Time, history and the making of the industrial middle class: the story of Samuel Smith

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Abstract

This article uses the politics of time to explore the making of the industrial middle class. It argues that anxieties about the decline of industry and the future of liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century fuelled a small explosion in life writing, prosopography and popular history. Accounts combined anecdotes about everyday life and reminiscences of the great civic age in a network of texts that attempted to recreate the associational life of the industrial middle class and presented it as the foundation of national progress. However, slips in time between retrospection, nostalgia, memory and history reveal the complexity of late-Victorian anti-industrialism and the tensions in liberalism between a political culture that was inclusive and open and a social world that was not. The article combines a deep reading of the autobiography of the cotton magnate and liberal politician Samuel Smith alongside popular local history and collective biography. In so doing it shows how life stories were consciously composed as history, intent on shaping the provincial middle class as a historical force at a time of uncertainty about the future of industry and of liberalism.

Key words: liberalism, middle class, autobiography, class, civic, memory, cotton

In December 1906, the recently retired Liberal M.P. Samuel Smith died whilst attending the Indian National Conference in Calcutta. Obituaries soon appeared which outlined the story of Smith's life, no doubt drawing on his recently published autobiography.[1] Born in 1836 in Kircudbright, Scotland, Smith was the son of a farmer and the grandson of the local parish minister. He came to Liverpool as an apprentice in 1853 and was, by the 1860s, a successful and wealthy cotton broker. As his business grew, he became an active philanthropist and a prominent figure in Liverpool's civic politics. He advocated a liberalism that combined the economic vision of Cobden and Bright with the Christian philanthropy of Lord Shaftesbury to campaign for free trade and social reform. He was elected to parliament in the 1880s, first for Liverpool and then for Flintshire in Wales. In later life, he devoted himself to campaigns for the reform of alcohol laws in India and against obscenity in theatres, issues he saw as an extension of a Non-Conformist liberal agenda which promoted the building of character through the moral leadership of an exemplary middle class. As the obituaries demonstrated, his life story represented the age: the rise of the industrial middle class from rural farming roots to civic politics and parliament, and from the cotton businesses of northern provincial towns to finance, empire, global politics and trade. The obituaries also noted the declining influence of men like Smith. As the parliamentary correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* noted, Smith's 'demure austerity' and 'absence of humour or geniality' did not suit the cut and thrust of turn of century politics. Even his 'long beard' marked him out as a man from an earlier era whose dogged pursuit of a non-conformist liberal agenda now provoked ridicule. The *Manchester Guardian* noted, he 'cared nothing for the frown of the world or the laughter of the young Tory bloods when they returned from dinner to jeer and flout at

the last of the Puritans.' The obituary ended 'There are few Puritans nowadays. If he is not the last, he is almost the last'.[2]

Smith's story demonstrates why the industrial middle class are so hard to locate in histories of the nineteenth century. One the one hand, the outlines of Smith's life suggests there is something tangible in accounts of the rise of a new middle class from provincial roots whose advance was closely intertwined with the building of the industrial nation. His story demonstrates how this class shaped free trade political economy and evangelical religion into an 'industrial spirit', a habitus built around the virtues of work, self-making and social reform that forged the networks and practice necessary to its materialisation. On the other hand, Smith's story illustrates the evanescence of this middle-class world. At the end of the nineteenth century, Smith's interests were diverse enough to sever any easy association with the spaces, places and politics of the industrial middle class. Smith was a cotton broker in Liverpool, with business interests in India, who owned two cotton-spinning mills near Stalybridge. He had homes in London and Liverpool and towards the end of his life, a large gentry house in Orchill Scotland.[3] In moving so far from the site of middle-class power and authority, the places in which stories of self-making and social reform were forged, Smith undermined the narratives and associations that sustained a social group. As *Vanity Fair* noted in 1904, Smith 'started as a poor cotton broker in Liverpool and ended a rich one'.[4] There was nothing more to the story than this.

The inability of the industrial middle class to make a lasting mark on national culture and politics has been seen as evidence of their 'failure', an indication that they lacked any purposeful class credentials in the first place. Marx complained that they delegated power to the aristocracy, and Cobden that they were happy to 'prostrate themselves at the feet of

feudalism.'[5]Later Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn located the 'economic decline and social deadlock' of the 1960s in the failure of the nineteenth century industrial bourgeoisie to challenge England's aristocracy. Instead, they argued, 'a supine bourgeoisie produced a subordinate proletariat', a situation which, over time, stymied the economy. [6] This view was restated from a different perspective in the 1980s in studies that blamed Britain's industrial decline on the failure of the industrial middle class to confront the anti-industrialism at the heart of British culture.[7] According to Rubinstein, at the end of the century, power and wealth were located in London and the South, in flows of finance and in political networks that linked London, the counties and empire, but which side-lined the industrial north.[8]

In challenging such arguments, subsequent histories of the middle class have identified an industrial bourgeoisie that was coherent and 'historically purposive'.[9] These studies charted the emergence of a distinct local elite made wealthy through manufacturing who cohered around campaigns for parliamentary reform, free trade and the repeal of the Corn Laws. However, by locating the middle class in provincial towns and cities of the early nineteenth century, these studies conspired in the view that the middle class had no nation-wide or lasting influence on British culture and politics. Thus, Wahrman could argue that the middle class were simply the product of a political movement, an interest group imagined up in the political and economic reform campaigns of the early nineteenth century who cast nothing more than a shadow over the late-century.[10] Other historians have interpreted the incremental invisibility of the middle class as a measure of its success. The liberal values attributed to the middle class in the campaign for parliamentary reform in the 1820s and 1830s, such as independence and work, became so embedded in Victorian

culture that they were no longer associated with any one social group and instead provided the basis for a popular and parliamentary liberal culture.[11] In fact, the universalism of liberal values in the north of England has led historians like Joyce to question the usefulness of concepts of class.[12] For Joyce, the shared language of mid-century liberalism was more than a linguistic resource for the building of imagined communities; it actively shaped subjectivity, forcing deep connections that cut through class.[13] Taken together studies suggest that, whether through absorption into the aristocracy or through evaporation into a popular liberalism, the industrial middle class erased itself from existence. Although remnants of their interests and associations can be identified in the manufacturing regions of the north of England, what Wahrman calls a 'distinctive nation-wide' industrial middle class is hard to find.[14]

This article attempts to resolve the contradictions surrounding the industrial middle class by showing how it was the product of its own failure. It argues that the industrial middle class became aware of its own effacement at the end of the century and used autobiography and prosopography to write histories of the century and the nation with them at the core. As Koselleck has argued, 'If history is made in the short run by the victors, historical gains in knowledge stem in the long run from the vanquished'. The vanquished are compelled to record their version of events and in explaining why the future they imagined did not happen 'they face a greater burden of proof'. [15] To consider men of the industrial middle class as vanquished may seem controversial. However, as the Tory bloods who ridiculed Smith suggest, the mid-Victorian liberal culture so central to middle-class identity was shaken by the revival of Conservatism and the 'vulgarities' of mass politics.[16] Men like Smith were easily displaced by these changes. Their public careers and personal fortunes

were made from the expansion of capitalism and democratisation of politics but they struggled to adapt their voice to changing cultures of business and politics.[17] By the end of the century the liberal free trade philosophy in which men like Smith were schooled was threatened by protectionism, voluntarism was challenged by socialism, and the conjoining of religious conviction and politics became less easy to reconcile as the issue of disestablishment threatened to tear liberalism apart.[18] The sense of displacement that resulted was exacerbated by new business forms that unsettled any easy association between capital and place.[19] Smith helped to build the business, culture and politics that made his geographical and social mobility possible. As a result, by the end of the century he had moved far from his roots and early associations. He had, like others, helped to build a world he no longer understood. Smith's life writing then, like others of his generation and class, was a way of understanding how the present had arrived and what had happened to the future they had imagined. It recreated class through memories of association, made material by words.[20]

