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“Professional Identity and Social Capital: the Personal Networks of Victorian Popular Journalists”

Carole O’Reilly

In 1869, a Manchester journalist, Mr Townsend, wrote to John Howard Nodal, the editor of the *Manchester City News* (1864-1934), asking for help in finding a job. “The literary world,” he wrote, “seems to me like a ballroom. You can’t get into any dance without an introduction but when introduced, all goes easily enough...” (John Howard Nodal papers, JHN/1/120/1). These sentiments about the importance of personal connections in the journalism world are echoed in George Gissing’s 1891 novel *New Grub Street*, when Jasper Milvain (an ambitious journalist who writes for financial gain) tells his fiancée Marian Yule: “men won’t succeed in literature that they may get into society, but will get into society that they may succeed in literature” and that “the chances are dead against anyone who can’t make private interest with influential people” (38).

This paper deploys the concepts of social capital and knowledge networks to examine the often-ambivalent relationship between Victorian journalism and more literary forms of writing such as novels and poetry. It probes the dynamics by which journalists used their personal networks to construct and promote their image as authors and explores the nature of the tensions and contradictions inherent in these relationships. Late-nineteenth-century journalism faced a period of intense competition between newspapers, magazines and a whole range of printed periodicals, while simultaneously undergoing an internal debate about its own status. This also marked a time of critical self-reflection about the relationship between journalism and its audience, whose attention span was perceived to be dwindling.

Many of those working in journalism were concerned about its future development and the attempts to professionalise were a manifestation of the need for organisational boundaries to be established and reinforced. The role of personal and professional networks is key here. These networks represented an attempt to redraw and strengthen genre boundaries both within journalism and between journalism and other kinds of writing (which remained a contentious subject, as we shall see), and provided opportunities for working journalists to engage with other writers and cultural critics to address issues of professional identity in a mutually supportive environment.

Utilising the personal papers and recollections of journalists combined with the records of private members’ clubs and local literary and philosophical societies, this paper

studies how such personal networks were used to enhance their status not just as popular journalists but as literary authors, cultural commentators and urban citizens. It examines the impact of concepts such as anonymity, professional identity among journalists and explains the desire of Victorian journalists to join local literary clubs in order to utilise social capital and its networks as a stepping-stone to more culturally valued forms of writing.

Literary Clubs as Knowledge Communities

As well as being the cradle of the industrial revolution, Manchester was an important centre of newspaper and periodical production and distribution in the nineteenth century. Many of the national newspapers maintained their northern offices in the city and newspapers were distributed around the whole of the north of England, Scotland, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland from there. Manchester was frequently referred to as “the other Fleet Street” (Waterhouse 5). The reputation of the city for its press developed quickly during the nineteenth century. Writing in 1835 of the prospects for a literary journal in the city, Richard Cobden was pessimistic about its survival in a city that “is not eminent for the cultivation of literature, having no university, to its shame, possessing few professors of science or learning and, moreover, not having a publishing trade” (*Manchester Literary Club archives*, M524/11/1/2 26). However, by the mid-century, the city was host to a thriving number of literary societies and associated publications. Both personal interests and wider, attendant social relations enhanced the opportunity for collective learning that resulted from membership of these clubs and societies. Thus, we can describe the basis for these knowledge exchange relationships as social capital.

“The concept of social capital draws attention to the effects and consequences of human sociability and connectedness and their relations to the individual and social structure” (Tzanakis 2). The approach to social capital deployed here will mirror that of Coleman who viewed social capital as purposeful and emphasised its importance as a bonding mechanism between social actors. The social bonds that existed between journalists, literary writers and other urban actors were a significant source of employment, opportunities to exchange ideas and knowledge and to develop mutual interests.

Field has suggested that “tangible benefits” accrued from social capital acquired in this manner (49), but this paper argues that such benefits could often be more nuanced than this and, in this case, pertained more to the acquisition of social status and visible authorship. These networks enhanced success in the business world during the nineteenth century and it is therefore no coincidence that journalists were attracted by such professional aspirations at

this time. Frequently, the business of nineteenth-century journalism was knowledge acquisition, a less tangible benefit of membership of these literary clubs, but one that had an increasing professional significance for journalists.

The use of these members' clubs as a critical and literary space directs our attention to their usefulness as knowledge communities. Andriessen has outlined some key characteristics of knowledge communities (200):

- They share a common purpose or mission
- They have a defined membership (open or closed)
- They have a degree of formalisation (formal meetings, rules)
- They are based on reciprocity (members interact and often already know each other)
- They have an identity; there is a sense of trust, cohesion and belonging.

