

“neither boy nor man”: Transnational Trade Identity in
Canada’s Typographical Trade Press, 1860-1900

by

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A thesis submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

in

English

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

“‘neither boy nor man’: Transnational Trade Identity in Canada’s Typographical Trade Press, 1860-1900” is situated at the intersection of literary, periodical, print historical, and labour studies. Examining the eight printing trade journals produced in central and eastern Canada during the later nineteenth century (Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick), this project contributes a Canadian dimension to extant scholarship on printing trade journals, which has mostly attended to British and American publications. This study of Canadian printers’ trade journals offers important insights for understanding how the Canadian trade was situated as a node within the printing trade’s transnational network. Journeymen hand typesetters working in the Canadian newspaper trade of the later nineteenth century identified various threats to their aristocratic trade identity: apprentices, amateur labourers, and tramp printers; rising literacy rates and the middle-class worker; women; the work of Black, Indigenous, and Chinese compositors; and the introduction of machines in typesetting. Situating these perceived threats within the context of local and transnational/transatlantic histories of printing, I demonstrate how journeymen used narrative, poetry, correspondence, humour, and visual devices as defensive tools to reinforce and protect the trade’s aristocratic labour identity and to associate the work of typesetting with masculinity, skill, superior intelligence, and whiteness. Due to Canada’s position within the British Empire and its proximity to the United States, the exclusionary discourses that Canadian journeymen compositors cultivated and circulated were shaped by both national and transatlantic labour discourses. Further, I argue that these representational strategies were largely misplaced, given that the actual threats of deskilling and technological unemployment resided not

with half-trained compositors, women, and other apparent dangers to the trade, but in the structural conditions of print capitalism and of waged labour more generally. The textual and historical analysis of the labour discourses found within Canadian printing trade journals that I present in this dissertation demonstrates that Canadian journeymen were ultimately concerned about what changes to the economic and technological landscape of their trade at the end of the century would mean for their status as men whose identities were intrinsically tied to waged work, skill, and craftsmanship.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council as well as funding from Carleton University and the Bibliographical Society of Canada's Marie Tremaine Fellowship. I am grateful to both the Bibliographical Society of Canada and the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals for their support of my work and the opportunities to share my research at their annual conferences.

I want to thank my committee for their support throughout my doctoral studies. Thank you to Sarah Brouillette and Janice Schroeder for supporting me throughout my studies. Thank you both for your feedback and for allowing me the space to parse through all the materials for this project. Thank you to my supervisor, Jody Mason. You made my doctoral studies such a positive experience. From the beginning, your kindness and generosity have been everything. Thank you for agreeing to supervise a project that you described, more than once, as "ambitious." Thank you for allowing me to steer this project in new directions and for guiding me when things fell a bit off course. Thank you for being a wonderful collaborator and for always challenging me to be a better writer and scholar. Thank you for your support and guidance and for steadily nudging me "onward!" It has been such a pleasure to work with you.

I cannot leave Carleton without acknowledging that much of my time at the University was spent happy as a printer's devil can be – elbows-deep in paper, ink, and type. The Book Arts Lab was a constant haven for me, and I literally would not be the person I am now without it. I am so glad to have been a part of this, the most magical

place at Carleton. Thanks to Larry. It has been an absolute pleasure to be your colleague and friend. Thank you for challenging me creatively and for all your wisdom and jokes. You have changed the way that I approach making, teaching, book arts, and printing, and for that I am eternally grateful. Thanks to Kiah. It was a joy to work with you. Your positivity and passion for book binding, figuring stuff out, and effective teaching are infectious. Thank you to Patti for everything. To Ray, Eden, Nadia, and Maira: Thank you for being such amazing colleagues and collaborators. It was always a pleasure to work alongside and with you. I have gained so much from you.

I also want to thank my family. To my parents and sister: Thank you for your steadfast support from the very beginning. Thank you for seeing my passion and never questioning why I had to pursue it. I would not be here without your love and encouragement. To Theo: Thank you for being you. To Cathy, Juan, and Raf: Thank you for the support and care you have shown me and for always asking how things are going.

Thank you to all the friends who have supported me throughout my studies: Tim, Jess, Dan, Julia. And special thanks to Sabrina. You have never wavered in your excitement for and support of me and my work. Thank you for that, and for your constant positive energy. Thank you also to Lorraine Janzen Kooistra for staying in touch all these years and for all the support and generosity you have shown me. And thank you to Stephen Sword. This project would not be the same without you. Thank you for telling me about *The Printer's Miscellany* and *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*.

I cannot end these acknowledgments without thanking two very special guys. I am deeply grateful to my partner, Juan. While writing a dissertation of your own, you were a constant and comforting support. You are the only person who has truly seen me

through this whole thing and who knows, intimately, how much this work has changed me. I am thankful for the ways we held and carried each other throughout this process. Thank you for everything. And, finally, thank you to Hobbes, whose presence made the last several months infinitely more joyful. Thank you for forcing me to slow down and making me stop to appreciate the *oranger* things in life.

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Introduction

“Take as many of the practical trade’s journals as you can possibly afford. Not only subscribe to them, but read and study them ; take in everything in them : but don’t attempt to follow blindly everything in them. You must use as much discrimination in handling trade journals as a razor. Study every piece of jobwork, every newspaper, every piece of printing you can get your eyes on. You cannot get too much of it. You will find use for every piece of information, every design, suggestion or idea that you can possibly get into your brain box. Study everything—if not to use, to avoid.”

“Specimens Received,” *International Art Printer* 1 no. 9-10 (November-December 1895): 209.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, male journeymen compositors working in the newspaper industry in Canada, like their counterparts in America and Britain, were deeply engaged in discussions about trade membership, skill, and competency. Such discussions occurred in response to employers’ desire to save on labour costs, the industrialization of the typographical trades that led to shifting workplace and trade dynamics, and the mechanization of typesetting. These forces threatened to undermine compositors’ labour positions and trade identities, which, up to the mid-nineteenth century, were defined by their relatively aristocratic or elite position within the hierarchy of the labouring class. Compositors generally perceived that their work – setting texts and printed materials of all kinds – afforded them a higher position than most because it required both mental (intellectual) and manual skills. Compositors performed manual work that was informed by their intellect, their familiarity with language and literacy, and their aptitude for design in setting type. Additionally, their trade had long been involved in labour organization movements which afforded them regulated pay and job/unemployment security and support. David Finkelstein observes

that the printing trade's "privileged sense of place in the social hierarchy of labour organization" was largely due to the fact that male typographical trade workers were "at the forefront of nineteenth-century social and trade union movements, in terms of union organization, social support, establishing libraries and educational centers, and in organizing and actively engaging in literary and cultural events."¹

However, compositors' elite position began to shift and come under threat by the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1840s in Canada, the introduction of new technologies was pushing the typographical trade's handicraft identity toward "full-fledged industrial production." The next forty years, 1850-1890, saw Canada's Industrial Revolution and the emergence of the daily press, technological innovations in printing and typesetting, and the growing segmentation of the trade's book and job sectors from newspaper publishing. For printers, Gregory S. Kealey writes, this meant that job shops often "demanded more varied skills that more closely resembled the talents of the old-time, all-around printer, whereas urban daily newspapers were increasingly specialized." As the division of labour in the trade increased, the days of the "all-around printer" who was knowledgeable in all areas of the job quickly became a thing of the past. Technological developments in printing "drove a wedge between the compositors," Kealey writes, "whose handicraft skills remained intact" and the pressmen who, despite their trade's long history of skilled handicraft labour, "had become machine-tenders."²

¹ David Finkelstein, *Movable Types: Roving Creative Printers of the Victorian World* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 152.

² Gregory S. Kealey, "Work Control, the Labour Process, and Nineteenth-Century Canadian Printers," in *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada*, ed. Robert H. Storey and Craig Heron (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 75, 80, 82, 81.

The work of the compositor – typesetting – remained comparatively unchanged and continued to rely on compositors’ skills throughout the mid-to-late century. Despite this, by the mid-century, journeymen compositors perceived that their masculine craft status and elevated labour positions were threatened by the employment of those they deemed unskilled. Newcomers who did not look like male journeymen in their training or behaviour – amateurs, women, racialized workers, and other “unskilled” labourers – increasingly began to enter the typographical trades. These so-called “unskilled” labourers were appealing to employers because, not being fully-fledged journeymen, they could be paid less to perform much the same work. Thus, the influx of unskilled workers threatened to destabilize journeymen’s positions in the workplace because their skills were no longer considered necessary. Likewise, growing literacy rates threatened to destabilize the trade’s identification as an occupation characterized by unique literacy requirements. By the mid-1880s, machine typesetters had begun to mechanize the work of typesetting, and journeymen compositors feared that they, too, would become machine tenders and be forced to relinquish their claims to craft and skill altogether. As machines sped up press work in the second half of the century, hand typesetting became a “bottleneck in the production process,”³ prompting employers to hire so-called “unskilled” workers – women, boys, and other non-journeymen status men – to perform the work for lower wages than those set by the union scale and paid to union journeymen. Employers’ hiring of “unskilled” workers catalyzed journeymen’s hostility toward those groups of workers. Journeymen’s discomfort fueled attempts to assert dominance within

³ Christina Burr, “‘That Coming Curse – The Incompetent Compositress’: Class and Gender Relations in the Toronto Typographical Union during the Late Nineteenth Century,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (September 1993): 350, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/574453>.

their trade, working to associate it with masculinity and skill, and to exclude those who were presented as not fitting within established trade standards.⁴

Journeyman's notions about who should be permitted to work in the trade reflected the economic, class, racial, and gendered conflicts that arose in the late nineteenth century during and after the Industrial Revolution in Canada. Similar conflicts arose in America, though the experience of industrialization there occurred earlier than in Canada, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Those socio-economic biases and struggles were reflected in the union structures and policies that governed local nodes across the North American trade network. Union concerns about membership and training were often transnational, especially as the Canadian and American industries functioned in a kind of reciprocal relationship.⁵ While not all compositors were union members (nor were all shops union shops), the union structure greatly influenced the work and social lives of typographical workers across the continent. Many journeymen were critical of the skills and qualifications possessed by those working in the trade

⁴ Here, a brief clarification of the terms "printer" and "compositor" is useful. There is some disagreement as to the proper uses of both terms when working in historical contexts such as this that is worth expanding upon. Writing about British compositors in the second half of the nineteenth century, Patrick Duffy is critical of the ambiguity that comes from using both terms interchangeably. He claims that it is a mistake "that suggests a failure to acknowledge [the trade's] complexity." Conversely, Isidore Cyril Cannon observes that "the word 'printer' for the journeyman during the period embraced both the 'compositor' who set the type and the 'pressman' who printed the sheets" because, until the strict division of labour and departments in printing shops, it was generally "expected that a journeyman could work at either occupation." Throughout this project I differentiate the work of typesetting and the work of printing sheets by referring to those separate workers as "compositor" and "pressman," respectively. However, while I privilege the language of "compositor" or "journeyman compositor," I also use "printer" where appropriate because practitioners of the trade also conflated those terms and used "printer" to refer, rather explicitly, to the occupation of typesetting. For clarity, when referring to all those working in the printing trades collectively, I use the term "typographical trade workers." Patrick Duffy, *The Skilled Compositor, 1850-1914: An Aristocrat Among Working Men* (Ashgate, 2000), 3; Isidore Cyril Cannon, *The Compositor in London: The Rise and Fall of a Labour Aristocracy* (St Bride Foundation, 2011), 20-21.

⁵ Jacob Remes, "Movable Type: Toronto's Transnational Printers, 1866-1872" in *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History*, ed. Leon Fink (Oxford University Press, 2011), 386.

throughout the second half of the century. Their scrutiny even extended to criticisms of fellow journeymen who were perceived to not meet the standards set by the majority.

In *The Rise and Fall of the Toronto Typographical Union 1832-1972*, Sally F. Zerker writes that “to stop the drift of cheap labour” which threatened to dismantle the trade’s longstanding masculine craft status, printers and compositors in Canada “had to find ways to control the supply of labour.”⁶ While the trade’s unions attempted to control the unwanted influxes of labour and guard the work of typesetting for journeymen compositors throughout the century, official measures were not enough to protect compositors’ labour status. The economic pressures imposed by the increasing employment of women, boys, amateurs, and other threatening male workers in the second half of the century convinced many male journeymen of the possibility that these other labourers might displace them from the shopfloor. Not only that, but the employment of women and boys undermined the masculinity of the trade. As masculinity and manliness were fundamental components of a compositor’s labour identity, many journeymen felt the need to take matters into their own hands and fight against employers’ reliance on such workers. Using their transnational network of trade journals, journeymen compositors in Canada engaged with and cultivated exclusionary discourses that complemented union efforts to protect the trade from “unskilled” workers. They also used their trade journals to establish an ever-evolving masculine trade identity that was simultaneously rigid and fluid: rigid, because it conformed to patriarchal ideologies about gender roles and work; and fluid because compositors adapted their trade identities and

⁶ Sally F. Zerker, *The Rise and Fall of the Toronto Typographical Union 1832-1972: A Case Study of Foreign Domination* (University of Toronto Press, 1982), 25.

definitions of skill to meet the challenges imposed upon them by the increasing influx of deskilling forces throughout the end of the century.

The typographical press was a tool of the transnational “typographical web” that characterizes the culture of nineteenth-century printers across the English-speaking world.⁷ Typographical trade journals often included various genres and addressed all subjects relevant to the trade. As Sydney J. Shep outlines, some of the inclusions common in typographical trade journals were:

trade union and technical information, pension and benefit schemes, book reviews and notices of printers’ library acquisitions, trade advertisements, reports of social activities, the results of sporting events, literary works and quotations, lists of typos and howlers, and memorials of one sort or another to the human fragment: obituaries, biographies of prominent trade personalities, lists of union members in arrears, and information purveyed or solicited about mobile members and friends.⁸

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a “continual succession of writers upon typography, some dealing with its practical aspects and others with its historical and antiquarian relations.”⁹ Finkelstein observes that as early as the 1840s, “newly emerging print trade unions backed the launch of typographical trade journals in the USA, UK, South Africa, and Australia,” among other English-speaking countries and territories, and that many of these journals “were short-lived, or underwent multiple transformation of title, frequency, and format throughout their lifespan.”¹⁰

⁷ Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 5.

⁸ Sydney J. Shep, “Cultures of Print: Materiality, Memory, and the Rituals of Transmission,” *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, no. 28 (2010): 184, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41245593>.

⁹ Wesley Washington Pasko, ed., *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking* (New York: Howard Lockwood & Co., 1894), i, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433006362614>.

¹⁰ Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 111.

Although the Canadian printing industry was not as big or as prolific as those in Britain or America, where many trade journals were produced throughout the century, printers in Canada did circulate trade journals. In Canada, typographical trade journals emerged in the wake of the labour press that surged in the decade after 1863, gaining momentum alongside the working-class movement of the 1870s that was championed and heralded by labour reform periodicals like the *Ontario Workman*.¹¹ The proliferation of Canadian typographical trade journals in the 1870s also coincides with the formation of the Dominion of Canada; the territory discussed in this project did not become Canada until after Confederation in 1867.¹² Like their foreign counterparts, most Canadian typographical trade journals were published in large cities with thriving newspaper and job printing sectors, where the trades were bigger, more stable, and more connected to international networks. From Montreal, Quebec came *The Canadian Printer* (1860-1871?) and later *The Dominion Printer* (1873-1879?), both organs of the Dominion Type Foundry (formerly the Montreal Type Foundry).¹³ From Saint John, New Brunswick came *The Printer's Miscellany* (1876-1882), published by Hugh Finlay.¹⁴ From Toronto came *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* (1892-201?), founded and published by the John Bayne McLean Company.¹⁵ *The Imprint*, organ of the Toronto Type Foundry (1893-

¹¹ Ron Verzuh, *Radical Rag: The Pioneer Labour Press in Canada* (Steel Rail Publishing, 1988), 7, 9.

¹² Canadian place designations were in flux during the century; I will be using “provinces” to refer to Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick, and “Canada” to refer to the country those provinces eventually joined to form, though they did not assume this identity until after Confederation, in 1867.

¹³ Bryan Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing: A History from Lead Type to Lasers*, Transformation Series no. 3 (National Museum of Science and Technology, 1995), 35; C.T. Palgrave, ed. / The Montreal Type Foundry, *The Canadian Printer* 1 no. 2 (January 1861), (August 1867), 2 no. 1 (August 1871), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_05117; Dominion Type Founding Company, *The Dominion Printer*, vols. 1-5 (July 1873-April 1879), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06447.

¹⁴ Hugh Finlay, ed. and proprietor, *The Printer's Miscellany*, vols. 1-6 (July 1876-April and May 1882), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_05136.

¹⁵ J.B. McLean Company, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher [Printer and Publisher]*, vols. 1-9 (May 1892-December 1900), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_04955.

1895); *The Nonpareil* (1898-?), organ of the Toronto Typographical Union No. 91; and *Type and Press* (1898-1899?), published by Miller & Richard, were also produced out of Toronto.¹⁶ Only one journal was published outside of a major city; the *International Art Printer* was published by Arthur Rutherford in Owen Sound, Ontario.¹⁷ I introduce each of these periodicals in more detail in Chapter 1.

“‘neither boy nor man’: Transnational Trade Identity in Canada’s Typographical Trade Press, 1860-1900” is concerned with the ways that Canadian journeymen compositors used their typographical trade journals to sustain a hold on their aristocratic, masculine labour identity in the second half of the nineteenth century. Not all scholars are agreed that compositors perceived their occupation as one that occupied a distinct position in the aristocracy of labour. Attending to the British printing trades, Patrick Duffy contends that there were “marked differences” between men working in different sectors (newspaper, jobbing, book work) and even geographies (urban versus rural) that might have led compositors to have different opinions about their work. Duffy is cautious to generalize about all compositors, arguing that compositors “were found across the whole spectrum of the working class” and that arguments that generalize about compositors tend to “disguis[e] great differences in experience between workers and leads to assumptions that are incorrect.”¹⁸ He posits that the variability and inconsistency of compositors’ (ir)regularity of employment and wages throughout the century, for

¹⁶ The Toronto Type Foundry, *The Imprint*, vols. 1-2, no. 2 (May 1893-Summer 1895), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_04481; Toronto Typographical Union No. 91, *The Nonpareil* 1, no. 1 (December 1898), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_04598; Miller and Richard, *Type and Press* 2, no. 4 (November 1899), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06043.

¹⁷ Arthur M. Rutherford, ed. and proprietor, *International Art Printer* 1, no.8 (October 1895) and no. 9-10 (November-December 1895), <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/s0x34mk66f1c>.

¹⁸ Duffy, *The Skilled Compositor*, 77-8, 106, 83.

instance, means that most compositors would not, technically speaking, qualify as labour aristocrats.¹⁹ I argue that, whether truly labour aristocrats or not, compositors in Canada strategically circulated discourses about their trade that imagined their work in this light.

It is unsurprising that journeymen compositors in Canada utilized their trade literature to shore up their trade identities throughout the century. One of the primary functions of trade periodicals is the establishment of connections between tradespeople and the conceptualization of a shared trade community within and across nations via the circulation of new items, information, advertisements, and creative writing.

Typographical workers' use of trade journals is a practice deeply tied to their identity as highly skilled labourers. Typographical workers had been producing trade literature since at least the seventeenth century. Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, Lisa Maruca, and Philip Gaskell, Giles Barber, and Georgina Warrilow all place the origin of the trade's English-language literature with Joseph Moxon and the second volume of his manual, *Mechanick Exercises, Applied to the art of printing*,²⁰ the first of its kind in English²¹ and the first "comprehensive manual in any language" to cover the typographical trades.²² Printers and compositors were fervent creative writers and literary commentators, and their work was directly associated with the composition of literary materials of all kinds. Before and during the nineteenth century, compositors were undoubtedly "a profession comfortable

¹⁹ Duffy, *The Skilled Compositor*, 79-87, 79-119.

²⁰ Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, *Nineteenth-Century Printing Practices and the Iron Handpress*, 2 vols (Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2004), 1: 3; Lisa Maruca, "Bodies of Type: The Work of Textual Reproduction in English Printers' Manuals," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 235, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ecs.2003.0030>; Philip Gaskell, Giles Barber, and Georgina Warrilow, "An Annotated List of Printers' Manuals, to 1850," *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, no. 4 (1968): 13.

²¹ Gaskell, et al., "An Annotated List of Printers' Manuals, to 1850," 24-5. Philip Gaskell, et al., indicate that earlier printer's manuals were printed in German earlier than 1683.

²² Gaskell, et al., "An Annotated List of Printers' Manuals, to 1850," 13.

in the skin of writing and reading, and conscious of [their] aristocratic heritage amongst skilled artisans” and, as this project details, their use of trade journals helped to maintain that picture.²³

Typographical trade workers generally believed that their trade journals were important publications that allowed them to communicate across national borders and to cultivate a transnational trade identity. To this point, Melissa Score observes that while trade journals were often produced inexpensively, journeymen understood them to be more than “ephemeral productions,” as evidenced by the fact that select British trade periodicals were “collected and bound as volumes.”²⁴ Indeed, as Blanche Beatrice Elliott observed in 1962, as a group, printers were invested in their literary output, having “the distinction of being the only trade that has carefully studied the contents of its early periodicals.”²⁵ Printers frequently referred to their trade journals as required reading for new and veteran workers. As one piece of advice addressed to apprentices in the Owen Sound-based journal, the *International Art Printer* (1895), encourages: “take as many of the practical trade’s journals as you can possibly afford.”²⁶ Rummonds notes that Samuel Whybrew, author of the 1882 manual, *The Progressive Printer*, lists Thomas MacKellar’s manual, *The American Printer*, and three trade periodicals as necessary reading for apprentices.²⁷ In 1893, *The Imprint*, the organ of the Toronto Type Foundry, published an

²³ Shep, “Cultures of Print,” 184.

²⁴ Melissa Score, “Pioneers of Social Progress?: Gender and Technology in British Printing Trade Union Journals, 1840-65,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47, no. 2 (2014): 276, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/43663243>

²⁵ Blanche Beatrice Elliott, *A History of English Advertising* (London: Business Publications Limited, 1962), 183.

²⁶ “Specimens Received,” *International Art Printer* 1 no. 9-10 (November-December 1895): 209.

²⁷ Rummonds, *Nineteenth-Century Printing Practices and the Iron Handpress*, 1: 89.

article that emphasizes the importance of trade journals to the trade's skilled and literate identities. The article opens:

The printer who really loves his vocation is always interested in anything in the shape of literature that bears on the growth and development of his art. Such a craftsman will delight in poring over documents and books written by men who in their day were looked upon as judges of what constituted a first-class typo, men who were willing and able to give 'pointers' to younger aspirants how to become good printers. Probably in no other calling is the literature so voluminous and presented so attractively and artistically as in printing and its kindred occupations.

The article praises the trade journals being produced at the end of the nineteenth century as works of literary and technical merit, "owing to the combined efforts of the type-founders and press-builders, backed up by the brains and skill of the men who handle their products." The journals "are really works of art and worthy of an honored place in any library, to be looked at and conned [sic] over as 'things of beauty and joys forever'." ²⁸

Given the importance of these journals to the typographical trades in the nineteenth century, it is surprising how little scholarship has attended to the centrality of such journals for our understanding of print history across the English-speaking world. Although the fields of book history and print culture are abundant and scholarship on the typographical trades is, today, geographically, temporally, thematically, and methodologically diverse, owing to the fields' feminist, transnational, and postcolonial turns, little attention has been paid to the role of typographical trade journals as important material and literary objects that circulated across the English-speaking print world. ²⁹

Instead, as Shep argued in 2010, scholars have tended to "selectively min[e]"

²⁸ D.B.E., "One of the Olden Time.," *The Imprint* 1, no. 3 (July-August 1893): 54.

²⁹ Typographical trade journals and trade literature also existed in other languages.

typographical trade journals “for information about the politics of emergent trade unionism and technical issues in an era of dynamic technological change. Their role as intersecting points in a sophisticated global communication network mediated and sustained through print has yet to be studied.”³⁰ It is true that, as Bryan Dewalt suggests, printing trade journals are valuable resources for those working on the histories of printing and technology.³¹ This project, however, considers these journals as technical or historical resources that also provide key insights into the occupational culture and social dynamics of the trade.

In his 2018 monograph, *Movable Types*, David Finkelstein considers the role of nineteenth-century typographical trade journals within the trade’s international communication network, drawing from English, Scottish, American, and Australian journals. His work has also focused on poetry and Scottish printing trade journals as well as British colonial printing trade journals, such as those from India and South Africa.³² Others have produced important articles on the genre: Sydney J. Shep considers typographical trade journals within a colonial context (the *Australasian Typographical Journal* and colonial New Zealand); Melissa Score considers how concerns about gender and technology penetrated British typographical trade union journals between 1840-1865; and John Bidwell’s 1977 article “*The Engraver and Printer*, a Boston Trade Journal of

³⁰ Shep, “Cultures of Print,” 184.

³¹ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 11.

³² Finkelstein, *Movable Types*; David Finkelstein, “Scottish Compositor Poets and the Typographical Trade Press, 1850-1880,” *Scottish Literary Review* 10, no. 2 (Autumn/Winter 2018): 47-69, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/707796>; David Finkelstein, “Colonial Trade Identity and Labour Information Exchange in the International Typographical Trade Press, 1840–1910,” in *The Edinburgh Companion to British Colonial Periodicals*, ed. David Finkelstein, David Johnson, and Caroline Davis (University of Edinburgh Press, 2024), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/jj.15478419.29>.

the Eighteen Nineties” presents a detailed look at *The Engraver and Printer*.³³ Jamie Horrocks, Ellen Mazur Thomson, and Matthew McLennan Young all consider the role of trade journals (and adjacent genres) in the transnational cultivation and proliferation of graphic design principles, movements/design reform, and aesthetics at the end of the century.³⁴ The work of other scholars like Lisa Maruca, Geoffrey Wakeman, Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, and Alastair Johnston has attended to journal-adjacent materials like printers’ manuals and type specimens, and there are important and broad-ranging intersections between these genres.³⁵ These scholars’ attention to the trade’s literatures provides a valuable basis from which to understand the trade’s transnational communication networks. Such studies are invaluable for helping to construct an understanding of the trade’s nineteenth-century identity, and this project is indebted to their work. There are, however, two significant gaps in the existing scholarship.

First is the fact that the extant scholarship on typographical trade journals has not yet considered the role of trade journals produced in Canada during the century, instead

³³ Shep, “Cultures of Print”; Score, “Pioneers of Social Progress?”; John Bidwell, *The Engraver and Printer*, a Boston Trade Journal of the Eighteen Nineties,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (1977): 29-48, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24302322>.

³⁴ Jamie Horrocks, “‘An Organ of Their Own’: Victorian Print Trade Journals and the Evolution of Graphic Design Thinking,” *Victorian Periodical Review* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2023): 205-243, <https://doi.org/10.1353/vpr.2023.a912318>; Jamie Horrocks, “The grammar of typography: *The Printers’ International Specimen Exchange* and Victorian letterpress design reform,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 20, no. 4 (2022): 339-67, DOI: 10.1080/17460654.2022.2067206; Jamie Horrocks, “Reforming the ‘Art Preservative’: Nineteenth-Century British Printing Manuals and the Discourse of Design,” *Book History* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2022): 351-82, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2022.0012>; Ellen Mazur Thomson, “Early Graphic Design Periodicals in America,” *Journal of Design History* 7.2 (1994): 113-26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1316080>; Matthew McLennan Young, *The Rise of The Printers’ International Specimen Exchange* (Oak Knoll Press, 2012).

³⁵ Maruca, “Bodies of Type”; Lisa Maruca, “Printers’ Manuals and The Bodies of Type,” in *The Work of Print: Authorship and the English Text Trades, 1660-1760* (University of Washington Press, 2007), ProQuest Ebook Central; Geoffrey Wakeman, *The Literature of Letterpress Printing, 1849-1900: a selection* (Kidlington, Oxford: Plough Press, 1986); Rummonds, *Nineteenth-Century Printing Practices and the Iron Handpress*; Alastair Johnston, *Alphabets to Order: The Literature of Nineteenth-Century Typesetters’ Specimens* (Oak Knoll Press, 2000).

tending to favour periodicals from Britain or America. In attending to the trade journals published in Canada during the century, this project further develops our understanding of the nineteenth-century typographical press and transnational communication networks that were so important to typographical workers' trade identities. This project also contributes to the fields of Canadian print and labour history; in both fields, the significance of typographical trade journals has been of cursory importance.

I approach the Canadian typographical trade journals at the center of this study through both national and transnational perspectives. During the 2000s, transnationalism became an important methodological approach for book and print historians, and since then scholars have sought to understand the circulation of printed materials through interconnected networks that exist within and outside of national boundaries.³⁶ Previously, the 1990s saw the launch of several national book history projects, like *A History of the Book in America*, *History of the Book in Canada*, and *History of the Book in Australia*, all important in their respective countries. However, by the mid-2010s, many scholars acknowledged that the book historical era of the “nation” or “national” may have passed, and that the contemporary book history practice is one that focuses on the international networks of book and print cultures.³⁷ Despite this methodological turn,

³⁶ For example: Sydney J. Shep, “Books Without Borders: The Transnational Turn in Book History” in *Books Without Borders*, vol. 1, *The Cross-National Dimension in Print Culture*, ed. Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); *Books Without Borders*, vol.1, *The Cross-National Dimension in Book History*, ed. Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond (Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); *Angles On the English-Speaking World*, vol. 10, *Moveable Types, Mobile Nations: Interactions in Transnational Book History*, ed. Simon Frost and Robert W. Rix (Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010).

³⁷ Publications that speak to the transnational turn in book history, generally or in relation to the construction of national book histories, include: Fraser and Hammond, eds, *Books Without Borders*, vol.1, *The Cross-National Dimension in Book History*; Frost and Rix, eds., *Angles On the English-Speaking World*, vol. 10, *Moveable Types, Mobile Nations: Interactions in Transnational Book History*; Carole Gerson, “History of the Book in Canada: The View From Here,” *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1036856ar>; Martyn Lyons, “National Histories of the Book in a Transnational Age,” *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 1-

national paradigms remain critical to book historical methodologies. As Martyn Lyon observed in 2016, “the nation-state still exerts a powerful grip on book history research” because “it dictates the legislative framework within which the book trade has historically operated.” The transnational turn, Lyons writes, simultaneously moves beyond and complements the national perspective, cutting through the regional, national, and international contexts of book history “to examine their reciprocal relationships.”³⁸ This approach is important to the way that we understand the circulation of periodicals in general. It also grounds my approach to the trade journals’ thematic and literary elements, particularly as discussions of trade identity were not entirely bound by national dimensions. For instance, it is important to acknowledge, as this project frequently does, that many contributors and correspondents to the Canadian journals were American.

An approach that emphasizes the interrelation of the national and transnational is also related to my second major scholarly contribution. While many scholars have mentioned the importance of trade journals as sources of knowledge for developing our understanding of trade identity (such as by considering how the journals illuminate union history, policies,³⁹ and the class and gender dynamics of the nineteenth century typographical trades⁴⁰), little scholarship has considered how journeymen compositors

17, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1036855ar>; Shep, “Books Without Borders”; Michael Winship, “Looking Backwards to the Future,” *Mémoires du livre/Studies in Book Culture* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 1-11, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1036858ar>.

³⁸ Lyons, “National Histories of the Book,” 8-9, 14, 4.

³⁹ For example: Jeffrey D. Groves, “Trade Communication” in *History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Micheal Winship, (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 130-9, ProQuest Ebook Central; Andrew King, “The Trade and Professional Press,” in *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press*, vol. 2, *Expansion and Evolution, 1800-1900*, ed. David Finkelstein, (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 573-4, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁰ Christina Burr, “Defending ‘The Art Preservative’: Class and Gender Relations in the Printing Trades Unions, 1850-1914,” *Labour / Le Travail* 31 (Spring 1993): 47-73, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25143669>; Burr, “‘That Coming Curse’,” 344-66; Cynthia Cockburn, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change* (Pluto Press, 1991); Cait Coker, “Gendered spheres: theorizing space in the English printing

used their trade literature to engage with transnational discourses about trade membership, skill, gender, and race. This lacuna is significant given the fact that, as Shep remarks, the trade's periodicals "played a critical role in manufacturing, disseminating, and sustaining" compositors' trade identity in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴¹

The Canadian location of the trade and journals at the center of this study is important because of Canada's unique position in relation to the United States and Britain. It is true that printers and compositors were workers whose domestic activities were fundamentally situated within a transnational printological network characterized by printers' physical mobility, the circulation of periodicals and other printed materials, and shared labour organization structures. However, this project demonstrates that the Canadian context of printers' journals, as well as compositors' arguments and representational strategies is unique in the transatlantic context. Whereas the printing trades in Britain and America tend to be treated as self-contained, largely divorced from the influence of trade practices in other countries, the printing trade in nineteenth-century Canada, much like the Canadian nation itself, cannot be considered insular.

Many of the traditions and practices that shaped the Canadian printing trades were imported by British and French settlers. By the early 1870s, the population of the Dominion was largely made up of French, Irish, English, and Scottish settlers, though in addition to Indigenous Peoples who had inhabited the land since time immemorial, there

house," *The Seventeenth Century* 33, no. 3 (2018): 323-336, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2017.1340850>; Ava Baron, "Contested Terrain Revisited: Technology and Gender Definitions of Work in the Printing Industry, 1850-1920," in *Women, Work, and Technology: Transformations*, ed. Barbara Drygalski Wright (University of Michigan Press, 1987), 58-83; Ava Baron, "Questions of Gender: Deskillling and Demasculinization in the U.S. Printing Industry, 1830-1915," *Gender & History* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 178-99, Wiley Online Library.

⁴¹ Shep, "Cultures of Print," 184.

were settlers of other ethnicities in the territory that is now Canada long before Confederation. For instance, the earliest settlers of African descent were brought to New France in the seventeenth century, and the earliest immigrants from China arrived on the western coast of British North America in the late eighteenth century.⁴² As Jacob Remes observes of printers in Toronto, while many “saw themselves within a North American labor market and imagined themselves as part of a North American community of workers [in the 1870s], they also paid fealty to Britain and recognized strong affective ties to what they called ‘the mother country.’”⁴³ Furthermore, the Canadian trade’s structural organization, and print and labour markets were also shaped by the dominance of American industrialization, trade practices, and politics and laws. For instance, by the 1870s, many union locals in Canada had joined the larger American association, the International Typographical Union. Thus, while many of the trade’s conflicts in Canada were primarily of local concern (such as the conflict between English and French compositors’ unions in Quebec), the dominant international reach of the American Union informed Canadian unions’ policies and discourses.⁴⁴ Likewise, the pressures of industrialization impacted Canada later than they impacted the trades Britain and America, so printers in Canada were not only coming up against threats and conflicts that were already affecting their counterparts elsewhere, but their responses were informed by

⁴² Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, 2nd ed., (University of Toronto Press, 2000), 23; Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 1-9, Scholars Portal Books; Henry Yu, “Global Migrants and the New Pacific Canada,” *International Journal* 64, no. 4 (2009): 1014, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40542171>; Anthony B. Chan, “Chinese Canadians,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, published July 30, 2013, updated September 13, 2023, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-canadians>.

⁴³ Remes, “Movable Type,” 393.

⁴⁴ George A. Tracy, *History of the Typographical Union* (Indianapolis: International Typographical Union, 1913), 264, 292-4, 353-4, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hb1e53>.

discourses already coming out of those countries. Canada's pressurized position between Britain and America also had troubling implications for other sectors of the printing trade, namely the book sector. As Eli MacLaren writes, "British imperial copyright hindered the development of a book-publishing industry in the Dominion of Canada. [...] Owing to the domination of Canada by imperial copyright and then by the Berne Convention, Canadian printers and booksellers tended to evolve internationally cooperative, rather than radically independent, strategies for producing literature in Canada." Moreover, books first printed and published in Canada "automatically forfeited copyright in the United States" until the 1960s because of the "strict formalities" imposed by the United States regarding "domestic manufacture and registration."⁴⁵

Other unique socio-cultural elements of the national situation also informed Canadian newspaper compositors' negotiation of their national and transnational position. One such element included the divide between urban and rural settlements. Printers felt a distinct conflict between the trade in cities and in the country, and their discourse on this matter tended to emphasize the quality of city printers over country printers. Additionally, the end of the century saw rising literacy rates across Canada, along with trends in spelling reform and the adoption of shorthand writing systems. Both are unique aspects of the late nineteenth-century context in central and eastern Canada that led compositors to reconsider education, training, and literacy as fundamental components of the work of typesetting. While these and other national dimensions informed the typographical trade's identity within Canada, in so doing they simultaneously

⁴⁵ Eli MacLaren, *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structuring of the Canadian Book Trade, 1867-1918* (University of Toronto Press, 2011), 141, 142.

characterized journeymen's identities within the transnational and interconnected "typographical web"⁴⁶ of which the trade in Canada was but a node.

Although the trade journals are polyvalent, polyvocal, and inherently transnational literary materials, they are more than "rich miscellan[ies] of domestic and international printological news from the sublime to the eccentric."⁴⁷ Throughout this dissertation, I argue that they are also key sites for the elaboration of the trade's efforts to exclude people from its masculine self-definition. When the trade journals were controlled by typographical unions or locals, their objectives were often to keep union members abreast of their industry and to support trade unions' activities. For instance, the International Typographical Union established its organ, the *Typographical Journal*, to communicate with subordinate unions, encourage non-union printers to join a local, and encourage the establishment and charter of additional locals across the United States and Canadian provinces, further developing trade solidarity among union members, and "penetrat[ing] every part of the field which lies open to it." George A. Tracy's *History of the Typographical Union* records that, in 1891, the secretary-treasurer's report proved that the *Typographical Journal* was a "valuable asset" to the Union, pointing out that "14 new unions had been started as a result of mailing sample copies of the Journal."⁴⁸ In the hands of journeymen compositors seeking to sustain their trade identity in the face of an increasingly deskilled labour force, the transnational typographical press was, as Shep articulates, "a potent vehicle for printers to reclaim control of their own representations in order to express cultural solidarity, to perpetuate craft traditions, and to maintain a vital

⁴⁶ Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 5.

⁴⁷ Score, "Pioneers of Social Progress?," 274, 276; Shep, "Cultures of Print," 184.

⁴⁸ Tracy, *History*, 434-5, 448.

presence on the international labour stage.”⁴⁹ This was particularly true, I add, as technology and labour conditions shifted throughout the century.

I position this project at the intersection of literary, periodical, print culture, and labour studies to expand upon scholarship that attends to the trade’s labour struggles and to typographical trade journals as material and literary objects. I argue that the trade’s journals were spaces in which journeymen constructed narratives about themselves, outsiders, and their labour. The trade’s journals archive not only the business of trade unions, but the trade’s attempts to maintain a stronghold on its craft identity. These attempts took several forms: attempts to construct a highly gendered narrative of its masculine craft status; the construction of evolving definitions of the “skilled” and “unskilled” labourer; and the communication of concerns around the trade’s skilled and craft statuses in general. These narratives were often extensions or manifestations of the trade’s broader labour ideology emphasizing the trade’s identity as a highly skilled craft uniquely positioned within the aristocratic class of the hierarchy of labour. Attending to the journals’ textual and material qualities, I contend that journeymen used storytelling, correspondence, humour, and other literary and textual mechanisms to reinforce the trade’s masculine identity in an effort to protect their jobs against the forces of capitalism, industrialization, and mechanization. The chapters of this dissertation explore the narrative and discursive strategies employed by journeymen compositors in response several of the distinct conflicts that faced compositors in Canada from the 1860s to the end of the century.

⁴⁹ Shep, “Cultures of Print,” 185.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 1, “Canadian Typographical Trade Journals and Their Contexts, 1860-1900,” I provide a brief overview of the Canadian trade journals that are at the center of this study, situating them within the nation and in relation to one another. I provide the relevant contexts of their publication and introduce the periodicals and their missions, wherever those elements are known.

In Chapter 2, “Male Trade Membership: Narrative Strategies for the Redefinition of Skill and ‘Manly Competence’,” I begin my study by considering male compositors’ conflicts with other male workers, namely apprentices, amateur boys/men, and tramp printers. During the century, the economic and labour landscapes of the typographical trades changed drastically, particularly as unions in Canada joined the American-based International Typographical Union and as the apprenticeship system changed to meet modern demands. With apprenticeships eventually taking on new forms, boys began to see the advantages of leaving their training early to take up work as partially trained labourers, thereby depreciating the trade’s craft status. At the same time, where the unions once encouraged printers’ mobility (tramping), by the 1870s, a new class of printer emerged – the tramp printer – who threatened to displace journeymen in their search for work abroad. Situating these conflicts within the history of printing trade unionism and labour history more broadly, I explore the various ways in which compositors defined their trade identity to combat the presence of these sources of cheap and disruptive labour. By attending to the narrative and representational strategies utilized by journeymen within their journals, I examine the contradictory ways in which journeymen identified their occupation with high levels of education, skill, natural ability

and temperament, gentlemanliness, and respectability. I argue that journeymen compositors' attempts to narrowly define their labour identity through these elements was part of their effort to limit access to the trade. The conflicts explored in this chapter lay an important foundation for understanding journeymen compositors' masculine labour ideology that I explore in more detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 3, “‘craft and cunning both combined’: Literacy and the Skilled Compositor,” expands upon the previous chapter, arguing that journeymen compositors also fortified their status as skilled workers vis-à-vis their historic relationship to literature and literacy. I argue that compositors used their journals to establish their relationship to language, a fact that not only elevated them above other tradespeople but also allowed them to sustain claims to their elite labourer status. As literacy rates increased across North America at the end of the nineteenth century, compositors' historic claims to being a class of labourer distinguished by their use of literacy in the workplace began to be destabilized. This chapter outlines compositors' insistence that the nuanced literacy of the compositor was superior to the alphabetic literacy afforded to the general public and other labourers by the 1880s. I begin by attending to the inclusion of poetry in the trade's journals, arguing that compositors used figurative language to establish an intimate and ancestral connection to the English language. I then turn to consider the way that compositors conceived their superior literacy skills at the typecase, expanding upon my analysis in Chapter 2 and Walker Rumble's concept of printers' “special literacy.”⁵⁰ Journeymen's emphasis on “intelligence” and the development of the

⁵⁰ Walker Rumble, *The Swifts: Printers in the Age of Typesetting Races* (University of Virginia Press, 2003), 7.

archetype of the “intelligent compositor” were representational strategies that insisted upon the superior mental capacities of journeymen compositors over the rest of the working class. I also explore the ways that journeymen conceptualized their literacy as one that was not confined to alphabetic literacy but also included the use and literacy of codes and coded language. Looking specifically at *The Printer’s Miscellany*, this section examines the gendered and exclusionary implications of the journals’ encouragement and use of literal codes – phonographic shorthand and the use of printer and proofreader marks – to argue that compositors’ emphasis on literacy as a component of their competency was bound up with the trade’s association with masculinity and the labour elite.

In Chapter 4, “From the Kitchens to the Composing Room and Back Again: Narrative Discourses of Women On and Off the Shop Floor,” I attend to the trade’s male-female conflict before the introduction of the machine typesetter. I build upon the previous chapters’ discussion of the trade’s gendered labour ideology to consider the ways that male journeymen utilized their trade journals to exclude women from the shop floor. I contextualize journeymen’s exclusionary strategies within the history of this conflict as it relates to union policies and general labour discourses and provide a brief history of women compositors’ organizational efforts in the United States in the mid-century. This background provides the necessary context to consider the space women were afforded within the trade journals. With particular attention to *The Printer’s Miscellany*, this chapter considers the masculinity of the object of trade journals with regard to the journal’s gendered perceptions of its audiences; the mis-en-page which literally marginalizes women; and journeymen’s frequent use of derisive humour that

keeps women in the domestic sphere and never imagines them as a competent typographical workers. These exclusionary strategies reflect the trade's gendered labour discourse as well as the dominant gender ideology of the upper- and middle-class of the period, which sought to establish that women belonged in the home while men belonged at work.

Chapter 5, ““printing that rightfully belongs to those ‘in the trade’”: Concerning Race and the Whiteness of Typesetting,” explores the trade's transnational conflicts with racialized workers with particular attention to the employment and training of Black, Indigenous, and Chinese labourers in North America. This chapter's primary consideration is how and where the trade's shifting definitions of skill and craft identity functioned with reference to race and in relation to the very real presence of racialized compositors in Canada throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. I begin by outlining the concern around Black compositors and conflicts over membership that occurred primarily in the United States during the mid-century. I then turn to print education programs at industrial schools in Canada and the education of printing for Indigenous children and youth in relation to the larger trade conflicts around training and wages. Lastly, I examine the presence of Chinese men and women in the typographical trade at the end of the nineteenth century in Canada. There is not a significant amount of discussion of racialized labourers or people in any Canadian typographical trade journal, but this chapter argues that what evidence there is of Canadian journeymen's racial ideologies normalized typesetting work as the labour of white men and contributed to the suggestion that skill and whiteness were inseparable concepts.

I conclude my study with a chapter on the trade's fin-de-siècle conflict with machines. In Chapter 6, "Craft, Masculinity, and the Mechanization of Typesetting," I begin by elaborating on the history of the development and use of machine typesetters in North America, an invention that ultimately forced journeyman compositors to fear that they were going to be replaced by machines. I consider journeymen's discourse around the machines as well as the Union's attempts to monopolize the operation of the machines for journeymen as employers attempted to gender the work of machine operator as women's work to save on labour costs. The discourse circulated in the trade's journals indicates that journeymen in Canada were fearful that their trade was becoming increasingly deskilled because of the employment of women or unskilled labourers. Additionally, discourse around the machines tended to divorce the machines from their operators, diminishing the importance of the operator's skill and experience to the production of good work. Journeymen responded to such threats and discourse by utilizing rhetorical strategies to make their labour essential to the operation of the machines. Throughout this discussion, I map not only how journeymen conceptualized their relationship with machines in positive ways, but also how their attempts to assert the natural connection between journeymen compositors and machines were sometimes coloured by anxieties about the machines' ability to irreversibly alter the trade and compositors' trade identity.

Toward an Understanding of Trade Identity and the Typographical Press

In what follows, I do not intend to vilify journeymen compositors' actions, defensive posturing, or patriarchal discourses, nor do I glorify their occupational culture.

Contrary to what I have proposed thus far, the chapters of this dissertation build upon each other, temporally and thematically, to reveal that the primary focus of this project is not entirely the composers themselves, nor is it the so-called threats to their labour identity. Rather, by critically analyzing the way that Canadian journeymen used their trade literature to communicate their labour conditions, this project elucidates the interconnected national and transnational occupational cultures and labour discourses of newspaper composers in nineteenth-century North America. It not only reveals the fact that Canadian composers' labour discourse was masculine and exclusionary; it also reveals why and how that was the case, attending to the nation-specific dimensions of the trade's structure, while also acknowledging that journeymen's occupational culture was defined by a distinct transnationalism.

In closely examining the eight typographical trade journals published in the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick from 1860 to 1900, the chapters of this dissertation continuously reason that journeymen composers in Canada were not necessarily at odds with apprentices, amateurs, tramps, women, racialized workers, and machines themselves. A closer look at journeymen composers' rhetoric, defensive moves, and representational strategies reveals that the real conflicts that journeymen were facing were often between themselves, their employers, and the progressive shift of the industry toward a capitalist structure that employers and workers navigated differently. This project asserts that, within journeymen's struggles to protect their jobs and maintain their trade identity, their fight was not simply about the trade's relationship to gender and skill; it was also, perhaps most importantly, a fight for autonomy, human agency, and creativity.

Chapter 1: Canadian Typographical Trade Journals and Their Contexts, 1860-1900

This study focuses on typographical trade journals from four cities in central and eastern Canada: Montreal, Quebec; Saint John, New Brunswick; and Toronto and Owen Sound, Ontario. Newspapers and periodicals of all kinds were produced by printers throughout the century. However, this project refers specifically to trade journals that were produced by and for typographical trade workers (i.e. printers, compositors, pressmen, and typefounders). The typographical trade journals that this project is concerned with are only those that were published regularly or semi-regularly; that deal explicitly and exclusively with printing trade-related concerns; had in their mandate to represent the trades, speak to members of the trades, or sell tools and equipment related to the printing trades; that have an audience of typographical workers, with particular attention to the work of the compositor; and that do not often feature items related to other unrelated trades. Additionally, this project only attends to those journals (or their issues) published before or during the year 1900. 1900 was selected as a cut off date because none of the other typographical trade journals selected for this study extend beyond that point, and because the trade's concerns shifted in different ways after 1900 in the lead up to WWI. Because *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* was published throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, most of this publication's life falls outside of the temporal scope of this project.

Montreal, Saint John, and Toronto were major print centers in British North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were some of the major cities in which workers unionized and where those unions became associated with the

American-based International Typographical Union (ITU) (see Chapter 2). As Travis DeCook observes, newspaper publishing before 1801 was largely concentrated in the Atlantic region, expanding westward to 1820. Between 1821 and 1840, 10 or more newspapers were published in the major cities of Halifax, Saint John, Quebec City, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and Hamilton.⁵¹ And, as Éric Leroux notes, from the 1840s onward, printing in Quebec and the Maritimes was primarily concentrated to urban centers; Montreal and Quebec vied for the top spot in Lower Canada. In the Maritimes, Saint John, New Brunswick and Halifax, Nova Scotia produce over 72 and 80 per cent of the provinces printing, respectively. Montreal would be displaced as the industrial center of printing by Toronto in the 1870s, and Toronto would later give way to industry in London, Hamilton, Ottawa, and Kingston.⁵²

Between the 1850s and 1870s, the typographical trades in Canada “experienced rapid growth, rising from 725 workers to more than 4,000.” In 1861, the number of printers in Montreal and Toronto exceeded 250 people per city.⁵³ According to the results published in *The Printer’s Miscellany* a decade later, the 1871 Canadian census recorded that, in the province of Quebec, over 1000 men were employed in the industry, with 547 men employed in Montreal (Centre) and 247 men Quebec (Centre). Approximately 150 women were employed in the printing trade in the province of Quebec, primarily in Montreal (Centre), Montreal (West), and Quebec (Centre), with 2 or fewer women employed in the trade in St. Hyacinthe and Stanstead. 301 boys and 63 girls under the age

⁵¹ Travis DeCook, “The Spread of Newspapers in British North America,” in *History of the Book in Canada*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1840*, ed. Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan, and Yvan Lamonde (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 229-33.

⁵² Éric Leroux, “Printers: From Shop to Industry,” in *History of the Book in Canada*, vol. 2, *1840-1918*, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 75-6.

⁵³ Leroux, “Printers: From Shop to Industry,” 75, 76, table 3.1.

of sixteen were employed in Quebec in 1871.⁵⁴ In New Brunswick, the number of “hands employed” in 1871 included 13 women (of which 1 was under 16 years old) and 207 men (of which 35 were boys), most of them in Saint John.⁵⁵ Christina Burr notes that in 1889 the Toronto Typographical Union reported that 35 women and 595 union and non-union men were working as compositors in the city (this number importantly does not include the number of people working as pressmen).⁵⁶ These bustling print centers, where the newspaper, book, and job industries flourished and which were significant points of exchange in the international print network, were the perfect environment in which to establish typographical trade journals.

Owen Sound, where the *International Art Printer* was published at the end of the century, was not this kind of printing town. In 1871, at the three newspaper and printing offices listed in the Canadian Census, only 10 men and 4 boys were employed and, in 1881, there were only 23 printers and publishers counted in the whole District of Grey North (this included Owen Sound, Sydenham, Holland, Sullivan, Derby, Keppel, Sarawak).⁵⁷ However, the size of Owen Sound and its local print industry does not mean it was an inconsequential small Ontario town. Although remotely situated apart from urban centers like Toronto, Owen Sound became a significant hub of nineteenth-century

⁵⁴ Census results summarized in “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877): 89. The chart included in the article calculates that 156 women were employed in the trade in Quebec in 1871, however the author’s count of the individual amounts is 147.

⁵⁵ Leroux, “Printers: From Shop to Industry,” 76; Census results summarized in “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 8 (February 1877): 109-10.

⁵⁶ Burr, “Defending ‘The Art Preservative,’” 54.

⁵⁷ Canada, *Census of Canada, 1871*, [Microform c-9954], p. 414, Library and Archives Canada, accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/microform-digitization/006003-119.02-e.php?q2=26&q3=2103&sqn=414&tt=707&PHPSESSID=f0v3thhcgqvau3vslaruumn2a7>; Canada, *Census of Canada, 1880-81*, vol. 2 (Ottawa: Maclean Roger & C., 1884), 300, <https://archive.org/details/1880censusofcana02canauoft/page/n5/mode/2up>; “Grey North, Ontario (1867-08-06 - 1968-04-22),” *Parliament of Canada*, accessed September 1, 2025, https://lop.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/ElectionsRidings/Ridings/Profile?OrganizationId=3419.

mobility and commerce in Ontario, since it was strategically settled on the Georgian Bay. Its position as a hub of mobility is complex. First, it was the northern terminus for the Underground Railroad. Although the exact number of former slaves arriving in Sydenham village in the mid-century is unknown, Paul White notes that the 1861 census “shows that 88 African-Americans lived in the community” and by 1880, this number had risen to 667.⁵⁸ Second, Owen Sound, Grey Bruce, and the Georgian Bay were significant sites for the elaboration of settler colonialism from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, particularly as the land in and around Owen Sound was the object of many treaties signed during that time.⁵⁹ Shortly after being named “Sydenham” by Charles Rankin in 1842 (the settlement became the town of Owen Sound in 1856) the village’s port became home to “an armada of Great Lakes vessels,” since, as Paul White notes, “there was no direct, economical land transport to bring supplies and settlers into the pioneer community.” Shipbuilding became a large economic enterprise between 1846 and 1848, and the city experienced a boom of industrial and commercial growth in the 1850s.⁶⁰ In 1873, Owen Sound was connected to Toronto by rail, but it was only a narrow-gauge line of the Northern Railway. The line was later widened for better connectivity; however, the “difficult terrain” was hard to traverse and build up, keeping

⁵⁸ “The Underground Rail Road,” *Owen Sound’s Black History*, accessed June 13, 2023, <https://www.osblackhistory.com/underground.html>; Paul White, *Owen Sound: The Port City* (Natural Heritage Books, 2000), 55, Scholars Portal Books.

⁵⁹ “Indigenous Reconciliation,” *Owen Sound*, accessed September 8, 2025, <https://www.owensound.ca/living-here/indigenous-reconciliation/>; White, *Owen Sound*, 5-8; “Map of Ontario treaties and reserves,” *Ontario*, accessed June 13, 2023, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/map-ontario-treaties-and-reserves>. Modern-day Owen Sound “is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishinabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomi Nations.” Treaties negotiated and signed with the Indigenous communities on the land that would become Owen Sound throughout the century include: the Nottawasaga Purchase, Treaty 18 (signed October 17, 1818); the Saugeen Tract Purchase, Treaty 45 ½ (1836, by Sir Francis Bond Head); the Saugeen Peninsula Treaty, Treaty 72 (signed October 20, 1854); and Treaty 82 (signed February 9, 1857).

⁶⁰ White, *Owen Sound*, 19, 65, 34-5; James P. Barry, *Georgian Bay: The Sixth Great Lake* (Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1978), 138.

Owen Sound on the periphery until it became the eastern lake terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1882.⁶¹

The following sections briefly introduce the trade journals that emerged from these important printing cities, roughly in chronological order beginning in 1860 (Table 1). As this study frequently positions these journals in conversation with one another, across time and space, the following sections serve as an important foundation for understanding each periodical's impetus, overarching concerns, and place within the constellation⁶² of typographical journals circulating in and outside of Canada throughout the century.

⁶¹ Barry, *Georgian Bay*, 79, 138; White, *Owen Sound*, 5, 42-7; Melba Morris Croft, *A Port of Some Importance* (Owen Sound, Ontario: Melba Morris Croft, 1984), 4; Paul White, "Owen Sound CPR Link," *Great Lakes Stories*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.history-articles.com/owen-sound-cpr-link.html>.

⁶² Claire Battershill, *Women and Letterpress Printing 1920-2020: Gendered Impressions*, Cambridge Elements Series, ed. Samantha Rayner and Leah Tether (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 10-14.

Table 1. Typographical trade journals published in Canada (Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick) from 1860 to 1900, chronological from date of first publication.

Journal Title	Years Active	Proprietor / Publisher / Associated Organization	Place of Publication
<i>The Canadian Printer</i>	1860-1871?	Montreal Type Foundry	Montreal, Quebec Toronto, Ontario
<i>The Dominion Printer</i>	1873-1879?	Dominion Type Founding Company	Montreal, Quebec
<i>The Printer's Miscellany</i>	1876-1882	Hugh Finlay	Saint John, New Brunswick
<i>The Canadian Printer and Publisher</i>	1892-201?	John Bayne McLean Company	Toronto, Ontario
<i>The Imprint</i>	1893-1895	Toronto Type Foundry	Toronto, Ontario Winnipeg, Manitoba
<i>International Art Printer</i>	1895-189?	Arthur Rutherford	Owen Sound, Ontario
<i>The Nonpareil</i>	1898-?	Toronto Typographical Union	Toronto, Ontario
<i>Type and Press</i>	1898-1899?	Canadian agents for Miller & Richard, Type Founders to Her Majesty for Scotland. Edinburgh and London.	Toronto, Ontario

1.1 From Montreal, Quebec: *The Canadian Printer* (1860-1871?) and *The Dominion Printer* (1873-1879?)

In 1860, the Montreal Type Foundry (Montreal and Toronto) began publishing their organ, *The Canadian Printer*, which was perhaps the only typographical trade journal published in Canada before Confederation. The journal was published by Charles T. Palsgrave, proprietor of the Foundry. Only three issues of the journal are extant, with the last dated August 1871.⁶³ The Montreal Type Foundry was established in 1835. In 1849, the Foundry opened a Toronto branch “to serve printers who had followed the Canadian [printing] capital from Quebec”; they seemingly established another Toronto branch, operated under the management of W. H. Lovell and Robert Hall during the 1870s, to “supply a want felt by the printers of Western Ontario.”⁶⁴ Bryan Dewalt notes that the Montreal Type Foundry operated until the early 1870s, seemingly disappearing for a few years in 1874, and was later succeeded by the Dominion Type Foundry. *The Dominion Printer* outlines this history as the following: type-founding in Montreal began with Thomas Guerin and Chilian Ford in 1830, and in 1834 C.T. Palsgrave became proprietor of the Montreal Type Foundry until 1873.⁶⁵ In the early 1870s, the Foundry was acquired by a Joint Stock-Company and incorporated under a new name, the Dominion Type Foundry.⁶⁶

⁶³ *The Canadian Printer* 1, no. 2 (January 1861): n.p.; *The Canadian Printer* 2, no. 1 (August 1871): n.p.

⁶⁴ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 35; “The Dominion Type Founding Co.,” *The Dominion Printer* 1, no. 1 (July 1873): 1; “Our Toronto Branch,” *The Dominion Printer* 2 no. 3, (October 1876): 1; “Our Toronto Agency,” *The Dominion Printer* 5 no. 1 (April 1879): 1-2.

⁶⁵ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 35; “Type Making,” *The Dominion Printer* 2, no. 1 (January 1876): 2.

⁶⁶ “The Dominion Type Founding Co.,” *The Dominion Printer* 1, no. 1 (July 1873): 1.

In 1873, the newly minted Dominion Type Foundry began publishing a new organ, *The Dominion Printer*. This was a quarterly journal launched by a group of men that included prolific periodical publisher and the Dominion's first Queen's Printer, George-Édouard (George Edward) Desbarats, who most notably founded the *Canadian Illustrated News*, and Alex Buntin who was involved in the paper industry. Both men are among the six listed in *The Dominion Printer*'s first issue as one of the foundry's "Provisional Directors." After the first issue, Desbarats is not listed. From its first issue to June 1878, Alexander Murray is listed as the president of the Board of Directors, Richard White as the Vice-President, and Alex Buntin among 6 or 7 other members; in June 1878 there is a reduction in the number of members on the Board and John Whyte takes over the Vice-Presidency.⁶⁷ The last extant issue of *The Dominion Printer* is dated April 1879, but the *N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual*, a yearly catalogue of American and Canadian newspapers, lists the journal as active until at least 1885.⁶⁸

The Dominion Type Foundry was an important fixture of the trade for the eastern Canadian provinces because it was the primary means by which printers in Canada could procure equipment and materials from within the country. Type founding, Bryan Dewalt notes, is deeply woven into the base fabric of the typographical trades in Montreal, as it was "the first British North American city to have a commercial type foundry." Indeed,

⁶⁷ Claude Galarneau, "Desbarats, George-Édouard," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed July 8, 2025, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?BioId=40183>; Canada, *Impressions: Stories of the Nation's Printer, Early Years to 1900* (Canada: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1990), 55; William Forbes, "Print Industry," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, updated May 14, 2021, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/print-industry>; "Provisional Directors," *The Dominion Printer* 1 no. 1 (July 1873): 1; "Board of Directors," *The Dominion Printer* 1 no. 4 (January 1875): 1; "Board of Directors," *The Dominion Printer* 4 no. 2 (June 1878): 1.

⁶⁸ *N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Sons, 1885), Part 1, 727, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn91012091/resource/gdclccn.sn91012091_1885_1; *N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Sons, 1886) Part 2, 749, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn91012091/resource/gdclccn.sn91012091_1886_2.

The Dominion Printer asserts that the foundry is the origin of type-founding in Canada.⁶⁹ Despite its history and importance to the trade in Eastern Canada, the Foundry went into liquidation in 1897 and until that point, Dewalt observes, it “lived a precarious existence as Canada’s only maker of types.”⁷⁰ As asserted in the December 1873 issue of *The Dominion Printer*, it was the Foundry’s “ambition” to:

[...] be able to produce—within the Dominion—everything that a printer requires, without troubling our powerful rivals across the line—or the Atlantic—for an ounce of type or material [...] There are one or two ‘type-foundries’ in Canada, but ours is the only one in which type is really *manufactured*; and although—under the existing tariff—others are able to import foreign type almost free of duty, we are prepared to supply the trade, with our own manufacture, at lower prices than the same class of material can be offered by the importer.⁷¹

Like the Foundry itself, its journal was in many ways inseparable from and integral to the local and national printing trade. *The Dominion Printer* makes clear, for instance, that type-founding was “an art inseparably combined with printing” and, of course, typesetting.⁷² Like other periodicals of its kind, it includes materials of interest to “practical printers.” However much of its contents focus on the business of type-founding and printing, such as advertisements for type/equipment for sale and articles on the quality of type produced by the Foundry. In many cases, issues comprise mostly of advertisements and type samples, rather than articles written by and for printers; when there are articles, they are usually related to type, equipment, jobs, and sales.⁷³

⁶⁹ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 14-15; “Type Making.,” *The Dominion Printer* 2 no. 1 (January 1876): 2.

⁷⁰ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 57-8.

⁷¹ “Our Second Number,” *The Dominion Printer* 1 no. 2 (December 1873): 1.

⁷² “The Johnson Type Foundry,” *The Dominion Printer* 2 no. 3 (October 1876): 2.

⁷³ *The Dominion Printer* 1 no. 2 (December 1873); *The Dominion Printer* 1 no. 3 (September 1874). For example, the December 1873 and September 1874 issues are twelve pages, and 11 of those are dedicated to type samples, advertisements, and classifieds.

The Canadian Printer and *The Dominion Printer* were apparently not the only typographical trade journals to come out of Montreal. In November 1877, *The Printer's Miscellany* (Saint John, New Brunswick) reported: "*The Pressman* is the name of a new publication issued in Montreal, Q." The *Miscellany* observes rather critically that "aside from the fact that it seems to be, like *almost* all printers' papers, merely an advertising medium for the proprietor's goods, there is much of interest to printers to be found in its pages."⁷⁴ As there does not appear to be extant copies of this journal, this journal does not feature in this study of typographical trade journals in Canada.

Additionally, in the spring of 1890, *The Echo* was published in Montreal "under the Auspices of [the] Montreal Typographical Union No. 176 in the Interest of Organized Labor." In October 1890, the paper began to be published by the Echo Printing and Publishing Company with a new tagline: "A Journals for the Progressive Workman, and Family Newspaper." While the paper does attend to issues related to the printing trades in the city and is used to communicate with union members, particularly in the issues published by the union local, its eventual status as a newspaper for all labourers means that it does not fit within the purview of the present study.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ "The Editor's Table," *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 5 (November 1877): 101.

⁷⁵ *The Echo* 1, no. 1 (October 4, 1890), <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/s0nc5s756q69>; *The Echo* 1, no. 3 (June 3, 1890)-no. 7 (June 25, 1890) and (September 1, 1890). Microfilm, Library and Archives Canada. "The Echo," Library and Archives Canada, Aurora [catalogue entry], accessed September 30, 2025, <https://bac-lac.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1081083845>; *The Echo* 1, no. 1 (October 4, 1890): 4, 1, <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/s0nc5s756q69>.

