

Capturing the *Leader*: from Template to Snapshot

The *Leader*, a London weekly published between 1850 and 1859/1860, is one of the six journals whose full text is to be digitised in the ncse project. It was selected for inclusion as representative of a mid-century weekly which would be of interest to compare on the one hand to well-known up-market weeklies appearing in the 1850s such as the *Athenaeum*, *Spectator* and the *Saturday Review*, and on the other hand to radical newspapers such as the *Northern Star*, with which it overlapped and soon quarrelled, and other radical papers such as Julian Harney's *Star of Freedom* and *Red Republican*, and George Holyoake's *Reasoner*.

While the full text of each journal in ncse will be available and searchable online, the project's ultimate focus is not on a succession of single titles that span the century, but on the cluster of journals, and what reading and mapping across the group can usefully tell us about 19C serials as a category. Bourdieu's notion of text as always 'relational' is germane here. The cluster of titles provides a platform to consider serials themselves, generically and as forms, and to analyse contents, functions, and strategies comparatively, *in addition to* the opportunity to focus on the trajectory of a single run that digitisation of individual titles affords.

The textual aspects of the project were foremost at its beginning, but it became clear very soon that technical issues were equally challenging and pressing; crucially they were not separable or in any way or an add on. If paper and ink are the technology of the 19C serial, and shape every aspect of its nature, so are the software and electronic medium of the publication of ncse. While the generic template we devised governed our initial forays into the titles, we undertook a parallel, if somewhat later process of formal analysis of the layout and typographical design of each title for purposes of developing the software; this we learned to call 'segmentation'.

No sooner had we agreed on the contents of the textual template, than we stumbled across its limitations. Our plan had been to sample each run at its beginning, middle and end, and at more frequent intervals – time permitting -- if the run was particularly short, such as those of *Tomahawk* or the *English Woman's Journal*. Our aim was that in a brief period of time (a month), we

would acquaint ourselves diachronically with each title, as well as three moments in depth. We believed that most of the categories we included on the template were discernible through examination of the text.

However, that proved erroneous, for a variety of reasons that varied with the journal. We could not, mostly, ascertain the identity of editors and proprietors at any given date from the text itself. Nor had we counted on more than one edition with variations per issue date. Advertising wrappers were often missing, having been stripped out by binders or publishers, so it was even unclear whether the title carried adverts at all, or had a cover, and what the advertising rates, type, or quantity were. Two categories, for mergers etc and rivals/models etc immediately were consigned to square brackets because this information was not deemed easily available from the address of the *text* of the journals to which we largely confined ourselves for this exercise. But the most important limitation of the Template was the irregularity of the form and contents of the serials, particularly with the *Northern Star* and *Tomahawk*, where the density of material (NSt) or the illustrated text (Tom) made it difficult to manage recording the plethora of changing detail in categories such as Regular Sections, others contents (obits, letters, self-reflexive materials), and the identity of artists or contributors in the rigid categories and demanding boxes of a tabular template. Doing the template with respect to the NSt drove its compiler to near despair, and proceeded at a very slow pace.

Even *changes of title* eluded our grasp, as we didn't specifically register the importance of subtitles, so that although the *Leader* doesn't change its main title until 1860, its sub-title altered substantially in 1858, thus signalling (it transpires) a change of ownership as well as significant changes of coverage, length, and editor. The *Leader* title goes *from The Leader: A Political and Literary Review* (1850?) to *The Leader: A Political and Literary Review, Mercantile Journal and Record of Joint Stock Companies, Banks, Railways, Mines, Shipping &c* (24 July 1858) to *The Leader and Saturday Analyst* (Jan 1860) to absorption by *The Saturday Analyst and Leader* (July 1860 ff). Just to illustrate this point of dynamic and significant change within single runs, which applies to more than one of the journals, I want to note the

transformation of the *Leader* from a self-confessed *newspaper* at its launch to a disavowal of any newspaper properties by the end.