In this sense, literary clubs and societies functioned as a kind of knowledge community in which journalists could participate, not just as journalists. Many popular journalists joined local literary and philosophical societies, local Press Clubs and other professional associations (such as the Institute of Journalists) and private members' clubs, often based on their own personal, professional and/or political interests. Obtaining and sharing knowledge on a range of popular subjects within a setting such as a members' club was a useful mechanism for Victorian journalists to network and build the relationships on which social capital depends. Nodal established a philological committee at the Manchester Literary Club in 1873 to facilitate the compilation of a glossary of Lancashire folk speech, which later formed the basis for his and the committee's work on dialect. There was also a bibliographical branch of the club devoted to the study of libraries (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/4). Thus, members cohered around shared interests and a commitment to certain causes, another important dimension of social capital.

As Field has remarked, trust is an important element in knowledge acquisition that is not "necessarily a consequence of shared norms and strong networks" (72). The kinds of collaborative productions that were possible within the confines of these literary clubs and societies bound journalists more tightly into the literary fabric of their cities. Such a public acknowledgement of their authorship provided opportunities to enhance their value in the growing literary marketplace as an author's name now constituted a "marketable asset" (Nayder 2). While literary authorship was becoming a middle-class profession, journalism was not, hence the symbolic importance of these associations for Victorian journalists. Charles Dickens, writing of Wilkie Collins, noted the importance of getting one's name

“before the public” and it was this opportunity that could be provided by membership of literary clubs (Nayder 31).

The use of these members’ clubs as a critical and literary space directs our attention to their usefulness as spaces in which social capital could be acquired and professional identity consolidated. The types of popular journalism that circulated at these clubs served as a mechanism to establish an identity as a member of the wider literary world and to provide opportunities to develop a form of social cachet often denied to professional journalists. They allowed for the formation of a more complex character than that allowed by the diktats of an increasingly hierarchical and formalised journalism profession and permitted the exploration of subjects and themes that offered less clearly defined social roles. The intersection of popular journalism with other forms of literary output provides an occasion to examine how these networks facilitated the exchange of ideas, values and interests, and offers an increasingly complex picture of a profession in flux.

The Manchester Literary Club was founded in 1862 and described as possessing a “subtle charm, which arises from the combination of a love of literature and art with a ‘clubbable’ spirit of fellowship and sympathy” (Swann 7). The aims of the club were to “encourage the pursuit of literature and art; to promote research in the several departments of intellectual work and to protect the interests of authors in Lancashire; to publish from time to time works illustrating or elucidating the literature and history of the county and to provide a place of meeting where persons interested in the furtherance of those objects can associate together” (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/2 75). The first and primary aim of the club presented it as almost academic in nature. Literature and art were clearly distinguished from each other and the twin goals of both publicity of research and protectionism for authors revealed the privileging of literary activity that the club sought to emphasise. The subscription rates in the 1870s were 15 shillings a year, which would have been beyond the means of many working in Victorian journalism, except those in senior and editorial positions. A reporter on a large provincial daily at this period earned about £80 a year; that of a reporter on a smaller newspaper was around £52 per annum (Lee 131).

Club members included representatives of the literary and cultural elite of the county – including Charles Hardwick the antiquarian, painter and historian, Joseph Chattwood, an architect and engineer, Ben Brierley, the writer and City Councillor and Charles Calvert, a theatre manager and producer (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/2 preface page). The fecund literary culture of Manchester was also in evidence in the club’s records – there was an abundance of prospectuses for new literary magazines being launched and

seeking financial support, many of which never came to fruition: *Once A Week* (never ran), “a miscellany of literature, art, science and popular information,” *Country Words* (1866-1867), a weekly journal of science, literature and art and the *Manchester Cynic* (never ran), a weekly journal of criticism and satire (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/1 7, 39, 83). The desire of the nineteenth-century reader for publications that straddled the line between newspaper and literature was clearly fuelling at least some of these enterprises.

