'Miner poet' or 'seer and singer'? Joseph Skipsey's performance of the identities of miner and poet

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Northumberland poet Joseph Skipsey (1832–1903) published 11 volumes of poetry between 1858 and 1895. For the majority of this time he was also working as a coal miner, and his poetry can be seen as part of a North-East working-class tradition looking back to earlier local ballads, and forward to the work of Tom Pickard and the Morden Tower poets of the 1960s and beyond. This article explores the dual identities of Joseph Skipsey through his first published pamphlet, Lyrics, and through visual representations of the poet, in particular the photographic portrait 'Skipsey in his Working Clothes'. It argues that Skipsey's choice to 'try on' a multiplicity of visual personas through the emerging art of photography provides a parallel to the development of both his lyric voice, and his identity as a poet in the world outside his poems.
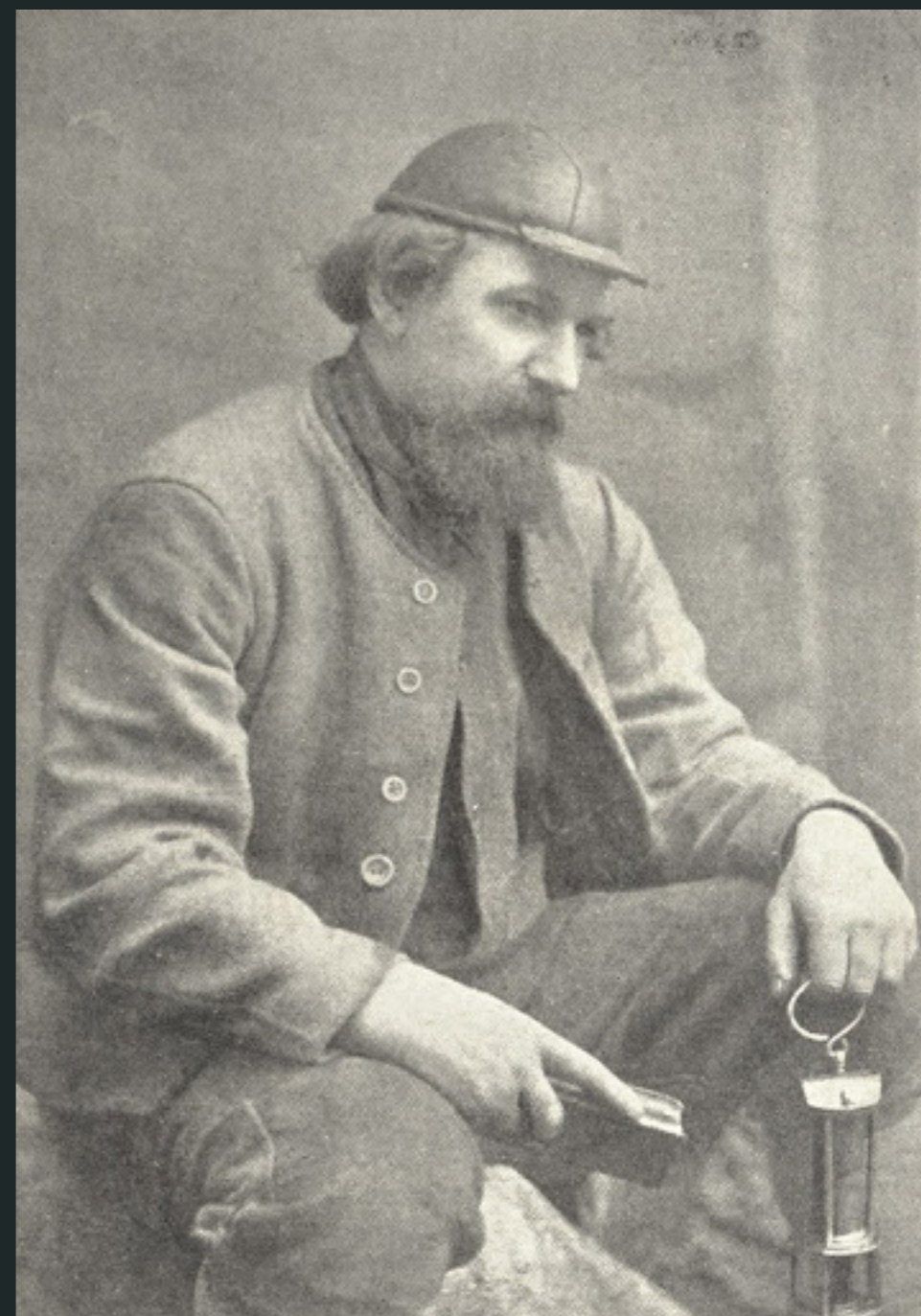
Figure 1. Unknown photographer, *Skipsey in his Working Clothes*, (c.1870s), black and white photograph, published in Robert Spence Watson, **Lectures delivered to the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-on-Tyne**, printed for the Society, 1898.

