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KRAMER, Kaley <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0394-1554>>

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Chapter 7

York's first female printer: Alice Broad, 1661-1680

Kaley Kramer, Sheffield Hallam University¹

Alice Broad² began her printing career in York with some fanfare. In 1661, a sermon was published by an established press on Stonegate, 'over against the Starre'; neither the author (Thomas Bradley) nor the press was particularly noteworthy. The imprint, however, declared in capital letters that the sermon was the work of ALICE BROADE. This was Broad's first publication and the only time she would identify herself in such a fashion. While the typography might boldly announce a newcomer, Alice Broad must have been known in the small world of York printing as the widow of Thomas Broad, printer to the Parliamentary government after the siege of the city in 1644. Charles I had returned printing to the city when he fled London for the relative safety of the north in 1642. Thomas Broad had begun his career in the vacuum left by the departures of the King's printer, Robert Barker, and the enterprising Royalist, Stephen Bulkley. Broad swiftly established himself, opening a press on Stonegate and a shop near the Guildhall, and printing for Parliamentary York throughout the Commonwealth Period. When Alice assumed control of the press after Thomas' death, she would have inherited a successful printing business but also faced a significant change in the city's fortunes as the Restoration swept away Parliamentary rule. But she in fact thrived as the *only* printer in York in the first three years of her career and continued to print after competition returned to the city.

¹ This chapter draws on the work of Sarah Griffin and Kaley Kramer in *Print Culture, Agency, and Regionality in the Hand Press Period*, 2022.

² The name appears as 'Broad' and 'Broade' in historical records and has been standardised to 'Broad' throughout this chapter.

The few traces Alice left in the archives typify the challenges of researching women in the print trades. Thomas Broad's will was not recorded at probate, but Alice's appearance in print shortly after his death suggests that the transition to her control was neither surprising nor unusual. Marriage was certainly an established route into the print trades and, in the absence of any sons, Alice would have inherited her husband's estate, at very least for use during her lifetime. A tantalising record of a 'Mrs Broade' as paying hearth tax in the parish of St Matthew Belfry (the 'printers' church' in York) during the years that Alice was active is inconclusive; she left no baptismal record, no professional nor personal correspondence, and no will. She can only be glimpsed through her extant body of work, seventeen pieces of which have survived, reaching from her first publication in 1661 to a final volume of poetry, printed with her son-in-law, John White, in 1680. And yet, the outlines of Alice's career set alongside the upheavals of the Restoration place her in her local community and suggest broader points about women's roles in the everyday business of the print trades. While she called herself a 'printer', she would also have been part of all the required negotiations and work of a functioning business; to this extent she *typifies* the career of a woman in seventeenth-century England. As the wife of a successful printer and shop-owner, Alice would have been intimately familiar with the unique space of the print house: a space in which 'family values' overlapped with 'business values'.³ As a widow and mother, head of a household as well as a business, Alice would also have been responsible for taxes and leases, private accounts, and for raising her daughter, Hannah. As is the case for women more generally in history, gender contributed to the erasure (or non-recording) of Alice's life and works. It is more challenging, however, to pinpoint how gender intersected with political affiliation and reputation in the fortunes of her career.

³ Maruca, p. 115.

York offered printers unusual circumstances in England in the seventeenth century. The Council of the North was finally dissolved in 1641, formally ending the city's lingering political clout, yet in 1642 the Court decamped to York. The Court brought a Royal printer to ensure that news 'from the North' was appropriately vetted and that the King had an immediate outlet for decrees and official business. The city was also advantageously situated between two major metropolises: London and Edinburgh. York was thus isolated from these developed print trade communities but enjoyed the advantage of being beyond the competition that such markets created. Though relatively small, York was also 'endowed with a county jurisdiction, containing twenty-seven administrative parishes as well as a functioning guild economy, serving as an ecclesiastical and provincial centre'.⁴ As it was a centre of regulatory bodies and legislative institutions, York's professional classes increasingly required printers to produce official notices, information, records, alongside popular works for individual readers. Sermons were a reliable product for printers and, given the cathedral's dominance, were an important part of Alice Broad's business. She also undertook work for the church in the form of visitation articles: these were lists of questions and orthodox responses that were sent to parishes ahead of visits from church authorities. Broad's work on these important documents at various points in her career indicates that her business had sufficient esteem to attract establishment contracts.

