

**Publishing Periodicals: OU/IES Seminar in Book History and
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**‘Town and Country’? : the *Northern Star*, the *Leader* and multiple
editions**

This paper arises from ncese (19C serials edition), a three-year research project funded by the AHRC. It investigates how two serials deal with the problem of distribution over geographical and demographical space: what the phenomenon of multiple editions – town and country, first, second and beyond, North and South – can contribute to understanding of the 19C press and the public sphere in the period between the Reform movements of the 1830s (which gradually led to the enfranchisement of a higher number of participants in national and local politics, and an increase in stakeholder/readers of the press, and the removal of Newspaper Stamp duty in 1855, which lowered prices, fostered local weeklies, upped the frequency of already-established titles, and in a few cases resulted in the establishment of new dailies (eg the Daily Telegraph). Focus on and comparison of case studies of multiple editions of a London-based progressive weekly (1850-60) and an initially northern weekly broadsheet newspaper (1837-52) illuminate the specific conduct and precarious fortunes of these reformist weekly serials, but also indicate larger patterns in the period of communication, advertising, distribution, newspaper economics, changing technology, and working concepts of local, metropolitan, and national.

These multiple editions, in weeklies, might be usefully compared with other models of multiple editions of the day, such as the most ubiquitous one of successive editions of daily national newspapers: only the first edition was normally destined for national and international distribution. Editions to follow largely provided readers in the same city and region as the place of publication with changing, up to date ‘national’ news including, for example, closing city prices, war or political news, or sports results. While distribution also figures in these editions subsequent to the first, their local character means that their distribution is quicker and probably less expensive than that

of the first edition: distribution of the 2nd editions and after multiplies circulation, and maximises market permeation in a single geographical locus, however faceted into individual newsagents on numerous high streets across the serial's 'home' ground.

In the weekly examples I am investigating, the complexity of production coupled with the economic expense, of multiple editions emanating from a single hub, result in the gradual withdrawal of both papers from their ambitious beginnings with respect to clearly differentiated editions. The models of the two mid-century titles discussed here pre-date the later 19C syndicate model of local newspapers which builds in part on the *Northern Star* model, which consisted normally of 3 or more editions emanating from a single location.

Another model for multiple editions via syndication, exemplified in Scotland, is that of the *People's Journal*, a cheap weekly which appeared north of the border in January 1858. The publisher John Leng's first redaction of his penny weekly *People's Journal*, the *Dundee, Perth, and Forfar People's Journal*, has been identified as a descendant/imitator of *Chambers's*, 'the real pioneer'. Leng saw the solution to the problem of building readership in different geographical and indeed economic terms than either *Chambers's* which immediately went South for readership, or the *Northern Star* with its urban agents in the UK and Ireland. Arguing that the newspaper press in Scotland 'did not have to attract an English readership as a basic fact of existence', Ian Donaldson suggests that evidence of a new popular form developed in the second half of the century, 'based on a distinctively Scottish newspaper press, owned and produced within the country with the outlook and tastes of a Scottish audience specifically in mind'; a new form of post-repeal Scottish weeklies emerged which were both newspaper and miscellany, of which the *People's Journal* is a prime example (Donaldson 1986, 14, *et passim*). Whereas the Chambers brothers' project a generation earlier in 1832 arose out of pre-Reform Britain and fear of Jacobitism, the *People's Journal* appeared in the wake of the Disruption in Scotland and of Chartism, events through which organised labour found its voice. Leng's prospectus targeted

working-class readers, purporting to replace 'cheap papers which have grown up since the abolition of the stamp, as being utterly unworthy of the intelligence and character of the respectable portion of the working class' (qtd Donaldson 1986, 11).

Where *Chambers's* treated Scotland as part of a larger market, the *People's Journal* expanded by means of local editions, which reflect its origins in the newspaper. The first edition served Dundee and its environs, then Fife (1859), then Aberdeen (1863?), and then in quick succession separate editions in Perth, Forfar and the South of the country, arguably resulting in Scotland's first truly national newspaper. Where the *Chambers* expanded to other countries such as England, Ireland and the colonies, Leng was content to multiply his readership within Scotland, calling on its extensive network of editors, printers and publishers to distribute as well as produce the papers. Lindsay writes '[W]e travelled over many parts of the country, establishing agencies, appointing correspondents, and, generally, promoting the circulation of the *People's Journal* in the North of Scotland' (Lindsay 1898, 252–57). The circulation figures tell the story of their success. Starting with 7,000 copies per week in Dundee, circulation doubled within a year; by 1862 the combined titles were selling 37,500 weekly, higher than any other weekly outside London. By 1866, weekly circulation had reached 100,000, and by 1875, now with three additional titles, nearly 130,000 (Donaldson 1986, 23–26). The mixture of regional news, miscellaneous items and a regular presence of vernacular Scots kept these titles in touch with Scottish working-class life.