1.2 From Saint John, New Brunswick: *The Printer's Miscellany* (1876-1882)

In May 1865, Ireland-born William Elder came to New Brunswick as a missionary for the Free Church Presbyterian ministry. There, he founded the *Morning Journal* in Saint John. Four years later, in 1869, Elder's paper merged with John Livingston's *Morning Telegraph* to form the *St. John Daily Telegraph and Morning Journal*, with Livingston as its proprietor and Elder as editor. Elder purchased Livingston's shares in the paper in 1871, and the title was shortened to the *Daily Telegraph* in September 1873. Under Elder's charge, the *Daily Telegraph*, Murray Barkley writes,

rose to unprecedented prominence in the Maritime provinces. Its circulation was more than double that of any daily in New Brunswick, and that of the *Weekly Telegraph* was equal to the combined circulation of its three leading rivals in the Maritimes. The *Presbyterian Advocate* [Elder's other paper] and the *Daily Telegraph* together had a circulation of 20,000 each week, the largest output for an advertising medium in Canada east of Montreal.⁷⁶

As Barkley remarks, the *Toronto Globe* dubbed the *Daily Telegraph* "one of the most enterprising, most ably conducted, and most influential journals in the Dominion."⁷⁷

With talented editorial staff, including James Hannay, "New Brunswick's most prominent historian before World War I" working as the assistant editor from 1872 to 1883, the paper became a shining example of excellence in newspaper publishing at the end of the century.⁷⁸ It is there, behind-the-scenes in the job rooms of the famous New Brunswick *Daily Telegraph* where we find what came to be one of Canada's longest-

⁷⁶ Murray Barkley, "Elder, William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed July 10, 2023, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/elder_william_1822_83_11E.html.

⁷⁷ Barkley, "Elder, William"; "Hon. William Elder, M.P.," *The Globe* (July 25, 1883): 4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Globe and Mail.

⁷⁸ Barkley, "Elder, William."

running typographical trade journals, and the only one produced out of the Maritimes during the nineteenth century: *The Printer's Miscellany*.

Beginning in July 1876, *The Printer's Miscellany* was issued monthly out of the *Daily Telegraph* steam job rooms in Saint John, New Brunswick by Hugh Finlay (not to be mistaken with the “father of the Canadian post office,” the Scottish-native merchant and politician who traveled from Glasgow to Quebec in 1763).⁷⁹ There does not appear to be any direct association between the papers. The last extant issue of the journal is dated April and May 1882, and the *N.W. Ayer & Son's Newspaper Annual* lists the journal for the final time in its 1883 volume.⁸⁰ The journal was issued monthly at \$1.00 per year, and offered a discounted rate of fifty cents for apprentices and female compositors. The journal started with 8 pages, increasing in size after its first year.⁸¹

In the 1880s, Finlay was an active member of the Saint John Typographical Union, No. 85.⁸² He published the *Miscellany* on his own time while not working as the foreman in the *Telegraph's* composing room or, as he writes, “directing the mechanical department of the leading daily morning paper in the maritime provinces.”⁸³ *The*

⁷⁹ “Printed at the Daily ...,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1 no. 3 (September 1876): 27; I.K. Steele, “Finlay, Hugh,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed July 10 2023, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/finlay_hugh_5E.html.

⁸⁰ *N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Sons, 1883), Part 1, 642, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn91012091/resource/gdclccn.sn91012091_1883_1; *N.W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Sons, 1884), Part 2, 709, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn91012091/resource/gdclccn.sn91012091_1884_2.

⁸¹ “Terms of Subscription,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1 no. 3 (September 1876): 18; “Female compositors are ...,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1 no. 6 (December 1877): 123; “Close of the First Volume,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1 no. 12 (June 1877): 205.

⁸² Verzuh, *Radical Rag*, 36; “Saint John No. 85,” *The ITU Review* vol. XII, no. 16 (May 1, 1969): 7 in P8 – Union Typographique Jacques-Cartier, Local 145, Box 12.1, File P8-1100-1 [Historique – Local 145], Centre d'histoire et d'archives du travail, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, <https://archivesdutravail.quebec/fonds-d-archives/>.

⁸³ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 4 (October 1876): 37; “We desire to place on record ...,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 2 (August 1876): 10.

Printer's Miscellany sought to be a premier trade journal in and for Canada and to “represent Canada—not any one province,” claiming that the “feeling[s]” and views within the journal were “entirely Canadian.”⁸⁴ While the journal acknowledged that it was but “a small representative at present of such a large interest as that of printing,” Finlay hoped “that it [would] not long remain so.”⁸⁵ Despite the circulation of its peer, *The Dominion Printer*, out of Montreal during the 1870s, a journal that Hugh Finlay and New Brunswickers were keenly aware of, the “Salutory” in the first issue of *The Printer's Miscellany* in 1876 remarks:

At the present time there is nothing in the shape of an independent printers' paper published, with any degree of regularity, in the Dominion of Canada. There is no place where can be found the record of events daily transpiring in the printing business. There is no way in which those connected with the craft can readily find one another's whereabouts without considerable cost. There is no regular channel through which the printer can find employment, or the employer help when needed. The printers of the Dominion should have a medium through which they could communicate with each other, and interchange ideas about their work, etc. They feel the want of such a medium, and we believe that if the disciples of Faust, in the Dominion, will aid us to supply this want, a great good must result.⁸⁶

Speaking critically of other typographical trade journals – and perhaps pointing fingers at *The Dominion Printer* which is filled with advertisements and associated with a type foundry – a letter from frequent contributor “Hair Space” praises Finlay's journal for catering to printers and compositors, rather than serving the interests of the employer, a fact “which cannot be said of any other journal now in existence.” Hair Space writes that despite the frequent assertion that “printers will not support a paper even if it should be printed for them exclusively” – an assertion yet unproven as “no journal has ever been

⁸⁴ “The ‘Miscellany,’” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877): 88.

⁸⁵ “If every employing printer ...,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 3 (September 1876): 18.

⁸⁶ “Salutory,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1 no. 1 (July 1876): 2.

published of that character” – *The Printer’s Miscellany* meets “the standard required by the average printer” and is the kind of journal that printers should readily support. It “gives up its columns entirely for [printers’] benefit” and knows “the exact *status* of the printer.”⁸⁷ In response to claims that no printers’ journal in existence was produced solely in the interests of the printer, *The Printer’s Miscellany* indicates that they have produced a periodical “independent from any agency whatever,” and that their first year of existence has been almost completed “without the aid of any influence except whatever of merit it may have contained.”⁸⁸ One correspondent remarks that printers in the Dominion are generally agreed that *The Printer’s Miscellany* “is a first-class printer’s journal, and one which no Canadian printer should be without.”⁸⁹

The *Miscellany* boasted the fact that it was sent “to every printing office in the Dominion and has also a large circulation in the United States”⁹⁰ and had a broad circulation of 2,000 copies per month in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, New South Wales, Newfoundland, West India Islands, Africa, and South Africa.⁹¹ It was a publication cherished by many; those to whom the *Miscellany* was an invaluable resource expressed their elation that the journal persevered

⁸⁷ Hair Space, “A Welcome Magazine,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1 no. 8 (March 1877): 116.

⁸⁸ “To the Workman,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1 no. 10 (April 1877): 158-9.

⁸⁹ M. Quad, “A Word from one of our first Subscribers,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 9 (March 1877): 138.

⁹⁰ “Dealers in and manufacturers of ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 2 (August 1876): 11.

⁹¹ *Geo. P. Rowell & Co’s American Newspaper Directory* (New York: Geo. P. Rowell & Co., 1880), 1002, https://www.google.ca/books/edition/Geo_P_Rowell_and_Co_s_American_Newspaper/XiEiAQAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22printer's%20miscellany%22&pg=PA1003&printsec=frontcover; “The Printer’s *Miscellany*,” *The Canadian Illustrated Shorthand Writer* 1, no. 10 (February 1881): 165, https://www.google.ca/books/edition/The_Canadian_Illustrated_Shorthand_Write/aOADRH7gzv4C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22printer's%20miscellany%22&pg=PA149&printsec=frontcover; *Pettengill’s Newspaper Directory and Advertisers’ Handbook for 1878* (New York: S.M. Pettengill & Co., 1878), 253, https://www.google.ca/books/edition/Pettengill_s_Newspaper_Directory_and_Adv/6klFAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22printer's%20miscellany%22&pg=PR1&printsec=frontcover.

despite the “calamitous fire” that ravaged the newspaper industry in Saint John in June 1877.⁹² Despite the popularity of the journal, however, it has not been well documented in histories of newspaper production in New Brunswick. For instance, while the journal is listed in J. Russell Harper’s 1961 *Historical Directory of New Brunswick Newspapers and Periodicals*,⁹³ the *Miscellany* is not listed in the *New Brunswick Newspaper Directory, 1783-1996*, which was published by the Council of Head Librarians of New Brunswick in 1996, though it lists other trade- or industry-adjacent papers, such as *The British Colonist and Mechanics’ and Traders’ Advocate* (1836), *The Gleaner and Northumberland, Kent, Gloucester and Restigouche Commercial & Agricultural Journal* (1842), and *The Maritime Farmer and Co-operative Dairyman* (1901).⁹⁴

1.3 From Toronto, Ontario: *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* (1892-201?); *The Imprint* (1893-1895); *The Nonpareil* (1898-?); and *Type and Press* (1898-1899?)

In the spring of 1892, the John Bayne McLean Company, the “Trade Journal Publishers and Fine Magazine Printers” who would become Mclean-Hunter, “the largest and most successful magazine publisher in Canadian history,”⁹⁵ founded *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* (CPP) (also known as *The Printer and Publisher*, which was its

⁹² Jay, “Charlottetown Letter,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 3 (September 1877): 58; “Commencement of the Second Volume,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 1 (July 1877): 3; “The Memorable 20th June, 1877.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 1 (July 1877): 4; “Condition of the Craft after the Fire,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 1 (July 1877): 7.

⁹³ J. Russell Harper, *Historical Directory of New Brunswick Newspapers and Periodicals* (University of New Brunswick, 1961), 81.

⁹⁴ Helen Craig, Muriel Daniel, Marion Beyea, Sheila Laidlaw, and Ian Wilson, eds., *New Brunswick Newspaper Directory, 1783-1996* (Fredericton, N.B.: Council of Head Librarians of New Brunswick, 1996), 229-50, 231, 241.

⁹⁵ Merrill Distad, “Newspapers and Magazines,” in *History of the Book in Canada*, vol. 2, 1840-1918, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 302.

running-head / short title). John Bayne McLean, president of the company along with Hugh C. McLean, manager, would become one of Canada's most prolific magazine publishers. The company would publish many Canadian trade periodicals throughout the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* is also sometimes referred to as *The Printer Publisher / Pulp and Paper* due to the introduction of a new department of the paper in November 1894. The section "Paper and Pulp News" generally made up the back half of every issue from November 1894 to early 1899 and was devoted to topics relating to paper making and pulp manufacturing in Canada. *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* argued that the inclusion of an independent section on these related industries was important because "the printers and publishers of Canada should be well informed concerning the trend of the paper and pulp manufacturing trades," considering the natural connection between the two.⁹⁶

The Canadian Printer and Publisher was a monthly magazine urged into existence by the Canadian Press Association, for which it became the official/unofficial organ. It was printed, at least before 1900, by the office of Apted Bros, "one of the most complete printing establishments in [Toronto]."⁹⁷ The Canadian Press Association (CPA) existed alongside other similar organization of the period, such as the Toronto Employing Printer's Association, the Printers and Allied Trades Association in London, England or

⁹⁶ "Editorial Notes," *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* [hereafter cited as *CPP*] 3 no. 11 (November 1894): 1; "Paper and Pulp News," *CPP* 3 no. 11 (November 1894): 26-31; "Paper and Pulp Department.," *CPP* 8, no. 3 (March 1899): 16; "Editorial Notes," *CPP* 4 no. 6 (June 1895): 1.

⁹⁷ "Why We Are Here.," *CPP* 1 no. 1 (May 1892): 5; Forbes, "Print Industry"; R. Neil Matheson, "John Bayne Maclean," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last updated December 16, 2013, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/john-bayne-maclean>; "Testing the Typograph.," *The Imprint* 1 no. 2 (June 1893): 3; "A Model Printing Establishment," *CPP* 1 no. 1 (May 1892): 7.

the United Typothetae of America, the latter of which was organized, its Constitution reads,

‘[...] to develop a community of interest and a fraternal spirit amongst the Master Printers of the United States and the Dominion of Canada, and for the purposes of exchanging information and assisting each other when necessary. It is based on the rights of the individual as opposed to the arrogated rights of trade societies, and while it disclaims any intent to assume an arbitrary control of the trade either against customers, workmen, or members, its members assert and will maintain the individual right to regulate their own affairs.’⁹⁸

The CPA’s membership consisted of “Publishers, Proprietors, Editors or Business Managers of newspaper, professionally and habitually engaged as such.” J.B. McLean was a member of this Association.⁹⁹

Although Floyd S. Chalmers writes that *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* “was a publication for publishers,”¹⁰⁰ the primary goal for its establishment, according to its first issue, was to “more thoroughly unite the Printers and Publishers of Canada, and through such united effort to increase the diminishing revenues of the printing office,”¹⁰¹ particularly in the aftermath of the implementation of the National Policy, which created rising concerns around copyright and future tariffs on materials relating to the trades. In establishing this paper, as in the case of previous Canadian journals, the aim was partly to reinforce a national typographical trade and to aid in the establishment of an economically sovereign trade/nation. Indeed, an 1894 review of *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* by the *Orillia Times* asserts that while the journal “is only in its infancy as

⁹⁸ Constitution quoted in W. A. Shepard, “Objects of the Typothetae,” *CPP* 1 no. 2 (February 1892): 2.

⁹⁹ “Canadian Press Association: Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting,” *CPP* 2 no. 3 (March 1893): 3, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Floyd S. Chalmers, *A Gentleman of the Press* (Doubleday Canada Limited, 1969), 52.

¹⁰¹ “Why We Are Here,” *CPP* 1 no. 1 (May 1892): 5.

yet, ... [it] is already a power in the land, and is now waging war on the iniquitous tariff which legislates with such gross unfairness against the printer and bookbinder.” The journal argued that the trade was missing an official organ and that theirs was a journey “on a road untraveled before, as far as Canada is concerned,” despite evidence of earlier (and concurrently published) typographical trade journals.¹⁰² It was imagined that the journal’s “editorial columns will advocate the best interests of the craft, [while] the remaining columns will be utilized to keep our readers abreast of the times in the various departments of printing and publishing, special attention being given to the composing and press rooms, the bindery and advertising.” Later, in 1895, the journal expanded its project: “The aim of this journal is to furnish Canadian journalists and printers with technical knowledge, with discussions of trade topics and with craft news.”¹⁰³ Certainly, throughout the first decade of *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, the emphasis on technical information was notable but less present than that included in journals like *The Printer’s Miscellany*. Given the journal’s emphasis on printing and publishing, as opposed to the singular focus on printing that tended to characterize older typographical trade journals, many of the articles in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* discuss aspects of concern to that sector, including tariffs, copyright, and libel. Additionally, a significant amount of space was dedicated in the first decade to communications, information, and reports regarding the CPA and the United Typothetae, some issues even being doubled in size to accommodate the inclusion of the CPA’s annual reports.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *Orillia Times* quote in “Trade and Other Chat,” *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 20; “Ourselves Again,” *CPP* 1 no. 2 (June 1892): 5.

¹⁰³ “Why We Are Here,” *CPP* 1, no. 1 (May 1892): 5; “The Preface,” *CPP* 4, no. 4 (April 1895): 1.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example: “Canadian Press Association. Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Meeting, Ottawa, March 10th and 11th 1898.,” *CPP* 7, no. 3 (March 1898): 1-36.

The journal was published for over 110 years. It was eventually published by Rogers Media under the title *Canadian Printer* (this last name change was in September 1989) and became a quarterly publication that remained “the national organ of the printing industry in Canada” until its cessation. In the 2010s, the journal ceased print publication, opting to move to an online format with an annual printed magazine.¹⁰⁵ The magazine’s last known web address, www.canadianprinter.com, is now defunct.¹⁰⁶

Although *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* is widely regarded as one of the largest and most important typographical trade journals ever produced in Canada, it was not the only trade journal for the printing trades produced in Toronto at the end of the nineteenth century. Published by F.N. Lemieux, *The Imprint* (1893-1895) was the journal for the Toronto Type Foundry (TTF) and was also connected to the Foundry’s Winnipeg branch. The journal was founded to address the company’s desire to communicate with printers in Canada and to advertise the “goods they make and sell.”¹⁰⁷ The TTF was established by J.T. Johnson in 1887 when the center for printing in Canada shifted to Toronto. By 1898 the company had established branches across Canada – Winnipeg by 1893, Montreal and Vancouver in 1897, and Halifax in 1898. In 1899 the Foundry bought

¹⁰⁵ Hailey Biback, “Back to the future: Canadian Printer celebrates 110 years of publication,” *Canadian Printer* 110, no. 4 (April/May 2002): n.p., ProQuest; “About,” *Canadian Printer and Publisher*, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, accessed September 1, 2025, https://collections.library.utoronto.ca/explore/cpp/cpp_about; Cary Sherburne, “Canadian Printer Magazine Abandons Printed Edition in Favor of Online,” *What They Think*, June 30, 2010, <https://whattheythink.com/articles/53545-canadian-printer-magazine-abandons-printed-edition-in-favor-of-online/>; “Canadian Printer Ceases Printing,” *Print Action*, July 6, 2010, <https://www.printaction.com/canadian-printer-ceases-printing-704/>.

¹⁰⁶ Dfukumori, “Canadian Printer 1975-2005,” *Internet Archive*, September 23, 2021, https://archive.org/details/pub_canadian-printer?tab=about.

¹⁰⁷ ““A Long Felt Want.’,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 1 (May 1893): 1; “Our Winnipeg Branch,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 1 (May 1893): 1.

out the Montreal Type Foundry. The Foundry was one of the largest in the country by the end of the century and employed over fifty people.¹⁰⁸

The Nonpareil (named after the size of type in the old system), was the organ of the Toronto Typographical Union No. 91 at the end of the century. It was, as Sally F. Zerker briefly highlights, the space in which printers voiced their opinions on issues related to the union and its membership.¹⁰⁹ Local No. 91 would later publish the *Typographical Bulletin* in 1922.¹¹⁰

Type and Press, a journal “devoted to the Interests of the Printing Trade,” was published in Toronto at the end of the century by Miller & Richard, “Type Founders to Her Majesty for Scotland. Edinburgh and London.,” which operated as an authorized agent for several local and international manufacturers. Only one issue, November 1899, is extant.¹¹¹

1.4 From Owen Sound, Ontario: The *International Art Printer* (1895-189?)

There were few newspapers in Owen Sound, and it appears that most of the job printing shops were associated with newspaper shops.¹¹² In 1851, *The Comet: Farmers’*

¹⁰⁸ Forbes, “Print Industry”; Elizabeth Hulse, *A Dictionary of Toronto Printers, Publishers, Booksellers and the Allied Trades* (Anson-Cartwright Editions, 1983), 263; George L. Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 1985), 150.

¹⁰⁹ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 141.

¹¹⁰ Russell G. Hann, Gregory S. Kealey, Linda Kealey, and Peter Warrian, *Primary Sources in Canadian Working Class History, 1860-1930* (Dumont Press, 1973), 99.

¹¹¹ *Type and Press* 2, no. 4 (November 1899): 3.

¹¹² See, for instance, advertisements for job printing offices in *The Owen Sound Advertiser* and *The Owen Sound Times*. “Advertiser Job Printing Office,” *The Owen Sound Advertiser* (December 30, 1892): n.p.; “The Owen Sound Advertiser,” *The Owen Sound Advertiser* (January 20, 1893): n.p. in PF123S2F2, *The Owen Sound Advertiser*, Grey Roots Museum and Archives, Owen Sound, Ontario and “The Best Printing,” *The Owen Sound Times* IV, no. 24 (July 3 1857): n.p.; “The Owen Sound Time, and Meaford

and Mechanics' Protector, Owen Sound's first newspaper, was established by Owen Van Dusen, a member of one of the first settler families in the region. Paul White writes that the establishment of the settlement's first newspaper signaled the settlement's growth. In 1853, Richard Carney, first warden of Grey County and first mayor of Owen Sound, founded one of the region's first printing companies – a weekly newspaper called *The Times* – which “became one of Owen Sound's major industries and a leader in printing, lithography and bookbinding in Canada.” Another paper, *The Lever*, was established by W.J. Campbell and John C. Boyd shortly after Carney announced his intention to establish *The Times*. Harry Rohrman and Tom Hakala remark that these papers were “in fierce competition” by the end of 1853. *The Times* outlived the others, *The Lever* folding shortly after its establishment, being “absorbed by *The Comet*,” which appeared intermittently after nearly a decade of longevity. *The Times* passed through many hands during the century. In 1857, four years after establishing the paper, Carney became the sheriff for the newly establish territory of Algoma, leaving his son-in-law, Patrick G. Laurie, to take over the newspaper's operations. However, as Rohrman and Hakala note, Laurie was not well suited to a journalistic lifestyle and left the newspaper after only two years. In 1862, Laurie's successor, Edward Todd, a bookbinder, sold *The Times* to William Wye Smith, “a former division court clerk and frequent contributor to the columns of *The Times*.”¹¹³

Advocate,” *The Owen Sound Times* New Series 1, no. 11 (January 20 1865): n.p., in MF35S1F1, *The Owen Sound Times*, Grey Roots Museum and Archives, Owen Sound, Ontario (hereafter cited as Grey Roots Museum and Archives).

¹¹³ White, *Owen Sound*, 38; Harry Rohrman and Tom Hakala, *1853-1978: 125 Years of providing opportunity for people of purpose and skill* (Owen Sound, Ontario: RBW Inc., 1979), 7, 8, 12; Art M. Rutherford, *Rutherford's Directory of the Town of Owen Sound* (Owen Sound: John Rutherford, Book and Job Printer, 1892), 7, <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/s0kp7tm7257j>.

David Creighton and John Rutherford, who both worked at *The Times*, became joint owners of the newspaper in the fall of 1864. In doing so, they would make Owen Sound a place of great respect in the Canadian printing industry. Creighton and Rutherford worked “energetically in the two departments of their business: newspaper publishing and job printing,” respectively. Under their charge, the paper claimed to be “the Largest, the Cheapest, and the Best Paper published in the Saugeen Division [...] enjoying a much larger circulation than any other paper published in th[at] section of the Province.”¹¹⁴ In 1868 Rutherford and Creighton amicably divided their business between the job printing and newspaper ends.¹¹⁵ In 1872, John Rutherford constructed his own building to accommodate the expansion of his business, an idea that was spurred by an increased demand for print; “the job plant was located on the second storey while the lower rear half was rented by Mr. Creighton for The Times’ office.” According to Rohrman and Hakala, Rutherford further expanded his business by adding a bookbinding business and opening a stationary store. His work “earned the company a province-wide reputation.”¹¹⁶ Fred Boardman, who was appointed the Federal King’s Printer in Ottawa in 1910, was trained by John Rutherford and described the shop as “perhaps the best

¹¹⁴ Rohrman and Hakala, *125 Years of providing opportunity for people of purpose and skill*, 12-4; W.W. Smith, *Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Grey for 1865-6* (Toronto: Globe Steam Press, 26 & 28 King Street East, 1865), 218, <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/m08911n80f0b>.

¹¹⁵ Rohrman and Hakala, *125 Years of providing opportunity for people of purpose and skill*, 14-5.

¹¹⁶ Rohrman and Hakala, *125 Years of providing opportunity for people of purpose and skill*, 14, 16. Advertisements for John Rutherford’s book and job printing business from *The Owen Sound Times* in late 1870 read “1860 | NEWS PREMISES! NEW TYPE! | 1870. [...] Opposite the Sign of the Big Axe, Poulett Street, Owen Sound.” “1860 | NEWS PREMISES! NEW TYPE! | 1870.” *The Owen Sound Times* New Series VI, no. 52 (October 21 1870): n.p.; “1860 | NEWS PREMISES! NEW TYPE! | 1870.” *The Owen Sound Times* New Series VI, no. 55 (November 4 1870): n.p. These newspapers are found in MF35S1F1, *The Owen Sound Times*, Grey Roots Museum and Archives.

printing plant outside of the large cities in Canada, and gloried in the quality of its product.”¹¹⁷

When John Rutherford retired in 1893, he passed down his job printing business to three of his nine sons, Arthur, George, and James, and the firm was renamed John Rutherford’s Sons.¹¹⁸ They operated the business until 1900; the business would pass to J.J. Pratt, and then to John A. Richardson, Alfred Bond, and Harry Wright in 1907, who established RBW Inc., which would operate in Owen Sound before being acquired by Transcontinental Printing in the late twentieth century. The printing office, Transcontinental RBW Graphics, continues to operate today.¹¹⁹ James Rutherford managed and was the editor of *The Times* until November 1918¹²⁰ when C.A. and Howard Fleming (the Fleming Publishing Company) purchased the paper, amalgamating it with their own paper, *The Sun*, which was established in 1890 by Joseph Lang, creating *The Sun-Times*. The paper continues to run under that name today.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Rohrman and Hakala, *125 Years of providing opportunity for people of purpose and skill*, 25; “Owen Sounders of Early Days Are Pictured by Fred Boardman Retired Federal King’s Printer,” *The Daily Sun-Times* (Saturday December 13, 1941): 12 [newspaper clipping], newspapers.com, accessed September 1, 2025, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-sun-times-writeup-on-a-band-mate-of/152472173/>.

¹¹⁸ Newspaper clipping of John Rutherford’s obituary, dated March 19, 1915, and titled “Grey County Clerk John Rutherford.” The obituary is a reproduction, and the date of publication is handwritten as November 12, 1975. The newspaper of origin is unknown. PF49S19F50I1, Box 12, Owen Sound Historical Society, Grey Roots Museum and Archives. According to the obituary, only 7 of John’s children survived him in 1915: his sons, Peter, James, John William, Arthur, Drs. Allen and Fred, and his daughter, Amelia G. Rutherford.

¹¹⁹ Rohrman and Hakala, *125 Years of providing opportunity for people of purpose and skill*, 25, 29; “RBW” *Grey Roots Museum and Archives*, accessed August 2, 2023, <https://greyroots.pastperfectonline.com/bysearchterm?keyword=RBW>; “Transcontinental RBW Graphics,” *LinkedIn*, accessed August 2, 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/transcontinental-rbw-graphics/about/>.

¹²⁰ Ted Briggs, “Today’s paper follows 139 years of newspapering,” *The Sun Times*, January 30, 1993, p. 5, in PF49S18F24I1-2 (Box 10), Owen Sound Historical Society, Business Newspapers, Grey Roots Museum and Archives. In the January 30, 1993 *The Sun Times*, an article for the paper’s anniversary remarks that James left the job printing business and took control of *The Times* in 1888.

¹²¹ Melba Morris Croft, *Renewal of a Canadian Port: Owen Sound on Georgian Bay* (Owen Sound: Melba Morris Croft, 1993): 44; *The Owen Sound Sun Times*, accessed September 30, 2025, <https://www.owensoundsuntimes.com/>.

Two years after his father retired and he and his brothers took over the Rutherford book and jobbing business, Arthur (Art) Miller Rutherford, a printer and bookbinder, established the *International Art Printer*. He printed and published his journal out of 130-132 Poulett Street,¹²² in Owen Sound, Ontario, the same business address as *The Times*/the Rutherford's shop.¹²³ An obituary for Arthur Rutherford, dated March 15, 1930, notes that he spent some time in Toronto where he worked in the printing industry and was "connected with some of the best printing establishments." Upon returning to Owen Sound in the early 1910s he "became the superintendent of the Daily Sun-Times mechanical dept." Arthur Rutherford was remembered not only as a local personality, community member, and war veteran, but as an "expert on high-class typography" who, "for several years published the 'International Art Printer,' a publication devoted to the development of the best class of printed matter."¹²⁴

Rutherford began publishing the *International Art Printer* in March 1895.¹²⁵ Only two issues of the *International Art Printer* are extant (October 1895 and the joint issue, November-December 1895). Although the date of its cessation is unknown, there is some indication that the journal was published for at least three or four years. As Arthur Rutherford's obituary indicates, the *International Art Printer* was published "for several years," and a brief note on the subscription rate for 1896 indicates that the periodical was

¹²² Chas E. Goad, Civil Engineer, *Fire Insurance Map for Owen Sound*, December 1907 (revised 1911), 6, "Owen Sound Street Numbers and Standardized Address Numbering, Introduced 1909," *Grey Roots Museum and Archives*, accessed September 10, 2025, <https://greyroots.com/story/owen-sound-street-numbers-and-standardized-address-numbering-introduced-1909>. In 1909, By-law #1368 came into effect in Owen Sound, renaming and renumbering the city's streets.

¹²³ Rutherford, *Rutherford's Directory of the Town of Owen Sound*, 58.

¹²⁴ "A.M. Rutherford Ex-Owen Sounder Died in Toronto," in unidentified newspaper (newspaper clipping), with hand-written date 15 March 1930, in PF1S6F1I1, vol. 1, Bruce & Grey Branch Ontario Genealogical Society Surname Collection, Grey Roots Museum and Archives.

¹²⁵ "Journalistic Gossip," *CPP* 4, no. 4 (April 1895): 12.

actively preparing for the next year. The November-December 1895 issue indicates that despite the unsatisfactory returns on the accounts sent out in October, “one thing is certain—the I.A.P. comes out in some shape till January, 1897.” An advertisement for the journal in the October 1896 issue of *The Inland Printer* indicates that the *International Art Printer* was still active.¹²⁶ Additionally, the *N.W. Ayer & Son’s American Newspaper Annual* lists the *International Art Printer* as one of two Ontario trade journals related to printing and typography, alongside the *Printer and Publisher, Pulp and Paper (The Canadian Printer and Publisher)* from 1897-1899.¹²⁷

From Owen Sound, Rutherford sought to actively participate in the typographical trade press. He positioned his journal alongside journals from major printing centers¹²⁸ and he called on his subscribers to support his efforts in establishing the *International Art Printer* as Canada’s foremost typographical trade journal. He writes:

... I am not a millionaire; and, while very anxious to be that medium through which our Canadian printers may be brought closer together, and into friendly competition with each other, tending through this contact to improve each other’s methods, at the same time I do not propose to carry it at a financial loss, nor run head and heels in debt to accomplish this end; nor do I think the printers of this country expect any such foolishness.

¹²⁶ “A.M. Rutherford Ex-Owen Sounder Died in Toronto,” Grey Roots Museum and Archives; “Subscription Rate for ’96,” *International Art Printer* 1, no.9-10 (November-December): 195; “Account,” *International Art Printer* 1, no. 9-10 (November-December 1895): 194-5; “International Art Printer,” *The Inland Printer* vol. 18, no. 1 (October 1896): 9, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=chi.096983254&view=1up&seq=32&q1=international%20art%20printer>.

¹²⁷ *N. W. Ayer & Son’s American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1897), Part 2, 1342, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn91012091/resource/gdclccn.sn91012091_1897_2; *N. W. Ayer & Son’s American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1898), Part 2, 1348, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn91012091/resource/gdclccn.sn91012091_1898_2; *N. W. Ayer & Son’s American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1899), 919, 1382, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.319510012956800&view=1up&seq=1609>; *N. W. Ayer & Son’s American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1900), Part 3, 1396, https://www.loc.gov/item/sn91012091/resource/gdclccn.sn91012091_1900_3.

¹²⁸ “Publications Received,” *International Art Printer* 1, no. 8 (October 1895): 176.

He also challenges Canadian journeymen to think about their industry as a singular one, seemingly divorced from the cultural influences of the more dominant American (and perhaps British) industry and their proliferating typographical trade presses. He asks of his subscribers:

Can Canada support such a printers' magazine, or is our country too small for that? No, you can't answer for Canada, but you can for yourself. Are *you* willing to pay *your* share? It is a simple question, and requires but a simple answer—yes, or no. If the former, forward your subscription; if the latter, drop us a postal. It is only fair that you should advise us where you stand, that *we* may know just how *we* stand.¹²⁹

Rutherford included endorsements by other newspapers for the *IAP* in its pages, curating an image of the rural trade journal as an upstanding and quality publication at the forefront of Canadian printing. For instance, Rutherford includes E.K. Johnston's review from *The Watchman* (Arnprior, Ontario): "By all means continue sending the ART PRINTER. It is easily the peer of all efforts along this line, as far as Canada is concerned, and is second only to the Inland Printer in the States."¹³⁰ This observation is particularly interesting especially given the fact that the more well-known journal, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, was being published in Toronto at this time. No doubt this is reason enough to include the endorsement in the journal. Only a year after the journal began, the Chicago-based trade journal, *The Inland Printer*, advertises: "If you have anything to sell to Canadian printers, an ad in the I.A.P. is guaranteed a larger circulation than any other printers' journal circulating in Canada."¹³¹

¹²⁹ "The I.A.P. In New Form," *International Art Printer* 1, no. 9-10 (November-December 1895): 194.

¹³⁰ *The Watchman* qtd. in *International Art Printer* 1, no. 8 (October 1895): 164.

¹³¹ "Representative Trade Journals in the Printing, Book Making, Advertising, Stationery, Paper making and Allied Trades," *The Inland Printer* 17, no.1 (April 1896): 122, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.20045438>.

In the November-December 1895 issue, Rutherford indicated that February 1896 would see an American edition of the *International Art Printer* to be printed by a highly regarded job printer in Philadelphia, Adam Deist.¹³² While it appears that journal at least had an audience in the United States,¹³³ I have not been able to find evidence that there are any extant issues of the promised American edition; no journal under the same name issued from Philadelphia ever appears listed in the *N.W. Ayer and Son's American Newspaper Annual and Directory*.¹³⁴

1.5 Elsewhere in Canada

While this study is primarily concerned with those journals published in Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick, I want to briefly note that printers elsewhere in Canada were also active in this space. For instance, printers in Winnipeg and Vancouver issued occasional or general papers. *The Vancouver Typographer* was published by the Union Printers of Vancouver only for “Auspicious Occasions”: in August 1892 “as a souvenir for Labor Day” and again in the summer of 1896 for the Carnival-Regatta. The *Winnipeg*

¹³² “American Edition of the I.A.P.,” *International Art Printer* 1, no.9-10 (November-December): 195; “Review of Specimens Received,” *The Inland Printer* 20, no. 6 (March 1897): 815, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.096983270>; Musgrove, “Printing and Publicity Problems,” *The Inland Printer* 19, no. 6 (September 1897): 684, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951001898746b>; “Review of Specimens Received,” *The Inland Printer* 18, no. 1 (October 1896): 89, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.096983254>; “Review of Specimens Received,” *The Inland Printer* 19, no. 1 (April 1897): 93, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951001898746b>; “Review of Specimens Received,” *The Inland Printer* 19, no. 4 (July 1897): 456, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951001898746b>; “Review of Specimens Received,” *The Inland Printer* 15, no. 1 (April 1895): 67, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.096983246>.

¹³³ “International Art Printer,” *The Inland Printer* 18, no. 1 (October 1896): 9, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.096983254>; “The International Art Printer,” *The Inland Printer* 18, no.2 (November 1896): 210, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.096983254>; “The International Art Printer,” *The Inland Printer* 18, no.3 (December 1896): 348, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.096983254>.

¹³⁴ *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (1897), 1342; *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (1898), 1348; *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (1899), 919, 1382; *N. W. Ayer & Son's American Newspaper Annual* (1900), 1396.

Typographer, “a commemorative tabloid” according to Ron Verzuh, was put out by the union local in Winnipeg in 1894 in celebration of Canada’s first official Labour Day.

And *The New World* was a “daily paper” “issued by union printers” in Vancouver; only one issue, October 1892, is extant.¹³⁵ Given the irregularity of these periodicals’ publication and the fact that they were published outside of the geographical limits of this project, they are not featured in the present study.

¹³⁵ Union Printers of Vancouver, *The Vancouver Typographer* 1, no.1 (August 11, 1892), <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/s0x921c1vr0r>; Union Printers of Vancouver, *The Vancouver Typographer* 2 no. 1 (August 32, 1896), <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/s0x921c1vr0r>; Verzuh, *Radical Rag*, 100; Union Printers, *The New World* 1, no. 1 (October 20, 1892), microfiche, Carleton University.

Chapter 2: Male Trade Membership: Narrative Strategies for the Redefinition of Skill and “Manly Competence”¹³⁶

On one hand, membership in the typographical trades during the nineteenth century was a simple matter of a worker’s formal registration, recognition, and protection in and by a typographical trade union. If they were not union members, they would not be afforded the same working and economic privileges or necessarily considered part of the typographical “fraternity” to which the union structure was fundamental. In particular, the union was responsible for formalizing the trade’s membership criteria. As Sally F. Zerker notes, the ITU held significant influence over its subordinate unions in the United States and Canada, but “in practice, the executive refrained from deciding questions other than those concerning the card system [related to member mobility and tramping] and its kindred subject, membership.”¹³⁷ On the other hand, the subject of membership was not passive and was also often defined by the trade’s relationship to gendered discourses of labour and the construction of masculinity through work. “Official” statuses like apprentice and journeyman were important markers that the trade used to distinguish itself – the good, quality, well-trained tradesmen – and the so-called “unskilled” incoming workforces it saw as a threat. In many cases, however, the social culture of the nineteenth-century typographical trades dictated that one’s belongingness within the trade was also a matter determined by the informal evaluation of a compositor’s character, skills, and general abilities by their peers.

¹³⁶ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 72.

¹³⁷ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 77.

Skill, manhood, and masculinity are concepts that are fundamentally inseparable in the labour ideology of nineteenth-century compositors. As Ava Baron observes, “waged work itself was a measure of manliness, essential to men’s roles as family providers,” and the nature of the work and the trade’s “occupational culture” were also considered highly masculine.¹³⁸ For example, the “Coming of Age” celebration for apprenticed boys described by William Washington Pasko in 1894 is, certainly by twenty-first century standards, a hypermasculine display: “the coming of age of an apprentice is celebrated by the other workmen by the beating of drums, chases and other sonorous articles, and by jokes and sarcasms. Very often beer is sent for and drank around the imposing stone.”¹³⁹ “Skill” (or, rather, the trade’s evolving definitions of “skill”) was critical to everything that the nineteenth-century male compositor stood for. As such, Baron writes, “unskilled” labourers not only destabilized the gender ideology of the period but threatened to emasculate the work of hand-composition, as their employment undermined the journeymen’s “position as family providers and their relatively prestigious status as craft workers.” The trade’s unions responded to the threat of cheap and unskilled labour in the early- to mid-century by formalizing apprenticeships and disallowing women from participating in the apprenticeship system. This controlled the foundational educational components of the trade and limited access to the trade to a select few it deemed worthy. Journeymen and their unions also fought against the employment of “rats,” labourers working below the union wage scale or who took the place of a striking worker; as William S. Prezter remarks, “tradition held that such a person undermined the foundations of the trade as surely as a rat undermined to

¹³⁸ Baron, “Contested Terrain,” 62.

¹³⁹ Pasko, ed., *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking*, 107.

foundations of a building.” They also opposed the work of amateur printers, even though amateur printing had long been a part of the fabric of the trade, at least in Britain.¹⁴⁰

Shifts in the economic circumstances of the trade – namely, employers’ desires to cut labour costs by employing cheaper sources of labour – meant that printers sought to maintain the gendered and skilled status quo of the newspaper shop floor and protect their economic statuses against the labour and work they deemed inferior, and which threatened to depreciate the status of the trade in the labour market. While women and amateur labourers had been a part of the typographical trades for centuries, in the nineteenth century, male journeymen regarded the influx of such labourers as a threat that promised to destabilize the trade’s longstanding craft traditions, its masculine identity, and its association with skill and intellectual elitism. This destabilizing influx of labourers also threatened to displace compositors from their socio-economic status as aristocrats of the labouring/working class, a status that was defined by their distinct history of labour organization, wages, skills, and literacy, among other things. The result of this anxiety was the widespread attempt by male workers to control the movement of women and “unskilled” men within the trade and, when the machine typesetter became a fixture of the composing room, to safeguard that work for themselves.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Baron, “Questions of Gender,” 178, 178-87; William S. Pretzer, “Tramp Printers: Craft Culture, Trade Unions, and Technology,” *Printing History* 6, no. 2 (1984): 4; Caroline Archer-Parré, “Private Pleasures and Portable Presses: Do-It-Yourself Printers in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Pen, Print and Communication in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Caroline Archer-Parré and Malcolm Dick (Liverpool University Press, 2020), 90-93.

¹⁴¹ Cannon, *The Compositor in London*, 78; Duffy, *The Skilled Compositor*, 126-56; Kealey, “Work Control,” 92-3; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 7; Score, “Pioneers of Social Progress?,” 275; Éric Leroux, “Culture ouvrière et métiers du livre: La Société typographique du Québec, 1836-1872,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 42, no. 2 (2004): 25, doi:10.33137/pbsc.v42i2.18381; Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 8; Cockburn, *Brothers*, 31.

The conflict between male workers and women has been the primary focus of scholarship on the gendered dynamics of nineteenth-century print history. However, as Baron asserts, male journeymen also had conflict with and exhibited “antagonism” toward boys and men, though less attention has been given to this conflict. Questions about boys, men, and women, Baron articulates, “did not exist separately from each other, despite differences in the ways journeymen articulated gender.” Such questions were also about “relations among [male] workers and between [male] workers and [male] employers.” Indeed, in the first half of the nineteenth century, “journeymen focused their discourse not on the contrast between men and women but on the distinctions between men and boys.”¹⁴² That is, the trade’s main conflict in the first half of the century was between apprentices, amateurs, and tramps and the fully-fledged journeyman, to whom skill, intelligence, and competency were afforded as a result of their training. In the sections which follow, I expand upon Baron’s observations and attend to the conflicts between boys and men in the typographical trades by examining the role of typographical trade journals in the evaluation of skill as it relates to these distinct subgroups of male typographical labourers.

Baron rightfully points out that boys (and women and other men) were all blamed in different ways “by adult male workers for the problems they faced at work,” but she contends that their “relations with apprentice boys and women were used as metaphors for discussing exploitation and degradation in the hands of their employers.”¹⁴³ I argue that journeymen’s relations with apprentices, amateurs, other so-called “unskilled” men,

¹⁴² Baron, “Questions of Gender,” 178, 179, 182.

¹⁴³ Baron, “Questions of Gender,” 180.

and women (I elaborate on the “Woman Question” in Chapters 4 and 6) was more than metaphorical, however. In the case of boys and men, journeymen compositors frequently used their trade literatures to construct narratives about skill and masculinity not as a metaphor to speak to their labour conditions, but to paint them as the root cause of their troubles. The representational narratives that journeymen constructed within their journals were designed, in large part, to protect their jobs. These narratives tend to isolate the individual, rather than consider the implications of the trade’s changing structures. That is, rather than acknowledge the fact that the shifting economic conditions and technological changes occurring in the trade in the second half of the century were, in many cases, the actual cause of their discomfort, journeymen blamed the quality and character of apprentices, amateurs, and tramps for the trade’s perceived degradation. The convolutedness of journeymen’s discussions of the trade’s male members illustrates how masculinity and skill, while fundamental and concrete ideas for compositors, were also nebulous concepts that shifted in response to changing trade structures.

2.1 Apprentices and Amateur Labour

Before and into the early nineteenth century, apprentices were boys who began their indentureship around the age of twelve. They were unpaid, or paid very low rates, and spent three to seven years learning the trade. The master printer would provide their apprentices with room and board and “at some point between his eighteenth and twenty-first birthday, an apprentice completed his indenture and became a journeyman printer. His master thereupon gave him a suit of clothes, a symbol of arriving manhood, and a set of work tools—perhaps a personal composing stick and a rule—in recognition of his

formal entry into the fraternity of the trade.”¹⁴⁴ However, “after 1836, the indoor, or indentured, apprentice ceased to be the rule in America,” and the trade began using a system of ““out-door apprentices”” which meant that apprentices no longer lived with the master. This became the predominant system, and as a result the master had less control over his apprentices. In North America, printing trade schools would be established in the early twentieth century, and even earlier in Great Britain; until then, this form of “in-” or “out-door” apprenticeship was the only way for boys to learn the trade.¹⁴⁵

The completion of a formal apprenticeship was a mandatory step in a compositor’s career and a bedrock component of the trade’s foundation. After all, apprentices became journeymen who might eventually train or otherwise mentor future apprentices, and so on. According to Baron, journeymen believed that once a boy had completed his apprenticeship, he was “certified as a competent worker” and “should have the right to a ‘man’s wage.’” On those grounds, journeymen claimed the right to “restrict, control and limit entry into the trade.”¹⁴⁶ In the early nineteenth century, a man’s competence – or, as Walker Rumble calls it, his “manly competence”¹⁴⁷ – “referred to a man’s ability to earn a ‘comfortable subsistence’ for himself and his family and enabled a man to earn enough to be independent regardless of age, incapacity or temporary unemployment.” The male worker’s ability to ““earn a competence”” was dictated by his mastering of a craft. Thus, for compositors, the successful and appropriate completion of an apprenticeship was about more than acquiring the necessary technical skills, it was also “an essential ingredient in acquiring manhood.” Baron writes that “boys gradually

¹⁴⁴ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 2, 6-7; Tracy, *History*, 77.

¹⁴⁵ Rummonds, *Nineteenth-Century Printing Practices and the Iron Handpress*, 1: 90, 73, 42.

¹⁴⁶ Baron, “Questions of Gender,” 181.

¹⁴⁷ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 72.

acquired masculinity during their apprenticeship as they learned the necessary skills. It was actually engaging in manly work that conferred masculinity on the apprentice. A boy's completion of an apprenticeship simultaneously symbolized passage into manhood and into skilled 'competent' worker status."¹⁴⁸ As Rumble writes, "true men fulfilled an apprenticeship and carried a union card."¹⁴⁹

Despite the necessity of apprentices to the longevity of the trade, however, the apprenticeship system had been a source of conflict in the history of North American typographical unions or societies since the early days of their organization and before the formal organization of the International Typographical Union. In Canada, the issue of apprentices was one of several catalysts for printers' labour organization.¹⁵⁰ The first typographical association in Canada was founded in Quebec in 1827. As Éric Leroux writes, the compositors in Quebec later reorganized to form an association called the Société typographique canadienne in 1836, joining all 66 compositors and printers in the city under the motto "Union et Fraternité." The Société typographique canadienne ceased after 1844 but reemerged in 1855, this time under a new name, Société typographique de Québec, and with redefined objectives.¹⁵¹ Leroux identifies that the society's president, Joseph-Norbert Duquet, described the objectives as the following: "Elle a ce double but d'être à la fois une société de bienveillance fraternelle et une association d'ouvriers de bonne volonté cherchant mutuellement à s'instruire."¹⁵² In what is now Ontario, the

¹⁴⁸ Baron, "Questions of Gender," 181.

¹⁴⁹ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 72.

¹⁵⁰ Tracy, *History*, 77; Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 48; Kealey, "Work Control," 77.

¹⁵¹ Leroux, "'Culture ouvrière et métiers du livre,'" 30, 32, 34.

¹⁵² Leroux, "'Culture ouvrière et métiers du livre,'" 34; "La Société typographique de Québec," *Le Journal de Québec* 14, no. 7 (January 17, 1856): n.p., <https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/2646754>.

Toronto Typographical Union began as the York Typographical Society in October 1832 after twenty-four journeymen printers of the town of York, likely representing most of the printers in York at that time and who were “principally of English origin, met at the York Hotel on King Street East on the initiation of Mr. J.H. Lawrence.” Like the unions in Montreal, Quebec and the United States, the primary catalyst for the journeymen printers of York to establish their society was, as Zerker writes, their concern for “the impact of long-run changes, with technological developments that threatened the security of the craftsmen,” to protect wages, and to guard themselves against “the threat of expanded labour supply due to employers’ increasing willingness to hire partially trained apprentices” who “formed ‘an army of half-taught workmen who ... floated in to take journeymen’s jobs,’ at lower rates of pay.”¹⁵³

To prevent the employment of runaways and other untrained labourers, “printers had to find ways to control the supply of labour,” and this included the frequent augmentation of the severity of apprenticeship requirements. According to Zerker, this was the rationale for sections 9 and 10 of the York printers’ constitution “by which the terms of training were uniformly fixed and the number of boys per shop was standardized.” In 1834, revisions to the constitution extended the term of apprenticeship to a minimum of five years (up from the previous requirement of four years) and stipulated a maximum ratio of one master printer to two apprentices in any given shop. It also outlined that journeymen should refuse to work in offices where three or more apprentices were found. As Zerker remarks, however, despite the implementation of such

¹⁵³ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 18, 23.

measures, that the society “had virtually no power to enforce its demands.”¹⁵⁴ Prior to the establishment of the Trades Union Act in 1872, labour unions were not legally recognized in the territory that would become Canada and union activity was seen as criminal activity. The Act “created only a tiny legal space within which unions could operate” that allowed limited provisions for collective bargaining and other labour actions.¹⁵⁵ Despite these limitations, it is worth noting the lengths to which unions in Canada and the United States went to reduce the amount of amateur labour within the industry. Zerker remarks that the revisions to the York printers’ constitution did not affect journeymen’s “long-established wage rate nor the hours of work”; instead, the society’s “attack” focused on “where it hurt most, in the flow of unwanted, unschooled labour into the profession.”¹⁵⁶

In the United States,¹⁵⁷ “the special agitation of the apprenticeship question began in Washington in 1818.” George A. Tracy remarks that while the Washington society’s constitution only required “a satisfactory apprenticeship” to qualify printers for membership, candidates “were not only vigorously questioned on this point, but were required to prove by written statement from ‘their masters’ that they had served ‘a four-years’ apprenticeship’.” A member was “held liable to expulsion” after they were

¹⁵⁴ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 21, 24-5.

¹⁵⁵ Craig Heron and Charles Smith, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History*, 4th ed. (James Lorimer & Company, 2020), 12, 14, 16.

¹⁵⁶ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 25.

¹⁵⁷ Cannon, *The Compositor in London*, 48-9. In London, England, similar conflicts between journeymen and apprentices arose earlier. According to Cannon, “as early as the 1780s there were attempts by the compositors to restrict employment to those who had been properly indentured. The compositors claimed the right to examine indentures and if these were not properly fulfilled the man ‘shall be compelled to quit his employment.’ By the 1790s the compositors were becoming anxious about the growth of boy labour, and in 1794 there was a resolution against the increase of the number of apprentices. A petition was sent to the Stationers Company to stop the increase, but this was to no avail, and the first decade of the nineteenth century saw a great increase in the number of apprentices.”

accepted to the society “if it was discovered that there ‘had been irregularities in his apprenticeship.’” One member was charged as having “no right to membership” because it was determined that he had served a short apprenticeship of two and a half years in Ireland and another short-term apprenticeship in Philadelphia. Tracy records that “this was claimed irregular” because “the entire term” of the apprenticeship was not conducted in one place “under one master,” a measure that was enforced “to protect the trade against ‘runaways.’” Until the ITU was established, American typographical societies lengthened the term of apprenticeship numerous times “in the vain hope of reducing the competition” posed by runaway boys. Despite their best efforts, however, the longer apprenticeship term “only increased the temptation” to run away. After becoming journeymen, former apprentices would be able to join the union and be protected under its laws and, importantly, make union wages. But years of unpaid labour meant that running away before completing their apprenticeship was popular among boys. Certainly, as Tracy remarks, “the fact that a runaway apprentice could, and would, be so employed at rates higher, to say the least, than his apprentice rates [...] put a premium on running away.” There was no real way to stop apprentices from running away. Masters could “legally compel the return of a runaway, if he could find him, but the supply of new apprentices and of other runaways willing to work for one-half or two-thirds the established price for journeymen made it unprofitable to search for escaped apprentices.” These runaway apprentices were called “half-way journeymen” or “two-thirders” and they were men who had not successfully completed the term of their apprenticeship and were “willing to work for anything they could get.”¹⁵⁸ Two-thirders therefore presented threats to the trade

¹⁵⁸ Tracy, *History*, 58-9, 77, 34, 25.

because, printers argued, they deskilled the workforce and pushed “practical printers” out of the shopfloor. Some societies felt that it was necessary to police their employment using measures over and above union policy. For example, some societies established Vigilance Committees – a practice that was employed in the United States, Britain, and British North America – to monitor the influx of apprentices, insuring the standards set by those societies were maintained.¹⁵⁹ By the mid-century, the American unions were continuing to pass resolutions aimed at maintaining their prestigious memberships, rooting out rats (those working for wages below the union scale), and reducing the number of unqualified labourers.¹⁶⁰

One individual single-handedly exposed and exploited the trade’s concerns about apprenticeship. General Duff Green, named “that printer’s Banquo” by Tracy, and printer to the United States Senate, challenged the American trade and societies for years with his radically different approach to the apprenticeship question. In 1833, Green “began employing ‘two-thirders’ on his paper, the United States Telegraph [sic], and later introduced a large number of boys as apprentices in doing the government printing.” The following year he proposed the establishment of a manual-labour school, the Washington Institute, and the response by the Columbia Typographical Society was as expected, negative. They understood that Green’s proposal was a declaration that he “intended to monopolize all the work that was possible” and to “employ a large number of children to take the place of the journeymen now employed by him, and that he wished to raise up a respectable class of men to take out [the journeymen’s] places.” The Society was

¹⁵⁹ Tracy, *History*, 102-3; Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 73. For more on the use of vigilance committees in Canada, the United States, and Britain, see the second chapter of Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, “Striking Printers,” 66-110.

¹⁶⁰ Tracy, *History*, 103, 118, 119, 282.

resolved that Green's proposal was ultimately "visionary in its final results, subversive of [their] rights, as journeymen printers, and destructive to the profession to which [they] belong." The Society neither took immediate action nor restricted the number of apprentices permitted in a shop to prevent Green's plans, despite the fact that it was "the opinion of the society that the practice which had lately come into vogue [at the time of Green's proposal], of employing an undue number of apprentices, is destructive of the rights and interests of journeymen, and detrimental to employing printers." In 1834, Green circulated a prospectus for the Washington Institute on the first page of his paper, "acting practically as an advertisement for boys to fill his school." The advertisement was protested by the Society, who issued their protest to every printers' society and unorganized printer across the United States. Societies across the country responded to the protest, resolving against "'the Duff Green school for printers'." Despite this overt disapproval, Green took his idea to South Carolina to organize "The American Literary Company." There, in 1836, he was met with more disapproval by the union in Augusta, Georgia.¹⁶¹ This years-long incident did not simply cause disruption and anger amongst America's journeymen printers. As Rumble observes, "the Duff Green episode had forced the issue of gatekeeping [in the ITU]—the definition of membership and what it meant to be a 'practical printer.'"¹⁶²

Approaching the 1870s, the apprenticeship system was no longer strictly standardized or monitored, and the training afforded to boy apprentices was not what it had been, as a result. This was regarded as a blow to the trade's traditions and identity,

¹⁶¹ Tracy, *History*, 88, 78-81; 88.

¹⁶² Rumble, *The Swifts*, 19.

and as a significant threat to composers' socio-economic status, all of which were founded upon the longstanding and rigorous training program that promised to produce highly skilled craftsmen. In the first issue of *The Printer's Miscellany*, July 1876, the journal's proprietor, Hugh Finlay, republished an extract from an American paper that attended to the transnational anxieties about shifting standards of education for fledgling composers: "It is unnecessary to inform our readers that the standard of education among printers has, within the last twenty-five years, been materially lowered." Finlay asks Canadian journeymen to determine the relevance of such concerns to the Canadian trade, and subsequent contributions and articles demonstrate rather clearly that journeymen in Canada were also suffering under the weight of the "Apprenticeship Question" in the last quarter of the century.¹⁶³ In June 1878, in his regular *Miscellany* section "Practical Matters," Jul L. Wright, an American, vocalizes his frustrations with "the loose system of apprenticeship now in vogue" and his belief that it "behooves the typographical fraternity to make some decided effort for remedying this crying evil." He argues for a return to the "intellectual, mechanical, and artistic superiority of the type of the old regime [in-door apprenticeship/indentureship] over him who had graduated under the modern innovation [out-door apprenticeship]." Unlike journeymen of earlier generations, the modern apprentice, Wright bemoans, is not properly instructed "'in the art of mysteries' of typography." For Wright, the problem is that the new class of apprentices has not been well-trained and thus they produce sub-par work, rushed and riddled with imperfections; the solution is "the revival and strict enforcement of *indenture*" that created earlier generations of skilled composers. Wright blames the

¹⁶³ "The following extract is from ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 1 (July 1876): 4.

conditions of the modern print shop with the overwhelming incompetence of apprentices. Because everything now “goes with a ‘rush,’” apprentices are not always properly instructed, resulting in the cultivation of bad habits, which spread from apprentice to apprentice. A new system, based on the old system of indentureship, he argues, would “tend to diminish the number of incompetents annually manufactured and set adrift, many of whom become ‘buzzards’ of the filthiest order, their foulness poisoning the atmosphere in which upright men are earning a precarious livelihood.”¹⁶⁴

By the 1880s in America, apprenticeship laws governing fledgling compositors were “practically unenforced and unenforceable.” Boys who had completed the full term of their apprenticeship, while recognized by the union as journeymen, were not considered by many journeymen to be thoroughly competent in their trade. Many apprentices, Baron notes, “were taught only how to set the simpler work, known as ‘straight matter’ and became what craft printers called mere ‘type-stickers.’ As a result, conflicts over apprenticeship more sharply focused on questions of the division of labour, worker skills, and the criteria for determining worker competence.”¹⁶⁵

Concerns for skill, competence, and the perceived degradation of the trade’s status were representative of larger structural shifts that concerned the trade during the end of the century, particularly as the 1870s onward saw the increasing specialization of the trade. As Christina Burr summarizes, “the period between 1850 and the 1880s was one of crisis among printing trade workers, for the uneven process of industrialization with the mechanization of presswork resulted in tensions between compositors whose

¹⁶⁴ Jul. L. Wright, “Practical Matters,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 12 (June 1878): 313-4.

¹⁶⁵ Baron, “Questions of Gender,” 187.

handicraft skills remained intact and pressmen who became machine-tenders.” For pressmen, the results of the introduction of machines meant that the trade saw a gradual “decline in the need for the ‘all round printer,’” that pressman who was capable of performing all of the jobs fundamental to his work.¹⁶⁶ Leroux writes that the 1870s “were years of diversification for Canadian printers,” with some shops developing specialities, such as focusing on school books, almanac, or illustrated magazines. Between the 1870s and 1920s in Canada, the printing and publishing industries were continuously being segmented “into specialized operations” that no longer necessitated that printers or compositors be well-versed in all aspects of the trade. Additionally, “one major trend” of the period “was the abandonment by daily newspapers of their job departments,” which printed jobs like calling cards, flyers, signs, and other ephemera. Dewalt notes that “job and newspaper work had initially been reasonably compatible, as long as jobs could be run on newspaper presses during off-peak times. But as technological requirements of newspaper work became more distinct from job work, most notably with the use of rotary presses, the two divisions became increasingly incompatible.”¹⁶⁷ According to Kealey, the separation of job and newspaper shops into the 1870s had significant implications for the economic and cultural status of pressmen and compositors. The branches, Kealey writes:

[...] emphasized different skills. Most job shops demanded more varied skills that more closely resembled the talents of the old-time, all-round printer, whereas the urban daily newspapers were increasingly specialized. The built-in variation in pay scales, whereby newspapers paid by the piece and job shops by the week, led

¹⁶⁶ Burr, “Defending,” 59.

¹⁶⁷ Leroux, “Printers: From Shop to Industry,” 78; Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 53-4.

increasingly to quite separate negotiations and different scales for the two branches of the industry.¹⁶⁸

Such a shift in the trade's structure allowed apprentices to learn pieces of information and abandon their apprenticeship to seek journeyman wages elsewhere, given that it was increasingly no longer necessary for them to possess the full skillset that had been a requirement for their predecessors. This meant that printers increasingly lost control over the labour process, which not only threatened the longstanding structure of the printing trades, but by extension, the skills necessary to perform the work under the evolving structures of print capitalism.

Typographical trade journals were an important avenue through which journeymen compositors addressed the apprenticeship question. Although perceived as threats to journeymen in the workplace, apprentices were not excluded from participating in the trade's print culture, as several of the journals frequently acknowledged the apprentice as a potential reader and often included materials for the explicit benefit of young compositors. *The Printer's Miscellany* in New Brunswick repeatedly called for apprentices to subscribe and was the only Canadian typographical trade journal to offer (or at least advertise) a reduced subscription rate for boy apprentices, indicating that its proprietor, Hugh Finlay, was aware of and invested in the trade's apprentices across the globe. The journal's several subscription lists clearly indicate that apprentices – identified as such by the “(ap.)” note beside their name as well as the lower 50 cent annual fee – made up a significant part of the *Miscellany's* paying readership.¹⁶⁹ This move was likely

¹⁶⁸ Kealey, “Work Control,” 82.

¹⁶⁹ “EVERY apprentice, as well as journeyman ...,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 4 (October 1876): 36; “Apprentices—Will be furnished ...,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 12 (June 1880): 189; “Acknowledgements,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 1 (July 1878): 4; “Acknowledgements,” *The*

in service of Finlay's desire to "place [the *Miscellany*] within the reach of all."¹⁷⁰ But it was not a purely benevolent gesture. Journeymen utilized these journals to establish the trade's cultural and educational requirements and, in doing so, control the influx of apprentices and amateur labour. Encouraging apprentices to engage with the trade's literature meant that they would also engage with such materials, thereby learning what necessary requirements and behaviours one should possess to belong to the trade.

Finlay positioned the *Miscellany* as a resource for cultivating the minds of young printers and compositors. In a call to action to his readers, Finlay clearly expresses his desire to reach the incoming generation, stating that "EVERY apprentice, as well as journeyman at the printing business, should subscribe for and preserve the *Miscellany*."¹⁷¹ Likewise, the Colborne, *Ontario Express*, quoted in the *Miscellany*, remarks that "the oldest and most experienced cannot fail to be both pleased and profited by perusing [the *Miscellany*], and for beginners it is invaluable."¹⁷² Indeed, this was the perspective of other journal proprietors. At the end of the century, for instance, Arthur Rutherford briefly speaks to the pedagogical function of typographical trade journals in his *International Art Printer*, proselytizing to young printers: "Take as many of the practical trade's journals as you can possibly afford. Not only subscribe for them, but read and study them: take in everything in them."¹⁷³

Printer's Miscellany 3, no. 2 (August 1878): 36; "Acknowledgement.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 3 (September 1878): 78; "Acknowledgement.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 126; "Acknowledgements.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 5 (November 1878): 158.

¹⁷⁰ "EVERY apprentice ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1876): 51.

¹⁷¹ "EVERY apprentice ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1876): 51.

¹⁷² The *Express* quoted in "The Printer's Miscellany.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 1 (July 1880): 4.

¹⁷³ "Specimens Received," *International Art Printer* 1, no. 9-10 (November and December 1895): 209.

Finlay used *The Printer's Miscellany* to support the educational pursuits of printers and compositors in and outside of Canada. Two of the *Miscellany's* main and recurring opening columns, "Practical Paragraphs" and Jul. L. Wright's "Practical Matters," were aimed at teaching the journal's readership all they might need to know to keep up with the modern shop, providing technical and mechanical information to help broaden the reader's knowledge of their trade. Many of the "Practical Paragraphs" series of articles were markedly intended as educational materials, "to help those who don't 'know all about it,'" those who "are not so well up in the mystic lore of printerdom" as experienced printers to elevate the trade through a shared understanding of best practices and behaviours. Finlay even defended the "Practical Paragraphs" section against some of his readers – the "'old hands'" who "may elevate their eyebrows somewhat when perusing" the section. He chides them, writing that "if the articles printed do not suit them, [...] [they should] write something themselves to take their place."¹⁷⁴ Certainly, titling these pedagogical sections "Practical Paragraphs" and "Practical Matters" aligns them with the "practical printer" – a term used to reference fully-fledged, skilled, and competent journeymen – and suggests that the knowledge contained therein is the kind of knowledges that makes one "practical." As such, the pedagogical content included within the *Miscellany* can be seen as a supplement to the knowledge that fledgling compositors were meant to cultivate through formal education, a system and practice which many in of the trade, by the last quarter of the century, perceived as seriously degraded. For example, in October 1877, the *Miscellany's* "Practical Paragraphs" discussed "The Proper Position of a Compositor" at the typecase, indicating, among other things, that the

¹⁷⁴ "While, perhaps, some of the ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 5 (November 1877): 99.

correct position at and distance from the typecase was conducive to good work and health.¹⁷⁵ The “Practical Matters” column, written by Jul. L. Wright, an American journeyman and union member, was solicited by Finlay and was a mainstay of the journal throughout its life.¹⁷⁶ Wright primarily focuses his attention on technical, detailed information, tips and tricks, and educational materials for typographical workers, such as on how to set rules; new type case lays; typography; rollers and composition; and the mathematics of type.¹⁷⁷ Both columns were viewed favourably. One correspondent to the *Miscellany* writes that the “Practical Paragraphs” column meets a high standard “and is ably conducted with a view to instruct and enlighten.” A “great amount of good is accomplished” by its inclusion in the *Miscellany*.¹⁷⁸ On “Practical Matters,” Finlay reports that:

Mr. Wright certainly deserves the warm thanks of the craft (particularly our readers) for his lucid and comprehensive letters on the practical points in printing. We know they are fully appreciated from the number of erconiums [sic] received in letters from correspondents and readers. We trust he may be long spared to continue in his good work and that we may long have him as an ally in our labor of disseminating the news and views of the craft.¹⁷⁹

Although less frequently, *The Dominion Printer* also gives voice to educational pieces with the aim of rectifying what the trade saw as a depreciation of skill. For instance, the January 1877 *Dominion Printer* includes a short article on typesetting. It

¹⁷⁵ “Practical Paragraphs,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 4 (October 1877): 73-4.

¹⁷⁶ “Editorial Notes,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 5 (November 1878): 142; “Jul. L. Wright,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 7 (January 1879): 206-7.

¹⁷⁷ Jul. L. Wright, “Practical Matters,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 1 (July 1878): 1-4; “Practical Matters,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 231, 232; “Practical Matters,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 7 (January 1879): 199-201; Jul. L. Wright, “Practical Matters,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 10 (April 1879): 287-91.

¹⁷⁸ John, N.B., “Our Elmira, N.Y., Letter,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 11 (May 1878): 299.