Many such periodicals were short-lived, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s early attempt, *The Watchman* (March 1796 – May 1796). Coleridge believed that his failure arose from the “audience’s contradictory desires for material from both the literary and journalistic genres” (Hessell 28). This apparent tension was unresolved by the time that journalists sought membership of local literary societies and was to cause some reiteration of those problems. The professional identities of journalists were still in flux and were being challenged by audience demands for both popular and literary writing. Some Manchester Literary Club members were involved in more active and successful publishing ventures— as well as Nodal, editor of one of the most popular weekly newspapers in the city, there was Abel Heywood, a former Mayor of Manchester, who owned the largest wholesale newsagency in the country and published many local writers and periodicals (Beetham), and the poet and essayist, Edwin Waugh.

The club was not entirely informal – it had rules, a syllabus and the regular reading of papers by members. It had its origins in a public house (the Sun Inn, also known as Poet’s Corner due to its connections with local literary culture), although once formally constituted as the Manchester Literary Club, meetings were held in the more respectable surroundings of a city centre hotel. Initially, the Cathedral Hotel on Long Millgate was used until the club moved to the nearby Mitre Hotel and then to the Clarence Hotel in Brown Street, a place closely associated with journalists and poets (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/2 16). The use of hotel accommodation for meetings distinguishes these less formal clubs from private members’ clubs such as the Manchester Reform Club and the Union Club, who had their own buildings at their disposal. An early minute book from the Manchester Literary Club recorded the opportunity for critique of journalistic work that the club represented: “Their writings appeared in the newspapers of the time and at the meetings of the Club, the members criticised each other’s work with ... frankness” (Swann 8). The Club published its own periodical, *The Manchester Quarterly* from 1882 until 1940.

As the name suggests, the club attracted its membership on the basis of an interest in and commitment to the promotion of literature. The club’s transactions for the year 1873-

1874 demonstrated its aim of becoming a Manchester institution “for the encouragement, for the advancement and, above all, for the elevation of literature in the north of England” (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/9/1/1 22). Despite the inclusion of the name Manchester in the title of the club, it was very much a regional institution. Members came from all over Lancashire and Cheshire and there were attempts made to address the provincial ability to appreciate literature and to emphasise that this was by no means confined to people in London. George Milner, the president of the club, articulated this in an address to Stockport Literary Club in 1896. “People in the provinces,” he told his audience, “were able to form a clear, sound judgement with regard to not only literary matters but all matters as were the people in London.” He found “many working men of Lancashire to be the very warmest supporters of the highest literature of the country” (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/4 56). The provincial aspect of these clubs was significant – many of their members were interested in local history and archaeology. The Manchester Literary Club described itself as “a county association” (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/2 4) and many of the papers presented at the club’s meetings had a strongly local flavour.

Despite its populist rhetoric, the club was clearly committed to the study of literature as the highest form of writing. In March 1875, the club visited the Manchester Free Library at Campfield to examine the rare book collection (M524/11/1/2 36). It was also prominent in the campaign to move the Free Library from Campfield to the old Town Hall building in King Street due to concerns about the safety of the building. The local satirical periodical, the *City Jackdaw* (1875 - 1880) described the Manchester Literary Club at this time as “backed by leading Tories and Churchmen of Manchester who are naturally fond of Establishment and Endowment in every form” (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/2 144). The underlying conservative inclinations of the club were being satirised to emphasise the good intentions of members and their commitment to both the preservation of literature in general and its accessibility to the citizenry.

The club announced its intention to create its own library in 1875. They compiled a catalogue of books and pamphlets belonging to serving members as a basis for the library and, by 1879, it amounted to some 607 books and pamphlets (*Manchester Literary Club Quarterly*, Volume 5, 1879: 274). The library also included the works of some members who were not novelists or journalists but who clearly had literary ambitions – for instance, Charles Calvert, a prominent theatre manager in Manchester, contributed some volumes of his own short stories. The Manchester periodical, the *Critic* (1851 - 1862), noted that this library was

intended to be of a very particular kind, however. “Journalistic work cannot be represented in it and some of our best known journalists either figure very insignificantly or, it may be, not at all ... the men who have done and are doing an enormous quantity of original newspaper and journalistic writing have not their names in the catalogue at all” (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/2 31). The reference here to *original* writing in newspapers and periodicals is interesting – the suggestion is clearly that such writing deserved similar respect to original fictional writing yet it was not accorded the same privilege. This could be explained by the fact that the Manchester Literary Club considered itself to be a literary and not a journalistic club, first and foremost. However, there is also an implicit hierarchy at work here and one that had been in existence for some time.

