor Charles Bowring did not agree, loftily affecting (unlikely) ignorance of Shimmin and suggesting that only books written by historians "proper" ought to be accepted into the public collection. In response, Picton gently suggested that Bowring 'seemed to view the matter far too seriously. He and all public men must expect remarks to be made upon their public character'.[86] Picton's relaxed attitude confirms that despite the discomfort it could occasion, political satire *was* accepted by some amongst the local oligarchy as a legitimate form of critique.

Making political foes was inevitable. Indeed, it was a badge of pride and success, as Shimmin explained in a feisty diatribe published in late 1861.[87] He singled out two institutions, the Liverpool Financial Reform Association and the *Liverpool Mercury*, representing the local Liberal party and press, respectively.[88] Both of these had recently hit out at the *Porcupine* and Shimmin responded disdainfully, accusing them of scurrility, bitterness and abuse.[89] The local Financial Reform Association had initially sought to court Shimmin but he had rebuffed their advances.[90] That the national Financial Reform movement was also sufficiently piqued to comment on the *Porcupine's* 'stupid absurdities', serves as further evidence of the Liverpool journal's wider reach.[91] *Porcupine* would not, vowed 'Mr Porcupine', be put off course.[92] This attitude naturally served to reinforce the journal's reputation, in some quarters, for being oppositional.

THE *PORCUPINE* AND THE LAW

In April 1864, a libel trial took place at the Court of the Queen's Bench in London. The plaintiff was Robertson Gladstone, local politician and brother to the future prime minister William Ewart Gladstone. Gladstone, a magistrate, had taken exception to two *Porcupine* articles which accused him of 'Bullying on the Bench' and of 'unseemly', 'indecent' and

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[85] 'Town Council Meeting: Library and Museum', *Liverpool Daily Post* (1 November 1866); Shimmin, *Pen and Ink Sketches*, pp. 37-40.

[86] 'Town Council Meeting: Library and Museum', *Liverpool Daily Post* (1 November 1866).

[87] 'Porcupine and Some of His Enemies', *Porcupine*, (16 November 1861).

[88] Liverpool Financial Reform Association, a free trade body, was instituted in 1848, with Robertson Gladstone as its inaugural president. See: *Account of the Formation, Principles, and Objects of the Liverpool Financial Reform Association* (Liverpool: "Standard of Freedom" Office, 1849).

[89] 'Porcupine and Some of his Enemies', *Porcupine* (16 November 1861).

[90] Autograph letter from Hugh Shimmin to unidentified recipient, 17 September 1860, Manx National Heritage Archives, MS 06301; MD 230.

[91] 'Rough Notes and Readings', *National Reformer* (30 June 1872).

[92] *Ibid.*

spiteful conduct during a court case.[93] He claimed that the articles had besmirched his good name and standing.[94] The presiding judge did not agree. He acknowledged 'asperity' and 'hostile feeling' in the *Porcupine* article but found that it 'was merely in the way of comment upon what had passed in a public court – a matter in which a public writer had a right to comment as of public interest; and it did not appear that the writer had taken advantage of the occasion to abuse it for the purposes of mere libellous and calumnious imputation'.[95] According to the judge, 'the writer had a right to say that Mr. Gladstone had lost his temper, and used language towards Mr. McGowen [a Corporation officer involved in the case] which he was not warranted in doing'.[96] Press reports of the trial indicate that the reading aloud of the alleged libels 'caused considerable amusement in court' and that the judge spoke 'in a good-humoured tone'.[97] Relaxed about the whole affair (and anticipating James Picton's advice to Charles Bowring in 1866), His Honour advised: 'Gentlemen holding public situations must … not be too thin-skinned in these matters'.[98] Finding no malicious intent and construing the matter as a 'freedom of the press' issue, he threw the case out.[99]

What this rather entertaining vignette illustrates is the capacity of Shimmin's journal to get under the skin of a senior public figure – thereby lending credence to the rhetoric surrounding the role of the self-styled "fourth estate", within the context of a growing democratic consciousness. Gladstone - a dynastic merchant prince and town councillor, as well as a justice of the peace - felt sufficiently concerned to defend his public reputation. It might be deduced from this that the *Porcupine* was held by certain political contemporaries, for good or for bad, to exert *some* influence as a mediator of public opinion. Significantly, two newspaper articles about the case were entitled 'The Privileges of the Press' and 'Freedom of the Press'.[100] The common-sense findings of the judge were construed as a triumph for both journalistic freedom of expression and for satire. They affirmed, for Shimmin and his colleagues, the moral righteousness of what they were doing.

According to Anthony Trollope, the nineteenth-century press were 'well aware that censure is infinitely more attractive than eulogy – but they are quite as well aware that it is more dangerous'.[101] Libel actions were also lucrative for venal lawyers: 'Porcupine, be on your

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[93] 'Bullying on the Bench', *Porcupine* (27 February 1864); 'I've heard of you before, Sir', *Porcupine* (5 March 1864).
[94] 'Mr. Robertson Gladstone and the Porcupine', *Porcupine* (30 April 1864).
[95] 'Action against the Liverpool "Porcupine"', *Chester Chronicle* (7 May 1864).
[96] "Porcupine": Court of Queen's Bench, Thursday', *Cheshire Observer* (30 April 1864).
[97] 'Alleged Libel from Mr Robertson Gladstone', *Blackburn Standard* (4 May 1864); 'Action against the Liverpool "Porcupine"', *Chester Chronicle* (7 May 1864).
[98] 'Alleged Libel from Mr Robertson Gladstone', *Blackburn Standard* (4 May 1864).
[99] 'The Privileges of the Press', *Leeds Mercury* (30 April 1864).
[100] *Ibid.*; 'Freedom of the Press', *Taranaki Herald* (1 February 1873).
[101] A. Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, Book 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 415-16.