Multiple editions tend to be overlooked by scholars and by libraries, for overdetermined reasons, all of which have to do with visibility and accessibility. Using the hegemonic model of book acquisition, libraries tend historically to have subscribed to and bound one edition only per issue, where multiple editions existed; even when libraries hold volumes of bound issues, more and more institutions acquire microfilm copies of newspapers, as newsprint both deteriorates and takes up valuable shelf space; microfilm copies almost always include one edition only, and the single origin of microfilm copies ensures not only that one edition, but the *same* edition is thus disseminated world wide. Moreover the tendencies of readers to consult

newspapers on microfilm, and of most researchers to search for specific information in response to extant research questions rather than browsing obscure the absence, and even the existence, of any multiple editions.

It was for these reasons that ncse, the Nineteenth-century serial edition, grant-aided by the British AHRC, decided to include multiples in our digitisation plans, once we registered them, that is. For when we did our original calculations of pagination for our titles, we did not take the possibility of multiple editions into account. However, once we **saw** and **registered** them, we found that even the main national copyright library in the UK, BL, did not hold full sets of multiple editions. While some multiples were included, many were missing, and where they were kept, they lack a systematic order, except perhaps the order in which they were received. Where multiple editions are available, their bibliographical features are sometimes only discernible, if at all, by careful reading of their contents; there is no certitude that the copy which comes first in the bound volume is the first edition. Thus, the origins of the uneven collection of multiples and their unsystematic order are unclear: did the distributors send all of the multiples to the copyright library or not, and if not, which edition did they send, and why? and did the library bind all that they received, or not? Who was doing the selection? Were they both?

The haphazard record of the libraries is indicative of the divergence of the two cultural formations: the newspapers for whom publication and distribution of multiple editions have to do with maximising the news contents on the date of publication (which in the case of the first edition is almost certainly different than the date of printing), while also ensuring maximum sales over as wide a geographical area as possible. Time is at a premium here, with the rush of the presses to get the first edition printed in time for transport to outlying points of consumption, followed by later editions in time to meet local patterns of consumption – market day, Saturday workers, or posting times, factors of social as well as physical Geography. Amidst the deadlines, distribution of multiple editions to the copyright library with its long-term aim of a repository of records for posterity may seem unwarranted and excessive. For the

library's part, the serial build up of newspapers, issue after issue, presents a protean task of storage, binding and cataloguing, but the compounding of serial publication by 'vertical' multiple editions may also appear excessive and result in ambivalence about acquisition on the library's part. Nor might the library be as inclined to chase up missing editions, week by week as it might be the single edition of a book. Thus the missing copies, and the invisibility of the phenomenon.

With respect to the six titles ncse is including in our edition, it transpired that only two had multiple editions, the *Leader* (1850-60), a weekly London-based paper based, like the *Spectator* in format, but progressive and reformist, costing 6d in March 1850; and the *Northern Star* (1837-52), also published weekly, but a national broadsheet, with a newspaper format, published in Leeds, allied with Chartism and costing 5d in 1850. *Tomahawk*, the third weekly of the ncse edition is a satiric, illustrated paper, and as a paper driven by illustration, with cuts needing to be prepared well in advance, it has no generic requirement of nuanced responses to time in distinct editions. All of the other titles are published less frequently than weekly, with one appearing fortnightly, and the other two monthly, and none have multiple editions.