This article demonstrates how the industrial middle class was recreated through a web of writing that interlinked autobiography, biography and local history and intertwined stories of people, spaces, and things to recreate masculine associations. These accounts of middle-class life moved between the everyday and the exceptional, between nostalgia and history, between thoughts recorded at the time and retrospective reflection. It is in these overlapping temporalities that the making of the industrial middle class is just visible. Whilst studies have explored the politics of time in relation to patriarchy and race few have considered the way time shapes class. [21] Yet the rhythms of life and the ability to control them shaped networks and associations and informed a sense of being a constituent part of

a zeitgeist. The ability to describe these associations in retrospect, ascribing to them a historical purpose and meaning, forms part of the making of class.

Exploring the politics of time in the making of the industrial middle class requires a deep and contextual reading of autobiography. The first section of this article examines Smith's autobiography in detail to show how middle class men defined themselves by their ability to master the rhythms of an industrialising world signalled by their capacity to come together in associations and societies, in the same spaces at the same time. The second part draws on prosopography and contemporary local history to show how the rhythms that constituted the industrial middle class were threatened by new forms of business and politics at the end of the century. This disruption forced new understandings of the everyday associational life of the middle class which was recast in life writing as epoch making, responsible for modernising and civilising the nation. However, as the final part shows, these reminiscences exposed a core tension in the liberal ethos of the industrial middle class: a liberal culture that depended on openness for its legitimacy required exclusivity in practice.[22] The result is a series of stories that in different ways confronted a perceived anti-industrialism by attributing the making of modern Britain to the everyday activities of the industrial middle class.

Historians have shown how a deep reading of a life story can provide novel insights into questions of class; nevertheless it is a method that still raises questions about representativeness. [23] Smith's story was selected from a sample of over 100 autobiographies written by businessmen, industrialists, financiers and provincial lawyers taken from a broader study of over 300 autobiographies written by members of the Victorian middle class. [24] Smith was selected because of his typicality. As with other middle-class writers he

describes rural roots, the arrival in the industrial city, the struggle to make oneself, the building of community, the establishment of one's business, marriage and family life, followed by the pursuit of public life and politics - standard tropes in the autobiographies of businessmen and industrialists. Yet his autobiography is also different. Unlike many autobiographies written by normal middle-class men, Smith's was reviewed in the periodical literature, giving some indication of the context in which it was written and the dialogue in which it was engaged. Finally Smith wrote his autobiography at the same time as William Forwood, the Liverpool ship-owner and Conservative politician. Smith and Forwood were contemporaries whose paths crossed but who did little to register each other. Yet their stories offer points of contrast and comparison which show how difference was negotiated in the interest of class. The focus on one life provides a way to explore the boundaries between sameness and difference, individuality and collectivity and between the everyday and the exceptional. However, the issue of representativeness takes on a slightly different perspective here. Smith's story is examined for the way it attempts to represent a class, a nation and a time. As this article argues, it is the claim to represent an age that defines the industrial middle class.

Autobiography, time and memory

The surge in life writing in the late-nineteenth century has been attributed to the desire of a generation whose lives had been radically altered by social and economic change to re-connect with their roots and make sense of their journey.[25] Writers from a number of different backgrounds enjoyed describing the changing rhythms and patterns of life, contrasting the simplicity of an early-nineteenth century rural past, lived in tune with nature and the seasons, with late-nineteenth century urban, industrial life.[26] However, within such

narratives, the ability to move successfully between different social worlds was a marker of particular notability and one that became associated with the middle class. Robbie Gray's study of the life writing of Non-conformist ministers demonstrates how the history of mid-Victorian England was presented in autobiographies as an experience of individual mobility and as a description of networks. As the Nonconformist minister Joseph Parker claimed 'The Englishman who was born in 1830, as I was may be expected to know something of the Genesis of modern things, for before that pregnant period, social England was without form and void'.[27] This was more than an expression of simple self-making. As Parker's autobiography demonstrates, social and geographic mobility gave middle-class men the experience and authority to describe and order the world around them. Similar tropes can be seen in the life writing of the industrial middle class. A number of histories have exposed the myth of the outsider and the man of humble origins in the making of employer class in the industrial north; nevertheless, even small movements within localities could be attributed great significance in the story of industrial Britain.[28] Being able to move between and operate within the different social worlds of the county estate, the city, the factory and the council chamber was a mark of pride. Particular notability could be claimed by outsiders who had come from different surroundings to make their own way in new communities. Members of the so-called 'Scottish brotherhood', such as Samuel Smith, could draw their authority from their experience of very different worlds and their ability to find acceptance in traditional rural communities and in the established and emerging networks of growing towns and cities. The ability to adapt to different rhythms of life was a characteristic that was worthy of note.

Industrialisation and urbanisation produced new temporalities as the natural rhythms of life were replaced with repetitions and routines dictated by capitalism.[29] In this context, men could distinguish themselves by their ability not to become enslaved and defeated by the demands of everyday life in the industrial city. Smith described his arrival in Liverpool and his apprenticeship to a firm of cotton- brokers recalling the 'dull routine of the counting-house' and he referred to his work on invoices as 'a kind of degradation'. However, like those educated in top public schools who endured hours of Latin grammar as training for dull administrative careers in the civil service, Smith thought that his business success was rooted in the discipline of these early years and he drew lessons from this for his readers.[30] He claimed that the businessman must 'work for the future, not the present. He must realise that the slow upbringing of character brings its reward in course of time'. A similar narrative was used to describe his political work. Smith recalled the exhausting routine of business, charitable and public work and argued that, though he could not see it at the time, because he was 'like a man swimming for dear life', his years of voluntary work amongst the poor in Liverpool, of building its societies and institutions, of campaigning for reform, were laying the foundations for his political success. Crucial to this success was time for study. After arriving in Liverpool and beginning work in the cotton brokers, Smith set four hours an evening aside to study classics, history, philosophy, political economy and theology. Such narratives are not untypical of the life stories of the urban working-class. Many describe a daily struggle to find time and space for study and self-improvement. The difference for Smith was the access his pursuits provided to networks of like-minded men. Smith's studies led him to debating societies and his interest in theology drew him to members of his church in similar postions. Smith acknowledged he owed a great deal to the religious and literary societies of Liverpool which 'led me into kindly intercourse with active-

minded and religious men' and enabled him to refine his argument and develop his debating skills. According to Smith, his ability to balance dull routine with the expansion of his interests helped cultivate the talents and networks that led to success in business and politics. In retelling this part of his story he reshaped narratives of mobility and everyday routine into an alternative heroism in which the slow accumulation of knowledge and capital and the investment of time in building deep connections with people and places are associated with progress. [31]