It undergoes major changes of contents *under the same general title*. Economic factors specific to the *Leader*, such as sales and resultant changes of editor and proprietor, result in considerable lurches of policy, politics, and content from 1851. In its last appearance as the *Leader and Sat Analyst*, it announces in an advert of Dec 1859 that it will transform itself from a newspaper to a review: it 'will consist entirely of original articles...the character of a newspaper will be so far abandoned that nothing will be admitted but a specially written analysis and record of all the political, literary, scientific, and artistic events of the week' (Brick, p. 258), whereas in its first manifesto it pledges itself to news: it is to be 'thoroughly a news-paper'...[with the] fullest accounts of whatever events command the interest of the week' from 'whatesoever source...Parliament or the police-office, from the drawing room or the workhouse' (quoted Brick 36). While this is dramatic, it shows clearly the power of a changing market which the single decade of the *Leader's* existence spanned, situated as these dates are, before and after the abolition of stamp duty in 1855. The function of weeklies changes with the onset of the greater availability of cheap news, both daily and weekly, and of new competition such as the *Saturday Review*.

The question of the balance between news and review is already present in the first appearance of the serial, in its divided form – a political front and a literary/arts back, signalled in a three-column newspaper-like format in the front half and a review-like two column format in the back for Portfolio, and from 1852 for reviews, and also in the subtitle, *A Political and Literary Review*. In this division, the *Leader* mimics contemporary weeklies that cover politics as well as the arts, notably the *Spectator* and the *Examiner*, and it is a convention that the *Saturday Review* will adopt when it breaks into the same niche market in 1855. Its dual contents and divided form signal the field into which it is entering.

But if we go beyond the template for a moment, and look at the contents of one of the bracketed categories, 'Others in same niche', the duality of the *Leader's* roots is more clearly limned. In 1850 when the *Leader* was launched, other titles at the same weekly frequency, comparable price, and pagination

included the *Athenaeum* confined to the arts and unstamped at 5d, and the stolid *Spectator* and no longer radical *Examiner*, both carrying political news and stamped at 9d and 6d respectively. The resolutely literary *Critic* appeared fortnightly, and the weekly *Northern Star*, a newspaper for the Chartist movement, was a significant model for the *Leader*, which matched its prioritisation of the political. However, because the *Leader* was not confined to a single party, it might be judged more radical than the *Northern Star*. But to the extent that the *Leader's* political focus suffused all of its copy in its early years including its adverts and literary contents, it falls into the same broad category of a radical paper as O'Connor's *Star*. Allan Brick's interpretation of 'the paper's chief effect' over the decade of its existence was 'to force m-c, upper-middle-class, and declassé intellectuals to join modern concepts of science and religion with radical politics'. (Brick 139)

If we turn to other contemporary papers, we can see continuing pressure on this divide. Subsequent to the *Leader's* launch, and during its run, the advent of the *Saturday Review* and the *Daily Telegraph*, both in 1855 and both direct outgrowths of the removal of stamp duty, were to undermine its readership, as it was by in 1855 more vulnerable under an editor who had substantially muted its radical nature. The acerbic *Saturday Review* added wit, youth, energy, and zest to the tried dual formula of the *Spectator* and the *Leader*, even if it was centre right, while the 1d *Daily Telegraph* was edited early on by Thornton Hunt who, having left the *Leader*, soon developed literary and arts coverage in the new paper. The move to weekly publication by the *Critic* in June 1858 further fuelled the competition, and in light of these external changes – removal of the stamp duty, new titles in the market, and former editors among the competition – it is an interesting move that in July 1858, the *Leader* attempted to develop an entirely unexpected element of its contents, its Commercial dept, the contents of which had waxed and waned from its inception as part of the Gazette tail of the journal.

Even the category of Frequency on the Template is fraught. If it was weekly throughout its run, the meanings of its frequency and its relation to the field of weeklies need to be refined. The weekly *Leader* is not in the same sub-field as the weekly *Northern Star*: one is a newspaper, signalled by its broadsheet

format, and the other is a weekly with news contents, signalled by its format, and comparatively equal weighting of news and features, politics and arts (as contained in its Portfolio Dept and reviews), and its openness to reader comment on its house politics, in Open Council, at least between 1850 and 1855.