¹⁷⁹ “Editorial Notes,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 108.

describes the best practices for hand composition, such as how to hold a composing stick “easy in the left hand, with the thumb on the rule, and following the right, which should always pick up the letter that presents itself to the eye with the face next the finger and the nicks upward, dropping it into the stick *at once* in the most easy manner, at the same time catching it with the left thumb.” Such descriptions seem not to be intended for the “good,” practical printer, but operate as educational morsels for new compositors in the “modern school” of printing.¹⁸⁰

While the solicitation and regular inclusion of educational pieces within *The Printer’s Miscellany* and *The Dominion Printer* might be seen as evidence of the journals’ valuing of journeymen and apprentice labour alike, such an assumption is complicated by the vocalization of transnational concerns regarding the fledgling labourers and their role in the supposed diminishing state of the trade’s standards. Despite Finlay’s generosity and the inviting hand he appears to extend to apprentices, he makes clear elsewhere his desire to meaningfully engage, via correspondence, only with “practical printers” (Figure 1).¹⁸¹ In May 1877, an article entitled “Printer Wanted” makes explicit the kind of printer some would like to see associated with a journal of such repute and “trust[s] [that] none of the boys who are readers of the *Miscellany* will allow themselves to be classed with the ‘runaways.’”¹⁸² Additionally, despite the *Miscellany*’s clear educational motivations, the views expressed in Wright’s column and elsewhere in the journal frequently illustrate the widespread displeasure with untrained or poorly trained labourers. It should not go unnoticed that Finlay, in praising Wright’s

¹⁸⁰ “Composing Cleanly and Quickly,” *The Dominion Printer* 3, no. 1 (January 1877): 4.

¹⁸¹ “Correspondents are wanted ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 2 (August 1876): 14.

¹⁸² “Printer Wanted,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 11 (May 1877): 180.

contributions, entrusts him with the confidence of the trade and likens him to its voice box, able to speak as a representative of concerned journeymen across the country.¹⁸³

Motivated by an anxiety regarding the trade's shifting requirements that rendered their "all-round"-ness obsolete or unnecessary, journeymen respond by blaming apprentices, runaways, and amateur labourers for their problems. Rather than blaming the shifting trade structures as the cause of many of their concerns, many journeymen compositors blamed the boys themselves and attacked their character. Many compositors did this by addressing what they perceived to be the shortcomings of the incoming young workforce and redefining "skill" and "competence" to reinforce their protection against rapidly changing labour conditions. But until the introduction of machine typesetters (and even after, to a degree), these attempts at redefining skill were not progressive or forward thinking. Rather, they were often attempts to hold onto an earlier ideal of what it meant to be a skilled typographical craft worker, an ideal that was increasingly incompatible with the realities of the trade's changing landscape. Additionally, journeymen's attempts to redefine skills and competence were highly contradictory, as their arguments about what made a good journeyman compositor frequently aligned the concept of innate skill and moral superiority with apprentices – who were formally trained – and the imperative of education with amateurs – who were not formally trained.

The reduced quality of apprenticeship education and of apprentices meant that the technical and manual skill one was supposed to acquire from a formal apprenticeship was no longer an adequate indicator of a compositor's competency. While this meant, as I

¹⁸³ "Editorial Notes.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 108.

have outlined, imposing stricter parameters on apprenticeships and forcing out other labourers whose employment threatened journeymen's positions on the shop floor, it also meant that journeymen had to come up with other criteria for assessing skill and competency that were more lasting. Earlier in the century, journeymen and their unions placed a great deal of emphasis on the length of an apprenticeship period because "time spent in training [was] a legitimate way to differentiate between skilled and unskilled work."¹⁸⁴ The insistence on training alone is exclusionary, particularly as one considers the gendered implications of the notion that skill or skilled work "is most frequently linked to formal training," a system that deliberately excluded women.¹⁸⁵ A short humorous piece included in the February 1877 *Miscellany* illustrates the way that journeymen believed that their work was highly skilled and could not be easily done (much less mastered) by others: an untrained editor attempts to set his own type, frustrated by paying the high wages of his employees, and his lack of skill is therein mocked, rather exaggeratedly, in the garbled and error-ridden text which results (Figure 2).¹⁸⁶ Yet, as boys were increasingly leaving their apprenticeships and gaining skills and knowledge outside of the system, "the judgement of one's betters and subsequently of one's peers defined a man. In other words, skill or prowess did not confer competence,

¹⁸⁴ Jane Gaskell, "Conceptions of Skill and the Work of Women: Some Historical and Political Issues," *Atlantis* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 15, <https://atlantisjournal.ca/index.php/atlantis/article/view/4526>. Gaskell is critical of this position, which she identifies as a commonly occurring assumption about labour expressed in twentieth-century scholarship. While there may be some debate, I argue that the relationship between training length and skill acquisition was certainly the opinion held by nineteenth-century compositors.

¹⁸⁵ Jan Clarke, "Skill as a Complex Gendered Concept: A Qualitative Study of Women, Information work, and Technology," *Knowledge and Science* 12 (2000): 211.

¹⁸⁶ "A Versatile Editor," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 8 (February 1877): 113.

but rather became a component of it, a part of a totality to be judged by a community of printers.”¹⁸⁷

Journeyman’s rhetoric frequently suggests that there are inalienable qualities and an inherent moral superiority about a particular class of boy who, in turn, becomes a skilled, masculine journeyman compositor. For example, in response to a case of thieving apprentices at the Hunter, Rose & Co. printing office in Toronto in 1877, the *Miscellany* issues a caution to the company – and to readers – to “be more careful in the selection of apprentices; taking only those who show superior moral and mental culture.”¹⁸⁸ At the same time, journeymen also began to argue that, in addition to one’s education, there is something intangible, inherent, and natural about the men who take up typographical work, an idea that is summed up rather succinctly in an article on “Printers and their Peculiarities” in the March 1880 *Miscellany*: “The printer, like the poet, is born, not made.”¹⁸⁹ Thus, the position taken by many journeymen regarding apprentices is contradictory because it prescribes that formal training and education is an absolute necessity while also asserting that such training is not, in and of itself, enough to qualify a boy to be a journeyman or to represent the trade. He must also possess a natural disposition to the work. That is, he must be born to do it.

The irony of this position is that the way that the trade was structured meant that compositors *were* made, not born. The trade unions and structure necessitated that, to become a journeyman, a boy must first complete a long apprenticeship and train in all the areas relevant to his work. Likewise, the journals’ emphasis on education, technological

¹⁸⁷ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 72.

¹⁸⁸ “The Examination Paper Scandal,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 124.

¹⁸⁹ “Printers and their Peculiarities,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 9 (March 1880): 137-8.

advancement, and the communication of ongoing changes to the trade's systems (such as a new system for measuring type, new type case layouts, etc.), illustrates, rather clearly, that the compositor is a class of labourer whose knowledge, and therefore skill and claim to masculinity, is very much acquired and highly curated by those around him and by the materials he reads. For instance, many of the sociocultural "codes of conduct"¹⁹⁰ around education, training, sobriety, and traveling etiquette that were circulated within the journals cultivated an image of the ideal, model compositor and, as a result, aided in the construction of a cultural (rather than union) trade discourse that ultimately informed compositors' understanding of what it meant to be a skilled typographical worker. The contradictory combination of manual skill, intellectual aptitudes, and moral superiority was foundational for journeymen's characterization of the work as "manly," thereby casting away any boys who might pose a threat to the trade's gendered and economic status.¹⁹¹

Trained manual skill and natural-born aptitude are often articulated together in discussions of the trade more generally. A short article titled "Good Impressions," copied from the *Chicago Specimen* included in the January 1877 issue of *The Dominion Printer*, argues that printers should aim to get the best equipment and supplies for the best results, but – in the spirit of the old adage, "a poor craftsman blames his tools" – whether the equipment is poorly or not, the impression will be good (or at least be improved) "if the pressman is a good one in the broadest sense of the term, – if he not only has the *ability* but also the *will* to do good work."¹⁹² Although *The Dominion Printer* is speaking to

¹⁹⁰ Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 7.

¹⁹¹ Baron, "Questions of Gender," 184.

¹⁹² "Good Impressions.," *The Dominion Printer* 3, no. 1 (January 1877): 3.

pressmen, the sentiment stands true for compositors. Take for example the opening article of the January 1880 *Printer's Miscellany*, which not only emphasizes that there are physical and manual requirements necessary to work in the trade, but points to some of the other components it deems foundational: "Composing is the art of arranging the type correctly into words, and of justifying them into lines of equal length, according to the form and sense prescribed in copy. [...] It includes not only intelligence to know how it should be done, but ability and skill to do it."¹⁹³ Although these terms – intelligence, ability, and skill – are related and, arguably, may be used interchangeably, within the rhetoric widely employed in typographical trade journals, they are not the same. Intelligence is about mental faculties, "brains." Ability is equal to capability; it is the "quality in a person or thing which makes an action possible" or "a natural faculty; a particular power of the body or mind; a personal talent or skill." Skill is more akin to one's "capability of accomplishing something with precision and certainty; practical knowledge in combination with ability; cleverness, expertness."¹⁹⁴ However, as Jane Gaskell reminds us, skill and ability are socially constructed and defined terms that fluctuate based on who is defining or qualifying the term.¹⁹⁵ In this case, what makes a good craftsman is not only the compositor's technical skill, afforded to him by years of training, but something less tangible and, seemingly, innately part of a good printer's disposition.

¹⁹³ "Practical Matters.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 7 (January 1880): 97.

¹⁹⁴ "intelligence (n.), sense 1," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed June 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3757635879.intelligence>; "ability (n.), sense 2.a," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed June 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6990862759>; "ability (n.), sense 3," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed June 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2657531187>; "skill (n.1), sense 6.a," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed February 28, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5623175660>.

¹⁹⁵ Gaskell, "Conceptions of Skill," 13, 14.

When discussing apprentices, contributors to the *Miscellany* often push the idea that some boys are born to do this work, while others are not, and it is their “intelligence” that makes it so. In the third issue of the *Miscellany*, September 1876, tucked towards the back is a brief piece on the temperament required of compositors which concludes: “Every boy will not make a good compositor. Some have vocations to be chimney sweeps and grave diggers. Intelligence and education are the chief conditions of success as a printer.”¹⁹⁶ Only a few months later, in December of that same year, an article written for the *Miscellany*, “A Word about Apprentices,” echoes similar sentiments:

It is undeniable, that to preserve good order and system in any establishment, the boys as well as the men must be of such a stamp as will ensure their punctual attendance at the appointed hours, and a faithful attention to their individual duties during the day. [...] Many of these evils [such as loafing and neglect] might be avoided if the employer would be more particular in selecting his boys; but this is seldom the case. He wants an apprentice. A boy applies; says he wants to “learn to print,” and is at once installed as “devil;” but unfortunately for both, the master in a few months finds out that his youthful majesty possesses little or no learning, and much less of that natural capacity which is absolutely requisite to make a thorough practical job printer or “type sticker.”¹⁹⁷

These articles suggest that, in part, the qualities possessed by boys who are well suited to the work of composition are natural, born qualities. Only sentences away from declaring that boys must be of a particular “stamp” in order to be suited to the work, the author indicates that the depreciation of the quality of new tradesmen is the result of employers who do not select well-educated or intelligent boys. Thus, education is an important qualification, but it is negated if the chosen young apprentice does not possess the “je ne sais quoi” that seemingly must characterize him. Indeed, as E. Burns Carol writes in “How the Apprentice may Become a Rapid and Correct Compositor” reprinted from *The*

¹⁹⁶ “Don’t flurry yourself,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 3 (September 1876): 27.

¹⁹⁷ “A Word about Apprentices,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 6 (December 1876): 72.

Typo in the May 1877 *Miscellany*, hard work, education, training, and intelligence make up only part of the compositors' necessary qualifications; "nature did more than half towards making a printer of such a boy" who otherwise made "a good report of himself [as an apprentice], and will so continue to do, until he is a thoroughly good compositor." Where one such successful and naturally talented compositor exists, Carol notes, "there will be found scattered about the printing offices ninety and nine who will fail."¹⁹⁸ In March 1878, the "Practical Paragraphs" column reproduces an excerpt from Thomas MacKellar's 1866 printers' manual, *The American Printer*, originally titled "General Remarks" in "The Art of Composition" chapter. "Experience," the selection reads, "proves that the apprentice foreshadows the workman, just as surely as the bend of the twig foretells the inclination of the tree. The upright, obedient, industrious lad will graduate a steady, skilful [sic] and capable man, as unmistakably as the perverse, idling, careless boy will ripen into a lazy, dissolute and worthless fellow." Thus, the practical printer is one in possession of a natural disposition towards obedience and industriousness; the reader of "Practical Paragraphs" and "Practical Matters" would, in fact, benefit from obedience by way of reading and accepting the trade knowledge being shared in each section. The article continues by emphasizing that work ethic and morals are not enough for those wanting to learn the "art and mystery of printing," but rather that they are only the minimum requirements which alone do not constitute one's readiness or capability in the trade. Those untaught characteristics are to be considered in relation to an apprentice-to-be's education:

¹⁹⁸ E. Burns Carol, "How the Apprentice may Become a Rapid and Correct Compositor.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 11 (May 1877): 179.

[...] it should be inquired of him: Has he had a fair common-school education? Is he a perfect speller? Has he a turn for reading? Is his eyesight good? Is he under fifteen years of age? A true affirmative answer to all these queries will entitle him to the position of reading and errand boy. He is told the hours at which he is to come and go, and a strict punctuality is enjoined upon him to the position of reading and errand boy. He sweeps the room, he sorts out the pi, he learns the position of the various letters in the case. A year spent in this way is an excellent preparative for 'going to case,' or learning the art of composing type.¹⁹⁹

The discriminating rhetoric that juxtaposed learned knowledge and education with moral superiority and natural ability continued to circulate even at the very end of the century. In *The Imprint*, for example, one article argues that education is the foremost requirement for compositors and printers as it weeds out "incompetency," but "is by no means the only point borne to mind. A boy may be well educated, and yet, through some physical, mental or other weakness, be entirely unable to grasp the business."²⁰⁰ Similar characterizations of apprentice boys appear in *The Canadian Printers and Publishers* at the end of the century, illustrating the degree to which the apprenticeship question agitated journeymen even when newer antagonizing forces, like the machine typesetter were being imposed onto the trade. For some, the concern at the end of the century was more explicitly about the fact that the days of the all-round printers were no more.²⁰¹ For others, the concern was still about the quality of boys entering the trade; certainly, the instability caused by the widespread use of machine typesetters fed into concerns about unskilled labour, and vice versa (Chapter 4 provides more insight into the relationship of anxieties about the death of the all-round printer and the entrance of the machine typesetter, which are closely related to concerns about apprentices and their lack of

¹⁹⁹ "The Apprentice Foreshadows the Workman.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 9 (March 1878): 217; Thomas MacKellar, *The American Printer: A Manual of Typography*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan, 1870): 103-4, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hn2gyt>.

²⁰⁰ "If printers would only take a little more pains ...," *The Imprint* 1, no. 6 (November 1893): 117.

²⁰¹ "Scarcity of Good Workmen.," *CPP* 2, no. 9 (September 1893): 12.

training in the final decade of the century). In the January 1893 issue of *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, in an article lamenting the “Neglected Education” of boy compositors, the author repeats concerns from earlier in the century that “the printer, of course, is not responsible for the stupidity and ignorance of a boy: but it is his duty to carefully examine every candidate for admission to his office, and ascertain his fitness before undertaking to teach him his business.”²⁰² Prefacing a rather useful piece on advice for tying up a page of type (originally writing for *The British Printer*), which was a common task in composing rooms, W. H. Srifield, writes that a boy’s mental capacities and intelligence are necessary elements of his work, just as manual ability is: “Young apprentices should not get the idea into their heads that they are merely going to be type lifters. Type-setting does not constitute the whole business of a composer, as most of us are no doubt aware; and if a lad means to get on in these go-ahead days, he must give his whole mind to every little detail which helps to make up a good compositors.”²⁰³ In 1897, one article argues that although “natural aptitude and earnest application such as few boys, or even men, are willing to give,” are necessary elements that “make a thoroughly good printer,” men also require great attention to detail and a desire for continuous learning. He should learn from the successes and failures of his peers as well as “the masterpieces of the best workmen.” He should also “gather a little library of practical technical books in his home, where he may add to his knowledge of the details of his work.”²⁰⁴

²⁰² “Neglected Education,” *CPP* 3, no.1 (January 1893): 14.

²⁰³ “How to Tie Up a Page of Type,” *CPP* 2, no. 1 (January 1893): 8.

²⁰⁴ “To be a Good Printer,” *CPP* 6, no. 12 (December 1897): 5.

By contrast, concerns about amateur or runaway labour in the last quarter of the century emphasize education (or the lack thereof) and *ridicule* claims to natural ability. This contrast not only highlights the convoluted nature of this trade discourse but demonstrates its instability. In April 1879, *The Dominion Printer* states its position on amateur printing in an article dedicated to concerns around cheap boy labour:

Another crying evil of amateur typography is the fearful and wonderful ‘journeymen’ that are ‘sent into this breathing world scarce half made up.’ Of all the nuisances about a printing-office commend us to a ‘natural, self-made’ printer. It is the next thing to impossibility to instruct one of these monstrosities, for he ‘knows it all.’ He has had an office of his own! It is easily seen that this method of spawning printers will account—if it does not already do so—for the marked deterioration in the capacity of men. It would seem indisputable that juvenile printing, in all its varied influences, is capable of working incalculable injury to the noblest art on earth, and it is encouraging to see that the craft are waking up to the fact that the evil must be strangled in its cradle.²⁰⁵

The characterization of the amateur printer as a baby or child is particularly striking because amateurs were often characterized by a distinct “lack of manliness.” Although Baron describes this “lack” in terms of amateurs’ weakness of character, in *The Dominion Printer* this lack stems from the absence of the prerequisite to manliness: education vis-à-vis apprenticeship.²⁰⁶ The characterization of amateur boy printers as babies was also used in some discussions around apprenticeship into the end of the century. For example, in the February 1893 issue of *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, an article copied from the *American Art Printer* remarks that “the initiatory steps of the apprentice are like the initiatory steps in anything else. They are not dissimilar to those of the child who is taught by its mother to totter across the floor, and so to gain a steady, straight measured gait.” The apprentice who cultivates good habits and “physical

²⁰⁵ “Amateur Printing,” *The Dominion Printer* 5, no.1 (April 1879): 4.

²⁰⁶ Baron, “Questions of Gender,” 182.

endurance” against the hard environment of the shopfloor will grow into a man: “Once don the armor of manhood and your body swells to the required size to fit it, and from thenceforth conforms to every movement and change with as much ease and comfort as if those changes were part and parcel of your very nature.”²⁰⁷ Burr points to the example in the July 15, 1896 issue of the ITU’s *Typographical Journal*, which describes how the apprentice that fails to achieve “manliness” and graduate to journeyman “keeps on forever—more or less—in that uncertain condition, neither boy nor man, yet in many cases long past the age at which maturity is supposed to come.”²⁰⁸ Where apprentices become men through their training, amateurs remain stunted in their growth toward manhood – indeed, they are not men at all. This is particularly unsettling given concerns that such labour threaten to unsettle journeymen’s economic and class positions as craft workers and their positions as family breadwinners. At the same time, however, the amateur’s lack of education discredits the legitimacy of any claim to inherent skill that journeymen might make. The arguments made for the inherent skills of boy apprentices function as exclusionary measures, enabling the trade to be selective with incoming trainees so as to maintain the skilled status of the craft, but claims by amateurs that they are “‘natural, self-made’ printer[s],” mocked in *The Dominion Printer* as “monstrosities,” suggest that there can be no such thing as inherent skill in the absence of formal regulated education.²⁰⁹

By emphasizing that natural capacities for typesetting exist within certain boys who become apprentices but *not* amateurs, the amateur worker is “othered” from the

²⁰⁷ “Standing At the Case,” *CPP* 2, no. 2 (February 1893): 13.

²⁰⁸ Burr, “‘That Coming Curse,’” 365; Louis F. Fuchs, “The ‘Devil.’,” *The Typographical Journal* 9, no. 2 (July 15, 1896): 50, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.li2bvuu>.

²⁰⁹ “Amateur Printing,” *The Dominion Printer* 5, no.1 (April 1879): 4.

trade and its masculine craft status. Likewise, the means through which amateurs learned the trade is also a point of contention. The conditions of the amateur labourer were not altogether dissimilar from that of women. Writing on women and skilled worker status, Gaskell remarks that “women’s unskilled status is produced at least in part by training that is widely accessible and formally short. Differences in what one needs to know to do the job are less important than differences in the way this knowledge is transmitted and made available in the labour market.”²¹⁰ Of course, an important distinction must be made: the difference between amateurs and women is that amateurs, as discussed here, are male, and chose to leave the system; women were systematically excluded from apprenticeship systems. Yet Gaskell’s observation rings true for the amateur labourer. The relative “othered” status of women and amateurs, as non-men workers devoid of the so-called “masculinity” acquired throughout apprenticeship suggests that the knowledge possessed by amateurs, who learn the trade outside of the formal education structures, is less valid than that possessed by apprentices *because* it was not acquired within the system. While they may work as printers and compositors, their work is deemed illegitimate not necessarily by virtue of its quality, but by virtue of the means by which they earned their education.

The perceived deterioration of the apprenticeship system and training throughout the period meant that male journeymen found themselves in conflict with their own immediate and incoming work force, whose lack of skills and qualifications destabilized the craft status of the trade. Jul. L. Wright decries that “the journeyman is paid for his *time* and *skill*. [. . .] [The typographical unions] should require of *all* applicants for

²¹⁰ Gaskell, “Conceptions of Skill,” 23.

recognition that they produce indubitable evidence of their worthiness to be enrolled as *one of us*. [The amateur] cannot do this.”²¹¹ Such a statement explicitly illuminates the trade’s exclusionary frameworks. It also illustrates rather clearly that the trade imagined its membership as highly exclusive. One piece in the July 1893 *Canadian Printer and Publisher* points to the central problem with journeymen’s antagonistic behaviour towards apprentices, namely that “boys are a necessity in printing offices. This being granted on all sides, why do not journeyman take kindly to the little fellows, and teach them as much as possible.” In order to sustain the longevity of the trade and craft that journeymen, obviously, care so deeply for, there needs to be a new generation of boys brought up in those traditions. The article argues that the new structure of apprenticeships, failings of a boy’s character, or issues with employers’ lack of attention are not wholly to blame for the poor quality of apprentices at the end of the century. Journeymen’s treatment is equally to blame for apprentices’ degradation of the trade because, contrary to much of the rhetoric around apprentices and amateurs in the trade’s literature, the fact remains that:

Every compositor ought to have sufficient pride for his own calling to see that those who are qualifying for it will in course of time be good, and if possible, first-class workmen . [...] If printing is to deteriorate, and the craftsmen’s wages fall to the level of the drain diggers, by all means continue the unfair treatment of apprentices. Show them in every way that printing is not an art, but a common place business, in which neither taste nor skill receive acknowledgement, and then grumble if in a few years you descend to the level you unwittingly aimed at. The boys, no matter how they are viewed, are the coming men, and if they are coached along carefully, and develop into first-class workmen, they will be the better enabled to stand out later on for fair wages, and their firm stand will make the position of the older men, their former tutors, more secure.²¹²

²¹¹ J.L.W., “Amateur Job-Printing Offices,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 238-9.

²¹² “Don’t Despise the Boys,” *CPP* 2, no. 7 (July 1893): 4.

In many of the articles directed to or about apprentices and amateur labour, the boys are not referred to as craftsmen, and while their sex may be male, they do not often yet (if ever) possess the type of masculinity that is conferred upon journeyman compositors. This rhetorical and representational strategy is one of the non-union strategies used by journeymen to address anxieties about the changing systems and structures. It would be an oversimplification to argue that journeymen's attacking of apprentices and amateurs was purely symptomatic of their concerns regarding the system, particularly as, as has been outlined above, expressions of journeymen's concerns were often (mis)directed at the boys. In reality, there was certainly a tangible belief that the new generation of compositors was inferior to the old and that their work was taking business and money away from fully-trained journeymen. Yet, largely unacknowledged by journeymen in discussions of apprentices and amateurs, the craft status of the trade was already being jeopardized by the increasing industrialization, mechanization, and specialization of printing and publishing work. Aside from apprentices and amateurs, these and other changes to the trade led to the rise and fall of other male workers who were, like the apprentice, simultaneously valuable and antagonist members of the trade: the Tramps.

2.2 Tramp Printers

Journeymen's concerns for tramp printers in the second half of the century are irrevocably linked to the shifting trade conditions that resulted in a surplus of apprentice and amateur labour. Tramping, E. J. Hobsbawn and Humphrey R. Southall detail, was not unique to the printing trade, but was in fact a common feature of the culture of organized

labour in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, British North America, and the United States.²¹³ Printers who tramped were journeymen who had completed an apprenticeship and were recognized and accredited union members. As such, they were, Rumble writes, “an ‘authorized’ workforce tied to straightforward supply and demand,” labour market conditions that were affected by fluctuating seasonal needs for printed materials (commercial and newspaper) throughout the first half of the century.²¹⁴ Before the 1860s, the tramping system was a “fundamental element of the printing work culture” and a system of mobility that “acted as a method of circulating skilled workers across space and time.”²¹⁵ The tramping system facilitated important international, transatlantic, and local networks of typographical labour, operating across and within British North America, Britain, and the United States. Itinerant printers travelled fluidly between British North America and the United States via this network.

Here, a brief history of the relationship between the Canadian and American printing trades is helpful. In the United States, the Typographical Society (renamed the National Typographical Union in 1851 and, finally, the International Typographical Union in 1869) was established in New York city in 1795. According to George A. Tracy’s *History of the Typographical Union*, published by the International Typographical Union (ITU) in 1913, it was the first known formal typographical society in North America to devote “its energies to trade conditions and wage scales that existed for any appreciable length of time” and which was not, as far as is known, “called into

²¹³ E.J. Hobsbawm, “The Tramping Artisan,” *The Economic History Review* 3, no.3 (1951): 299-320, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2599989>; Humphrey R. Southall, “The Tramping Artisan Revisited: Labour Mobility and Economic Distress in Early Victorian England,” *The Economic History Review* 44, no.2 (May 1991): 272-296, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2598297>.

²¹⁴ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 35; Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 59.

²¹⁵ Remes, “Movable Type,” 390.

existence by an immediate exigency of the trade, and ceasing to exist when that exigency was removed.”²¹⁶ The ITU grew to have an overwhelmingly large reach, not simply because Canadian unions joined the larger American organization, but because the Canadian and American industries functioned in a kind of reciprocal relationship.²¹⁷ As Jacob Remes observes in his study, “Movable Type: Toronto’s Transnational Printers, 1866-1872,” Canadian unions joined the American organization, which welcomed them, “precisely because printers in the United States and Canada worked in a single, unified labor market.”²¹⁸ In all cases, questions of apprenticeship, wages, and arbitration were afforded a great deal of importance in the establishment of typographical unions across British North America, especially considering the popular practice of Canadian printers traveling to the United States for work.²¹⁹ In 1865 the National Typographical Union (NTU) formally extended an invitation to the Toronto Typographical Union, altering article one of the union constitution to read: “‘It [the NTU] shall possess original and exclusive jurisdiction in all matters pertaining to the fellowship of the craft in the United States and British Provinces.’” In 1866, charters were issued to Canadian unions in Saint John, New Brunswick, and Toronto and other typographical unions in Canada would join the following year through to the 1870s: Montreal (1867); Ottawa (1868); Hamilton, London, Halifax (1870); Quebec (1872). They joined because they saw the advantages that came with being associated with the ITU, “a powerful American federation,”

²¹⁶ Tracy, *History*, 130, 230, 235-6, 17-9.

²¹⁷ Tracy, *History*, 212.

²¹⁸ Remes, “Movable Type,” 386.

²¹⁹ Burr, “Defending ‘The Art Preservative’,” 52; Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 23; Leroux “‘Culture ouvrière et métiers du livre,’” 32; Remes, “Movable Type,” 388-9, 388, figure 19.1.

including, Leroux notes, “participation in a system of travel cards that gave a worker belonging to the ITU significant advantages when he moved to another city.”²²⁰

Although a foundational part of nineteenth-century typographical work, the movements of traveling printers and compositors at the beginning of the century were largely unregulated, and typographical societies “desire[d] to control the impact of traveling printers.” Thus, in response to the early system of unregulated tramping in the trade, the National Union established a “coherent system which incorporated and supported the travelling journeymen” that would govern the trade’s itinerants from about 1815 to the 1860s.²²¹ One of the more important features of this system was the Union or traveling cards, issued to printers and compositors by their union local. In 1852, the National Typographical Union “adopted a national policy of having local branches issue travelling cards for departing members, in return accepting card holding incomers from other branches.” The first union card was adopted by the National convention in 1853. The card included the member’s signature, the union local and its number, the state in which the union was found, and the date of issue. The card indicated a printer’s membership to a local, thereby also functioning as a certificate of a compositor’s credentials and a symbol of their competency. The card “entitled” the member “to the confidence, friendship and good offices of all unions under the jurisdiction of the National Typographical Union.”²²² In the decade following the establishment of the card system, membership to the National Union increased, as did the number of union locals: in 1852 there were 12 subordinate unions; in 1869, there were 79. Given such growth, the

²²⁰ Tracy, *History*, 217, 230, 248; Leroux, ““Culture ouvrière et métiers du livre,”” 34; Leroux, “Printers: From Shop to Industry,” 84

²²¹ Pretzer, “Tramp Printers”, 5, 8, 6.

²²² Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 22-3; Tracy, *History*, 151.

Union “insisted that member locals issue cards and receive them from traveling members.” This order “entitled men to admission to a local without payment of initiation fees.”²²³

The formalized tramping system became a “program for unemployment relief especially designed for meeting the exigencies of seasonal or irregular employment” that was, otherwise, a problematic but common feature of the nineteenth-century newspaper industry.²²⁴ At the same time that the ITU “facilitated the movement of union men from one locale to another while simultaneously preventing traveling printers from undermining local wage scales,” subordinate unions were responsible for dealing with tramps in every other matter, including providing tramps the necessary funds and resources. In early British circuits, a tramp printer would arrive in town and present their union card. They would be given a stipend, fed, housed, and given a temporary working position, where possible. If no work was available, the tramp was expected to move on and continue travelling until they found work. Zerker observes that, in Canada, traveling printers coming to Toronto “were definitely accustomed to the migratory tradition and practice, [...] [and] they willingly adopted the old travel allowance scheme.”²²⁵ However, the tramping system may not have operated the same in Canada as it did in Britain or the United States. While many Toronto printers participated in the tramping system, traveling locally and into America, it was less common for tramps to travel to Canada for work, though some Canadian locals recognized cards issued by American locals. Zerker suggests that it was partly the Canadian landscape that made tramping less feasible in

²²³ Pretzer, “Tramp Printers”, 7; Tracy, *History*, 75.

²²⁴ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 55; Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 24-5.

²²⁵ Pretzer, “Tramp Printers,” 7; Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 21; Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 56.

Canada than elsewhere: “One need hardly dwell on the geographical and climatic differences between the pioneer land and the densely populated, compact islands of the United Kingdom. It was inconceivable for the tramp printer in Canada to be expected to make his way over the countryside on foot, as he had in the old country.” The use of steamship lines that connected Ontario and the United States (these operated from Toronto-Kingston, Toronto-Hamilton, Toronto-Niagara, Toronto-Rochester, and Chicago-Hamilton) mobilized the tramping circuit into Canada. However, Zerker also remarks that the needs of tramping printers to travel by steamship meant that “travel assistance must have been a costly burden for the newly formed union in Canada,” and she identifies these expenses as contributing to the downfall of the “old tramping system” as it operated in England.²²⁶ She contends that “it is significant that the founding of the York Typographical Society [in Toronto] in 1832 coincided with the beginning of decline of exclusive reliance on tramp relief in the old country” and that later revisions to the Society’s structure demonstrate that the Society “borrowed some element of the traditional technique of mutual aid, but that it was compelled by urgencies of economic conditions [in British North America] on the one hand, and by realities of the new environment of the other, to adapt the program to meet the demand for both relief and closed-shop security in those early, experimental years of its existence.”²²⁷

From 1860 to the end of the century, “a permanent class of *tramp printers*” emerged that was decidedly different from the printer who tramped. The professional

²²⁶ Remes, “Movable Type,” 388; Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 72, 56-7. For more information on the tramping system in Canada / Toronto, see Zerker, Chapter 4 “The international connection,” in *The Rise and Fall*; for more on the American and International tramping system, see Finkelstein, Chapter 1 “Roving Printers: International Printer Migration, Skills Exchange, and Information Flow, 1830-1914,” in *Movable Types*.

²²⁷ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 58.

status of “tramp printer,” Pretzer notes, was adopted by journeymen in “response to changing trade conditions and employers’ strategies.” For most typographical workers, tramping was a temporary situation; however, other trade concerns, tied to the increased presence of half-way journeymen and amateur workers, for instance, resulted in the period’s increased number of tramps. In particular,

country offices were notorious for turning young men loose before completing their apprenticeship in order to replace them with new boys. As this cycle repeated itself endlessly in country offices, the number of men seeking work in city offices or on the road increased. [...] Some of these young men eventually settled in one place; others drifted out of the trade; still others continued as full-time tramps.

Between 1865 and 1915, nearly six hundred journeymen were “perennial tramps.”²²⁸

Data collected by Remes regarding the mobility of Toronto printers alone indicates that, by the second half of the century, tramping was decidedly transnational. According to Remes, the most frequently mentioned cities where Toronto-based tramps traveled to and from between January 1866 and February 1872 identified in the Toronto Typographical Union minutes included: Chicago, Ill.; Ottawa, ON; Detroit, Mich.; Montreal, QC; and New York, N.Y., with several other American or British cities listed.²²⁹

Across North America, newspaper compositors continued to be increasingly concerned about this supply of cheap labour, especially as “much of the [American] trade’s post-Civil War expansion appeared in newspaper offices where the perishable importance of the news called for speed of composition.” Employers therefore hired two-thirders and women and supported technological developments, all of which were

²²⁸ Pretzer, “Tramp Printers,” 9.

²²⁹ Remes, “Movable Type,” 388, figure 19.1.

encouraged in the hopes of reducing labour costs and increasing production. Unwilling to offer more than the necessary number of permanent situations, employers increased the use of casual labour, in the form of tramps, to meet the demands of rush periods and maintain low workforce expenses. Pretzer remarks that foremen became pressured to improve efficiency and attempted to meet their employers' demands by "limit[ing] employment to only the best subs [substitute workers] by creating lists of acceptable workers, [thus] relations between regulars and tramps grew tense." Such lists would cease to be used in the 1880s but, as Pretzer notes, employers and journeymen's strategies continued to perpetuate unemployment, thus maintaining the permanent class of tramp printer: "Since the reciprocal relationship between the unions and the tramps was fraught with contradictions and tensions, growing hostility toward tramps during the last quarter of the century gradually eroded union members' willingness to support tramping."²³⁰

At the same time as this phase of tramping expanded, North America was simultaneously experiencing an economic depression. After the American Civil War, the trade's unions expanded drastically, but the depression of the 1870s had a significant impact on the American trade's numbers and organizational efforts. According to Bruce Laurie, "printers came perilously close to losing their union" during the post-war decade as "several convergent forces severely weakened and nearly destroyed what had become one of the most powerful craft unions" in America.²³¹ The 1870s was also a trying decade for periodical publishers; although, as Jeffrey D. Groves asserts, the number of

²³⁰ Pretzer, "Tramp Printers," 11, 12.

²³¹ Bruce Laurie, "Labor and Labor Organization," in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, Michael Winship, and David D. Hall (University of North Carolina Press, 2007): 77, 85, ProQuest Ebook Central.

periodicals in America nearly doubled “in spite of the economic depression,”²³² even established periodicals were made “vulnerable to the vicissitudes of an expanding but highly unstable economy.”²³³ Additionally, longstanding book industry practices were abandoned during the decade with publishers offering discounts on their works to the trade and public that “reduced the profitability of both jobbing and retailing.”²³⁴ The trade in Canada was not immune from the impacts of the depression. The 1870s (and later the 1890s) in Canada was “a period of heavy unemployment” or “trade depressions as they were then called”²³⁵ and the typographical trades felt the impact of the depression on its urban industries as printers tramped from the United States into Canada (and vice versa) to find work. By the second half of 1879, the economic conditions of the American trade were beginning to improve, and some journeymen were hopeful that things would shift in Canada, as well. With signs of an improving economy on the horizon in America, one article in *The Printer’s Miscellany* anticipates that “the skilled and unskilled labor market of Canada will be greatly and almost immediately relieved by this revival of trade in the United States, for no doubt many of the former [tramps] will flock to the commercial centres [sic] where work is plenty, and this, in turn, will relieve those remaining at home [non-tramp workers].”²³⁶

²³² Jeffrey D. Groves, “Periodicals and Serial Publication: Introduction,” in *History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, Michael Winship, and David D. Hall (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 225, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²³³ Eric Lupfer, “The Business of American Magazines,” in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, Michael Winship, and David D. Hall (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 250, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²³⁴ Jeffrey D. Groves, “Courtesy of the Trade,” in *History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, Michael Winship, and David D. Hall (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 147, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²³⁵ James Struthers, “Canadian Unemployment Policy in the 1930s,” in *Readings in Canadian History*, vol. 2, *Post-Confederation*, 4th ed., ed. R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith (Harcourt Brace & Company: 1994), 376.

²³⁶ “Return of the Good Times,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 3 (September 1879): 36.

It is in this context that the Canadian trade's antagonism towards tramp printers emerged, and regular, stay-at-home journeymen began to use their journals to circulate warnings to and news about tramp printers as a means of protecting local trade networks. Despite the fact that the tramping lifestyle was a ubiquitous facet of typographical work and life at the beginning of the century, into the mid-century, journeymen were increasingly concerned about the number of traveling printers, the resources they might take up, the wages and union funds they would depress, and the amount of new labour (in the form of apprentices) that would be needed to fill the gaps. As Zerker remarks, printers were painfully and acutely aware "that a labour surplus tended to depress wages, even when wages had a record of customary stability." This was a significant concern to local printers not just because of the trade's high levels of voluntary and independent mobility, but also because employers were known to import labour from out of town.²³⁷ In response to this threat of roving labour, "regular" journeymen (those who did not tramp) used their journals to circulate narratives about tramp printers. Although many tramps were union members, their peers framed the character of the tramp printer (as opposed to specific tramps) as an un-masculine slovenly drunkard, frequently comparing him to the gentlemanly qualities of other journeymen compositors. This representational strategy did not necessarily blame tramps for the instability of the trade during the 1870s. Instead, it attempted to cast a shadow over the character of the tramp to discredit their abilities and skills and to discourage their employment.

Of all the typographical trade journals published in Canada during the nineteenth century, *The Printer's Miscellany* was particularly interested in documenting the

²³⁷ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 55, 59; Pretzer, "Tramp Printers," 6.

movement and mobility of trade members across and beyond North America. In some ways, this focus was related to the expansion of settler print capitalisms in the newly founded Dominion of Canada. For example, in the August 1877 issue of the *Miscellany*, a correspondent from Quebec City wrote: “Allow me to suggest that young, lively and plucky typos, with sufficient capital, would find the following towns in the Dominion suitable places to start moderately-sized weekly newspapers with small job offices attached,” and included a list of 28 towns where a printer might find it profitable to expand the trade.²³⁸ The *Miscellany*’s focus on trade mobilities was also about mapping the transnational movement of Canadian workers. Finlay frequently issued calls to the *Miscellany*’s readership – “those who have any knowledge of printers, natives of the Dominion of Canada, who are working in any foreign country” – to assist in the locating and plotting of Canadian printers in the world. He asks them to send in the names of those printers “together with a short account of where they served their apprenticeship, how long since they left home, where they are working, and any other particulars that might be considered of interest to their former friends or companions, shopmates or acquaintances.”²³⁹ Such accounts, including the recurring sections on “Printers Abroad,” furnished the issues that followed and preceded Finlay’s direct solicitation. But the people mentioned in such sections were not tramps; rather they were printers and compositors who had emigrated and were working in foreign trade centers not as casual labourers, but often in permanent and professional capacities (such as proprietor or

²³⁸ “Suggestive,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 2 (August 1877): 32.

²³⁹ For example: “We invite those who have any knowledge...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 5 (November 1877): 100; “We invite those who have any knowledge ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 1 (July 1878): 6.

editor).²⁴⁰ The mobilities exercised by such printers were of interest to the *Miscellany* and the trade at large because it kept journeymen abreast of changes in the transnational industry and informed them where their peers were working. They were the mobilities of “regular” journeymen. For instance, in the July 1880 issue, the report on “Provincial Printers Abroad” identifies that “Billy Stone, who worked on the Moncton *Times* previous to going to Boston ten months ago, is a regular on the *Post* of that city”; “Wm. B. Gillespie, late of the *Progress* staff, Summerside, P. E. I., is a regular on the *Daily Mail*, Lowell, Mass.,”; and “Jas. Armour, of Halifax, is a regular on the Boston *Post*.”²⁴¹ Conversely, the mobility exercised by tramp printers is, in the *Miscellany*, often characterized as irregular, damaging, and unwanted. It is not framed as a welcome addition to a local trade community, but as an invasion.

Tramps are frequently mentioned in correspondence to *The Printer’s Miscellany* and the writers usually celebrate and encourage the distance they keep from certain cities. Journeymen were typically conscious that their real concern was not necessarily the tramp printer himself, but the shifting “state of trade.”²⁴² Many of the letters published in the *Miscellany* in the last quarter of the century illuminate the ways that journeymen understood that the changing continental economic landscape was, at least partially, the catalyst for conflicts between journeymen and tramps after 1860. For instance, in May 1877 a correspondent from Dundas, Ontario reports: “Tramps are few and far between. They manage to steer clear of this place, as it is a bad haven for ‘ye weary print.’ During

²⁴⁰ For examples of these sections before Finlay’s solicitation, see: “News of the Craft: Provincial Printers Abroad,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 3 (September 1876): 22; “News of the Craft: Canadian Printers Abroad,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 2 (August 1877): 35.

²⁴¹ “Provincial Printers Abroad,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 1 (July 1880): 11.

²⁴² “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 4 (October 1877): 79.

last month we had but three, claiming as their birthplaces, respectively, Texas, Sweden, and Madagascar.” In October 1877, Slug Twenty from Montreal, Quebec writes:

“Travelling printers will do well to give Montreal a wide berth. There are more ‘subs’ here than spaces.”²⁴³ In the same issue, Finlay himself issues a warning to tramps who might come to New Brunswick, also pointing to the seasonality of the work:

There is not much change to note in the state of trade. A slight improvement has taken place in the amount of work presented. Some offices are pretty well crowded with work, having to work overtime,. [sic] Notwithstanding the fact that nearly all hands are to work, we would advise perambulating printers not to visit this city for the present. It’s a bad place to get snowed in, should work slacken off during the winter.²⁴⁴

In December 1877, Pica, a correspondent from Ottawa, Ontario writes: “Tramps don’t visit Ottawa often. It is rather out of the way. The *space* between places makes them feel ‘out of sorts,’”; and “DEVIL” from Newmarket, Ontario writes: “Tramps are scarce around here now. It would be advisable for them to keep away from this section of the country. They are not wanted.”²⁴⁵ Among other Ontario cities, tramps were reported to steer clear of Exeter, Port Perry, Woodstock, Stratford, and Napanee.²⁴⁶ Tramping news from America also featured in correspondence. For example, in February 1878, Corn Cob from Marlboro, Massachusetts puts it simply: “No tramps, and don’t want any”,²⁴⁷ and

²⁴³ “News from Wentworth County, Ontario,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 11 (May 1877): 191; Slug Twenty, “Montreal Letter,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 4 (October 1877): 85.

²⁴⁴ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 4 (October 1877): 79.

²⁴⁵ Pica, “Notes from Ottawa,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 140; “DEVIL,” “Newmarket Notes,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 140-1.

²⁴⁶ “Stick,” “Exeter and Vicinity,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 2 (August 1878): 55; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 2 (September 1878): 79; “Woodstock Waifs,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 3 (September 1878): 87; “Slug Five,” “Stratford Scraps,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 246; “Napanee News,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 12 (June 1880): 186.

²⁴⁷ Corn Cob, “A Voice from the Old Bay State,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 8 (February 1878): 201.

regular contributor Stick and Rule's March 1879 letter from Connecticut, Ohio remarks that "travelling printers have heretofore been advised to avoid this city, but still they pop in, only to find nothing to do."²⁴⁸

For many journeymen, the concern about tramps was not simply that they posed a threat to the local economy; it was also that their presence unsettled stay-at-home journeymen's attempts to redefine and protect their labour identity and statuses in a trade that was already so unsettled by the influx of boy and amateur labour. Much like in the case of the trade's conflicts with apprentices, compositors became concerned that the tramp printer epitomized older values and represented lifestyles of the trade that no longer matched the industry and illustrated all too clearly the shifts in work and skill that compositors were performing. While the category of the professional tramp "made up only a small portion of traveling printers during the late nineteenth century, their status as emblems and exponents of the craft culture was unparalleled." As Prezter observes:

To the man who had given up some independence for a regular sit [employment position] and a steady income, who had forfeited his *all around* skills for a facility with *straight matter*, who had to take direction daily from a foreman, who had traded variety for stability, the tramp printer was a living reminder of an ethos partially abandoned. Tramps were both threatening and attractive because they refused to relinquish the ideals that were valued in the craft culture but had become less and less appropriate to the workplace and the majority of printers.

Indeed, late-nineteenth century criticisms of tramp printers tended not to focus on the union structures that enabled the practice but often turned instead to focus "on the alleged personal defects associated with tramping." Thus, it is not surprising that journeymen

²⁴⁸ Stick and Rule, "Norwich Notes.," letter to the editor, *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 9 (March 1879): 271.

used narrative and rhetorical techniques to exalt the trade's attitudes and cultivate an image of the tramp as an undesirable labourer.²⁴⁹

The tramp "became a well-recognized character in American folklore" and, as Jody Mason outlines, a distinct figure in Canadian literature and poetry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁵⁰ Printing trade lore is no exception to this. In general, "union tramps," Finkelstein notes, "were celebrated in trade lore for representing craft independence, integrity, and ingenuity" but the trade's attempts at regulating trade conditions and asserting control over the tramping systems eventually led to the "stigmatiz[ation] [of] the tramp as part of an immoral system." As Pretzer concludes, "tramps were both romanticized and vilified in the trade literature" because while tramps posed real economical threats, they also "represented a condemnation of those journeymen who allowed themselves to become specialized, dependent workers, even as they claimed allegiance to the old craft culture," as is equally evidenced in the trade's shifting relationship to apprentices.²⁵¹

Representations of tramp printers were complex because they tended to paint them as both erudite and skilled, and intemperate and amoral. Tramp printers often had a positive effect on the local trade, such as by stimulating the transference of skills and knowledge across North America and beyond. Tramps were often "[men] of the world and unusually erudite, in addition to being [...] crack comp[ositors]," as Alastair Johnston puts it and, as John Howells and Marion Dearman observe, were typically

²⁴⁹ Pretzer, "Tramp Printers," 9, 11, 12.

²⁵⁰ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 65; Jody Mason, *Writing Unemployment: Worklessness, Mobility, and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Canadian Literatures* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 25-53, Scholars Portal Books.

²⁵¹ Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 37; Pretzer, "Tramp Printers," 12.

“highly skilled, capable of demanding high wages, and [possessed] above average literacy.” They were distinguished by their pride, dignity, and uncompromising independence – “their badges” – and armed with “skills, artistry, and solidarity with fellow printers” – “their tools.”²⁵² According to Johnston, the “tramping lifestyle was celebrated in doggerel poems in the many typographical journals of the 1880s. Whatever they made subbing was usually quickly dissipated in gaming parlors, bars, bordellos and similar dens of ubiquity. It may have been a respite between the saloons and cribs, but even in the printing office the beer bucket was regularly sent out to be replenished.”²⁵³ Rumble writes that “tramping was an honorable, even mythic, aspect of the life.” At the same time, however, tramps were often associated with drunkenness, thievery, and poor work habits, though they were simultaneously revered for their skills. According to Pretzer, an 1875 article in *The Printers’ Circular* describes that the “characteristic tramp” was “of the festive nature, who walks into a town tired, hungry, solemn, sober, and penniless; poor, but respectable; shabby, but very skillful; shoeless, but with good understanding; all but hatless, with a remarkable idea-box.”²⁵⁴ Indeed, as far as skill is concerned, many of the trade’s fastest typesetters, known as Swifts, were tramp printers.²⁵⁵ The fabled and complex character of the tramp printer – a slovenly but highly educated and skilled craftsman – would be remembered well into the twentieth century. For instance, Rumble notes that Irvin S. Cobb, a newspaperman, described tramp printers in his 1923 memoir. According to Cobb, tramps were “erratic, uncertain, capable chaps,

²⁵² Johnston, *Alphabets to Order*, 144; John Howells and Marion Dearman, eds., *Tramp Printers: Adventures and Forgotten Paths Once Traced by Wandering Artisans of Newspapering and Typography* (Discovery Press, 1996, 2013), 11.

²⁵³ Johnston, *Alphabets to Order*, 144.

²⁵⁴ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 36; *The Printers’ Circular* 10 (May 1895): 62, quoted in Pretzer, “Tramp Printers,” 3.

²⁵⁵ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 36.

born spellers most of them, men who had been everywhere and had seen everything, and generally men who had read a lot and remembered what they had read.”²⁵⁶

The character of the tramp remembered and created in the trade literature of the nineteenth century was diametrically opposed to the character of the skilled and capable compositor that was the ideal typographical worker. This was the case even though journeymen compositors and tramping compositors were not, in the end, so different from each other. For instance, in November 1878, in a rare show of generosity towards tramps, one of the *Miscellany*’s regular contributors, Hair Space, issued a “A Plea for the So-called Tramps.” He calls on the trade to think critically about who tramps are. Although they have been cast as drunkards, criminals, and incompetent workmen, they are, many of them, simply journeymen out of work, and thus forced to travel. He writes:

Had the great ‘art preservative of all arts’ preserved them from such a misfortune as that, they would not be placed under the same condemnation, with their other co-seekers after an honest livelihood. But such is the lot of some. The stigma must be borne patiently by them, and it is to be hoped for that, if these poor but honest toilers cannot get their just desserts here they surely will receive their reward in the great hereafter.²⁵⁷

Overwhelmingly, however, the members of the trade did not look favourably upon this class of printer, regardless of how they ended up tramping. In addition to cultivating a hostile environment for tramps in their correspondence sections, the journals’ contributors and proprietors also often cultivated an image of the tramp as poor and slovenly, despite the fact that many tramp printers were fully-fledged journeymen, just like those workers who sought to run them out of their cities. In 1876, *The Dominion*

²⁵⁶ Rumble, *The Swifts*, xiv; Irvin S. Cobb, *Stickfuls: Compositions of a Newspaper Minion* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 31-2, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015030141066>.

²⁵⁷ Hair Space, “A Plea for the So-called Tramps,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 5 (November 1878): 151, 152.

Printer republished a piece from the *American Newspaper Reporter*, “The Tramp Printers’ Virtue,” written by Josh T. Johnston, editor and proprietor of the *Brant Union* in Brantford, Ontario. Johnston writes that when he began his business he was “determined that the tramp should have no cause to grumble at his treatment in the *Union* office. But, to guard against imposition by inferior workmen” (tramps that were *not* members of a union) he “posted up placards” indicating that he required union cards to work in his shop (Figure 3). The result of this signage he writes, “was that EVERY tramp who presented himself produced a musty tobacco-stained card from some Union or another,” yet all but one was a “dead swindle.” As a result, Johnston argues that union status does not exempt a tramp from poor workmanship, which seems to be the case for journeymen who do not tramp; in fact, tramping was the common denominator that tied them to poor work. A tramp’s union status did not automatically make them a good worker. He ends with a warning: that all who entertain tramp printers, union or not, will come to hold his same opinion.²⁵⁸ Tramp printers, the *Miscellany* would suggest a year later, are decidedly *not* practical printers, but another class of poor labourer altogether only “representing” themselves as practical printers (Figure 4).²⁵⁹

Journeymen utilized creative writing to differentiate the tramp printer from themselves, frequently villainizing their mobilities, discrediting the tramp printer’s skills, and, above all, attacking their character. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, journeymen’s anxieties about what the tramp’s independence represented led them to characterize tramps as injurious evils whose explicit mission was to undermine the

²⁵⁸ “The Tramp Printers’ Virtues,” *The Dominion Printer* 2, no. 1 (January 1876): 3.

²⁵⁹ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no.8 (February 1877): 128.

trade's craft status, rather than acknowledge the reality that tramps only existed because of the changing labour conditions of which "regular" journeymen were also victims. In attacking the character of the tramp printer, journeymen hoped to alter the image of the once romanticized printer who tramps into the undesirable tramp printer, thereby addressing the widely felt concern that tramps were an affront to the identity of the trade at large and protecting their work and local economies. In a story by "Delta" for the May 1877 *Printer's Miscellany*, the narrative does not discredit the tramps' skills, but instead describes the tramp as something much worse than unskilled: he is lacking in quality of character and underserving of respect or work. The story narrates the experience of two tramp printers (of which the narrator is one) who are not offered work at two newspaper offices (because they are not women and therefore more expensive to employ). Here, the tramp is:

a poor, broken-down tramp, under whose rags made more ragged-looking by want and care and waste of body—there is neither heart nor soul; whose only thought is murder, and rape, and larceny; jeered by children, shamed by all; who has no right to live, and cares not to die; pointed at with the finger of scorn; detested as a monster crawling upon the face of the earth, whom the very dogs of the barn yard are taught to snarl and snap at as he dips in the farm well for water to slake his parched lips and quench his thirst, which a broiling sun has enhanced. Poor, miserable, God-forgotten, unshaven, shoeless, footsore and heartsore tramp!²⁶⁰

In other instances, the itinerant printer is described as "ragged and dirty" and someone who made women feel uneasy; he is so poor, sad, and desperate that he must be told, it is conjectured, not to eat the paste in the print shop.²⁶¹ In a poem written by Kivas Pyke and "Published by Request," in the *Miscellany*, "A Tramp Printer's Dream.," the tramp who

²⁶⁰ Delta, "'Hoofing It.'," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 11 (May 1877): 185-6.

²⁶¹ "An Eccentric Typo.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 10 (April 1877): 174; Jac, "Toronto Jottings.," letter to the editor, *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 1 (July 1877): 14.

is cast out of work is “only a *tramp*—‘on the road’ and ‘dead broke.’”²⁶² In an article written for the July 1878 issue of the *Miscellany*, one contributor, John, N.B., describes the average tramp as “poor,” “unfortunate,” “misguided,” and “a humbug,” who is generally undeserving of “the sympathy of the printing fraternity.” It is this class of printer, the author surmises, that has brought about the “virtual degeneracy of the art.” He asks: “Can nothing be done to awaken the tramp printer to a realization of the fact that he is a libel on his better self and a sticking plaster on the fraternity, whose respectable calling he dishonors?” The tramp printer, according to this contributor, is also a drunk; there is a distinct difference between the kind of printer who travels for work, and the tramp for whom liquor is “the primary root in this great evil,” a class of tramps “we should denounce as frauds, and to whom we should turn the ‘cold shoulder.’” This class of tramp printer, the author concludes, cannot be reformed, but is morally corrupt:

They sow and reap the harvests of sorrow, sickness – death. They will continue to multiply. They will continue to travel over familiar tramping grounds of their choice, until the weary form is ‘unlocked’ as in the embrace of death. We sometimes throw the mantle of charity over them – thinking that they will endeavor to better themselves. But we have no evidence of their zeal in this much to be desired reform – except with their “good intentions,” and there is a certain place paved with them.²⁶³

Such hyperbolic characterizations are common and set the “tramp” character in direct opposition to the well-educated, industrious, responsible, respectful, and gentlemanly journeyman printer that is the face of the trade in Canada and elsewhere. In direct contrast to images of the vagabond tramp, the journeyman who occupies a permanent situation is imagined to be descendant from the true gentlemen printers who

²⁶² Kivas Pyke, “A Tramp Printer’s Dream,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 5 (November 1877): 102.

²⁶³ John, N.B., “Tramp Printers,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 1 (July 1878): 21-22.

donned gowns and swords. In the June 1878 issue of *The Dominion Printer*, a short piece laments that “a worthy old-fashioned printer died a few months ago, who could remember when journeymen came to work in knee-breeches, buckle shoes, and (precious privilege of printers and other gentlemen !) *wearing a sword*” (Figure 5). In his November 1878 “Practical Matters.,” Jul. L. Wright includes a short section titled “Gown and Sword.” which begins: “the privilege of wearing [gowns and swords] [...] in ‘ye olden timme’ [sic] was a distinguishing honor conferred upon the compositor, ranking him as a *gentleman* and creating a station unattainable by the followers of any other handicraft or the votaries of trade.”²⁶⁴ Patrick Duffy notes that journeymen used clothing to mark “sharp occupational and status differences” between them and other workmen, indicating that in England at the end of the century it was common for “older compositors to wear top hats while machine-room hands dressed in corduroys with a silk handkerchief tied in a knot with the ends brought round the brace.” According to Duffy, some compositors were known to have “dressed formally [in] stiff white collars, black cravats, ties and waistcoats.” He contends that compositors not only maintained high standards in their appearance, but in their social relationship with other journeymen, “invariably alluding to each other as gentlemen.”²⁶⁵

Although this romantic image of the printer is the one that journeymen likely would have preferred to dominate the historical record, it was not, in fact, the reality. As I have briefly suggested above, tramps were “fabled drinkers” and employing printers viewed tramps exhibiting such behaviours “at best with mixed feelings” and “at worst ...

²⁶⁴ “A worthy old-fashioned printer died ...,” *The Dominion Printer*, 4, no. 2 (June 1878): 5; Jul L. Wright, “Practical Matters.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 5 (November 1878): 138.

²⁶⁵ Duffy, *Skilled Compositor*, 100, 101.

[as] undependable.”²⁶⁶ However, this association was unfairly applied to tramps, as excessive drinking was a habit endemic to the trade at large.²⁶⁷ Although intemperance was perceived as a significant threat to the trade, drinking was a part of printers’ shop-floor social culture. For instance, a popular shop-floor betting game, “Quadrats,” also known as “jeffing,” was played by rolling quads or slugs as if they were dice; printers often played this game to decide how to divide work, for money, or to determine who would pay for drinks.²⁶⁸ As Zerker notes, the working conditions of the shop floor “induced a craving for almost instantaneous relaxation”; the diagnosis of printers’ consumption of alcohol might be what we could call alcoholism today, and was “so consistently concentrated, that some authorities suggest that it was in the nature of an industrial disease.”²⁶⁹ Mila Daskalova argues that the influence of industrial capitalism on the trade in the nineteenth century “transformed the printing office into a high-pressure, fast-paced work environment that commentators in the press and printers themselves perceived as ‘unhealthy’.”²⁷⁰ Drinking became a necessary remedy for the difficulties of shop floor life. A full-page article in the January 1878 *Dominion Printer*, “The Demon of Intemperance,” laments that too many good printers fall prey to this evil, largely resulting from the fact that, as newspaper compositors, their work involves setting and reading all the world’s horrible news every day – what else is there to do to cope but drink? The

²⁶⁶ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 22; “The Demon of Intemperance,” *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 1 (January 1878): 4; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 36.

²⁶⁷ Leroux, “Printers: From Shop to Industry,” 78; Howells and Dearman, *Tramp Printers*, 15; Baron, “Contested Terrain,” 73.

²⁶⁸ Pretzer, “Tramp Printers,” 4; Nonpareil, “Ancient Customs used in a Printing-House,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 5 (November 1878): 153. *Quads* are blank cuboid pieces of type used to fill spaces in typeset forms, and *slugs* are longer, thick pieces of spacing material used to separate entire sections of text.

²⁶⁹ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 22.

²⁷⁰ Mila Daskalova, “Printing as Poison, Printing as Cure: Work and Health in the Nineteenth-Century Printing Office and Asylum,” *Book History* 24, no.1 (Spring 2021): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2021.0002>.

article observes that it is not surprising that the work of newspaper composition, wherein the tragedies of the world are “in almost every history of crime they reproduce, in almost every piece of ‘copy,’ in almost every stickful of type they compose, in almost every ‘proof’ they correct,” should produce “no good ‘impression’” on the men. The article warns that succumbing to the allures of alcohol will be the demise of many printers and, in turn, make them the subject of the daily news that drove them to drink in the first place.²⁷¹

Although drinking was relatively commonplace behaviour, many employers and journeymen perceived that it was a habit unbecoming of a typographical worker and craftsman because it tended to degrade their quality of work. As such, some employers and journeymen attempted to encourage temperance among regular trade members, thereby differentiating them from tramps. Even some job advertisements specified sobriety as a requirement, a fact that, based on their perceived association with alcohol alone, would disqualify many tramp printers (Figure 6).²⁷² Additionally, sobriety was tied to perceptions of the trade’s masculinity, and the drunken behaviour unfairly associated with tramps was in direct opposition to journeymen’s sense of their masculine craft identity. As far as *Miscellany* contributor John, N.B. is concerned, tramps more generally lacked manly characteristics: those “who have a feint conception of what manhood is” might be able to reform their habits, including intemperance. But, since “they have become debauched and have passed the rubicon of self-asserted manhood,” the tramps’ “condition cannot be ameliorated”: “these poor unfortunate toilers toil along life’s rugged

²⁷¹ “The Demon of Intemperance,” *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 1 (January 1878): 4.

²⁷² “Wanted.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 8 (February 1878): 210.

and narrow path, not having the self-abnegation and moral force to rise above the level of their dissolute plane.”²⁷³

A few articles published in *The Dominion Printer* actively try to encourage temperance in the typographical trades, likewise, arguing that such behaviour not only degrades the quality of work that men put out, but also their masculinity. As one article, “The Demon of Intemperance,” illustrates, sobriety is directly linked to competence, which is in turn associated with a journeyman’s manliness. Those who fall victim to the evils of intemperance are mourned as “wrecks of manhood.” The article makes this association clear, evoking the trade’s fraternal solidarity and desire to uphold its distinct claim to masculinity in its call to end intemperance among the trade:

Printers—*Brothers!* We beg—we implore—we pray you to crush, at once and forever, this monster, before you are enveloped in its folds [...] We beg you by the great names in our Art [...] dash down the golden cup all gemmed with the sparkling wine, for in each drop it holds lurks the more than deadly poison, as it not only poisons the body but ill the soul—at once and forever ! Be a man ! [...] Every principle of manhood revolts at such a desecration. Every one who has the good of the craft at heart will turn resolutely away from temptation.

Anthropomorphised in *The Dominion Printer*, alcohol is a “monster,” the “demon of intemperance,” “red-throated as the wolf, and black-hearted as the Modoc !,” “King Alcohol.”²⁷⁴ Alcohol, *The Dominion Printer* makes clear, compromises the foundational characteristics of the practical printer, his work, and the print shop: order, beauty, correctness, punctuality, and truthfulness. According to “The School of the Printing Office,” published in the June 1878 issue of *The Dominion Printer*, these characteristics are distinctly connected to the art preservative because “they underlie all that makes

²⁷³ John, N.B., “Tramp Printers,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 1 (July 1878): 22.

²⁷⁴ “The Demon of Intemperance,” *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 1 (January 1878): 4.

printing what it has become, and will add to its greatness and power as they years roll on, if but rightly understood and acted upon.” Alcohol, “the worst of curses to the printing office,” makes unreliable compositors whose ability to perform necessary and basic tasks is compromised. It may, ultimately, result in the loss of a work situation (their claim to craft identity) and, *The Dominion Printer* asserts, self-respect.²⁷⁵

Although non-tramp printers participated in this much deplored habit, the journals’ affirmation of temperance as a fundamental value and virtue that contrasted with the tramp printer’s so-called immoral and monstrous character distances the trade from these kinds of workers. Howells and Dearman denounce the strict association of alcoholism to tramps, instead suggesting that “most tramp printers were not alcoholics or derelicts.”²⁷⁶ But this examination of *The Dominion Printer* and *The Printer’s Miscellany* demonstrates rather clearly that whether or not tramps *were* in fact drunks, criminals, or poor characters, the journeymen writing were not interested in publishing honest representations of tramps. The exaggerated descriptions of tramps and their behaviour established a narrative about the tramp printer that imagined them as labourers with extreme moral faults. This disingenuous tactic may not have been great enough to stop the flow of tramp printers in the last quarter of the century, but it certainly injured the image of the tramp and elevated the image of the regular journeyman. By distinguishing themselves from tramps, regular journeymen retained their reputations as honourable tradesmen who were part of a masculine craft.

²⁷⁵ “The School of the Printing Office,” *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 2 (June 1878): 3.

²⁷⁶ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 22; “The Demon of Intemperance,” *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 1 (January 1878): 4; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 36; Howells and Dearman, *Tramp Printers*, 15.

Attitudes toward the tramping lifestyle shifted by the end of the century, and the tramping system was effectively ended by the early twentieth century. But it was not only the machine typesetter and changes to union laws that affected this change;²⁷⁷ the trade's perception of such labourers, as was cultivated by narratives in the trade's literature, must also be considered. Although tramps, theoretically, possessed all the same qualifications as other journeymen with regular jobs, including the fact that they often held union travel cards, they were, like apprentices and amateurs, branded as a class of labourer lacking in manliness. Their work ethic, sobriety, and intelligence – all things that are fundamental to the making of a practical printer – were frequently questioned, whether or not such attacks were truly justified.