Smith's life story seeks to demonstrate how important time and space were in negotiating differences of opinion and establishing shared interests. Great emphasis was given to the role of discussion and debate in drawing out points of agreement that could cut through political and religious differences. The ability to communicate with a broad public and command the respect of business rivals and political opponents was admired and carefully performed. For example, recalling the Liverpool by-election of 1882, Smith acknowledged that his political opponent, the merchant and ship owner Arthur Forwood, leader of the Conservative party in Liverpool, was 'a most able municipal administrator', 'incomparably better equipped for public life than I was'.[32] Such rituals of recognition were based on real understanding of Forwood's attributes. Both men had been trained in the art of debate as members of the Liverpool Philomathic Society in the mid-nineteenth century. The use of autobiography to describe associates and recognise the contribution of others was more than symbolic. It was, alongside the experience of mobility, another way of building prestige. When Smith won the election, he claimed that he was 'but the mouthpiece of greater and better men, such as Alexander Balfour, the Rathbones, Lockhart, Patterson, Lundie and others, at whose feet I had sat, and whose lives had interlaced with

mine'. The recognition of Liberal grandees and of political rivals was formative for Smith and

led him to contemplate the source of political differences and social progress. As Smith

claimed 'Few of us can claim to be original. Our mental stock is a compound of ingredients

drawn from our social environment. We get ideas we can hardly tell how. The difference

between minds is more in the power of assimilation that of origination'. He went on to note

that political differences depend on whether one has a receptive or resisting mind; one

produces a 'fossil, Tory' the other a 'progressive, reforming', Liberal. [33] Drawing others into

the life story in this way shows how reflection is used to identify connections between the

individual and a group. Distinguishing individual and collective memory is fraught with

difficulties, as the vast literature on the subject demonstrates.[34] In attributing his ideas to

others, Smith defines a social group who may take different perspectives – Tories like

Forwood for example – but who nevertheless share common understandings of the past. As

James Wertsch has argued, this 'complementary collective memory' depends on the

'smooth functioning of a set of reciprocally organised efforts'. [35] Smith's autobiography then

rearticulates a broad and inclusive mid-Victorian liberalism but, at the same time, it shows

how this was the expression of a small group of middle-class men whose shared

understandings were forged in the carefully bounded time and space of debating societies,

voluntary associations and council chambers.

The politics of time determine the membership of social groups with time-tables,

trajectories and rhythms determining 'co-occurrence' and inclusion.[36] For Smith, debates

with friends at home, in literary societies, as part of the Cotton-Broker's Association and the

Liberal Reform Club, and as a member of his church provided scope for the slow

accumulation of knowledge, 'chance' meetings and the building of networks. They gave

Smith the opportunity to benefit from the experience of others and to bequeath his own to the next generation of public men. Smith remembered evenings spent with William Boyle Barbour and William Sproston Caine in his early days in Liverpool in the late 1850s. All three were businessmen who stood as Liberal members of parliament. According to Smith, many of the issues of the day were debated in their rooms which afterwards were debated in parliament. These associations, Smith claimed, built character and improved the quality of debate and ultimately produced better leaders who made better decisions. Smith also recalled 'delightful' engagements at his home in Princes Park, Liverpool in the late 1870s, at which a 'Clerical Club' including Presbyterian ministers and temperance reformers met once every three weeks. The friends had tea and discussed a theological subject, the object being 'edification, not argumentation'.[37] Such reminiscences when strung together present progress as a result of the habits and routines of association conducted quietly, over time and in private and semi-private spaces. Smith's contemporary William Forward, brother of Arthur and a well-known Conservative politician in Liverpool, made the point in his own autobiography when he wrote, 'the re-making of Liverpool has been accomplished in the quiet deliberation of the committee room'.[38] Committee rooms and dining rooms provided the time and space for deep thought on the issues of the day and for making of strong emotional ties that cut through political differences.[39] It was a rhythm that continued in national politics. Recalling his life in London during the late 1870s and early 1880s, Smith noted the impromptu gatherings at home with other MPs at which parliamentary debates were resumed. The potential for finding shared interests was emphasised. As Smith said, 'One of the best traditions of English political life is that party differences do not hinder social intercourse as is too often the case in Continental Europe. This is one reason why compromise is the essence of British politics. Each party knows the other well and has no

desire to annihilate it'.[40] Such statements give credence to Martin Hewitt's argument that

the middle class cohered around a set of consensual politics in the mid-century which was

used to foster a 'moral imperialism'.[41] However, the nostalgic tone of such reminiscences

and the importance attached to close associations and personal acquaintance in building a

progressive political culture suggests that this world was disappearing.

In recent years, nostalgia has undergone a reassessment. No longer simply indulgent

and whimsical, it is seen as a way of building a collective identity; a way of keeping a

dialogue between past and present alive and of reconnecting and rebuilding connections

between people and places. According to Dennis Walder, nostalgia is 'deeply implicated in

the political life of the people, it is part of their historical sense of themselves'.[42] It may have

roots in a deeply personal sense of loss. For example, Smith noted that the passing away of

the founding members of the Clerical Club left him 'impoverished' by the loss of dialogue

and debate. He recalled taking his seat in parliament after the election of 1895 when many

of his Liberal associates lost their seats and the sense of 'strangeness and solitude' that

came over him.[43] However, the broader expression of nostalgia can help define a group and

an ethos. Smith's nostalgia serves to underline the importance of rhythms he feared were

being undermined by new cultures of business and politics. Referring to the cotton trade in

the 1890s Smith said 'I have seen change after change pass over the scene, till old men can

scarcely identify the highly-complex system of today with the steady routine of the fifties'.

Instead of 'steady routine', 'patient industry', and the 'slow upbuilding of character' there

was speculation fuelled by the desire to get rich quick from people with no practical

experience or personal knowledge of industry. Smith noted that in his later life people had

become nervous and excitable, their 'minds filled with the scoriae and dust of the

pavement'; the 'din of the market-place and the last edition of the newspaper shut out the lovely face of Nature'. This was affecting judgement and proportion. As Smith said 'A generation is growing up sharpened to a needle's point in all that relates to the forum, the exchange, and the racecourse, but oblivious of the "music of the spheres"'.[44] In parliament too, there was little time for, or interest in, the steady accumulation of knowledge gained from practical experience and shaped through dialogue. Instead, there was party politics. On entering parliament in 1883, Smith found the 'bitterest party feeling, incessant obstruction and an utter waste of time'.[45] Smith was by no means alone in noting how speed in business and politics was eroding the quality of debate and decision-making more generally. Smith's contemporary William Forwood made the same point in his autobiography noting that the 'hurry of the present day' is 'prejudicial to thoroughness'.[46] In these expressions of loss, the politics of time are revealed and, with it, the rhythms that made the middle class.