The relationship between literary and journalistic writing had always been ambivalent. Many writers straddled the boundaries between both in practice, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Samuel Taylor Coleridge among them. Paid work in journalism often provided the foundation for a more financially precarious literary career. Coleridge in particular, was circumspect about his journalistic work and its potential to “damage his fledgling literary reputation in an environment in which journalism was seen as almost the direct opposite of literature” (Hessell 30). This binary opposition between the two forms of writing may indicate the reasons why literary club membership was so attractive to many Victorian journalists – it could, potentially at least, bestow on them the prestige that journalism could not. However, it also reveals something about the changing relationship that newspapers were developing with their readers.

An increasing desire among audiences for more literary forms of writing provided another challenge for authors. Newspapers were now devoting more space to literary criticism and reviewing and were reflecting their readers’ desire for more erudite writing, thus increasing the likelihood of reaching more people by journalistic writing than by the production of works of fiction (Hessell 31). This tension between journalism and literary writing is a theme that emerges from a study of the levels of engagement with such clubs by members who worked in journalism.

The fact that the Manchester Literary Club’s own library was privileging literature over journalism alerts us to the continuing difficulties faced by journalists in having their work taken seriously. Many club members were well-known and successful journalists, for example, Nodal who was the club’s president for 6 years (1873–9). His use of the club and its meetings to publicise and promote his works on dialect illustrate how networking groups provided opportunities to step outside of the field of journalism and to develop more

academic interests with other like-minded members. In 1871, the *Manchester City News* became a vehicle for publicising the activities and meetings of the Manchester Literary Club in some detail, no doubt as a result of Nodal's editorship. This literary symbiosis demonstrates the significance of both professional and personal networks for Victorian popular journalists and the advantages to be gained from both. Nodal used his membership of the club to advance his study of dialect and the pages of the newspaper which he edited to publicise those findings and publications and to develop his identity as a serious linguist as well as a practising journalist. The collaborative opportunities offered by club membership enabled him to develop and promote his expertise and to present himself as part of a trusted knowledge community and to enhance his standing among his peers.

Journalism and Professional Identity

During the later nineteenth century, journalism was involved in a struggle over its professional identity. As Ochs described, it is "a complex vocation, which opens avenues for careers of diversified character" (38). However, it was this very diversity that prevented any consistent consensus from emerging about the nature of popular journalism and those who were involved in it. This impacted on its ability to situate itself vis-à-vis other kinds of writing and writers. Gray has labelled Victorian journalism as "heterogeneous" and argued that journalists and poets of this period existed in cultural conflict with each other (810). The evidence presented here suggests that clubs such as the Manchester Literary Club actually reinforced these conflicts and prevented the development of a more coherent sense of professional identity among the city's journalists.

Alongside journalists, the Club drew its membership from scientists, local businessmen, historians, librarians, poets, municipal representatives, dialecticians and botanists. It was not uncommon to hold multiple club memberships at once – John Harland, head of the literary department at the *Manchester Guardian* (1821 - 1860) was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a member of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. John Howard Nodal was also a member of the Arts Club and the Brasenose Club in Manchester, thus facilitating a wider social network across several, related interests (Mitchell 30). These networks facilitated the development of personal and professional connections between those who moved at certain social levels in the city. The contact with municipal aldermen and councillors was especially important for journalists in terms of exchanging knowledge and local intelligence. It also led the municipal representatives into contributing occasional journalistic pieces to local newspapers and periodicals.

This intersection between journalist and local municipal representative was often valued for the insider status of the resulting articles, but the satirical popular press frequently lampooned this practice. Liverpool's the *Porcupine* (1860 - 1915) targeted those councillors who also worked as journalists, providing such insider accounts of committee and council meetings, which made up a regular part of the local weekly press in the nineteenth century. In 1861, the *Porcupine* published an article entitled "Scraps from the Diary of a Popular Town Councillor" that outlined the journey of a municipal representative around the local newspaper offices – "called into the (Liverpool) *Mercury* office to see the proofs of my speeches at the Council ... Crossed over to the (Liverpool) *Daily Post* office and dictated an article for the editor, praising my exertions" (205). While the harmony of interests between municipal representative and local journalist was not as blatant as this described, the confluence between these two groups did provide opportunities to develop the sorts of informal relationships that were also facilitated through literary club involvement. Regular social contact was a key factor in creating and sustaining relationships on which the flow of information relied.