guard, as there are cute and speculative lawyers in your locality who would not hesitate to treat your plain truths as money-pursuing libels'.[102] The litigation in which the *Porcupine* became embroiled serves as the most compelling evidence of the journal's ability both to reach its targets and to draw noisy attention to perceived abuses in public affairs. Complaint and criticism came cheaply; civil and criminal court action did not. Clearly implicit in the actions of those who were prepared to invest effort, time and money into suing the *Porcupine* was a conviction (even as their legal advocates illogically sought to argue otherwise) that Shimmin's journal did have the power to influence public opinion. That the *Porcupine* was very rarely sued for libel might be interpreted in two diametrically opposed ways. The satire, failing to hit its mark, was misunderstood; ergo, it was, *a priori*, poor. Or it was sufficiently accomplished to remain on the right side of the laws of defamation; ergo, it was, in fact, masterfully executed. The evidence suggests the latter. In Birmingham, Thomas Anderton noted with wonder and pride that under its original conductors, the *Town Crier* 'steered clear of libel actions … never [having] to pay even a farthing damages as a result of law proceedings'.[103]

The 1864 Gladstone case was the first of several prominent actions. Shimmin had less success in court in 1867. In an article entitled 'Keeping Watch for the Life of Poor Jack', 'Mr Porcupine' accused the Liverpool Seamen's Mutual Friendly Society of being little more than an exercise in organised crimping – and all the more immoral for masquerading as a philanthropic concern. It was a trenchant piece, 'a pungent way of calling a man a thief, and saying that he ought to be dressed in prison garb'.[104] Using the organisation's own published first year accounts, the article inferred that the Society had been set up to benefit its paid officers, rather than the thousands of seamen who funded it through their membership dues. The *Porcupine* article caused quite a stir; over sixty members of the Society met to discuss it and several officers of the Society sued the journal for libel, the first two 'test' cases finding in the plaintiffs' favour.[105] The prosecutor in the case of Richard Wareing argued the *Porcupine's* criticism had exceeded the limits of public interest.[106] He disparaged the *Porcupine's* brand of wit and also poked fun at 'Mr Porcupine's' grammar. This hearing, like the Gladstone hearing, appears to have been a very entertaining one for those present, court reports noting a great deal of laughter throughout. The *Porcupine's* legal advocate put forward a spirited defence. He accused the half dozen men who had set up the Society of having given up honest employment to 'live upon the wages of poor Jack' and

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[102] 'Something Like a London Letter!' *Porcupine* (14 November 1863).

[103] Anderton, *Tale of One City*, p. 43.

[104] 'A Verbatim Report of the Action for Libel: Wareing v. Shimmin', *Porcupine* (28 December 1867).

[105] 'Liverpool Assizes: Crown Court, Wednesday: Another Libel Case', *Liverpool Daily Post* (19 December 1867).

[106] 'A Verbatim Report of the Action for Libel: Wareing v. Shimmin', *Porcupine* (28 December 1867).

suggested 'Porcupine had done nothing more than call attention to the remarkable sort of thing which existed in society … the writer had written the article for the public good'.[107] The jury did not concur. Shimmin lost and was ordered to pay £10 damages plus costs. In the case of the second plaintiff, a 'verdict was taken by consent', Shimmin was fined 40s damages and the additional four actions taken in the names of other Society officers were dropped.[108] Shimmin and his colleagues remained unabashed, publishing an eight-page, verbatim account of the trial hearing and appending to it a supportive snippet which had appeared in the *Greenock Telegraph*:

> We regret to see that our clever and useful contemporary, the Liverpool *Porcupine*, - the only publication of the kind that has shown itself superior to the low arts of the slanderer, - has suffered for attempting to benefit poor Jack … The adverse verdict to the contrary notwithstanding, *Porcupine* has done a good work, and we believe he will receive his reward in an increased measure both of moral and material power.[109]

Shimmin managed to avoid another libel trial, in 1871, when solicitors for officers of the Birkenhead County Court forced him (and *Porcupine* contributor Henry Bolland, the author) to issue public apologies, on pain of litigation, for publishing an allegedly libellous piece. The article in question, 'A Happy Family', was held by the complainants to have cast aspersions upon 'the judge, registrar, high bailiff, and even the clerks' of the court.[110] The *Porcupine* was accused of impeaching their integrity.[111] Shimmin's subsequent apology – privately issued – was reportedly 'most ample, complete, and unreserved'.[112] Bolland also bowed to public pressure and issued his own apology. Whether Shimmin truly believed the *Porcupine* had overstepped the mark is open to conjecture. It is likely that his decision, on this occasion, to admit blame and be done with the matter, was influenced by the *Golden Fleece* case the preceding year, which had had a profound effect upon him personally and upon the way in which he viewed his journalistic vocation. This trial fed off and into much wider, national debates surrounding legislation and regulation in the maritime industry, and also concerned the freedom of the press, at a time when its "fourth estate" role was still evolving.

In September 1869, a ship belonging to William James Fernie, manager of the Liverpool Merchant's Trading Company Ltd, sank for reasons unknown whilst still in port in

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[107] *Ibid.*
[108] 'Liverpool Assizes', *Liverpool Daily Post* (19 December 1867).
[109] 'From the *Greenock Telegraph*', *Porcupine* (28 December 1867).
[110] 'To Henry Bolland Esq., Liverpool', *Liverpool Mercury* (19 April 1871).
[111] 'Alleged Libel on the Birkenhead County Court', *Liverpool Mercury* (19 April 1871).
[112] *Ibid.*

Liverpool. The *Golden Fleece* had been laden with coal and insured for £25,000 (equivalent to some £1.2m, today).[113] A Board of Trade inquiry failed to throw any light upon the cause. Less than a month after the event, the *Porcupine* carried an article entitled 'Marine Coal Scuttling', which Fernie took as referring to him. He had his lawyers write to Shimmin, which 'Mr Porcupine' promptly reported as an attempt to 'muzzle' him.[114] With misplaced confidence, 'Mr Porcupine' assured readers there was no case to answer, because the article contained no explicit reference to Fernie, his company or his ship.[115] Moreover:

> [Mr Porcupine] believes that the articles which he has published, exposing the commercial iniquities of our time … have had a wholesome and purgative effect. Time after time he has been earnestly thanked by men who wish to conduct their business with fairness and honour, for the efforts which he has made to purify the atmosphere of trade …[116]

