**Call for papers: Piston, Pen & Press**

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INDUSTRIAL LABOUR & CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

18th-19th August 2022, Manchester

This conference stems from the AHRC-funded ‘Piston, Pen & Press’ project ([www.pistonpenandpress.org](http://www.pistonpenandpress.org)), and its focus on industrial workers as producers and consumers of literary culture. It is designed to expand on the remit of this project and to discuss and reflect upon a wider range of cultural activities engaged in by industrial workers – for example, as dramatists and theatre-goers, as musicians and composers, as artists and visitors to exhibitions and galleries – as well as considering the state of critical work in this field and new directions for research. ‘Piston, Pen & Press’ focuses primarily on Scotland and the North of England: we are also interested in papers which consider literary and other productions in Britain more widely, and in papers which connect British cultural productions to those of international industrial workers, in order to make transnational or transcultural comparisons.

Given the project’s connections with industrial heritage museums and archives, we additionally seek to explore the ways in which creative, cultural and artistic activity by workers is, or could be, included in museum holdings, and used to engage twenty-first century audiences and communities. We therefore welcome proposals from museum, library and heritage professionals and from creative practitioners, as well as from academic and independent researchers.

This conference has three main themes:

* Reflection – we wish to reflect on the current state of the field and identifying future areas of research.
* Expansion – we wish to explore working-class cultural production and engagement beyond the printed page e.g. art, music, photography, drama.
* Engagement – we wish to explore the role of working-class cultural productions in the creative and heritage sectors.

In this CFP ‘working-class’ refers to an historical subject which is not homogeneous but rather internally differentiated by multiple factors including (but not limited to) gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and religious affiliation. We welcome papers that explore this complexity. Possible topics include:

*The Places of Working-Class Cultural Production*

* How did industrial workers produce/engage with specific forms of cultural production?
* Where/when was it produced/consumed?
* What were the relationships between cultural production and key sites of working-class culture such as the workplace, the home and the places of associational culture?

*Modes of Circulation*

* How did working-class cultural producers circulate their work?
* How far did those modes of circulation enable/constrain the content and/or form of their production?
* To what extent did working-class cultural producers participate in cultural networks whether local, regional, national and transnational?

*Modes of Production*

* What forms, genres, styles were preferred by working-class cultural producers?
* Did the injection of working-class ‘content’ into established forms precipitate new cultural forms?
* What challenges does working-class cultural production pose for aesthetic theory?

*Purpose and Commitment*

* What was the relationship between working-class cultural production and various forms of political/social organisation?
* What was the relationship between working-class cultural production and mutual improvement/self-help societies?
* How do we understand working-class cultural production beyond the workplace and/or the public sphere?

*Beyond the Academy*

* Can C19th working-class cultural production serve as the basis for creative practice in C21st?
* Can C19th working-class cultural production help us to understand and interpret British industrial heritage?
* In what ways is C19th working-class cultural production recognized and deployed as part of our industrial heritage?

*Working-Class Cultural Production In/As History*

* Does working-class cultural production constitute a distinctive form of historical knowledge?
* How did working-class writers respond to ‘historical’ events?
* How did the working class engage with middle-class and elite culture? What did they engage with and where?

*Retrieval and Celebration*

* How does recovery/retrieval work affect our understanding of C19th culture?
* ‘Forgotten’ working-class cultural producers and their role in C19th culture.
* Pioneering scholars of working-class cultural productions.

While we anticipate that most presenters will have a standard 20 minute slot, we are open to forms of presentation that go beyond the traditional conference paper, and to suggestions for themed panels or roundtable sessions. **This conference will be held in person, subject to any ongoing restrictions at the time, but we will aim to make some of the materials available online and to offer remote participation where feasible. If you wish to participate and *cannot* attend in person, please signal this with your proposal.**

Registration and catering will be free for all presenters. There will be a limited number of conference bursaries for UK travel and accommodation available for PhD/early career/independent scholars or creative/heritage professionals not in receipt of institutional funding. **Please signal your wish to be considered for a bursary in the email accompanying your proposal.**

Deadline for proposals: Friday 18th March, 2022. Acceptances will be issued by 8 April 2022.

Please send proposals (250 words max) plus a brief cv (2 pages max) to **pistonpenandpress@gmail.com**

**Organizing committee:**

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