The social and commercial connections offered by membership of these clubs were a useful mechanism for funding popular journalism. In their first year of publication, the Directors of the *Manchester City News* newspaper sought to make good use of the personal connections between their members by earnestly suggesting to all shareholders "the desirability of personal influence being used to increase the number of advertisements" at the paper. Meanwhile, the Directors committed to "personally exert themselves for the advancement of the paper" (*Manchester City News Minute Book*, msf 072 M45 40). Those directors of the newspaper included several members of Manchester City Council. The pressure was intense to increase both sales and advertising revenue and all means of doing so were exploited. Reporters for the paper were also co-opted for this task and were promised a 10% commission on all advertising revenue successfully secured when in the progress of their reporting duties. Thus, the duties of the journalist frequently overlapped with other less formal roles in supporting the development of their papers.

Mitchell has described the social importance of social clubs as pertaining to the development of an "associational culture" that provided respite from work and the opportunity to experience "rich and diverse masculine cultures" during this period (12). While there was undoubtedly an element of this in literary clubs of the nineteenth century, there was also the prospect of delineating and differentiating these men from each other on the basis of particular interests and enthusiasms. In effect, they became a mechanism for a

type of boundary maintenance, which emphasised exclusivity and difference as well as similarity. As well as having a physical form, communities also have a symbolic state, as Anthony Cohen (1985) has argued. He suggests that the constituent social relations of a community form a “repository of meaning for its members” and that “the distinctiveness of communities and thus the reality of their boundaries ... lies in the mind and in the meanings which people attach to them” (98). Therefore, these clubs functioned as both physical and symbolic expressions of literary and other professional identities and often worked to reinforce the boundaries of those identities instead of offering a space in which they could be challenged.

Brake has pointed out how fluid the work of the Victorian journalist could be, with writers moving seamlessly from one publication to another or working for several titles at once (115). These kinds of networks also had the advantage of enabling new titles to emerge from the interests and passions of those who were already known and connected to each other. Edmund Yates has recounted how, on the termination of the periodical the *Comic Times* in 1855 after just four months, he and his fellow contributors decided to publish their own magazine. “During the four months in which we had been thrown together a great feeling of natural liking had sprung up amongst us; the weekly symposia, held in the tavern parlour where the contents of the coming number had been arranged, had proved most delightful reunions” (Yates 222). Yates had had a varied journalistic career that included theatrical criticism, sketch writing and producing a gossip column (Edwards). Indeed, it is possible to argue that working for such periodicals was analogous to literary and social club membership (Fiss 417). The tightly knit social grouping with overlapping members, many of whom knew each other well, mirrored the genial atmosphere of the club.

There was also a significant social aspect to these clubs – members of the Manchester Literary Club went on regular excursions, often to places of local or literary interest. Members also involved themselves in local educational and social campaigns – they petitioned the City Council for the establishment of a University in Manchester in 1877 and they protested at the destruction of local countryside by the railways in 1887 (Swann 51). There were also interconnections with other, similar clubs in the city. Among the records of the Literary Club are invitations to an art exhibition at Manchester Town Hall hosted by the Art Museum Committee and a theatrical performance at the Free Trade Hall, which featured Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins (Manchester Literary Club archives M524/11/1/1 67).

Eating and drinking were important social dimensions to club membership and the Club’s annual Christmas Suppers were a regular event from 1872. The meal ended with the

members smoking pipe tobacco. On certain occasions throughout the year, the club invited members of the public to their “conversazioni.” These meetings were designed to “combine the agreeable unity of the arts and where music, literature, art and conversation are joined” (*Manchester City News*, 27 November, 1875). In this sense also, these clubs mirrored the sociable and companionable traits of nineteenth-century journalism workplaces, representing two of the three arenas (the domestic, work and all-male association) that substantially shaped masculine identity (Mitchell 76). Club membership emphasised a set of shared characteristics – sociability, networking, collective norms and values. These were complemented by the fact that many journalists also extended their club memberships beyond literary clubs and into other kinds of associations also deeply embedded in the urban life of the nineteenth-century city.