Fernie subsequently sued. According to his legal counsel: 'The libel imputed to Mr Fernie, in substance, that he had scuttled a vessel for the sake of insurance. And although the applicant was not named, yet he contended that the contents of the article, coupled with the facts as known at Liverpool as to the loading of the vessel with coals, and the recent loss and the inquiry, all pointed to the plaintiff'.[117] The jury agreed.[118] Shimmin vigorously denied the charges but was found guilty in May 1870. However, judged to have acted more clumsily than maliciously, he was sentenced to just one month in prison, as a 'first class misdemeanant'.[119] In the event, Shimmin spent this time enjoying special privileges, lodged in light and airy apartments donated by the sympathetic Roman Catholic chaplain in Kirkdale gaol.[120] Shimmin attracted considerable public support, widely reported in the press in Liverpool and beyond: 'the people of Liverpool showed what they thought of his sentence by voluntarily contributing a large fund of money [£500 over and above his costs] to pay his fine and expenses, and presented him with a handsome testimonial'.[121] Shimmin's became a local *cause célèbre* and upon his release, he was met with a hero's welcome:

> Mr. Shimmin was conveyed from Kirkdale gaol in an open carriage, under the escort of a large number of his friends and admirers. On arriving at the Porcupine office in

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[113] National Archives Currency Converter, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid [accessed 16 August 2017].
[114] 'Mercantile Muzzle Men', *Porcupine* (30 October 1878).
[115] *Ibid.*
[116] *Ibid.*
[117] 'Court of Queen's Bench, Westminster, Nov. 15', The *Times* (16 November 1869).
[118] 'Nisi Prius Court – Yesterday: Information Against an Editor for Libel', *Manchester Times* (2 April 1870).
[119] 'Proceedings Against the "Porcupine"', *Liverpool Mercury* (25 November 1869).
[120] 'The Editor of the Liverpool Porcupine in Prison', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (7 May 1870).
[121] *Ibid.*; 'Mr Plimsoll's Mission', *Nottingham Guardian* (7 March 1873).

Cable-street, there was a strong manifestation of popular feeling, and the released editor was immensely cheered. The street was dressed with flags and streamers, and the office of the paper was gaily decked.[122]

All of this points to a general sympathy with Shimmin and with his editorial choice of and approach to the subject of commercial (im)morality explored in Chapter Six.

The *Golden Fleece* case received widespread and detailed press coverage (not least because the print media had a vested interest in monitoring and reporting upon the 'freedom of the press') and the extent and nature of this coverage is very revealing. Firstly, it confirms that the targets of the *Porcupine's* quills *did* read the journal, or at least kept abreast of what it was putting out. Secondly, the presiding judge found that although Shimmin had been wrong to impugn Fernie as an individual, 'to a great extent, the article was a fair comment on the system' and only that it had been 'wrong to illustrate it by reference to Mr. Fernie, of the *Golden Fleece*'.[123] The Establishment had no problem with the exposure of systemic malpractice but, in keeping with contemporary ideas surrounding individual privacy, became uncomfortable when journalistic exposé became too personal. In this, the judge, consciously or otherwise, missed the point. Whilst 'Mr Porcupine' used insinuation and generalisation to make broad points, he often also aimed to reach individual targets, with a view to bringing direct moral and social pressure to bear upon them. Thirdly, the coverage of the case positioned the *Porcupine* – still known to most contemporaries as a 'comic' periodical – amongst the serious press. The youthful venture begun ten years previously had grown up, its latest legal embroilment of sufficient importance to stand as a test case of national interest. Indeed, the ongoing debate on commercial morality was invoked in defence of and justification for the *Golden Fleece* article:

> The affidavit also stated that the frauds which had been practised upon marine underwriters, and the general course of commercial immorality which had become rife in Liverpool and elsewhere, fully justified any journalist taking up the subject; that the article of the 23rd October in the *Porcupine* followed out the line of argument pursued in previous articles published in that journal; and that the same subjects had also been taken up by the leading papers in London.[124]

It is somewhat surprising that no overt mention was made throughout the *Golden Fleece* trial of the 'Demonology of Trade' series, although some of its essays covered issues identical to

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[122] 'Release of an Imprisoned Editor', *Cork Examiner* (6 June 1870).

[123] 'The "Porcupine" Libel Case', *Bradford Observer* (3 May 1870).

[124] 'Proceedings Against the "Porcupine"', *Liverpool Mercury* (25 November 1869).

those highlighted in the 'Marine Coal Scuttling' article. Its satire had fastened on that 'growing conviction somewhere that they are indeed abuses, or at least a growing sense of uneasiness and perplexity' identified by Ernest Myers in 1881.[125] *Porcupine's* legal counsel may well have decided not to draw too much attention to the 'Demonology' articles, for fear publicity may attract further complaint.

The perspicacity of the *Porcupine* in respect of Fernie reveals something about Shimmin's judgement. Historical hindsight suggests that he was correct in his estimation of the ship-owner as a morally and ethically dubious character. Fernie was an arch speculator and successful commercial empire-builder and has since been remembered as a prime example of Liverpool's bold, entrepreneurial spirit in the nineteenth century.[126] Appearing before Plimsoll's inquiry into safety at sea in 1874, however, Fernie reportedly proved to be 'one of the most culpable interviewees before the Commission', his answers 'vague, conflicting and defensive'.[127] Highly litigious, Fernie proved far more resilient than the (disproportionate) number of ships which were lost under his proprietorship. In 1893, Shimmin was vindicated in his assessment and exposure of Fernie by the *Nottingham Guardian*: 'the Liverpool public boldly declared by their subscriptions that the editor was right in the main facts stated in his horrifying disclosure… Now, Mr. Plimsoll, a member of parliament, steps forward and undertakes the work which the Liverpool *Porcupine* inaugurated'.[128] In retrospect, Sir William Bower Forward - another local political leader, a shipowner and a Conservative, note - found it very 'sad' that Shimmin ended up in court and in prison.[129] Shimmin's sacrifice had, he suggested, served Liverpool very well.