2.3 Summary

In September 1897, a young William Lyon Mackenzie King (who would become the Minister of Labour under Wilfred Laurier's government in 1908 and Prime Minister of Canada for three terms between 1921 and 1948) wrote an article on the International Typographical Union in the *Journal of Political Economy*. He wrote that the question of trade membership was one “of vital moment to every union” and that unions’ “insistence upon a certain degree of skill is necessary [...] to prevent the union being made a refuge for objectionable or unworthy workmen, and is also an essential guarantee that the members have attained that degree of efficiency as handicraftsmen which the union may claim for those who belong to it.” I have not argued against this. Being a labour

²⁷⁷ Pretzer, “Tramp Printers,” 14-5.

organization representing workers, the union is justified in its desire to take actions that protected its members from the influx of labour it felt was unqualified to maintain the integrity of the trade's craft. I have argued, rather, that journeymen, feeling that such union measures were not satisfactory, used their trade literature to make judgements about which boys and men were and were not "objectionable or unworthy workmen." I have also argued that compositors' "insistence upon a certain degree of skill" was overwhelmingly convoluted.²⁷⁸

This chapter has only begun to examine, following Ava Baron's lead, the ways in which "workingmen's understanding of gender structured their relations with others, grounded their views of the categories of market and skill, and shaped the ways they dealt with issues of wages and workers' control."²⁷⁹ With regard to the "Apprentice Question," this chapter has expanded upon scholarly discussions about journeymen's concerns about the influx of boy and amateur labour by examining the material and literary qualities of Canadian printing trade journals to understand how the trade, weaponizing its literature, created narratives about skill and competency that excluded boys and made the trade's membership even more exclusive. Some journeymen's sense of the trade's masculinity led them to make the case that education, skill, and familiarity with the work and equipment (which could realistically be acquired by any number of boys) was not enough. There were, according to the protective narratives fabricated by many journeymen, natural inherent qualities that made a good compositor and that seemingly

²⁷⁸ H. Blair Neatby and Tabitha de Bruin, "William Lyon Mackenzie King," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, October 15, 2008, updated October 4, 2023, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/william-lyon-mackenzie-king>; W. L. Mackenzie King, "The International Typographical Union," *Journal of Political Economy* 5, no. 4 (September 1897): 459, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1821011>.

²⁷⁹ Baron, "Questions of Gender," 179-80.

characterized all practical printers. The discussion I have herein presented echoes and is fully in agreement with Jesse Adams Stein's argument about pressman in mid-twentieth-century Australia that "there is nothing natural about the way in which these men's identities are simultaneously constructed around notions of craft skill and technological mastery."²⁸⁰ As I have shown, this "naturalness" was constructed. The inherent qualities attributed to journeymen that make them adept at the work are, like their evolving definitions of skill, fabricated to suit the exclusionary needs of the trade in a given moment. Likewise, the vilification of tramps – who were often union members and fully qualified – was, largely, an attempt by the trade to protect local markets from the influx of casual and cheap workforces. Certainly, the discourse circulated within the journals influenced the trade's socio-culture discourses about skill and masculinity, which disadvantaged boys and tramps immensely.

While the journals were theoretically also *for* amateurs, apprentices, and tramps – just as the trade was a space in which apprentices and tramps were *theoretically* welcome – the contents of the journals clearly show that the relationship between male workers and between male works and employers was not without its challenges, despite the fact that they shared a field and often served as successors to one another. This chapter has shown that journeymen did not only focus their discourse "on the distinctions between men and boys" in the first half of the century, as Baron suggests, but that such discourses (in conjunction with those about women, as Chapters 4 and 6 show) continued well into the end of the century because concerns about their labour status never ceased for many

²⁸⁰ Jesse Adams Stein, *Hot Metal: Material Culture and Tangible Labour* (Manchester University Press, 2016): 85.

male journeymen. By the last quarter of the century, apprentices were not the only ones considered boyish or devoid of manliness.²⁸¹ Indeed, any male half- or un-trained labourer or tramp was considered *unmanly* because the distinction between boy and man lay in the trade's perception of the worker's possession (or not) of a unique kind of masculinity that was viewed as an uncompromising foundational requirement of the trade. Such a masculinity was only conferred upon men through their completion of an apprenticeship and only maintained by journeymen if they conformed to strict but ever-evolving definitions of skill, masculinity, and craft identity. Ultimately, however, the real injury to journeymen's craft and labour status was not apprentices, amateurs, and tramps; it was the trade's shifting economic and labour conditions, and other boys and men who emerged as a threatening workforce were simply the symptoms or indicators of that injury.

²⁸¹ Baron, "Questions of Gender," 182.

Chapter 3: “craft and cunning both combined”:²⁸² Literacy and the Skilled Compositor

Before and during the nineteenth century, compositors generally perceived their literacy and close relationship with writing and literary production as a labour condition that conferred and necessitated a degree of learnedness, masculinity, and superior intelligence.²⁸³ In Britain, the United States, and Canada, typographical unions encouraged and cultivated their members’ relationship to arts, culture, and literature by establishing libraries and educational centers, and supporting their participation in theatre and music groups.²⁸⁴ Sally F. Zerker posits that literacy was, unlike in any other trade, “critical to the performance of the work,” noting that while some compositors did perform the work “by the simple expedient of rote imitation of the copy,” it was rare for printers to remain “‘unlettered’.” Literacy was also often associated with intellectual proficiency and the fact of their literacy benefited compositors’ organizational efforts and allowed journeymen to be geographically mobile, “literate in a world of illiterates,” an idea that led journeymen to vie for their lofty position in the hierarchy of labour against un/under-educated workers, like women and racialized workers.²⁸⁵ Patrick Duffy posits that the trade’s longstanding standards of education and literacy meant that the compositor had likely been high in the hierarchy of labour “from the fifteenth century to the present time” and that this was the case because “a reasonable standard of literacy,

²⁸² J.A. Phillips, “The Press,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 2&3 (August and September 1881): 23.

²⁸³ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *Divine Art, Infernal Machine: The Reception of Printing in the West from First Impressions to the Sense of an Ending* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 18.

²⁸⁴ Cannon, *The Compositor in London*, 86; Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 152; Tracy, *History*, 847; Leroux, “Culture ouvrière,” 27; Sydney Shep, “Printers’ Libraries and the Typographical Press System,” *Script & Print* 46, no. 2 (2024): 92-101.

²⁸⁵ Zerker, *Rise and Fall*, 7, 9; Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 152; Shep, “Cultures of Print,” 184.

numeracy, manual dexterity and creative interpretation has at all times been crucial for a skilled compositor.” A compositor’s “literacy, relatively high pay and occupational solidarity” were the labour conditions that generally distinguished male journeymen from workers in other trades since their work, “being both manual and intellectual, required them to be literate and to possess a reasonable degree of education.”²⁸⁶

In the second volume of *Mechanick Exercises, Applied to the art of printing* (1683), Joseph Moxon clearly outlines the trade’s distinct relationship to literacy, the literary, and its perennial emphasis on education. Although he argues that while it is not wholly necessary for compositors to know Greek, Latin, or French to produce good work, circumstance dictated that compositors *should* be intelligent and scholarly labourers. He writes:

a good *Compositer* need be no more than an English Scholler, or indeed scarce so much; for if he knows but his Letters and Characters he shall meet with in his *Printed* or *Written Copy*, and have otherwise a good natural capacity, he may be a better *Compositor* than another Man whose Education has adorn’d him with *Latin, Greek, Hebrew*, and other Languages, and shall want a good natural Genius [...] But the carelessness of some good Authors, and the ignorance of other Authors, has forc’d *Printers* to introduce a Custom, which among them is look’d upon as a task and duty incumbent on the *Compositer*, viz. to discern and amend the bad *Spelling* and *Pointing* of his *Copy* [...] Therefore upon consideration of these accidental circumstances that attend *Copy*, it is necessary that a *Compositer* be a good English Scholler at least; and that he know the present traditional *Spelling* of all English words, and that he have so much Sense and Reason, as to *Point* his Sentences properly: when to begin a Word with a *Capital Letter*, when (to render the Sence of the Author more intelligent to the Reader) to *Set* some Words or Sentences in *Italick* or *English Letters*, &c.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Duffy, *The Skilled Compositor*, 116, 209.

²⁸⁷ Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises: Or, the Doctrine of Handy-Works*, vol. 2, *Applied to the Art of Printing* (London: Printed for Joseph Moxon on the West-side of Fleet-ditch at the Sign of Atlas: 1683), 197-8, https://archive.org/details/mechanickexercis00moxo_0/page/228/mode/2up?q=latin.

Despite Moxon's observations of the trade during the seventeenth century, Isidore Cyril Cannon argues that education relating specifically to languages was particularly important for early compositors, who were working during a time when many works were written in Greek, Latin, and French. He contends that although "there is no real evidence of the extent of the compositor's education, [...] he must have been relatively educated in the early period if only in being able to read." Indeed, in mid-seventeenth century France, an apprentice was required to "pass a formal examination by the Rector of the University proving an acquaintance with Greek in addition to Latin" before being accepted into the trade. Later in the century, French compositors were often graduates of the University of Paris.²⁸⁸

The work of setting type literally put compositors in close proximity with various literary materials. According to one Ontario-based correspondent to the *Miscellany*, "a printer naturally acquires a greater facility in reading and writing, and should be better informed as to current events than any other craftsman, but he deserves no special credit on this account, as it is acquired without effort on his part, and is an incident of his occupation."²⁸⁹ In particular, the type sorts, by virtue of their representing/literally embodying alphabetic characters that are then turned into bodies of literature are, in and of themselves, literary. As W.D. Howells put it in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, printers of the past "had nearly all some affinity with literature, if not some love of it; it was in a sort always at their finger's ends, and they must have got some touch of it."²⁹⁰ Likewise, in his "essay-like review," "The Printer's Devil" published in *The Quarterly*

²⁸⁸ Cannon, *The Compositor in London*, 26, 27.

²⁸⁹ "'The Art Preservative,'" letter to the editor, *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 7 (January 1878): 172.

²⁹⁰ W.D. Howells, "The Country Printer.," *CPP* 2, no. 8 (August 1893): 11.

Review in December 1839, Sir Francis Bond Head, formerly the lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, describes the “heap” of individual type sorts dropped by compositors and swept up by apprentices from the shop floor as “literary rubbish.”²⁹¹ But compositors’ relationship to the literary extends far deeper than the materials of their labour. As Hugh Finlay writes in *The Printer’s Miscellany*, the literary and manually skilled aptitudes of the trade are entirely related for some compositors: “It is a genuine pleasure to us, and one that we can hardly find words to express, to be able to show and prove [through the publication of *The Printer’s Miscellany*] that printers have men in their ranks who are able to handle the pen, as well as the ‘leadens emblems.’”²⁹²

Journeyman self-consciously utilized trade journals to maintain literacy as a standard and distinct form of skill that characterized the journeyman compositor. This component of a journeyman’s competence should be understood as inseparable – but distinct – from the claims I made in Chapter 2 about the importance of education for compositors, as the labour aristocracy is a class of labourer categorized as such on the basis of “their educational backgrounds and grounding in language usage.”²⁹³ While the previous chapter has already discussed education for compositors (apprenticeship and formal manual training), the kind of education and knowledge addressed in this chapter refers more specifically to the intellectual, writerly, and readerly. This distinction is important because, by the end of the nineteenth century, literacy was widespread and

²⁹¹ Sarah Wadsworth, “Charles Knight and Sir Francis Bond Head: Two Early Victorian Perspectives on Printing and the Allied Trades,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 369, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20083115>; S.F. Wise, “Head, Sir Francis Bond,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed February 15, 2025, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/head_francis_bond_10E.html; Sir Francis Bond Head, “The Printer’s Devil,” *The Quarterly Review* no. 129 (December 1839): 4, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b000902208>.

²⁹² “To Our Contributors,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 12 (June 1877): 206.

²⁹³ Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 155.

white-collar/middle-class occupations had become more common, meaning that composers “no longer had a virtual monopoly on education.”²⁹⁴ As Jody Mason observes, during the nineteenth century, literacy became identified as “a skill increasingly deemed necessary to society.” The “attainment of mass literacy in industrializing, nineteenth-century Britain contributed significantly to existing class tensions,” particularly as education and the proliferation of books and periodicals were accessed differently between varying classes.²⁹⁵ In Britain, in 1800 an estimated 40 percent of males and 60 percent of females were illiterate; by 1900, “illiteracy for both sexes had dropped to around 3 percent” and was indicated by their ability “to sign the marriage register.” According to David F. Mitch, “some historians have [...] argued that the rise of literacy [in Britain] reflected a growing working-class demand for this skill.”²⁹⁶ By the 1850s in America, literacy rates had increased drastically, with “as many white women as men” who were able to read, “an unusual circumstance at the time and one that largely accounts for the nation’s high literacy rate.” According to Barabara Sicherman, white women were increasingly able to access education and they “were often principal carriers of literacy in middle-class homes, teaching children or younger siblings to read and setting the cultural tone. At a time when domestic ideology was at its peak, literacy was a boon to many middle-class women.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Cannon, *The Composer in London*, 87.

²⁹⁵ Jody Mason, *Home Feelings: Liberal Citizenship and the Canadian Reading Camp Movement* (McGill-Queens UP, 2019), xv-xvi.

²⁹⁶ Amy J. Lloyd, “Education, Literacy and the Reading Public,” *British Library Newspapers* (Detroit: Gale, 2007), 1, https://www.gale.com/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary-sources/intl-gps/intl-gps-essays/full-ghn-contextual-essays/ghn_essay_bln_lloyd3_website.pdf; David F. Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 1, 2-3.

²⁹⁷ Barbara Sicherman, “Ideologies and Practices of Reading,” in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship (University of North Carolina, 2007), 280, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Most British North Americans were also literate by the beginning of the twentieth century. “Provisions for public education in both Canada West and Canada East in the decade preceding Confederation led to rising literacy levels,” Mason writes, though the measure of literacy at that point was one’s ability to sign one’s name. Unlike in England, “the provision of mass elementary education in Ontario preceded industrialization.” In 1861, Hamilton, Ontario had one of the highest literacy rates in the Western world, and rural communities were also showing high levels of literacy among their populations.²⁹⁸ According to Harvey J. Graff, some skilled occupations were open to illiterate workers, including printing, but the numbers are marginal. For example, in Hamilton in 1861, only 1 printer (2.5% of the adult workforce) was illiterate compared to the 8 blacksmiths (10.3%), the 14 carpenters (4.7%), or the 205 general labourers (25.2%).²⁹⁹ By the 1880s, literacy was a “majority phenomenon” in Quebec, and Ontario was almost fully literate by the end of the century.³⁰⁰ Yet, while education was increasingly being democratized and, as Chapter 2 discussed, the trade generally perceived that “the quality of the lad attracted to the trade was declining,”³⁰¹ the image of the intelligent and highly educated and literate compositor persisted, particularly as compositors pressed their relationship to literacy and the literary.

Summarizing David Vincent and Harvey J. Graff’s studies on literacy in Canada, Mason observes that mass literacy “did not necessarily lead to occupational or class

²⁹⁸ Mason, *Home Feelings*, xvi.

²⁹⁹ Harvey J. Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century* (Transaction Publishers, 1991): 199, table 5.1.

³⁰⁰ Michel Verrette and Yvan Lamonde, “Literacy and Print Culture,” in *History of the Book in Canada*, vol. 2, 1840-1918, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 453, 458.

³⁰¹ Cannon, *The Compositor in London*, 87.

mobility for the majority of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in England and Ontario in the latter half of the century” though it did, at least in Ontario, “reinforce existing class identities.”³⁰² For typographical workers in and outside of Ontario, literacy undoubtedly reinforced their position within the hierarchy of the labouring class. Thus, while the increasing rates of mass literacy may not have immediately affected the typographical worker, who still had apprenticeships and union policies to safeguard their trade, at least partially, the emergence of a mass literate public threatened to destabilize their position in the labour aristocracy, as the hierarchy of labour shifted. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, then, journeymen saw a need to alter their discourse of skill vis-à-vis literacy, pressing on the “special” qualities of a compositor’s literacy that differentiated them and their work not just from amateurs and apprentices, but from the rest of the working class. This discourse emphasized the trade’s historical and close relationship to literature and literary production. Cannon reminds us that “the education of other artisans in earlier periods must not be understated”³⁰³ but, I contend, nineteenth-century compositors felt strongly that theirs was a trade deeply invested in education. Within their trade literatures, compositors expressed an acute awareness that their possession of a special kind of literacy and their relationship to the literary, over and above their high level of alphabetic literacy, differentiated their position in the labouring class and their work in relation to a rising professional class.

The “literacy” that is the subject of this chapter is not the same as alphabetic literacy. While literacy and literature are not altogether the same, they are interdependent

³⁰² Mason, *Home Feelings*, xvii.

³⁰³ Cannon, *The Compositor in London*, 87.

concepts that bear much significance for compositors' conceptualizations of their trade identity throughout the period. Printers' identification with literature and literacy has always contributed to the persistent image of the intelligent and literate compositor and has always been considered a fundamental component of their skilled status. Walker Rumble proposes that "a compositor's skill combined wide-ranging literacy and deft craftsmanship."³⁰⁴ I argue that, to differentiate themselves from the growing mass literate public and other workers for whom literacy was becoming a useful tool at work, compositors used their journals to affirm the trade's historic relationship to language, literature, and education. More than that, however, they asserted that their relationship to language, down to the very linguistic unit, was far superior to that of any other labourer and that their familiarity with language was an inherent characteristic of their work and identity.

Many scholars of nineteenth-century printing history have identified the importance of literacy to the typographical worker's identity across the Atlantic,³⁰⁵ but little has been said of the ways that that association is manifested or maintained during the century. In this Chapter, I attend to this gap in scholarship by considering the role of the typographical press as a medium through which the trade's association with literacy and literature is maintained. I consider the ways that Canadian typographical trade journals illustrate how journeymen compositors adapted their definition of skill and

³⁰⁴ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 5.

³⁰⁵ For example: Cannon, *The Compositor in London*, 84-9; Duffy, *The Skilled Compositor*, 208; Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 7; Felicity Hunt, "The London Trade in the Printing and Binding of Books: An Experience in Exclusion, Dilution and De-Skilling for Women Workers," *Women's Studies International Forum* vol. 6, no. 5 (1983): 518, Scholars Portal Journals; Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 48; Leroux, "Culture ouvrière," 35-6.

relationship with literacy and literature at the end of the nineteenth century. I begin by considering the role of poetry in typographical trade journals. I do this first as a demonstration of printers' work as creative writers and as evidence of the way that proprietors and contributors used the journals as avenues for the publication and dissemination of literature. But I also begin with poetry because I argue that it is a medium through which compositors expressed their relationship with language. Compositors utilized metaphor, puns, and poetic forms like the elegy to assert dominion over type and language, thematically narrating a superior, intimate, ancestral, and perhaps even supernatural, connection to and command over the English language. I then attend to the ways that compositors conceptualize their superior literacy skills at the typecase. Here, I use and expand upon Walker Rumble's concept of printers' "special literacy"³⁰⁶ and consider journeymen's emphasis on "intelligence" and the development of the archetype of the "intelligent compositor." Finally, I consider the ways that journeymen conceptualize their literacy as one that was not confined to alphabetic literacy (reading and writing). I attend to *The Printer's Miscellany's* emphasis on shorthand and its relevance to the work of hand composition, as well to journeymen's use of printing ornaments and symbols to code language. I argue that all these strategies culminate in encouraging the perception that journeymen compositors' competence and skill are inextricably tied to a kind of literacy that differentiates them not only from amateurs and apprentices, but also from every other labourer in every other trade or profession.

³⁰⁶ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 7.

3.1 “O, where is the man, with such simple tools, / Can govern the world as I?”:³⁰⁷

Compositors and their Masterful Relationship with the Literary

I begin by looking at the journals’ inclusion of poetry as a way of introducing the idea that compositors perceived of their labour identity in relation to elite levels of literacy and familiarity with the literary world for two reasons. First, I begin here because printers were notoriously prolific writers and poets. Indeed, the fact that some of America’s most well-known authors and men were once compositors – like Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and Benjamin Franklin³⁰⁸ – invariably binds the trade with the work of the literary elite. Thus, it is unsurprising to find that their journals are populated by poetry and other creative writing. Among the other ways that journeymen showcased their familiarity with the literary (i.e. discussions and lists of books, literary allusions, and the reproduction of writing by famous writers), journeymen used their journals to engage with literature and showcase their poetic chops, affirming the importance of poetry to their labour identity. Such inclusions are one of the most obvious ways that compositors demonstrated that their literacy extended beyond basic alphabetic literacy but also encompassed an elite kind of mastery vis-à-vis literary authorship. Secondly, I begin by considering the poems included in the trade’s journals because their themes and figurative language provide an important introduction to understanding how compositors viewed their literacy as particularly “special.” Many of the printer-poets writing specifically on the work of typesetting emphasize the compositors’ proximity to literary materials and to their powerful and key role in the production of printed materials. The

³⁰⁷ “Song of the Printer,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 8 (Feb 1877): 114.

³⁰⁸ Johnston, *Alphabets to Order*, 144; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 46; Alexander Lawson, *The Compositor as Artist, Craftsman, and Tradesman* (Athens, Georgia: The Press of the Nightowl, 1990), 18, 19.

following sections of this chapter build upon the kinds of ideological gestures that printers make through their poetry regarding their dominance over language.

Considering the journals' frequent inclusion of poetry alone reinforces the trade's longstanding association of its setting hands, creative minds, and discerning readers to the literary. Printers and compositors were often "viewed as important accessories to literary and print communication, turning manuscripts and written text into printed form." As such, Finkelstein remarks, they had a complicated relationship to the literary market, particularly as compositors' "practical knowledge seemed to militate in cultural terms against being taken seriously as creative producers." But compositors took their creative endeavors seriously and, in fact, those creative endeavors were seen as a natural extension or development of a compositor's skills. Poetry and related forms (such as song) were "vital parts" of printers' social culture and their societies/unions. Many of the poems included in typographical trade journals "were originally performed in public for key events in the printing trade, such as annual soirees, wayzgooses and trade dinners," among other occasions.³⁰⁹ For instance, the November 1879 *Miscellany* includes Jim Benson's poem "Pardner" and the note indicates that it was composed for and read after "the Annual Dinner of the Boston Press Club."³¹⁰ In other instances, printing presses were mounted to horse-drawn carriages and paraded through town during special celebrations in and outside of Canada, with poetry, songs, and other ephemera being printed and shared to attendees on the go.³¹¹ Poetry was so important to the trade, Finkelstein observes, that some early typographical trade journals established "in-house

³⁰⁹ Finkelstein, *Moveable Types*, 153, 152, 137.

³¹⁰ "Jim Benson's 'Pardner,'" *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 5 (November 1879): 73.

³¹¹ Shep, "Cultures of Print," 198; Rollo G. Silver, "The Convivial Printer: Dining, Wining, and Marching, 1825-1860," *Printing History* 4, no. 7/8 (1982): 21-25.

compositor-poets” who “were treated as respected bards anchored in oral, local, and trade culture.”³¹² Surveying six key typographical trade journals (UK-, Australia-, and US-based only), Finkelstein notes that these in-house poets, also known as “printer laureates [...] featured in practically every issue of relevant journals from the 1840s through to the early 1870s, either through their poetry, through reviews of their work, or in reports of their creative activities.” Finkelstein found that, between 1840 and 1870, these six journals published over 200 poems, alongside short stories and memoirs. “Poetry was ubiquitous in the popular and periodical press of the nineteenth century, overflowing,” Finkelstein notes, “through channels overlooked by past literary critics and historians.”³¹³ In the same vein, Herb Wyile, writing on Canadian Depression-era literature, contends that “despite a rich and interesting history of labour in Canada, representations of work, labour agitation, and unemployment are fairly uncommon in Canadian literature” and that scholarship on Canadian literature has tended to take other approaches than class and labour. Mason is “less convinced” of the absence of labour and work in Canadian literature, noting that while such topics emerged and were expressed in creative writing in greater numbers throughout the twentieth century, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, they also existed in nineteenth-century Canada.³¹⁴ In Canada, as in Britain and America, typographical trade journals are a significant site of nineteenth-century labour literature and working-class poetry.

³¹² Finkelstein, *Moveable Types*, 123, 137.

³¹³ Finkelstein, *Moveable Types*, 123, 124.

³¹⁴ Herb Wyile, “‘Draw a Squirrel Cage’: The Politics and Aesthetics of Unemployment in Irene Baird’s *Waste Heritage*,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 32, no. 1 (2007): 62, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/5823>; Mason, *Writing Unemployment*, 5-6.

The writings of those connected to the printing trades (not only printers themselves) were so vast and considered so important that they were frequently compiled into large collections. In 1833, T. Kirk, a printer from Nottingham, compiled *Songs of the Press and Other Poems, Relative to the Art of Printing*, a collection of songs and poems “connected with the Art of Typography [...] intended for circulation chiefly amongst the profession.”³¹⁵ In 1850, James J. Brenton published the compilation, *Voices From the Press; A Collection of Sketches, Essays, and Poems by Practical Printers*. In his “Preface,” Brenton notably remarks that it is unsurprising that by the mid-century, “they who have so often assisted in ushering into the world the productions of others should now in turn venture to originate ideas of their own, and appear before the public in the ambitious character of Authors.”³¹⁶ And in 1875, Oscar H. Harpel recognized the importance of the interplay between the trade’s technical and aesthetic prowess and its culture of poetic expression, compiling *The Poets and Poetry of Printerdom*, “a collection of original, selected and fugitive lyrics, written by persons connected with printing.”³¹⁷ In his “Editorial Remarks,” Harpel makes the case that by 1875 the amount of poetry written by the “printerdom” cannot be easily quantified or collected, indicating that while he proposes to publish the poems over two volumes, several of those by non-American composers and “highly intellectual, meritorious, interesting, and curious, lyrical

³¹⁵ Kirk, T., ed., *Songs of the Press and Other Poems, Relative to the Art of Printing* (London: Simpkin and Marshall Stationers-Hall Court; and T. Kirk, Nottingham, 1833), <https://archive.org/details/songspressand00songgoog>; C.H.T., Preface to *Songs of the Press and Other Poems, Relative to the Art of Printing*, ed. T. Kirk (London: Simpkin and Marshall Stationers-Hall Court; and T. Kirk, Nottingham, 1833), v, <https://archive.org/details/songspressand00songgoog>.

³¹⁶ James J. Brenton, ed., *Voices From the Press; A Collection of Sketches, Essays, and Poems by Practical Printers* (New York: Charles B. Norton, 1850), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t1rf5p49p>; James J. Brenton, Preface to *Voices From the Press; A Collection of Sketches, Essays, and Poems by Practical Printers*, ed. James J. Brenton (New York: Charles B. Norton, 1850): iii, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t1rf5p49p>.

³¹⁷ “We have just received ...” *The Dominion Printer* 2, no. 1 (January 1876): 3.

compositions” do not appear.³¹⁸ While printers were reading their peers’ poetry in collected works such as *The Poets and Poetry of Printerdome*, they were also frequently encountering this kind of poetry in their journals. *The Printer’s Miscellany*, and later journals like *The Imprint* and *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* were the journals that published the most poetry, whereas the earlier *The Dominion Printer* published relatively few poems and creative writing pieces over its six-year lifespan (1873-1879) (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of poems published in Canadian typographical trade journals, 1860-1900.

Journal Title	Number of Poems ³¹⁹
<i>The Canadian Printer</i> (Montreal, QC)	0
<i>The Dominion Printer</i> (Montreal, QC)	8
<i>The Printer’s Miscellany</i> (Saint John, NB)	62
<i>The Canadian Printer and Publisher</i> (Toronto, ON)	41
<i>The Imprint</i> (Toronto, ON)	10
<i>International Art Printer</i> (Owen Sound, ON)	1
<i>The Nonpareil</i> (Toronto, ON)	2
<i>Type and Press</i> (Toronto, ON)	0

³¹⁸ Oscar H. Harpel, ed., *Poets and Poetry of Printerdome: A Collection of Original, Selected, and Fugitive Lyrics* (Cincinnati: Oscar H. Harpel, Printer and Publisher, 1875): 16, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951p00427196x>; George T. Watkins, comp., *Bibliography of Printing in America* (Boston: Published by the Compiler, 1906), 14, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044080274277>. According to Watkins, the projected second volume of *Poets and Poetry of Printerdome* was never published.

³¹⁹ This number is approximate and includes full-length poems (original and republished) and excerpts of four lines or more. This does not include poems that appear in type samples, but it does include some full-length poems that appear in advertisements.

Closer attention to the poems themselves reveals the degree to which compositors conceptualized their affinity with the genre and language through figurative language. In particular, the poems' formal and thematic elements encourage the image of the highly intellectual and skilled journeymen. An important characteristic of printers' poetry is the way in which they are heavily punctuated by typographical puns. In Stephen Leacock's definition, "by a pun is meant the use of a word or phrase which has two meanings which the context brings into a glaring incongruity." The wordplay may appear simple, as it is "just a matter of words," but "the combination may be so ingenious that the very ingenuity pleases." Puns may rely on *double entendres*, a word's dual meanings, or on the similarity of sound between words.³²⁰ In the case of printers' writings, the pun form tends to rely on the readers' understanding of trade-specific language and their ability to apply it in a new context. Puns are used in some poems to establish compositors' relationship to the literary even (or perhaps especially) in death. In "The Old Printer" by C.W. M'Clunn, the speaker laments the impending death of an old compositor:

In a few years more death will *lock up his form*,
 And put it to press in the *mould*,
 And a *stone* on the spot where they lay him to rot,
 Will tell us his name, and how old;
 And his comrades will light the old lamp by his *case*,
 And list to the clock's dull tick,
 As they set up his death with a solemn click,
 In his old rust-eaten *stick*.³²¹

In "The Dying Typo" Montreal Printer John Alex Martin dedicates a poem in which the dying compositor's "PROOF will be with the AUTHOR soon" to his "Friend," E. M.

³²⁰ Stephen Leacock, *Humor and Humanity: An Introduction to the Study of Humor* (Henry Holt and Company, 1938): 28, <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/m0736m04036f>; Stephen J. Adams, *Poetic Designs: An Introduction to Meters, Verse Forms, and Figure of Speech* (Broadview Press, 1997), 131.

³²¹ C. W. M'Clunn, "The Old Printer," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1876): 54.

M.³²² In the anonymously written “The Dead Printer,” the speaker hopes: “May earth
press lightly on his *form*; / *Locked up* securely under.”³²³ In J.A.L.’s “Song of a Typo,”
the death knell of type sounds the compositor’s passing:

Click, click,
Typographic
Art by Genius Attired.
Click, click,
As the clocks tick,
The typo’s life retired.³²⁴

The use of “typographical allusions in epitaphs” – and subsequently printers’
creative writing in general – extends as far back as the seventeenth century, according to
J. Luther Ringwalt’s *American Encyclopaedia of Printing* (1871).³²⁵ The effectiveness of
such typographical puns is that the context of the poem reveals rather clearly the
difference of what the typographical language actually means as opposed to how its
meaning is changed through poetry. But these typographical puns are much more than
displays of compositors’ ingenuity with language. To use Leacock’s words, they also
“carr[y] with [them] a further meaning. [They] becom[e] a subtle way of saying
something with much greater point than plain matter-of-fact statement.”³²⁶ This is
because this typographical wordplay not only operates as puns do, but also on a
metaphorical level. Michael Warner discusses this kind of language in relation to
Benjamin Franklin’s epitaph, composed in 1728, decades before Franklin’s eventual
death (and which he did not actually use). In the epitaph, Franklin’s body,

³²² J. A. Martin, “The Dying Typo,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 3 (September 1877): 64.

³²³ “The Dead Printer,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 12 (June 1881): 187.

³²⁴ J.A.L., “Song of a Typo,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 2 (August 1878): 59.

³²⁵ J. Luther Ringwalt, ed., *American Encyclopaedia of Printing* (Philadelphia: Menamin & Ringwalt, 1871), 160, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hb1f1g>.

³²⁶ Leacock, *Humor and Humanity*, 30.

Like the Cover of an old Book,
Its Contents torn out,
And stript [sic] of its Lettering and Gilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms.
But the Work shall not be wholly lost:
For it will, as he believ'd, appear once more,
In a new & more perfect Edition,
Corrected and amended
By the Author.³²⁷

Warner does not identify Franklin's word play with the form of the pun, calling it, instead, "a metaphoric excess." However, Franklin's epitaph is structured on simile. Although this word play does not fall under the category of metaphor, the implications of what Warner identifies as "metaphoric excess" is still an important way to understand the language manipulation at work here.³²⁸ In the poems that elucidate the relationship between the printer, typographical equipment, and literary products, the different devices of pun, metaphor, and simile are employed to achieve the same ends. According to Leacock, puns are meant to showcase the incongruity between words, but, as Warner posits of Franklin's mock epitaph, such typographical allusions, "trea[t] life and print in equivalent terms" and demonstrate a "peculiar relation to print" that "draws us [...] into a fantasy of being-in-print." This excess "makes it difficult to take literally," Warner argues, "but that very excess *tempts* us to take it literally" and, I add, in many cases, forces us to.³²⁹ A metaphor "refers specifically to an assertion that two things in some way similar are identical," whereas in a simile the similarity between two things "is made explicit" and is thus more "rational" or literal. In all instances, the abundance of

³²⁷ Benjamin Franklin's epitaph reproduced in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., Helen C. Boatfield, and Helene H. Fineman, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (Yale University Press, 1959), 111.

³²⁸ Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Harvard University Press, 1990), 74.

³²⁹ Leacock, *Humor and Humanity*, 28; Warner, *The Letters of the Republic*, 73-4.

comparisons and allusions force us to read that compositors are one with their work.³³⁰

Compositors do not simply feel a great love and affinity for typesetting; rather, their minds and bodies are, in life as in death, indistinguishable from the materials of their labour. Thus, they are inherently and fundamentally literary labourers, and that association alters their physical being in ways that it does not for other labourers because they are made of the same stuff as books and/or literature.

The use of pun, metaphor, and hyperbole is not unique to printers' elegies and epitaphs, however. The desire to command and dominate language is a masculine impulse that is linked to the trade's patriarchal labour ideology as it seeks to position the male journeymen as superior. Some printer-poets use this kind of figurative language to invoke – and indeed encourage – the image of a masculine, skilled craftsman who is not only technically skilled or whose life is closely tied to the objects of his work, but who wields a supernatural mastery of language, down to the physical type that in turn makes up printed materials. For instance, in A. A. Hopkins' "The Typo," the compositor is "a singular creature," "a bit of a wizard" who holds a kind of "magical power" over the type "in his hands" that "marshal in at [his] command." Indeed, he is imagined as a kind of godly figure who conjures life's vicissitudes through his work at the typecase. Hopkins does not characterize the compositor as the setter of news for a newspaper, but rather as an omnipresent power who, in setting type, makes real the news and disaster he sets: first, "He spelled you a marriage—the next is a death," then "he's spelling a railroad disaster,"

³³⁰ Adams, *Poetic Designs*, 133-4.

and then advertisements for “patent bitters and pills, / To cure every one of mortality’s
ills.” The type,

The will of the typo they only obey’
To all his commands they respond with a ‘click,’
He rules with a stout little ‘rule’ and a ‘stick!’.³³¹

The theme of compositors’ dominion over type is explored in another poem entitled “The
Republic of ‘Letters’” by “An Old Typo.” Here, the speaker, a personified “body of
twenty and six” (the English alphabet in type form) similarly characterizes the
compositor as the wizardly type-master. The collective speaker says:

We are an order of twenty and six.
Laid in *cases* or ranged in *sticks*;
Prostrate and dumb we are doomed to lie,
Like dead men’s bones, in a heap of *pi*.
Till our sovereign, Mind, who alone can give
The mandate to make our dry bones live,
Give a magic *shake* and the word of command,
When rank and file on our feet we stand!

[...]

And the Printer baffled all monkish tricks
With his magical characters, twenty and six!

In addition to literally controlling the medium and the message, the compositor – or
rather the compositor’s intellect, the “Mind” – is the type’s “sovereign,” at once imbuing
the figure of the journeyman with power and intelligence while also demarcating the
compositor’s aristocratic position. Equally, the title’s allusion to the Enlightenment-era
transnational community of intellectuals of the same name forces an association of the trade
with the literati and scholarship.³³² In a similar vein, in Thomas MacKellar’s “Song of the

³³¹ A. A. Hopkins, “The Typo,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 2 (August 1876): 14.

³³² An Old Typo, “The Republic of ‘Letters,’” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 10 (April 1877): 157.

Printer,” described by Ringwalt as “the best poetic tribute to typography in English literature,” the rhythmic “tick! tick! tick!” of type being set in a composing stick is likened to “the world’s chronometer” and the compositor boasts that he, in performing his work, is more powerful than kings or, perhaps, God:

O, where is the man, with such simple tools,
Can govern the world as I?

[...]

Say, where is he, or who may he be,
That can rival the printer’s power?
To no monarchs that live the wall doth he give;
Their sway lasts only an hour;
While the printer grows, and God only knows
When his might shall cease to tower!³³³

Beyond using poetry to demonstrate that they are capable creative writers, printers also use poetry to contribute to the narrative that journeymen are men whose labour identity is deeply associated with literacy and the literary. The suggestion that compositors’ manual labour enables them to control language to a supernatural or superhuman degree supports their goal to assert their superiority over others. Journeymen’s masculine impulse to dominate and control language, as it is expressed and achieved through the metaphorical association of printers’ bodies and actions to their work, is not limited to poetry, however. Compositors also convey the necessity of the trade’s control and mastery of language in discourse around their conceptualization as highly intelligent labourers who are, fundamentally, responsible for setting the words that make up printed materials. Although the poems present compositors’ manipulation of

³³³ Ringwalt, ed., *American Encyclopaedia*, 289; “Song of the Printer,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 8 (February 1877): 114.

type and language in metaphorical and exaggerated terms, compositors believed, in literal terms, that their work necessitated a mastery of wide-ranging literacy skills. Such a mastery allowed them to perform their work efficiently and accurately. More importantly, however, it also enabled them to sustain their claims to masculine craft status and the labour aristocracy, both of which are founded on the idea that journeymen possess a robust competency that includes a superior “special literacy.”³³⁴

3.2 The Making of a Labour Archetype: The “Intelligent Compositor”

Compositors, Rumble writes, were “codebreakers” and the codes were “local variants of standard English usage expressed in ignorance, jargon, or slang” making the compositor “an intermediary between variously literate contributors and their reading public.” In reading manuscript copy and setting type, compositors “decipher[ed] badly handwritten copy,” a part of the job that was “an essential part of a printer’s literacy and therefore of his skill.” Most importantly, a compositor’s literacy was not only a defining factor in characterizing their labour status, but also in affirming the trade’s masculine identity because it was perceived to be a foundational skill that a successful journeyman could not be without. Rumble writes that the “solid bedrock values—hard work, responsibility, competence, [and] sobriety”—expected of apprentices in all trades were the kinds of characteristics that made a worker “a man” and defined the gendered boundaries of the trade, as Chapter 2 explored. A compositor’s “special literacy,” in combination with those widely affirmed trade values, “made a young man special.” Even

³³⁴ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 7.

at the end of the nineteenth century, when literacy was widely acquired by people in all levels of society, a compositor's literacy essentially allowed him to "sustai[n] a claim on a community elite," thereby aligning him with those who were "widely read and accustomed to grammatical niceties." A compositor's "special literacy," Rumble writes, permitted him to occupy a space in the aristocracy of labour.³³⁵

The characterization of a compositor in possession of this kind of specialized literacy is cultivated, rather heavy-handedly, via the repeated insistence that the compositor is not just literate, but that the work is, indisputably, an "intelligent profession."³³⁶ This characterization of the journeyman compositor originates earlier in the century; for example, in 1839 Sir Francis Bond Head writes that compositors are distinguished by the fact that they "all bear in their countenances the appearance of men of considerable intelligence and education." He describes them as "literary labourers" whose "great command of the mind" is unmatched; compositors can read copy, have the newspaper read to them, and set type at the same time, whereas "the apprentices and inferior workmen cannot attempt to do this."³³⁷ Indeed, compositors believed wholeheartedly that their work was the kind of work that "requires a considerable amount of brains" to the degree that it is reported that compositor John F. Crossin's "work at the case [...] enabled him to pursue the study of medicine" and become a physician in Massachusetts.³³⁸ An article published in the February 1878 *Miscellany* articulates rather clearly how "the art of printing confers more intellectual benefit on those who are

³³⁵ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 5, 7.

³³⁶ "A Few Facts Regarding the Educational Advantages of Printers.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 8 (February 1878): 188.

³³⁷ Head, "The Printer's Devil," 4, 5.

³³⁸ "How Printers are Bored.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 9 (March 1881): 133; "A Printer Becomes a Physician.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 6 (December 1880): 81.

engaged in its manipulation than many other vocations.”³³⁹ Printers felt that typography was a craft that ““has been championed and practiced by many of the wisest and greatest men who have trod this terrestrial ball.””³⁴⁰ As a republished article in the October 1893 *The Imprint* (and concurrently in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*) argues, printers and compositors are among the company of (and indeed *are*) intelligent and affluent men:

He is only a printer. Such was the sneering remark of a leader in a circle of aristocracy –the codfish quality. Who was the Earl of Stanhope? He was only a printer. What was Prince Edward William and the Prince Napoleon? Proud to call themselves printers. The present Czar of Russia, the Crown Prince of Prussia and the Duke of Battenburg are printers, and the Emperor of China works in a private printing office almost every day. Wm. Caxton, the father of English literature, was a practical printer. [...] In fact, thousands of the most brilliant minds in this country are to be found toiling in the publishing houses of large cities and towns. It is not everyone that can be a printer –brains are absolutely necessary.³⁴¹

Other pieces from the May 1895 *Canadian Printer and Publisher* equally assert the important connection between skill and intelligence:

Methods count in the printing business just as well as in any other trade.

So does mechanical skill.

Brains always did count, at least ever since Adam received his supply.

Combine method, mechanical skill and brains, and what is the result? It is money and respect. Before these two things chattel mortgages, unpaid bills and business troubles pass away like chaff before a September breeze. The method and the skill can be bought, but the brains are home-made.³⁴²

³³⁹ “A Few Facts Regarding the Educational Advantages of Printers.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 8 (February 1878): 188.

³⁴⁰ “Typography vs Lithography.,” from the *American Model Printer* in *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 2&3 (August and September 1881): 19.

³⁴¹ “Only a Printer.,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 5 (October 1893): 97; “Only a Printer.,” *CPP* 2, no. 10 (October 1893): 18.

³⁴² “Editorial Notes,” *CPP* 4, no. 5 (May 1895): 2.

In *The Printer's Miscellany*, the compositor who is equipped to read bad copy, translate handwriting, and make meaning from it is often overtly referred to as “intelligent.” In February 1879, the *Miscellany*'s “‘Sorts.’” column includes a brief dialogue between two “Intelligent Compositors” that equates a compositor's skill with the deciphering of bad handwriting (Figure 7).³⁴³ Additionally, the suggestion that the compositor's literacy skill is of a codebreaking nature is emphasized by the repeated comparison of bad copy to hieroglyphics. The handwriting is so bad that it no longer resembles alphabetical characters, but rather logographic writing systems that require a different – perhaps more scholarly and learned – set of knowledges. In May 1879, the *Miscellany* responds to a remark in the *Detroit Free Press* that claimed: “‘Next to the ‘intelligent compositor’ the proof-reader is the best-abused man in a newspaper establishment’.” Defending the proof-reading skills of compositors, the *Miscellany* argues that compositors get little credit for deciphering bad copy: “Writing of every conceivable design, from the neat copy of the first manuscript to the hieroglyphic scrawl of the old stager in journalism, all dumped on the unfortunate shoulders of the ‘intel. comp,’ or proof-reader.”³⁴⁴ Similarly, in August 1879, the *Miscellany* responds to criticisms from *The British and Colonial Printer and Stationer* (London, England) that alleged that the *Miscellany* made an error in “the transposition of a line in the make-up” that resulted in the “‘ridicule[e] [of] some of its contemporaries.’” *The Printer's Miscellany* writes: “we acknowledge hitting pretty sharply at that class of scribes who know more (or less) about slinging ink in the manufacture of hieroglyphics, than they do about the practical difficulties the ‘intel. comp’ has to contend with in his daily task of

³⁴³ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 260.

³⁴⁴ “The Intelligent Compositor.,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 11 (May 1879): 316-17.

making sense out of nonsense.”³⁴⁵ In other instances, the *Miscellany*’s contributors make clear their frustration with illegible writing, grumbling that “there is no law compelling editors and compositors to waste their time over hieroglyphics. The waste basket is handy and paper stock is up.”³⁴⁶ One article posits that if editors and reporters only wrote in “a decent hand” there would be fewer mistakes, and that it can be “safely assert[ed] that the intelligent compositor corrects more blunders in manuscript than he makes in print. The public, however, know nothing about these.”³⁴⁷

As a short story published in the October 1895 *International Art Printer* illustrates, this attitude remained true for compositors at the end of the century. “Old Barney” by American humourist writer, journalist, and printer, Opie Read, is the story of once-upon-a-time tramp printer, Barney Fugerson, whom the narrator remembers from his time as an apprentice. Barney is the vehicle through which Read looks back on the century to lament the shifting trade landscape while affirming the trade’s skilled and literate identity in the face of (or challenge to) that shift. While describing his time working for a daily newspaper to two apprenticed boys, Barney’s subtle reference to his “special literacy” reveals how compositors might have understood their literacy skills in the context of their workplace and as a means by which they could distinguish themselves in the hierarchy of labour. The conversation between Barney and apprenticed boys reads as follows:

‘Was it [the hand-written copy] hard to read?’ one of the boys asked.

‘Not for me. But a blacksmith couldn’t have made out a word of it.’

³⁴⁵ “A Correction.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 2 (August 1879): 21.

³⁴⁶ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 10 (April 1880): 158.

³⁴⁷ “An Exaltation Which Exalteth Not.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 10 (April 1881): 149.

[...]

‘Does anybody write correctly?’ [said one of the boys.]

‘Have n’t found him. Once in a while an old printer quits the case and takes to the pen; and naturally enough he writes fairly well.’

‘But the foremen can’t write anything, can they?’

‘Not a line.’

At the end of the story, the narrator recounts a brief meeting they had with Barney a year following this conversation. Folding out the latest issue of the newspaper that he and the boys once worked on, Barney laments: “‘They’ve made a horse-bill out of it. Too many stud heads. Lawyer owns it now, eh? He can’t write. Good-bye.’”³⁴⁸ Barney’s disappointment is, of course, a response to the changing landscape of the print shop floor and periodical publishing in the second half of the century. By the mid-1890s, the days of the “all around” printer and compositors were undeniably coming to an end, and as such the wide-ranging skills that compositors once required to perform the work – literary and otherwise – were possessed only by the old regime of compositors. Changes in literacy rates among the general population in North America also impacted tradesmen. These changes, Rumble writes, “encroached on a printer’s domain and on his codebreaking skills. Formerly arcane rules of grammar and punctuation in time became the equipment of every high schooler. An informed, bureaucratic society was fast intruding into an elite worker’s special realm of literacy.” Yet, while Read’s story ends in the defeat of the skilled compositor, it also ends with a critique of this “informed, bureaucratic society.”

³⁴⁸ The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Opie Read,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed May 29, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Opie-Percival-Read>; Opie Read, “Old Barney,” *The International Art Printer* 1, no. 8 (October 1895): 170-1.

The Lawyer, though presumably highly educated, is still not as skilled with language as the compositor whose work necessitates the literal mastering and manipulation of it.³⁴⁹

Rumble observes that while compositors, of course, understood that their role was to set the text as written, they were also required to understand the distinction between keeping the text “as is” and errors that were the result of the supervisor’s “slips of the pen.” Compositors were autonomous workers who were responsible for translating handwriting and handwritten instruction into made-up forms, and their education and literacy informed the choices they made at work directly. As Rumble notes, “confronting a garbled manuscript in an age of handwritten copy, a compositor’s literacy, his unparalleled skill, informed his guesses. Beyond this, a compositor’s autonomy governed his word space choices, his line drops, the propriety of his end-of-line word breaks. These choices combined to produce the look of his printed page.”³⁵⁰ Thus, the compositor’s literacy was not restricted to their ability to decipher handwriting. It was also the ability to translate copy into type, and to make choices that ultimately effected the text’s presentation. This important component of a compositor’s literacy stems from the widely held belief that “the art of printing” activates and ameliorates a compositor’s “knowledge of orthography, etymology, syntax, prosody, punctuation, and many other things that will utilize and strengthen his knowledge of those elements of education which he has acquired at school.”³⁵¹ Lamenting the poor education of the new generation of apprentices, an excerpt included in *The Printer’s Miscellany* from an unnamed American

³⁴⁹ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 25; Opie Read, “Old Barney,” *International Art Printer* 1, no. 8 (October 1895): 170-1.

³⁵⁰ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 33, 34.

³⁵¹ “A Few Facts Regarding the Educational Advantages of Printers.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 8 (February 1878): 188.

paper argues for the upholding of education in the typographical trade. Figuring the printer as scholar, the article remarks that:

‘[...] formerly a thorough knowledge of orthography, a fair acquaintance with the rules of grammar, and a reasonable amount of general information, were esteemed indispensable qualifications for a compositor. Fifty years ago, it is safe to say, the majority of printers were competent to edit the paper on which they worked, if not to write its contents, at least to put them in type correctly. Then a printer was looked up to as a man above the common as one possessed of an extraordinary degree of learning, and to whom questions of spelling and grammar construction were referred, as to high authority.’

A firm understanding – and indeed a mastering – of “the rules of grammar” was considered an “esteemed indispensable qualifications for a compositor”³⁵² not only because the compositor might make corrections to the proof-copy given to them, but because the various branches of linguistics were conceived of as (and are, in many cases) inseparable from the logistics of setting type. Where the compositor would be supplied the copy text, written in full prose, it would be the compositor who would set the text in type, fitting it into the specified line measure. To do this, the compositor would be responsible for justifying the text appropriately, which meant making decisions about where to break sentences and words. As Jul. L. Wright writes, compositors are charged with a great deal of agency in setting up copy, and the correctness of such copy is often considered the compositor’s responsibility, as complaints regarding “language, punctuation, and grammar are almost invariably charged upon the compositor, no matter where the seat of the disease may lie.”³⁵³

³⁵² “The following extract is from ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 1 (July 1876): 3, 4.

³⁵³ Jul. L. Wright, “Practical Matters,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 2 (August 1878): 33.

Compositors took seriously this component of their literacy skillset. The wide-ranging coverage of topics related to typesetting is unsurprising, given the journal's audience, but the emphasis on language, punctuation, and grammar demonstrates the degree to which compositors viewed this knowledge as a fundamental component of the work. In the *Miscellany*, correspondents and articles frequently open debates on the best systems for which to break and/or hyphenate words. In August 1877, "C", a correspondent from Saint John, New Brunswick, argues for "the necessity of adhering to the *syllable* instead of the *sound* system" and provides several examples in support of what he believes is the best practice for breaking words. He insists on the relevance of this debate to the work of the compositor, for whom breaking and compiling words is a daily occurrence. C's letter clearly demonstrates the degree to which compositors must be familiar with lexicography, linguistic forms, and the structure of language to perform this task effectively.³⁵⁴ In June 1878, Jul. L. Wright writes in his "Practical Matters" column that "it is bad taste to divide on *two* letters or to carry *two* letters over on a division—it should never be done in a wide measure. Compositors on book-work should hesitate before dividing such words as family or simile."³⁵⁵ Another "Practical Matters," which ran across the September to December 1879 issues of the *Miscellany*, focuses on "How to Use the Hyphen." The section opens by stating that there are, perhaps, "few subjects of more importance to the compositor (not the 'blacksmith') than the question of correct punctuation," rather overtly repeating prejudices about the perceived lack of education of workers in other trades.³⁵⁶ The series provides plenty of examples and the discussion

³⁵⁴ "C", "Sound vs. Syllable," letter to the editor, *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 2 (August 1877): 31.

³⁵⁵ Jul. L. Wright, "Practical Matters," *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, 12 (June 1878): 316.

³⁵⁶ "The Proof-Reader," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877): 92.

attends to the rules governing the use of the hyphen related to: compound adjectives and compound nouns; nouns and pronouns in opposition; nouns used adjectively; numerical adjectives; adjectives consolidated with nouns; names of places; the possessive case; compound pronouns and adverbs; compound and other phrases; prefixes in derivative words; the division of words into syllables, according to their pronunciation; and, finally, the division of words into syllables, according to their form, derivation, or meaning.³⁵⁷ In January 1881, the *Miscellany* advertises *The Use and Abuse of Abbreviations, with an Alphabetical List of those in Common Use* (Henry R. Book & Co.), describing it as a “valuable little work [that] should be on the desk of every editor and proof-reader, as well as on the frame of every compositor.”³⁵⁸ The comma receives a similar, though less frequent, treatment. In the March 1877 *Miscellany*, a humorous piece outlines the importance of the comma: “The following ludicrous sentence is the result of a compositor’s erroneous punctuation: ‘Caesar entered upon his head, his helmet upon his feet, armed sandals upon his brow, a cloud in his right hand, his faithful sword in his eye, an angry glare.’”³⁵⁹ In the June 1893 *Canadian Printer and Publisher* an article outlines eight rules for the use of commas.³⁶⁰

What the *Miscellany* makes abundantly clear is that nineteenth-century compositors viewed their special literacy as a fundamental component of their skillset. Combining “wide-ranging literacy and deft craftsmanship,”³⁶¹ compositors’ evolving

³⁵⁷ “Practical Matters.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 3 (September 1879): 33; “Practical Matters.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 4 (October 1879): 49-51; “Practical Matters.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 5 (November 1879): 65-7; “Practical Matters.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 6 (December 1879): 81.

³⁵⁸ “‘The Use and Abuse of Abbreviations ...,’” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 7 (January 1881): 98.

³⁵⁹ “The following ludicrous,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 9 (March 1877): 150.

³⁶⁰ “The Use of the Comma,” *CPP* 2, no. 6 (June 1893): 7.

³⁶¹ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 5.

definitions of skill thus distinguished typesetters from other trades and, in doing so, elevates them within the hierarchy of the working class. Punctuation is an element of language that would be familiar to literate people of the time. However, the degree to which the rules of grammar are elucidated in the *Miscellany* prioritizes a complex understanding of the construction of language and syntax that exceeds the level of comprehension likely achieved by most literate people at the end of the century. What makes a compositor special, according to their own view, is the way in which the work's relationship with language necessitates "brains," or intelligence, as well as agency over the work and text in all forms. Compositors really did imagine themselves as codebreakers and firmly believed that this constituted a more specialized form of literacy that was unique to the typographical trades. This special literacy was also a component of a journeyman's competency and thus contributed to his masculine craft status. Of course, women were also hand compositors and performed the same work. As Wesley Washington Pasko writes in *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking* (1894), in a Boston office, women compositors who were formally educated and working in print shops could "pass examinations on grammar, the mathematics and the rudiments of Latin and French."³⁶² But the emphasis on the male compositor's literacy being one engaged in the excavation of meaning from "hieroglyphics" seems to suggest that the literacy goes beyond the kind of school-book learning that created the new literate public. Printers' literacy, then, is part of the trade's secretive knowledge, the "Myster[ies] of Printing" that, in 1678, the Stationers' Company of London forbade printers to share with anyone

³⁶² Pasko, ed., *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking*, 189.

“who is not actually bound as an Apprentice to some lawful authorised Printer.”³⁶³ Thus, this special literacy can only be gained through the completion of a formal apprenticeship. The thematization of the intelligent compositor and of coded language is also, most importantly, a rhetorical tool utilized by compositor’s to further make their ranks exclusive. Since not anybody can read “hieroglyphics,” not anybody can become a compositor. At the same time, the compositor’s ability to read “hieroglyphics” and comprehend complex elements of linguistics differentiates them from the literate public and from those working in other trades.

3.3 Literacy Beyond Bad Handwriting: Shorthand, Language Codes, and Compositors

3.3.1 *The Printer’s Miscellany* and its “Phonographic Department”

Rumble’s analysis of compositor’s “special literacy” stops at considering the codebreaking, or handwriting deciphering, component of compositors’ literacy skills. In this section, I expand upon Rumble’s concept of “special literacy” to argue that the thematic recurrence of “codebreaking” within the trade’s journals illustrates that the trade’s sense of its literacy was far more nuanced and complex than Rumble observes and that, for some, it in fact involved the writing, reading, and deciphering of literal codes. This emphasis on codebreaking is not just an old printer’s trope. In the last quarter of the

³⁶³ Maruca, “Bodies of Type,” 326; Hunt, “The London Trade,” 518; Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554-1640*, vol. 1, *Text* (London: Privately Printed: 1875), 16, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x001800905>.

century, it takes on a new urgency because of the rising mass literacy that “encroached on a printer’s domain.”³⁶⁴

“Decoding” bad handwriting was not the only way that compositors conceptualized of themselves as skilled, literate, and aristocratic labourers. *The Printer’s Miscellany* offers another site for analyzing this self-fashioning. Unique to *The Printer’s Miscellany* was its (and its contributors’) perennial interest in phonographic shorthand writing systems, also, at least once, referred to as “hieroglyphics.”³⁶⁵ Phonography was an all-consuming phenomenon in communications for Victorians across the Atlantic. Ivan Kreilkamp observes that, from the introduction of phonography (writing system) by Isaac Pitman in the 1830s to Thomas Edison’s inventions of the phonograph (sound recording and listening) in 1877, “the Victorian era was fundamentally phonographic” as “Victorian culture struggled resourcefully to find ways to transcribe and write voice.”³⁶⁶ In the fifty years following the publication of Pitman’s *Stenographic Soundhand* in 1837, “hundreds of shorthand manuals and dozens of competitive new systems, most of them ‘phonographic,’ some of them avowedly ‘Pitmanic’” emerged across the United States.³⁶⁷ Lisa Gitelman outlines that, “prior to [Isaac] Pitman, shorthand was called *stenography* (derived from the Greek, narrow or close writing), *tachygraphy* (swift writing), or *brachygraphy* (short writing).” According to Gitelman, Pitman called his system

phonography (sound writing) because he claimed that his was the first shorthand based explicitly on the phonetics of English, rather than on its spelling. Andrew Jackson Graham, Pitman’s staunchest American competitor, who was once his

³⁶⁴ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 7, 25.

³⁶⁵ “Our Shorthand Bureau,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 4&5 (October and November 1881): 58.

³⁶⁶ Ivan Kreilkamp, *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁶⁷ Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 27.

disciple, even used the term *phonograph* in 1858; according to him, the word could either be a noun, naming ‘the *graphic* or *written* sign of a vocal element,’ or a verb meaning to write using those signs.

Whereas stenography, described by one correspondent in the *Miscellany*, is “*compact writing*” that is “in the main, composed of arbitrary signs,” phonography, Gitelman outlines, “emphasized the oral character of language at the same time that it sought to perfect a technology for linguistic representation.”³⁶⁸

According to Carole Srole, the use of shorthand writing systems dates to at least the ancient Greeks and Egyptians; such writing systems only arrived in the West in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the nineteenth century, shorthand evolved from earlier English styles and “became more commonly used in the United States with the popularization of Englishman Isaac Pitman’s phonics-based ‘phonography’ as part of an international movement to simplify language, with phonetic principles as its central feature.” Srole writes that in America, shorthand systems were originally borne of “the antebellum spelling and phonetic reform movements.” Through such movements, shorthand was imagined as “a crusade for human progress” and as riding in the vanguard of the promotion of the middle-class man’s “image of self-reliance” – that is, intellectual

³⁶⁸ Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, 24; R.W.C Mitchell quoted in “Our Art.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 249. Kreilkamp considers stenography and phonography as overlapping or synonymous terms when applied to the century. Indeed, while the *Miscellany* called it the “Phonography Department” and some contributors made distinctions between the forms, the *Miscellany* is frequently populated by side-by-side or comparative discussions of shorthand, phonography, and stenography. However, Gitelman’s detailed study of the relationship between phonetic shorthand and Edison’s phonograph insists upon the individualization of this particular form. Taking from both scholars, this section considers all shorthand as deeply related forms of writing (not necessarily overlapping) while making the distinction between phonography and other shorthand writing systems, as necessitated by the name of the *Miscellany*’s section (Kreilkamp, *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller*, 70; Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*).

and economic self-sufficiency.³⁶⁹ In Canada, interest in phonography began earlier in the century. Heather Murray and Yannick Portebois note that interest in phonography in Canada began largely in Canada West (now Ontario). They outline the work of William Orr, a printer from Oshawa, who became one of the country's phonographic pioneers when he established the *Canadian Phonetic Pioneer* in 1858. He determined to use his paper "to promote the science of Pitman phonography, to market the texts and implements necessary for its practice, and to explain the philosophical underpinnings of spelling reform." Murray and Portebois observe that spelling reform in nineteenth-century Canada "was most energetically represented [...] by Pitmanites," proponents of Isaac Pitman's system. Although the movement shifted away from phonography, per se, to the concept of "simplified spelling" as a means of encouraging literacy by the early 1880s,³⁷⁰ Murray notes that "Pitmanite shorthand, now known as the 'original,' still flourished in the United States and had achieved acceptance in Canada." Throughout the 1880s, discussions about phonographic systems were points of contention for many, as Pitman frequently changed and adapted his system; as new systems gained traction across North America; and as spelling reformers' attentions shifted.³⁷¹

The Printer's Miscellany was actively engaged in and mediating transnational discussions around phonography. In December 1877 a column on "Shorthand" first appeared in *The Printer's Miscellany*, authored by "Mr. Wm. H. Fry, Corp. 97th

³⁶⁹ Carole Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices* (University of Michigan Press, 2009), 17, 35, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁷⁰ Heather Murray and Yannick Portebois, "Steam Writing in the Urli Daiz: William Orr, the *Canadian Phonetic Pioneer*, and the Cause of Phonographic Reform," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 54, no. 1-2 (2016): 57, 58, 59, <https://doi.org/10.33137/pbsc.v54i1-2.22657>.

³⁷¹ Heather Murray, "And All the Arts of Peace: Phonography, Simplified Spelling, and the Spelling Reform Movement, Toronto 1883 to 1886," *English Studies in Canada* 43, no. 2-3 (June-Sept 2017): 175-6, 178, 198, Gale Literature Resource Center.

Regiment” from Halifax, a “Certified Teacher and Lecturer” of Pitman’s phonography. The column appears in every issue of the *Miscellany*’s second volume, and it encourages typographical workers across North America to write in positive and critical responses.³⁷² In November 1878, the *Miscellany* begins publishing a casual “Phonographic Department.” It is primarily composed of correspondence to the *Miscellany* rather than original material written for the journal.³⁷³ In addition to debates from competing schools of phonographic thought,³⁷⁴ advertisements for lessons in phonography and phonographic books were increasingly issued in the *Miscellany*.³⁷⁵

Likely due to the amount of attention already afforded to the subject within its pages, Finlay capitalizes on the trade’s investment in this popular form, inaugurating the journal’s formal “Phonographic Department” toward the end of the *Miscellany*’s third volume, in January 1879. The Department was run by T. William Bell.³⁷⁶ No other typographical trade journal published in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century included such a section or focused as much (if at all) on phonography, though there were periodicals dedicated to shorthand and phonography being produced and

³⁷² “A series of papers on ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 126.

³⁷³ “Phonographic Department,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 5 (November 1878): 154-7;

“Phonographic Department,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 6 (December 1878): 186-8.

³⁷⁴ See, for example: An Editor, “The Different Systems of Shorthand,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 12 (June 1878): 330; T.W.B., “Shorthand,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 12 (June 1878): 330-1; American, letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 3 (September 1878): 91-2; G.W.H., “Change of Base,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 123; A Standard Phonographer, “Short-fist,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 123; T.W.B., “Phonography – The ‘Standard’ vs. Isaac Pitman,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 123-6; M.T.J., “Another Humbug Exposed,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 9 (March 1879): 277;

³⁷⁵ For example: “Phonography,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 12 (June 1878): 338; “Standard Phonography,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 2 (August 1878): 66; “Phonography,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 131; “Standard Phonography,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 131; “Price List of ‘Standard’ Phonographic Books, etc.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 10 (April 1879): 301.

³⁷⁶ T. William Bell, ed., “Phonographic Department,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 7 (January 1879): 218-21.

circulated in Canada in the 1880s.³⁷⁷ After the commencement of the *Miscellany*'s "Phonographic Department," interest and debate among the *Miscellany*'s readers regarding shorthand is markedly increased. In fact, the *Miscellany*'s reputation and audience changed; it was no longer viewed simply as a valuable resource for printers and compositors, it was now also, allegedly, "the cheapest phonographic monthly published under the sun." In April 1879, the *Miscellany* advertises that "a specimen copy of the *Miscellany* will be sent to the address of any phonographer whose name [they] receive from subscribers" and, for only \$2.00, sent to Finlay, the *Miscellany* and the phonography periodical, *The Student's Journal*, published by Andrew J. Graham in New York, would be sent to the subscriber.³⁷⁸ *The Student's Journal* praises the work of the *Miscellany*, remarking that "the spicy phonographic items" within the journal have "helped to arouse the printer's fraternity to the subject of shorthand; and this is well, as the day is fast coming when those who can set from Standard Phonographic copy will be in demand, and, of course, all the private advantages of the art are as useful to printers as to any class of men."³⁷⁹

Certainly, a familiarity with shorthand systems was useful to compositors setting manuscript copy. The typographical trade's perception of its literacy encompasses, from the early nineteenth century, a robust knowledge of shorthand writing systems.

According to Rummonds, the author of the 1833 printers' manual, *The Printer*, makes the case that compositors should be familiar with shorthand. Rummonds remarks that "there

³⁷⁷ Murray, "And All the Arts of Peace," 178.

³⁷⁸ "A specimen copy of the *Miscellany* ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 9 (March 1879): 277; "A specimen copy of the *Miscellany* ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 10 (April 1879): 303; "For \$2.00, received before July 1st ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 10 (April 1879): 302.