Northumberland poet Joseph Skipsey (1832-1903) published 11 volumes of poetry between 1858 and 1895. For the majority of this time he was also working as a coal miner, and his poetry can be seen as part of a North-East working-class tradition looking back to earlier local ballads, and forward to the work of Tom Pickard and the Morden Tower poets of the 1960s and beyond. Skipsey became known, locally and nationally, as a 'miner poet', enjoying a small degree of national critical interest and anthologisation which barely outlasted the nineteenth century.[1] He self-identified as a miner from his earliest published pamphlet, *Lyrics* (1858), obliquely attributed to 'J.S., a coal miner.'[2] This anonymity privileges role over person. Skipsey's childhood as a trapper boy in mines, his auto-didacticism, and his continued work as a miner while writing poetry, supported the creation of a romantic narrative both for himself and for his patrons. The preface to *Lyrics* asks for kindness towards 'the production of a Working Man' from those 'who have the strength, which a liberal Education supplies'. There is thus an element of self-apology, but also of pride in Skipsey's self-conception as a miner who writes.

Skipsey's work was grounded in his lived experience as a miner, but he also strongly self-identified as a poet, which for him was a bardic, magical role ('seer and singer') with the power to teach society as a whole.[3] This role is eternal and outside class hierarchies. From his earliest work, Skipsey combined representation of his community and lifestyle with contemplation of the role of the poet and the nature of fame; his aspiration to fame, on the same terms as the great poets who had gone before, can be seen as a political stance. At the same time, Skipsey was dependent upon patronage to support his ability to publish. There is a tension for Skipsey himself between his 'minerness' and his 'poetness', and this also plays out in his relationship with the literary establishment. The photograph in Figure 1, published by Skipsey's patron Robert Spence Watson, is a concrete example of Skipsey the published poet consciously inhabiting and performing the 'miner' persona: in a sense he is dressing up as himself.

This article explores the portrait of Skipsey in the context of photography as a new art form, and the conventions which were emerging as the form developed. It compares Skipsey's visual self-performance in the portrait, with his poetic self-performance in his *Lyrics*, assuming a (varying) degree of creative agency in both performances. It argues that both forms of artistic production act out the tension between Skipsey's identities. The content, form and use of the poetic persona in the *Lyrics* embody Skipsey as both 'Rhyming Joe' (the pitman in his community who is also a poet), and as a serious poet seeking fame in the wider world. The photograph both challenges, and works within, the conventional portrayal of workers at this time; it is a *portrait* of a recognisable, serious self, but it also uses clothing and tools as shorthand for 'worker' in a way which was legible to, and could be used in the agendas of, the political and literary establishment. Photography created another artistic channel through which the poet's private self could engage in the public domain.

Rhyming Joe and the laurel wreath.