So, the bare categories of any Template are basic and partial data, which we used for an initial 'fix' on the succession of single titles, and to deploy finally for a 'headnote' on each, but it is not for publication. Where does this leave a project like the *Waterloo Directory of English Newspaper and Periodicals 1800-1900* which, thankfully, has tried to produce a reference work around a very demanding template. The latest, 20 volume edition, in paper and online, of the *Waterloo* has been *invaluable* to all who use it, including ourselves, what with its attempt to list titles and changes of titles, place of publication publishers, editors, printers, proprietors, contributors, frequency, prices, and circulation as well as bibliography about titles, sources, and a thumbnail image of a page. It is *immensely* ambitious, and it should be no surprise that it is vulnerable to incompleteness and inaccuracy, even in those titles that it has sought to cover already. Being online, it is always in progress, and includes very full entries as well as listed titles awaiting shelf checking. But the other 'information' that *Waterloo* carries is THE necessary caveat in working with the vast field of serials, and that is the impossibility of perfection or completeness, even in its most basic form of the factual record. *Waterloo's* ambitious template alone signals the ocean of basic data that we lack. What projects like *ncse* or *SciPer*, or monographs, anthologies, or reference works like *Wellesley* or *Waterloo* on the press do, necessarily, is provide indicative (and partial) modes of access to this vast, largely unmapped terrain.

It is tempting, in doing so, to impose our contemporary disciplines on the otherwise organised knowledges of the 19C, but full of dangers. Thus Alvin Sullivan's 4 volumes on *English Literary Magazines* was bound to misrepresent the hybrid contents of 19C serials through literature-coloured glasses, or inversely, belie its title, as canny contributors do by referring to the full range of journal contents in their entries. It may be a real surprise to readers when they read the serials and find how 'unliterary' they are, or rather

that they are 'literary' but in the sense that the TLS is a 'literary' paper. Book reviews cover a wide range of subjects, including science, philosophy, medicine, gender, and law as well as fiction and poetry. The first volume of the *Wellesley Index* didn't list the poetry contents of the journals it indexed, as it surmised the poetry was all 'filler', of non-literary standard; it's a useful example of the power of ideology – the imposition of categories from the field of English literature as defined by 20C high modernism on another field, that of 19C higher journalism; that these two fields were uncomfortable bedfellows in the late 19C and the hierarchy that ensued in the 20C no doubt influenced the assumption of inferiority of journalism vouchsafed by literary modernism. But this is not to forget the pioneering enterprise that the *Wellesley Index* has been. It put study of serials on the map of Victorian Studies at an early date. Monographs on single titles can also be crucial, and Allan Brick's unpublished Yale dissertation on the *Leader*, remains the most sustained study of the title, and merits close reading for its methodology (its problems and successes) as well as its research.

The need to go beyond the text to produce meanings of our titles and cluster was also illustrated by the richness of contemporary contexts such as the *Newspaper Press Directories*, in the case of the *Leader* Mitchell's of 1851, 1855, 1857, and 1860. Each volume includes a standard listing, a paragraph which probably derives from input from Mitchell's staff and that of each serial. While the paragraphs tends to remain the same from year to year, the adverts inserted by the *Leader* change over the decade; they constitute paratextual self-portraiture, analogous with the initial Manifesto. In successive NPD adverts, we initially (1851) are unexpectedly presented with the *Leader* as a 'family magazine', a claim that by 1855 only survives in the form of the assurance of vigilant censorship of adverts: the *Leader* 'excludes all objectionable Advertisements; and its condensation of Police cases and Criminal Records carefully expunges all offensive details' (Mitchell NPD 1855, p. 93). No amount of reading of the text of the journal would have identified it as a family magazine or its adverts as inoffensive without these prompts. It invites the unexpected comparison of the *Leader* with the later *Cornhill*, and makes us consider afresh the overlap of contributors, notably G H Lewes.

There is even a novel *Friends of Bohemia* which satirised the *Leader*, published during its lifetime in 1857 by a former editor, Edward Whitty, after he left the staff.