³⁷⁹ "The spicy phonographic items ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 9 (March 1881): 141.

were dozens of other shorthand systems in use before [Pitman's]. Until the invention of the typewriter in the late nineteenth century, all texts, except reprints, were composed from handwritten copy. The reference to shorthand in *The Printer* would indicate that some authors might have also utilized [shorthand] when writing their books.”³⁸⁰ If this is true, then shorthand had long been one of the codes compositors were required to break. Kreilkamp and Leah Price make the case that there was definitely a relationship between shorthand and nineteenth-century novel-writing, turning to the example of Charles Dickens “as a representative of the nineteenth-century author as self-described faithful recorder and shorthand expert.” Dickens’ interest in shorthand was immense, and his expertise made its way into several of his novels, most notably *David Copperfield* and *The Pickwick Papers*.³⁸¹ Printers even used shorthand in relation to their own creative writing. For instance, in Harpel’s *Poets and Poetry of Printerdom* (1870), “The Grave of Captain Hall,” a poem by J. J. Roche, a Prince Edward Island-born humourist and poet, appears both in English and in “tachygraphic characters.”³⁸²

Finlay, however, does not associate his decision to launch the Department with growing interest in spelling reform or the anticipated rising popularity of phonography. Rather, he indicates that the impetus for including materials on shorthand in his journal is “because of the close affinity of printing and shorthand.”³⁸³ The Department’s goal was

³⁸⁰ Rummonds, *Nineteenth-Century Printing Practices and the Iron Handpress*, 1: 43.

³⁸¹ Kreilkamp, *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller*, 76-77; Leah Price, “Stenographic Masculinity,” in *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, ed., Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell (Routledge, 2005), 32; Hugo Bowles, *Dickens and the Stenographic Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 2-3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198829072.001.0001>.

³⁸² Harpel, *Poets and Poetry of Printerdom*, 231; J.J. Roche, “The Gave of Captain Hall” in *Poets and Poetry of Printerdom: A Collection of Original, Selected, and Fugitive Lyrics*, edited by Oscar H. Harpel (Cincinnati: Oscar H. Harpel, Printer and Publisher, 1875), 237, 239, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951p00427196x>.

³⁸³ “A series of papers on ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 126.

not simply to discuss shorthand writing systems, but to provide introductory instruction on phonography; almost every installment of the “Phonographic Department” includes a section on “Easy Lessons in Phonography” that provide relatively detailed instructions, with reproductions, designed to teach the reader how to read and write phonography (Figure 8).³⁸⁴

The *Miscellany*’s encouragement of the independent study of phonography has important implications for composers’ sense of their masculine trade identity. This is particularly important to consider as changes to the late-nineteenth-century labour market meant that an emerging clerical sector saw men and women working in more professional capacities (as opposed to manual labour) using literacy skills and learning phonography. By the early 1880s, stenography and related practices were becoming “business skill[s]” and phonography was increasingly “seen as a vocational attainment,” particularly in the clerical sector. Thus, clerical workers who were learning and using phonography at work “encroached on [the] printer[s]’ domain and on [their] codebreaking skills” as literate workers.³⁸⁵ Srole contends that phonography gained popularity in the second half of the century in the United States as men working in the clerical sector “struggled to construct a new class and gender identity” in the face of shifting labour markets and class dynamics.³⁸⁶ These parallel gender politics are critical to contextualizing the dominating presence of shorthand within the pages of the *Miscellany*, and the role of the *Miscellany*’s “Phonographic Department” in establishing literacy as a fundamental component of the

³⁸⁴ For example: “A Few Easy Lessons in Phonography.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 250; “Easy Lessons in Phonography.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 10 (April 1879): 300; “Easy Lessons in Phonography.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 11 (May 1879): 319.

³⁸⁵ Murray, “And All the Arts of Peace,” 176; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 25.

³⁸⁶ Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender*, 17.

journeyman compositor's literary skills toolkit. The widespread interest in phonography and, subsequently, the class and gender struggle of middle-class male clerical workers, occurred concurrently with the typographical trade's class and gender struggles in the mid-to-late century resultant from *their* changing labour market. According to Srole, the male clerical worker "became a symbol of potential economic independence" during the century, and his commitment to intellectual self-improvement and the independent "acquisition of increasingly complex skills [...] signified" and realized a particular "upward mobility" for the clerical man. Such practices allowed young men "to advance beyond the 'ordinary clerk,' 'make more money,' or become law stenographers." It was argued that such a dedication to self-education – shorthand "was a hobby that encouraged self-study" – was, "the behavior of men," as opposed to women, though women were also working in shorthand during the century.³⁸⁷ The fact that middle-class male clerical workers could learn shorthand independently of their employers and formal schooling made it an important piece in furnishing the middle-class male clerical worker's masculine labour identity toward the end of the century. The reasonings for this are embedded in a transatlantic gender politics that is strikingly similar to the labour ideologies of typographical workers during the same period.³⁸⁸ In endeavouring to cultivate an image of the male clerical worker as masculine, "clerks needed evidence of mental training" above and beyond the simple requirements that they, like compositors, "speak English; possess general knowledge of arithmetic, spelling, grammar, composition, and punctuation; and write neatly and legibly." This was because "mental labor defined middle-class men's work." Thus, stenography, and the clerical sector's

³⁸⁷ Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender*, 19, 20, 39, 35, 32.

³⁸⁸ Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender*, 31, 39, 117.

widespread interest in the form, “developed within this framework of middle-class manly improvement.”³⁸⁹

Here, it is worth noting that, from the very beginning, the intended audience for phonography was professional men. According to Price, Pitman’s manual and writing system were marketed “to independent male professionals: students, clergymen, barristers, travel writers, diarists, journalists, court and parliamentary reporters like [Charles] Dickens.”³⁹⁰ The phonographic reader of the *Miscellany*, just like the reader of Pitman’s manual, is imagined as, predominantly, male. This is why women, who were encroaching on the compositor’s place in the composing room by the 1880s in other ways (see Chapters 4 and 6), were not made to feel welcome in the “Phonographic Department.” For example, in October/November 1881, the *Miscellany*’s “Phonographic Department” issues a warning to phonographers and male workers of women’s encroachment on this skill. The article posits that women may use phonography to work in the post office, but they also want to use it to “keep abreast with the news of the day that travels on postal cards” and to “correspond with their loved ones in a way that will insure something approximating privacy in a more desirable degree than can reasonably be hoped for among postal cards and female officials.”³⁹¹

Compositors framed their argument for the study of phonography in much the same way as middle-class clerical workers: the independent study of such a skill became a component of compositors’ competency and conferred upon them the kind of

³⁸⁹ Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender*, 32, 35.

³⁹⁰ Price, “Stenographic Masculinity,” 34.

³⁹¹ “Phonography is fast becoming a popular study ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 4&5 (October and November 1881): 61.

masculinity that comes from independence, mastery, and the pursuit of intellectual betterment. Compositors understood the relevance of phonography to their work and to their ability to legitimately claim a position in the aristocracy of labour, in which literacy was a necessary qualification. Printers were keenly aware of what phonography might do for their social mobility and, consequently, their masculine identity. In March 1881 the “Phonographic Department” includes an article from the *Montreal Star* that indicates that writing shorthand will increase one’s mobility as “he can make a living wherever the English language is spoken. Shorthand is as good as a trade, as sure a means of livelihood, and as an accomplishment it will yet rank high.”³⁹² Proponents of printers learning phonography argued that phonographic literacy conferred upon the compositor masculinity because it necessitated the development and use of their “mental superiority.” Not only would a familiarity with phonography allow compositors to shore up their claims to literacy, it would also “endue the mind with quickness,” affirming the trade’s masculine labour ideology which considers that the work of hand composition is skilled and masculine because it requires both brains and manual skills.³⁹³

In addition to considering phonography as a complementary component of their literacy, compositors also perceived that there were important parallels between the practice of phonographic writing and the manual practice of typesetting. These parallels reflect compositors’ conceptualization of their special literacy and of their manual skills, both of which are fundamental to their identity construction as intellectual, masculine labourers. In September 1880, the “Phonographic Department” includes a piece written

³⁹² “Articles like the following ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 9 (March 1881): 141.

³⁹³ “Mr. Gawtress, when speaking ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 1 (July 1879): 8.

by “Boz.” speaking to “Printer-Phonographers” and the special connection and aptitude shared between the two fields. Boz writes:

in setting up from manuscript, the printer often had to compose very rapidly, and at the same time correct errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation, for, as we all know, even the immaculate editors do not always furnish their copy in as perfect a state as could be wished, while the ‘great unwashed’ (public) would seem to think that the printer can make good English out of the worst jumble of words that could be penned by man. [...] This discipline gives the printer an immense advantage in learning phonography over those engaged in other pursuits. [...] allow me to say to my fellow printers that it will pay them to take up the study of the art; pay in many different ways. Pay in cash, in intellectual development, in the acquisition of a useful and beautiful art; and I would strongly advise them to take up the study of it at the earliest possible moment.”³⁹⁴

Much the same as reading and setting from bad copy, compositors capable of reading phonographic shorthand would be responsible for translating the systems’ phonetic sound-representations of lines and dots into English, adding punctuation and correcting grammar and syntactical structures as needed. Equally, the compositor’s knowledge of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and, relatedly, syllables and the sound break-down of language as a literacy tool for setting type, are essentially the same skills as those required for phonography. Additionally, “speed and legibility” were essential skills of the shorthand writer, just as speed, efficiency, and accuracy were essential to the work of the skilled compositor.³⁹⁵

As definitions of literacy shifted at the end of the nineteenth century to include techniques like phonography (vis-à-vis the transnational spelling reform movement), the *Miscellany*’s privileging of phonography signals that compositors in Canada understood that they needed to be ahead of the curve in learning phonography to maintain their

³⁹⁴ Boz., “Printer-Phonographers,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 3 (September 1880): 40-1.

³⁹⁵ Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, 30.

distinct labour identity in relation to literacy. The rise and fall of the *Miscellany*'s "Phonographic Department" precedes that of the Spelling Reform Movement in Ontario in the mid-1880s.³⁹⁶ Phonography was a central element of the movement, which was generally concerned with making literacy simpler and more accessible, particularly for former slaves and immigrants.³⁹⁷ Despite this relationship, however, printers were not interested in making language easier or more accessible. In fact, the *Miscellany*'s purpose in promoting independent education in phonography was quite the opposite. In adding compositors' ability to read and write phonography to their literacy toolkit, their command of language would be extended. Gitelman remarks that it is "tempting to locate shorthand" in the history of writing and I argue that, in the context of its relationship to the typographical trades, this locating is necessary because both practices – printing and shorthand writing – are inseparable from language and the development of literacy in the West. Phonographers like Isaac Pitman and his brother, Benn, clearly imagined the relationship between shorthand and literacy, "invok[ing] the origins of literacy itself in their promotion of new systems of phonetic shorthand." Gitelman points to the example of Benn Pitman's *Manual of Phonography* which he opens "with a discourse on the origins of the alphabet in the hieroglyphics of the Near East," explicitly drawing the connection between Roman alphabetic characters and pictographs (returned to in phonetic shorthand). She also considers phonography alongside histories or practices of dictation or recording verbal/oratory communications; as such, "the history of shorthand may indeed be the history of writing."³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ Murray, "And All the Arts of Peace," 171-204.

³⁹⁷ Murray and Portebois, "Steam Writing in the Urli Daiz," 89; Murray, "And All the Arts of Peace," 198.

³⁹⁸ Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, 28-9.

Positioning phonography as a form of writing is useful for considering its relevance to the typographical trades and compositors' identity because it situates the acquisition of shorthand techniques within compositors' legacy of special literacy. This is particularly pertinent as the kind of writing or recording made possible by phonetic shorthand – *verbatim memory* – is, Gitelman writes, “limited to literate societies.” Considering phonography in this way suggests that it is a technique that is only open to groups of workers who possess a deeply intimate and advanced relationship with literacy and language, like compositors. Gitelman writes that, “Pitman’s phonographic writing style is a third-generation language in many respects” because:

the preparation of lengthy, word-for-word transcripts of oral proceedings [using phonetic shorthand] only became a practical possibility with second-generation or posteriori literacy; that is, with writing that abbreviates or otherwise speeds up what nineteenth-century authors of shorthand manuals were so fond of calling ‘common’ writing. The terms *first-*, *second-*, *third-generation literacy* come from computer programming, where written programming languages build upon each other the way shorthand builds upon ‘common’ writing.

Like the special literacy that enables compositors to read poor manuscript copy, their historic relationship to language enables them to practice this “third-generation language.” In essence, compositors’ familiarity with “‘common’ writing” enables them to easily build upon their literacy skills, stacking this coded quasi-English on top of their already masterful command of English.³⁹⁹

The *Miscellany*’s “Phonographic Department” ended in October/November 1881, in part due to Bell’s ill health. In his final piece, Bell remarks that the cessation of the Department was also spurred by the feeling among printers that the journal’s

³⁹⁹ Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*, 42.

encouragement of shorthand was “a little premature,” regardless of the attention it was afforded in the journal.⁴⁰⁰ Despite this, I argue that the *Miscellany*’s inclusion of a dedicated section on shorthand is deliberate. By dedicating half of every issue published between January 1879 to the end of 1881 to shorthand and emphasizing its importance to composers, the journal anticipated the prevalence of phonography in the 1880s and the encroachment of other workers into the composers’ domain in relation to literacy. The *Miscellany*’s dedication to its “Phonographic Department” also fundamentally associated the special literacy skillset of shorthand with that of typographical workers. In an increasingly professionalizing labour market populated by increasingly educated workers, composers had to compete to maintain their socio-economic positions. One of the ways they attempted to do this, this section has proposed, was by encouraging composers to adapt their literacy skills to meet shifting definitions of literacy that were circulating amongst the public. By differentiating the importance of phonography to the typographical trades, *The Printer’s Miscellany* affirms composers’ elevated status within the hierarchy of labour.

3.3.2 Proofreader Marks and Printers’ Ornaments as Codes

Shorthand is, by definition, a code since it is “a system of signs or symbols” – logograms (as defined in the *OED*: “A sign or character representing a word; in *Phonography*, a word-letter; a single stroke which, for brevity’s sake, represents a word”) – by which “information or instructions are conveyed concisely according to a set of

⁴⁰⁰ “Our Phonographic Department,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 4&5 (November and December 1881): 41.

previously agreed correspondences between words, symbols, sequences of numbers, or actions and the words or meaning to be understood.” But shorthand is not strictly related to the typographical trades. As the previous section has outlined, phonographic shorthand, which utilizes representative markings to indicate sounds (which in turn represented words), was used by professional workers of all kinds throughout the century. However, since “code” can also refer to “a language, or a particular dialect or register of language” – such as the equipment- and technical-based typographical jargon found in printers’ poetry, for example – it is worth interrogating how industry codes make their way into the trade’s journals as a means of reinforcing literacy as skill.⁴⁰¹ I am not talking about the kinds of printing terminologies and puns that were often used in “metaphoric excess”⁴⁰² in jokes, stories, and poetry (though there is certainly overlap). Rather, I am talking about another logographic/pictographic element of compositors’ language that makes a meaningful appearance in *The Printer’s Miscellany*: the use of symbols – like printer’s ornaments and proofreader’s notation marks – in place of words.

Where shorthand was included in the *Miscellany* as an educational companion to the rest of the journal, it was a kind of language that crossed trade and professional boundaries. In theory, anyone working in any trade or industry could learn shorthand, whether they used it at work or not. The substitution of words for symbols in several pieces throughout the *Miscellany*, however, necessitates a working literacy in printing trade language, as no key is ever provided. Therefore, since a code is also “a method of

⁴⁰¹ “logogram (n.), sense 2.a,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed July 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1186907057>; “code (n.), sense II.4.a,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed March 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7804306471>; “code (n.), sense II.5.b,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed March 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2747285473>.

⁴⁰² Warner, *The Letter of the Republic*, 74.

communication in which each letter (or group of letters) in a written message is systematically substituted by another, or by a symbol, to enable transmission” and includes “any system of cryptography in which such substitution is used for secrecy,”⁴⁰³ I argue that, while generally not malicious, the use of this logographic code system in the *Miscellany* obscures meaning for and simultaneously excludes any reader not well-versed enough to make inferences or understand the relationship between the literal symbol and the signified meaning. One’s ability to read and make meaning necessitates their being “part of the club” or, to refer to Jul. L. Wright’s remarks on amateur printers, their status as a fully-fledged journeyman, their belonging “as *one of us*.”⁴⁰⁴

In some instances, the code is a relatively straightforward substitution of symbol for word. They also sometimes include the use of letters in place of words like modern text messaging shortcuts. In Figure 9, the text, “translated,” reads: “Bright [star] of my xisroce¹ give me an [embrace]!” said a printer [to] his sweetheart. She made a [dash] at him and planted her [fist/hand] between his [two eyes], which made him [see stars].” It is worth noting, however, that in this example, I cannot decipher what is meant by “xisroce¹.”⁴⁰⁵ In Figure 10, proofreader marks act as euphemisms: “A young printer on beholding the object of his affections, cried out—‘Let me [em]brace you,’ and they [em]braced, and were happy.”⁴⁰⁶ And in Figure 11, daggers and fists animate an excerpt from *Macbeth*: “A great admirer of ‘Avon’s Bard,’ who asked an American paper where the following passage is to be found: ‘Is that a [dagger] that I [see] [before] me?’ was

⁴⁰³ “code (n.), sense II.4.b,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed March 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1750064856>.

⁴⁰⁴ J.L.W., “Amateur Job-Printing Offices,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 238-9.

⁴⁰⁵ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1876): 64.

⁴⁰⁶ “‘Devil’-isms,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 12 (June 1877): 211.

informed that it might be found in Macbeth, whose murderous [hand] put a [end] to [one] Duncan.”⁴⁰⁷

In other instances, the use of symbols is less about directly replacing words and more about representing meaning in a more abstract, pictographic way. Take Figure 12, for instance, in which a *fist* fight is illustrated visually: “[exclamation exclamation exclamation dash dash dash exclamation exclamation exclamation fist dagger exclamation exclamation stars].”⁴⁰⁸ Or Figure 13, where someone falling through the ice and drowning is visually represented by asterisks and daggers.⁴⁰⁹ Or, in Figure 14, where a form of gawlix (“a random string of typographical symbols [...] used in place of an obscenity, esp[ecially] in comic strips”) is used: “The harder a compositor works, the more he takes his [ease].—*Stamford Advocate*. There is no [excuses] for such [star dagger double daggers double bar section paragraph] to our honorable calling; besides, it’s a well-known fact that the more he takes his [ease] the less [ease] he has, and also the more he [owes]. Let him have his [peace].”⁴¹⁰

The use of proofreader and printers’ symbols in newspapers and periodicals was not an uncommon occurrence. In fact, the kind of coding discussed above appears elsewhere, albeit less frequently, in other nineteenth-century Canadian typographical trade journals. It may have also been found in other periodicals, as evidenced by the poem “The Arab and His Donkey,” published in *The Printer’s Miscellany*. The poem is made up of excerpts from five newspapers, all of which include a coded word in this

⁴⁰⁷ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 1 (July 1877): 22.

⁴⁰⁸ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 150.

⁴⁰⁹ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 260.

⁴¹⁰ “gawlix (n.),” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed March 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1949051878>; “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 134.

vein, suggesting that, if the transcriber did not alter the text themselves, the practice was widely understood and used (Figure 15).⁴¹¹

Counter my argument that proofreader's marks constituted a kind of trade-code, Jul. L. Wright observes in a section of "Practical Matters" that "it is rare to find two readers who do not use different and dissimilar signs to convey the same meaning. Occasionally it occurs that a common sign is used by two or more, but radically differing in application and significance."⁴¹² Thus it is up to the compositors to infer the proofreader's meaning and intentions, just as it is the reader's responsibility to infer that it was Macbeth's "murderous [hand]" that "put a [end] to [one] Duncan," not, say, a point or finger (as might be inferred otherwise).⁴¹³ Equally, however, this knowledge was also secret. Or, rather, typographical workers were not necessarily interested in sharing their "codes" with outsiders. Although Jul. L. Wright provides some explanation for the marks made by proofreaders on copy in a section of "Practical Matters,"⁴¹⁴ the author of an article from the *Utica Observer* (New York) republished in *The Printer's Miscellany* provides no real answers. The article begins by promising to elucidate on the "typographic signals" that circulate in every "well-regulated office" and which are, otherwise, "only understood by the craft": "a 'Constant Reader' writes from Ilion asking us to explain the signs used by the editors to express their directions to compositors. It's unusual to share office secrets with the public, but we don't mind just this once." What follows provides no answers to the untrained reader; rather, it is a humorous article filled

⁴¹¹ "Literary Gossip," *The Imprint* 1, no. 2 (June 1893): 4; "The Arab and His Donkey," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 12 (June 1881): 182.

⁴¹² Jul. L. Wright, "Proof-marks," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 9 (March 1879): 264.

⁴¹³ "'Sorts,'" *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 1 (July 1877): 22.

⁴¹⁴ Jul. L. Wright, "Proof-marks," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 9 (March 1879): 264-5.

with sarcasm and the combinations of symbols it purports to explain seem mostly arbitrary and the explanations mock the uninformed reader (Figure 16).⁴¹⁵

When they are categorized as codes or coded languages, phonographic symbols and printers' ornaments are of the same ilk. The former did not necessarily exclude women or other "unskilled" labourers from participating in the trade or engaging with the trade's journals. It is a superfluous addition to the definition of skill for compositors. Certainly, not all compositors were masters at shorthand or even cared to learn it. Additionally, women were actively learning shorthand and working in the clerical sector using those systems. The literal codes vis-à-vis printers' ornaments included in the *Miscellany*, on the other hand, are part of the workplace jargon of the shop floor. A compositor who did not know those symbols would be lost at the case. It would be unconvincing to claim, outright, that women did not know these symbols and their meanings, given the number of women working in composing rooms and as editors and journal proprietors in the second half of the century. Indeed, the symbols are not necessarily complicated or really all that hard to figure out, especially with the help of modern reference materials like Robert Bringhurst's *The Elements of Typographic Style*.⁴¹⁶ Though, as I briefly mentioned, I was not able to completely decipher all of the language and symbols. The matter remains that this coded language was one that made several appearances within the journals and while they do not obscure *actual* secrets, they are themselves secretive. The way they are used to code language is an exclusionary practice. Such inclusions perpetuate complex notions of the trade's skilled identity in relation to literacy, namely that compositors' conceptualization of skill encompassed a

⁴¹⁵ "A Wholesale Betrayal of Innocents.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 4 (October 1879): 54.

⁴¹⁶ Robert Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style* (Hartly & Marks Publishers, 1992).

“wide-ranging literacy”⁴¹⁷ that extended far beyond the norm and was weaponized to differentiate the labour and intelligence of the compositor during the century. In operating as secret codes or languages, they reinforce the common suggestion that the trade is defined by exclusivity.

3.4 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that compositors’ conceptualization of themselves as literary labourers was multifaceted and bound up in gendered and skilled labour ideologies. It has also demonstrated that the trade’s journals are complex sites of literary and technical exchanges, the boundaries of which are often blurred together. The journals’ technical sides tend to privilege hands-on training and manual skill, obtained through the competition of a formal apprenticeship, as fundamental components of the male journeymen’s status as a skilled craftsman. But “skill” as defined in the trade’s journals also necessitates compositors’ intellect and “brains,” a combination which elevates their position within the hierarchy of labour and, in doing so, excludes “unskilled” workers – women, amateurs, and apprentices.

As the typographical trade’s “domain”⁴¹⁸ was threatened by increasing literacy rates, an emerging professional class, and the influx of amateur and female labour (Chapters 4 and 6 discuss the latter in more detail), compositors emphasized that their work required intelligence beyond the basic school education afforded to the mass public. They emphasized the fact that their work put them in close and intimate proximity to

⁴¹⁷ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 5.

⁴¹⁸ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 25.

printed materials and literatures of all kinds. They used that fact to justify the belief that their literal manual manipulation of type sorts resulted in or was equal to their ability to figuratively manipulate and control the printed word. By emphasizing that compositors are codebreakers capable of reading bad handwriting, translating “hieroglyphics” into English, and deciphering and writing coded language like phonography, journeymen attempted to distinguish themselves from the mass reading public and other labourers. Adjusting their definitions of literacy to meet the challenges of a changing labour market at the end of the nineteenth century not only enabled compositors to sustain claims to their position in the hierarchy of the labouring class, but it also allowed them to reaffirm the masculinity of their work in the face of the increasing employment of women on the shop floor. Undoubtedly linked to manual and mental skill, the trade’s interest in phonography has gendered implications that situate the intellectual work of composition in a decidedly masculine social sphere. Phonography’s association with independence, intellectual pliability, and social mobility are aspects closely related to the compositor’s masculine labour identity. The use of printers’ ornaments as codes is, likewise, exclusionary. Though it is, in a way, a humorous way for journeymen to assert the trade’s exclusiveness, it is a successful gesture of exclusion toward those labourers, in and outside of the trade, who do not possess the right kind of literacy to engage with them.

These features offer a layered image of the ideal compositor: a highly intelligent, literary man who is economically self-sufficient and has a high degree of autonomy and agency in the workplace. As Chapter 2 outlined, formal technical education, good pay, labour organization, and skill were all necessary for the compositor to achieve a

“competence.” A compositor’s “special literacy”⁴¹⁹ was always part of his competency. However, the trade journals’ elucidation of a compositor’s intelligence and literacy provides important insights for understanding compositors’ self-fashioning as intelligent elite workers. Whereas printers’ literacy once only required a detailed knowledge of English and the ability to read bad copy, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, those skills were not enough to distinguish the work of the compositor. The trade’s discourse thus shifts, and their journals illustrate the many tools that compositors used to hold onto their ever-threatened labour identity vis-à-vis their unique, historical, and supposedly inherent connection to literacy and the literary.

⁴¹⁹ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 7.

Chapter 4: From the Kitchens to the Composing Room and Back

Again: Narrative Discourses of Women On and Off the Shop Floor

From the 1850s to the 1880s, the friction between journeymen compositors and their employers intensified. This was due, in part, to the fact that many local unions in Canada joined the ITU and became subordinate locals, thereby “tightenin[ing] the bonds of unity” through the “adopt[ion] [of] its increasingly rigid set of ‘laws’ governing the trade.” The trade’s struggles also intensified because employers, who were “caught in cutthroat competitive battles, relentlessly attacked craft control over the labour process.” In response to competition and the desire to save money, employers increasingly hired women in the mid-century, including as strike-breakers, and paid them wages below the union scale.⁴²⁰ In response to employers’ engagement of women for wages below the union scale and as strike-breakers, journeymen generally rejected women on the shop floor. However, as Mary Biggs notes, male journeymen’s “most fundamental opposition was not to women but to the competition of inferior and cheap labor.” Women’s exclusion from union structures, namely the apprenticeship system, was the trade’s most obvious strategy for safeguarding their economic and craft statuses. Biggs argues that “union policies, though ultimately exclusionary, were founded not in sexism but in the workingman’s need to survive.”⁴²¹ I argue, however, that while the Union’s policies were not overtly sexist in language, the ideologies that informed them and the concern about workingmen’s “inability to survive” the influx of women workers were, in fact, based on

⁴²⁰ Kealey, “Work Control,” 85, 84.

⁴²¹ Mary Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow: American Women in Typesetting, 1830-1950,” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 50, no. 4 (1980): 439, 432, 440, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4307273>.

the sexism of the trade's patriarchal thinking. At the 1854 National Union Convention in Buffalo, for instance, women's employment was considered, in similar terms to that of runaway and amateur boys, an "injurious invasion by which employers wished to set aside fair usage and compensation," an "evil which, if allowed, will eventually impair the prosperity and efficiency of subordinate unions."⁴²² Ellen Carol DuBois argues that, from the perspective of female typesetters, "the National Typographical Union was an organization for the protection of male workers against women, as much as against employers."⁴²³ Barring women from the union and apprenticeship programs limited their access to training, making it easier for employers to hire and fire women when it suited them, essentially rendering them "economically subordinate" and vulnerable, and their work precarious at best.⁴²⁴ If the threat that women posed to male journeymen was really that they were hired at low wages, why not invite them to join the Union to make it impossible for them to accept low pay? Women were generally not permitted to join unions because the problem was not, in fact, wages; it was that women posed threats to the trade's association with masculinity.

In the conflicts with and exclusion of boy apprentices and amateurs from the trade's narratives of identity, education (vis-à-vis a formal apprenticeship) was an irrefutable and fundamental component of a compositor's training which allowed him to acquire a competency. In addition to an apprentice's formal technical and mechanical training, the complicated proposition that apprentices (and by virtue of lineage,

⁴²² Tracy, *History*, 153, 154.

⁴²³ Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Cornell University Press, 1978), 141.

⁴²⁴ Barbara L. Gray, "Organizational Struggles of Working Women in the Nineteenth Century," *Labor Studies Journal* 16, no. 2 (1991): 18, EBSCOHost; DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 127, 130.

journeymen) possessed select “inherent characteristics” was used to further narrow the terms by which an apprentice might truly be considered a skilled craftsman and thus belonging to the trade. In and outside of the trade’s journals, similar discursive and practical strategies were used to define women out of eligibility for formal (union) or informal (cultural) membership to the trade. Journeymen in Britain and America frequently utilized their trade journals to uphold the trade’s gendered ideologies. Melissa Score, for instance, compares essays, histories, letters, poems, and short stories in British printing trade journals to understand how they “represent[ed] a range of views of labour, mechanization, and gender.”⁴²⁵ This chapter attends to the narrative and discursive manifestations of the trade’s patriarchal labour ideology in and outside of the trade’s journals within a Canadian context, accounting for the transnational reach of this trade concern.

First, I attend to the real shop-floor struggles of women across North America in the second half of the century. Outside of the trade’s journals, male workers employed patriarchal narratives that defined women’s (in)ability/suitability to perform hand composition and to exclude them from union and trade membership, more broadly. This brief history of women’s labour conditions in the typographical trades provides important context in which to situate the treatment of women in Canadian trade journals before and after the introduction of the machine typesetter in the 1880s and 1890s (I discuss the latter in Chapter 6). I then turn to the journals themselves, with particular attention to the two Canadian trade journals produced before the widespread use of machine typesetters, after which the trade’s relationship to women workers shifts. These are *The Dominion*

⁴²⁵ Score, “Pioneers of Social Progress?,” 274.

Printer (Montreal, Quebec 1873-1879?), and by extension its predecessor *The Canadian Printer* (1860-1871?), and *The Printer's Miscellany* (Saint John, New Brunswick 1876-1882). I consider the role of the trade's journals as spaces in which the trade's hegemonic and patriarchal labour ideology, one primarily predicated on the economic independence of the male typographical worker and the social and intellectual inferiority of women, is cultivated and elaborated. I attend to the trade's reporting on women in the newspaper trade as editors, proprietors, and labourers of all kinds; to the use of storytelling to fabricate narratives that seek to demonstrate or perpetuate ideas about women's inferiority; and to the role of the journals' physical format/mis-en-page in embodying the trade's gendered ideologies of labour.

4.1 Contextualizing the Place, Treatment, and Union Status of Women Hand Compositors

Male journeymen continued to dominate the trade's workforce in the second half of the century. We recall that by the 1860s there were over 250 male printers working in the printing and allied trades in Montreal and Toronto alone, with this number increasing drastically over the following decade across central and eastern Canada.⁴²⁶ By the 1870s, over 1000 men and 300 boys were employed in the trades in the province of Quebec.⁴²⁷ At the same time, over 200 men and 30 boys were employed in the trades in New Brunswick. By the late 1880s in Toronto, almost 600 non-union men were employed in

⁴²⁶ Leroux, "Printers: From Shop to Industry," 75, 76, table 3.1.

⁴²⁷ Census results summarized in "Printing in Canada in 1871," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877): 89.

the trades as compositors.⁴²⁸ Conversely, by 1871, approximately 150 women and 60 girls were employed in the province of Quebec and 13 women and 1 girl were employed in New Brunswick. By the late 1880s, 35 women were working in Toronto as compositors.⁴²⁹ Though these numbers indicate that many women worked in the trade in the second half of the century, Kealey clarifies that “by the 1880s, women, nonetheless, had only a limited role in the industry, mostly performing recognizably inferior work owing to their lack of training and their usually short time at the case.”⁴³⁰ The trade was structured by a clear gendered division of labour, “with women occupying those positions socially defined as unskilled, namely, press feeding, and folding, collating, and stitching in the bindery” as opposed to presswork and hand composition, which required more training. The maintenance of this gendered division of labour was one of the workplace tactics utilized by journeymen to “maintain superiority over women.”⁴³¹

Despite the number of women working in the trade during the nineteenth century, their continued exclusion from the formal apprenticeship program meant that while they may have worked alongside journeymen and apprentices, “none of them became journeymen compositors, members in good standing.” Thus, as Rumble describes, “in the fullest sense of the word, women could not possibly achieve a ‘competence’.” Women’s lack of journeymen status meant that employers could – and did – pay them below the union scale. Women, like apprenticed boys or runaways, who were not yet completed or

⁴²⁸ Census results summarized in “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 8 (February 1877), 109-10; Burr, “Defending ‘The Art Preservative,’” 54.

⁴²⁹ “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877), 89; “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 6 (December 1876), 69; “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 8 (February 1877): 109; Burr, “Defending ‘The Art Preservative,’” 54.

⁴³⁰ Kealey, “Work Control,” 84.

⁴³¹ Burr, “‘The Art Preservative,’” 48, 49.

who had abandoned their apprenticeships, were perceived as “‘other’ than men, categorically and contingently different,” since they did not possess the form of masculinity that was tied to skill and that could only be properly acquired through apprenticeship. Kealey likewise remarks that, in Canada, women were “welcome to join the union and entitled to equal pay” by the 1880s, although “they seldom fulfilled the five-year initiation requirement to demonstrate competency.” By 1887, there were only two women members of the Toronto union local.⁴³²

Women became a problem for male journeymen whose sex and power, which had previously enabled them to claim their craft and skilled labour statuses, came under threat from the trade’s evolving capitalist (as opposed to craft) structure, wherein newspaper proprietors and employers sought to reduce their production and labour costs to maximize profit. DuBois posits that newspaper owners sometimes “portrayed themselves as philanthropists,” claiming that “they hired women because they wanted to try to relieve their suffering and increase their wage-earning opportunities,” all while, of course, using women’s cheaply bought labour to advance their own economic prospects.⁴³³ As Biggs writes, women were “the threat most commonly flung at rebellious journeymen by employing printers,” pawns weaponized to undermine the position of journeymen on the shop floor and within the labouring class.⁴³⁴ The economic pressures imposed by the increasing employment of women eventually convinced many male journeymen of the possibility that women might displace them from the shopfloor. The fear was that women would not only take men’s jobs, but that their being in the shops working alongside male

⁴³² Rumble, *The Swifts*, 7, 8; Kealey, “Work Control,” 85.

⁴³³ DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 129-30.

⁴³⁴ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 432, 439-40.

journeymen might lead to a deskilling of the trade, or at the very least, the perception that the trade was being deskilled. For journeymen, deskilling was synonymous with the feminization of labour.⁴³⁵ Likewise, when women were employed as strike-breakers, male journeymen perceived women to be the labour displacing them from their positions and undermining their labour action. If women came into the shop and performed the work previously performed by men, it became “the work women do,” and, as a result, it risked becoming socially designated as unskilled. After all, as Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor remark:

The work of women is often deemed inferior simply because it is women who do it. Women workers carry into the workplace their status as subordinate individuals, and this status comes to define the value of the work they do. Far from being an objective economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it.⁴³⁶

Women were simultaneously caught in the middle of the conflict between the typographical workers’ labour struggles with employers, and within the union’s attempts to restrict the movement of women in the trade. The conflicts between men and their employers were largely economic; they frequently revolved around wages and the employment of unskilled labour (and thus the undermining of wages). The fact that women were simultaneously the central weapons employed by employers and the targets of journeymen’s exclusionary strategies in the conflict between male journeymen and employers was, Biggs writes, “a product, on the one hand, of management’s opposition to [the trade’s] unionization and, on the other, of an economic and social system which

⁴³⁵ Baron, “Contested Terrain,” 60.

⁴³⁶ Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor, “Sex and Skill: Notes towards a Feminist Economics,” *Feminist Review*, no. 6 (1980): 79, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1394973>.

declared most paid labour unsuitable for women, proffered employed women the lowest possible wages, and assumed that all women toiled only temporarily before finding their permanent occupation as wives.”⁴³⁷ Although some journeymen may have perceived the conflict in this light – wherein the employer was frequently the true antagonist – journeymen and the trade at large often targeted their frustrations at the women and blamed them, not the employer, for their problems. As a result, while the trade’s unions worked to reduce the employment of women, journeymen compositors utilized patriarchal discourses in and outside their trade journals to shape narratives about women workers.

The overarching rhetorical tactic utilized by journeymen to shape narratives about women typographical workers was their appeal to the trade’s and society’s patriarchal ideologies around gender and gender roles. One iteration of this rhetoric was to argue that women were not physically able to do the work. Employers often cited women’s superior manual dexterity, arguing that women’s smaller hands and nimble fingers made them naturally dispositioned to the work of hand composition.⁴³⁸ Indeed, in 1894 *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* reported on competition and compensation for compositors, briefly remarking that “male typesetters certainly have a great deal to complain of these days, for it is hard to adapt one’s self to new conditions. Female type setters are, more and more, working their way into the trade. Typesetting is a pleasant occupation, not purely mechanical, but giving occupation for both brain and hands. Women’s delicate fingers are peculiarly suited to the setting of fine type.”⁴³⁹ However, as

⁴³⁷ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 432.

⁴³⁸ Baron, “Contested Terrain Revisited,” 64; Biggs, “Neither Printers’ Wife nor Widow,” 435; Burr “Defending,” 52; Burr, “That Coming Curse,” 351.

⁴³⁹ “Editorial Notes,” *CPP* 3, no. 5 (May 1894): 1.

Wesley Washington Pasko remarks in his *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking* (1894), such a belief may not have been popular. He observes that the belief held “by persons outside of the trade that women are particularly adapted to the work of typesetting, as their fingers are delicate, their perceptions quick and their motions active [...] has not been shared by printers generally, as the latter know how many other qualities are requisite to make a good compositor.”⁴⁴⁰

Women’s strength was also often cited as a primary reason for their exclusion from the composing room. As metal type can become heavy in large amounts and the working conditions of the shop floor were rough, physical endurance was necessary to work in a composing room. Some men (and women) believed that women were generally inferior in this capacity. For example, Constance Roe, a hand and machine compositor at the first half of the twentieth century, said that she frequently needed men’s help in lifting typecases. Master printers in Boston “are said to have found women ‘a great inconvenience’ in the shops unable to lift their own cases and requiring assistance and supervision.”⁴⁴¹ In the 1889 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital in Canada*, Hugh Graham, proprietor of the *Montreal Star*, said that women “cannot be depended upon to the same extent as a steady man; besides they are not equally as strong and cannot endure the same amount of fatigue and therefore altogether they are not worth as much.”⁴⁴² And Pasko writes that women compositors “require much waiting on, as their cases are too heavy for them to shake, and the galleys frequently

⁴⁴⁰ Pasko, ed., *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking*, 188.

⁴⁴¹ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 435; Burr, “Defending,” 53.

⁴⁴² Burr, “Defending,” 54-55; Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital in Canada: Quebec Evidence. Part I* (Ottawa: Printed for the Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1889), 327, <https://n2t.net/ark:/69429/m0zc7rn30n03>.

weigh a great deal.”⁴⁴³ Many women refuted this notion, however. Biggs remarks that Rena Challendar “scorned the notion that typesetting was too heavy for women, although she criticized women workers for creating that impression through unnecessary requests for help”; the Bohemian Women’s Publishing Company in Boston was said to have operated at full capacity, publishing a popular women’s weekly, without the help of men; and, according to Baron, middle-class women reformers (and employers) like Susan B. Anthony thought that typesetting was feminine work because it was intellectual and “intellectual work was feminine because it was light, clean, and easy.”⁴⁴⁴ As all hand compositors know, however, the work is neither light nor clean, and it is not necessarily easy, though that does not mean women were incapable of performing the work. Ironically, this association of the work to intellectualism, as I have shown in Chapter 3, was one of the claims male journeymen made about why the work was, in fact, masculine. But, throughout the latter half of the century, employers in Toronto “justified paying lower wages to women compositors by arguing that women were not capable of performing ‘equally’ to men.”⁴⁴⁵

Although women had been working in the printing and allied trades well before the nineteenth century,⁴⁴⁶ journeymen also utilized patriarchal ideologies, such as

⁴⁴³ Pasko, ed., *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking*, 189.

⁴⁴⁴ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 435; Baron, “Contested Terrain Revisited,” 63-4.

⁴⁴⁵ Burr, “Defending,” 55.

⁴⁴⁶ A non-exhaustive list of scholarship on women in the printing trades before the nineteenth century includes: Cristina S. Martinez and Cynthia E. Roman, eds., *Female Printmakers, Printsellers, and Print Publishers in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2024); Christine N. Moog, “Women and Widows: Invisible Printers” in *Making Impressions: Women in Printing and Publishing*, ed. Cathleen A. Baker and Rebecca M. Chung (The Legacy Press, 2020); Miranda Garmy Nelsner, “Elizabeth Holt and the Early Modern Women Imprinting the *Mind of Man*,” in *Making Impressions: Women in Printing and Publishing*, ed. Cathleen A. Baker and Rebecca M. Chung (The Legacy Press, 2020); Rosa Smurra, “Women’s Contribution to Manuscript Textbook Production in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Bologna,” in *Women in Print*, vol. 1, *Design and Identities*, ed. Artemis Alexiou and Rose Roberto (Peter Lang, 2022); Joseph Saunders, “Female Agency in the Social Network of the Early Modern English Print

invoking the language of the public and private, to assert that the space of the print shop was not the proper space for women and to affirm the societal belief that men were protectors and family breadwinners.⁴⁴⁷ In America, night work was generally agreed to be too arduous for women and was forbidden in many states, “effectively barr[ing] women in those states from work on morning newspapers.”⁴⁴⁸ In other cases, trade journals would sometimes include reports on workplace illness affecting women, arguing that women who suffered from lead poisoning, as men also did, were particularly endangered because “the power of maternity [was] more or less annihilated among them from this cause.”⁴⁴⁹ Similar arguments circulated well into the end of the century; for example, in February 1893, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* reports on the Biological Society of France’s investigation which found that “of 141 cases of pregnancy among women employed in printing establishments,” 82 ended in miscarriage, four premature births, five still-births, and only 14 of the born children lived beyond the age of 3. The piece concludes by summarizing the Doctor’s findings: that the numbers illustrate quite plainly “that the atmosphere and mode of life in a printing office is not suited to pregnant females.”⁴⁵⁰ At the same time, however, there were reports that male journeymen also experienced the ill health effects of the print shop, bodily injury and lead poisoning in

Trade, c.1623-41,” in *Women in Print*, vol. 2, *Production, Distribution and Consumption*, ed. Caroline Archer-Parré, Chritine Moog, and John Hinks (Peter Lang, 2022); Helen Smith, *Grossly Material Things’: Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Valerie Wayne, ed., *Women’s Labour and the History of the Book in Early Modern England* (Bloomsbury, 2020); Rebecca Warren Davidson, *Unseen Hands: Women Printers, Binders, and Book Designers* (Princeton University Library Press, 2005).

⁴⁴⁷ For more on the gendered space of the composing room / print shop, see Cait Coker, “Gendered Spheres.”

⁴⁴⁸ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 434. For more on the night work structure in the Canadian newspaper printing trade, see Kealey, “Work Control,” 84.

⁴⁴⁹ “A French medical journals says ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 2 (August 1876): 14.

⁴⁵⁰ “Craft Notes,” *CPP* 2, no. 2 (February 1893): 11.

particular, though they were never cautioned from working in printing offices.⁴⁵¹ As Cynthia Cockburn criticizes, while lead poisoning can certainly “cause irregular menstrual periods and miscarriages,” similar studies on the “dangers for male fertility” were likely never conducted.⁴⁵² Mila Daskalova’s study on the conditions of nineteenth-century printing offices in Britain and America makes explicitly clear the ways in which the work of printing was generally “unhealthy” for all: the work was characterized by long work hours sometimes leading to sleep deprivation compounded with workplace environmental factors like dust, foul odours and a general lack of ventilation, poor sanitation and hygiene, hazardous materials (including lead type), and difficult or dangerous equipment.⁴⁵³ What is illuminating about the trade’s concerns for women’s health is that they essentialize women’s roles as reproducers. The composing room is an unsuitable place for women not because it is unhealthy. If that were the case it would be an unsuitable place for men, too. The composing room is an unsuitable place for women because it has the potential to interfere with their natural childrearing capabilities and duties.

Journeyman also expressed concerns about women’s moral health and argued that their fragile character and sensibilities were incompatible with the masculinity that characterized the shop floor. Biggs points to two examples. First, she remarks that a section of the *Philadelphia Daily News* (1854) titled “The Printers’ Union” “called on Americans to oppose the hiring” of women to protect their “purity.” The article argued

⁴⁵¹ For instance: “Junius Henri Brown is the author ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 2 (August 1876): 13; “The Health of Printers.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 1 (July 1880): 6; “Morning Newspaper Printers.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 1 (July 1881): 5.

⁴⁵² Cockburn, *Brothers*, 175

⁴⁵³ Daskalova, “Printing as Poison,” 61-4.

that “contact with a man’s world” “would have a very pernicious effect upon her morals.”⁴⁵⁴ Second, Biggs points out that Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, while not necessarily agreeing with the exclusion of women from the trade, did agree “that it was appropriate” for printers “to apprise [woman] beforehand of the moral atmosphere into which promiscuous typesetting would expose her,” though he also argues that if printers claimed that women cannot set type because the “society and conversation” of male printers would “corrupt” them, the printers would be “carry[ing] the joke a little too far.”⁴⁵⁵ On the one hand, these concerns may have been sincere, as printers and their relationship with alcohol (thus creating immoral workplaces) was, as I have discussed, well known and documented. On the other hand, the trade’s discussion of a woman’s purity was wrapped up in the larger question of women’s proper place within society, especially considering how the union refused to organize women “hoping that this policy would drive them,” DuBois writes, “if not back to the kitchens, at least out of the composing room.”⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, as Biggs observes, the sincerity of printers’ concerns for the moral wellbeing of women was “suspect, especially since their concerns for female purity were always expressed in conjunction with complaints about female competition.”⁴⁵⁷ Rumble writes that “union men always pointed out that women, however skilled or conscientious, found their true occupation in the home and all too readily abandoned their careers for a chance at marriage.” Even Augusta Lewis (a well-educated journalist, “competent compositor, a famous typesetting-machine operator, a pioneering labour, and,

⁴⁵⁴ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 433; George A. Stevens, *New York Typographical Union No. 6: Study of a Modern Trade Union and its Predecessors* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, State Printers, 1913), 427, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/miun.aey3782.0001.001>.

⁴⁵⁵ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 433; Stevens, *New York Typographical Union No. 6*, 426.

⁴⁵⁶ Zerker, *The Rise and Fall*, 22; DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 130-1.

⁴⁵⁷ Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 433.

finally, a gender hero and cherished memory among the men of the oldest labor union in the land [the ITU]”) who strongly believed that the ITU would welcome women when men saw that they were just as capable as men, also “assumed that marriage was women’s chief interest when she recommended organizing female compositors ‘by convincing them that it will not interfere with their chances of a home.’”⁴⁵⁸

The belief that a woman’s fate was ultimately to be married and be a homemaker, not a worker, was also firmly upheld by the National Union. In 1858, Union President Robert C. Smith directed some words to the wives of union men. The President encouraged the women to support the men in their organizational efforts from their domestic vantage points:

It is to you that society is indebted for the refinement, as well as the accomplishments of the age. The influence that you exercise over rough, uncouth man, is almost as great in your sphere as the press is in diffusing knowledge. Would that the ladies properly appreciated their sphere of action and encouraged us in all the good works we undertake; but, above all, ladies, let me ask you to look approvingly upon the efforts of our ‘National Typographical Union’ and it will be the citadel of our strength and the source of prosperity indeed.⁴⁵⁹

Almost a decade later in 1865, at a banquet held by the Philadelphia Typographical Union for the unions’ official delegates, a toast was given to “*The Ladies*”: “The angels who guide us from the cradle to the grave. May we deserve their smiles, merit their caresses, and be followed always by their best and most blessed benedictions.”⁴⁶⁰ From the Union’s perspective then, women are, at once, angels – guiding lights and inspiration

⁴⁵⁸ Walker Rumble, “Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion: The Gender Politics of Augusta Lewis and Women’s Typographical Union No. 1, 1868–1872,” *Printing History* 18, no. 1 (1997): 23–4, 13–4; Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 438–9.

⁴⁵⁹ Tracy, *History*, 177–8.

⁴⁶⁰ Tracy, *History*, 215.

to the workmen in their labour and organizational efforts when they are in their “sphere” (when they stay at home) – and evils – when they endeavor to enter the composing room.

In some cases, however, employers understood the “domestication” of the shop floor in the presence of women to be a good thing. At the end of the century, arguments suggested that, perhaps, the presence of women in composing rooms might have a positive influence on men, their behaviour, and the tidiness of the shop. Pasko recounts that advocates in support of women compositors “point[ed] out that women are cleanly, orderly and to be depended upon. They have no blue Mondays, and no days when they are taken away by drink [unlike some of their male counterparts]. The part of the printing office in which they work is cleaner than any other, and their presence checks vulgarity and improves the moral tone of the place.”⁴⁶¹ In 1885, *The Inland Printer*, a Chicago-based typographical trade journal, tells the tale of a fictional shop run by rough and rugged men who use foul language, and chew and spit tobacco. The narrator summarizes how the employment of a women resulted in the men tidying themselves and the shop up so as not to appear like “chumps.” The author concludes the fable by remarking that “the close of the day saw more actual work done and cleaner proofs than had been seen in the alley for some time.” The narrator hopes that the lesson of the tale “may increase and spread and that there may be more alleys with girls in them, or kept as if there were, anyway.”⁴⁶² Although this position is one theoretically in support of women’s employment, it is only in support of women’s employment when women’s contributions to the workplace conform to traditional roles, namely “the creation and maintenance of

⁴⁶¹ Pasko, ed., *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking*, 188.

⁴⁶² D.G.L., “A Girl in Our Alley,” *The Inland Printer* 3, no. 2 (November 1885): 88.

the domestic environment.”⁴⁶³ In actuality, however, women were powerful contributors to the trade and, in the second half of the century, they disregarded these attempts to define them out of employment. In opposition to the trade’s attempts to exclude them, women in the United States fought to be included by unionizing.

4.1.1 Women Organize: The Women’s Typographical Union No. 1

In the 1860s, the gender/skill-related struggles in which women were deeply involved resulted in the establishment of a women’s union, the Women’s Typographical Union No. 1, which was the only union in North America established by and for women compositors. In December 1867, a strike led by Local 6 broke out in New York at the *New York World*, during which women were hired and trained as typesetters. While this enabled them to learn the trade, they were ultimately only hired to break the strike and were fired ten months later. According to Barbara L. Gray, when the women were discharged employers “claimed that women were not as skilled as the men – they could not spell, space, and read sloppy manuscripts” and that they “neglected their duties and produced bad copy.” According to Rumble, both the *World* and Local 6 (New York) “agreed that these shortcomings were virtually genetic” qualities of women typesetters.⁴⁶⁴ Support for the women – who included Augusta Lewis – came from *The Revolution*, a suffrage newspaper owned by Susan B. Anthony and edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton

⁴⁶³ Harvey Green, *The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America* (Pantheon Books, 1983), 59.

⁴⁶⁴ Gray, “Organizational Struggles,” 19-20; Rumble, “Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion,” 18.

and Parker Pillsbury. Augusta Lewis was hired to *The Revolution* and developed a collaborative relationship with Anthony.⁴⁶⁵

Despite the differences in priority for each group (the vote versus equal pay),⁴⁶⁶ Lewis and Anthony joined forces to establish the Working Women's Suffrage Association; this was later renamed the Working Women's Association (established on September 17, 1868), following Lewis' belief that "the new organization should relax in its suffrage agitation until more support was gained" and the general insistence of the working-class women that "'woman's wrong should be re-addressed before her rights were proclaimed'" and that the women should "unite to improve their economic conditions."⁴⁶⁷ Female printers formed the majority of the membership and elected offices including Anna Tobbitt, president, who worked at her husband's print shop; and Susie Johns, Augusta Lewis, and Emily Peers, vice-presidents, and who were "very representative of the women in the printing industry" as they were "young, unmarried women and very much aware of their status as printers."⁴⁶⁸ The hostilities between women and the male-dominated typographical union persisted and the women found themselves needing to establish their own organization to fight for their concerns and "force open the doors of the ITU." At the time, Gray notes, there were not yet any examples of "unions organized for the protection of women" as "the Knights of Labor did

⁴⁶⁵ Gray, "Organizational Struggles," 20-21.

⁴⁶⁶ Gray, "Organizational Struggles," 23. The primary concerns for organizing differed among the working-class women and suffragists. For the working-class women, it was the issue of equal pay; for the suffragists, it was the vote. According to Gray, Lewis acknowledged that the vote would change the law "but would not change society" and so the "problem of equal pay would remain." On the contrary, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, among others, "believed women would never be able to pursue careers of their choice until they won the right to vote," as enfranchisement was the key to women's social and political mobilities

⁴⁶⁷ Gray, "Organizational Struggles," 25, 23.

⁴⁶⁸ DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 127; Gray, "Organizational Struggles," 25.

not exist until 1876 and did not admit women until 1881.”⁴⁶⁹ Only eleven days after the organization of the Working Women’s Association, Lewis called for a meeting of female compositors who were interested in establishing an organization of their own. The meeting, aided by the Association and held in the office of *The Revolution*, led to the formation of a cooperative organization that later became the Women’s Typographical Union No. 1. The formation of the women’s union concerned the male unionists, who felt that the women’s organizational efforts were a threat to their own. The Women’s Typographical No. 1 was officially founded on October 12, 1868, with Lewis elected as president.⁴⁷⁰

The differences in priority between the two groups of women came to a head in 1869 during a strike led by New York Local 6 against the book and job sectors, during which Lewis was fired from her job as a compositor and journalist at *The Revolution*. The women’s union responded to the strike by supporting the male unionists, while *The Revolution* (Anthony) “promised employers competent compositors if they would ‘liberally contribute to the formation of a training school for girls in the art of typesetting’.” The periodical’s publishers, Gray & Green, helped to set up a two-week training program for female typesetters but, as Gray notes, “in reality, the school offered a program for training strikebreakers” since employers were “only interested in compelling the union to settle on their terms.” The only thing gained from this program, Gray writes, was that it could “provide Anthony with the claim that *The Revolution* hired women as typesetters.”⁴⁷¹ According to Rumble, Anthony claimed that she had used the

⁴⁶⁹ Rumble, “Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion,” 18; Gray, “Organizational Struggles,” 26.

⁴⁷⁰ Gray, “Organizational Struggles,” 27.

⁴⁷¹ Gray, “Organizational struggles,” 28, 29.

strike “as an opportunity to train women as compositors” because “it was the only way women could get experience in the trade.”⁴⁷² The position taken by *The Revolution* during the strike became the undoing of the collaboration between suffragists and working women and the demise of the Working Women’s Association as the suffragists’ “middle-class experience remained their standard for feminism.” By “encourage[ing] the women to continue to work and not leave their jobs in support of the men,” the suffragists exposed “the underlying class differences between [them] and the working women.” The women compositors *did not* continue to work, and their decisions to support the men and refuse to work as scabs were instrumental in the success of the strike.⁴⁷³ Despite the working women’s loyalty to the strike and male workers, Anthony and *The Revolution* sided with the employers. As a result, *The Revolution* had become a scab shop and Anthony was accused of running a rat shop.⁴⁷⁴ The situation in which Anthony had put herself – through her defence of scabbing but also by not paying the women compositors at *The Revolution* union scale wages when asked to do so by Local 6 and making excuses for Lewis’s firing when it was protested by Local 6 – led not only to the disintegration of the alliance between working-class women and middle-class suffragists which, Gray notes, was not repaired until the early twentieth century, but also to her own downfall. According to Gray, “Susan B. Anthony’s credentials as a delegate to the National Labour Union Convention in Philadelphia in August 1869, were challenged by the National Typographical Union” and she was denounced as “an enemy, not only to the working

⁴⁷² Rumble, “Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion,” 21.

⁴⁷³ DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 127; Gray, “Organizational Struggles,” 28, 29.

⁴⁷⁴ Rumble, “Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion,” 19, 21.

men, but to the working women of New York” by Local 6 – a statement which, according to Tracy, was supported by Lewis.⁴⁷⁵

During the 1860s, the Union had firmly decided against encouraging the employment of women as compositors and left subordinate unions to deal with the issue on their own.⁴⁷⁶ This decision remained unchanged when the question of female labour resurfaced in 1867 at the Memphis Convention despite New York Local No. 6’s prompting to “encourage the recognition of women printers” and extend the Union’s protections over them. Such pressure occurred because some journeymen began to recognize “that women posed a greater threat if they remained outside the union” since “the numbers of women setting type were growing, driving down wages.”⁴⁷⁷ The position held by the Women’s Typographical Union No. 1 during the strike in New York finally convinced the National Union to charter them in July 1869.⁴⁷⁸ The National Typographical Union’s constitution was amended in 1869, providing that “female printers might be granted charters in any city where the application was approved by the subordinate union of male members.” The women were subject to the same scale of prices as male union members and they were permitted to join any subordinate male union where a women’s union did not or could not exist. The Women’s Typographical Union No. 1 was, therefore, subordinate to New York Local 6. In spite of the ITU’s continued exercising of control over women in the trade, things began to look up for women compositors. In 1870, Augusta Lewis became the first and only woman elected to an International office as the Union’s corresponding secretary. In 1872, it was reported

⁴⁷⁵ Gray, “Organizational Struggles,” 30; Tracy, *History*, 251.

⁴⁷⁶ Tracy, *A History*, 153-4, 226.

⁴⁷⁷ Gray, “Organizational Struggles,” 18; Rumble, “Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion,” 17.

⁴⁷⁸ Gray, “Organizational Struggles,” 31.

by the ITU's "committee on female labor" that most women working in the industry were still "working outside the union organization and at rates of compensation below those received by men, although there had been a marked increase in the female membership of subordinate unions and a corresponding increase in the wages received by women." The committee additionally reported that "no important number of union men were opposed to the admission of women into the subordinate unions provided they were required to conform to the same regulations concerning apprenticeship, wages, etc., as were established for men."⁴⁷⁹

In June 1872, Lewis married Alexander Troup, Secretary Treasurer of the ITU and moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where Troup began publishing a daily newspaper, the *Evening Union*.⁴⁸⁰ Rumble notes that without Lewis, the Women's Typographical Union No. 1 "simply collapsed" and by the summer of 1872 "it was no longer sending a representative to ITU conventions" though the organization continued.⁴⁸¹ The following year "the practice of allowing subordinate unions to admit females to membership was approved, but it was ordered that no more charters be granted to female unions." In 1874 the ITU convention discussed the Women's Typographical Union and, despite their historic relationship, No. 6 strongly protested "against allowing this organization to retain its charter." Despite the good standings of the Women's Union, it was ultimately forced to surrender its charter in 1878, after which it was ordered "that no further charters be granted to women for the formation of separate unions," finalizing the ITU's slow suppression of women's forceful push against it. While ITU President

⁴⁷⁹ Tracy, *History*, 235, 246, 262-3.

⁴⁸⁰ Rumble, "Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion," 24, 25n70

⁴⁸¹ Rumble, "Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion," 24.

Streeter strongly opposed women's membership in the Union in 1878, the Union ultimately determined that the women who were then currently members should not be "interfered with in any of the privileges they enjoyed," reiterating that the admission of women was for individual subordinate unions to decide.⁴⁸² Such a record of conflict clearly suggests, as Burr remarks, "a reinforcement of patriarchal control within the ITU." After the 1870s in America, it was not "unusual" for women to be union members, but "they always remained few."⁴⁸³

4.2 The Angel in the Home: The Place of Women in Trade Journals Before the Machine Typesetter

Although the preceding history largely imagines the "Woman Question" as an American concern, the employment of women in the typographical trades was a topic dealt with across North America. It is within this context that *The Dominion Printer* and *The Printer's Miscellany* began publishing. Despite the pervasiveness of the "Woman Question" in scholarship on the British and North American printing trades, it is a trade concern that is rarely explicitly addressed in any Canadian trade journals. For instance, in the July 1878 issue of *The Printer's Miscellany*, the committee on female labour's report against the chartering of women's unions and on the question of female compositors is only briefly outlined in the journal's more comprehensive reporting on the ITU's 26th annual convention; the topic is, surprisingly, not expanded upon in articles or

⁴⁸² Tracy, *History*, 268, 273, 279, 296, 299.

⁴⁸³ Burr, "Defending," 53; Biggs, "Neither Printers' Wife nor Widow," 448.

correspondence in later issues.⁴⁸⁴ There are significantly fewer mentions of women within *The Dominion Printer* than in *The Printer's Miscellany*. Consequently, the *Miscellany* is at the center of the discussion that follows. I argue that the editorial decisions of the *Miscellany's* proprietor, Hugh Finlay, privilege the trade's misogynistic and patriarchal ideologies, contradicting the journal's posture of acceptance and support for women workers and ultimately contributing to the trade's attempts to exclude women from the shop floor. This is evident not only in the journal's textual materials, like jokes, but also in its mise-en-page. Both are elements that were dominated by male voices and gazes that largely centered on the notion that a women's proper place is in the home and *not* in the printing office. More is known about the work of and prejudices against women typographical workers in Great Britain and America than in Canada despite the interconnection of the printing trades across the Atlantic in this period. As such, this interpretative move is an important one because it provides a Canadian framework for thinking about the trade's approach to the exclusion of women before the widespread use of the machine typesetter.

Within the whole run of the *Miscellany's* life, there are over 20 mentions of women working specifically as compositors or labourers within the typographical trades; this does not include mentions of women working in other allied trades or as editors or proprietors of newspapers and other periodicals. Mentions of contemporary women in the trade are frequently found in the journal's "News of the Craft" section, though they can also be found in other general columns or more specific sections dedicated to the subject

⁴⁸⁴ "The International Typographical Union: Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 1 (July 1878): 20.

of women in the trade, such as “Female Contributors to the Philadelphia Press.”⁴⁸⁵ In these sections, women are positioned alongside men, and their work is considered in relation to other important trade news, such as the changing of a paper’s ownership, the establishment of new papers, and the mobility and personal lives of male workers. Women are often mentioned by name, the focus tending to be women working in the local/North American trade, such as: Anna Holmes, daughter of the *Clinton New Era* proprietor Edmund Holmes, who worked as a compositor; Miss Ross from Souris who worked in the job office of Combs & Worth in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island and then, a month later in the steam book and job office of Henry Cooper of that same city; Miss Fleming, a compositor at the *Times* in Moncton, New Brunswick; and Miss L. Pierce of Denver, Colorado, who was elected a member of the Denver Typographical Union.⁴⁸⁶ In some instances, more detail on the women and their situation is provided.⁴⁸⁷ Additionally, the journal sometimes remarks on the work of very notable women including Charlotte Guillard, a sixteenth-century printer and publisher working in Paris whom, the *Miscellany* reports, was “the first notable female printer”⁴⁸⁸ and the London Women’s Printing Society, established by Emily Faithfull and Emma Paterson in the

⁴⁸⁵ “Female Contributors to the Philadelphia Press,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 12 (June 1877): 212.

⁴⁸⁶ “Newspapers, Editors and Printers,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 11 (May 1877): 184; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1877): 104; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 6 (December 1877): 128; “Typo,” “The Press in Parliament,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 247; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1877): 104.

⁴⁸⁷ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 7 (January 1878): 159; “Notes and News,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 9 (March 1880): 132; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877): 98.

⁴⁸⁸ Beatrice Beech, “Charlotte Guillard: A Sixteenth-Century Business Woman,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 346, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2862159>; “CHARLOTTE GUILLARD . . .,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 11 (May 1877): 183. On Guillard, see also: Rémi Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard: Une femme imprimeur de la Renaissance* (Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2017), <http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/24924>.

1870s.⁴⁸⁹ Finally, the achievements of women in editorial, journalistic, and authorial roles are frequently lauded within the pages of the *Miscellany*. Many of these women are well-known in the twenty-first century, including Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*⁴⁹⁰ and Mrs. Anna Ottendorfer, wife of the proprietor of the New-York based German-language newspaper, the *Staats Zeitung*, who is reported to have “conduct[ed] the business department of that establishment with great executive ability” and contributed to the editorial, composing, and press room work.⁴⁹¹ Ouida and Susan Warner are briefly mentioned in relation to their life and work as authors, and a story by Margaret Eytinge, “Love in a Printing Office,” is included in the March 1877 issue.⁴⁹²

In other instances, women are regarded as statistics. For instance, notes from “a Charlottetown Occasional Correspondent” indicate that there are “about sixteen female type-setters employed in [Charlottetown]” by November 1877; a correspondent from Prince Edward Island indicates that “the two female type slingers, mentioned in [the] November issue as working on the Alberton *Pioneer*, have been discharged on account of the decline in job work, and the *Pioneer* is now got out by three male comps”; a correspondent to the May 1878 *Miscellany* reports that three female apprentice compositors “have been employed on the Christian Visitor, Armstrong & Hopper, proprietors. This is a new feature in the printing business of St. John”; and in June 1878,

⁴⁸⁹ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877): 100; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 10 (April 1877): 171; Peter Gordon and David Doughan, *Dictionary of British Women's Organisations 1825-1960* (Woburn Press, 2001), 178-9.