In the 1850s, Joseph Skipsey was in his twenties, working at Percy Main and Choppington pits, but also reading widely, and writing the *Lyrics* published in 1858.[4] The collection contains a range of lyric forms, but the majority of poems are brief and in short stanzas with regular rhythm which could be described as musical; many, such as 'The Lad o'Bebside', 'Jemmy stops Lang at the Fair' and 'Hey, Robin', are in ballad style. This connects them with both North-East miners' songs and canonical traditions; Skipsey acknowledges an existing popular song for the chorus of 'Jemmy', and *Twelfth Night* as his source for the first two lines of 'Hey, Robin'. The majority of the poems are about love, with timeless themes such as the dangerous, beguiling woman ('Annie Lee') and the unattainable woman ('To a Young Lady', where love is hopeless because of class). Most importantly, the poems express individual emotion, exemplifying Wordsworth's description of poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' and this lyrical 'I' is often explicitly signalled as identifiable with Skipsey the poet.[5] An example is the domestic love poem 'To Sara (During Illness)':

> For I feel when I gaze on my baby and thee,-
> I feel my lost strength back returning to me;
> And my heart, from this sick bed up leaping, declares
> My Sara has one yet to lighten her cares.

From the title onwards, the lyric persona is identified with the poet within his family unit, in the vulnerable state of sickness, and from the almost physical perspective of the sickbed.

1 For example: *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford: OUP, 1912); *North Country Poets*, edited by William Andrews (Hull: Brown and Son, 1888); *The Poets and Poetry of the Century*, edited by Alfred Henry Miles (London: Hutchinson, 1892), volume. 5, pp. 515 - 28.

2 *Lyrics, by J. S., a coal miner*, pamphlet (Durham, printed by George Procter, 1858).

3 Joseph Skipsey, 'The Poet as Seer and Singer', *Igdrasil, journal of the Ruskin Reading Guild*, volume 1, 1890, pp. 69-76, 136-141 and 182-189. Initially delivered as a lecture to the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society in 1883. See: Miles, ibid, p. 517.

4 J. S., *Lyrics*. Poems cited: *Fame* (p. 14); *The Lad o'Bebside* (p. 8); *Jemmy Stops Lang at the Fair* (p. 22); *Hey, Robin* (p. 7); *To Sara, During Illness* (p. 19); *The Lass of Willington Dene* (p. 12).

5 William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, third edition. (London,:Longman, 1802), preface, pp. x-xi.

Even where Skipsey writes in a narrative tradition where the poetic persona is often an observer, his perspective is present. In 'The Lass of Willington Dene', a traditional story of the girl who steals all the lads' hearts but is destined for the protagonist, this is taken further: the poet steps out of the anonymity of the ballad-singer, and the group of lads in the narrative, naming himself in the third person while singing in the first:

Rhyming Joe, so distressed for the rest
of the fair,
Cries, let Meg the choice of her fancy
declare,
Then– though her fair kind may her
fortune envy,
Their hatred will change to a blessing
of joy!

But if, like a bairn in a summer-deck'd
bower,
She cannot well mention her favourite
flower,
One life-lasting favour of her I would
beg…

This poem is full of named characters who also appear in other poems, creating the sense that this is a real community Skipsey is writing about (again this is in the tradition of North-East mining songs where recognisable characters regularly appear). In a poem which is fairly formulaic, Skipsey draws our attention to himself as a poet, implying that he is known as such in the community.

That Skipsey aspired to be a 'serious' poet is clear from another poem, 'Fame':

Deep, deep must you dig
In the earth ere you come
To that treasure which brightens
And comforts our home,–
That keeps out the cold
In the keen wintry night,
And converteth the cot
To a hall of delight.

But deeper than this
Must you search in the mind,
Ere that charm can be found
Which so many would find–
That charm which upreareth
The fabric of fame,
And commandeth the nations
To worship a name.

Oh! yes! But by dint
Of hard labour and toil–
By the battling with sorrow
And ridicule's smile,
Is the laurel obtained
That encrowneth the brow
And marketh the children
Of genius below.

The poem moves from mining to fame in three economical stanzas. The first stanza equates coal with treasure, social value (not, at this point, the hard graft of extraction). The second uses the pit as a metaphor for the mind which must be mined for creative inspiration; this elusive commodity is there for the finding, but not found by many. The reward for finding it is fame. Finally, the toil of the miner and that of the poet are equated. Being a poet is a trade, a work of mental

sweat, and also of loneliness (sorrow and ridicule). In publishing his poetry, Skipsey is presenting the fruits of his labours in the hope of starting on the path to a classical laurel wreath. 'Fame' is confidently rooted in his own personal experience, but the idea of inspiration as an elusive charm which can conjure fame contains trepidation.