Late- nineteenth century nostalgia for the simplicity of rural England has been seen as evidence of anti-industrialism.[47] However Smith's nostalgia is for an earlier urbanism and industrialism in which men with a perspective drawn from experience of a different way of living, had time to talk, think and consider. He contrasts the quiet deliberation of like-minded men in committee rooms whose earnest intention was to represent local interests with modern councils in which thoughtful debate was sacrificed to democracy and the need to give voice to a more diverse range of people. He also contrasts businesses built up through the steady accumulation of experience and capital with new speculative ventures that prioritise profit over longevity and stability. In this context, autobiographies like Smith's were an attempt to remember the small associations of men who made industrial Britain

and show how their slow and steady self-making enabled them to transform themselves and the landscape. Here the liberal ideals of an earlier civic age were restated and openness and the sharing of interests across party political and denominational differences was emphasised. The nostalgia for lost communities and 'quiet deliberation' also showed the exclusionary practices of liberal civic culture at work, for what is lost is the time and space for small groups of like-minded men to get together in semi-private spaces to forge interests in common or, to put it another way, the time and space to set the agenda. As this suggests, the different visions of 'the social' in Smith's autobiography, one promoting openness, the other the need for exclusivity, reveal the ambivalence towards working-class participation in middle-class associational life that could harden into class distinction at moments of tension. As Martin Hewitt has shown in his study of reform campaigns in the 1860s, shared interest were central to the building of a broad coalition of working-class radicals, liberals and some Tories.[48] However a cross class consensus was difficult to maintain outside of public campaign spaces. Simon Gunn's study of the civilising mission in mid-century Manchester demonstrates this point. Here philanthropy and reform provided the framework for a broad alignment of like-minded men, one that was able to cut through denominational differences in the middle class. In public meetings and sermons, philanthropists and minister spoke of inclusivity, charity and equality but letters and correspondence revealed contempt for the poor and 'sharp-edged class prescriptions'. For Gunn this distinction revealed the real significance of the civilising mission: the 'categorization and institutionalisation of class difference'.[49] Such class prescriptions and distinctions percolate through the autobiographical narrative. Preserving the past for Smith meant inflecting industrialism and its liberal ethos with hierarchical inscriptions designed to recognise the shred interests and superior judgement of middle-class men.

Nostalgia can be both 'melancholic and utopian', combining a desire to return with a desire to shape history and influence the future. [50] The nostalgia for the great civic age was motivated by dissatisfaction with the present but it was also infused with the hope that the politics of association that Smith saw as the foundation of progress had a future. In this way the autobiography was a way of influencing the next generation, and, as Smith claimed through Old Testament references, of 'he, being dead, yet speaketh'.[51] His autobiography was a strategic intervention in contemporary political debate and a way of passing on 'unresolved burdens' and of correcting other interpretations.[52] As the following section argues, reading Smith's autobiography alongside other kinds of popular history writing shows that the life-writing of the industrial middle was intended to generate new historical knowledge about the making of the modern nation and place industrial middle-class men at its core.

Prosopography and history

The growth in autobiography in the late nineteenth century corresponded with a booming interest in history. Alongside published history writing, both popular and academic, there were re-enactments and ceremonies, pageants and rituals which contemplated the relationship between the past and the present, belonging and identity.[53] As is well noted, Thomas Macaulay's *History of England* first published in 1848 was immensely popular throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. It offered what Catherine Hall called a 'heroic story of a homogenous people and a progressive nation'.[54] Other kinds of national history, told in collected biographies and local histories, followed. The *Victoria County Histories*, begun in 1899, and the *Dictionary of National Biography* first published in 1885, focused on the people and places that shaped the British nation.[55] There was also a

long tradition of using centenaries and memorials to build alternative communities around

alternative histories. Commemoration and memoir had a long tradition in Non-Conformist

circles where it was used to motivate and inspire. [56] Much of this focused on life stories.

Smith noted that the memory of Scottish martyrs was kept alive in Scotland through

circulating copies of John Howie's *The Scot's Worthies*.[57] There were also secular interests

at work. The 'cult of the centenary' was fuelled by entrepreneurs and businessmen who

attempted to make money from souvenirs and commemorative merchandise. The multiple

aspects of this historical impulse shaped middle-class life writing. The use of biography to

explore religious conscience, the mobilisation of commemoration to inspire political

movements, the writing of alternative national histories through life stories and local

history, and the interests of entrepreneurs and publishers, all left their mark on middle-class

men's stories.

The fashion for commemoration and the popularity of local history were exploited

by commercial publishers as the nineteenth century came to an end. The Brighton publisher

W. T. Pike used the turn of the twentieth century as inspiration for the *Dictionary of*

Edwardian Biography, a series of local histories of the out-going century presented through

pen portraits of local people and places. Part history, part biography and part local guide,

these provided a prosopography and topography listing people in their social groups and the

organisations, businesses and institutions that they contributed to. These collections

covered the counties and regions of England, including Kent, Yorkshire and Sussex but they

had a particular resonance in the new towns and cities of the manufacturing districts, places

that had been radically transformed in the nineteenth century. Publications such as

Bradford Portraits and the *Leeds Biographer* combined biographies of local notables with

portraits and sketches of local landmarks. The editors suggested readers order the monthly

edition in advance from newsagents and preserve them for future generations.[58] These

volumes cultivated a particular kind of history. The notable men celebrated were shown to

have made a measurable and material impact in their locality demonstrated in the

descriptions of churches, factories, roads and sewers that littered biographies. Clergymen,

employers and politicians were singled out for praise and a new type of heroism was

identified in those that sacrificed adventure and national glory for steady industry, local

public service and the building of towns and cities. The life stories of local notables could

challenge traditional histories of England by showing how the everyday endeavour of

ordinary middle-class men led to the greatest development of the age: the building of the

industrial nation.

As Paul Readman has argued, English national identity was strongly associated with

'love of locality' and the local roots of national identity need to be better understood.[59] The

prosopography that emerged out of the industrial towns intended to rebalance national

history in favour of the industrial districts. In the preface to the second in the series of

Pike's New Century, 'Manchester and Salford at the close of the nineteenth century', the

author W. Burnett Tracy wrote that the effect of every picture depended on the background

and on 'just apprehension and balance of foreground'. In the interests of a better

perspective on the nation, Burnett Tracy offered 'a few rapid panoramic glimpses of the

past, alike for the purposes of contrast, and to show what we have grown from, and to

indicate the long lie of association both in work and ideas that has run through the ages and

has transformed Lancashire's increasing purpose'.[60] The 'panoramic glimpses' were

biographical sketches of local businessmen whose stories offered a new context in which

the progress of the nation could be understood. Similarly, the preface to the *Leeds Biographer* claimed that 'there are thousands of men in the provinces...whose lives and services are as worthy of public recognition, and permanent record, as are those who figure in the pages of the Illustrated Metropolitan Journals'.[61] Rueben Spencer, one of the managers of Ryland's cotton mill in Manchester, began his alternative county history, *Men of the Period. Lancashire: The Records of a Great County* (1897) with a challenge to traditional history writing. Spencer noted that the contribution of warriors and soldiers to national honour had been established in the great works of history but he argued that they deserve no more attention than the 'the peaceful and honourable men who have, by their marked industry, their skill and perseverance, laid the indispensable basis of a great nation'. Rewriting Cobdenite liberalism as history Spencer claimed that art, commerce and industry were the 'chief causes of a nation's influence among nations'.[62] This formulation did not simply allow the history of industrial towns to be written, it attempted to present it as the vanguard of the modern nation. As Christine MacLeod has argued, 'While the power base of the bourgeoisie was in the cities, its ambitions were played out on a national stage and anchored in its sense of self-importance. '[63]