⁴⁹⁰ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 7 (January 1878): 159; “Editorial Notes,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 10 (April 1879): 294.

⁴⁹¹ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 12 (June 1878): 324; The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Anna Sartorius Uhl Ottendorfer,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed July 1, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Anna-Sartorius-Uhl-Ottendorfer>.

⁴⁹² “News of the Craft,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 112; “‘Ouida,’ the English writer with the French name ...,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 3 (September 1880): 43; Margaret Eytinge, “Love in a Printing Office,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 9 (March 1877): 142.

the “News of the Craft” section simply states that “female printers have doubled in numbers within the past five years in New York.”⁴⁹³ The *Miscellany* also reports on “a girl” working in a paper mill in Delphi, Ohio; “a girl” working for Messrs. Weed, Parsons & Co., Albany, New York who got her hand caught in a press while working as a press feeder; the attempts by employers to introduce female compositors in newspaper offices of Jamaica, Wisconsin; on the 1,500 female compositors and their wages in Boston; and on the absence of women from the 1878 International Wayzgoose in Paris.⁴⁹⁴

Women are treated similarly in the *Miscellany*’s contemporary, the Montreal-based *Dominion Printer*. In the October 1876 issue the fact that “there are sixteen female compositors on the Montreal *Witness*, who can earn from \$7 to \$14 per week” is followed by a discussion of the Montreal *Witness* printing office, its library and glee club, and does not pass judgment on the employment of women. Just below this entry *The Dominion Printer* notes that Sweden has “121 printing-offices employing 835 compositors, of whom 159 are women, 468 apprentices, 165 pressmen, 30 female layers-on, and 259 machine boys.”⁴⁹⁵ In the June 1878 issue, it is briefly noted that “the Letteverein (Women’s Printing School), in Berlin, has 30 compositrices in its employ ; they are

⁴⁹³ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1877): 104; “Copy Drawer,” “Prince Edward Island Items,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 7 (January 1879): 211; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 11 (May 1878): 287; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 12 (June 1878): 323.

⁴⁹⁴ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 7 (January 1879): 209; “News of the Craft,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 3 (September 1879): 41; “Notes and News,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 5 (November 1880): 72; “Notes and News,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 6&7 (December/January 1881-2): 76; “The International ‘Wayzgoose’ at Paris – A Successful Co-Operative Society of Printers – Meritorious Machines, etc.,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 4 (October 1878): 115-116.

⁴⁹⁵ “There are sixteen female compositors ...,” *The Dominion Printer* 2, no. 3 (October 1876): 4; “In Sweden there are ...,” *The Dominion Printer* 2, no. 3 (October 1876): 4.

mostly daughters of people in decent positions. The highest average earnings during the latter half of 1876 were 34s. ; the lowest 20s.”⁴⁹⁶

Immediately, this evidence would seem to suggest that women were treated, to an extent, as relatively equal to their male counterparts. Certainly, the number of news items related to women compared to men is not overwhelming and is more so representative of the trade’s demographic. For scholars, these news items capture an important part of print history in Canada and America, and un/re-cover the names of some women working as compositors across North America, particularly those working outside of major print metropolises. Indeed, the *Miscellany*’s reports on the 1871 census data highlight the importance of employing female labour. The *Miscellany* argues that, despite the “inexhaustible subject” of cheap labour, if women were not cheaply employed at country newspapers, the papers “would not have an existence, and no one will venture to assert that the country districts would be better without them,” a consideration which can be “equally applicable to all the provinces of North America.”⁴⁹⁷ Perhaps it was for these reasons that Finlay offered women compositors a discounted subscription rate of fifty cents per year (the same as for boy apprentices) and was the only typographical journal published in Canada to do so (or, at the very least, to advertise as much). Such a gesture implies that the *Miscellany* extended a welcoming hand to and encouraged the women in the trade to engage with the trade’s transnational community through its trade literature.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ “The Letteverein ...” *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 2 (June 1878): 4.

⁴⁹⁷ “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 6 (December 1876): 69; “Printing in Canada in 1871,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 7 (January 1877): 89.

⁴⁹⁸ “Female compositors ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 123; “Female compositors ...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 7 (January 1878): 177.

The suggestion that the *Miscellany* had women readers and the regular appearance or mention of women workers within the journal do not necessarily signal that the male typographical workers who were engaging with the *Miscellany* were more accepting of or felt less threatened by women, nor does it suggest that women's skills were more appreciated in Canada. Finlay very well might have been a supporter of women in the trade, but the overarching patriarchal ideology represented by the journal's form and content – beginning with his awareness (and address) of the journal's audience – undermines the positive gesture of the reduced subscription rate and wide reporting on women's work that he offers in the *Miscellany*. For instance, the lower subscription rate is only advertised in two issues of the *Miscellany*, and the subscription lists do not seem to include the names of any women. In fact, the lists are sometimes concluded with thanks to "gentlemen" (see Figure 17). Additionally, these notices do not appear in the journal's "Terms of Subscription" section alongside the fees for journeymen and apprentices. In the December 1877 issue the notice appears at the opposite end of the same page (Figure 18).⁴⁹⁹ This is a deliberate editorial choice that places women compositors on the periphery of the page, divorced from the other members of the trade, including the boy apprentice. Though they pay the same price as apprentices, their relative outsider position in the *Miscellany*'s acknowledgement of its audience, which is also the trade's membership, is not only indicative of the physical space women are afforded within the *Miscellany*. It is also emblematic of the trade's patriarchal labour

⁴⁹⁹ *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 7 (January 1878): 177; "Female compositors ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 6 (December 1877): 123.

ideology wherein women are literally and figuratively below or other from their male counterparts.

Aside from the way that the journal frames female subscribers and readers, the journal's contents more generally demonstrate gendered ideologies that attempt to place women outside of the shop floor by insisting on their place in the domestic sphere. It will be unsurprising to hear that women frequently appear in sections like or announcements related to "Births, Deaths, and Marriages." This kind of section is ubiquitous in newspaper and periodical genres. But the importance of women's appearance in this section within the *Miscellany* is that it repeatedly situates women as accessories to the lives of male workers. Here, women appear almost exclusively as wives, daughters, and sisters, whereas men are celebrated and eulogized workers, peers, comrades, and countrymen. For example, in April 1881, the marriage of Whitelaw Reid, editor of the *New York Tribune* to "Miss Mills, the only daughter of a California banker and millionaire" is announced; and she is described as "a lady of twenty-seven, not strikingly beautiful or oppressively clever, but bright, well read, scientifically disposed, and domesticated."⁵⁰⁰ As accessories to the lives of male workers, the women in these notices are often relegated to the home. In other places, the assertion that women's place is in the home is affirmed by articles supporting women's editorial roles in the running of "Household Departments" and sections dedicated to women's organizations, such as the Toronto Women's Literary Club.⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰⁰ "Notes and News.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 10 (April 1881): 147.

⁵⁰¹ "Household Departments.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 12 (June 1880): 182; "Notes and News.," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 2 (August 1880): 30.

The domestic positioning of women happens in the form of other standard components of the periodicals, like advertisements. Take for example the peculiar advertisement for “Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup” that calls out “Mothers! Mothers!! Mothers!!!” (Figure 19). The ad is peculiar because this kind of advertisement – for medicines and that seem to address women readers – was uncommon in the *Miscellany*; additionally, while advertisements often repeated across several issues, this one only appears once.⁵⁰² Trade cards and other advertisements for the Syrup outside of the *Miscellany* include illustrations of women and their babies and refer to the Syrup’s use for soothing teething babies.⁵⁰³ Even if the *Miscellany* had female readers, the advertisement does not address them as workers, but instead affirms the relation of women to mothering – a condition that was generally perceived to be incompatible with life in a composing room.⁵⁰⁴ Some such advertisements are fake or satirical, more clearly demonstrating the way that this otherwise ubiquitous periodical element functioned as a site of ideological exchange and expression. In the January 1878 issue of *The Printer’s Miscellany* an advertisement is put out by a printer looking for a female compositor who might be his wife. She must, the notice reads, “be moderately good looking, attractive, musical, good tempered, etc.” (Figure 20).⁵⁰⁵ This advertisement, sandwiched between *real* notices for used equipment or selling type, is for the male reader. As an ad, its

⁵⁰² “Mothers! Mothers!! Mothers!!!,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 10 (April 1881): 155

⁵⁰³ Alysha Strongman, “Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup: The Baby Killer,” *Museum of Health Care at Kingston* (blog), July 28, 2017, <https://museumofhealthcare.blog/mrs-winslows-soothing-syrup-the-baby-killer/>; “Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup,” Collection Spotlight, Drug Enforcement Administration Museum, accessed February 20, 2025, <https://museum.dea.gov/museum-collection/collection-spotlight/artifact/soothing-syrup>; Myles Sinnamon, “The Baby Killer – Mrs Winslow’s Soothing Syrup (Patent medicine in Queensland),” *State Library of Queensland* (blog), May 3, 2016, <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/blog/baby-killer-mrs-winslows-soothing-syrup-patent-medicine-queensland>.

⁵⁰⁴ Rumble, “Strategies of Shopfloor Inclusion,” 23-4; Biggs, “Neither Printer’s Wife nor Widow,” 432, 438-9.

⁵⁰⁵ “WANTED – A young, single...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 7 (January 1878): 179.

placement is not unexpected, but its content is deliberate and necessitates the reader's full attention to the journal. Whether Finlay wrote the notice himself or was paid to include it, its inclusion ultimately reinforces the misogynistic ideology of the paper by suggesting that women, who need only be wives, are equal to commercial goods and services. In the following issue, a regular correspondent from Connecticut, Stick and Rule, comments on the notice, exclaiming: "only look at the accomplishments she must possess! Goodness, here we are ready to take two possessed of one-half the charms he asks for, and trust to luck and enterprise to do the rest."⁵⁰⁶ Similar mock advertisements appear at the close of the century as well, demonstrating the trade's unchanging perception of women. Years later, in the *Miscellany's* April/May 1882 issue, an article describes how a Chicago man hoped to have his advertisement for a wife included in a paper. The advertisement outlines in great detail the specific measurements of the prospective woman's body because, the man says, she must be able to fit into his dead wife's clothes (Figure 21).⁵⁰⁷ And in 1895, the *International Art Printer* includes an advertisement for Aaron Read's Fine Cigars. The ad invites wives to sign a permit, reproduced there, permitting their husbands "the company of any lady or ladies, and to enjoy a sample of one of Read's Winners Cigars". This is a fake ad nested within a real one; upon closer inspection, the fine print at the bottom of the page – "MATERIALS USED ON THIS PAGE MAY BE OBTAINED FROM MILLER & RICHARD" – indicates that the real object for sale are the ones demonstrated on the page, not cigars (Figure 22). This framing makes it clear that these advertisements are not targeted at women, as they first seem to be, but are

⁵⁰⁶ Stick and Rule, "Norwich Notes," letter to the editor, *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 8 (February 1878): 198.

⁵⁰⁷ "A Wife Wanted," *The Printer's Miscellany* 6, no. 10&11 (April & May 1882): 132.

meant to appeal to male typographical workers who would have understood that the humour at play here is the controlling wife trope.⁵⁰⁸

Overwhelmingly, humour is the tool most often wielded in the *Miscellany* to patronize women, ridicule their intelligence and achievements, and appeal to the trade's gendered ideologies. While stories and short sketches with women characters are featured throughout the journal, jokes about women are mostly concentrated in the section called "'Sorts.'," which appears at the end of every issue of the *Miscellany*. The titling of this section is metaphorically significant. Similarly named sections are a regular component of many typographical trade journals from in and outside of Canada. For instance, *The Quadrant*, a journal published by Allan C. Bakewell & Co (later Allan C. Kerr & Co in December 1878) in Pittsburgh, regularly included a "Sorts" section of quick news items and, sometimes, jokes.⁵⁰⁹ In June 1878, the *Miscellany*'s contemporary, *The Dominion Printer* included a section called "Quads" that was a mix of jokes, news items, and short fictions.⁵¹⁰ In printing, quads (quadrats) are cuboid pieces of spacing material used to fill in the empty spaces of a line of text; they do not have a face to them, are not type-high, and are, therefore, not printed. Although they are imperceptible to the eye once printed, they are an integral element of the final printed product. Their work as solid but invisible pieces is to allow the text on the page to take its shape and make meaning. The metaphor is this: in his 1884 *Quads for Authors, Editors, & Devils*, a collection of printer's jokes

⁵⁰⁸ "Aaron Read," *International Art Printer* 1, n. 9-10 (November-December 1895): 201.

⁵⁰⁹ A.C. Bakewell & Co, proprietor, "Sorts," *The Quadrant* 5, no. 1 (Whole No. 37) (February 1877): 12-3, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435056979610>; Allan C. Kerr & Co, proprietor, "Sorts," *The Quadrant* 6, no. 4 (Whole No. 46) (December 1878): 65, 76, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435056979610>; Allan C. Kerr & Co, proprietor, "Sorts," *The Quadrant* 7, no. 4 (Whole No. 1) (August 1879): 76-8, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435056979610>.

⁵¹⁰ "Quads.," *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 2 (June 1878): 4.

from the *Paper and Printing Trade Journal*, British printer Andrew Tuer explicitly connects printers' jokes with the physical piece of type. In the "Introduction" he writes that "quads, which are little metal blanks used by the printer for filling up gaps, are not of much account, although he cannot get along without them; hence the application of the word to printers' jokes."⁵¹¹ Finlay also makes this connection, encouraging its readers with the following: "if you get out of 'sorts' don't forget to look for them on page [...]", alluding to the frustration that occurs when a box in a typecase is emptied and is, therefore, out of sorts, while also pointing his readers to this section.⁵¹²

I do not agree with Tuer that printers' jokes "are not of much account" precisely because, as he writes, printers "cannot get along without them." As the existence of Tuer's *Quads for Authors, Editors, & Devils* suggests, printers were not only enthusiastic jokers, but their jokes were also an important, if not fundamental, part of the way they communicated with each other across geographical boundaries.⁵¹³ Although there are jokes found all over typographical trade journals, no attention has been paid to how they operate not only within the journals, but also within the structures of the typographical trade's transnational culture. Steve Linstead writes that humour not only functions as "*a coping device* to release tension, allay fear, forestall threat, defuse aggression or distance the unpleasant," in organizational culture, humour also "performs a *boundary function* on both internal and external lines, policing grounds in terms of membership and acceptable and competent behaviour." Internal lines are moral boundaries, and external lines are

⁵¹¹ And. W. Tuer, ed., *Quads for Authors, Editors, & Devils* (London: Field and Tuer, 1884): n.p., Special Collections and Rare Books, University of Minnesota.

⁵¹² "If you get out of 'sorts' ...," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 8 (February 1877): 125.

⁵¹³ Tuer, *Quads for Authors, Editors, & Devils*, n.p.

“both social and geographical.”⁵¹⁴ Including those in and outside of the “‘Sorts.’” section, there are at least 100 jokes in which women are the punchline or a feature. But the humour used with reference to women is different than the humour used elsewhere targeted at journeymen and apprentices. The self-effacing humour used in relation to men – jokes like “a highly intelligent dog—a type-setter”⁵¹⁵ – contributes to the journal’s function as a site in which trade culture is developed. By contrast, jokes about women are almost always derisive and characterized by a misogynistic voice aimed at reducing women’s intelligence and rights, objectifying their bodies, and placing them at home.

The recognition afforded to women workers elsewhere in the *Miscellany* is undercut by a kind of humour that appeals to a superiority theory of humour in which “the affective response that often accompanies comic amusement [...] is an enjoyable feeling of superiority to the object of amusement.” According to David Monroe, the superiority theory of humour argues that “the laugher always looks down on whatever he laughs at, and so judges it inferior by some standard” and E. M. Dadlez says that “superiority theories ally humor principally with ridicule and the enjoyment of one’s own superiority in pinpointing the foibles and weaknesses of another.”⁵¹⁶ For example, some jokes in the *Miscellany* ridicule women workers in an attempt to make them seem useless, improper, and inferior in the shop: “Sitting hens—Female compositors,”⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁴ Steve Linstead, “‘Jokers Wild’: Humour in Organisational Culture,” in *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*, ed. Chris Powell and George E. C. Paton (MacMillan Press, 1988), 142, 125.

⁵¹⁵ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 5 (November 1877): 118.

⁵¹⁶ Sheila Lintott, “Superiority in Humor Theory,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74, no. 4 (Fall 2016): 347, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44510295>; David Monroe, “Theories of Humor,” in *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, 3rd ed., ed. Laurence Behrens and Leonard J. Rosen (Scott, Foresman and Company: 1988), 9; E. M. Dadlez, “Truly Funny: Humor, Irony, and Satire as Moral Criticism,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jae.2011.0003>.

⁵¹⁷ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 1 (July 1878): 30.

“Going the rounds of the press – the girl who waltzes,”⁵¹⁸ “Female compositors are continually setting their CAPS for the editor.”⁵¹⁹ In “An Angel’s Visit,” the fiancé of a compositor is characterised as a clueless menace; she visits him at work and, much to his displeasure and panic, pies a galley of type (knocks it over and ruins all his work, a truly horrifying experience for compositors into the present day). As she leaves, she “soliloquize[s],” ““how George loves me! He nearly sobbed when I touched those funny little bits of thingummies [pieces of type/sorts].””⁵²⁰ Thus, these jokes, as quads or sorts, figuratively support and underpin the misogyny that is legible elsewhere in the *Miscellany* and in the trade’s gendered policies and discourses. These sorts are one-in-many, sometimes single jokes found amongst an entire page of other jokes, but they, like quads, are an essential component of the text and make visible the narrative that the *Miscellany* proliferates about women and their roles in society.

Many of the jokes that furnish the *Miscellany*’s “Sorts” section have women’s clothing and bodies at the heart of them. In Canada during the second half of the century, the suffrage movement that was central to the establishment of the American woman’s union was still active and growing, and women continuously fought for the right to fair wages, enfranchisement, and treatment as gender roles and norms changed. The social, political, and economic freedoms gained by women compositors throughout the earlier half of the century afforded women in America the ability to organize their labour and force their way into the trade in official, union-sanctioned ways. Clothing was a

⁵¹⁸ “Sorts.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 9 (March 1879): 284.

⁵¹⁹ “Sorts.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 10 (April 1879): 308.

⁵²⁰ “An Angel’s Visit,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 8 (February 1880): 122.

particularly important component of women's rights and liberation movements.⁵²¹ As I elaborated in Chapter 2, journeymen placed great importance on their physical appearance and used clothing – gentlemanly attire – to distinguish themselves from other workmen.⁵²² If criticisms and comments about clothing operated as a gentle mode of worker policing in relation to male journeymen and their male peers, it operated similarly when applied to women. Quips such as “The rise in printing paper has had the effect of causing a decline in bustles”⁵²³ and “An old subscriber writes to us that since his daughters have discarded the old style bustle, his paper is no longer in arrears,”⁵²⁴ for example, point to a common metaphor of feminist activism that equates the liberation from constraining undergarments with the liberation of the female mind. One heavy-handed pun – “Mrs. Dr. Mary Walker says she pants for the ‘good time coming’ when her sex will not have to ‘stay’ on the outside edge of the professions, but will assume their legitimate position”⁵²⁵ – likewise points to the advancing socio-economic status of women toward the end of the century. Another joke, copied from the *North American Review*, makes explicit reference to women's enfranchisement. It not only trivializes the social importance of women's right to vote, but it also characterizes women as materialistic and clueless: “If woman had the ballot, what would she do with it? It isn't long enough for a belt, or big enough for a bustle.”⁵²⁶ The emphasis on clothing signals that dress was an important site for the expression of anxieties about changing gender

⁵²¹ Anita Rush, “Changing Women's Fashion and Its Social Context, 1870-1905,” *Material Culture Review* 14 (1982): 44, 38, 42, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/MCR/article/view/17088>.

⁵²² Duffy, *Skilled Compositor*, 100, 101.

⁵²³ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 1 (July 1880): 14.

⁵²⁴ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 4 (October 1877): 94.

⁵²⁵ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 4 (October 1879): 62.

⁵²⁶ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 8 (February 1880): 126.

roles. This is particularly true when considering the way that the *Miscellany* reports on and discusses women in journalism at the end of the century.

By the 1880s, periodical work, editing and journalism were professions that many came to see as acceptable jobs for women. By the 1890s, it was not uncommon to find many women heading journals and working in the field of periodicals.⁵²⁷ *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* often reported favourably on women editors and journalists including: Faith Fenton, Helen Gregory Flesher, Mrs. Watkins, M.J. Sanborn, Isabel Garrison Smith, Mrs. Deverill (*Toronto Mail*); Miss Madge Robertson in New York; Miss Eva Broadbique (*Chicago Times*), and Margaret Sullivan (*Chicago Herald*).⁵²⁸ However, in the November 1879 issue of *The Printer's Miscellany*, one joke's emphasis on clothing illuminates the trade's growing concerns for the infiltration of women into the trade and the shifting gender dynamics of the late nineteenth century:

It is given out that ladies will wear vests precisely the same as gentlemen's this winter. When a married man goes to bed he will have to put a chalk mark on his vest, or next morning he may slip on his wife's and not discover his mistake until he inserts his thumb and forefinger in the right-hand pocket for a pinch of fine-cut and finds nothing but a piece of chewing-gum and the stub of a short lead pencil. Then he will suddenly remember that there was a roll of ten-dollar greenbacks in the left-hand pocket of his vest—that is, if he is an editor, he will—and he will rush back home in Rarus time [sic].⁵²⁹

The punchline of this joke is really aimed at the editor because it is humorous to see him be swindled by his bold wife. However, the attention given to the wife's choice of dress (her husband's vest over her own) and the suggestion of cross-dressing (that the husband

⁵²⁷ "Female Journalists," *CPP* 2, no. 7 (July 1893): 17; "The Newspaper Female.," *CPP* 3, no. 9 (September 1894): 7-8.

⁵²⁸ "News of the Month in Brief.," *CPP* 4, no. 10 (October 1895): 11-12; "News of the Month in Brief.," *CPP* 4, no. 12 (December 1895): 9; "The News Gatherers," *CPP* 2, no. 4 (April 1893): 7.

⁵²⁹ "'Sorts.'," *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 5 (November 1879): 78.

accidentally finds himself in a woman's robe) is twofold, expressing anxieties about women's masculinization and men's feminization simultaneously. Likewise, the *Miscellany's* reporting on Middy Morgan, a stock reporter come to America from Ireland, foreshadows male anxieties of the fin-de-siècle New Woman, and particularly this figure's association with masculine dress. Emphasizing her appearance more than her work, the *Miscellany* writes that Middy Morgan is

[...] an immensely tall woman—six feet two inches in height. [...] Her shoulders are broad and square, and she does not mince matters when she walks. She jumps on and off a car, when in full motion, when she feels like it. Those accustomed to the ordinary helplessness of the female sex, in the matter of locomotion, are somewhat startled by her methods. They say she looks like a man dressed in woman's clothes.⁵³⁰

Attitudes toward women journalists did not change at the turn of the century. For instance, in 1894, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* asserts that “the Lady Journalist is with us to stay, she is both welcome and useful.” Acknowledging that some were concerned about the arrival of the emboldened New Woman, the piece outlines how it is generally considered acceptable for women journalists to cover such topics as “weddings and teas,” among other domestic and traditionally feminine social events, but that when she enters the profession of journalism and begins “dressing up in men's clothes and going to theatres, she passes outside her sphere and brings disgrace upon her sex. [...] Of course, the brilliant young journalists who are now coming up in the ranks may have less puritanical notions, and may think these things proper.” Although the “old fogeys are thus impressed” by the fin-de-siècle female journalists, the editorial argues that “we ‘old’uns’ would be ashamed to call ourselves disciples of such high-minded men as

⁵³⁰ “Middy Morgan, Stock Reporter,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 1 (July 1880): 7.

Franklin, Greely, Bennett, Garrison or Childs, did we condone such things.” This new woman journalist exhibits a “dangerous” “modern, ultra-masculine femininity” because she unsettles Victorian gender norms, norms that are central to compositors’ masculine craft identity and economic status. As such, some journeymen believed that the involvement of female journalists of this kind with the press was unacceptable because it unbalanced the gendered divide that so defined the trade for male journeymen.⁵³¹

To quell fears about women’s shifting roles in society and, perhaps, to exert some control over women where they otherwise were unable to at work, journeymen’s humour in *The Printer’s Miscellany* far more frequently positions women in the domestic sphere. If journeymen and their unions were not actually able to “drive them” “out of the composing room” and “back to their kitchens,” their humour, at the very least, could act as a figurative surrogate for their desired workplace dynamic.⁵³² One such joke is flagrant in its espousal of the notion that a woman’s proper place is in the home: “The women’s literary club may be all very well in its way, but the women ought to depend mainly on the good old-fashioned flat iron and rolling pin. That’s the real woman’s club.”⁵³³ Others suggest that the only thing women are entitled to or destined for, desire or in fact *need*, is marriage. For instance:

1. “Woman’s rights—Husbands.”⁵³⁴
2. “Those we shall Miss—Our daughters till they are married.”⁵³⁵

⁵³¹ “Editorial Notes,” *CPP* 3, no. 12 (December 1894): 1.

⁵³² DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 130-1.

⁵³³ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 5 (November 1878): 166.

⁵³⁴ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 4&5 (October and November 1881): 62.

⁵³⁵ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 6&7 (December/January 1881-2): 88.

3. “‘Take away women and what would follow?’ asked a writer. Stag-nation of course.”⁵³⁶
4. “A compositor, in setting up the toast: ‘Woman – without her, man would be a savage,’ got the punctuation in the wrong place, which made it read: ‘Woman without her man, would be a savage.’”⁵³⁷
5. “‘Woman’s sphere - That she will never get married.’”⁵³⁸
6. “The marriage question—why don’t the men propose.”⁵³⁹

One absurd joke even suggests that women literally live to serve their husbands: “Annie Muller committed suicide, in Detroit, because her sweetheart, gave his trousers to another girl to mend.”⁵⁴⁰ Others speak to the stereotypical notion that men are generally displeased with marriage, often because wives are cast as nagging, overbearing, and controlling.⁵⁴¹

1. “The right kind of a man will always have his life insured. It gives his wife’s second husband such a good start.”⁵⁴²
2. “‘Dearest,’ said a sick wife fondly to her husband, ‘if I should die I wonder If you wouldn’t marry again?’ ‘No indeed’ was the prompt for me. ‘I have tried

⁵³⁶ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 12 (June 1879): 340.

⁵³⁷ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 7 (January 1879): 228.

⁵³⁸ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 6 (December 1880): 94.

⁵³⁹ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 6 (December 1880): 94.

⁵⁴⁰ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 6, no. 4&5 (October and November 1881): 62.

⁵⁴¹ The institute of marriage has a long relationship with the printing trades in England. Cait Coker writes that in the English guild labour system of the seventeenth century, “apprentices were forbidden to marry and the requisite age of gaining one’s freedom was twenty-four; improper relations between the sexes would involve the offending apprentice’s removal from the guild system altogether and so eliminate the possibility of acquiring middle-class employment and even certain local government positions” (Coker, “Gendered spheres,” 327).

⁵⁴² “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 12 (June 1879): 340.

it once, and that's enough for me.' She was so mad that she recovered almost immediately."⁵⁴³

3. "Husbands never meet their wives with 'smiles' on their lips; they wipe them off before they get home."⁵⁴⁴

While they are characterized as wives, the women of the journal's "'Sorts'" are also mothers and, more importantly, reproducers. The latter bears important implications for the way that compositors viewed women in relation to typographical work, particularly as some of the jokes that appear in the *Miscellany* use the trade's gendered printing terminology to reference reproduction. Lisa Maruca demonstrates that the gendering of print terminologies extends as far back as the seventeenth century with Joseph's Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises* in which type and technology "evidently have a sex." She refers specifically to Moxon's description of typecasting: "The *Female Block* is such another *Block* as the *male Block*, only instead of a *Tongue* running through the length of it a *Groove* is made to receive the *Tongue* of the *Male Block*." In mold-making, there is also the "*Female-Gage*" which is "about a *Double Pica* wide, and is made for the *Male-Gage* of the other part of the *Mold* to fit into and to slide forwards or backwards as the thickness of the Letter to be cast may require," and so on.⁵⁴⁵ Referring both to the men and women responsible for producing printed materials and the gendered tools and equipment, Maruca observes that this "mechanistic heterosexual coupling is an essential part of the creation of words" describing the work of typecasting as a "love scene" featuring "the sex of machinery" through which "a unit of language [type] is born." She

⁵⁴³ "'Sorts,'" *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 3 (September 1879): 46.

⁵⁴⁴ "'Sorts,'" *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 3 (September 1879): 46.

⁵⁴⁵ Maruca, "Bodies of Type," 328; Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, 185, 33.

concludes her analysis of printers' manuals by writing that "the medium of print has never been—and was not always thought to be—a pure or neutral form of communication, but one which always conveys and supports a specific ideological regime."⁵⁴⁶

The jokes that make sexual euphemisms of printing terminology certainly convey and support the nineteenth-century trade's gendered ideologies. In July 1880, the *Miscellany* published the following joke: "A young married lady who recently presented her husband with triplets (three little bluenoses) remarked that this was her first literary production."⁵⁴⁷ In this joke, the act of birth is equated with the act of writing or, perhaps, setting literature and it also essentializes women's reproductive capabilities suggesting that she is foremost meant to produce children rather than literature. In another joke – "A book publisher's advertisement announces: In press—'A Beautiful Woman.' We are not surprised to hear it. The fellow who does the 'pressing' is to be envied"⁵⁴⁸ – "pressing" in the printological sense is equated with sexual intercourse. This is also the case in a sketch called "Matrimony." The sketch utilizes printing terminology to reduce the wife to a "form" (Figure 23).⁵⁴⁹ In a similar vein, a pair of jokes appearing in the same issue use printing slang – "fat" or the "fat take," negative terms used to refer to materials that required a lot of quads and spacing materials to fill out lines⁵⁵⁰ – to comment on women's bodies: "Isn't it almost time for the fleshy old girl in the Anti-Fat advertisements to begin to get thin?" and "A Newark printer, who recently married a woman nearly twice his

⁵⁴⁶ Maruca, "Bodies of Type," 328-9, 338.

⁵⁴⁷ Peter Periwinkle, "Pollywogs," *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 1 (July 1880): 10.

⁵⁴⁸ "'Sorts.'," *The Printer's Miscellany* 2, no. 11 (May 1878): 310.

⁵⁴⁹ "Matrimony," *The Printer's Miscellany* 1, no. 12 (June 1877): 219

⁵⁵⁰ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 5; Johnston, *Alphabets to Order*, 123

avoiropois, explained that he never could resist a ‘fat take.’”⁵⁵¹ In all instances, the woman is literally objectified through her association with type. More than that, however, because she is reduced to the status of physical type, she is also the object acted upon by men. In “Matrimony,” “no good journeyman *unlocks* the matrimonial *form* for the purpose of *distribution*—but much prefers to *set up a doublet* of this kind for himself; so that when he gets *out of sorts* the *form* that has absorbed so many of his *embraces*, may be able to return to him a few *quoins* of love.” Given that the surface on which type forms are laid to be printed is often called the “bed,” the sexual nature of this piece cannot be mistaken. The printer penetrates her, unlocking the form, an action that is done in printing by inserting a key into the hole in a quoin and turning; and distribution, which refers to the returning of sorts to their typecase, is here equated to ejaculation. The wife has no agency – the only thing that is asked of her is to return the printer’s love – and she is, like a type form, meant to lay in the bed and await the printer’s “*embraces*.”⁵⁵² As the primary goal of all printing is the reproduction of printed works, the relation of women’s sexualized bodies and reproductive traits in these jokes to printing terminologies is significant because it again affirms women’s relationship to marriage and mothering. Likewise, equating women’s bodies with type and printing allows the men in the jokes, and by extension the men laughing, to assume a superior and domineering role in relation to them since the women are no different than the materials and equipment over which the men have control as labourers every day.

⁵⁵¹ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 12 (June 1879): 340.

⁵⁵² “Matrimony,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 1, no. 12 (June 1877): 219

4.3 Summary

Typographical trade journals are an important source for scholars of print history in uncovering the names and mobilities of women working in North America; this is especially significant when thinking about the provincial periodical press, where the names of women compositors more easily go missing. Their work and contributions are significant and legitimate, yet the gendered ideologies that frame their appearances in the trade journals in the latter half of the nineteenth century undermine their centrality to the trade as labourers. I began this chapter by outlining the history and stakes of the trade's male-female conflicts as a way of contextualizing the treatment of women in *The Printer's Miscellany*. This context illustrated the ways that male journeymen compositors battled employers' attempts to employ women in their place by defining women out of the workplace and excluding them from their union systems where possible.

The Printer's Miscellany, at first, appears to propose a possible alternative to that history. Finlay's offer of a lower subscription rate for women and the reporting on women working in the typographical trades and journalism in Canada are important elements of the *Miscellany* that speak to the trade's acknowledgement of and response to women workers in Canada during the period. Both demonstrate that journeymen were aware of women working in their trades and that men were not *always* antagonistic toward them. However, as this chapter has explored, the good that those gestures offer (to women then and scholars now) is overshadowed by the fact that women's presence within the journal is often mediated through derisive jokes and narratives about women. The persistent repetition of tropes of women – the clueless and hazardous woman, the controlling wife, the domestic angel, and sexual/sexualized being – reinforce social

gender norms with the aim of supporting the male tradesmen's desire to push or keep women out of the print shop. Such repetition also reminds us of who is speaking. Although women workers appear in the *Miscellany* (and in other trade journals across North America), it cannot be forgotten that their presence there is largely mediated by the trade's patriarchal ideologies and the male labourer's defensive gaze.

Here, it is worth noting that most typographical trade journals were produced by and for men. I have only encountered two typographical trade journals produced for women during the century. In June 1890, the Chicago-based trade journal *The Inland Printer*, copying from the British journal, *Paper and Printing Trades Journal*, reported on the existence of typographical trade journals for women. In a section on women compositors, the article reads: "*Les compositrices* of *la belle* France have a journal of their own, *La Compositrice*. In Boston, Massachusetts, there is another journal published in the interests of female compositors entitled *Elle*. This paper is a veritable man-hater; not the slightest mention of man in any shape or form is to be found in its columns, neither is the *genus homo* allowed to hawk it!"⁵⁵³ *La Compositrice: organe des travailleuses du livre* was first launched by Mlle. Jeanne Daussy, "Compositrice," in May 1887 from Abbeville, France; the journal is currently held at the National Library of France, which indicates that the journal ran until at least May 1888.⁵⁵⁴ Likely citing the same article as *The Inland Printer*, Alexander Lawson echoes that *Elle* was published in

⁵⁵³ "Women as Compositors," *The Inland Printer* 7, no. 9 (June 1890): 820, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.c2647260>.

⁵⁵⁴ Jeanne Daussy, ed., *La Compositrice: organe des travailleuses du livre* 1, no. 1 (22 May 1887): 1, access courtesy of the National Library of France, <http://ark.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32746052c>; "La Compositrice," [Library Catalogue Entry], Bibliothèque Nationale de France, [Library Catalogue Entry] Catalogue Général, accessed August 2, 2025, <http://ark.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32746052c>.

the United States at the end of the century, but I was unable to locate it or find any other record of it.⁵⁵⁵

In literally marginalizing women, reducing them to objects, and privileging the role of women in the domestic sphere, the *Miscellany* not only echoes the dominant gender ideologies of the period, but proliferates an exclusionary trade discourse rooted in misogynistic thought. It is important to recall that, outside of news reports, the jokes and narratives never situate women competently on the shop floor. And that is exactly the point. As women entered the shop floor in increasing numbers during the mid- to late-century, organized and were granted union status in the United States, were favoured by employers for their willingness to work cheaply, and sought social and economic freedoms, male journeymen used humour “as a form of social control” to protect their craft status.⁵⁵⁶ By using the *Miscellany* in these ways, journeymen maintained a sense of control of their trade identity by reinforcing longstanding patriarchal ideologies.

⁵⁵⁵ Lawson, *The Compositor as Artist, Craftsman, and Tradesman*, 25.

⁵⁵⁶ Chris Powell and George E. C. Paton, introduction to *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*, ed. Chris Powell and George E. C. Paton (MacMillan Press, 1988), xviii.

Chapter 5: “printing that rightfully belongs to those ‘in the trade’”:⁵⁵⁷

Concerning Race and the Whiteness of Typesetting

Apprentices, tramps and other “unskilled” white journeymen were not the only men with whom the trade was concerned; it was also periodically troubled by the trade’s racialized membership and non-union workers. Although there were several newspapers established and run by racialized people in Canada throughout the nineteenth century, the number of Black, Indigenous, Chinese, or other racialized printers and compositors working in Canada during the century has not yet been determined or approximated. Unfortunately, this is an undertaking too large for the scope of this chapter. Instead, this chapter attends to the ways that the trade’s literature addresses the very real presence of racialized compositors in Canada. This chapter asks not only where the labour of Black, Indigenous, and Chinese labourers fits into the white, male-dominated newspaper trade, but also how and where the trade’s shifting definitions of skill and craft identity functioned with reference to race. This is an important question given the fact that, as Finkelstein observes, racial identity played an important part in establishing the printing trades elsewhere in the British colonies during the century.⁵⁵⁸ Where possible, I also consider how the journals’ material and literary qualities relate to the period’s racist ideologies and illustrate how the trade’s definitions of skill are bound up with whiteness and, in relation to Indigenous printers, Canada’s settler colonial identity.

⁵⁵⁷ “Northwest Nuggets,” *The Imprint* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1894): 6.

⁵⁵⁸ Finkelstein, “Colonial Trade Identity,” 383-7.

5.1 Black Labour and Black Printing in Canada

Black men worked in the typographical trades throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries across North America. Joe William Trotter Jr. and Jonathan Senchyne make very clear that enslaved Black men worked as printers and contributed significantly to early print culture in antebellum America. Trotter notes that before emancipation, the *New York Gazette*, the *Boston News Letter*, the *Boston Chronicle*, and the *Boston Gazette* “regularly carried ads for the purchase of slave coopers, carpenters, joiners, tailors, bakers, blacksmiths, and sometimes printers.” And Jonathan Senchyne remarks that enslaved Black people “set, cleaned, and organized type, pulled impressions on hand presses, and cut engravings. Enslaved African Americans made print just as they made buildings, pottery, and sugar.”⁵⁵⁹ Throughout the century, Black people were also cultivating a rich community print culture for themselves that included newspapers – a group of publications we now commonly refer to as the Black Press.⁵⁶⁰

The production of newspapers by and for Black people was a significantly smaller phenomenon in Canada than it was in the United States. The fact that there were Black newspapers in Canada at all during the nineteenth century is owed, in large part, to British North America’s anti-slavery legislation and, subsequently, the emigration of free

⁵⁵⁹ Joe William Trotter Jr., *Workers on Arrival: Black Labor in the Making of America* (University of California Press, 2019): 4-5; Jonathan Senchyne, “Under Pressure: Reading Material Textuality in the Recovery of Early African American Print Work,” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 75, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 109-10, <https://doi.org/10.1353/arq.2019.0013>.

⁵⁶⁰ For more on African American print culture see, for instance: Grey Gundaker, “Give Me a Sign: African Americans, Print, and Practice,” in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 2, *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*, ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley (University of North Carolina Press, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central; Jeannine Marie DeLombard, “African American Cultures of Print,” in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed., Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship (University of North Carolina, 2007), ProQuest Book Central.

Blacks from the United States in the early- to mid-century. The presence of Black people in the land that would become Canada extends to the early seventeenth century when they were brought to New France (present-day Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and Cape Breton). The presence of Black people increased throughout the century with notable groups like the Black Loyalists arriving in the Maritimes toward the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁶¹ In the 1790s, John Graves Simcoe, Upper Canada's first lieutenant governor, championed the Act to Limit Slavery which prohibited the importation of slaves "and provided for the gradual emancipation of blacks born into slavery." Years later, in 1803, William Osgoode, chief justice of Lower Canada, "issued a landmark decision that slavery was inconsistent with British law," in effect "free[ing] the three hundred slaves in the province."⁵⁶² During this time, the United States passed the Fugitive Slave Act (1793) which gave slaveholders the right to recover escaped enslaved persons; however, states were not required to abide by the Act, and many Northern states did not. The Underground Railroad was used to circumvent this early legislation, and many enslaved Blacks utilized the network to escape to British North America, where they would be free. In 1850, the United States strengthened the enforcement of the Act; measures included, for example, incentivising states and individuals to assist in the recapture of escaped enslaved peoples, as well as prohibiting the assistance of escaped slaves in any way and fining individuals who were caught doing so. The reinforcement of the Act "initiated the second and largest movement of blacks into Canada" where slavery had

⁵⁶¹ George Elliott Clarke, forward to *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, by Robin Winks, 50th Anniversary ed. (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), x-xii, Scholars Portal Books.

⁵⁶² Natasha Henry-Dixon, "1793 Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, published February 7, 2022, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/1793-act-to-limit-slavery-in-upper-canada; C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 2, *Canada, 1830-1865* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1986): 4.

been abolished by the adoption of the Emancipation Act in 1833/4 (also known as the Slavery Abolition Act).⁵⁶³ By the mid-century in Canada West (modern-day Ontario), many Black settlements were concentrated in the corridor between Sandwich (Windsor) to the bottom of the Georgian Bay, including the settlements of Dawn, Elgin, Buxton, and the Refugee Home Society, which had its base in Windsor. During the 1850s, organized Black abolitionists began producing newspapers in these communities.⁵⁶⁴ Between 1827 and 1860, there were no Black daily newspapers in Canada and “less than 12 Black newspapers, which were published weekly, biweekly, monthly, or even quarterly.” The relative silence of Black newspaper production in Canada continued well into the early twentieth century. This absence, Tokunbo Ojo remarks, “was primarily due to the limited financial resources to support such an enterprise” and the “low Black population in the country at the time.”⁵⁶⁵

Canada’s early Black newspapers included the *British North American*, published in Toronto in March 1845 but which folded after only a few months; the *Voice of the Fugitive* (1851-3), published in Sandwich (Windsor), Ontario by Henry Bibb and his wife, Mary; and Mary Ann Shadd Cary’s *The Provincial Freeman* (1853-58?), published in Windsor, Toronto, and later Chatham, Ontario. Other shorter-lived papers published before the American Civil War included the *Voice of the Bondsman*, which appeared only twice and was produced “at Stratford [Ontario] in 1856 by John James Edmonstoune

⁵⁶³ Natasha Henry-Dixon, “Fugitive Slave Act of 1850,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, published June 21, 2023, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/fugitive-slave-act-of-1850; Adrienne Shadd, “Mary Ann Shadd,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, published November 6, 2013, www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/mary-ann-shadd; Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 2: 9.

⁵⁶⁴ Henry-Dixon, “Fugitive Slave Act of 1850”; Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 2: 12, 18, 21.

⁵⁶⁵ Tokunbo Ojo, “The Early Black Press in Canada,” in *Media Across the African Diaspora: Content, Audiences, and Influence*, ed. Omotayo O. Banjo (Taylor & Francis Group, 2018): chap. 1, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Linton, a Scottish abolitionist who had written for the *Provincial Freeman*.” Shortly thereafter, from 1860-1, the conservative paper *The True Royalist and Weekly Intelligencer* was published by the Reverend A.R. Green of the British Methodist Episcopal Church in Sandwich.⁵⁶⁶ These papers were “important outlets for opinion and public debates, for Canadian Blacks, many of whom were freeborn Black Canadians, African-Americans who fled the United States during the slavery trade era, indentured laborers from Britain, and Canadian Pacific Railway workers/porters.”⁵⁶⁷

The story of the two most famous early Black Canadian papers – the *Voice of the Fugitive* and *The Provincial Freeman* – provides some insights into the work of Black printers and newspaper proprietors during the mid-century. Henry Bibb, proprietor of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, was “a former slave and antislavery lecturer well known in Michigan and Canada West” and his paper, which was the official organ of the Refugee Home Society, was “the first sustained black newspaper in Canada.” The *Voice* had a wide readership across Canada West and in several Northern states. It was “well respected and often quoted by the northern abolitionist press.” The paper was largely concerned with expressing the editors’ concerns around emigration and the conditions of fugitive slaves in Canada, as well as pertinent topics like American proslavery legislation. Unfortunately, “the office of the *Voice* burned in October 1853, and although Bibb

⁵⁶⁶ Ojo, “The Early Black Press in Canada,” chap. 1; Cheryl Thompson, “Cultivating Narratives of Race, Faith, and Community: *The Dawn of Tomorrow*, 1923-1971,” *Canadian Journal of History* 50, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2015): 35-7, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/579076>; Shadd, “Mary Ann Shadd”; Dorothy W. Williams, “Print and Black Canadian Culture,” in *History of the Book in Canada*, vol. 2, 1840-1918, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 41.

⁵⁶⁷ Ojo, “The Early Black Press in Canada,” chap. 1.

announced that the paper was not yet finished, publication was suspended; with Bibb's death the following year, it never revived."⁵⁶⁸

Throughout its life, the *Voice* made very brief remarks on its production, which provide some insight into the labour behind the paper. It is unclear, based on lack of acknowledgement in the paper, where the *Voice* was printed or produced. However, some evidence exists from which to extrapolate that it was printed by Bibb or printers close to him. The first issue indicates, from the voice of the editor, that "some of the type with which our paper is printed this week is smaller than we desired it to be; our next will not be so."⁵⁶⁹ In the February 26, 1851 issue of the *Voice*, soliciting for subscribers and financial support, Bibb writes: "we are sorry the paper is not so respectable in its appearance as we could desire, neither is it what we should make it in other respects had we the pecuniary ability."⁵⁷⁰

The story of Mary Ann Shadd Cary's paper, *The Provincial Freeman*, which has been the subject of much study,⁵⁷¹ provides more insights into the work of Black printers in Ontario during the mid-century. Shadd began publishing *The Provincial Freeman* in the spring of 1853 in Windsor (the paper moved to Toronto in 1854, "possibly because

⁵⁶⁸ Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 2: 23, 18.

⁵⁶⁹ Henry Bibb, ed., "Some of the type...", *Voice of the Fugitive* 1, no. 1 (January 01 1851): n.p., <https://news.ourontario.ca/abolition/97848/data>.

⁵⁷⁰ Henry Bibb, ed., "To The Anti-Slavery Public," *Voice of the Fugitive* 1, no. 5 (26 February 1851): n.p., <https://news.ourontario.ca/abolition/97848/data>.

⁵⁷¹ See, for example: Rosemary Sadlier, *Mary Ann Shadd: Publisher, Editor, Teacher, Lawyer, Suffragette* (Umbrella Press, 1995); Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Indiana University Press, 1998); Rinaldo Walcott, "'Who Is She and What is She to You?': Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the (Im)possibility of Black/Canadian Studies," *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2000): 137-46, <https://atlantisjournal.ca/index.php/atlantis/article/view/1598>; Demetra McBrayer, "'So Go to Editing': Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the Liminality of Editorship and Authorship," *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 40, no. 1-2 (2023): 11-28, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/leg.2023.a917935>; Kristin Moriah, ed., *Insensible of Boundaries: Studies in Mary Ann Shadd Cary* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2025).

Toronto claimed the largest population of blacks in Canada”), months before Bibb’s death and a year after Shadd made waves with her political pro-emigration pamphlet, *A Plea for Emigration; or, Notes of Canada West*, an act that put her at odds with Canada West’s male abolitionists, including Bibb. In publishing *The Provincial Freeman*, she became the first Black woman to publish a newspaper in North America, and the first woman to publish a newspaper in British North America. Initially, *The Provincial Freeman* named Samuel Ringgold Ward, a Black abolitionist and lecturer for the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, as editor, and Alexander McArthur, a White Congregational minister, as corresponding editor because Shadd did not want to alienate readers who might consider editorship to be a man’s job. Indeed, when Shadd claimed editorship of the paper her position was contested, as many did not feel that it was appropriate for a Black woman to run a newspaper. Throughout its life, the paper’s editorship would be handed off to William Newman, H. Ford Douglas, and Shadd’s brother, Isaac D. Shadd.⁵⁷² In 1855, the paper moved to Chatham, taking its printing press and type with it, though their press was damaged on the arduous journey. In Chatham, “they became the official printers to the Chatham Town Council” and did book and job work. They established their office at the Charity’s Brick Building at the corner of King and Adelaide Street “in the heart of the town’s financial district.” After a month’s break, *The Provincial Freeman* returned, published from Chatham on August 22, 1855, with W.P. Newman listed as Editor, and Isaac D. Shadd listed as Publishing Agent.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Jim Bearden and Linda Jean Butler, *Shadd: The Life and Times of Mary Shadd Cary* (NC Press, 1977), 128, 135; Shadd, “Mary Ann Shadd”; Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary* 43, 100; Ripley, *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 2: 23.

⁵⁷³ Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 102; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 395; Mary Ann Shadd Cary, proprietor, *The Provincial Freeman* 2, no. 18 (August 22, 1855): 69, <https://news.ourontario.ca/abolition/97849/data>.

Although the editorial component of the *Freeman* has been widely studied, as has Shadd Cary's work as an editor and author, scholarship has fallen short on attending to the manual labour behind the paper. In general, studies on Black periodical and newspaper production in Canada tend to focus on the editorial aspects of the periodicals' production. While the editorial aspect is certainly important for understanding the contributions of Black people to the print history and intellectual life of Canada during the century, the absence of information (or lack of acknowledgment of this absence) on Black typographical labourers is a lacuna in Canadian labour and print history. The number of Black printers and compositors working in nineteenth-century Canada is unknown. Likewise, little evidence exists to provide concrete evidence of the number of printers and/or their race working on the *Freeman*, particularly when they move to Chatham. According to Jim Bearden and Linda Jean Butler's biography of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, in Toronto, the paper had "black staff" that Shadd sometimes left in charge of the paper.⁵⁷⁴ In the pages of *The Provincial Freeman*, Isaac Shadd makes periodic remarks on delays or missed issues due to problems with equipment. Given this and his successful bid "for the job of Town Printer" in January 1857, the paper may have been printed by him and/or other compositors and pressmen in their office under his charge.⁵⁷⁵ In 1857 the *Freeman* listed "Wanted" advertisements for help asking for "a smart, active and intelligent boy about fourteen years of age. Apply at this Office. One able to read and WRITE preferred." Although it cannot be confirmed that this was a call for apprentices,

⁵⁷⁴ Bearden and Butler, *Shadd*, 148.

⁵⁷⁵ "Provincial Freeman.," *The Provincial Freeman* 2, no. 27 (November 3, 1855): 106; Bearden and Butler, *Shadd*, 192; Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 102; Carmen Poole, "Conspicuous Peripheries: Black Identity, Memory, and Community in Chatham, ON, 1860-1980," (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2015), 231, ProQuest (10014498).

the qualifications required by the call are certainly compelling for such a case.⁵⁷⁶ Additionally, *The Provincial Freeman*'s reproduction of an article from the *Middlesex (Mass.) Journal* on "Important Inventions to Printers" in September 1855 suggests that at least some of the newspaper's readers were working in the trade and would have had use for such information.⁵⁷⁷ And, according to Bearden and Butler, Osborne P. Anderson, a young Black man from Pennsylvania, worked at the *Freeman* "for two years, first as an agent and later as printer's devil and general assistant."⁵⁷⁸ The *Freeman* eventually ceased publication by the early 1860s, not because of a lack of ability or competence but rather due to a dearth of funds and financial support, a condition that plagued the *Freeman* for most of its life. One of the paper's editors, Newman, argued that it was the duty of Black and white readers to support the paper, and toward the end of the paper's life, Shadd Cary "lashed out at the *Freeman*'s audience, complaining that local blacks did not believe in the newspaper's crisis and had no loyalty to the race."⁵⁷⁹

After the American Civil War, Black people in Canada continued to produce printed materials that narrated their experience of the Canadian colour bar and the racism they experienced in Canada, many "produc[ing] serials, pamphlets, essays, tracts, sermons, hymnal collections, poetry, and church histories."⁵⁸⁰ At the same time, the question of what to do about Black composers and printers arose at several ITU conventions in postbellum America. Though we now retrospectively refer to those

⁵⁷⁶ "Wanted Immediately.," *The Provincial Freeman* 3, no. 44 (July 4, 1857): 175; "Wanted Immediately.," *The Provincial Freeman* 3, no. 47 (August 8, 1857): 159; "Wanted Immediately.," *The Provincial Freeman* 3, no. 52 (September 13, 1857): 181.

⁵⁷⁷ "Important Invention to Printers.," *The Provincial Freeman* 2, no. 23 (September 29, 1855): 91.

⁵⁷⁸ Bearden and Butler, *Shadd*, 195.

⁵⁷⁹ Bearden and Butler, *Shadd*, 205; Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 115, 107, 123-4.

⁵⁸⁰ Williams, "Print and Black Canadian Culture," 41.

periodicals produced by and for Black communities as a unique category of periodical production that is separate from the rest of the continent's newspaper and printing trades (the Black Press), the printing trades themselves – and their workforces – were not necessarily segregated, and Black men worked as compositors alongside white men.⁵⁸¹ For example, Scott E. Casper remarks that in 1881 Robert Washington Kerr, an assistant foreman at the Government Printing Offices in Washington, D.C., described the press room there as racially integrated, a space wherein the printing plates were “taken in charge by one of our ‘colored brethren’” who worked alongside white women.⁵⁸² There, Casper writes, “all sorts of hands – black and white, skilled and unskilled, human and mechanical – produced the government's imprints.”⁵⁸³ However, James P. Danky and Elizabeth McHenry are agreed that in the latter half of the century the trade's unions and employing printers, as Danky puts it, “systematically excluded African Americans from skilled jobs.”⁵⁸⁴ Beginning in the mid-1860s, Black men were formally trained in printing; however, this training was organized outside of the trade's formal apprenticeship system. According to Danky, “industrial education, which afforded some valuable opportunities for training in printing, was the dominant model” at the eighty-five

⁵⁸¹ Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein, introduction to *Early African American Print Culture*, ed. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 4, 2, ProQuest EBook Central.

⁵⁸² Scott E. Casper, “The Census, the Post Office, and Government Publishing” in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, *The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott E. Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship (University of North Carolina, 2007), 189-90, ProQuest Ebook Central; R.W. Kerr, *History of the Government Printing Office* (Lancaster, P.A.: Inquirer Printing and Publishing Co., 1881), 10, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015077866021>.

⁵⁸³ Casper, “The Census, the Post Office, and Government Publishing,” 190.

⁵⁸⁴ James P. Danky, “Reading, Writing, and Resisting: African American Print Culture,” in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 4, *Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880-1940*, ed., Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway (University of North Carolina, 2009), 347, ProQuest Ebook Central; Elizabeth McHenry, ““Out of the business once established could grow various enterprises”: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Ed. L. Simon & Co. Printers.” *Book History* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2021): 409, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2021.0015>.

Black colleges founded in America between 1865 and 1885. Despite their training, however, graduates from these colleges “found it nearly impossible to obtain work in the printing trade.” Additionally, despite the proliferation of Black print culture in America into the twentieth century and the increasing number of Black people working as bookbinders, printers, and lithographers, “union discrimination against black workers [at the beginning of the twentieth century] continued to limit access to these occupations; many African Americans involved with print held additional jobs, in or out of the printing trades.”⁵⁸⁵

According to Tracy’s *History of the Typographical Union*, the first mention of Black membership in the ITU was at the 1869 Convention in Albany, six years after the Emancipation Proclamation was enacted in the United States. The case was that of Lewis Henry Douglass, son of abolitionist and newspaper proprietor Frederick Douglass. Lewis had learned the printing trade in the office of his father’s paper, the *North Star*. Despite this training, in 1866, “the same year that he served on a prestigious black delegation charged with interviewing President Andrew Johnson, Lewis was refused employment.” He was not refused on grounds of his education – as was the rationale for the exclusion of white apprentices and amateurs, though his father, Frederick Douglass, surmised that the reason was partly due to the fact that Lewis’ training was not considered equivalent to the trade’s formal apprenticeship system – but “because of his race.” He was denied union membership on these grounds in Washington and Colorado. He later found work as a

⁵⁸⁵ Danky, “Reading, Writing, and Resisting,” 342, 347.

compositor in Washington at the Government Printing Office and became the government's first Black typesetter.⁵⁸⁶

At the 1869 ITU convention in Albany, the Union passed resolutions regarding “the question of admitting negroes as members of the International Union,” and the case of Lewis H. Douglass. The resolution reads:

WHEREAS printers, as other workmen, should be engaged solely on account of competency, and not for the individual views, religious or political, they may entertain; therefore, be it

Resolved (as an expression of the sentiments of the National Union on the subject), That the conductor of any printing house, be it governmental or individual, who makes religious or political sentiment a test of fitness for employment, is deserving of censure, and his course in that regard should meet the united opposition of the craft.

Further resolved, That the wanton attempt of the congressional printer to force upon Columbia Typographical Union No. 101 L. H. Douglas [sic], an avowed rat, meets our unqualified condemnation, and that we deem it the duty of Columbia Union to resist the attempted outrage, and shall firmly sustain them in so doing.

Tracy remarks that “while nothing in the resolution refers to the admission of negroes, it was a well-known fact that L. H. Douglas [sic] was a negro.” Instead, the resolution’s language focuses on “competency” and denounces discrimination based on political or religious beliefs, policies that apply to all labourers. Rather than isolating race as the criterion of exclusion, the resolution mars Douglass’s individual character by denouncing him as an “avowed rat,” a derogatory term used for those who worked for wages lower

⁵⁸⁶ Tracy, *History*, 239-40; Danky, “Reading, Writing, and Resisting,” 342; “The Case of Lewis H. Douglass,” Graphic Arts Collection, Special Collections, Firestone Library, Princeton University, published July, 17 2020, <https://graphicarts.princeton.edu/2020/07/17/the-case-of-lewis-h-douglass/>; Frederick Douglass, “We Are Not Yet Quite Free: An Address Delivered at Medina, New York, on August 3, 1869” *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, vol. 4, 1864-1880, The Frederick Douglass Papers, accessed February 2, 2025, <https://frederickdouglasspapersproject.com/s/digitaledition/item/18429>.

than those set by the Union.⁵⁸⁷ The fairness (and truth) of such an accusation is debatable. While working for wages below the union scale was seen as a flagrant and disrespectful injury to the trade when perpetrated by white labourers, working for below the union scale was often a practice that racialized workers had no choice but to accept. As Frederick Douglass argued: *if* Lewis worked for low wages, “there was no choice for him. Had he been a white young man, with his education and ability, he could easily have obtained employment, and could have found it on the terms demanded by the Printers’ Union. There is no disguising the fact—his crime was his color.”⁵⁸⁸ According to Tracy, Lewis was later granted membership by the union in Washington on an unknown date.⁵⁸⁹

The subject of Black membership was discussed at length at the following ITU Convention in Cincinnati in 1870. The special committee assigned to the issue determined that “it would be assuming an arbitrary power for the International Union to legislate as to the color of printers seeking admission as members of subordinate unions,” deciding that the rejection or admission of Black members, as in the case of female compositors, should be left entirely to the discretion of subordinate unions. Nine years later, this subject re-surfaced when another Black man was refused admission in Memphis, Tennessee and Little Rock, Arkansas. The decision to accept an application from a Black printer was left optional but questions regarding the requirement of locals to recognize Black printers by traveling card “remained unsettled.” Many Black male printers were in possession of a union traveling card. As the traveling or union card functioned similarly for Black men as it did for tramp printers, they were evidence that

⁵⁸⁷ Tracy, *History*, 239-40.

⁵⁸⁸ Douglass, “We Are Not Yet Quite Free.”

⁵⁸⁹ Tracy, *History*, 240.

some Black male printers were recognized by a union as skilled workmen. The card should have afforded them union protections, as it was proof of their status as union members. It was determined by the Union that “no subordinate unions be allowed to refuse to accept a properly accredited traveling card, which was clear and within date, provided no charges were pending against the holder thereof.”⁵⁹⁰

Comparing these two cases, the Union’s resolutions suggested that printers, by union law, should not be able to cite race as a reason for refusing an otherwise certified worker. Instead, they should cite a lack of competency and the worker’s general standing within the trade (as was already the process regarding white tramps and “unskilled” workers) as the reason for refusal. In practice, the Union’s rulings provided an avenue for the conflation of competency and race, and specifically the implication that Black men were less qualified than white men. Although locals were eventually mandated to accept any worker with a proper traveling card who was in good standing, earlier rulings allowed unions and employing printers to claim that a Black worker was simply not qualified, even if they had experience or had been formally trained.

There is no clear record of whether conflicts related to Black labourers in Canada occurred in the second half of the century. If there were any, no details are included within the trade’s literature. The lack of such conflicts is likely, at least in part, indicative of the fact that the landscape of the late-nineteenth-century newspaper and periodical press in Canada was dominated by white workers and white publications.⁵⁹¹ Robin Winks contends that the depression of 1857 and the American Civil War resulted in the

⁵⁹⁰ Tracy, *History*, 248, 307-8.

⁵⁹¹ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 392.

interruption of Black newspaper production in Canada. After the Civil War, no Black newspapers were produced in Windsor and many of the American Black periodicals from the northern states sought a Canadian readership, often sending issues into Canada. Additionally, Black Canadians “often worked for Detroit-based enterprises,” leaving the Black newspaper sector in Canada relatively dormant until the twentieth century. It was not until 1881 that a Black person once again founded a newspaper in Canada. *The British Lion* was published for Blacks in Hamilton, edited by Charles A. Johnson, and appeared “sporadically until 1892 and possibly a little later.” According to Winks, no copies of *The British Lion* are extant.⁵⁹² Winks calculates that by 1899 there were three Black daily newspapers and 136 weeklies in the United States while there were none in Canada.⁵⁹³ The next major periodical publications by and for Black people in Canada appeared in the twentieth century with the country’s first Black literary magazine, *Neith* (1903-04), founded by Abraham Beverly Walker in Saint John, New Brunswick. It was, Winks writes, “the most interesting and certainly the most intellectually ambitious effort toward a Negro publication in Canada.”⁵⁹⁴ Later, J.R. Whitney published the *Canadian Observer*, which operated during World War I. After the war, in July 1923, *The Dawn of Tomorrow*, owned and edited by James. F. Jenkins (later edited by his widow, under his name), entered circulation; it ceased publication in 1966, exceeding the two-and-a-half-year average lifespan of Black periodicals in Canada.⁵⁹⁵ More Black periodicals would be

⁵⁹² Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 397, 392, 398, 398n20.

⁵⁹³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 392.

⁵⁹⁴ Williams, “Print and Black Canadian Culture,” 42; Thompson, “Cultivating Narratives,” 37; “Neith,” Canadian Modernist Magazines Project, accessed February 15, 2025, <https://www.modernistmags.ca/mags/neith/>; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 398.

⁵⁹⁵ Thompson, “Cultivating Narratives,” 38, 31; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 402, 391.

published in Canada throughout the twentieth century, but there were significantly fewer compared to the sector in the United States.⁵⁹⁶

Except for a brief overlap between *The True Royalist and Weekly Intelligencer* (1860-1) and *The Canadian Printer* (Montreal, 1860-71?), all early Black newspapers ceased publication before typographical trade journals became a significant element in the Canadian periodical press. Thus, details about the production and circulation of Black newspapers in Canada do not appear in the typographical trade's literature, which also does not draw from or cite this earlier Black print culture. Only *The Printer's Miscellany* and *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* make explicit reference to Black people, though the comments do not often cast light on the work of Black printers in Canada. In April 1880, the *Miscellany* reports that there are six newspapers edited by Black people in North Carolina; three in Louisiana; two in both Tennessee and Texas; and one in Virginia, Alabama, and Mississippi.⁵⁹⁷ The August-September 1881 issue of the *Miscellany* includes a brief report on the meeting of the "Colored Press Association" held in Chicago in August 1881, noting the number of papers (18) and from which State they originate.⁵⁹⁸ Only one Black Canadian worker is ever mentioned by name – "Dan Taylor, a colored roller-boy," who worked in Victoria, British Columbia. He is mentioned only in relation to his trial for arson and burglary.⁵⁹⁹ And in 1896, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* briefly reports on *The Afro-Canadian*, a newspaper established in Toronto by

⁵⁹⁶ James P. Danky and Maureen E. Hady, eds., *African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography* (Harvard University Press, 1998), xi, <https://archive.org/details/africanamericanne00dank/page/n15/mode/2up>.

⁵⁹⁷ "Notes and News," *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 10 (April 1880): 148.

⁵⁹⁸ "At a meeting of the 'Colored Press Association,'" *The Printer's Miscellany* 6, no. 2&3 (August and September 1881): 20.

⁵⁹⁹ Time, "From the Pacific Coast.," letter to the editor, *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 4 (October 1880): 54.

John Sharpe. The journal incorrectly remarks that *The Afro-Canadian* was “the first paper to represent the coloured citizens of the country.” These reports demonstrate that Canadian printers were aware of the work and organization of Black printers and compositors in the United States and Canada. It also demonstrates that they were uninterested in or ignorant of the recent history of the Black Press in Canada.⁶⁰⁰

In *The Printer’s Miscellany* and *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, mentions of Black people appear more frequently in derogatory and racist jokes or representations that have Black people or caricatures as their subjects. This use of humour does not explicitly target Black labourers but is instead used to shore up the period’s racist ideologies. For example, some jokes are simple plays on skin-colour and Blackness: “Color blind – The white man who marries a dusky woman”;⁶⁰¹ “It was a darkey who exclaimed, as he rose from his knees at a prayer meeting the other night: ‘Here I raise my ebon-knees-sir.’”⁶⁰² In other cases, the journals’ racist humour represents Black people as minstrels and caricatures. In the December 1894 and July 1895 issues of *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, the journal reproduces an illustration by Canadian illustrator J.D. Kelly of a Black man, white-teeth grinning, holding a banana; this illustration is later the cover art for the February 1896 issue (Figure 24).⁶⁰³ In November 1894 the journal includes a poem by white American poet Will Carleton called “Shadrach’s Thanksgiving” that attempts to render Black Vernacular English. The poem is reproduced

⁶⁰⁰ “Current Notes,” *CPP* 5, no. 7 (July 1896):1. I was unable to confirm the existence of *The Afro-Canadian*; at the time of writing, the only known paper identifiable by that name is *The Afro-Canadian* published in Montreal from 1985 to 1994? (“The Afro Canadian,” [Library Catalogue Entry], Concordia University, accessed September 1, 2025, <https://concordiauniversity.on.worldcat.org/oclc/32372849>).