Such cascading editions then are largely confined to papers aligned with the *ethos* of newspapers, published at intervals of a week or less, and papers whose frequency may ensure/require their privileging of up-to-date news. The multiple editions of the weekly *Leader* are initially designated Town and Country editions, and 1st and 2nd, and there are no more than two, while the multiple editions of the *Northern Star* vary in number from 2 at its demise to 8 at the height of Chartism, just before one of the Petitions was delivered. If the metropolitan centre of London is confidently referenced in the demotic 'Town' of the later edition of the *Leader*, all specificities of other locations in the UK are absorbed into the designation of the earlier 'Country' edition. They are alike presumably alike in having to reach their destination from the London hub for sale on the date of publication printed on the journal, the same date on which they appear in London. In this model, the readers of the Town at the 'centre' get the latest edition, with the latest news, including the commercial

prices and latest correspondence. Before widespread use of the telegraph, the importance attached to the 'closing' prices of the financial markets – perhaps the core element of 'hard' news in the later Town edition of the *Leader* in its early years – is a reminder of the origins of the press in the circulation of commercial news, and its persistent role as the medium of dissemination of such information to the country at large..

The most graphic testimony of the disadvantaged position of the 'Country' reader of the *Leader* is the inclusion of 'Postscript' from last week's Town edition. This parsimony on the part of the editors indicates both the premium put on a piece based on the *latest* news for the Town edition (published just a day later), and an economy which always privileges the town and penalizes the Country, who do not rate a Postscript of their own. While the *Leader* continued to have two editions through 1859, the designations Town and Country were dropped in early 1853 from 5 Feb, when Postscript was simply excluded from the Country editions. By 1856 Postscript appears in both editions, which are now identical. This does not seem to coincide with a change of editor or publisher. As the *Leader's* finances and optimism ebbs, the distinctions of content -- based on the difference of time of writing and printing, of the two editions collapses (a luxury no longer affordable?), and the fastidious sign of the *Leader's* registration of the dual timeframe for news slips into a fudged unitary 'instant' of publication, that of the earlier Thursday evening dateline.

The geographical configuration implicit in the *Northern Star* and its multiple editions is quite different from that of the *Leader*. First of all, its title immediately signals the division of the country into two, what E Gaskell writes into cultural memory as *North and South*, nearly 20 years later. Like other titles of its day – eg the *Northern Echo* and the *Northern Liberator* -- it is important to its internal ethos and its identity among other organs and its readers that it emanates from the working classes of the manufacturing North, not from the less industrialized South, and likewise *not* from London, the seat of Government. Moreover, in its discourse about its editions and readers, it divides the country into more nuanced urban, county and national areas,

which are on a more equitable footing with each other than the Town and Country division. Thus in its early years there is a Lancashire edition as well as a Leeds/ Yorkshire edition, from which city the paper is published until 1844 (when it moves to London), but also Irish and Scottish editions (neither of which we have seen or can trace).

While it is clear from this and the contents of the paper itself that England is privileged, with the most named centres of readers (with circulation described for eg, in 1838, at the micro level of city by city), this mapping of the UK with its specific identification of other centres of reader-workers, and of Chartist organization through whom the paper was distributed, is less hierarchical and more pluralist than the London-based nomenclature of the *Leader*. By naming editions more specifically, it is ensured that they carry an aura of *local* reference which readers might value, along with their access to and sense of inclusion in 'news' of the *national* movement. The *Northern Star's* interpolation of its readers through their locale brings detail to our understanding of real readers, consumption, and distribution of titles through local meetings and organizations.

Certainly in its early years to 1842 the *Northern Star* seems to be experimenting with a less binary model of regions in its distribution of illustrations, which it supplies county by county over weeks on pre-announced dates. In a recent essay in *Papers for the People* on these graphic supplements (37 free steel engravings), Malcolm Chase explains the technical underpinning of this distribution plan -- the problem of printing huge numbers of high quality graphic material to a weekly publishing schedule, but what interests me here is the interpolation of readers by region week after week, in the schedules and announcements, and also the shared sense of expectation and pleasure of geographically defined groups of readers as they prepared for and received their prints. Chase argues that the *Northern Star* used the device of political portraits to educate its readers, but also more commercially to cement its circulation in a particular form of sales, by subscription, as it was ostensibly supplied (via local newsagents) to 'purchasers' of that kind alone.