The newspaper accounts of the court hearings in which the *Porcupine* was involved illustrate that the principle of the 'fourth estate' was well-established and its role widely accepted, by the 1860s. Irrespective of whether the *Porcupine's* socio-political satire was considered good, bad or indifferent by its original audience, it is notable that virtually none of those contemporaries who criticised or took action against the *Porcupine* questioned its 'townological' credentials. Despite the occasional quibble over minor points of fact or interpretation, it was taken as a given that 'Mr Porcupine' wrote with insight and authority about local public affairs. That, for his critics, was the problem – and the reason why they resorted to *ad hominem* allegations of smearing. Significantly, too, 'Mr Porcupine's'

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[125] E. Myers, 'English Satire in the Nineteenth Century', *Fraser's Magazine* (December 1881), p. 753.
[126] G.J. Milne, *Trade and Traders in Mid-Victorian Liverpool: Mercantile Business and the Making of a World Port* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 142-45.
[127] N. Jones, *The Plimsoll Sensation: The Great Campaign to Save Lives at Sea* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2006).
[128] 'Mr Plimsoll's Mission', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (7 March 1893).
[129] Forwood, *Recollections*, p. 208.

detractors never accused him of pulling Liverpool down. They accepted the distinction he made between the urban imaginary and its governance, between the general citizenry and its political leadership. Contemporary critics were similarly even-handed in their attitude towards the *Porcupine's* chosen form of expression. Although some sought to disparage the nature and quality of the *Porcupine's* satire, none challenged its legitimacy as a form of discourse or questioned its 'truly socially formative function'.[130] On the contrary, the legal fraternity generally upheld the right and responsibility of the press, in principle, to serve the public interest.[131] The judge in the Robertson Gladstone case offered a useful lesson in choosing not to be offended, a concept which is key to appreciating how the satirical periodical was understood and processed by contemporaries.

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL ASSIMILATION

It is fitting to return to Robertson Gladstone, as there was an interesting epilogue to his unsuccessful 1864 libel suit. It has been mentioned how at the 1870 sentence hearing in the Fernie case, the judge received a clutch of sworn affidavits from public figures in support of Shimmin and his journal. The *Porcupine* published these verbatim. Joseph Hubback, incumbent Mayor of Liverpool, declared that he had 'for a considerable period read the local newspaper called the *Porcupine*'.[132] Likewise James Picton, cited earlier. Dr William Trench, Liverpool's medical officer of health, and William Thomas McGowen, the town's former deputy town-clerk, both confirmed readership of the journal in similar terms. In addition, a 'memorial' was signed by over 130 individuals, from across the political spectrum in both Liverpool and the wider Lancashire area (Appendix 3). These included various members of the town's "old" families, many of whom are memorialised in Liverpool place names and landmarks.[133] The list of signatories read like a roll call of illustrious local mercantile and/or political names. It also featured Liberal William Rathbone (of the Liverpool family dynasty), Samuel Robert Graves (a Conservative who was 'amongst Mr Shimmin's warmest supporters') and George Melly (the 'evil genius of Liverpool Liberalism', as 'Mr Porcupine' dubbed him), the three parliamentary Members for the borough at that time.[134] This - the production of a mass character statement - was a damage limitation exercise, aimed at mitigating Shimmin's sentence. Those who signed the memorial might only speculatively be regarded as regular readers of the *Porcupine*. Yet

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[130] Jauss and Benziger, 'Literary History', p. 37.

[131] P. Mitchell, 'Nineteenth Century Defamation: Was it a Law of the Press?', *Amicus Curiae*, Issue 75 (Autumn 2008), pp. 27-32.

[132] 'The Risks of Journalism: Fernie v. Shimmin', *Porcupine* (7 May 1870).

[133] Lane, *Gateway of Empire*, pp. 53-84.

[134] *Ibid*; 'Mellyism', *Porcupine* (21 November 1868, 5 December 1868, 19 December 1868, 27 March 1869).

there is little reason to suppose that any of the private individuals and public figures who supported Shimmin and his paper did so unthinkingly, unwittingly, under duress or from a sense of obligation. They were prepared, before the law, to signal their tacit approval of the journal and its editor and to defend the integrity of both. That 'great numbers of the best men in Liverpool have associated themselves with us at this time of trial' was – as the *Porcupine* justifiably pointed out – all the more significant, given that '[t]here is hardly one of the eminent names appended to the memorial and affidavits which we publish to-day that has not at some period fallen under criticism more or less severe in these columns'.[135]

One of the 'best men' to offer support at Shimmin's sentence hearing was Robertson Gladstone. Buoyed by his legal victory in 1864, 'Mr Porcupine' had continued to critique Gladstone's performance as a public figure.[136] That seven years after attempting to sue the *Porcupine* for libel, Gladstone was willing to state that not only had he 'taken' it 'for some years past' but that he also deemed it to have 'rendered great service' to the town, is both a reflection of his own maturation as a political figure and a potential indication of the esteem in which the prickly *Porcupine* came to be held, once established, understood and accepted on its own idiosyncratic terms.[137]

CONCLUSION

By 1870, the local political and mercantile community had come to concede the well-intended motivations of the *Porcupine's* writers, the quality of its content and the role it played in local discourse. In summing up, Mr Justice Blackburn found that the journal had never been 'carried on to propagate scandal or to make reckless imputations upon others'.[138] This objective, evidence-based finding – a distillation of a large number of contemporary reader receptions – validated the *Porcupine* as the organ of public opinion it aspired to be, in the uncompromising way it determined to be.

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[135] 'The Risks of Journalism: Fernie v. Shimmin', *Porcupine* (7 May 1870).

[136] 'Mr Robertstone's Last!' [*sic*], *Porcupine* (10 August 1861); 'Mr. Robertson Gladstone "Preserves his Position"', *Porcupine* (3 September 1864); 'Gladstone v. Paving Stones', *Porcupine* (13 May 1865); 'Mr. Robertson Gladstone's Attack on Dr. Howson', *Porcupine* (3 December 1864); 'Hope for Health', *Porcupine* (4 August 1866).