Journalism Networks

In addition to literary society memberships, many journalists joined private member’s clubs such as the Manchester Reform Club (1867 - 1988), the Union Club (1825 - 1933) and various political clubs such as the Conservative Club (1868 - 1912). These clubs allowed journalists to circulate freely with local municipal representatives, to share local gossip and rumours. Some of these clubs even provided a pathway to political power for those interested – Liverpool journalist and editor Edward Russell was elected as a Liberal Member of Parliament for Glasgow in 1885. He resigned his seat two years later to return to journalism, believing that a career in both politics and journalism was impossible. These clubs were more formal in administration than local arts and literary clubs and drew their membership from a narrower range of society. However, there is little doubt that the less formal clubs such as the Manchester Literary Club sought to emulate some aspects of these private members’ clubs by, for instance, establishing their own library, which was a common feature of the Manchester Reform Club, whose library extended to more than 3,000 volumes (*Manchester Reform Club Archives* MRC5/2 149).

These networks could also be protectionist and assist in strengthening the boundaries between journalism and its different genres and other forms of literary writing. We can observe these debates being explicitly undertaken at the Manchester Literary Club meeting in 1876. The speaker, W. H. J. Traice, an engineer and a member of the Bridgewater Canal Trust, used the occasion to attack professional journalism and its defects. In a talk entitled “Defects in Newspaper Reporting”. Traice contended that journalism was too isolated as a profession and that many newspaper reports merely contained “a quantity of useless

verbiage” (*Manchester Literary Club Quarterly*, Volume 3 1876: 170). He warned that journalism was not aware of and was not responsive enough to changing public tastes and that its isolation was damaging its ability to survive in the future. Journalists’ membership of literary clubs had the ancillary motive of allowing them to challenge this isolation and to take advantage of the opportunity to develop collaborative writing relationships with others.

Dallas Liddle has argued that many of the best and most robust critiques of nineteenth-century journalism emanated from outside the profession by people such as Anthony Trollope, George Eliot and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (2009: 167). Within the literary clubs and societies, journalist members addressed themselves to their non-professional interests, while critiques of journalism emanated mostly from others. John Howard Nodal frequently read papers on dialect and other linguistic interests such as epigrams, while Charles Hadfield presented his thoughts on Thackeray’s Irish characters in 1876, and Frank Hasleham spoke about actors and theatre history. This suggests that these members viewed the club as a platform for them to explore aspects of literature not directly connected with journalism and to provide a social outlet for their extra-professional interests. The exploitation of such personal connections formed a kind of social capital among Victorian writers that was facilitated by membership of organisations such as the Manchester Literary Club.

Henry Franks, a Manchester journalist, was one of the few members to regularly present papers on aspects of journalism. He spoke about the associations between journalism and literature in November 1878. He argued that, while it was customary to distinguish between literature and journalism, “the reason for this was not obvious,” suggesting that not everyone accepted the apparent tensions between the two forms of writing (*Manchester Literary Club archives*, M524/11/1/3 13). Indeed, Franks often used his presentations to the club to promote the work of journalism in a positive sense. He reminded his audience of the influence of newspapers on the public in an 1879 paper about his profession. “Newspapers,” he argued, “today probably have more influence over the minds and conduct of men than all the other educational agencies put together” (*Manchester Literary Club Quarterly*, Volume 5 1879: 230). While it was clearly in his professional interests to present this argument, Franks was articulating a growing confidence among journalists about the impact of their work. New technology for production and distribution and a growing demand for newspapers resulted in a new confidence in the press and in the profession by the late nineteenth century (Matthews 77).

While Franks may have been eager to defend journalism against the occasional criticism of his fellow members, these continuing tensions between journalism and its detractors reflect the sense of the uncertain status of the profession within the environment of a literary society. In December 1879, Franks gave a paper that addressed the connections between editors, writers and other freelance contributors of journalism. He defended the practice of anonymised journalism, arguing that editors were then forced to judge a piece of writing on its merits, rather than on the name of the writer. He also drew a clear distinction between the literary writer (“who writes when he is in the humour”) and the journalist (“who must always be in the humour”) (Manchester Literary Club archives, M524/11/1/3 41), emphasising the professional demands of journalism in contrast to the often dilatory nature of literature. Franks’ contributions to the Manchester Literary Club demonstrate that the differences between journalism and literature were often taken for granted and that these boundaries remained stubbornly resistant to change in the eyes of some journalists. While there are examples of more prominent and senior journalists such as John Howard Nodal who were able to benefit from the social capital acquired through club membership, such networking opportunities were not equally available to everyone and the boundaries between journalism and literature were still being sustained by many members.