For the first three years after she took over her husband's business, Alice published an average of four books per year. Most of these are sermons, several by Thomas Bradley, who had worked with Thomas Broad before his death. Other works include self-help manuals (*The Country Mans Instructor*, 1661), and religious works (*The Black Diet*, 1664). Extant titles suggest that she published only two books in 1665-8 and then there is nothing until 1680,

⁴ Withington, p. 97.

when she published a set of visitation articles for the Archdeaconry of Northumberland and the final volume of poetry. Her imprints not only evidence her work with York booksellers Leonard Campleshon, Francis Mawburn, and Richard Lambert, but also with a London bookseller, Thomas Messenger, ‘at the three Bibles on London-Bridge’.⁵ Alice leveraged and extended the business networks inherited from her husband. Thomas Broad had worked with York booksellers but the later collaborations, particularly with Lambert and Messenger, are Alice’s developments.

During the early stages of her career, Alice Broad was the only printer in York. While her business was dominated by sermons, she also published original material and reprints either by or for local readerships. *The Dukes Desk* (1661) for example, by William Lovell, ‘gentleman and traveller’, provides ‘rare receipts of physick and surgery’ for men, women, and children, as well as remedies for the ‘most pestilent diseases in any cattel’.⁶ Broad and Mawburn published six editions of *The Dukes Desk* in 1661, indicating its popularity with a local readership. The same year, Broad published two books of husbandry instruction for Leonard Campleshon: *The Good Husbands Jewel* and *The Country Mans Instructor*. Both texts were by John Crowshey, a Yorkshire writer, and it is curious that Broad and Campleshon published them so close together as the former was a reworking of the latter, originally published in 1631. *The Good Husbands Jewel* was, however, popular enough to warrant a reprint in 1664. After *The Dukes Desk*, she published popular texts either by Yorkshire writers or specifically for local interest, alongside the usual sermons. A manual of remedies

⁵ *Scarborough-Spaw*, title page.

⁶ *The Dukes Desk*, title page.

against the plague published in 1665, ‘presented to the Lord Mayor and sheriffes of London’, likely indicates local interest in the outbreak of plague in London in 1665-6.⁷

Given York’s religious history and role as one of the twin centres of ecclesiastical authority in England, sermons were an obvious product for Broad’s press. They were increasingly popular as reading material in the late seventeenth century, and York’s ecclesiastical community provided a steady stream of preachers eager to see their words in print.⁸ In the first years of her career, Alice sustained the relationship with Thomas Bradley that her husband had established. The multiple editions of Bradley’s sermons, in particular *Caesar’s Due* (1663), demonstrate their popularity as well as Alice’s ability to respond quickly to demand. The first edition notes that it was ‘to be sold by Richard Lambert, at the Minster-Gates’; the second is identical but omits Lambert’s name. This suggests that Broad needed to work with other sellers quickly to supply another edition. The consistency of sermons in Alice’s output across her career also provides a sense of her continued work with York booksellers as well as where these relationships failed or changed. The partnership with Lambert was the longest and most productive, Broad working with him on several sermons as well as on a work that touched controversy: Thomas Calvert’s *The Black Diet, of the Historie of Christ’s Passion* (1664). Lambert had worked closely with Thomas Broad as had Calvert, which may explain some of Alice’s willingness to work with him despite Calvert’s run-ins with ecclesiastical authorities in the same year. Through Lambert, she also collaborated with Thomas Messenger on Dr John Wittie’s *Scarborough-Spaw* (1667). Again, this continued the work of Thomas Broad, who had published previously on the health-giving waters of spas, but the extension of her work into the London market was her own initiative.

⁷ *The choicest and approved antidotes*, title page.

⁸ Barnard and Bell, p. 28.