[137] *Ibid.*

[138] 'The "Porcupine" Libel Case', *Bradford Observer* (3 May 1870).

CONCLUSION

Laying pathologies bare

Ontologies Past, Present and Future

> Upon the morals and the national manners, works of satire afford a world of light that one would in vain look for in regular books of history.[1]

> The last few months are a testament to the fact that history is not past, that the passage of time does not necessarily imply progress.[2]

Justin Smith has written about modern satire 'laying pathologies bare'.[3] To lay pathologies bare via historical enquiry is an appropriate way of describing what has been attempted here. With due regard to the pitfalls of postitivist historicisim, this research project has done more than simply recover the facts surrounding an obscure example of the print press.[4] It has used the empirical evidence to obtain a unique, if challenging, interpretive route into the cultural and political culture of the nineteenth-century city. It has done so through the prism of periodical satire, confirming that the serio-comic periodical - long classed amongst the lesser genres of press history - offers a more significant insight into contemporary discourse than has previously been understood.[5]

The research has responded to need. In 2009, Annemarie McAllister and Andrew Hobbs identified 'readers' responses', 'individual studies of types of publications', 'more theoretical work' and 'more research on the relationship between metropolitan and provincial print culture', amongst the 'most pressing research directions' for the study of local and regional print culture.[6] This extended case-study has risen to the challenge of pursuing these lines of inquiry. The *Porcupine* has been contextualised in time, place and

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[1] W. M. Thackeray, 'Macaire-Smollett-Fielding', *Westminster Review* (1839), p. 157.
[2] N. Malik, **'**Trump is Creating his American Caliphate, and Democracy has No Defence**',** *Guardian* (18 June 2018).
[3] J.E.H. Smith, 'Why Satire Matters', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 61(24), B10-B13 (27 February 2015).
[4] 'Manifesto of the V21 Collective: Ten Theses' http://v21collective.org/manifest-of-the-v21-collective-ten-theses/ [accessed 1 December 2017].
[5] J. S. North, 'The Rationale – Why Read Victorian Periodicals?' in J. Don Vann and R. T VanArsdel (eds) *Victorian Periodicals* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1978), p. 18.
[6] McAllister and Hobbs, *Regional and Local Studies*, p. 10.

genre, and the significance of its emergence and heyday during a defining period of societal transformation, explored. Analysis has established the nature and purpose of the *Porcupine* project. Reader reception theory and methodology have been employed to determine the contemporary influence and impact of Shimmin's journal and to establish its broader role as a dynamic opinion shaper and interventional agent of change.

The importance and originality of the study lie in its recovery and analysis of hitherto untapped source material, alongside its revaluation and reinterpretation of existing evidence. It has qualified previous findings, tested others' theories, carried out new empirical exploration, synthesised information in new and different ways, adopted a cross-disciplinary approach and produced a critical analysis of a subject not previously examined. Through this process, it has confirmed and bolstered some of the received wisdoms surrounding its subject and themes, and challenged others. Significantly, the research has gone some way towards demonstrating that it is possible to use satirical sources to break through historicised myth, stereotype and bias. More significantly, the investigation has demonstrated how in-depth study of a *Porcupine* or a *Free Lance* or a *Town Crier* acts as a sometimes startling corrective to contemporary and later consensuses surrounding social and political progress during the period.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The analysis has added to a wider historical understanding of the press and satire, power and local governance. A reappraisal of the *Porcupine* and its creators was long overdue and has proven fruitful. The periodical can now be used correctly and referenced more accurately, as a source, product and illustration of liberal governmentality. Through the example of the *Porcupine*, a great deal of light has been thrown upon Victorian satire and the provincial press. The findings have established that the local, serio-comic publication, as an active exercise and experiment in political philanthropy, was both a cause and effect of change. The best of such journals did not merely purvey local intelligence in an engaging way, important though that task was. They turned their essential knowingness to practical use, encouraging through their civic journalism a dynamic form of political engagement which impacted both directly and indirectly upon local governance. They thus performed a socio-political function. Their method of doing so was necessarily provocative, sometimes flagrantly biased and often crude and clumsy. In their feistiness and perceived oppositionalism, they trod a fine line between attracting and alienating readers. Those journals which persisted and endured – the *Porcupine* being a prime example – became all

the more effective for it, earning the respect of those upon and for whom whom they shone the critical light of scrutiny. The local serio-comic periodical has been shown to have met a public demand; its self-appointed "fourth estate" role as public watchdog and reforming agitator was considered legitimate and necessary by contemporaries. On the basis of all of the above, it can be argued that the Victorian satirical publication of the type exemplified by the *Porcupine* constitutes an identifiable sub-genre of the comic periodical type, distinguishable by its powerful localism and politicism. *Au courant* and hyper-relevant, fulfilling an educative purpose, such journals mattered to citizens then, as they ought to matter now to scholars of press, urban, cultural and political history.

Close reading of the local serio-comic periodical, taken as an indicator of the confidence and autonomy of the thriving Victorian city, has contributed to our knowledge of democratic thought and action. Its consciously provincial focus and locus ought thus to be interpreted as a 'townological' strength. From the point of view of socio-cultural history, the analysis has subjected to scrutiny some of the received wisdoms surrounding the world view of our nineteenth-century ancestors. It has raised interesting questions *vis-à-vis* satire as freedom of thought and expression during the period and has challenged orthodox understandings of Victorian deference, morality, pragmatism and materialism. 'Mr Porcupine', as an independent, if self-appointed citizen monitor, reveals a great deal about contemporary attitudes towards the concepts, principles and safeguards associated with modern democracy. From the point of view of political history at local government level, the provincial satirical periodical offers valuable lessons in Victorian Realpolitik, which might be employed to inform a more sophisticated, more evidence-based approach to present-day debates surrounding decentralisation and devolution, subsidiarity, city-regionalism and smart urban growth.