These local histories of industrial towns and cities reproduced the middle-class idiom that Wahrman identified in the campaigns for the parliamentary reform and repeal of the Corn Laws in the early part of the century. Now it was written as history. The middle class were presented as a distinct group with special interests that emerged from their particular journey from modest roots to provincial towns where they had, by necessity, to forge their own politics, economy and society. Notability was earned through the use of one's resources for the benefits of the community regardless of social origins. The *Leeds Biographer* was typical in presenting notable men as 'workers', from self-made men such as,

William Boothroyd, businessman, alderman and mayor, applauded for his 'patient industry,

perseverance, and sheer ability', to those from established local dynasties, such as James

Kitson, recognised for having the 'necessary grit' to make a difference despite relative

privilege.[64] Although clergymen of all ranks and denominations tended to dominate these

collections, businessmen were afforded particular recognition for their role in increasing

local prosperity. The editor *of Liverpool's Legion of Honour*, Guinness Orchard claimed that

Liverpudlian 'notables' were diverse, encompassing members of old landed families and

trade union leaders, but it was businessmen who had particular claim to notability. More

than any other social group, they exercised a 'perceptible influence on an unusually large

number of fellow men' yet they were unseen and ignored: 'A merchant whose signature is

honoured on three continents, and whose operations furnish employment for thousands, is

often unknown even by name in Liverpool…though a music-hall celebrity is recognised and

followed at every step'. Guinness Orchard attributed this to anti-industrialism and the

'impertinent and supercilious contempt' in which businessmen were held.[65] The fact that

businessmen were the primary market for such publications no doubt informed the special

notability afforded them, but the particularly valuable combination of business and public

service to localities was recognised more broadly. A memorial to Reuben Spencer, given to

him on his retirement from Ryland's, noted that the history of Manchester was rich in

examples of men successful in business and politics which proved beyond doubt that 'those

who of necessity labour most arduously in the advancement of their own affairs are

frequently the first to consecrate their briefest moments of leisure to the public service'.[66]

Such practical men were, it was claimed, often too busy to claim recognition for themselves.

In direct challenge to accounts of English politics and society that ignored the achievements of the urban-industrial middle class, these prosopographies presented alternative histories and an alternative heroism. The qualities and characteristics associated with the transformation of the nation were perseverance, diligence, attention to detail and restraint. As Burnett Tracy wrote,

> It is often said that the real work of Parliament is done in the committee rooms; in like manner it is true that the greater part of the real work of establishing industries and building up communities is done by men whose constant association with the toil and details of construction, and of keeping pace with the demands of progress, keeps them out of the public view, and frequently induces habits of reserve which makes publicity repulsive.[67]

Leadership and force of character was important but so was tact and patience because such qualities enabled an individual to work with others, share experience and define a collective purpose. Speeches that forged common ground were regularly commented on. For example, the *Leeds Biographer* commended Mr Councillor Harland who despite being a committed Wesleyan and one of the 'most active and zealous Conservatives of Leeds', could address a range of men, so much so that political opponents were able to praise his 'long record of useful and persevering work in a direction that is calculated to benefit the town'.[68] As Smith had done in his autobiography, notability was afforded to those capable of cross-party and inter-denominational communication, and progress attributed to men of openness and tact, patience, persistence and industry. The emphasis on these qualities resulted in histories that described change in the mid-century without reference to struggle, tension and unrest. Instead change was orchestrated through a liberal associational culture

that imagined connecting people through example and emulation, through reason and understanding. At the same time, the compulsion to recognise and record such people and practice hints at the pressure this liberal culture was under.

Many life stories were written to ensure that England's particular kind of civic and industrial history did not go unrecorded because of the reserve of provincial men and the disinterest of wider metropolitan culture, but this was combined with an attempt to capture the spirit of emulation and example, dialogue and debate that gave mid-century liberal culture momentum. The *Leeds Biographer* hoped their 'public and permanent record' of local notables 'cannot fail to exert an influence for good upon men who, as yet, perhaps, have not undertaken any public service'. The editors went further in stating that they thought it 'highly probable that many worthy young men will be incited to emulate the examples herein recorded'.[69] Smith expressed similar hopes in his autobiography when he wrote, 'if my book should inspire generous and ardent youth to a nobler life, it will have attained its object'.[70] However, the attempt to describe the recent past in the interests of the future, to encourage the continuity between generations, produced a rupture.[71] In charting the links between past, present and future these accounts ended up defining the mid-century industrial city as distinct from what had come before and what was to come after.[72] As Jameson has argued 'the foregrounding of continuities, the insistent and unwavering focus on the seamless passage from past to present, slowly turns into consciousness of a radical break; whilst at the same time the enforced attention to a break gradually turns the latter into a period in its own right'.[73] The mid-Victorian generation of civic men and their late-nineteenth century promoters, fearing decline, traced the connections between people and things not necessarily apparent at the time. The urban-

industrial middle class emerged, and an era – the age of industry and reform – was created, in the desire to describe a collective temporality before it dissipated.[74]

Rupture, decline and the making of class

Prosopography and local history bring a different perspective to bear on the life writing of men like Smith, by showing them to be part of a broader move to reassert the ethos and argument of the industrial middle class at a time when it was under threat. Victorian liberalism always had to articulate itself against a strong counter-culture but it came under particular strain at the end of the century when Tory businessmen, pro-imperialists, Socialists and workers came together in opposition to Liberalism's smug belief in progress, its moral hypocrisy and philistinism.[75] Liberal tropes and stories came under attack. *Vanity Fair* parodied Smith's narrative of self-making, which he, like so many, used as to tell his story. A caricature of Smith with his long beard, hands clasped tightly, included the caption: 'Started as poor cotton broker in Liverpool and ended as a rich one'. His campaigns against obscenity in the theatre which Smith presented as a natural follow on from the civilizing mission and temperance reform were seen as driven by religious sensibilities that were out of step with new forms of mass culture. In a statement that well-describes a paternalist liberalism that promoted freedom and democracy but which was intolerant of real difference, *Vanity Fair* called Smith 'The broadest minded bigot in England'.[76] Smith's autobiography was savagely reviewed. Criticism focussed on Smith's earnestness, his attention to detail and his lack of humour.[77] His speeches in parliament were ridiculed with the diarist H W Lucy noting that 'the tremulous piping of his pained voice does not

command the full circuit of the audience'.[78] It was not just that Smith was a poor writer and

speaker. By the late nineteenth century, this form of self-representation was out-moded.