While the *Leader* adheres to the binary nomenclature of Town and Country until 1853, in a note to its 'Country' subscribers it stresses their *choice* of options, between the prompt first Country edition, or the second more up to date Town edition, which will arrive on Monday rather than Saturday. So, the *Leader* too undermines the exclusive privilege of 'central' physical location, by giving their country readers the *choice* either to bow to the fact of their distance from the centre and receive news a week behind their metropolitan co-readers, *or* to do away with adherence to the nominal date on the masthead, and perhaps more convenient patterns of consumption, and *get* their news more up to date, but two days later than the nominal Saturday publication date, on Monday, where there is less time to read it.

As the *Leader* begins in 1850, the *Northern Star*, starting in late 1837 in the vanguard of Chartism, is losing circulation in its aftermath, and ceases publication in 1852. More saliently than the *Leader*, the *Northern Star* is an advocacy newspaper, with 'branches' in a variety of centres which correspond with manufacturing industries (the textile workers) and Chartist groups. These clusters of industries and groups were moreover convenient units for distribution and mustering readership. From the beginning, then, the remit of the paper was geographically diverse, and it and its Chartist project geographically pluralist, a multi-centeredness that was articulated discursively. Editorial matter was routinely broken up into reports on regions with subsets of locations within them, and adverts announce meetings and services that reflect a specific and wide geographical reach, as well as the normally non-specific 'universal' address of adverts for patent medicines. Advertisements which were initially accommodated within the 8 page allocation of the paper on the front and back pages were so voluminous by 1841, and encroaching on editorial space that a separate wrapper for adverts was resorted to. Unfortunately, we have not had sight of these, to see for eg, if they were regionally specific. But, clearly, adverts were an important part of the news the *NS* circulated as well as an income provider.

Beside this insistent and pervasive local record and information (including an article on a local hurricane among the political news), sit regular references to national 'progressive events, such as a meeting of the British Association for

the Advancement of Science, which is reported in detail, as well as regular critical reporting of the 'Imperial' Parliament. The notion of the 'national' in the *NS* emerges from a mosaic of local and central government events, along with an eloquent discourse of universal discourse associated with *Chartism* and employment attaching to large regional meetings, events, and publications. The *NS* is bent on representing a public sphere of participatory democracy, and its formal organization is governed by the geographical diversity of its readership.

In a story in 1838 on the proposed founding of a new paper in Newcastle, the *Northern Liberator*, there is an insight into what it identifies to be of interest to working class readers of its Town edition as local news: police reports and political meetings. The *NS* included both, but this pattern of inclusion has barely survived in 21C local, regional or national press, which tend strongly to privilege one category at the expense of the others. These two mid 19C serials with multiple editions are constantly transgressing these boundaries by an economically-enforced degree of maximum uniformity while observing them by way of their local and regional contents. The problems for news rich weeklies, with multiple editions, who share both ambitions for national communication and circulation and awareness of the economic and political power of local copy, letters, advertisements and notices of meetings are dependent in this instance on the energy and particularity with which one imagines the nation and the public sphere. Whereas the *Leader* puts little effort into this task, one might say that the *Northern Star* is characterized by aggressive geographically diverse marketing for readers, and arguably, consumed by it. As a reader of the *NS*, one has the sense of a carnivalesque variety, or even of chaos. Clearly, systematic order and layout are problems, and its organization suggests constant struggles of its Editors with the diversity and amount of copy, interpretation of its diverse reader base, and the balance of its 'universal education' mission with local and national news reporting.

Multiple editions indicate the geographical hybridity of the *NS* and the *Leader*, in both of which geographically diverse markets are constitutive, but I would

argue far more in the earlier advocacy newspaper the *Northern Star* than in the metropolitan weekly. The *Leader* fell back on the population density of the South and its networks for its circulation, although early in its history it did make a vitiated effort to muster northern readers.

In conclusion, I would argue that the presence/ absence of information in itself (the obituary missing in the Town edition, crowded out by pressing news) is not the primary significance of multiple editions, however exasperating to the researcher it is. Comparisons of these versions of the 'same' issue pinpoint when news breaks, when it is available for dissemination, what hierarchies attach to it (what goes), and where it is inserted. Comparison of these Multiples inform us about the deep structures of the press in this particular sector and period – the impact of geographical location and distribution networks on titles; Time and the management of news; the relation of time to the construction of hierarchical categories of news and the press, such as provincial, regional, and local. Costing a similar price, if arguably in different market niches, the multiple editions of these two progressive titles map tellingly different versions of what constitutes the public sphere from their bases in the North and the South.