The *Lyrics* clearly suggest Skipsey's dual identity. In life, and in the community suggested in the poems, he is known as a miner, who is incidentally also 'Rhyming Joe'. However, *Lyrics* as a published object positions him as a poet, yet one who is anonymous as a *man*, identified as 'a Coal Miner', 'A Working Man'. At this stage in his career, Skipsey's lyric persona within the poems seems more confident than his poetic persona in the external literary world of his aspiration.

Photography and the curation of a public self.

Geoffrey Batchen describes the explosion of photography in the mid nineteenth century as 'an avalanche of images which swept modernity along in its wake and gave pictorial certainty to that era's peculiar sense of self.'[6] From their genesis as experimental

forms at the turn of the 1840s, when the rival processes of daguerrotype (using silvered copper sheets) and calotype (using paper) emerged from the work of Louis Daguerre and Henry Fox-Talbot, photography quickly became recognised as a commercial opportunity. The market was primarily linked to portraiture because photographic portraits were cheaper and more reproducible than those produced by artists. From the mid 1850s, process improvements allowed an explosion of cheap, popular formats such as the *carte de visite*, which promoted public engagement through collecting, whether for the family album or to possess portraits of celebrities or curiosities.[7] Andrew Wynter, writing in 1863, noted that forty portraits could be had for a couple of guineas.[8]

Collecting photographic images was, and is, an act of choosing and curation, a statement of the self-conception of the collector. *Sitting* for a photograph is an even more overt performance of self; Batchen notes that in sitting, 'the subject…got to make all sorts of choices about how they wished to appear'.[9] Nineteenth-century studio photographers actively facilitated self-performance, initially by the middle classes but later more widely, through

6 Geoffrey Batchen, 'Richard Beard', *Art on Paper*, volume 12 (4), March 2008, pp. 48-75.

7 Audrey Linkman, *The Victorians: photographic portraits* (London: Tauris Parke, 1993) pp. 61-9; John Falconer and Louise Hide, *Points of View: capturing the nineteenth century in photographs* (London: British Library, 2009) p. 10.

8 Andrew Wynter, 'Photographic portraiture', in *Subtle Brains and Lissom Fingers: being some of the Chisel-marks of our Industrial and Scientific Progress* (London, Robert Hardwick, 1863) p. 309.

9 Geoffrey Batchen, 'Dreams of ordinary life', *Photography: theoretical snapshots*, edited by Jonathan J. Long, Andrea Noble and Edward Welsh (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 82.

the use of poses, props and backdrops, and this was invariably an aspirational exercise, as well as being good for business. Wynter decried the tendency for 'the lower stratum of the middle classes' to adopt upwardly-mobile dress and poses:

> Miss Brown.… Why should she shiver in a ball-dress on a verandah, and why should we be called upon - instead of looking at her good honest face - to admire the far-stretching lake-like prospect at her back? [10]

The idea of the 'good honest face' hidden by borrowed signifiers of wealth is a value-laden one, conjuring a social upstart sitting in a Gainsborough painting, pretending to be monarch of all she surveys. Wynter's positive-sounding notion of the 'good honest face' is an encouragement to Miss Brown to know her place. Whilst celebrating the new photographic art-form, Wynter is displaying unease with social change.

The curation of personal image was no less dominant among writers and other 'men of eminence' who embraced the craze to be seen through collectible *cartes* and photographic compendia. The first two images below show Dickens and Thackeray, ostensibly in the act of writing or thinking, surrounded by the accoutrements of scholarship and respectable endeavour.[11] Draped curtains, writing implements and books abound; the painted backdrop of books in the Thackeray portrait is unavoidably reminiscent of the curated Zoom background of 2020. These portraits are 'real' in the sense that they capture the features of the writers, but are entirely staged by the photographer in collusion with the sitter. They are intended to create what Brian Maidment, in his anthology of self-taught Victorian poets, calls a 'Parnassian' image of the writer.[12] The third image, embracing the same aspirational convention, is the earliest extant published photograph of Joseph Skipsey.[13]

The Dickens and Thackeray photographs are from the early 1860s and were taken for publication or distribution. The Skipsey image is c.1850s, closer to the infancy of the form, and is a family photograph meant to be displayed only in a domestic setting. But the style and aspiration are recognisably the same. It is impossible to know whether the photograph was instigated by Skipsey himself or his family (his biographer indicates that he was spending his

Figure 2. (top left) George Gardner Rockwood, *Charles Dickens*, (1867), albumen print, copyright National Portrait Gallery.