I have already noted the routine privileging of politics over literature in the sub title of the *Leader* and this is reflected in the standard NPD paragraph, but there is also a reiterated large claim in this paragraph for the *Leader's* distinctiveness, carried over from its inception, in the importance it gives to literature and art criticism as late as 1857; this at odds with the abbreviated space for literature after July 1858 when the journal goes mercantile. The economic fragility of the journal in 1857 is also discernible in the modesty of the 3 line advert that year, which refers baldly and only to 'politics and literature', whereas the advert of 1855 is long, discursive, and tenaciously ideological in its adherence to 'positive science'. With hindsight, the sale of the *Leader* in 1858 is prefigured in the advert of 1857. More generally, the importance of adverts to the study of 19C culture will be far more discernible once 19C serials are searchable and accessible.

There is one other intriguing direction for the *Leader* mooted in the long advert of 1855, which indicates another function of metropolitan weekly journals in reference to other serials (provincial? or perhaps even colonial?), that is, the *Leader's* bid for the peculiar compliment of plagiarising, paid routinely by provincial papers to metropolitan organs before the repeal of the stamp duty and before provincial access to the wire services. We read in the 1855 advert that 'the particular mode of compiling the news offers great facility for expanding such portions as may be most interesting, while no matter indispensable to completeness is omitted.' (Mitchell's NPD 1855, p. 93). From the radical *Leader's* perspective, with its aim of education of its readers, what may appear as a bid for sales may also be a strategy of permeation and dissemination.

The link between these adverts in an external site which are addressed to the trade (advertisers and other serials) and the address of the *Leader* to its readers in its internal self- adverts and/or Manifestos is a generic point which future research methodology can use to gain a view of the complex cultural position of serials, by observation of a title's address to its advertisers and the trade, and to its readers. As late as July 1858, in its penultimate Manifesto on

the point of transformation and tacitly of sale, it is still ambitious to be a journal of record. It advertises the shift of location of its adverts, from the last pages of the journal to 'wrappers' at the beginning and end, which will make it 'more convenient' for binding, as well as show the adverts to more advantage (and attract more advertisers). In comparison with other analogous journals of this time, such as the *Saturday Review*, the number of pages devoted to adverts in the *Leader* (ca 4) is extremely modest, and a bid to increase these understandably goes hand in hand with the effort to attract new readers and higher circulation in the mercantile classes by the addition of the commercial departments.

Modern sources must be acknowledged as one of the great supplements to the Template. In addition to Waterloo, Sullivan, and Brick, I want to mention the *ODNB*. In a context of anonymity and pseudonyms, biography particularly yields links of editors with other titles both before and after their stints on the *Leader*, which indicate their politics and journalism preferences, and tensions among them as related individuals (what Bourdieu calls their habitus or 'socialised subjectivity'), which not only play out in the journal in contemporary and retrospective readings, but also provide us with an overview of the profession of journalism in the period, which itself is a context for the *Leader* and the other titles in the cluster: For example:

Thornton Hunt founder editor of *Leader* was ed of *Spectator* in 1840s and returned to it in 1858, after he left *Leader*; the printer of early issues of *Leader* is the same as that of *Spectator*, the offices of which are like the *Leader's* on Wellington Street. Soon after Hunt left the *Leader* in 1855, he became ed of *Daily Telegraph*, which soon added book reviews, drama and music criticism, and sport, and in 1856 foreign and provincial correspondence, so that DT became a rival of *Leader*

Lewes was lity editor of the *Leader* until ca 1854, and afterward of the *Cornhill* 1860-64; went on to be a co-founder/ed of FR in 1865.

Holyoake was editor of radical papers in late 40s such as *Cause of the People*, *Spirit of the Age*, and *People's Review*. Of the founders, Hunt and Holyoake were strongly committed atheists and secularists, while Larken was a minister of the Church and socialist—desirous of disseminating Christian Liberalism.

The useful contribution that the ODNB can make is also evident from a *missing* life, that of Edward Pigott, the unpopular and benighted Examiner of Plays from 1874, who hated Ibsen and banned *Salome* in the 1890s. He was the editor of the *Leader* for half of its existence, from Jan 1852 to June 58 (with a one year break 52/3). He gets short shrift from Brick, and there is no ODNB life, or any full-length biography that I can find.