Public speaking was, as Joseph Meisel has argued, 'central to the thought and

practice of public life' and great oratory was associated with Gladstone and the age of

liberalism.[79] Public speeches demonstrated the interconnections between the platform and

the pulpit and between the private and political spaces of liberal culture.[80] Learning to speak

in associations and clubs provided a steady apprenticeship into public life and, as already

argued, the ability to hold the attention of a diverse audience was given due recognition in

prosopography and biography. Yet public speaking was only one part of wider liberal culture

of explication. Speeches were printed in pamphlets and reported in papers and followed up

with private correspondence and letters to editors. In this way, speeches were part of an

on-going conversation, disciplined by conventions and tropes, open to those who

recognised the importance of what was being said and the wisdom of those saying it. By the

end of the century this culture was slowing being undermined by new technologies and new

kinds of politics. The 'new journalism' was interested in politics but did not have the time or

space for reproduction of long verbatim speeches or exchanges. The *Daily Mail*, founded in

1896, represented the shift to a new style of political reporting which was, according to

Colin Matthew, like the adverts it contained, 'more visual, more punchy and less wordy'.[81]

Smith's earnest exposition and long-winded reflections together with his solemn

examination of conscience were no longer required. The need to attract the attention of a

mass readership in an age of democracy was paramount for editors. Brevity was of the

essence.[82]

In this context, the autobiographies of the industrial middle class were a way of preserving the spoken words of the writer and the liberal culture of which they were a part. Smith was fairly typical for including copies of speeches heard and speeches given in his autobiography, some interspersed in the narrative and some in appendices at the end. Composed at intervals in the life, and brought together in the life story, they provide a concentrated digest of liberalism's trajectory. Smith included a speech given at Hengler's Circus to local constituents in Liverpool in 1882 which outlined the transformative power of liberalism with reference to Cobden and free trade but also Shaftesbury and social reform. In the speech Smith defended a vision of politics and capitalism to his audience at the time and to the contemporary readers of his autobiography which presented industrialists and manufacturers as natural leaders of communities they served: they knew their neighbours and their workers and were willing to invest in a shared future through workmen's dwellings and parks, temperance societies and schools.[83] Other speeches claimed this future was under threat from the rise of financial capitalism, which threatened the steady rhythms of industry and the everyday connections of liberalism. A speech on the gold standard given to the Manchester Athenaeum 1887, argued that power was shifting to the 'idle class', the fundholder, the mortgagee, and the money lender who had the 'ear of all modern governments', and the power to override the interests of the majority. They had little knowledge or interest in industry but stripped profits through preference shares and bonds. Using railways as an example, he noted that shares were held by two classes – the ordinary shareholders, whose dividends depend upon profit, and the preferences shareholders, or bondholders, who receive a fixed rate of interest. He commented that 'The latter class represent much the largest amount of capital but the law cannot touch their income; the whole loss must fall upon the smaller class, viz. the ordinary shareholders…'.[84] He

contrasted this with cotton, where shareholders retained links to industry, whose returns

depended on profits and whose interests as such were intertwined with workers and other

businessmen.[85] As Smith suggested, these deep connections and shared interests were

established over time and space. Smith's investments at home and in empire were made

through business networks and personal connections and informed through practical

knowledge of global trade acquired through study and travel. He warned that the speed and

velocity of new kinds of speculative capitalism, driven by a rentier class living on interest

and securities, made it impossible for merchants and industrialists to study markets,

determine prices and manage businesses. As he claimed, 'The railway bonds, corporation

debts, permanent or long dated engagements of all kinds are simply incalculable. All

civilised communities are covered with them, as some of our streets are with a network of

telegraph wires'.[86] The threat to stability was palpable. According to Smith the mortgagee

and bond holder disrupted markets, fuelled poverty, overturned the customary logic of land

and liberal visions of an empire of free trade. Smith urged a return to stability, and the 'well-

deserved authority' of Manchester and the steady, piecemeal, informed governance of the

industrial middle class. As Smith said 'Time was when Manchester spoke with a voice to

which all England listened.'[87] The autobiography and its appendices were a last attempt to

be heard.

Smith's preserved dialogue underlines how the industrial middle class was produced

in the writing of history at a time of rupture. Long speeches given in council chambers, pen

portraits of inspirational figures, detailed correspondence with other public men and letters

to newspapers contained carefully composed arguments in support of free trade, steady

industry, social reform, religious conscience and civic duty. These were intended to show

that the authority of the industrial middle class was earned through patient learning, informed exchange and steady practice: capabilities acquired in business, nuanced through religion and applied in politics. In principle, the middle-class liberal culture that resulted was open to all who recognised the value of deliberation and contemplation. In practice, maintaining this tempo depended on exclusions: exclusions that were increasingly exposed by the demands of a new age. Smith could not bring himself to speak of women's suffrage. His only reference to it came in the inclusion of a letter from Gladstone that hoped for steady reform given 'immaturity of the public mind'.[88] However, in a letter to H M Hyndman, leader of the Democratic Federation, Smith argued that the authority of the industrial middle class resulted from their work as wealth creators and their experience, through business and politics, of balancing secular interests with the 'commands of God'. Further democratic progress depended on hard work and 'moral and religious training' and not on any sudden re-distribution of wealth or power.[89] At the same time, he acknowledged the urgency needed to tackle the industrial decline and poverty caused, in Smith's mind, by the rising power of financial capitalists. Confronting his own powerlessness Smith ended with a 'parable and forecast' written in 1901 which ridiculed secularism and its claims to reason and rationality. Instead, Smith argued that the conflict and unrest in places as far apart as Londonderry and Ladysmith were evidence of recklessness, absurdity and foolishness and the rash pursuit of short-term British interests. He registered the rise of secularism and the loss of seriousness by a change in language: 'Meaningless words like "patriotism", "benevolence," "self-sacrifice" have disappeared from use'.[90] It is no wonder then that the parliamentary diarist H W Lucy referred to Smith as 'Jeremiah M.P' in reference to the prophet of the Hebrew bible whose dire warnings of the disasters that would befall the people of Israel went unheeded.[91]

Smith's politics were deeply unfashionable amongst sections of the political and literary establishment at the turn of the century. They were also increasingly marginalised in the Liberal Party. The Liberal party was a diverse mix of Whigs, radicals, Gladstonians, imperialists, social reformers and free traders and could accommodate a range of interests but in the last decades of the nineteenth century the Non-Conformists were, as Geoffrey Searle has argued, a 'drag on Liberal fortunes', and their focus on the war against sin unappealing to the majority of the electorate.[92] The threats were felt to be immediate. In the election of September 1900 Smith's seat in Flintshire was contested by Colonel Henry Howard, of Wigfair, St Asaph, a military man who was serving in South Africa at the time and who was actively supported by the Conservative man of letters, George Wynham. The election pitted Smith's austere liberal moralism, carefulness and thoroughness against Howard's imperialist adventure. Howard called for imperial defence to be funded through taxation whilst Smith deprecated the 'spirit of boasting and jingoism' that pervaded debate and campaigned instead on religious equality and temperance.[93] Smith won the election with a majority of over 400 – a majority that had remained remarkably constant throughout his time as the member for Flintshire – but the contest brought to the fore debates about the relevance of Smith's brand of liberalism in an age of imperialism and democracy. A year after the election, in an address to his constituents, Smith expressed his frustration at the subversion of liberal agenda in a parliament elected on a 'Khaki issue'. He feared that a mass consumer capitalism had undermined temperance and thrift, that jingoism had replaced the civilising mission and that protectionism was threatening the imperialism of free trade. He contrasted the 'endless troubles and anxieties we have been plunged into these last few years' with what he considered the country needed and what he and his generation had provided in the mid-century: 'peace and economy and quiet industrial development'.[94]

Smith retreated from public life and wrote his autobiography in a bid to preserve his liberal

agenda and to record a history which demonstrated that, in contrast to the contemporary

view, modernity was the product of the quiet endeavour of a few like-minded men in the

industrial and civic centres of Britain.