Indeed, the ramifications of the historicity and geospecificity of the Victorian provincial serio-comic periodical have proven particularly stimulating. Although it reflected those broader trends which marked the golden age of the provincial press, the *Porcupine* has been shown to have been of both its time and place. Provincial satirical "fourth estate" journalism of the kind exemplified by Shimmin's journal has long become extinct. Nothing like the *Porcupine* has emerged in Liverpool in the century since it folded and a *Porcupine* would not and could not emerge today. The erstwhile urban centres of the Victorian age have become too sprawling and corporately managed, to allow for the kind of knowingness enjoyed by the creators of Victorian provincial journals. Communities have atomised, the local press has become disenfranchised and opportunities for informed and civilised political discourse and civic engagement at the local or regional level have arguably been eroded by

the shrill, often uninformed polemics of social media. From this perspective, the performed townology of the Victorian print press appears as a unique historical phenomenon, which says something profound and worrying about freedom of thought and expression in our supposedly advanced twenty-first century democracy. It hints at a sorry reversal in intellectual discourse which runs against the grain of Whiggish theories of inevitable human progress towards enlightenment.[7]

Continuities of time and place emerge, in the final analysis, as theorems of particular historiographical interest and application. Edwardian prejudices persist but in the broader grand narrative sweep of history, we *are* the Victorians, 'inhabiting, advancing, and resisting the world they made … The conceptual problems, political quandaries, and theoretical issues [they] broached remain pressing and contentious'.[8] The Victorian Studies for the 21st Century (V21) collective proposes that '[one] outcome of post-historicist interpretation may be a new openness to presentism: an awareness that our interest in the period is motivated by certain features of our own moment …'.[9] This is a problematic proposition, which fails to reflect the complex and contested nature of the 'fallacy of *nunc pro tunc'* or the self-congratulatory complacency of its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century by-product, Whig history.[10] It also fails to register the fact that the past is rendered interesting by its differences, as much as by its similarities, to the present. The *Porcupine* serves as a stark reminder of this. Even within its own time, the journal could appear both anachronistic and progressive. It is this tension which makes the history of the journal such a useful vehicle for a critical engagement with the present.[11]

The *Porcupine* - construed as a case study in Liverpool's historical exceptionalism - goes some way towards evidencing how Liverpool arrived at its twenty-first century social, political and economic ontology. Liverpool's past has been shown to have segued organically into its present. The findings have highlighted the perennial nature of many of the issues and concerns which preoccupied Shimmin and his colleagues. It is important to recognise this, as a great deal of sentimental and self-flattering mythology surrounds Liverpool's history, heritage and "character". The *Porcupine* serves as a cautionary reminder that Liverpool forgets or misreads history at its peril. Unless the longstanding and still unresolved quest to get to grips with the city's exceptional culture (past and present, both positively and negatively understood) is recognised, the city risks being caught in a perpetual

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[7] Smith, 'Why Satire Matters'.
[8] 'Manifesto of the V21 Collective: Ten Theses', http://v21collective.org/manifest-of-the-v21-collective-ten-theses/ [accessed 1 December 2017].
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] D. H. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), pp. 137-39.
[11] Kritzman, *Michel Foucault*, p. 262; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 31.

"Groundhog Day" of social, economic and political stagnation. In this way, Shimmin's nineteenth-century journal can be used - should be used - to inform the present. Andrew Miller is one history scholar to have argued that 'we are habitually, perhaps inevitably, presentist'.[12] This is a controversial position but one which gains legitimacy and appeal if, as Miller points out, studying the 'Victorian Period' is understood as studying 'modernity' and inheritance.

NEW DIRECTIONS

There are several obvious ways in which the research conducted here might be taken forward. The first relates to further enquiry. This thesis has scratched the surface of a fifty-five-year discourse. There is much more to be discovered about the *Porcupine* project and many more prisms, concrete and abstract, through which the journal's content might be filtered. By way of just one example: The *Porcupine's* reform journalism was essentially a critique of 'sailortown', much of its socio-political coverage given over (both directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously) to maritime concerns and impacts – a result and reflection of the complex 'entanglements' between life and lives on board, in the waterfront district and in the urban hinterland.[13] The "port" could not be divorced from the "city" then, and ought not to be now. Shimmin's journal offers an intriguing, if particularised, route into an exploration of the discourse surrounding the nineteenth-century shipping industry and, by extension, into "glocalisation" as performed through and manifested by that industry.[14]

The second activity relates to extending the research comparatively. Aled Jones, examining journalism and political culture in the Victorian city, has mooted that comparative studies between a number of the urban provincial satirical periodicals could 'prove highly suggestive'.[15] He is right. The *Porcupine* in Liverpool, the *Town Crier* in Birmingham and the *Free Lance* in Manchester, as well as a host of equivalents in the smaller towns, do not only offer unique micro insights and intriguing local counter narratives. They represent a non-centralised, non-homogenised, extra-London worldview. A cross-cutting comparative study – selected by event, issue, theme or date(s) – would allow for a far more accurate

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[12] A.H. Miller, 'Response: Responsibility to the Present', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Autumn 2016), p. 122.
[13] G.J. Milne, *Sailortown: People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[14] R. Robertson, 'Globalisation or Glocalisation?' *Journal of International Communication*, 18:2 (2012), pp. 191-208.
[15] Jones, 'Dart and the Damning', p. 193.

survey of provincial attitudes towards broader (i.e. national and international) subjects and concerns.

The third recommended course of action, upon which the first and second are contingent, relates to the availability of resources. There is a strong case for the digitization of Victorian Britain's leading provincial serio-comic publications. The satirical journal, with its punning, word play and subversion of norms, can be rendered much more accessible in digital form. Article titles are frequently cryptic, offering little reliable clue as to the subject of the text to follow. Keyword search capabilities would facilitate a quicker, more forensic level of research into the sub-genre. This would render far more practicable a long overdue history of the English or British 'satirical periodical' which does not – and should not – take *Punch* as its benchmark.