The diversity of these journalists' positions made negotiation of the *Leader's* copy not only sensitive in accordance with what the broadbase diversity of their reader/ consumers would withstand, but also the complex diversity of the producers of the weekly, the editors, backers, and contributors themselves. With respect to its readers, Brick is wry: While professing religion, 'The *Leader* combined the essential strands of unbelief: the worship of science, the evolutionary interpretation of history; political radicalism..., and F.W. Newman's attack upon the immoralities of Christian dogma. ' Moreover 'advertising cards' associated the *Leader* with Holyoake, the atheist, and Harriet Martineau was a frequent signed contributor. (Brick 122).

Brick provides a fascinating insight of these 'advertising cards'. In drawing attention to other contemporary serials with which the *Leader* clashed/engaged, he cites the *Church weekly*, the *Guardian*. Beside offering names of anonymous subscribers, he discloses some sharp and aggressive marketing of the *Leader* in its early years, reflecting Hunt's considerable experience as a radical journalist and the son of a radical journalist. Brick quotes a *Guardian* leader 'The Social Regeneration School that appeared in Nov 1851:

'on the public advertising placards of the *Leader* now going about, the names of the following contributors to the *Leader* appear: Foxton, Larken, Kingsley, Dawson, Neale, Owen, Froude, Thornton Hunt, Holyoake, Landor, Marotti, Martineau, Manzini, Newman, and others,' whose names are reserved for special reasons'. Should any of these gentlemen object to the mention of their names in this place, -- we can only say that this is no publication of them; they are public already, placarded at every railway station, for anybody to see who likes. The paper is announced in obtrusively large letters as a 'first-class family newspaper,' and as intended to 'develop the utmost freedom of

intellect, energy of production, popular power, and in the political and social relation of all the classes the paramount influence of natural affection' (qtd Brick 137). That the name of Charles Kingsley, an ordained priest and Christian Socialist, was publicised in connection with the *Leader* was without his consent, as he soon made public, and rested entirely on a single letter of protest about the *Leader* in Open Council.

The *Guardian's* attack on the *Leader* is part of a backlash detailed by Brick, in which the *Leader* of 3 Aug 1850 is taken to task for its criticism in an editorial of the marriage laws in conjunction with the alleged communism of the weekly. This combination was also castigated by Greg in the *Edinburgh Review* in January 1851 in the course of a review of two works by Kingsley, and echoed in *CEJ*, which placed Kingsley's novels on the same side as the *Leader!* The *Leader's* relation to liberal reform is thus criticised by activists of the right and from the left (such as Kingsley) from early on, despite the *Leader* opening its pages to all in Open Council. As late in the *Leader's* life as the first half of 1857, it was still 'open' to the marriage question, but in the Open Council section rather than openly critiqued by editors. Bessie Rayner Parkes, from February to June 1857 contributed, irregularly, five letters to Open Council— indeed a series of articles —on the various paragraphs of the Married Women's Property Act. Parkes' intervention in the *Leader* also links it with another reformist title of the *ncse* cluster, the *English Woman's Journal* (1858), which she financially backed and edited as part of the Langham place activists already gathered together.

This series of articles was identified in the second part of the *ncse* process of 'page turning', during which we are aiming to go through all the pages of journals, to augment and confirm impressions from the snapshot (which we began but couldn't sustain), but mainly to identify missing pages or issues, or corrupt printing, with an eye to finding substitutes from other libraries to improve the film from which the digitised text is made. Despite being labour intensive, page turning is invaluable in the revelation of links among serials in terms of personnel and politics (eg NSt and L) and rivalry with/imitation of contemporary titles. It is also indicative of changes within a run that are not signalled by sale of title, but which may signal change or upheavals of staff, loss of advertisement revenue, or poor circulation figures and consequent

retargeting of readership. Variation in anonymity and signature policies, or in department categories that invariably crop up over a run – additions (eg The Labour Market (May-Aut 1850) -> Progress of the People in 1853) and subtractions(irregular/ infrequent.presence of Open Council and rarity of Portfolio in 1857) – leave questions -- about the significance of these dates, choice of categories, and priorities --that may be answered in other contexts at a later point in the project.