Conclusion

The industrial middle class were a product of decline. The autobiographical impulse of men

like Smith, together with biographies of other middle-class men and local histories of

provincial towns, were an attempt to preserve a mid-Victorian industrial liberal culture as it

dissipated and to distance themselves from the culture of capital that was emerging. The

political challenge to liberalism was sharpened by the emergence of mass politics at a time

when new forms of capitalism were severing the ties between the provincial middle class

and the industrial city. This dislocation may have intensified the estrangement between the

past and the present at a time of political uncertainty about the value and significance of

what had been achieved. As Nora has noted, with the rupturing of past and present it

becomes harder to establish the links between action and experience.[95] Life-stories were an

important mechanism for re-establishing these links and for understanding the significance

of associations and actions. William Forwood, Smith's contemporary, ended his

autobiography by noting that, 'Events move so rapidly, the men and circumstances of today

are crowded out and their memory obliterated in the interests of tomorrow that no man's

work or influence can be said to have exercised more than an evanescent power.'[96] The life

story was motivated by a desire to preserve the past to shape the future but, at the same

time, authors were conscious of being out of time. The *Leeds Biographer* hoped to inspire a

new generation of public men but it noted in parenthesis that 'right-thinking, self-respecting

men' will need no inducement. Smith lamented that 'each age brings to light new wants and new necessities, and the business of Government is to patiently and wisely to adapt itself to the needs of each age'.[97] In the context of such uncertainty, life-writing could 'grasp time and rematerialise it' by making the thoughts and feelings of a social group tangible in text.[98] These works of memory and history created a sense of a period, an era and an epoch and established a narrative in which the Victorian middle class were the architects of modernity who transformed Britain through quiet endeavour, careful debate and steady progress.

Close attention to the politics of time can show class in the making. It also helps expose the contradictions at the heart of liberal modernity. As studies of liberalism show, the powerbase of the middle class lay in provincial cities and was expressed through an inclusive politics that emphasised associations with other like-minded men regardless of their social origins. Society was imagined as an inclusive realm which balanced individual responsibility and community needs and which, as such, sought to negotiate rather than delineate differences.[99] This ethos, combined with the ease with which men like Smith moved between different social groups, makes the middle class difficult to identify. However consensus, movement and transformation came to define the middle class, and the life story was central to its articulation. The life story portrayed authors as controlling time and working with the rhythms of industrial capitalism to forge society for themselves through networks and associations. In the nostalgia for the great civic age, popular accounts of local notables also show how the democratic imaginings so central to liberal modernity were forged out of spaces and temporalities that were exclusive, such as the debating society, the dinner party and the council chamber. This exclusivity extended to the recording

of the past itself: the provincial middle class were distinguished and defined by their ability to represent the history of industrial Britain.

Acknowledgements

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[1] Samuel Smith, *My Life-Work* (London, 1902).

[2] *The Manchester Guardian*, 31 December 1906, 5.

[3] Smith was ridiculed for his aristocratic pretentions, see *Cardiff Western Mail*, 11 June 1900, 5.

[4] *Vanity Fair*, 'Men of the day', 4 August, 1904, p.143.

[5] J. Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden* (London, 2010 [1881]) 481-482. Karl Marx, 'The British Constitution', *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, No. 109, March 6, 1855, reprinted in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14 (London, 2010) 53-54.

[6] For an overview of these debates in the *New Left Review* in the 1960s, see Perry Anderson, *English Questions* (Verso, 1992).

[7] Martin Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, second edition, (Cambridge, [1981] 2004); See also F. M. L. Thompson, *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture : Britain 1780-1980: Britain 1780-1980* (Oxford, 2001).

[8] William Rubenstein, *Men of Property: the very wealthy in Britain since the Industrial Revolution* (New Brunswick, 1981).

[9] Theodre Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990) 13. Anthony Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830 to 1860* (Oxford, 1984).

[10] Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class. The Political Representation of Class in Britain, 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995).

[11] Miles Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism, 1847-1869* (Oxford, 1995).

[12] Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People. Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991).

[13] Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects. The Self and the Social in Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1994) 11-14.

[14] Wahrman, op.cit.*,* 4.

[15] Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, 2002) 76.

[16] Jon Lawrence, 'Paternalism, class and the path to modernity' in Simon Gunn and James Vernon (eds), *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (California and London, 2011) 154.

[17] The concept of voice is used to refer to qualities that enable a writer or speaker to convey their character and beliefs. It is linked here to 'technologies of self', the way individuals define themselves and society and how they communicate this in writing and speech. See Joyce, *Democratic Subjects, op.cit*., 19. See also James V Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge, 2002), 16-18.

[18] Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946* (Oxford, 1997) 111-130.

[19] R. J. Morris, *Men, Women, and Property in England 1780-1870: A Social and Economic History of Family Strategies amongst the Leeds Middle Classes,* (Cambridge, 2005) Chapter 5.

[20] On the materiality of life-writing see Carolyn Steedman *An Everyday Life of the English Working Class. Work, Self, and Sociability in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2013) 13-28.

[21] See essays in Chris Lorenz, Berber Bevernage (eds.) *Breaking Up Time: Negotiating the Borders Between Present, Past and Future* (Göttingen, 2013), Susannah Radstone, *The Sexual Politics of Time: Confession, Nostalgia, Memory* (London, 2007), 9-10.

[22] See Jon Lawrence, 'Paternalism, class, and the British path to modernity, *op.cit.*, 153-156.

[23] Carolyn Steedman, *op.cit.*, 13-28.

[24] This study was part of a wider project on autobiography and the Victorian middle class which looked at local networks, class and national identity. The sample of 323 autobiographies was taken from the bibliography complied by W. Matthews, *British Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies Published or Written Before 1951* (Berkeley, 1955). For further details see, Robert Gray, 'Self-made Men, Self-narrated Lives: Male Autobiographical Writing and the Victorian Middle Class' in *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 6, 2, (2001), 288-312. The approach taken here of collective and deep reading is informed by H. L. Malchow, *Gentlemen Capitalists: The Social and Political World of the Victorian Businessman* (Stanford, 1992). Typicality has been assessed using David J. Jeremy and Christine Shaw, eds., *Dictionary of Business Biography*, 5 vols (London, 1984 to 1986). For an overview see David J. Jeremy, 'Anatomy of the British Business Elite, 1860–1980' in *Business History*, 26, 1, (1984), 3-23. On representativeness and autobiography see

Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010), 5, 23.

[25] Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, 1993), Chapter 1.

[26]For many working-class writers, as Emma Griffin has shown, the advantages of modern life challenged any simple romantic attachment to older simpler ways of living. Emma Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn. A People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (London and Yale, 2013), 244.

[27] Robbie Gray, 'North and south revisited: Locality nation and identity in Victorian Britain', inaugural lecture, March 2000. See J. Parker*, A Preacher's Life* (London, 1899) p.5.

[28] Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics, The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (Brighton, 1980), 18-20.

[29] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, Vol 2 , Translated by John Moore ([1961]London, 2002) 47-51 and *Everyday Life in the Modern World* ([1984] London, 2002) 34-35; Rita Felski, 'The invention of everyday life', *New Formations*, 39, (1999/2000), 15-31.

[30] Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom. A Social History of the British State* (Cambridge, 2013) 253-254.

[31] Smith, *op.cit.*, 14-15, 35-36, 139-140.

[32] Smith, *op.cit.*, 136

[33] Smith, *op.cit.*, 136, 139.

[34] For an overview see Chris, Weedon and Glenn Jordan, 'Collective memory: theory and politics' in *Social Semiotics*, 22, 2, (2012), 43-153. Joanna Bourke, ''Remembering' War' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39 (October 2004), 473-485,

[35] James V. Wertsch, *op.cit.*, 23.