AFTERWORD

This thesis opened with a reference to the *Charlie Hebdo* outrage of 2015. That shocking event made of satirical journalism and freedom of expression a literal life and death issue. In light of this, it is apt to turn to one historical litterateur who excelled in satire: French thinker, writer and all-round *bon-viveur*, Voltaire. It was not Voltaire himself but his admiring nineteenth-century biographer, historian Evelyn Beatrice Hall, who attributed to him the bold declaration: 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it'.[16] It is a credo with which many thinking Victorians, including those behind the *Porcupine*, most heartily concurred.

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[16] S. G. Tallentyre (pseud.), *The Friends of Voltaire* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1906), p. 199.

Appendix 1

Perceptions and Receptions of the *Porcupine*: selection of examples over time and place

DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
'Journal of Current Events: Social, Political, and Satirical'	*Porcupine* Sub-Masthead, 1860-1880
a 'bantling'	*New York Times*, 10 July 1860
a provincial facetious journal	*Publishers' Circular*, 15 September 1860
a brochure + a 'Liverpool Punch'	*Kendal Mercury*, 8 December 1860
our youthful and amusing contemporary	*Liverpool Daily Post*, 22 December 1860
a facetious publication	*Liverpool Daily Post*, 23 May 1861
an excellent satirical, jocular, Liverpool publication	*Launceston Examiner* (Aus), 19 December 1861
our radical contemporary	*Liverpool Courier*, 15 October 1862
a funny pennyworth	*Bury Times*, 10 October 1863
our Liverpool *Charivari*	*Liverpool Daily Post*, 24 December 1863
a … comic periodical	*Manchester General Advertiser*, 4 January 1864
a very well-sustained comic periodical	*Illustrated Times,* 2 January 1864
a local satirical journal	*Illustrated Times*, 7 May 1864
[a paper of a similar character] to a 'new flippant trifle'	*Freeman's Journal* (Aus), 22 June 1867
a newspaper printed and published in Liverpool	*Liverpool Daily Post*, 16 November 1869
a Liverpool journal of events political, social and satirical	*Manchester Times*, 2 April 1870
a paper	*Bradford Observer*, 30 May 1870
'country' [i.e. provincial] newspaper	*Street's List of Newspapers*, 1870
a local humorous print	*Taranaki Herald* (NZ), 1 February 1873
journal + a little weekly paper	*Liverpool Daily Post*, 13 January 1879
journal + paper	*Liverpool Weekly Albion*, 18 January 1879
the principal critical weekly in Liverpool	*New Zealand Observer*, 2 October 1880
a weekly journal + a Liverpool journal	*Manchester Guardian*, 12 August 1893
[by implication]: local satirical sheet + county comic + a smart little weekly joker + ambitious weekly comic	Mayhew, *A Jorum of 'Punch'*, 1895
a little Liverpool weekly + small … sheet	Putanga *Star* (NZ), 1889
a weekly journal of quite exceptional merit	Watson,*The Savage Club: A Medley*, 1907
a most exacting journal + a critical weekly journal	Brereton, *The Life of Henry Irving*, 1908
comic periodical + satirical journal + weekly paper	McCarthy, *Irish Recollections*, 1912
a social and satirical journal	James, *Lancashire: Biographies*, 1917
a bright little weekly paper	Millward, *Myself and Others*, 1923
a very successful critical and satirical journal in its day	Watson, *Newspaper Man's Memories*, 1925
a literary and political weekly	*Observer*, 1 November 1931
comic periodical	Gray, 'List of Comic Periodicals', 1972
'really quite scurrilous'	Jarvis, *Liverpool Central Docks 1799-1905*, 1991
a scurrilous Merseyside magazine of long, long ago	*Daily Post* (Wales Edition), 22 April 2002
a newspaper	*Liverpool Echo*, 26 October 2004
a wonderful journal with a jaundiced view of authority	*Daily Post*, 9 August 2008
satirical local mag	Hobbs, 'W.T.Stead, a newspaper revolutionary' (published conference notes), 18 April 2012
wonderfully named … newspaper	Jones et al., *Cthulhu Lives!* , 2014
Newspaper	British Library Classification (ie: not held in the periodicals archive), 2018

Appendix 2

List of individuals identified as having contributed occasional copy to, or written regularly for, the *Porcupine*, between 1860 and 1880

Notes:
1. Those marked * were members of the Savage Club
2. NYC ~ dates not yet confirmed
3. Both of the two women listed were jobbing journalists and writers.

À BECKETT Arthur William	1844-1909
ARCHER Thomas*	1830-1893
AUSTIN Alfred	1835-1913
BARNES Edward Charles	1836-1882
BIRD Ernest B	NYC
BLANCHARD Edward Litt Laman	1820-1889
BOLLAND Henry	1831-1911
BROUGH John Cargill*	1834-1872
BROUGH William*	1826-1870
BUCKINGHAM Leicester Silk*	1825-1867
BURNET Walter	1849-1918
BURROUGHS James Colman*	1827-1898
BURROUGHS Catherine Hester	1830-1898
BYRON Henry James*	1835-1884
CAMPBELL Samuel*	NYC
CARR Henry Lascelles	1844-1902
CHESSAR Jane Agnes (Miss)	1835-1880
CONINGSBY Robert	NYC
COPE Thomas	1827-1884
DAVISON John Soppit	1827-1909
DRAPER Edward	1827-1899
ESCOTT Thomas Hay Sweet	1844-1924
FRANCIS John Deffett*	1815-1901
GIBSON Alexander Craig (Dr)	1813-1874
GILBERT William Schwenk*	1836-1911
HALLIDAY Andrew*	1830-1877
HOLLINGSHEAD John*	1827-1904
HOOD Thomas*	1835-1874