We have also long since begun to discuss metadata, advanced metadata and concept mapping, considerations which have already added, just in conceptualising them, rich layers to this terrain of 'basic' data that we have registered in the *Leader*. One of the greatest challenges of our project is to develop software that can make accessible our complex hierarchical models of concepts and indeed structures or segmentation of the journals. It is already clear that part of our understanding, however elaborately and carefully mapped, will be captured by the software, due to limits of time, labour, funding, and ingenuity, and technology!

But ncse, in its micro scale of six full text journals, edited and mapped to the cutting edge of the capacity of technology available at this moment, will join two macro projects of more raw, full-text digitisation of 19C serials, the BL/JISC nineteenth-century newspaper project of 49 titles, and the Thomson Gale plan to digitise 100s of periodical titles; both are ongoing and scheduled to publish within the next two years. Together these three projects can potentially transform the task of research into all aspects of the 19C, putting hundreds of serials, multi-faceted gateways to their time, within geographic reach of readers at all levels and varieties of disciplines – if they have the technology, and if access is easily and cheaply acquired.

Ncse will be free and publicly available, worldwide, thanks to the AHRC; it is not yet clear what the availability of the BL and Thomson Gale projects will be, but the case of the *Waterloo* is cautionary, and perhaps to a lesser extent even the cases of the *ODNB* and the *Times* full text. Many universities all over the English speaking world will remain without access to these materials, as will schools and individual scholars. Professor Gordon Johnson, chair of CUP, is chillingly articulate in the THES of Aug 19 about the bottom line of British publishers with respect to digitisation – the cost of their investment

and recouping it, intellectual property rights, and conservation of the information: 'the digital revolution is both marvellous *and* expensive. It is amazing that diagrams in a scientific paper can now be manipulated by readers, and that textbooks come with electronic materials that keep it constantly up to date. Having experienced such benefits, the academic world want them as standard. But it does not have the resources to pay for them. ...there is no real understanding of the costs involved in its creation and management. Some of the biggest publishing conglomerates have withdrawn, at least for the moment, from full-scale electronic publications, in some cases having spent tens of millions with no prospect of a viable return.' (p. 23). Professor Johnson is pleased to remind us, in his conclusion, that we can return to our books, noting the resistance to reliance on electronic publication only.

Key to the attraction of digitisation projects to librarians and scholars is conservation, in the face of the haunting spectre of the disappearance of the paper archive as we store and consult it, when it crumbles to dust before our eyes. From this perspective, dissemination of serials electronically is a by product; primarily it is a means to fund the microfilming of the archive, as microfilm is at once a platform for textual digitisation and a stable form of conservation in a world of technical change, in which our digitisation projects will be overtaken by new hardware, software, and techniques before we finish them.

As for our edition of the *Leader*, it should alert its readers to the category of the weekly in the 19C, and how this type of radical middle class weekly compares with other weeklies in the cluster, such as the Northern Star and the Tomahawk, as well as other more similar contemporaries. Falling as it does, on both sides of the repeal of stamp duty, the *Leader* is indicative of the British press at a moment of significant change, as well as of British politics at mid century. A network of journalists and capital, which meshes with other titles, is evident in its frequent changes of owners, editors, and printers. As well, there is an observable struggle to identify a heterogeneous readership across parties, class and gender, which resonates with the problems of other unaffiliated journals. Its radical vision for the arts as well as politics is of interest too, bringing it into relation to Chapman's and Marian

Evans' quarterly *WR*, as are its profound and pioneering engagement with evolution, science more generally, religion, and social science. In the pages of the *Leader* these debates are loosened from their author contexts and volumes in which they have largely been accessed for the last 150 years, and seen cheek by jowl in the rough and tumble of the broad cacophony of news, commentary and analysis which constitutes the journalism of the day.

Laurel Brake, Sept 2005.

British Association of Victorian Studies panel.