⁶⁰¹ “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 6 (December 1880): 94.

⁶⁰² “‘Sorts.’,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no.1 (July 1879): 14.

⁶⁰³ Illustration in “Wishing You the Season’s Compliments,” *CPP* 3, no. 12 (December 1894): 11; Illustration in R. Holmes, “Canadian Illustrators and Designers,” *CPP* 4, no. 7 (July 1895): 12.

with the title situated inside an illustration of “Shadrach,” a blackface minstrel-show character whose features include a dark face, white beard, and exaggeratedly large lips (Figure 25). The poem makes African American men out to be fools. Shadrach Brown tells the speaker to find the “stingiest man in town” and to make a deal for one of his “turkey-gobblers” so that the community can have a Thanksgiving turkey feast. The speaker, it is suggested, killed the man and served him instead – “An’ Brown was standin’ by my stove, at mornin’s soonest ray, / An’ helped undress de veteran, an’ cooked him half a day” – only to be found out when a child exclaims that the turkey is still alive.⁶⁰⁴ Other visual representations of Black men include a block, reproduced more than once with different headings, of three Black boys laughing. One heading, “Types—Black Face,” makes a typographic pun on Blackletter typefaces that are generally characterized by a dense and dark appearance; taking this into consideration, the pun also works as a metaphor for thinking about the boys’ darkly pigmented skin (Figure 26).⁶⁰⁵ Jonathan Senchyne makes the argument that discourses of print and racial legibility frequently informed each other throughout the nineteenth century. The page, as a “field of white spaces and black marks [...] carried racial significance for writers, readers, and print practitioners” in antebellum America, where the black marks – ink – were frequently characterized as a racially-coded stain that was either unwanted or threatened

⁶⁰⁴ Will Carleton, “Shadrach’s Thanksgiving,” *CPP* 3, no. 11 (November 1894): 22; James D. Hart, “Carleton, Will,” in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1995, online 2004), Oxford Reference.

⁶⁰⁵ Illustration captioned “‘Ticked to Death,’” *CPP* 2, no. 5 (May 1893): 20; Illustration captioned “Types—Black Face,” *CPP* 4, no.3 (March 1895): 21.

to consume the purity of the whiteness of the paper. In this case, it is the blackness of the style (density and name) as well as the ink that would be rolled on it that is invoked.⁶⁰⁶

The absence of criticism of Black typographical workers in the trade's journals is unsurprising, particularly considering Black newspaper workers' precarious position in society and in the periodical press. What the history of the production of *The Voice of the Fugitive* and *The Provincial Freeman* reaffirm for print scholars is that Black newspaper proprietors and workers in Canada did not see their productions as lacking skill. By all accounts, the appearances of the *Voice* and the *Freeman* are unoffensive. They are printed well-enough to be read and contain a variety of materials, including advertisements and poetry, not unlike other provincial papers of the period. The establishment and frequent shuttering of Black newspapers and periodicals in Canada into the twentieth century was not due to a lack of ability, know-how, or even equipment. Winks' claim that the story of Black periodicals in Canada was one of "persistent [...] failure" does not acknowledge that there were structural hurdles that made longevity and success difficult to achieve.⁶⁰⁷ Rather, what was lacking was monetary support⁶⁰⁸ and an educated, literate audience. As Jane Rhodes observes, all newspapers were dependent on

⁶⁰⁶ Jonathan Senchyne, "The Whiteness of the Page: Racial Legibility and Authenticity" in *The Intimacy of Paper in Early and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), 127, 128-36.

⁶⁰⁷ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 402.

⁶⁰⁸ The financial position of the *Voice of the Bondsman* was entirely different than its contemporaries. The primary difference between the *Bondsman* and Bibb and Shadd's papers, however, being the whiteness of the *Bondsman*'s proprietorship and the privilege and financial independence that accompanies it. Offering the paper for free, Linton argues that "we cannot be so *bothered* to ask for as subscription the 'dolings' meted out so often to those who work at the public Press, for the public.—We have some experience, and we write where we are known and where we can, and *dare* to say, what we say." In the same article, shortly after denouncing the poor financial support afforded to Black papers, Linton states that he does not accept money, thus enabling him to produce a paper free from influence or prejudice, a paper which tells "*the truth*." John James Edmonstoune Linton, proprietor, "To The Readers—To the Humane.," *Voice of the Bondsman* no. 1 (December 1856): n.p., <https://news.ourontario.ca/abolition/3611501/data>.

the financial loyalty of their readerships, and publishers could do little but issue pleas for payment if readers stopped paying or if their “interest waned.” The former was, unfortunately, a common ailment for newspapers throughout the century. But “this was especially true for black-owned periodicals,” Rhodes writes, since they often “relied on the small proportion of the black community that was literate and had the financial means to purchase subscriptions and/or advertising.” In America, “the only black newspapers that survived this period [...] were those with strong support from white abolitionists and philanthropists [...] or from established institutions.”⁶⁰⁹ By contrast, from the 1860s onward there were hardly any Black newspapers to speak of in Canada. As such, the journals’ lack of attention to Black newspapers or workers is disappointing but not surprising. White journeymen were aware that Black printers and compositors were working in their trades but, unlike with apprentices or white women, the trade discourse hinted at within the journals regarding Black workers is not overtly exclusionary. The inclusion of racist jokes, literature, and illustrations does not necessarily *exclude* Black workers from the shopfloor nor does it attack their skills. It does, however, other and further marginalize Black men, upholding the period’s racist ideologies. It also maintains the image of the ideal and imagined reader of the trade’s journals as a white journeyman for whom such inclusions are not offensive, but humorous. It is worth noting, however, that the absence and, where included, inaccurate representations of Black print culture are erasures or obstructions of Black print culture in Canada.

⁶⁰⁹ Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 100.

5.2 Indigenous Labour, Industrial Schools, and Printing Education

The history of printing in Canada is inseparable from the project of Canadian nation-building and, as Brendan Frederick R. Edwards reminds us, was “the vehicle of expression for European and settler-Canadian understanding, preconceptions, and inventions relating to the new world.”⁶¹⁰ Not only is printing related to the formation of structures of the Canadian federal government – the establishment of the Queen’s Printer, for example⁶¹¹ – the settler mobilities afforded to English and French printers were also closely related to the creation of Canada’s cities and provinces. As David Finkelstein writes, “English-speaking printers from Britain, North America, and elsewhere moved into British colonial spaces to participate in what has generally been termed ‘settler capitalism’, setting up businesses, engaging in labour and union politics, and creating the print culture infrastructures that sustained social, communal, and national communication and identity in such territories.”⁶¹² By virtue of their use as objects for the proliferation of the printing trade in Canada, typographical trade journals are tools of settler and national capitalisms whose inherent purpose is the privileging of European technologies, knowledges, and modes of production. Print and print culture were “significant tool[s] of colonial control in North America”⁶¹³ and, as such, the role and work of printing as it related to Indigenous communities in Canada cannot be ignored. This section explores the introduction of printing education programs at residential schools at the end of the century. I do this not necessarily to illustrate the ways that settler-made institutions forced

⁶¹⁰ Brendan Frederick R. Edwards, “Print Culture and the Reassertion of Indigenous Nationhood in Early-Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada,” in *Comparative Print Culture*, ed. Rasoul Aliakbari (Springer International Publishing, 2020), 226.

⁶¹¹ *Impressions: Stories of the Nation’s Printer, Early Years to 1900*, 6, 22, 27.

⁶¹² Finkelstein, *Movable Types*, 14.

⁶¹³ Edwards, “Print Culture and the Reassertion of Indigenous Nationhood,” 226.

assimilation and the erasure of Indigenous identities through print culture (though this is an unavoidable part of the discussion), but rather to illuminate the ways in which some settler journeymen perceived of these programs and their students as threats to their own trade identity.

In 1846, the superintendent of Indian Affairs proposed the establishment of manual labour schools in response to concerns raised by the Bagot Commission of 1842 that, as Jane Griffith summarizes, “no progress had been made in civilizing Indigenous peoples since 1830.” Relatedly, some church-affiliated residential schools founded printing training programs at the end of the century. Such initiatives were part of the larger assimilative project of religious institutions and British and Canadian government legislation of the period. Once such piece of legislation was, Griffith observes, the Act to Encourage Gradual Civilization of the Indians (1857). The Act declared that any Indigenous man over the age of 21 who was “able to speak, read and write either the english or the french language readily and well,” who had a basic education, good character, and was debt-free would be enfranchised under the Act and would, as a result, “no longer be deemed an Indian.” Residential schools thus employed printing as a tool through which language and education would be acquired at a young age, aiding in the government’s legislated mandate to erase Indigenous identities and assimilate Indigenous youth into settler culture.⁶¹⁴ The implications of this thinking are not only significant for Indigenous peoples, but for immigrants, as well. As Jody Mason notes, literacy in English (and, in particular, the literary education of immigrant labourers in Canada) was deeply

⁶¹⁴ Jane Griffith, *Words Have a Past: The English Language, Colonialism, and the Newspapers of Indian Boarding Schools* (University of Toronto Press, 2019), 14, 12; Bill No. 58, *An Act to encourage the gradual civilization of Indian Tribes in this Province, and to amend the Laws relating to Indians* (1857), https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_07030/2.

connected to citizenship in the early twentieth century, “a term that came to mean ‘Canadianization’ during the 1910s.”⁶¹⁵ Certainly the same logic applies to these printing programs at the end of the nineteenth century.

By 1884, the federal government had funded three industrial residential schools and the schools later began to set up printing programs. However, as Griffith remarks, printing education was supported more in principle than in fact by the Department of Indian Affairs. Although the Department provided some financial support, the schools relied on “access to a knowledgeable printing instructor, an enthusiastic principal, [and] hand-me-down equipment.” When such programs were successfully launched, they were, as Griffith describes, “charged sites of surveillance and labour,” wherein a student’s mastery of the English language and ability to perform the work of typesetting – which is linked to literacy (see Chapter 3) and civility – was morally evaluated. Griffith remarks that, in one case, a student whose work had many mistakes was perceived as bad and in need of closer surveillance.⁶¹⁶ Similar programs existed in the United States, most notably at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (Carlisle, Pennsylvania).⁶¹⁷

In Canada, printing programs taught hand-typesetting and printing and were typically reserved for boys; girls were mostly educated in domestic skills. The exception to this rule is the Kitamaat Home in British Columbia, which was an all-female school. As well as acting as the job shop for the schools’ bureaucratic demands, many industrial

⁶¹⁵ Mason, *Home Feelings*, xvii, 72, 70.

⁶¹⁶ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 14, 18, 25.

⁶¹⁷ Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Susan D. Rose, eds., *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 1, 19, 24, 36, 39, 229; Robert Warrior, “The Work of Indian Pupils: Narratives of Learning in Native American Literature,” in *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 95-142, ProQuest Ebook Central.

schools with printing programs produced school newspapers.⁶¹⁸ Griffith's monograph, *Words Have a Past*, is the only book-length work dedicated to a history and analysis of these newspapers in Canada, and this section is indebted to her work. She identifies six relevant papers produced at five institutions: *The Aurora* (Rupert's Land Indian Industrial School, Middlechurch, Manitoba); *The Canadian Indian* and *Our Forest Children: And What We Want to Do with Them* (Shingwauk Industrial Home, Sault Ste Marie, Ontario); *The Guide* (Battleford Indian Industrial School, Battleford, Saskatchewan); *Na-Na-Kwa: Or, Dawn on the Northwest Coast* (Kitamaat Home, Kitamaat, British Columbia); and *Progress* (Regina Industrial School, Regina, Assinaboia / Saskatchewan).⁶¹⁹ The Regina, Battleford, and Rupert's Land Schools all boasted that their newspapers had been set and printed by their students, whose labour was frequently acknowledged as necessary to their production.⁶²⁰ Some schools outsourced their printing. For instance, in Owen Sound, John Rutherford, father of Arthur Rutherford, proprietor of the *International Art Printer*, printed *Our Forest Children* and *The Canadian Indian*, the latter of which was "published under the Auspices of The Canadian Indian Research and Aid Society."⁶²¹

Although Griffith remarks that skills like hand typesetting were "fast becoming obsolete" by the end of the century, particularly as the machine typesetter took hold of

⁶¹⁸ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 25-6, 38-9,

⁶¹⁹ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 254, table 1.

⁶²⁰ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 36.

⁶²¹ Rev. E.F. Wilson, ed., *Our Forest Children*, 2, no. 6 (August 1888): 17, 20, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06666_18/3; Rev. E. F. Wilson and H. B. Small, eds., *The Canadian Indian*, 1, no.1 (October 1890): n.p., https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06250_1/2; Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1894* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1895), 150, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924100520646>. *The Canadian Indian* indicates that it was printed by John Rutherford in Owen Sound, however, the 1894 *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs* indicates that a student from the Battleford School, Gilbert Bear, "did a great part of the mechanical work in connection with the printing of the *Canadian Indian*."

the newspaper trade,⁶²² the work of hand-typesetting remained relevant to country printing – where mechanized equipment was too expensive and too much hassle to maintain without ready access to a technician – for some time. Additionally, even though these skills remained relevant for a time, one of the primary reasons that students were taught printing was to enable schools to produce their own printed materials and to assimilate Indigenous youth into settler print and literary cultures. To this point, some of the printing done at the Rupert’s Land School in Middle Church utilized newly acquired syllabic type.⁶²³ In general, the papers performed their implicit job of encouraging English-language education and sought to instill, either through English or syllabics, settler ideologies among Indigenous youth. They also perpetuated the proliferation of the residential school system.⁶²⁴ As J. A. Sinclair, Principal of the Regina Industrial School stated in the 1901 *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs*, the instruction in printing (in addition to carpentry, painting, glazing, and baking) “is followed in such a way as not only to teach those so disposed to learn trades, but so as to utilize the educational function of manual work. An effort is made to get pupils to think as much as possible by means of tools and materials.”⁶²⁵ To showcase the “successful” assimilative work of such programs, schools would “display their printing at fairs and in parades,” and would “exhibit students themselves” to demonstrate that Indigenous children were, like white children, able to acquire mechanical and literacy skills. Griffith notes that some

⁶²² Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 27.

⁶²³ Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1893* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1894), 105, [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b536205](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b536205).

⁶²⁴ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 27, 52-3.

⁶²⁵ Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30 1901* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1901), 374, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924100520398>.

schools sent samples of students' work, "such as its school's annual report and municipal lists" for evaluation at fairs; "Canadian Indian boarding schools – including Rupert's Land School, Shingwauk Home, Elkhorn School, and Battleford School – won several awards for examples of school work at [the 1893 Chicago World Fair], as did the Department of Indian Affairs."⁶²⁶ In the Report of the Deputy Superintendent of General Indian Affairs, Hayter Reed clearly acknowledges the civilizing mission of industrial education. Remarking on students' demonstration of their skill at the World Fair, he writes: "these children were born in tepees amid savage surroundings, and during the continuance of the Fair, day after day, they could be seen printing, making shoes, sewing, knitting, weaving and spinning."⁶²⁷

At their school newspapers, many boys were credited with skilled workmanship and several of them were given agency over the production of the newspapers. At Washakada Indian Home in Elkhorn, Manitoba, Jeremiah Cochrane, who worked on the School's paper, the *Advocate*, was credited with having "almost entire charge of the job work in the office, which is by no means small." In this shop, six boys learned printing; in particular, Miles Cochrane and Angus Prince were named as "two very expert compositors." Also considered an expert was "Dummy Nap-ia-mo-kin-ma," a deaf and mute boy who was taken from his Blackfoot community in 1891. Printing was not uncommon work for deaf people during the century, and he is described as "a marvel" (because of his disabilities) who had been working in the trade for three years. At the age of 17, he could "read, write, do sums" and is regarded as "a fine, strong, intelligent lad of

⁶²⁶ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 40-1.

⁶²⁷ *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1893*, xviii.

fine physique.”⁶²⁸ By the end of the century, the Elkhorn School boasted that their printing office was “in a like manner no longer under the control of the institution” with regular work being “done by the pupils.”⁶²⁹ A. J. McLeod, principal at the Regina School, noted in his report that after opening a printing office at the school, an instructor was employed for four months before “two of the boys who had no previous training in typesetting were competent to take full charge of the work, and the instructor’s services were dispensed with. Since that time ‘Progress,’ a semi-monthly school paper of twelve pages, has regularly appeared.” By the turn of the century, the “more experienced boys” acted as foremen in the printing office.⁶³⁰

Such programs – and perhaps the independence and work of their students – were points of contention for some journeymen printers. Only the Toronto Type Foundry’s organ, *The Imprint*, refers to the establishment of industrial schools at the end of the century. In March 1894, *The Imprint* indicates that the Foundry has furnished the printing department of the Rupert’s Land Indian Industrial School in Middle Church, Manitoba with type.⁶³¹ A few months later, in the Fall 1894 issue, *The Imprint* reports that the school had purchased the printing plant of *The Qu’Appelle Echo*, and that the printing program was designed to “initiate the young Indians into the mysteries of the ‘art

⁶²⁸ Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1895* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1896), 107, 127, [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b536207](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b536207); Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 38.

⁶²⁹ Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1898* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1899), 271, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924100520885>.

⁶³⁰ *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1895*, 135; Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30 1900*. Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1901), 383, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924100521008>.

⁶³¹ “Northwest Nuggets,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 9 (March 1894): 161.

preservative.” Although this inclusion seems to approve of such news, just down the page, *The Imprint* reports that there are local union concerns regarding the program:

[The] Winnipeg Typographical Union has taken in hand the Deaf and Dumb Institute, at Winnipeg, and the Indian Industrial School, at Middle Church, Man., claiming that by doing printing that rightfully belongs to those ‘in the trade’ they are going beyond limits. Circulars have been forwarded to the respective Ministers of the Crown and Local and Dominion representatives, calling their attention to what is being done, and asking their assistance in seeing that ‘the wrong is righted.’⁶³²

The 1895 *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs* signaled that local tradesmen were concerned about the economic implications of the Rupert’s Land School’s printing program. The report indicated that the school’s printing and blacksmithing outfits “are handicapped in the way of earning much by the opposition of local tradesmen, who complain that it interferes with their business. Care has been exercised that this should not be the case, but it is to be regretted that this means of reducing the expenses of these trades is thus cut of [sic].” These concerns were valid; one school, the Washakada Indian Home, reported in 1895 that their shop was doing “a great deal of job printing for the merchants, farmers and municipalities.” According to Griffith, the Rupert’s Land School “attempted to prevent direct competition by distinguishing its printing output from services offered by white townspeople [...], but inevitably the school could print ‘very little owing to much opposition from local tradesmen,’ who did not feel it fair to compete with ‘government-fed people’.”⁶³³

⁶³² “Northwest Nuggets,” *The Imprint* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1894): 6.

⁶³³ *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1895*, 73, 127; Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 60.

The language utilized by *The Imprint* – “doing printing that rightfully belongs to those ‘in the trade’” – has two implications. First, it references the perceived competition posed by the school’s printing program. Second, it attempts to affirm the trade’s skilled craft status by refusing to legitimize this training. By emphasizing the ownership of the work by “those ‘in the trade’,” the report insinuates that Indigenous peoples should not be permitted to work in the trade despite their experience with typesetting and printing. It also illustrates that some journeymen felt that such programs were an affront to the trade’s systems and traditions,⁶³⁴ and this position is especially compelling when one considers that settler printers in colonies were not only “desperate to keep in touch with their old world past for self-legitimation and craft respectability,” as this study clearly shows, “they were also acutely aware of the need to reshape their centuries-old, socio-cultural practices on new soil.”⁶³⁵

The reference to both the industrial school and the Deaf and Dumb Institute suggests that concerns about race were conflated with concerns about training regulation. This conflation was not without its contradictions, however. For instance, although *The Imprint*’s report denounces the program at the Deaf and Dumb Institute, disabled printers and compositors worked in and were sometimes celebrated members of the trade. For example, in June 1881, *The Printer’s Miscellany* published a short article on the work of S.S. Waterman, an engraver and compositor, who “has been paralyzed ever since he was born.” He is “remarkable” because he uses his teeth to hold his engraving tools and is celebrated for the fact that he sets type with his teeth. No mention is made of the adverse

⁶³⁴ “Northwest Nuggets,” *The Imprint* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1894): 6.

⁶³⁵ Shep, “Cultures of Print,” 184.

health effects of ingesting lead.⁶³⁶ Or, consider the fact that in 1879, *The Printer's Miscellany* called the Deaf and Dumb Institute at Halifax, Nova Scotia, where some students were learning printing, “an honor to humanity.”⁶³⁷ Fundamentally, however, these programs were organized outside of the union structure, which otherwise governed the printing education of fledgling tradesmen. In Canada, the structure of the trade's apprenticeship system was deeply rooted in British labour traditions and the challenge posed to its definitions of skill and membership by such printing training programs was a uniquely colonial one. By encouraging Indigenous youth to learn and work in the typographical trades, such programs threatened to circumvent or undermine the trade's already threatened apprenticeship system while also destabilizing its relationship to British tradition. By focusing on their training at industrial schools and their failure to complete a formal, union-sanctioned apprenticeship and not their race, the complaint decidedly characterizes Indigenous youth as “those outside of the trade,” much like other amateur or untrained labourers of the period. Certainly, the 1891 *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs* acknowledges the irregularity of the training provided at industrial schools. The printing instructor for the Rupert's Land Industrial School in Middlechurch, Manitoba remarks that ““it is difficult to compare the progress of these pupils with those **in regular printing offices**, owing to their imperfect knowledge of English, but there is no doubt that, taking the average pupil in both cases, the progress of our pupils is quite as rapid as that of **ordinary** printer-apprentices.””⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ “Setting Type with His Teeth,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 5, no. 12 (June 1881): 181.

⁶³⁷ “News of the Craft,” *The Printer's Miscellany* 4, no. 4 (October 1879): 55.

⁶³⁸ Emphasis added. Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1891* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1892): 114, [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b536203](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b536203).

Journeyman's concerns may also have been about Indigenous boys working in "regular printing offices" and newspaper shops.⁶³⁹ Schools frequently "boasted how printing prepared students for jobs" and some students from American and Canadian industrial schools did, in fact, find work in the trades.⁶⁴⁰ Griffith remarks that the papers' emphasis on (unpaid) student labour – particularly at the Regina School's *Progress* – illustrates how the production of newspapers was "proof" for religious organizations and the settler state that "students were transforming from supposedly unskilled and illiterate boys to those capable of working a machine and printing in English."⁶⁴¹ But some students, who learned printing outside of programs housed in industrial schools, were paid. At the Birtle Boarding School in Birtle, Manitoba, one student learned printing off-site:

As an illustration of what has been done at this school, which has not been in operation five years, an Indian boy from the Way-way-see-cappo's Band, who was given the name of Hugh McKay, was one of the first pupils. On entering this school he could not speak one word of English. He now devotes part of each day working in the local printing office [the Birtle *Eye Witness*], for which he receives a small salary, and the proprietors express themselves as well pleased with his work, so much so that they are willing at any time to give him constant employment and remunerate him sufficiently to meet his living expenses.⁶⁴²

According to the 1894 *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs*, the manager of the *Eye Witness* spoke highly of McKay's "tact, push and perseverance" and McKay allegedly invested a portion of his earnings in shares of the printing company. It is tempting to read McKay's success as an individual triumph; he trained as a printer and

⁶³⁹ *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1891*, 114.

⁶⁴⁰ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 59.

⁶⁴¹ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 40-1.

⁶⁴² *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1894*, 61; *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1893*, 56-7, 243.

was subsequently hired as one. However, even training conducted outside of school programs was a part of the assimilative aims of the school's mandate and government legislation. For J. A. Markle, Indian Agent, McKay's individual success also represented the success of Industrial Schools and legislation: it was "an indication of the possibilities of many of the Indian youths that are growing up, and I am fully satisfied that the Compulsory Education Act lately enacted was opportune and that it will be a blessing to many of these Indian youths."⁶⁴³ The 1897 *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs* indicated that senior student printers Miles Cochrane and Angus Prince were "quite sufficiently advanced to take positions in other offices and to earn their own living, and in fact are only waiting for suitable opportunities to do so, while others of the boys are rapidly following in their footsteps and becoming most efficient in their work." The report also indicated that a student printer from the Regina School was "working at good wages" in the offices of the *Regina Standard*.⁶⁴⁴

Other students would eventually come to work in newspaper shops after their time at the industrial schools. At the Battleford School, one student, Gilbert Bear "had sole charge" of the printing office and printed the school's paper, *The Guide*, by himself (or, possibly with some aid from another student, William Bear).⁶⁴⁵ Griffith points to evidence that Gilbert was considered so skilled that the editor of the *Saskatchewan Herald* called him "the smartest boy he has ever seen in learning the art of type

⁶⁴³ *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1894*, 61.

⁶⁴⁴ Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1897* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1898), 237, 272, [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b535921](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b535921).

⁶⁴⁵ *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1893*, 101, 186.

setting.”⁶⁴⁶ By 1894, Gilbert was employed at the Battleford school and was in charge of its print shop.⁶⁴⁷ He was later employed as a printer at the *Ottawa Citizen*, but this was not perceived as a success in the same way that McKay’s work was. According to Griffith, an 1897 report commissioned by Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, conducted by Martin Benson, from the Department’s education sector, argued that such printing programs as the one through which Gilbert had been trained “were wasted government money.” This was because, despite being employed at a big city newspaper, and “despite his talents,” Gilbert was only permitted to work nights and was paid below the union scale, earning only \$3.50 per week. His living expenses continued to be paid for by the Battleford School because he was, the Benson report explained, “excluded from the union and was ‘merely a printer’s devil’” and thus not considered a fully fledged journeyman. Gilbert faced prejudices at work and criticisms about his work ethic and ability to follow direction, a fact which, Griffith remarks, was rather suspect given Gilbert’s experience and previous successes. Griffith concludes by remarking that despite Gilbert’s talents and experience, he “could not shatter the larger white supremacy” of the trade while in Ottawa.⁶⁴⁸

It is unlikely that journeymen in Canada were truly threatened by Indigenous boys learning printing, given their lack of concern for Black printers and the absence of complaints within the trade’s literature on the work of Indigenous youth at the end of the century. Certainly, by the 1890s, the trade in Canada was far more preoccupied with the

⁶⁴⁶ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 61-2; letter from Hayter Reed quoted in Walter Julian Wasylow, “History of Battleford Industrial School for Indians” (Master’s thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1972), 129, <http://hdl.handle.net/10388/etd-03132008-114104>.

⁶⁴⁷ *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June 1894*, 150; Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 62.

⁶⁴⁸ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 31, 62-3.

invasion of machine typesetters that threatened to displace hand compositors (see Chapter 6). As such, there is little concrete evidence to suggest that Indigenous printers were a significant threat to white journeymen. Yes, they could be paid less, but how many Indigenous students became printers? There were relatively few printing programs in Canada and not a significant number of students in those programs. Thus, it is not likely that the white tradesmen perceived Indigenous printing education and the possibility of trained Indigenous printers in the labour market as a serious long-term threat to their economic status.

It would be a mistake, however, to suggest that Indigenous youth were exempted from the trade's correlation of race and skill. Griffith notes that "Gilbert's inability to find work represents the broader story of settler colonialism, where the ultimate goal was that Indigenous peoples vanish, not compete for jobs with white workers."⁶⁴⁹ Unlike Griffith, I do not interpret Gilbert Bear's exclusion from the trade as an act solely predicated on racism. Rather, I argue that race is only one element at play in the relationship between Indigenous compositors and their treatment at work; given many journeymen's insistence on the importance of education throughout the century, racism does not entirely explain white journeymen's reactions to Indigenous labour. From the perspective of the State, the Indigenous identities of boys who learned printing at residential schools *had* ostensibly vanished. Such programs assumed that Indigenous youth would be assimilated into settler culture through their training, and when they worked as printers, they were a very real part of settler print culture in Canada. As Robert Warrior writes, the few boys or girls who worked in the trade after their time in

⁶⁴⁹ Griffith, *Words Have a Past*, 64.

residential school were usually “the favored ones who were ‘representative’ of the goals of the teachers, administrators, and policy-makers behind the ideologies of the schools.”⁶⁵⁰ Their training encouraged them to seek jobs that further contributed to this settler infrastructure, and so some tried, sometimes supported all the while by their schools. As a result, it is entirely possible that some journeymen felt that Indigenous compositors were competing for their jobs. It is also possible that settler racism played a part in journeymen’s decisions about who to accept as legitimate labourers, as Indigenous boys faced racism and discrimination in their search for work. On the “new soil” of the Dominion of Canada,⁶⁵¹ recently divorced from Britain, settler compositors may have perceived that Indigenous youth were not only unfit to participate in the trade because of their training, but also because, despite their time at industrial school, they were still not British or European, and the skills (including literacy) that they acquired there, were not the same as was afforded to white boys who completed a formal apprenticeship.

The conditions of their training and the racism that Indigenous youth faced in the workplace are not mutually exclusive phenomena. In fact, it is precisely because of their race that Indigenous youth were trained in this way. Within the institution of the industrial residential school system, this training was a useful tool that greatly supported the government’s efforts to assimilate Indigenous youth into settler culture. Some journeymen and employers perceived that this training was adequate and that these Indigenous students, at least in their training, were equal to their white, formally trained

⁶⁵⁰ Robert Warrior, “Indigenous Publishing, Scholarly Editing, and the Digital Future,” in *Futures of Digital Scholarly Editing*, ed., Matt Cohen, Kenneth M. Price, and Caterina Bernardini (University of Minnesota Press, 2024), n.p., Manifold ebook Edition, 2025, <https://manifold.umn.edu/projects/futures-of-digital-scholarly-editing>.

⁶⁵¹ Shep, “Cultures of Print,” 184.

peers. For many other journeymen, the informality of their training meant that their work was as injurious as the work of women or runaways because they had not completed the requirements of formal apprenticeship. Thus, Indigenous youth gained the skills required to work in the trade, but the conditions of their training, brought about by virtue of their race, rendered them, in the eyes of some journeymen and the Union, unqualified and ineligible for membership. From this perspective, then, their work outside of the Union threatened to destabilize the trade's identity vis-à-vis race, an identity that, as has already been suggested, identified as white.

5.3 Chinese Labour and Anti-Chinese Rhetoric

White journeymen compositors also came into conflict with Chinese labourers. Jacob Remes observes that unions and printers (particularly in Toronto) generally “do not appear to have feared nonwhite competition for jobs.” However, the anti-Chinese racism and Orientalist ideologies that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century in Canada with the increased emigration of Chinese workers were a part of the trade's discussions of race.⁶⁵² As Finkelstein observes, the “Chinese Question” was “a general labour issue wrestled with in international trade journals” from the United States, America, and South Africa.⁶⁵³ The presence of anti-Chinese discourse and Orientalist ideology and iconography within the trade's journals is small, just as discussions of Black and Indigenous printing and printers in Canada received little-to-no coverage. The pieces that do emerge within the pages of *The Printer's Miscellany* and *The Canadian Printer and*

⁶⁵² Remes, “Movable Type,” 390.

⁶⁵³ Finkelstein, “Colonial Trade Identity,” 383.

Publisher, however, provide insights into the ways that some journeymen perceived the work and presence of Chinese people in the trade during a period when many settlers in North America encountered Asians for the first time.⁶⁵⁴

During the 1880s, an estimated 15,000 Chinese labourers arrived in Canada (mostly in British Columbia) to work on constructing the Western leg of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), addressing the shortage of labour necessary for the completion of the project. The employment of Chinese labourers had its advantages for exploitative employers. As Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock describe, employers perceived that Chinese labourers were “relatively easy to secure, were more servile than most other workers, and were willing to work at wages 30-50 per cent lower than those paid to white labourers.” In America, Chinese construction workers were likewise recruited to work on the transcontinental railway.⁶⁵⁵ The Chinese immigrants that came to Canada were recruited through labour agencies that paid for their passage, a debt that would be deducted from whatever wages they earned working on the railway. The debts were so high that even “after several years of employment, many workers found that they did not have enough savings to return to China, as they initially intended.” So, while some returned to China, many Chinese workers stayed in Canada, and they faced exclusionary legislative and racist social challenges that sought to Other them in their new home. Although Prime Minister John A. MacDonald acknowledged that the Chinese were fundamental to the successful erection of the CPR’s western leg, he and his government objected to their becoming permanent citizens once they had completed their work. Part

⁶⁵⁴ David Weir, *American Orient: Imagining the East from the Colonial Era Through the Twentieth Century* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 6, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁵⁵ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 95; Weir, *American Orient*, 6.

of the reasoning for this was the belief that the Chinese were unable to assimilate into settler culture due to their unfamiliarity with and distance from British ways. In the summer of 1885, when the Canada Pacific Railway was reaching completion, the Dominion government passed the Chinese Immigration Act, which “imposed a \$50 head tax on all Chinese immigrants, except for diplomats, students, tourists, and merchants, and it [disproportionately] limited the number of Chinese persons a ship could carry.” The government also passed the Electoral Franchise Act, which prohibited Chinese people – even those who were born in Canada or who were naturalized British subjects – from voting.⁶⁵⁶ David Weir remarks that once work on the American railroad had been completed, “the Chinese workers tried to enter other sectors of the labor market, they drew fire from the unions, which succeeded, with the aid of pressmen and politicians, in demonizing the Chinese as a threat to the American way of life.” Chinese labourers found work and accepted wages below union scale. In British Columbia, displeasure with the state of Chinese immigration was such that white settlers claimed that “the West was in danger of being overrun by Chinese immigrants whose moral depravity, poor hygiene, and willingness to work for low wages threatened the physical health and economic well-being of the white race.”⁶⁵⁷

It is unclear the degree to which Chinese men and women entered the typographical trades at the end of the nineteenth century in Canada, though they certainly did. For instance, Mary Chapman identifies that Chinese-Canadian author Edith Maude

⁶⁵⁶ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 95, 96, 98.

⁶⁵⁷ Weir, *American Orient*, 6; Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 111.

Eaton (Sui Sin Far) set type for the *Montreal Star* as a young woman in 1883.⁶⁵⁸

Typographical trade journals rarely mention Chinese workers and only make a few suspect remarks on the establishment of Chinese newspapers. In May 1894, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* briefly notes that a new, unnamed Chinese newspaper has been established in Canada.⁶⁵⁹ Possibly speaking about the same newspaper a couple of months earlier in March 1894, *The Imprint* reports that “the first Chinese paper in Canada has appeared at Vancouver. It is called the Globe-Democrat and is issued from the Ving-Wan Bo Printing and Publishing House, Chinatown, Vancouver. T. Jung Pentjea is the editor.” The article quotes from “an exchange, introducing the sheet to newspaperdom.” Rather than provide details about its proprietors or management, as was the norm for such announcements, the excerpt panders to racist stereotypes about the incivility of the Chinese and their proclivity for gambling. The excerpt reads:

‘For a year in Victoria and Vancouver vacant houses and fences have been covered with more or less important announcements, which served the purpose of a newspaper for the Celestials. Not long ago one of these announcements contained in large Chinese characters in every available space in Victoria, Chinatown, the following announcement: ‘Sheppard, newspaper man, Toronto, Canada, made the biggest possible winning at the Fan-Tan (Chinese lottery) to-day. He purchased a ten cent ticket, and by a succession of combinations won out \$200. Go and do likewise. Signed, Fan-Tan Lottery Company.’⁶⁶⁰

The excerpt undermines the seriousness of the establishment of a Chinese newspaper, if it was even true to begin with. My search has not found that a *Globe-Democrat* was published in Vancouver at the end of the century, but the timeline is about right. Paul

⁶⁵⁸ Mary Chapman, introduction to *Becoming Sui Sin Far: Early Fiction, Journalism, and Travel Writing by Edith Maude Eaton*, ed. Mary Chapman (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016), Introduction, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁵⁹ “Canada has now an Italian newspaper as well as a Chinese paper.,” *CPP* 3, no. 5 (May 1894): 6.

⁶⁶⁰ “Making Progress.,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 9 (March 1894): 159. I was unable to locate the original article quoted here.

Hjartarson remarks that “the first Chinese newspapers in Canada were established by political reformers and revolutionaries intent upon modernising China following its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5.” Possibly the earliest of such papers was the *Tih xin bao / Chinese Reform Gazette* launched in British Columbia by the Chinese Empire Reform Association in 1903.⁶⁶¹

Despite a lack of evidence to suggest that Chinese men were making big moves in the typographical trades at the end of the century, white journeymen across North America leaned into the period’s transnational anti-Chinese politics. The “Chinese Question” began to propagate in ITU discussions in the early 1880s and continued into the twentieth century; in 1887, the ITU even passed a resolution demanding “the enforcement of existing laws to prohibit Chinese immigration.”⁶⁶² In Canada, some journeymen felt that Chinese labourers posed some threat to their economic position and labour status. In the July 1879 issue of the *Miscellany*, a correspondent from Stratford, Ontario wrote about “a Chinese cheap labourer—a *rat*—representing himself as a reporter, [who] recently obtained a temporary sit[uation] in one of the offices [t]here, doing odd chores.” The complaint is not necessarily about the fact that the worker was Chinese, but rather, as was the case for Lewis Henry Douglass, that he was working for wages under the union scale – a position that undermined the trade’s economic status. The correspondent writes that, due to this worker’s willingness to accept lower pay, “two good men, residents of the town, were thrown out of their places. I think it is about time the union question, which was proposed in the *Miscellany* some time ago, was brought

⁶⁶¹ Paul Hjartarson, “Print Culture, Ethnicity, and Identity,” in *History of the Book in Canada*, vol. 2, 1840-1918, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 53.

⁶⁶² Tracy, *History*, 342, 359, 687, 400.

into working order, to secure a slight measure of protection against such unprincipled beings.”⁶⁶³ The union question to which this correspondent refers was likely the one discussed in a Letter to the Editor submitted by Joseph A. Labadie from Detroit, Michigan and published in February 1879 that argued against sources of labour competition in the trades (Figure 27). Labadie speaks primarily to the threat of convict labour, arguing that while he believes that educating convicts in the trades is a good thing, what is “wrong” is competition. Labadie also equates the labour supplied by convicts to the labour supplied by Chinese workers; they are, in essence, equally bad:

Competition being wrong, why not do away with it altogether?

Abolish convict competition and we come in contact with Chinese competition.

The competitive system is a human curse!

Substitute the co-operative system in its stead and the convict and Chinese competitive evil will be heard of no longer.

Labadie encourages his fellow tradesmen to engage in politics and demands that if union measures cannot protect workers and abolish competition of this kind, the trade should take measures to “*abolish it anyhow*.”⁶⁶⁴ By the end of the century what little detail is found in the journals suggests that the relationship of Ontario journeymen to Chinese workers was slightly more amicable. In October 1895, the *International Art Printer* announced that the London (Ontario) Typographical Union “has resolved to fine any member \$1 who patronizes a Chinaman ; and \$2 for a second offence.”⁶⁶⁵ Such a

⁶⁶³ “Stratford Scraps,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 4, no. 1 (July 1879): 7.

⁶⁶⁴ Joseph A. Labadie, “Convict Labor,” letter to the editor, *The Printer’s Miscellany* 3, no. 8 (February 1879): 248.

⁶⁶⁵ “A Month Condensed,” *The International Art Printer* 1, no. 8 (October 1895): 167.

resolution indicates that there may have been a number of Chinese typographical workers in London, Ontario and that they were considered valuable members of the local trade.

One of the ironies of this period is that while anti-Chinese policies and ideologies were widely accepted and practiced by whites in North America, the period also saw an increasing “enthusiasm for things Asian or ‘Oriental.’”⁶⁶⁶ In France, *japonisme* – the craze for all things Japanese – surged in the second half of the century and the aesthetic principles found in Japanese art captivated French artists, writers, and intellectuals. British artists were equally as influenced by Japanese art. The influence of Japanese art and aesthetics on the Western fin-de-siècle Art Nouveau movement is “readily apparent,” Elwood Hartman writes, especially “when one takes note of the sinuous curves, strong rhythms, animal and vegetable motifs” that characterized its aesthetics. According to Eleonora Sasso, “the spread of an Oriental mania [...] was almost unstoppable,” not only influencing art and literature, but Victorians’ “conducts, gestures and behaviours which sometimes were irrational and absurd”; she gives the examples of Ford Maddox Brown installing a Turkish bath at home and Dante Gabriel Rossetti adding a Japanese salamander to “the exotic menagerie at his house in Cheyne Walk.” Additionally, “Oriental paraphernalia” and goods – such as “tea, opium, ceramics, chinoiserie, Indian silks” – “entered Britain through imperial trade” and were widely available in London.⁶⁶⁷ Even the aesthetics of the printing trades in Britain and North America shifted to

⁶⁶⁶ Meghan C. Thomas, “Orientalism,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed June 20, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/science/Orientalism-cultural-field-of-study>.

⁶⁶⁷ Elwood Hartman, “Japonisme and Nineteenth-Century French Literature,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 18, no. 2 (1981): 147, 148, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40246249>; Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and Nineteenth-Century Japan* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2003; digital printing 2006), Preface, ProQuest Ebook Central; Eleonora Sasso, *Late Victorian Orientalism : Representations of the East in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Art and Culture from the Pre-Raphaelites to John la Farge* (Anthem Press, 2020): Introduction, ProQuest Ebook Central.

incorporate Oriental motifs. Artistic printing was a divisive typographic style and aesthetic movement that gained momentum in and after the 1870s. The influence of Oriental art (in particular, the inclusion of motifs like “storks, bamboo screens, and fans”) was an important characteristic of the movement’s first phase.⁶⁶⁸ The *International Art Printer* may be associated with the Artistic Printing movement, and advertisements in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* are printed in the style. However, by the time they were published in the mid-1890s, the influence of Oriental art had significantly lessened. The aesthetics had shifted toward an emphasis on elaborate rule work, ornamentation, panels, bands, and pictorial vignettes.⁶⁶⁹

Although the printing found in the trade’s journals by the end of the century was not deeply influenced by Oriental aesthetics, one example of Orientalism in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* sheds some light on the ways that printers engaged with racist representations of Chinese people in their trade literature. The full-page spread dedicated to a poem, “TING-A-LING TING,” illustrated by René Bull (Irish-born British cartoonist, illustrator, and war artist known for drawing cartoons for magazines, including the London-based *Printers’ Pie*) is indicative of the period’s transnational Orientalism (Figure 28).⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁸ Young, *The Rise and Fall of the Printers’ International Specimen Exchange*, 2-3; Vivan Ridler, “Artistic Printing: A Search for Principles,” *Alphabet and Image* no. 6 (January 1948): 4.

⁶⁶⁹ Ridler, “Artistic Printing,” 4; John Southward, *Modern Printing: A Handbook for the Practices and Principles of Typography and the Auxiliary Arts*, Section II (London: Raithby, Lawrence & Company, Limited, 1910), 86.

⁶⁷⁰ “TING-A-LING TING,” *CPP* 5, no. 2 (February 1896): 32; Mark Bryant, ed, “Bull, René (1872-1942),” in *Dictionary of Twentieth Century British Cartoonists and Caricaturists* (Ashgate, 2000), 42; John Mark Ockerbloom, ed., “Printers’ Pie,” The Online Books Page, accessed March 3, 2025, <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=printerspie>.

“TING-A-LING TING” is the most striking and blatant example of Orientalism found in any Canadian typographical trade journal throughout the century. The poem and its title are printed in distinctly “chop suey” or “chopstick” typefaces. Such fonts emerged at the end of the nineteenth century in America; Paul Shaw points to “Mandarin,” a face produced by the Cleveland Type Foundry in 1883, as the origin of this class of typeface. He notes that such typefaces were likely not terribly popular before Chinese people began immigrating to the United States in the 1860s. Thus, as Anne Quito remarks, it is unsurprising that this style of face emerges in “an era when Orientalism coursed feverishly through the West.” The language of this class of typeface is that of a racist “typographical shortcut for ‘Asianness’.”⁶⁷¹ The composition of the text and images around “TING-A-LING TING” echo this approach by freely mixing Chinese and Japanese references. “TING-A-LING TING,” is a narrative poem that tells the story of how “Ting-a-Ling Ting,” a Japanese “beauty” married one of her lovers, “Tan-Chou,” and thwarted the other, “Ping Pong.” Ting-a-Ling Ting is characterized as a mystic woman whose fate is connected to “the birds of Japan” that “sing ‘Ting-a-Ling, Ting-a-Ling’” while sitting on “japonica spray” and the final stanza connects the tale to Japan:

Then music & melody bring
 From the land where the little birds sing
 “Pingy Pong with his ‘Ring a Ting Ting,’
 Tan-Chou & the Sweet Ting a Ling.”

⁶⁷¹ “TING-A-LING TING,” *CPP* 5, no. 2 (February 1896): 32; Angela Riechers, “Evoking Memories: Communicating via Memory in Design,” *Print*, July 10, 2015, <https://www.printmag.com/design-inspiration/evoking-memories-communicating-via-memory-in-design/>; Paul Shaw, “Stereo Types,” *Print*, June 17, 2009, https://www.printmag.com/design-resources/stereo_types/; Jeff Yang, “Is Your Font Racist?,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2012, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-SEB-70508>; Anne Quito, “Karate, Wonton, Show Fun: The end of ‘chop suey’ fonts,” *CNN*, April 8, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/chop-suey-fonts-hyphenated/index.html#:~:text=These%20%E2%80%9Cchop%20suey%20fonts%2C%E2%80%9D,later%20named%20Mandarin%2C%20in%201883.>

The poem tells of how “little Ping Pong” with his “plantations of tea” proposes to Ting-a-Ling Ting; she, “thinking of teas,” mistakenly “answered ‘Yes’”. When he “refused to do battle” with Tan-Chou – who was “blue-blooded & rather swell” “hard up as hard up could be” – over their engagement, “the maid changed her mind & decamped with Tan-Chou.” Denied by Ting-a-Ling Ting, Ping Pong is overcome with rage:

He swore with a Japanese swear
To eat nothing further nor put off his shoes
Until he’d beheaded the pair.

He fails to do this and kills himself instead.⁶⁷²

Despite the fact that the tale is supposedly one of Japan, the iconography that surrounds the text is overwhelmingly Chinese and reflects Western perceptions of Chinese men, most significantly via the Chinese Queue (sometimes referred to with the derogatory/common name, the Chinese braid).⁶⁷³ The Chinese Queue was imported by the Manchus “when they invaded China in 1644.” According to Rachel K. Bright, “from the earliest days of modern interactions between Europeans and Chinese, Europeans were mesmerised by the braid hairstyle. It became a representation of Chinese superstition, as well as a visually striking feature ripe for caricature.” The style became “a physical symbol of one’s gendered and national identity” and “the loss of it could cause considerable social distress and ostracism.” She notes that the queue “was often singled out for special mention in descriptions of the Chinese in the nineteenth century” and that Chinese men’s lack of facial hair was seen as “a moral and racial failing,” whereas

⁶⁷² “TING-A-LING TING,” *CPP* 5, no. 2 (February 1896): 32.

⁶⁷³ Efforts have been made to identify the objects and imagery illustrated, but the author welcomes any corrections to ensure the accuracy of this discussion.

“European and American hairiness was held up as signifying ‘physical and moral strength, manly dignity, a higher state of culture, and individual freedom.’” “The apparent inability of Chinese men to grow beards,” Bright writes, “indicated a racial and moral inability to be proper men. This notion was exacerbated by the queue, which was deemed ‘unnaturally feminizing.’”⁶⁷⁴ It is thus unsurprising that “little Ping Pong,” drawn through the Western gaze of Irish artist René Bull, wears an untamed and flowy queue and a long wispy mustache. This, in combination with his unwillingness to fight and his inability to follow through with his plans to kill Tan-Chou and Ting-a-Ling Ting render him effeminate and lacking in manliness. By contrast, “blue-blooded” and “hard” Tan-Chou has short hair (though it does not appear in a Western style) and is clean-shaven. It is Tan-Chou, who more closely resembles Western standards of manliness, and not the effeminate Ping Pong, that dominates the tale and wins Ting-a-Ling Ting.⁶⁷⁵

The implications that Chinese men are effeminate is important in terms of the labour conflict I have described above. The fear among nineteenth-century compositors that their trade might become effeminate was real, given attempts to associate hand composition (and eventually the work of machine typesetters) with women. As white male journeymen grappled with their trade’s identity as a masculine craft, concerns about the fragility of this identity were, perhaps, exacerbated by the threat of Chinese men, who were generally not perceived as manly. Bright writes that in the United States, Australia and Canada there were attempts made “to tax the hairstyle [...] as a way to discourage Chinese migrants” and, as Chinese men increasingly immigrated to the West, “depictions

⁶⁷⁴ Rachel K. Bright, “Migration, Masculinity, and Mastering the Queue,” *Journal of World History* 28, no. 3 & 4 (2017): 560-61, 558, 563, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26537622>.

⁶⁷⁵ “TING-A-LING TING,” *CPP* 5, no. 2 (February 1896): 32.

of the queue were directly linked to fears of *real* Chinese men.”⁶⁷⁶ The poem’s inclusion in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* does not explicitly signal that white journeymen were afraid of the influx of Chinese men into their trades, as was sometimes the case in *The Printer’s Miscellany*. It does, however, ridicule the effeminate Chinese man while upholding the masculine one, a move that echoes the trade’s gendered ideologies at the end of the century.

When all these pieces from across *The Printer’s Miscellany* and *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* are considered together, the implication is not necessarily that journeymen feared greatly that their jobs would be taken by Chinese men, or that their craft status would be jeopardized by the work of unqualified Chinese men. Rather, it demonstrates, again, the ways in which the trade in Canada conceived of its racial identity as white. This is especially true when one considers the fact that the qualities attributed to Chinese men at the end of the nineteenth century were qualities that were incompatible with compositors’ trade identity, which was shifting in the face of structural and technological change.

5.4 Summary

In examining the trade’s journals in relation to race and race-making, I have tried to provide some insights into Canadian journeymen’s relationship with racialized labourers. In doing so, I have demonstrated that the journals – particularly those published at the end of the century – employed racist literary materials and images and

⁶⁷⁶ Bright, “Migration, Masculinity, and Mastering the Queue,” 564, 565.

that there is some evidence that journeymen, through their journals, were tracking the activities of racialized workers. I have also demonstrated that while white printers may not have frequently or overtly expressed racist ideologies regarding the typographical trades, the trade journals were sites in which journeymen participated in the period's anti-Black, anti-Chinese, and settler-colonial discourses.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the journals were instrumental in the trade's normalization of typesetting work as the labour of white men and that whiteness was an important component of settler compositors' conceptualizations of skill. The infrequent attention to racialized workers, and the journals' privileging of white/settler print production, reaffirms the implied suggestion that the space of the journals and, by extension, the space of the composing room, were white spaces. Although the journals do not completely ignore the work of racialized typographical workers, they do not meaningfully engage with them or their histories, as they do the work and history of white settler printing in Canada. Thus, the journals in and of themselves may reflect the demographics of the Canadian typographical trade throughout the century, but they are by no means truly representative of all the typographical labour and production occurring across the Dominion.

Given the dearth of information on racialized typographic labour in Canada, specifically, I have framed this analysis with histories that expand the discussion of racialized typographical labourer beyond the pages of the trade's journals and within their local, national, or transnational contexts. These contexts demonstrate the ways in which it might be dangerous to take the journals' recounting of trade history at face value. Although this study often privileges the journals as a medium through which print

scholars might better understand the printing trade in nineteenth-century Canada, the trade and trade culture that is found in them is that of the white settler printer. Clearly, in America and in Canada, there were Black, Indigenous, and Chinese typographical workers. Their relative absence from the trade's literature may not necessarily be malicious or premeditated, but it is evidence of the way that the trade's labour ideologies were racially informed.

Chapter 6: Craft, Masculinity, and the Mechanization of Typesetting

One of the most significant changes in the newspaper pressroom during the nineteenth century was the adoption of web-fed rotary presses and the shift from steam to electric power at the end of the century. By the early- to mid-1890s, motors had been largely adopted in Canadian pressrooms, with city printers almost all exclusively running on electricity. While the new presses “greatly increased productivity in the pressroom, composition remained an unprofitable but necessary burden on the employing printer” because human hand compositors could not set type fast enough to match the speed of the new power presses.⁶⁷⁷ Across the Atlantic, composition had become a “bottleneck in the production process.” Compositors simply could not keep up with the pace of the printing side that now used rotary, cylinder, and web presses that increased the rate of production.⁶⁷⁸ Thus, as a desire to cut costs and make a greater profit from newspapers grew in the increasingly competitive newspaper market, the second half of the nineteenth century saw people investing in and inventing numerous typesetting machines. Walker Rumble writes that “solving the typesetting bottleneck” imposed by the mechanization of printing “promised fabulous riches.” For example, according to Rumble, Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) “famously” “plow[ed] the proceeds of *Huckleberry Finn* into a machine called the Paige Typesetter,” and an “exasperated editorialist” for the *New York World* wrote about his disbelief that a functional and efficient solution to the bottleneck had not yet been invented, offering that the paper would issue “a half-million-dollar prize

⁶⁷⁷ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 58, 63-66.

⁶⁷⁸ Burr, “‘That Coming Curse,’” 350.

for a successful composing machine.”⁶⁷⁹ But the invention of an efficient machine that could truly replace a human compositor was not straightforward. “By 1855 printers and inventors had already been trying to mechanize the process [of typesetting] for a while” and by the end of the nineteenth century more than 1,500 patents for machine compositors had been registered in the United States alone.⁶⁸⁰ Bryan Dewalt identifies that around 200 inventions “emerged from this period of innovation” and that inventors generally pursued one of the following concepts of design: they designed “machines that set foundry type” (that is, already cast type sorts, as if from a case) and “machines that assembled matrices from which types or lines were cast,” known as linecasters.⁶⁸¹

Machines that set foundry type made up most of the first iterations of machines trying to solve the typesetting bottleneck problem. In America, one such machine was the Alden Typesetter, “hatched” by Timothy Alden in 1857, the same year that he died. According to Rumble, the Alden Typesetter “got nowhere” under the charge of Alden’s cousin “until the company stopped trying to persuade people how fast it was—how ‘smart’ it was—and started convincing employers that women could run it.” When a new and improved version of the machine was launched in 1865 the company “fully embraced the sales potential of women” by hiring women to demonstrate it. In doing so, they followed employers’ leads as “newspapers such as the *New York World* were obviously feminizing their work forces.” The *World* sent Augusta Lewis to “test the cost alternative of the Alden typesetting machine”; she mastered and “displayed it in the Alden

⁶⁷⁹ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 57; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 45, 46, 60.

⁶⁸⁰ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 15, 16. For more detailed information on the history of machine typesetters and the various kinds invented, see John S. Thompson, *History of Composing Machines: A Complete Record of the Art of Composing Type by Machinery* (Chicago: Inland Printer Company, 1904), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/iau.31858047477702>.

⁶⁸¹ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 66.

showrooms” to international visitors.⁶⁸² The employment of women on typesetting machines was a problem for journeymen throughout the end of the century, as I discuss in more detail below. But foundry setting machines, including the Alden, had mechanical problems that discouraged shops from adopting them. First, they had problems with justification, the process of spacing words appropriately to achieve the desired line spacing. By the mid-century, no one had developed a typesetting machine that could justify on its own; until “someone figured out a way to tell a machine how to get the spacing right,” Rumble writes, “justification required a second printer working in tandem with the machine operator, a worker whose sole function was to justify the lines of type,” thereby defeating the machines’ whole purpose to be labour-saving. Despite the many attempts to come up with a successful machine, by the 1850s no one had successfully made a machine that could justify type by itself. Meanwhile, “a competent hand compositor did it routinely as he set type.” The second problem with early typesetters was the redistribution of sorts back into their typecase once printed. Compositors did this regularly; with type being finite, it was important that compositors replenished their typecases to set new forms once the already set forms had been printed and were no longer needed.⁶⁸³

At the end of the century, machines setting foundry type were still being used. The machine invented by Joseph Thorne in 1880 – the improved form of this machine later became known was the Simplex or Unitype – was the most successful in Canada and the United States.⁶⁸⁴ But devising a machine that could perform all the necessary

⁶⁸² Rumble, *The Swifts*, 45, 46, 55-6, 57, 65-6.

⁶⁸³ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 49, 50.

⁶⁸⁴ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 69.

functions and, in particular, distribution, “vexed everyone,” Rumble writes, except Ottmar Mergenthaler.⁶⁸⁵ Between 1884 and 1890, German-American inventor Ottmar Mergenthaler, who trained as a watch-maker, invented the most famous and most successful linecaster of all time: the Linotype Machine. His machine was an “unprecedented” invention that “steamroll[ed] the composing machine market.”⁶⁸⁶ Employing existing technologies such as “a keyboard, an overhead magazine, a typesetting mould, and notches for distribution,” the Linotype “reused permanent matrices for casting lines of type.”⁶⁸⁷ And, as Rumble writes, Mergenthaler’s “genius” was “not in devising a machine that could set and distribute type, but in devising one that avoided distribution altogether by melting down and reusing the metal,”⁶⁸⁸ eliminating the need to store mass amounts of typesets, as is needed for hand typesetting and when using machine typesetters setting foundry type.

In the Dominion of Canada, the evolution of typesetting technology was largely monopolized by foreign companies. According to Dewalt, “Canadian firms built typesetting machines and some small presses and bindery equipment according to American designs” but most type and presses were imported from abroad, and from about 1910 onward, “American makers also monopolized the Canadian business in typesetting machines.” Two of the Linotype’s early Canadian competitors were the Rogers Typograph (1890) and the Monoline (1892), both of which were manufactured in Canada. The machines similarly employed reusable matrices, cast lines of type, and could justify the line using the keyboard. The Canadian machines were smaller, lighter, simpler,

⁶⁸⁵ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 50.

⁶⁸⁶ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 66, 69; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 51.

⁶⁸⁷ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 69.

⁶⁸⁸ Rumble, *The Swifts*, 50.

and the Typograph, specifically, did not require power to operate. These competitors were popular with small newspaper offices at the turn of the century since they were cheaper. But this innovation marketplace was governed by national trade politics and the Canadian-made linecasters were “barred from the United States for infringement on Mergenthaler patents.” After Mergenthaler’s patents expired, several American competitors introduced machines similar to the Linotype, incorporating some modifications and improvements. The most important of these machines were the Linograph (1912), a small machine popular in country offices, and the Intertype (1913).⁶⁸⁹

By the spring of 1894, over 80 typesetting machines were in use across Canada: Hamilton (10), Montreal (15), Ottawa (11), Toronto (33), Winnipeg (1), Vancouver (7), Victoria (4). Although a significant amount of scholarship on the impact of machine typesetters on the newspaper industry focuses on the Linotype, as it became the dominant machine at the end of the nineteenth century in America, Dewalt argues that this was not necessarily the case in Canada. Data collected by the ITU indicated that the Linotype was “by far the most commonly used typesetting machine in North America” by the turn of the century (4568 out of 5000 machines in operation in 1901 were Linotypes). However, Dewalt asserts that “these figures are misleading” in the Canadian experience. In fact, the Toronto dailies, the *Mail*, the *Empire*, and the *Globe* were the first to use machine typesetters in Canada in 1891, all of which were Typographs, though Linotypes were used later in the 1890s on Canadian newspapers.⁶⁹⁰ The Typograph and Monoline, which

⁶⁸⁹ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 57-8, 69.

⁶⁹⁰ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 70, 71; “Craft Notes,” *CPP* 2, no. 5 (May 1893): 12.

could not be sold in the United States, were “readily available in Canada.” Dewalt notes that the ITU statistics were “gathered only from centers where union locals existed, thus missing many country and small-town printers,” who were more likely to use the Typograph, Monoline, Thorne, or Simplex.⁶⁹¹

There was not necessarily an immediate mass panic regarding the invention and use of machine typesetters and the possibility of their displacement of human labour. Rumble writes that “neither union officials nor shopfloor journeymen [...] paid much attention to machinery before the mid-1880s.”⁶⁹² When they did, they were often skeptical of the viability of the technology. For instance, in January 1877, *The Dominion Printer* reports on the Westcott type casting and setting machine, and is suspicious of its success, noting that while Ottawa compositor George Drummond exhibited the machine, he did not show it “in operation.” In another instance, *The Dominion Printer* includes a piece on Mackie’s steam-driven type composing machines which are reported on rather neutrally.⁶⁹³ In 1878, *The Printer’s Miscellany* circulates a piece “commenting on the possibility of the type-setting machine becoming utilized” in newspaper shops. The article is indifferent about the machines, arguing that “printers can be no worse off than those engaged in other branches of industry where machinery has taken the place of manual labor.” The writer remarks that machine typesetters may, in fact, “prove a real blessing in disguise to the printing profession” and allow the trade to distinguish between skilled craftsmen and others: “the best men will be retained to assist in those matters something above mechanical skill; the spoiled ploughboys will find their true sphere in

⁶⁹¹ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 71.

⁶⁹² Rumble, *The Swifts*, 145.

⁶⁹³ “Type-Setting Machines.,” *The Dominion Printer* 3, no. 1 (January 1877): 2; “MACKIE’S TYPE COMPOSING MACHINES.,” *The Dominion Printer* 3, no. 2 (April 1877): 3.

agriculture or cement-mixing, and will accordingly become happy men and useful.”⁶⁹⁴ In 1881, the *Miscellany* republished a piece from the *London Stationer and Printer* that cautions that the machines are more trouble than they’re worth because “they must be kept in constant use, or they will sustain injury by idleness and involve a great loss on original outlay.” The machines will only be able to produce “plain work—where the letters of one size follow each other in the usual ‘newspaper’ succession, without the introduction of braces, two-line letters, or fancy lines of any kind. These, therefore, would have to be put in afterwards by hand.”⁶⁹⁵

Conflicts over the machines’ capabilities and the journeymen’s skills persisted into the turn of the century and the trade’s journals played an important role in mediating the transnational conflicts regarding the machine typesetter. While early critics of typesetting machines played with the possibility of, but were ultimately skeptical of the viability of, the machines becoming shop mates, in the mid-1880s, journeymen began to be alerted to the fact that machine typesetters were “intruding themselves upon the trade and public attention.”⁶⁹⁶ The widespread use of machine typesetters was a phenomenon that affected compositors, employers, and equipment sellers differently. At the end of the century, the several typographical trade journals being produced in Canada by, for, and representing the interests of these different groups illustrate the trade’s complicated relationship with typesetting innovation. Oscillating between characterizing the machines as friend and/or foe, the discourse and narratives around machine typesetters found in the trade’s journals illuminate the complexity of this conflict. For many journeymen, the

⁶⁹⁴ “One of our contemporaries...,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 2, no. 8 (February 1878): 190.

⁶⁹⁵ “Composing Machines.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 12 (June 1881): 183.

⁶⁹⁶ “Composing Machines.,” *The Printer’s Miscellany* 5, no. 12 (June 1881): 183.

machines were not purely antagonistic, though they were that, too. Beyond arguing that the machines were bad because their efficacy prompted employers to save on labour, employ non-union labour, compromise trade union structures, and generally displace workers, journeymen also argued that the machines were bad because they could not produce the same quality of work as them. And, while employers attempted to draw parallels between machine typesetters and women's work, journeymen opted to redefine the labour of operating machine typesetters as masculine and skilled to hold onto the labour identity of journeymen hand compositors that had been unsettled by the introduction of a technology designed to make them obsolete.

6.1 To be or not “to be found in the ranks of our union”⁶⁹⁷: Operating the Machine Typesetter

What made the Mergenthaler Linotype and other Canadian machines earth-shatteringly monumental for type composition at the end of the century was not just the fact of their widespread adoption in newspaper shops across North America, but their effectiveness and speed and, as a result, their volatile relationship with the ITU and union journeymen compositors. For many compositors, the machines were another tool utilized by employers to make newspaper production more efficient; in this capacity, they posed a serious threat to journeymen's craft and economic statuses. For employers, this equipment promised to finally achieve the labour-saving scheme that their earlier attempts to employ women and amateur labour could not. One aspect of this trade

⁶⁹⁷ Tracy, *History*, 454.

conflict was the economics of the machines, which was positive for employers and negative for workers. The other was journeymen's concerns about who was operating the machines and the skill or qualifications of those operators, even though they themselves essentially had no qualifications, having never operated the new machine typesetters. These concerns were fundamentally linked.