Given her absence from historical records, Broad's successes as a businesswoman and the challenges that she faced require speculation based on small evidence. While her imprints demonstrate consistent partnerships with some York booksellers, others were of a much shorter duration, including those who had worked previously with Thomas Broad. Alice's position in York might have been precarious for reasons over which she had little control. In 1663, Stephen Bulkley returned to York, which had important impacts on Broad's press. His first printing was a sermon by Thomas Bradley, sold by Francis Mawburn. Both these men had worked closely with Broad in the previous years; neither would work with her again. Bradley and Bulkley shared a history as supporters of Charles I who suffered under the Commonwealth and both saw their fortunes reversed with the Restoration. It is also possible that Alice's status as the *only* printer in York may have made Bradley's original partnership necessary rather than selective. Equally, Thomas Broad may have cast a long shadow as a public supporter of the Parliamentarians before the Restoration. A Royalist city that was besieged rather than converted, York might have looked with less favour on the widow of a Parliamentary printer.

There are two unique texts in Broad's outputs: the first, in 1662, is an account of the legal examination of Isabell Binnington after her alleged encounter with a ghost who described in specific detail the circumstances of his own murder. This is the only time that Broad included 'printed with privilege', which suggests an officially licenced document. She also takes the unusual step (for her) of securing an endorsement from one of the text's authors, a Justice of the Peace. While tales of ghostly encounters were popular and sold well, particularly when combined with the grisly details of a death, Binnington's ghost also recounted a conspiracy against Charles II. Broad's press rarely skirted controversy. Her pursuit of official and clearly

licenced publications suggests she deliberately distanced herself from her husband's partisan (and, following the Restoration, treasonous) political stances. The careful framing in this publication of Binnington's account was an opportunity to show allegiance to the new regime.⁹ It is equally possible that Broad's private allegiances followed her husband's more closely than her professional reputation would allow her to display: a more lurid pamphlet of Binnington's ghostly encounter was published in London, closely following Alice's tract, but without the conspiracy against the King.¹⁰ Though it ostensibly alerted the King to a potential threat, the report of the conspiracy also publicised dissatisfaction with the restored monarchy. Such content, whether sensational or transgressive, also appealed to audiences in a different register from Alice's typical sermons and self-help manuals.

Alice's last imprint, the volume of poetry, is also unique among her surviving printed works. Published after over a decade of apparent silence, with the inclusion of John White, the slim collection announces an important change in the business. Both the author and the subject were connected to Yorkshire but inhabited a different class than Broad's previous authors. The poet, Richard Graham, Viscount Preston, had his seat at Norton-Conyers and was MP for Cockermouth, Cumberland; the collection marks the death of Mary Paulet, Marchioness of Winchester. More importantly, it also indicated the passing of Broad's press into new hands. White had married Hannah Broad, Alice and Thomas' daughter, in 1680. A new arrival in York from London, an established business offered his future in the city a considerable boon.¹¹ Printing Graham's responses to the death of Paulet may have been part of a new direction for the print house. There are no extant records of Alice's death, but after this point,

⁹ Butler, p. 272.

¹⁰ Butler, p. 250.

¹¹ Sessions, p. 24.

her name disappears from the imprints. John White succeeded remarkably with the material and capital inherited through Hannah from Alice, becoming ‘Their Majesties’ Printer for the City of York and the five Northern Counties’ after the Revolution of 1688.¹² In addition to the tools of the trade, Hannah, having grown up in her mother’s business, also brought knowledge and experience of York’s print trade networks. Later, Broad’s press would form the basis of another innovative woman of print, Grace White, John’s second wife, who started York’s first newspaper in 1718.

Through the considerable upheavals and uncertainty of the 1660s and 1670s in York, Alice Broad persisted with her career. Bulkley’s return, though a blow to her business, did not stop her press which was, after all, her livelihood. The curious disappearance of her name from imprints after 1667 may indicate a change in her attitude towards printing rather than a suspension of activities. Her imprints in the 1660s support the idea that York was less than wholly welcoming of a female printer – or at least, that gender was a factor in some of her partners’ transference of work to Bulkley. Between 1661 and 1664, the imprints carry her full name; in 1665, she began to appear as ‘A. Broad’. ‘Alice Broad’ returns only for her final imprint with John White in 1680. But she also produced different kinds of work after 1664, including broadsheets and pamphlets. This shift could indicate the production of even more ephemeral materials that did not survive. It is tempting to read too much into the traces that Alice Broad left behind: from the bold capital letters of her first foray into York’s print worlds to the gradual diminution from ‘Alice Broad’ to ‘A. Broad’ and then to apparent silence. And yet, those traces offer enough to surmise the multiple pressures on women in the print trades in the late seventeenth century.

¹² Sessions, p. 25.

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