JUSTYNE William*	1840-1902
KIRKUS William (Rev)*	1830-1907
LEIGH Henry Sambrooke*	1837-1883
LEIGH Percival	1813-1889
LEIGHTON Robert	1858-1934
MACCABE Fred	1831-1904
McARDLE John Francis	1842-1883
McCARTHY Justin	1830-1912
MILLWARD Charles*	1830-1892
NIGHTINGALE Joseph Henry	1827-1882
PLIMSOLL Samuel	1824-1898
PROWSE William Jeffrey	1836-1870
QUILLIAM William Henry	1856-1932
QUIN Charles William	1832-1885
READE Thomas Mellard	1831-1909
ROBERTSON Thomas William*	1829-1871
ROSE George	1817-1882
RUSSELL Edward Richard	1830-1920
SCOTT Clement William	1841-1904
SHIMMIN Hugh	1820-1879
SPENCER Herbert	1820-1903
STRAUSS Gustave Louis Maurice (Dr)*	1807-1887
TALFOURD Francis*	1828-1862
TEGETMEIER William Bernhardt*	1816-1912
THORNBURY George Walter*	1828-1876
VEREY Joseph	1830-1912
VIZETELLY Frank	1830-1883
WHITFORD John	1829-1895

Appendix 3

Porcupine Readership: List of Memorial Signatories
(transcribed from *Porcupine* special supplement, 7 May 1870)

Joseph Hubback, Mayor of Liverpool
S. R. Graves, M.P., merchant
William Rathbone, M.P., merchant
George Melly, M.P., merchant
Henry Duckworth, J.P. and president of the Chamber of Commerce, Liverpool
Clarke Aspinall, J.P., coroner of Liverpool
W.J. Lamport, J.P., also merchant and shipowner
C.J. Corbally, J.P., Liverpool
James H. Macrae, J.P. county of Lancaster
Thomas Holder, J.P., Liverpool
Edgar Musgrove, J.P. county of Lancaster
Francis Hollins, J.P., county of Lancaster
John Swainson, J.P., county of Lancaster
Robert Trimble, J.P., for the county of Lancaster
R. C. Gardner, J.P., Liverpool
James Whitty, J.P., Liverpool
C. H. Cartwright, J.P., King-street
Christopher Bushell, merchant
Charles J. Bushell, merchant
William Langton, merchant, Liverpool, chairman of Mersey Docks and Harbour Board
Robertson Gladstone, merchant
L.H. Macintyre, merchant and shipowner, ex-president of the Shipowners' Association
Robert Galloway, merchant and shipowner
Charles P. Melly, merchant
Philip H. Rathbone, underwriter
John William Wilson, merchant
Philip H. Holt, merchant
Charles Booth, merchant
Thomas Fletcher, merchant
E.Hoette, merchant
Thomas R. Stolterfoht, merchant
Edward R. Russell, editor of the Liverpool *Daily Post*
W. Rome, merchant and shipowner
T. W Swift, incumbent of St. George's, Everton
Christian D. Ginsburg, LL.D
H. Stowell Brown, minister of Myrtle-street Chapel
W. Crosfield, jun., 28, Temple-court
George Porter, ST Francis Xavier's, R.C. Church
John Petrie, secretary of Scottish Imperial Insurance Company
Arthur Ryley, cotton broker
E. W. Rayner, general broker
Fr. Ad. Meter, merchant, Exchange-court
Frs. Brann, merchant, Water-street
Th. Von Sobbe, merchant, The Albany
Isaac Hadwen, broker, 27, Tithebarn-street
S. B Guion, merchant
Jos. Scheuten, merchant
William During, cotton broker

Geo. Warren, merchant
William Quentell, merchant
Lloyd, Rayner, general broker
Arthur B. Forwood, merchant
Robert Mason, merchant
Robert T. Gladstone, broker
F. G. Prange, merchant
James Latham, broker
S. H. Langenbach, merchant, Liverpool
Dr. Anderson, M.A., incumbent of St. Mark's
George Reade, M.A., curate, parish church, Blackburn
Benson Rathbone, broker, Liverpool
Henry W. Gair, merchant, Liverpool
O. Holden, town councillor
Thomas E. Priest
John Scott, corn broker
F. J. Moore, corn merchant
Isaac B. Cooke, broker, Liverpool
Robert Durning Holt, broker, Liverpool
Francis Prange, merchant, Liverpool
August Rogge, merchant, Liverpool
W. D. Holt, broker, Liverpool
H. B. Gilmour, merchant, Liverpool
Robert Rogers, merchant, Liverpool
Henry Worrall, merchant
Joseph Bright, broker
Geo. Mayall, Junr., broker
J. Glynn and Son, shipowners
T. B. Royden, shipbuilder
Geo. T. Sanders, shipowner
John Parratt, town councillor
W. S. Caine, iron merchant
Charles Beard, B.A., minister of religion
A. Craig Gibson, surgeon
Peter Atkin, merchant
Evans, Sons, & Co., wholesale druggists
John Hargreaves, merchant
Joseph Bushby, shipowner
Richard Ashton and Co., merchants
Geo. Atkin, asphalte manufacturer
Robert C. Hall, broker
Edward Quaile, broker
John Patterson, merchant
Edward Ellis Edwards, cotton broker
S. B Gaskell, merchant
Samuel How, merchant
John Green, coffee roaster
George Henry Lee, silk mercer, &c
Edwin L Samuel, late banker, Liverpool
David Campbell, merchant, Liverpool
Joseph Hughes, merchant
John Henderson, silk mercer, &c
John Bushby, merchant
J. Strong, shipowner, &c
Will Reid, shipowner & c

Charles Edward Rawlins, jun., merchant
George Philip, jun., publisher
Robert S. Blease, accountant
T. P. Sawyers, shipowner
Thomas Jones, merchant
J. P. Evans, merchant
Edward S Braddyll, cotton broker
William Francis, solicitor
Charles Martin, solicitor
Charles Clarke, merchant
Edward P. Haughton, merchant
Joseph Mayer, F.S.A., goldsmith, &c
George William Goodison, civil engineer
T. Mellard Reade, architect
R. J. Hardman, broker
William Williams, town councillor
William Jolliffe, shipowner
Peter Maddox, shipowner
J. T. Danson, underwriter
George Behren, merchant, Liverpool
James Smith, broker, Liverpool
William Whatham, merchant
William Henry Grimmer, solicitor
William P. Lockhart, merchant
A.F. Graham, M.D.
Howard Horsley, warehouse keeper
J.M. Donald

'And many others.'

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