[36] John Frow, *Time and Commodity Culture. Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity* (Oxford, 1997), 9.

[37] Smith, *op.cit.*, 105.

[38] William Forwood, *Recollections of a Busy Life Being the Reminiscences of a Liverpool Merchant, 1840-1910* (Liverpool, 1910), 97

[39] On the need to combine analyses on the production of time and space see John May and Nigel Thrift, 'Introduction', in John May and Nigel Thrift (eds) *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (London, 2001), 23. On the strong emotional ties forged in middle-class networks see Nigel Thrift 'Space' in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23, 2-3 (2006), 144.

[40] Smith, *op.cit* , 170.

[41] Martin Hewitt, *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester 1832-1867* (Aldershot, 1996) Chapter 3.

[42] Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias. Writing, Representation, and Memory* (Abingdon, 2011), 3.

[43] Smith, *op.cit.*, 105, 338.

[44] Smith, *op.cit* , 5-6, 17, 35.

[45] Smith, *op.cit.*, 141.

[46] Forwood, *op.cit.*, 262.

[47] Wiener, *op.cit.*, 106 to 108.

[48] Martin Hewitt, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: the End of the 'Taxes on Knowledge', 1849-1869*, (Bloomsbury, 2013) 167-178.

[49] Simon Gunn, 'The ministry, the middle class and the 'civilizing mission' in Manchester, 1850–80',

Social History, 21, 1 (1996), 22-36.

[50] Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley, 'The modalities of nostalgia', in *Current Sociology*, 54, 6 (2006), 919-941, 921. See also George K. Behlmer 'Introduction' in George K. Behlmer and Fred. M. Leventhal (eds), *Singular Continuities: Tradition, Nostalgia and Identity in Modern British Culture* (Stanford, 2000), 1-10. On the need for historians to distinguish narratives of modernity and, in particular, to separate modernity and modernism see Robert Wohl 'Heart of darkness: Modernism and its historians' *in Journal of Modern History*, 74, 3, (2002), 573-621.

[51] Smith, 'Preface', *op. cit.*, v. The quote is from Hebrew 11.4.

[52] See also Michael Roper's discussion of Karl Figlio in 'The unconscious work of history', *Cultural and Social History*, 11, 2, (2014) 169-193, 186.

[53] Peter Mandler, *History and National Life,* (London, 2002); Roland Quinault 'The cult of the centenary: 1784-1914' in Historical Research, 71, 176 (1998) 303 – 323; David Cannadine, 'The transformation of civic ritual in modern Britain: the Colchester Oyster festival', *Past and Present*, 94, 1 (1982), 107-130; Mark Freeman, ''Splendid Display; Pompous Spectacle': historical pageants in twentieth-century Britain', *Social History*, 38, 4 (2013), 423-455; Paul Readman, 'The place of the past in English culture c1890-1914', *Past and Present*, 186, 1 (2005),147-200.

[54] Catherine Hall, 'Macaulay's nation', *Victorian Studies*, 5, 3, 2009, 505-523, 521.

[55] See Geoffrey Cubitt, 'Introduction. Heroic reputations and exemplary lives' in Geoffrey Cubitt and Allen Warren (eds), *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives* (Manchester, 2000).

[56] Quinault, *op.cit.*, 309.

[57] Smith, *op.cit.,* 3.

[58] J. R. Beckett, *Leeds Biographer* (1888) and *Bradford Portraits* (1892).

[59] Paul Readman, *op.cit.*, 147-200.

[60] W. Burnett Tracy 'Manchester and Salford at the close of the nineteenth century', *Pikes New Century* (Brighton, 1899), 23.

[61] *Leeds Biographer*, preface.

[62] Reuben Spencer, *Men of the Period. Lancashire: The Records of a Great County* (London, 1897), Preface.

[63] Christine MacLeod, *Heroes of Invention: Technology, Liberalism and British Identity 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 2007), 14.

[64] *Leeds Biographer*, 8, 15.

[65] B. Guinness Orchard, *Liverpool's Legion of Honour* (Birkenhead, 1893), viii, .xix.

[66] Rueben Spencer, *A Survey of the History, Commerce and Manufactures of Lancashire and a Biographical Sketch of Reuben Spencer* (London, 1897), 230.

[67] Burnett Tracy, 'Manchester and Salford', *op.cit.*, 23.

[68] *Leeds Biographer*, 34.

[69] *Leeds Biographer*, Preface.

[70] Smith, *op.cit.*, vi.

[71] Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, *Essays on the Ontology of the Present* (London and New York, 2002), 23.

[72] In this case, the point of writing is to communicate with those who do not inhabit what Ernest Bloch calls 'the same Now.' See John Frow, *op.cit.*, 8-10.

[73] Jameson, *op.cit.*, 27.

[74] Frederic Jameson, *op.cit.*, 17-18. See also, Walter Benjamin and his claim that accounts of the past, are concerned to 'seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger' *Illuminations* (New York, 1969[1955]), 255.

[75] Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class. Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914*, (Manchester, 2000), 100.

[76] *Vanity Fair*, 4 August 1904, p.143.

[77] *Academy and Literature*, 20 December, 1902, 680; *Athenaeum*, 6 December 1902, 757; *London Quarterly Review*, 9, 2 (April 1903) 396.

[78] *Observer*, 17 June 1900, 5. See also 'History and biography' in *Westminster Review*, April 1903, 159, 4, 474.

[79] Joseph S. Meisel, *Public Speech and the Culture of Public Life in the Age of Gladstone* (New York, 2001) 282.

[80] Toshihiko Iwama, 'Shaping Civic Culture through Public Discussion: The Debating Societies of Birmingham, c. 1850–c. 1890' in *Midland History*, 41, 1, (2016), 57-70.

[81] H.G.C, Matthew, 'Gladstone, rhetoric and politics' in Peter J. Jagger (ed.) *Gladstone* (London, 1998) 232.

[82] Meisel, *op.cit.* , 286. On time and politics acceleration and political culture see Ryan Anthony Viera 'Connecting the new political history with recent theories of temporal acceleration: speed, politics, and the cultural imagination of fin de siècle Britain' in *History and Theory*, 50, 3, (2011) 373 -389.

[83] Smith, *op.cit.*, Appendix VI.

[84] Smith, *op.cit.*, 496.

[85] Smith, *op.cit.*, 543.

[86] Smith, *op.cit.*, Appendix III, 489.

[87] Smith, *op.cit.*, Appendix III, 500.

[88] Smith, *op.cit.*, Appendix XI, 569.

[89] Smith, *op.cit.*, Appendix VIII, p. 543, 544, 545.

[90] Smith, op.cit., Appendix XVII, 616.

[91] *Observer*, 17 June 1900, 5.

[92] Geoffrey Searle, *The Liberal Party. Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929* (Michigan, 1992), 42.

[93] *Liverpool Mercury*, 24 September 1900.

[94] *Manchester Guardian*, 16th April, 1901.

[95] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory* (Colombia, 1996), 1-20.

[96] William Forwood, *op.cit. ,* 262.

[97] *Leeds Biographer*, Preface, Smith, *op.cit*., Appendix VI, 532.

[98] Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian. Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885-1918 D*urham and London, 2012), 7. See also, Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Boston, 2001), 3-4.

[99] Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*, *op.cit. ,* 17.