MacLeod has argued for the importance of journalists in literary culture in terms of production, dissemination and reception, and that “journalists acted as pivotal shunts in the circuitry of literary culture, helping to shape the way new work was understood and appropriated” (9). From an examination of the activities of the networks studied in this paper, the picture would seem to be more complex than this. Many of the papers produced and read to these literary clubs by journalistic members did not concern themselves with journalism per se and, if they did, they addressed what may be termed ‘structural’ matters in the profession such as the relationships with editors, questions of copyright, and the patterns of local newspaper and periodical circulations. They did not address the issue of journalistic writing, nor did they discuss the distinctive features of their craft or try to delineate those aspects of their professional lives that pertained to this. Challenging such orthodoxies within the confines of these clubs and societies was not always encouraged or appropriate

The city of Liverpool also echoed many of the same patterns as Manchester in terms of the participation of journalists in literary societies. The Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool was founded in 1812. The Society met an average of 12-14 times a year at the Royal Institution with average meeting attendance of 80-100 members (*Proceedings* 1885: xl). It was a more formal society than the Manchester Literary Club and the emphasis was

more on the sciences than the arts. Members were drawn from the professional and business community of Liverpool with a large number of practicing physicians, lawyers, municipal councillors and headmasters. The bulk of papers read at the meetings were concerned with chemistry, biology, physics and law, with only occasional offerings on literary topics. The Society had 258 members in 1883, including women. The practice of permitting women to be members of these literary clubs varied. Women were informally allowed to attend meetings in Liverpool from 1880 and their membership was formalised in 1883 (*Proceedings* 1883: lxxi). The first paper to be delivered by a woman was in December 1882 when Miss Jessie MacGregor presented her work on Scandinavian Mythology (*Proceedings* 1883: lxi).

The most prominent journalist member was Edward Russell, the editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post* (1855 - 2012) (Morris). Russell was the Society's President for three years from 1878 – 1881 and regularly gave papers on literary themes such as the plays of William Shakespeare and the *Book of King Arthur* by Thomas Malory. Reflecting on his qualifications to do so, he stated that he had to offer: “nothing of erudition, nothing of special research” but “all I can pretend to is an endeavour to see and to estimate the literary value of the work criticised, exactly as it is” (*Proceedings* 1889: 29). Again, Russell's activities in the Society did not directly address the journalism profession but provided him with an outlet and an environment in which to explore his personal interest in drama and literary criticism.

In 1879, controversy emerged at the Literary and Philosophical Society about ownership of the intellectual copyright of members' papers that were printed in the Society's *Proceedings*. A new law was proposed at a meeting of the Society in October 1879 that would grant ownership of the papers to the Society and not to the individual authors (*Proceedings* 1879: xliv). The new law was discussed again at the November meeting with many members feeling that such a law was “unnecessary” (xlix). An extraordinary meeting held in February 1880 revisited the proposed law and granted the Society the power to print all papers read before it and to retain the ownership of those papers (liv).

The significance of this for the journalist members of the Society was related to a continuing issue within journalism about anonymity. All of the Society's printed papers had a designated author. This allowed members to enjoy the public promotion of their work and to associate themselves with literary enterprises and ideas. As Liddle has demonstrated, there were several schools of thought about the subject of anonymous writing in journalism after 1860 (1997: 33). Periodicals were increasingly using either author's initials or full names on all articles published, while newspapers largely continued the tradition of anonymous authorship. The anonymous author was omnipotent, speaking for all of society in a

paternalistic manner, while the named author had to take individual responsibility for their work and the views expressed in it. Many of the journalists who were literary club members, therefore, found themselves in the position of being able to attach their own names to their published work in a way that was not available to them in their professional lives.

Not all journalists welcomed the persistence of anonymous journalism in newspapers. Nodal commented that “under our anonymous system of journalism, personality is to a great extent suppressed” (Manchester Literary Club Archives, M524/11/1/6 Index page letter W). This suppression of personality led journalists to explore more personal forms of writing that aligned more clearly with their own personal hobbies and interests within the literary clubs. The culture of these clubs allowed the emergence and development of expertise and authority on subjects of interest and to circulate the products of this knowledge among members and the wider public.