The trade's unions battled employers and opposing unions and labourers for the right to position journeymen compositors as machine operators. In 1889, the ITU enacted minor legislation that enforced gatekeeping controls over the machines, ordering that "in order to meet the introduction of typesetting machines in all offices within the jurisdiction of the International where typesetting machines were used, practical printers only should be employed to operate them, and subordinate unions were instructed to regulate the scale of wages on such machines." Indeed, as the industry increased the use of machine typesetters, in 1891 a "special committee of investigation" found that union printers were "beginning to awaken to the possibilities of the typesetting machine." Given the economic implications of this situation – that the use of these machines would result in fewer people needing to be employed to do the same work – the committee urged that it would benefit the ITU "to enact such laws as will secure to the members of [the] subordinate unions a fair share of the lessened cost of production resulting from their use." In fact, the special committee believed that "the principal factor in the economical operation of typesetting machinery is the employment of highly skilled and intelligent labor, and that this is to be found in the ranks of our union." The committee recommended that "none but members of the subordinate unions may be employed as operators on [the machines]," a stance that was insisted upon later in 1893 as machinists

and their unions fought for control over the Linotype. Additionally, in an attempt to protect compositors' time, wages, and health, the special committee recommended that time on the machines "be reduced to the lowest possible number—eight hours being the maximum," since working on the machines was "of a more exhaustive character, both physically and mentally, than hand composition." By 1893, some employers were offering machine operators bonuses for extra work completed beyond their required jobs, and the majority report for the ITU argued that, while such a tactic allowed the operator to earn "big money for the time being," it generally resulted in labour displacement, as it encouraged "hoggishness'." The Union prohibited men from accepting bonuses. In the same year, the ITU expanded their demands, insisting that union members not only be the only ones to operate the machines, but also the only ones to learn to operate them; apprentices in the final year of their apprenticeship would be permitted to operate the machines, but they would be paid two-thirds the wage of a journeyman operator.⁶⁹⁸

One of the main journals in which the conflicts regarding the introduction of machine typesetters into Canadian newspaper shops is borne out is *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*. *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* was officially-unofficially associated with the Canadian Press Association (CPA), which represented newspaper employers and proprietors. The relationship between the journal and the Canadian Press Association is a bit unclear. In March 1893, the Association's report of proceedings indicates that *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* was not technically officially connected with the Association; later, in February 1897, however, the President of the CPA called it the "official organ of the association." Whatever its true relationship was to the Association,

⁶⁹⁸ Tracy, *History*, 433, 453-4, 477-8, 482-4.

The Canadian Printer and Publisher frequently included reports on the Canadian Press Association (as mentioned in Chapter 1, sometimes whole issues were dedicated to meeting reports) and related organizations, like the Toronto Employing Printers' Association and the United Typothetae of America.⁶⁹⁹ The latter was initially organized in 1887 "to resist the demands of the International Typographical Union for the nine-hour day" and was "generally at war with the ITU."⁷⁰⁰ It also included topics of concern to those organizations, such as tariffs, copyright, and libel. Yet the journal itself claimed to be for all typographical workers, employers and labourers alike.

Founded by John B. McLean in 1892 at the request of the Canadian Press Association,⁷⁰¹ it is unsurprising that, with the looming technological revolution aimed directly at newspaper and periodical publishers, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* situated itself, in part, as a kind of "boots-on-the ground" source for all things machine typesetter. In August 1892, the journal announced that its purpose is:

to give the experience as far as can be done of the firms using type-setting machines. [...] If these machines are going to come into general use, then the newspaper proprietor who is contemplating a new dress of type for his paper [buying new type and changing the style of their paper], had better await developments. No doubt a few months more will throw considerable light on the actual benefits and disadvantages of the machines, and the readers of PRINTER AND PUBLISHER will be furnished with all the information as soon as it is available.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁹ For example: "Canadian Press Association: Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting," *CPP* 2, no. 3 (March 1893): 4, 2-13; "Journal of Proceedings. Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of Canadian Press Association," *CPP* 4, no. 3 (March 1895): 8-44; "Canadian Press Association: Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Annual Meeting, Toronto, February 4, 1897.," *CPP* 6, no. 2 (February 1897): 3, 3-16.

⁷⁰⁰ Clarence E. Bonnett, *Employers' Associations in the United States: A Study of Typical Associations* (The MacMillan Company, 1922), 22, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015008681937>; Kealey, "Work Control," 86.

⁷⁰¹ "Why We Are Here.," *CPP* 1, no. 1 (May 1892): 5.

⁷⁰² "Type-Setting Machines," *CPP* 1, no. 4 (August 1892): 3.

Holding true to this purpose, in January 1893, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* asserts that despite its positioning in Toronto, its mission is not only for the benefit of city publishers, but to provide useful information for all publishers to come to their own decisions as “many country publishers are seriously considering the advisability of introducing type-casting machines, hoping thereby to save money. Elsewhere [in the journal] reference has been made to some points upon which they should receive enlightenment before investing their capital.”⁷⁰³ *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*’s affiliation with the Canadian Press Association is a clear conflict of interest. It is reasonable to assume that the journals’ ties to the organization representing proprietors, publishers, and editors would encourage it to lean in favour of the machines. Certainly, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* includes several frequent advertisements for machine typesetters, all of which – regardless of their individual messaging and taglines – inherently encourage the journal’s readership to purchase and employ machines.⁷⁰⁴

In its early years, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* was frequently dominated by content related to the machines. Often, brief reports about the number of specific machines being installed at newspaper and other shops across the country and statistics and figures related to their production are included within its pages as a means of informing the reader about the growth and progress of the new technology. Much of this is included under “Craft Notes,” a general column that reports brief trade news. For instance, in January 1893, the column reports that “the Rogers Company expect to place

⁷⁰³ “Not Adapted for a Country Office,” *CPP* 2, no. 1 (January 1893): 7.

⁷⁰⁴ See for example, advertisements for the Rogers Typograph, the Canadian Typograph Company, or the Thorne Typesetting Machine: “The Rogers Typograph” *CPP* 4, no. 4 (April 1895): 25; Advertisement for the Canadian Typograph Company, *CPP* 4, no. 11 (November 1895): 21; “Thorne Machines are Money Makers,” *CPP* 7, no. 6 (June 1898): 12.

several additional machines in Ottawa at an early date.” In April 1893, the journal records that “a Windsor operator recently set over 5,000 ems on a Typograph an hour.” Not breaking with neutrality to provide an explanation, the journal factually indicates that “several Typographs have been removed from a couple of offices in Montreal, one of which has since put on a new dress [type]”; it parrots that “by the introduction of a new top on the Typograph machine it is alleged the speed has been increased 25 per cent.” In June 1893, the paper remarks that “the *Empire* has ordered another Typograph, being anxious to test the latest improvements”; “Robt. Self, the Typograph operator in the Methodist Book Room, set about 55,000 in his third week”; and “the staff comps. at the Government Printing Bureau, Ottawa, has been greatly reduced within the past few weeks.” Some remarks even hint at the damaging effects that the employment of machines had on journeymen: “‘Billy’ Blair, a noted tramp comp., originally from Napanee, is in town recently. He looked with sad eyes at the machines in the *Mail* office.”⁷⁰⁵

Other news items make note of the economic implications of the employment of machines. In 1892, no agreement had yet been made between the Union and employers on a wage scale for machine operators and, according to an article in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, the Union objected to piece-work (being paid for each job completed), arguing that “the machines break down so often that the lost time prevents [compositors] from making their wages on a piece-scale.” Conversely, employers argued hand compositors transitioning to machine operators would not do good work if paid for

⁷⁰⁵ “Craft Notes,” *CPP* 2, no. 1 (January 1893): 10; “Craft Notes,” *CPP* 2, n. 4 (April 1893): 11; “Craft Notes,” *CPP* 2, no. 6 (June 1893): 9.

time worked versus on a piece-scale “on account of their innate antagonism to the machines.”⁷⁰⁶ Indeed, in November 1892, the compositors at the Toronto *Evening News* went on strike after the paper introduced a Rogers Typograph into its shop and the Toronto Typographical Union rejected the proposed piece-scale.⁷⁰⁷ In January 1893, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* notes that the New York Typographical Union “adopted a scale for type setting machines” but that the scale for hand composition remained the same; and in July 1893, the journal reports that “a number of comps. have withdrawn their cards from T.T.U. No. 91 [Toronto], owing to the suspension of the *Evening Star* and the use of the Typograph in the *Mail*. Several of them have already crossed the border.”⁷⁰⁸ Other factual news items include reports on existing and newly invented machines, as well as the introduction of machines across Canada and the United States.⁷⁰⁹

In an effort to inform their readership about the efficacy and/or drawbacks of the machine typesetters, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* included a series of reports on the testing of a Rogers Typograph machine used in the office of the J.B. McLean Publishing Company from April to September 1893. Importantly, however, perhaps considering the concerns of their readership, the McLean Company reportedly only used Typograph machines to produce their *other* trade journals, and *not The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, which was printed by the Apted Bros. in Toronto.⁷¹⁰ By not using the machines on *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, the J.B. MacLean Company distanced

⁷⁰⁶ “The Printers and The Type-Setting Machines,” *CPP* 1, no. 4 (August 1892): 12.

⁷⁰⁷ “Trouble in the ‘Evening News’ Office,” *CPP* 1, no. 7 (November 1892): 14.

⁷⁰⁸ “Craft Notes,” *CPP* 2, no. 1 (January 1893): 10; “Craft Notes,” *CPP* 2, no. 7 (July 1893): 10.

⁷⁰⁹ For instance: “The Formotype,” *CPP* 2, no. 5 (May 1893): 18; “The Monoline,” *CPP* 2, no. 7 (July 1893): 5; “The Page Type-Setting Machine,” *CPP* 2, no. 7 (July 1893): 6; “Machines in New York,” *CPP* 2, no. 8 (August 1893): 10; “Recent Inventions,” *CPP* 2, no. 9 (September 1893): 18.

⁷¹⁰ “Testing the Typograph,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 2 (June 1893): 3.

itself, in a way, from the problem; their reports described an *experiment* rather than a *shift* in technology, and the journal's readers could not immediately see the results for themselves in the body of *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*. The journal indicates that its reports will "give actual results of each week's work which will be of very great value to the majority of publishers in enabling them to form an idea as to its adaptability for the average newspaper office." The first report shows a net loss of \$17.24 for operating the Typograph for one month versus doing the same work by hand.⁷¹¹ The following reports demonstrate technological improvements and the machines' consistent cost saving, despite wear on the machine and the frequent need to consult with the Rogers Typograph Company on repairs. Yet, with consistency, the reports criticize the quality of the work produced by the machines. In May 1893, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* cautions that the machines' cost savings "cannot be called satisfactory";⁷¹² in June, the journal reiterates that the cost savings afforded by the machines are "questionable" when "considering the quality of the work";⁷¹³ and in September, the journal laments that while "a fair quantity of matter was set" by the operator, "the appearance [of the product] was unsatisfactory" as a result of the machine's mechanical problems.⁷¹⁴ The reports are concluded by an article in the December 1893 issue that encourages Canadian printers to keep abreast of the developments related to machine typesetters given that "the situation is more complicated today than ever." And, by the end of 1893, the J.B. McLean

⁷¹¹ "Testing the Typograph," *CPP* 2, no. 4 (April 1893): 6.

⁷¹² "Testing the Typograph," *CPP* 2, no. 5 (May 1893): 7.

⁷¹³ "The Work of the Typograph," *CPP* 2, no. 6 (June 1893): 3.

⁷¹⁴ "The Record of the Machine," *CPP* 2, no. 9 (September 1893): 16.

Company's testing and reporting ultimately resulted in their decision "to cease using their Rogers machine [...] because of the unsatisfactory work that ha[d] been done."⁷¹⁵

In the following year, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* dedicated their April 1894 issue to the topic of machine typesetters. The issue includes information on machines in use in Canada and the United States, including long lists of machines at use and the shops using them across the country.⁷¹⁶ The "Editorial Notes" argue that the journal is "valuable" because, "if these machines continue to improve, it will be necessary for every publisher in Canada to be fully informed thereon. The information collected here can be found in no other place, and is published for the first and last time."⁷¹⁷ Although many of the articles seem to agree that the machines are "here to stay," they are not all in agreement that this is a true threat to "any large portion of the craft whose members were once 'gentlemen and wore a sword.'" Articles and letters to the editor also demonstrate a division of opinion regarding the quality of work produced by the machines, with some arguing that the machines cannot compete with the quality of work produced by journeymen compositors and others arguing against this.⁷¹⁸

The Canadian Printer and Publisher's Toronto contemporary, the Toronto Type Foundry's organ, *The Imprint*, also expressed the belief that the machines were not as good as they were promised to be. The Toronto Type Foundry was a retailer of supplies

⁷¹⁵ "Progress of the Machines," *CPP* 2, no. 12 (December 1893): 7.

⁷¹⁶ Articles include: "The Linotype," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 12; "The Monoline Machine," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 12; "The Thorne Type Setter," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 13; "Lanston Monotype Machine," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 13; "The Typograph," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 13-4; "Empire Typesetting Machine," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 14; "Godson Type-Casting and Setting Machine," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 15.

⁷¹⁷ "Editorial Notes," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 3.

⁷¹⁸ "Are the Machines a Success?," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 8-9; "Machines VS. Compositors," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 9; "Machines in New York," *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 10.

for the typographical and allied trades, selling equipment like type cases, inks, paper cutters, printing presses, drying racks, and paper folders. It would be reasonable to assume that the Foundry might begin selling machine typesetters in order to meet customer demand and keep up with technology, but *The Imprint* (ostensibly functioning as a catalogue, not unlike *The Dominion Printer*) did not include advertisements for machine typesetters until the summer of 1895, unlike *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*, which included advertisements for the machines as early as November 1894.⁷¹⁹ In 1893 when discussions of machine typesetters were at the forefront of journeymen's and employers' minds, the Toronto Type Foundry was still (successfully) selling foundry type and the journal frequently included type samples and information on the new point system to educate its readers on advancements in type casting and to sell materials. In these years, the machine typesetter was explicitly antagonistic to the business model of the Toronto Type Foundry and the machines were perceived as generally dissatisfactory in comparison to skilled human labour.⁷²⁰ However, others, like, J.C. McLagan, manager of the World Printing and Publishing Company (Vancouver, British Columbia), believed that the machines were a success. He writes that the machines he employs are "doing good work" and he has "nothing but praise" for the Linotype, "it being the harbinger of better times and days for compositors and the craft generally."⁷²¹

⁷¹⁹ "The Thorne Type Setting Machine.," *The Imprint* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1895): 28; Advertisement for the Rogers Typograph, *CPP* 3, no. 11 (November 1894): 19.

⁷²⁰ For instance, from the first issue of *The Imprint*: "THE Point System. . .," *The Imprint* 1, no. 1 (May 1893): 1; "SOME of the old-time printers. . .," *The Imprint* 1, no. 1 (May 1893): 6; "What is the Point System?," *The Imprint* 1, no. 1 (May 1893): 7.

⁷²¹ J.C. McLagan, "The Machines in British Columbia," letter to the editor, *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 10.

The ITU believed that journeymen compositors needed to adapt to the technology, rather than push against it. As the 1893 majority report urged its members, a “failure to recognize the conditions that confront us will lead not only to our losing the control of the machines, but the disruption of the union.”⁷²² That same year, ITU President Prescott said that the “machines would undoubtedly exercise a most potent influence in the economy of the trade, but that should not dismay the membership, but rather serve as a stimulus to renewed effort in preserving and strengthening the organization.” In 1894, he likewise encouraged the Union’s members to direct their “best thought to devising ways and means of meeting the changed conditions resultant from machinery having been introduced into the craft.”⁷²³ This would be important for compositors because, as Cynthia Cockburn asserts, the Linotype’s widespread use in newspaper pressrooms “threw the compositors headlong into their first ever real crisis of craft control. They would not meet another like it until [the 1980s].” And, as Christina Burr says, the Linotype “made machine typesetting a viable alternative to hand composition in the production of newspapers, and resulted in the first real crisis of craft, and masculinity, for male hand compositors.”⁷²⁴ Not only did the machines require fewer men (fewer operators were needed to perform the same work as hand compositors), but setting type by machine no longer required the same skills with which journeymen’s training had outfitted them.

One of the most pressing challenges facing journeymen compositors was the fact that, at the end of the century, machine typesetting companies and employers attempted

⁷²² Tracy, *History*, 483.

⁷²³ Tracy, *History*, 472, 493.

⁷²⁴ Cockburn, *Brothers*, 28, 3; Burr, “Defending,” 55.

to define the work of operating machine typesetters as work for women. Employers attempted to gender the work of machine typesetting and were successful in “displac[ing] skilled compositors [with] underpaid and ill-trained boys or women” when, for instance, they placed women at their keyboards as strike-breakers.⁷²⁵ According to Ava Baron, “both employers and men printers made claims about the specific, inherent characteristics of men and women and the work they were capable of, but they articulated different versions of what was properly masculine or feminine.”⁷²⁶ Reasons given against women’s employment as machine operators were the same as those given to exclude women from hand composition. Women were considered to be weaker than men, and therefore unable to perform the heavy and hard work associated with the operation of the machines. Additionally, the trade argued that women were not naturally disposed to working with such equipment, “having an innate aversion to machinery.” The question of women’s intelligence, literacy (or purported lack thereof), and natural temperament were also considered.⁷²⁷

Although Melissa Score believes that in Britain, “the advent of linotype printing helped ease [women’s] pathways into the trade,” the newspaper industry’s increasing reliance on machine typesetters did not, to any significant degree, facilitate women’s entrance into the workforce. Cockburn asserts that despite British employers’ attempts to gender the work by employing “unskilled” labourers on the machines for less pay,

a welcoming hand to women workers was not [...] among the gestures of even the most progressive printers. Women were never in the running for the Linotype. [...] The composing room, now housing the mechanical typesetter, continued an all-male preserve and lost none of its traditional atmosphere of masculine

⁷²⁵ Dewalt, *Technology and Canadian Printing*, 79.

⁷²⁶ Baron, “Contested Terrain,” 67.

⁷²⁷ Cockburn, *Brothers*, 174-7.

camaraderie. Indeed, [...] to many of the men, the clatter and clunk of the linotype if anything enhanced the manly qualities of the occupation.⁷²⁸

This was certainly the case for the trade in Canada. Although journeymen and their unions worked to exclude women from the position of machine typesetter, Burr remarks that in the 1870s and 1880s, the small number of women compositors in Toronto (35 women compared to 595 union and non-union men, as reported by Local 91 in Toronto in 1889) likely posed little threat to the journeymen's livelihoods "or their socially defined status as skilled craftsmen."⁷²⁹ In April 1893, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* makes mention of one female machine operator, Della Dunlap, working on a Rogers Typograph at the Toronto *Presbyterian*, who was injured on the job, and according to Burr, a report submitted by the ITU Local 91 (Toronto) in April 1895 indicated that only two women machine operators were working compared to forty-two male union machine operators.⁷³⁰

The gendering of labour on machine typesetters was not only about whether or not women could or should perform the work. It was also about the language used by employers and machine companies to defend their reasons for attempting to employ women instead of journeymen. One of the primary discursive tactics used by employers to situate the work as women's work was their association of the machine's keyboard to that of a typewriter. Burr writes that at the end of the century, "newspaper publishers viewed machine typesetting as analogues to the work of women typists in the clerical sector, and attempted to gender the operation of the typesetting machines as women's work, thereby reducing labour costs by eliminating the comparatively more costly-hand

⁷²⁸ Score, "Pioneers of Social Progress?," 288; Cockburn, *Brothers*, 31.

⁷²⁹ Burr, "'That Coming Curse,'" 354; Burr, "Defending," 54.

⁷³⁰ "Craft Notes", *CPP* 2, no. 4 (April 1893): 11; "Craft Notes," *CPP* 2, no. 6 (June 1893): 9; Burr, "'That Coming Curse,'" 364.

compositors.”⁷³¹ While the Union claimed that the work of machine typesetting was “intrinsically masculine, and that women did not have the necessary abilities to do the job,” employers considered women to be the “ideal linotypists because the work required typically feminine characteristics such as steadiness and dexterity.”⁷³²

Women entered the clerical sector at the end of the nineteenth century in great numbers, working as typists. According to Christopher Keep, the female typewriter came to be known as “a new species of woman, the Type-Writer Girl.” She was “the acceptable face of the ‘New Woman’: she represented the desire for a career and independence in such a way as not to endanger those traditional feminine sensibilities that held matrimony and maternity as a woman’s highest purpose in life.” Type-writers became associated with other domestic technologies, like sewing machines and pianos, as advertisements for typewriters created narratives about “the cultural ‘fit’ between the normative values of femininity and typing.” According to Keep, such advertisements would evoke images of women’s “‘feminine fingers.’” Thus, the typewriter became domesticated, “draw[ing] it from the ‘masculine’ world of commerce and business into the ‘feminine’ domain of the family parlor and the sewing room.”⁷³³

In July 1893, one article in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* follows the ITU’s convictions that journeymen should operate the machines and in doing so makes

⁷³¹ Burr, “Defending,” 55-6.

⁷³² Baron, “Contested Terrain,” 67.

⁷³³ Jessica Gray, “Typewriter Girls in Turn-of-the-Century Fiction: Feminism, Labor and Modernity,” *English Literature in Transition* 58, no. 4 (2015): 486, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/582571>; Christopher Keep, “Blinded by the Type: Gender and Information Technology at the Turn of the Century,” *Nineteenth-century Contexts* 23 (2001): 154, 155, Taylor & Francis Online; Christopher Keep, “The Cultural Work of the Type-Writer Girl,” *Victorian Studies* 40, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 401, 404-5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3829292>.

the comparison of machine typesetting to typing. The article's emphasis on skill and intelligence aligns the work of the machine operator with that of the journeyman compositor. But that emphasis also illuminates a highly gendered conceptualization of who machine operators ought to be, particularly as the compositor or machine operator is, elsewhere, always male, but the typist who is theoretically in the running for machine operator, as referred to here, is either male or female. The article on "Machine Operators" reads in its entirety:

Type-setting machines are now admitted to be a fixture, even the most conservative old compositors being forced to yield the point. As the machines are here to stay, and are introduced for the purpose of saving money, it is possible that printers and publishers may be too anxious to reduce their composing room expenses, and that anxiety may lead them into making expensive blunders. The vendors of the machines loudly assert that any one who can run a type-writer can operate a type setting machine. Doubtless it can be done, but what publisher wants to see the matter in his paper improperly punctuated, capitals thrown in regardless of style or propriety, and word divided just where the line ends, irrespective of syllable or of sound? Operating a key-board is mere manual labor, or if you like, manual skill, but to turn out work fit for publication requires some brains and a little education. It is a rare occurrence to receive a type-written document which does not bear marks of correction by the dictator of the letter, and such mistakes are not in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization, but words that have been used because they bore resemblance in sound to the right word. The intelligence of the type-writer is not always of the order that suggests to him or her the possibility of a blunder, and onward goes the operator, banging the keys, and grinding out stuff that would not be tolerated from a boy six months at the case.

If the machines are to be a success they must be operated intelligently, and no one can do that work better or more profitably than a bright young printer. We emphasize the word young, as unfortunately the old men are not fitted for such work. Their fingers have not their suppleness, and it is next to impossible for them to work the key-board with more than one finger, and then they jab and poke at it in an awkward manner. The men who are placing the machines on the market make a serious mistake when they speak slightly of a compositor as an operator, because his intelligence added to the work of the inventor is required to make the affair a success aimed at. The days of the straight hand composition are

numbered, but he will not yet be replaced by any one wholly unacquainted with the printer's case.⁷³⁴

Although Mark Twain believed that his work as a hand compositor would help him get the hang of typewriter keyboards,⁷³⁵ the article's thesis plainly outlines the opinion held by many journeymen: that one's ability to type on a typewriter might enable them to type on a typesetter, but it does not provide them with the skills and intelligence with which journeymen, through their training, are equipped. Explicitly denying the correlation between typing and typesetting, the article opposes the idea that "any one who can run a type-writer can operate a type setting machine" because the work of composition always "requires some brains and a little education." As such, the article opposes the idea that "any one" could be a woman, particularly as their training (and thus intelligence) is not on par with that of the "young printer" whose mechanical and mental faculties complement the operation of the machine typesetter.⁷³⁶

The technological shift from hand to machine was complicated (but not halted) by the clashing of journeymen's unending attempts to maintain their masculine craft identity and association with the aristocracy of the labouring class against the imposing forces of the trades' new capitalist framework which threatened to displace skilled male labour in favour of speed and profit. As an 1894 article in *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* criticizes:

The publisher adopts the machine for what reason? They are two in number: First and most important, because it reduces the cost of composition; secondly, because it reduced the number of men to be kept under supervision. The publisher is

⁷³⁴ "Machine Operators," *CPP* 2, no. 7 (July 1893): 4-5.

⁷³⁵ Mark Twain, "To Orion Clemens," *The Letters of Mark Twain*, accessed July 7, 2025, <https://www.marktwainproject.org/letters/uccl01162/>.

⁷³⁶ "Machine Operators," *CPP* 2, no. 7 (July 1893): 4-5.

publishing his paper because he wants to make money. It is purely a business speculation into which personal or sentimental considerations do not enter. The cheaper the elements which enter into the cost of his paper the greater the profit to be derived. If something cheaper than union labor presents itself, the publisher is bound to accept it as a matter of business.⁷³⁷

Regarding the employment of machines and women at country offices, Albert Dennis from Nova Scotia writes that “country offices employ girls very cheaply, and unless a machine can be bought or rented on a par with what it costs to keep girls, the result will be that, in many cases, publishers will prefer to continue to employ girls rather than introduce the machine.”⁷³⁸ In response, journeymen across North America attempted to define the work of operating machine typesetters as masculine work against efforts to define the work as naturally feminine. The employment of women on machine typesetters threatened to feminize and thus deskill a trade that was already facing deskilling by the infiltration of machines. The widespread use of machine typesetters not only promised to compromise Union and journeyman control over the trade – by replacing them with women or alienating them from their work – but threatened to reduce compositors to machine tenders. Journeymen felt that if they would be reduced to machine tenders, they would no longer be able to hold onto their craft status.

6.2 The Convergence of Man and the “Iron Comp”⁷³⁹

While employers were keen to argue that the machines produced good work, other members of the trade were critical of this framing since it ignored the fact (or,

⁷³⁷ “Union Wages Help Machines.,” *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 8.

⁷³⁸ Albert Dennis, “Opinions From Nova Scotia,” letter to the editor, *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 11.

⁷³⁹ Cockburn, *Brothers*, 26-28.

rather, journeymen's argument) that these machines only operated and produced good work because of the skilled and intelligent operator. Beyond using union legislation to their advantage, journeymen's primary tactic for protecting the work of operating machine typesetters was to emphasize that they were the only ones capable of doing the work. They did this by insisting on their necessity to the machine's operation, arguing that their unique skills were what resulted in good work. The machines (on their own or at the hands of a non-union, unskilled operator) were incapable of producing good work without them.

Prior to the introduction of machine typesetters, compositors were often "rewarded for demonstrating machine-like qualities" – speed and accuracy. But, from their earliest attempts at inventing typesetting machines, inventors sought to, as Graham Thompson articulates, "imagine, replicate, and unite in machine form the different physical and mental human skills required for type composition; that is, their capacity to simultaneously humanize technology and technologize the human. For mechanical typesetting, unlike papermaking and printing, this was not a merely technical problem, but a deeply human one." This was because, where the "value attached to craft skill in the nineteenth-century book trade was already in decline before the arrival of steam and stereotyping technologies [...] manual typesetting defied this shift" and was, Thompson writes, "an unusual example of craft skill remaining central to industrialized technology because of the lack of mechanized alternatives."⁷⁴⁰ It is precisely this blurring of the boundaries between machine and compositor – the "incongruity of human and machine,"

⁷⁴⁰ Graham Thompson, "A Manual Job in a Machine Age: The Long Wait for Mechanized Typesetting," *Book History* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2024): 310-12, 315, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2024.a947330>.

as Thompson puts it, or the “equation that linked their skills with those of a machine,” as Rumble writes⁷⁴¹ – that was the problem for journeymen.

To protect their positions as machine typesetters and to affirm the craft status in the face of a technological invasion, journeymen attempted to emphasize and assert the particular humanity of the male journeyman and the work of typesetting that could not be replaced by machines. Journeymen did not necessarily attempt to halt the introduction of the machines altogether, but their repeated emphasis on the operator (often positioned as superior to the machine) supported the argument that “duplicating identical products mechanically,” which is what the machines were for, “required an understanding of difference that [...] required specialized and skilled human hands and minds.”⁷⁴² As the editors of *Fast Typesetting* put it in 1887:

It is all very well to say that the compositor’s art is mechanical, but the inability to replace him by competent machinery gives the lie direct to the assertion. In all machines the same operations are repeated from time to time, whereas the apparatus for composing may be at work for years and may not once perform exactly similar motions for five minutes together. In short, what is wanted is a piece of mechanism that can think, and the numerous efforts to secure this phenomenon proves the sure foundation on which the compositor’s art is based.⁷⁴³

In May 1893, on the introduction of machine typesetters into several Toronto newspaper offices, *The Imprint* reported that evidence in favour of the cost savings of the machines is negligible when the costs of operating the machines (rental fees, maintenance, etc.) are considered. Indeed, the critical stance largely taken by *The Imprint* is that the machines cannot produce quality work. Acknowledging that the machines are faster producers, the

⁷⁴¹ Thompson, “A Manual Job in a Machine Age,” 311; Rumble, *The Swifts*, 145.

⁷⁴² Thompson, “A Manual Job in a Machine Age,” 313.

⁷⁴³ William C. Barnes, Joseph W. McCann, and Alexander Duguid, eds., *Fast Typesetting* (New York: Concord Co-Operative Printing Company, 1887), 65, <https://archive.org/details/FastTypesetting1887>.

article also asserts that “the greatest disadvantage of the machine is and must continue to be the illegible character of the work, owing to its extreme irregularity both as to line and height. It is not good business to say that these machines ‘do good enough work for newspapers.’” The article concludes by arguing that readers will not long tolerate poor workmanship if other papers, employing hand compositors, are still producing quality papers.⁷⁴⁴ Likewise, a September 1893 article articulates that despite the amount of effort and money expended on the invention of such machines, it is “doubtful” that any machine could save significantly on costs while also producing “results equal to hand composition.” Indeed, the article argues that the imperfect production of the machines might negate the cost saving advantages of mechanizing the process: “Quality of work considered, the saving over hand composition is very doubtful. Owing to the delicacy of their mechanism, the machines are also very liable to get out of order: this fact combined with their high price and inferior product renders their general introduction at present most improbable.”⁷⁴⁵

Conversely, when the operator is made the primary character in discussions of the machines, the product is generally characterized as good, and the machines celebrated. In October 1892, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher*’s report on “The Work of the Machines” remarks that, along with the machine’s mechanical faults, good rates of production can be obtained “by all fairly skilled operatives” and that “when the operators become more skilful in working the keyboard, and more familiar with the mechanism of the machines, better results are anticipated.”⁷⁴⁶ Assessing the Winder machine in January

⁷⁴⁴ “The Linotype and typograph machines have been introduced ...,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 1 (May 1893): 4.

⁷⁴⁵ “Type-Setting Machines,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 4 (September 1893): 76.

⁷⁴⁶ “The Work of the Machines,” *CPP* 1, no. 6 (October 1892): 8-9.

1893, *The Canadian Printer and Publisher* observes that “as in all type setting and type-casting machines the product depends on the expertise of the operator.”⁷⁴⁷ In October 1893, Albert Dennis, who was previously critical of the machines, quotes J. Chambers who anticipates that before long he ““expect[s] to see the typesetting machine, with the expert compositor behind it, take a place at the right hand of each writing editor’s desk in every newspaper office in this country.””⁷⁴⁸ And, as J. C. McLagan wrote in his 1894 letter praising the machines, “one prime qualification to a successful operator will be intelligence and sobriety,”⁷⁴⁹ echoing the trade’s exclusionary discourses from earlier in the century regarding its definition of skill and its requirements for trade membership. Indeed, H. G. Bishop (from the *Bookmaker*) writes that “to recommend the employment of boy or girls or other inexperienced people is to hinder the success of the machines and bring unnecessary trouble upon both the employer and his present compositors.”⁷⁵⁰

At the same time, however, while some journeymen embraced the technological shift, others – those who felt that the trade’s craft status was tied more closely to the practice of hand composition – resisted it. The Union called for its members to make the machines their own and to bring the skills they had to its operation. But the fact of the matter was that the transfer of skills from hand composition to machine typesetting felt for some compositors, at least at the time, like a difficult thing to imagine. The machine typesetter was a completely different way of doing things, and it relegated the artistic, creative, and intelligent hand compositor to a sit-down, button-punching operator. As a

⁷⁴⁷ “The Winder Composing System.,” *CPP* 2, no. 1 (January 1893): 4.

⁷⁴⁸ Chambers quoted in a letter to the editor from Albert Dennis, “Typesetting Machines.,” in *CPP* 2, no. 10 (October 1893): 8.

⁷⁴⁹ J.C. McLagan, “The Machines in British Columbia,” letter to the editor, *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 10.

⁷⁵⁰ H. G. Bishop, “Type Setting Machines,” 2, no. 12 (December 1893): 14.

result, attempts to simultaneously differentiate man and machine while also emphasizing the necessity of the relationship of machine typesetters to skilled and intelligent operators – journeymen – are complicated by imagery of the violence and monstrosity of the machines’ capacities to fundamentally alter the state of the trade and, more importantly, the hand compositor.

In much of the discourse around the relationship of man and machine, the hand compositor is made entirely distinct from the machine; they are not the same in the work they perform, for better or worse. In April 1894, *The Imprint* circulated a piece titled “The Union and the Machine.,” arguing, again, that while journals and unions had cause to be concerned about the displacement of labour that the employment of machines promised, the reality was that “there is no comparison between the quality of the work done by the machine and that done by the hand compositor. Every newspaper using the machines presents a deplorable appearance when placed alongside a handset paper, the latter being so much neater, freer from errors and much more legible.” This conflict, the article continues, necessitates that unions and union compositors ask: “How can type be set profitably to the compositor at a price nearly approximating that of the machines?,” and goes on to provide some possible solutions. Indeed, machines were a threat to their livelihood and to the labour structures and systems that had been part of the trade’s culture for centuries, as “the large membership of typographical unions unquestionably depend[ed] to a large extent upon whether typesetting machines gain[ed] a general foothold in the printing offices in the larger cities.” The article ends with a call to action that not only reaffirms the trade’s masculinized understanding of the craft, but which illustrates that while wages and costs were central to this concern, so too was the threat to

aesthetics and typographical skill: “Now is the proper time for the compositor manfully to grapple with the machine question. The work done by machines is so unsatisfactory that there is hardly an office in Toronto that would continue their use if hand composition were anywhere nearly as cheap.”⁷⁵¹ In December 1898, *The Nonpareil* circulated a statement from the union in Buffalo which clearly indicates that there was a pay disparity between men operating machines and those continuing “hand work” in newspaper offices – that is, the machine operators were paid more.⁷⁵²

Journeymen’s complex and con-/di-verging opinions about the relationship and place of the hand compositor and the machine all ultimately imagine that it is only with the unification of skilled compositor and machine that the performance of each, together, can reach the successes desired. This is a positive argument for journeymen because it enables once-upon-a-time hand compositors to transition to working with the new technology and to stay employed. But it is also a fearful proposition because it necessitates that the machine and the compositor are joint, and that the machine become an extension of their bodies and alienates them, however marginally, from the setting of type. By the combination of man and machine, man is no longer directly responsible for the product; instead, their ideas and movements are mediated by the machine’s keys and matrices.

The fear of hand compositors literally turning into machine typesetters, “machines that could think—or at least imitate the process of thinking”⁷⁵³ – and that “journeymen

⁷⁵¹ “The Union and the Machine.,” *The Imprint* 1, no. 10 (April 1894): 175.

⁷⁵² “Buffalo Union Statement.,” *The Nonpareil* 1, no. 1 (December 1898): 3.

⁷⁵³ Thompson, “A Manual Job in a Machine Age,” 324.

printers [were] machines to [the publisher]”⁷⁵⁴ is animated in and outside of trade journals at the end of the century. One of the most striking examples of this animation is found in Andrew Tuer’s *Quads For Authors, Editors, & Devils* (1884). Graham Thompson points to the frontispiece in *Quads* (Figure 29) as an example of the trade’s attempts to “alleviate the discomfort” of the possibility of journeymen’s displacement using humour. Tuer’s frontispiece depicts a metal-machine-man attached to a steaming bucket and the human compositor’s body is completely consumed by the machine. For Thompson, the frontispiece “depict[s] an imaginary type composer capable of working non-stop, twenty-four hours a day, by harnessing the steam power transforming nineteenth-century industry.” He proposes that the illustration suggests that the trade’s fears were not so much about automation and displacement, but more specifically about the idea that “mechanization need only replicate manual labor.” However, as John Southward asserts, the hand compositor – as the trade’s century-long battles against women and amateur labour suggests – is not “a mere animated machine.”⁷⁵⁵ Additionally, I add that there is something ironic about the way that the compositor in the frontispiece’s body mimics a suit of armour, as if conjuring the image of printers as knight or gentlemen carrying swords into the shop. That association conjures anxieties about the trade’s general degradation, echoing the sentiment humorously suggested in the June 1878 *Dominion Printer* that, by the last quarter of the century, the compositor’s sword had “dwindled into a bodkin.”⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁴ “Union Wages Help Machines,” *CPP* 3, no. 4 (April 1894): 8.

⁷⁵⁵ Thompson, “A Manual Job in A Machine Age,” 317; Tuer, *Quads for Authors, Editors, & Devils*, frontispiece; John Southward, *Type Composing Machines of the Past, the Present, and the Future* (Leicester: Raithby, Lawrence & Co, 1891): 29, <https://archive.org/details/typecomposingmac00soutiala>.

⁷⁵⁶ Tuer, *Quads for Authors, Editors, & Devils*, frontispiece; “A worthy old-fashioned printer ...,” *The Dominion Printer* 4, no.2 (June 1878): 5.

The fear of man turning into machine is also expressed in “‘Thad’ Versus the Machine,” a short story by George Ade published in the joint November-December 1895 issue of the *International Art Printer* (Owen Sound, Ontario). The narrator, finding himself at an eating house on the south side of Chicago, encounters “Thad,” who manages the restaurant but was once “‘Slug 3’ on a morning paper that tried to fill a long-felt want, and failed because there was no long-felt want to be filled.” When asked what he is doing in the restaurant, “Thad” blames the machine typesetter: “‘You thought I’d be a compositor all my life, did n’t you? [sic] Well, you don’t see any keyboard on me, do you? Can I put a meltin’ pot on my shoulder, and run type down my sleeve? Am I good for six thousand an hour?’” “Thad” argues that not all journeymen displaced by the machines can find work situations, as one machine replaces 4 or 5 skilled journeymen compositors. He says:

‘When they first put them in [the shops], lots of people said there’d be so much extra composition that compositors and machines would both be busy. Just the same, the town is full of subs today. I can name you twenty good printers who don’t get a day’s work in a week ; and I can name you twenty more who have gone into other work. There are too many printers, that’s the size of it. The publishers are going to use machines on all the work they can, and there’s no use fighting them.’⁷⁵⁷

Of course, the criticism here is regarding the lack of work available to hand compositors with the arrival of the machines – the conflict between the economic desires of employers versus compositors. But the horror of Ade’s narratives – as in Tuer’s frontispiece – lies in the image of the human typesetter’s deformity; the alternative “Thad” has lost his agency in the labour process and is consumed by the machines which have otherwise overtaken

⁷⁵⁷ George Ade, “‘Thad’ Versus the Machine,” *International Art Printer* 1, no.9-10 (November-December 1895): 187-8.

the trade and displaced human labour. What Tuer's frontispiece and Ade's story suggest is, perhaps, that journeymen's emphasis on their connection to the machines goes so far as to render them materially inseparable. Journeymen argued that good typesetting cannot happen without them, but in the machine age introduced by the machine typesetter, what the journeymen do not acknowledge is that typesetting cannot happen without the machine. According to Cockburn, the "iron comp" was a name given to the Linotype machine in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, but perhaps, given the images presented by Tuer and Ade, the "iron comp" is best suited to describe the consumption or tethering of compositor by/and machine at the end of the century.⁷⁵⁸

6.3 Summary

Before the end of the century, the possibility of inventing a machine that could replace the work of the hand compositor was either considered highly unlikely, or a beautiful dream. The technical hang-ups of early inventions left much to be desired and some arguing that such a machine might never materialize. For others, technical challenges were taken as opportunities to continue investing and inventing what promised to be one of the most revolutionary pieces of technology the industry would ever see. When the Linotype machine was invented, opinions on the use of machines for typesetting varied. Some resisted the employment of the machines, arguing that they were not as good as they promised to be and that they could not produce the same quality of work as men. Others rejoiced, believing that the machines were effective cost savers and that the results they produced were good enough to rival the work of hand compositors.

⁷⁵⁸ Cockburn, *Brothers*, 26-8.

But by the mid-1890s in Canada, many were resigned to the fact that the machine typesetter had “come to stay.”⁷⁵⁹ They were generally faster than hand compositors, and thus, despite many technical quirks, they were valuable pieces of equipment for employers because they simultaneously increased production and lowered production costs. So, printers and type foundries had to get behind the technology, even if they did not like it, or they risked being left behind. In 1895, *The Imprint*, which had previously not advertised or supported machine typesetters, began serving the technological revolution that had solidly arrived and overwhelmed the trade in Canada, and encouraged its readership to use the Thorne Type Setting Machine. The Toronto Type Foundry was not only an agent for the Thorne machine, but they claimed to use one daily in their own shop. The Foundry excitedly issued “an invitation [...] to publishers to visit [their] establishment and see at work one of the most wonderful inventions of the age in connection with the printing press, ‘the power that rules the world.’”⁷⁶⁰ A few years later, in 1898, the Toronto Typographical Union’s journal, *The Nonpareil*, makes clear that, in the face of the adversarial machine typesetter, “you” – those who would employ these machines in place of hand compositors – “Can’t Down the Printers.”⁷⁶¹ The ITU continued its battle over jurisdiction of the machines, arguing that all machine operators – former hand compositors or not – should be members of the ITU.⁷⁶²

Despite the so-called inevitability of the machines, the employment of hand compositors on those machines was not inevitable, and this upset spurred the Union and

⁷⁵⁹ “Trouble in the ‘Evening News’ Office,” *CPP* 1, no. 7 (November 1892): 14; “Type-Casting vs Type-Setting Machines,” *CPP* 1, no. 8 (December 1892): 5.

⁷⁶⁰ “The Thorne Type Setting Machine,” *The Imprint*, 2, no. 2 (Summer 1895): 28.

⁷⁶¹ “Can’t Down the Printers,” *The Nonpareil* 1, no. 1 (December 1898): 2.

⁷⁶² Tracy, *History*, 602-3.

trade's fin-de-siècle campaign for what they argued was essentially their right to operate the machines. Journeymen compositors argued that they, alone, possessed the necessary faculties, capabilities, and skills to operate the machines skillfully. Only with skilled journeymen at the helm could these machines produce the desired outcome. Other "inferior" workers would produce inferior work. Given the different circumstances and conditions of women's typographical work in Canada compared to Britain or the United States (where there was generally more direct union action taken by women), it is unsurprising that the trade's journals make few mentions of women operators. I have argued that, despite the absence of this conflict, which furnishes much scholarship on the trade's gendered division of labour and technology, the trade's journals were still engaged in gendered discourses that attempted to assert male dominance over the machines. By emphasizing the role of intelligence and skill – two factors that, as Chapters 2 and 3 outline, were fundamental to the journeymen's masculine craft identity – journeymen compositors claimed the physical work of machine operator, thereby guarding their economic standing. They also absorbed the work into the trade's definition of craft. Whereas the printing trade's mechanization saw pressmen become machine-tenders, compositors' rhetorical essentialization of the man-machine connection deliberately argued that the active participation of the compositor's mind and body were necessary companions to the machine typesetter. And although this rhetorical strategy was sometimes punctuated by anxieties about compositors becoming machines, it – in combination with Union legislation – insured that when the machines populated shop floors at the end of the century, hand compositors were not left behind.

Journeyman ultimately succeeded at protecting their labour and economic positions as machine operators until the 1980s. Peter Betjmann articulates that scholars of craft have sometimes tended to “see craft as an activity synthesizing the mental and the manual to the degree that the artisan is the person who actually enacts the concept (effectively distinguishing the artisan from the industrial designer) and to the degree that craft is a creative process predicated on canonical or iterated skills (thereby distinguishing the artisan’s values from the ‘subjective consciousness and innovation’ named as a paradigm of modern art).”⁷⁶³ Both are certainly true for compositors throughout the century, especially after the quick mechanization of their trade. For compositors, typesetting has always been “partly mental, partly mechanical,”⁷⁶⁴ but when women and machines entered the shop floor, journeymen were forced to emphasize their necessity to the process of machine typesetting. Thus, in continuing to define the work of typesetting on machines as mental and mechanical, journeymen extend their “canonical or iterated skills”⁷⁶⁵ from hand composition to hot metal, and the practice remained a craft, becoming part of the young printers’ competency by the turn of the century. Throughout most of the twentieth century, hot metal composition was defined “as a highly skilled craft, securely placed within the domain of hegemonic masculinity,” but its definition as such was upended in the 1980s, this time by the introduction of phototypesetting. As male workers transitioned to a new technology, they once again

⁷⁶³ Peter Betjmann, “Craft and the Limits of Skill: Handicrafts Revivalism and the Problem of Technique,” *Journal of Design History* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 184, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25228581>.

⁷⁶⁴ Southward, *Type Composing Machines*, 11.

⁷⁶⁵ Betjmann, “Craft and the Limits of Skill,” 184.

perceived this new technology as an instrument that further deskilled and degraded their labour.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁶ Stein, *Hot Metal*, 76.

Conclusion: Navigating Work, Craft, and Identity to the Present

This project has extracted the eight printing trade journals produced in the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick during the nineteenth century from the footnotes of Canadian printing and labour histories and woven them together, in conversation with scholarship on typographical trade journals, the transnational printing trade, and Canadian print history, to contribute a Canadian dimension to the study of printers' trade literature. In so doing, this project has also highlighted the importance of considering typographical trade journals as primary materials for the study of print and labour history. But this research has done more than simply excavate forgotten or understudied materials; it has also provided significant insights into the Canadian trade's nineteenth-century labour conditions and occupational culture. Moreover, these insights offer important parallels for thinking about the twenty-first century and our contemporary relationships with technology and work.

I began this dissertation by arguing that journeymen compositors in Canada used their trade journals to create narratives about themselves, outsiders, and their labour. I argued that, through the circulation of creative writing and labour literature, journeymen were able to speak to the conflicts facing the trade across the Atlantic. I proposed that, in many cases, the narratives and discourses found within the trade's literature were extensions or manifestations of the trade's broader labour ideology and journeymen's desire to cast their work as masculine and skilled to maintain their position within the hierarchy of the labouring class toward the end of the nineteenth century. It may be contended that such arguments suggest that journeymen's actions were antagonistic for antagonism's sake. However, the chapters of this dissertation have continuously

demonstrated that composers did not arbitrarily create narratives about what it meant to be a skilled compositor, nor were their defensive actions against and negative, misogynistic, and racist representations of other workers without reason. Rather, as I have shown, they consciously circulated narratives that built up a picture of the ideal journeymen compositor as a means of protecting their economic positions because they understood that their jobs, not just their labour identities, were under threat. While much of my analysis has centered on the patriarchal actions of journeymen composers and has been critical of male composers' exclusionary strategies and attempts to assert the masculinity of their trade, the central focus of this study is not the journeymen themselves. Rather, the central focus has been the way that journeymen composers used their trade journals as sites in which to express solidarity with each other and respond to shifting trade conditions. In other words, the larger argument I am making is about the ways in which capitalism forced the trade's longstanding structures to change throughout the century, fostering the work conditions that led to composers' defensive labour postures.

Through the examination of journeymen's responses to individual groups and threats – boys, amateurs, women, racialized workers, machines, and other male workers – this dissertation has illuminated several of the international and national structural conditions that loomed over the trade throughout the century and that created the particular labour identity and print culture explored throughout this study. Each chapter of this study has examined the ways composers identified and addressed threats to their livelihoods. The different sub-groups of workers that journeymen composers faced throughout the century posed related but distinct challenges to journeymen's jobs and the

trade's identity. These challenges all stemmed from a central anxiety: What does it mean to be a compositor, a skilled masculine craftsman, in the face of an ever evolving economic and technological landscape? For newspaper compositors in Canada, the answer to this question was about more than establishing the parameters of the trade's membership and battling the intrusion of the "unskilled" into their workplaces; it was also about determining how they defined themselves as men whose identities were inextricably linked to their jobs. Within the distinct trade structures that informed journeymen's language and discourses, the typographical press afforded journeymen the space to shore up the association of typesetting with skill, intellect, and manliness.

As I have shown throughout this study, the gradual displacement and eventual technological unemployment of compositors that began in the nineteenth century is a feature of capitalism that journeymen's gatekeeping and assertion of craft identity could only ever mitigate. That it why, today, while in principle, the job of the typesetter bears many similarities to earlier iterations of the occupation, the status of the typesetter within the hierarchy of labour is no longer aristocratic (if it ever was). It is also why lead type and machine typesetters do not often play a role in print production and are now the (sometimes nostalgic) tools of artists, small presses, and printing labs. Despite all their efforts to protect their jobs and maintain the trade's craft status throughout the nineteenth century, newspaper compositors were largely displaced from their jobs and ostensibly became machine operators in the twentieth century. Machine typesetters gained massive popularity and became the norm in newspaper shops. Typesetters mastered the intricacies of different machines until the end of the twentieth century when they once again faced a technological shift that threatened not only to destabilize their labour identities, but to get

rid of their jobs altogether. The technological unemployment that faced typesetters in the late twentieth century is intrinsically linked to the conflicts examined throughout this study. Certainly, the technological shift of the twentieth century continued the pattern of “fundamentally dissolv[ing] compositors’ identities as skilled craftsmen” just as the introduction of the machine typesetter had at the end of the nineteenth century. But there is also the important fact that this technological shift was an evolution of the threats that journeymen faced in the nineteenth century that were symptomatic of the trade’s progressive shift away from craft and toward a capitalist structure that valued speed and volume over quality, human agency, and creativity.⁷⁶⁷

This study can help us to reflect on our contemporary relationships with technology and work, and with the way we situate our opinions about such technologies. I am not necessarily suggesting that there are lessons to be learned from the way that journeymen handled their conflicts, or that history is repeating itself. I am saying that contemporary concerns about AI technologies and mass automation are wrapped up in similar anxieties about technological unemployment, worker identity, and human agency that arose for printers during the nineteenth century and again at the end of the twentieth century. In the face of technological innovations that seem to promise the alienation of humans from almost everything, today we are asking ourselves questions that echo those of nineteenth-century journeymen: What happens to the human element of industry or craft when capitalist forces and technological innovation take over? Where does the knowledge, skills, expertise, and techniques acquired by human practitioners go when

⁷⁶⁷ Cockburn, *Brothers*, 3; Stein, *Hot Metal*, 76.

they are rendered obsolete? Is there still value in those things when machines are used to replace them (the worker and their skills)?

Throughout the early 2020s, workers, creatives, and industries of all kinds have been overwhelmed with discussions about artificial intelligence. The impact of such technologies on the creative industries has been viewed with much apprehension. In the commercial printing trade landscape of the twenty-first century, the use of AI is not viewed as an altogether bad thing; in many cases, it is a tool that can make the industry and its products better by streamlining design, increasing efficiency, and reducing waste.⁷⁶⁸ However, while some argue that AI has the capacity to increase efficiency, speed, and accuracy in creative projects (much as employers argued with regard to machine typesetters), creatives are rightfully concerned about not only what rights they have over their work when it is fed to AI, but what it means to be a creative worker living and creating alongside machines that are used to copy their work and produce “originals.”⁷⁶⁹ The advent of generative AI also has the possibility to present significant

⁷⁶⁸ Treena Hein, “Artificial intelligence revolutionizes the print industry: From personalization to efficiency,” *PrintAction* November 25, 2024, <https://www.printaction.com/artificial-intelligence-revolutionizes-the-print-industry-from-personalization-to-efficiency/>; Brian Kroeker, “How Will AI Change the Print Industry in 2025 & Beyond?,” *Little Rock Printing Company*, May 15, 2025, <https://littlerockprinting.com/how-will-ai-change-print-industry/>.

⁷⁶⁹ For example: Bernard Marr, “How Generative AI Will Change The Jobs Of Artists And Designers,” *Forbes*, May 28, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2024/05/28/how-generative-ai-will-change-the-jobs-of-artists-and-designers/>; Jocelyn Noveck and Matt O’Brien, “Visual artists fight back against artificial intelligence companies for repurposing their work,” *PBS News*, August 31, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/visual-artists-fight-back-against-artificial-intelligence-companies-for-repurposing-their-work>; Eileen O’Grady, “What happens when computers take on one of ‘most human’ art forms?,” *The Harvard Gazette*, April 26, 2023, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/04/what-happens-when-ai-takes-on-one-of-most-human-art-forms/>; Eric Reinhart, “The trouble with AI art isn’t just lack of originality. It’s something far bigger,” *The Guardian*, May 20, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/20/ai-art-concerns-originality-connection>; Rebecca Ackerman, “Is AI the Bitter End—or the Lucrative Future—of Book Publishing?,” *Esquire*, July 9, 2024, <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/a61485201/books-ai-lawsuits/>; Zoe Kleinman, “How an AI-written book shows why the tech ‘terrifies’ creatives,” *BBC*, January 30, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp8k5gezykyo>; Ian Youngs and Paul Glynn, “Fans loved her new

challenges to the twenty-first century labour market that parallel those the machine typesetter imposed on composers at the end of the nineteenth century. Not only might such technologies displace skilled workers, Su Zhan, Guillaume Togay, and Anne-Marie Côté remark that they may also make some jobs easier to do, allowing semi- or un-skilled workers, assisted by AI, to take the place of skilled workers.⁷⁷⁰ According to Kristofer Erickson, beyond offering the possibility of substituting technology for human workers when used as “production tool[s],” automation may also inundate the market with an “oversupply of creative goods” and lead to the “further deskilling of creative labour, and [the] displacement of ancillary production jobs due to increased efficiency and changing production practices.”⁷⁷¹

It is worth reflecting on the conflicts explored throughout this dissertation to make sense of our relationship to work and technologies in the present day. Contemporary rhetoric around the threat of AI to human agency, creativity, and employment frequently characterize AI as autonomous. For instance: “AI is reshaping work by automating traditional jobs while creating new roles” or “AI is unavoidable on Instagram, and it’s destroying bookish art communities.”⁷⁷² While it is undoubtedly scary to imagine that artists, writers, and other workers might be displaced by technologies that can produce or

album. The thing was, she hadn't released one,” *BBC*, August 22, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clydz8d03dvo>.

⁷⁷⁰ Su Zhan, Guillaume Togay, and Anne-Marie Côté, “Artificial intelligence: a destructive and yet creative force in the skilled labour market,” *Human Resource Development International* 24, no. 3 (2021): 341, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1818513>.

⁷⁷¹ Kristofer Erickson, “AI and work in the creative industries: digital continuity or discontinuity?,” *Creative Industries Journal* (2024): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2024.2421135>.

⁷⁷² Micah Zimmerman, “Will AI Bring Mass Unemployment or a New Revolution?,” *Entrepreneur*, October 3, 2025, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/science-technology/is-ai-bringing-mass-unemployment/497501>; Bella Bakeman, “AI is unavoidable on Instagram, and it’s destroying bookish art communities,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 12, 2024, <https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/columnists/2024/07/12/meta-ai-artificial-intelligence-instagram-book-art-artists-bookish-social-media/74369820007/>.

perform work that, in some cases, may appear to be virtually indistinguishable from human-made work (or may in fact exceed human work), one should not be tempted to fall into the fallacy of technological determinism. At the end of the nineteenth century, the machine typesetter promised to produce lines of type that could rival the technical abilities of hand compositors and be indistinguishable from hand-set type. But the search for changes to the typesetting process began because the demand for print exceeded physical human capabilities, not because technology simply advanced or because workers were no longer skilled. The machine typesetter did not bulldoze the trade alone; it was consciously brought into printing to address the needs of a growing industry. This is also true, in many cases, for AI. Modern technology is not taking over human jobs or creative work on its own; it is changing the labour landscape at the behest of a human or company.

As was the case for journeymen compositors in the nineteenth century, today, the thing that appears at first to be the threat – cheap sources of labour, technology – is not, in actual fact, the threat. The threat is something else. We recall that for compositors at the end of the nineteenth century, apprentices, amateurs, and tramps were only threats because shifting trade structures and market demands altered what the old guard believed was the correct way of doing things. Women were threats because their employment associated typesetting with femininity and because it put into question men's economic positions. But women were only threats to their male counterparts because they were exploited by employers looking to save money; it was not, in fact, *women* who sought to undermine journeymen compositors' positions, but employers. Today, the increasing use of AI tools in and outside of the printing trades – even in desktop applications, where AI

tools offer to summarize documents, for instance – are almost always about speeding up processes, generating productivity, and lessening the workload imposed on humans (not necessarily in a positive way). The threat is not necessarily AI itself; it is social, organizational, and ideological shifts that result in (or from) the employment or implementation of new sources of labour, human or non-human, to achieve the economic and productivity goals of the increasingly capitalist and technological society in which we live, work, and create.

Here, it is also worth turning to Jesse Adams Stein’s observation that journeymen composers’ “masculine craft identities did not rely exclusively on skill-based mastery of traditional technologies.” In addition to the fact that composers’ masculine craft identities “were also related to other dimensions of technology, such as aesthetics, design, embodied ‘know-how’ and the physical presence of large-scale machinery on the shop floor,”⁷⁷³ this project has shown that their identities were also related to other socio-cultural aspects of the work: their relationship to other men; perception of one’s character and natural disposition; the distinction and relationship between one’s intelligence, education and training; and one’s racial identity. That is to say that for printers then and us now, the problem is not just the invasion of cheap labour or machines. It is what those forces represent. Today, while we are undoubtedly concerned with the technical abilities of AI, we are also fearful of what a reliance on such tools might do to art, culture, and creative expression in and outside of work. Like composers in the nineteenth century, we are concerned about how the increasing presence of machines (and technology more

⁷⁷³ Stein, *Hot Metal*, 75.

broadly) might estrange us or alienate us from different modes of production, and what that might mean for our own identities.

Our discomfort with AI suggests that there is something intangible, important, and fundamentally human about some kinds of work and creating that cannot be easily replicated by machines. Perhaps this is why, while the 2020s have seen the widespread implementation of AI technologies, it has also seen “a growing desire to reconnect with the familiarity and warmth of handmade craftsmanship” (this rising interest is also likely due to the COVID-19 Pandemic). Does, as Natalie Mercer posit, “AI’s sleek appeal seems to lose its shine when compared to the authenticity of artisanal craftsmanship”? Of course, as Mercer argues, we have seen this turn to craft(ing) before.⁷⁷⁴ Take for example the British Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1870s that arose in direct opposition to industrialization. Today, movements that reject or oppose the hyper-digitization of the modern world do not necessarily look like William Morris and John Ruskin’s movement.⁷⁷⁵ Instead, they look like the turn toward “grandma hobbies” or “grandmacore,” affectionate terms for the contemporary rise in hobbies – like baking, knitting, crochet, embroidery, and gardening – that reflect the values traditionally associated with craft. For some, turning to craft is about reconnecting with a forgotten nostalgia or slowing down.⁷⁷⁶ For others, it is about disconnecting. In an October 2025

⁷⁷⁴ Natalie Mercer, “The Persistence of Artisanal Craft in an AI World,” *Adorno Design* (blog), October 14, 2024, https://adorno.design/editorial/the-persistence-of-artisanal-craft-in-an-ai-world/?srsltid=AfmBOoq_JamMX2rM_s-hwiGq_FrWlwGuDMTB832sHzNJ1J5eM0Z9-ezN.

⁷⁷⁵ Michele Krugh, “Joy in Labour: The Politicization of Craft from the Arts and Crafts Movement to Etsy,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 44, no. 2 (2014): 283, doi:10.3138/CRAS.2014.S06.

⁷⁷⁶ Greta Cross, “Is 2025 the year of ‘grandma’ hobbies? Here are the young people embracing ‘grandmacore,’” *USA Today*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/01/15/grandmacore-grandma-hobbies-trend/77675857007/>.

blog post, Jarrod Baddeliyanage writes that young people are “fed up with endless days sitting at a computer screen” and “have started to reach for more tangible distractions from the world of video calls and digital entertainment, resulting in an unprecedented rise in the popularity of traditional handicrafts.”⁷⁷⁷ Perhaps this rekindled acknowledgement of the humanity of creating and the value of labour is why sustainability movements, like the slow/local fashion movement, which consciously oppose the environmental harms and exploitative labour practices of the fashion industry while upholding craftsmanship and quality, have also gained momentum in recent years.⁷⁷⁸

My own craft-based work has, along with this project, forced me to reevaluate my relationship with technologies, new and old, and to renegotiate my identity as a creator in this hyper-digital age. Since 2017, I have been a printer in one way or another. I learned to print through an informal (not 6-year long) apprenticeship program at Massey College at the University of Toronto, and throughout much of my doctoral studies I worked as the Senior Book Arts Lab Assistant in the MacOdrum Library Book Arts Lab at Carleton University. In the undergraduate classes that I have observed or been a part in which letterpress printing or other book arts have been used as experiential learning tools, what is always emphasized is not the look of the final product, but the process of arriving to the final product. That is not to say that the students do not care what the final product

⁷⁷⁷ Jarrod Baddeliyanage, “Now Your Grandma’s Crafts: How Handicrafts Have Taken Over Your Timeline,” *Kemmler Kemmler* (blog), accessed October 7, 2025, <https://kemmler-kemmler.com/journal/not-your-grandmas-crafts-how-handicrafts-have-taken-over-your-timeline>.

⁷⁷⁸ Angela Beevers, “The Slow Fashion Movement: a Shift in Consumer Consciousness,” *The Retail Bulletin*, June 9, 2025, <https://www.theretailbulletin.com/retail-commentary/the-slow-fashion-movement-a-shift-in-consumer-consciousness-09-06-2025/>; Jharna Pariani, “How Craftsmanship is Helping this Slow Fashion Label do Away with Disposability,” *Conscious Fashion Collective* (blog), accessed October 9, 2025, <https://consciousfashion.co/features/craftsmanship-fashion>; Isabel Slone, “The Moral Quandary of ‘Slow Fashion’ Influencers,” *The New York Times*, February 8, 2022, updated March 1, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/08/style/fashion-influencers-sustainability.html>.

looks like, but this pedagogical approach is important because it places value on process, rather than product – a position that a reliance on AI tools, for example, would seem to negate.

Compositors were certainly concerned about the look of a final printed product because how it looked reflected their collective trade identity. However, in all their conflicts with boys, amateurs, women, racialized workers, other men, and machines, journeymen were always concerned about *process*. Questions like “Where and how long have they trained?,” “How did they come to acquire their knowledge?,” and “What do they know?” were always central to journeymen’s defensive posturing. These were not questions motivated by racial and patriarchal ideologies alone; they were also questions that placed value on the process, the time, and the education required to produce the final product. Journeymen wished to preserve the conditions that enabled quality work. That is, it did not matter if amateurs, women, or racialized workers could produce the same products as journeymen. Journeymen’s discourse suggests that even if the products looked the same, they were not, because it mattered who was doing the work and how they learned to do it. This project has shown how such a labour ideology is problematic and convoluted because it narrowly defines the work of typesetting as work for a specific kind of white male worker that may or may not have been representative of the trade in general. It bears remarking, however, that we find ourselves echoing similar perspectives today.

It is certainly concerning that we may not be able to tell the difference between machine-made and human-made art. Perhaps that is why recent trends have turned toward the creation of things that are visibly made by hand. As Kobe Millet, Florian Buehler,

Guanzhong Du, and Michail D. Kokkoris argue about AI-generated art, the use of such technologies in creative spaces is a “threat to an anthropocentric worldview” because “artistic creation” is “one of the last frontiers of anthropocentrism that has been untouched by AI until recently.”⁷⁷⁹ In some ways, we are justifying the need for human agency and creativity today using similar strategies as composers employed in the nineteenth century. We may not be using racist and patriarchal ideologies to assert the value and importance of human authors, creators, and workers (this is a good thing), but we are questioning the programming (education and training) and abilities (when compared to humans) of AI technologies. The discourse circulating in the second half of the nineteenth century indicates that journeymen were anxious to assert their uniqueness. To do this, they emphasized many of the qualities that made them special workers – their education, their intelligence, their literacy, their various aptitudes, their creative agency. We do a similar thing today when we insist on the difference between human and machine, when we take up “grandma” hobbies to assert that we see the value in handicraft when faced with overwhelming and evolving digital and technological landscapes. As Rebecca Solnit wrote when observing similar cultural shifts in the early 2010s, taking up these hobbies is “about finding alternatives to the alienation that accompanies” modern consumerism; “It’s an attempt to put the world back together again, in its materials but also its time and labour.”⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁹ Kobe Millet, Florian Buehler, Guanzhong Du, and Michail D. Kokkoris, “Defending humankind: Anthropocentric bias in the appreciation of AI art,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 143 (2023): 2, 7, Scholars Portal Journals.

⁷⁸⁰ Rebecca Solnit, “In the Day of the Postman,” *London Review of Books* 35, no. 16 (August 19, 2013), <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v35/n16/rebecca-solnit/diary>.

In 2023, I printed a broadside that questioned the typographical trade's moniker as "The Art Preservative" (Figure 30). The almost imperceptible words, "The Art Preservative," that foreground the question mark disappear into the paper, putting into question the lasting power of the trade's technologies and labour identities. The dot of the question mark is formed by the quote: "There are certain things connected with the 'art preservative' that can never become old."⁷⁸¹ Of course, there is something sorrowfully ironic about this statement. I felt that irony as I printed this broadside while working adjacent to rows of screens in the computer lab beside the Book Arts Lab. But, at the risk of being overly optimistic, I think there is also some truth to it. While the technologies of printers past may no longer be used the same way, nor are printers' customs largely upheld, there is an immutableness to journeymen's emphasis on the necessity and value of independence, human agency, autonomy in the workplace and in creative spaces that, in the face of new displacing and alienating forces, speaks rather powerfully to the contemporary moment.

⁷⁸¹ "The School of the Printing Office.," *The Dominion Printer* 4, no. 2 (June 1878): 3.

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