This constitutes an instance of the intangible benefits to be derived from membership of these clubs. Social capital relies on relations between people and has less tangible elements than other forms of capital such as human and physical capital (Coleman 100). Publishing signed work in the proceedings of these societies enabled the association to be made between these writers and their work in the public arena. They could be firmly connected to their literary interests in ways that were not available to them as journalists. Thus, they exploited the opportunities that social capital presented to them for their own development as authors. Coleman has identified social capital as “productive” (Halpern 7) and the type of collaborative productivity enabled by literary clubs allowed journalists to extend their essence of mutuality and collective enterprise from journalism into the comparatively rarefied world of literature. It is clear that these literary clubs defined literature in a very broad sense. Speaking at his inaugural address as President of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool in 1872, Albert J. Mott remarked that literature “includes all subjects on which books are written” and that the scope of the society was to be “of the widest kind” (*Proceedings* 1872: 1). This paper has provided evidence that this kind of broad definition was no means shared by all literary clubs and that there was an unspoken process of hierarchy and of privileging some kinds of writing above others.

There is no evidence that the literary clubs in Manchester and Liverpool exchanged speakers or held shared events but they did share their published papers with each other. The *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* were donated to the Manchester Literary Club, the Manchester Free Library and the libraries of Chetham’s and Owens College. The Liverpool Society also held occasional shared events with the city’s

Astronomical Society (from 1888) and with the Architectural, Biological, Chemists' and Geological Societies to enhance the range of subjects available to members and to take advantage of mutual interests, particularly in the sciences. Thus, the pool of available social capital was widened and deepened, and members were able to circulate among wider social circles.

As well as the networks such as those outlined above, Victorian journalists also availed themselves of more formal networks specifically designed for their profession, such as the Institute of Journalists (IOJ), formed in 1886 (Jones 124). The IOJ published its own newspaper for members, the title of which was *The Journalist and Newspaper Proprietor* (1886 - 1909), indicating the equal status given to journalists and newspaper owners in the IOJ. These more formal networks were a response by the profession to a general public whose tastes were changing and who were demanding more diverse kinds of information in a more digestible format. As journalism became “more sensational, more entertaining, more socially engaged but intellectually lighter” (Liddle 2009: 165), there was a concomitant need for journalists to be able to find spaces that would allow them to explore more non-journalistic forms of writing. The very status and nature of journalism itself was open to question during this period and this would not begin to be addressed until the formation of professional societies such as trade unions like the National Union of Journalists, whose nascent body first met in a Manchester hotel in 1906 (Bundock 5). The introduction of bylines into newspapers and periodicals allowed journalists to be identified as the authors of their own work and the increase in the amount of literary writing in journalism during the early years of the twentieth century did not apparently diminish the enthusiasm of journalists in both Manchester and Liverpool for membership of local literary clubs. This suggests that they were not merely arenas for the study and practice of literary writing but that they also offered an opportunity to develop social capital and personal networks during a time in which the journalism profession was still establishing itself.

Conclusion

Knowledge was the bedrock of the journalism profession. Opportunities to share knowledge both professional and personal took place at both formal and informal levels. Thus, journalists were intimately engaged with others outside and inside the profession in establishing, promoting and belonging to communities of knowledge. These opportunities were not equally available, however. Membership fees for many clubs militated against most local journalists and some groups remained suspicious of part-time and freelance writers.

Journalism was an inherently social practice and the existence of knowledge communities within it alerts us to the interdependence of journalistic networks during this period and the importance of the emergence of a sense of professional identity in belonging to such communities. Some clubs and societies, however, did not acknowledge journalism as equivalent to more literary forms of writing and thus limited the ability of journalist members to have their professional work recognised.

The journalism profession as a whole occupied a rather ambiguous position during the nineteenth century. Not regarded as a trade, and “among the last of the callings to be generally recognised as a profession’ journalism ‘had established neither standards of admission nor a formulated code of ethics” (Bleyer 358). This position enhanced the appeal of the literary societies discussed here as they offered at least some elements of the status that journalism lacked. They brought journalists into close social contact with local municipal representatives, literary writers and other members of the arts community and allowed them to explore and develop their own literary interests in a supportive and sympathetic environment.

Returning to the quote from Gissing that began this paper, it was by no means certain that their club memberships offered any firm guarantees of literary success, but being a part of these societies extracted Victorian journalists from their comparative professional isolation and brought them into regular and collaborative contact with those active in literary circles. If social capital is “quintessentially a product of collective interaction” (Field 22), then literary and philosophical societies played a useful role in enlarging the social circles of Victorian journalists and allowing them to explore more literary forms of writing and to expand their sense of professional identity during a time characterised by a lack of occupational consensus. The social capital acquired as a result of these memberships gave these journalists the cachet that their professional lives did not and could not yet provide.

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