Figure 3. (top right) Ernest Edwards, 'William Makepeace Thackeray', albumen print, published in *Portraits of Men of Eminence*, volume 1 (London: Lovell Reeve, 1863).

Figure 4. Unknown photographer, *Joseph Skipsey*, (c. 1850s), unknown medium, family collection, online under Creative Commons.

10 Wynter, ibid, p. 299.

11 George Gardner Rockwood, *Charles Dickens,* albumen cabinet card, 1867. National Portrait Gallery NPG x 13113, copyright National Portrait Gallery; Ernest Edwards, 'William Makepeace Thackeray', in *Portraits of men of eminence in literature, science and art, with biographical memoirs,* volume 1 (London: Lovell Reeve, 1863) p. 17.

12 Brian Maidment, *The poorhouse fugitives: self-taught poets and poetry in Victorian Britain.* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987), pp. 95-100.

13 Photograph of Joseph Skipsey c. 1850s, from Skipsey family archive, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skipsey.JPG. The photographic medium is not given, and is unclear from the digital image. The photograph has white markings which could indicate paper or be adhesions from a facing page, but also contains scratches showing a darker under-surface, suggesting metal or glass.

own earnings on books at this time), but the mode of presentation is surely influenced by him. [14] Thinking about the photograph alongside the poem 'Fame', the classical statue and fringed tablecloth of the image echo the embellishments of 'encrowneth' and 'marketh' in the poem.

Labourers and pit lasses.

The early photograph shows Skipsey performing the role of autodidact and writer, not that of manual worker. Why, some fifteen years later, does he choose to be photographed in his miner persona? In order to explore this, it is useful to think about how working people were portrayed in early photographs. Asa Briggs and Audrey Linkman both note that portraits of workers (where the primary aim of the photographer is to capture the likeness and character of the sitter) were rare, particularly in the early days of the art form. [15] The photographs below display some of the purposes for which workers' images were made. These can be categorised as documentary, reforming and commercial. All of these forms require the sitters to be in their working clothes.

Figure 5 documents workers in their workplace, albeit in resting mode and looking at the camera. It was taken in the early 1850s by William Delamotte, who had been commissioned to document the construction of the Crystal Palace. [16] Among his detailed architectural photographs is this image of those doing the constructing; it acknowledges their presence as part of a portfolio celebrating modernity and progress, but they are still presented as 'characters' or picturesques. Their timeless, almost rustic, quality is set against the clean lines of the modern technological wonder behind them.

Figure 6 is taken from John Thomson and Adolphe Smith's 1864 compendium *London Street-life*; it shows John Day, 'The Temperance Sweep', and is accompanied by an improving description of his rise from dissipated vagabond to master sweep making plenty of money, once he gave up the demon drink. [17] Although Day is named, he is presented as a type and a parable.

Figure 7 is one of a series of collectible

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14 Robert Spence Watson, *Joseph Skipsey: his life and work* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1909), p.19. If the image is a daguerrotype, it would have been expensive, costing around half a guinea according to John Werge, an itinerant daguerrotypist in the North East in 1850. In his *Evolution of Photography* (London: Piper and Carter, 1890) p. 40, Werge describes basing himself variously in Hexham (where he hires a sitting room to take 'parlour portraits'; it is 'a slow place'), Seaham Harbour (where people were 'too poor for me to continue long'), and Tynemouth.

15 Asa Briggs, *A Victorian Portrait: Victorian life and values as seen through the work of studio photographers*, (London: Cassell, 1989) pp. 75- 85. Linkman, *The Victorians*, pp. 67-9.

16 Philip Henry Delamotte, *Breakfast time at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham* 1852–54. Albumen print. British Library, available at http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/pointsofview/themes/progress/crystalpalace/

17 John Thompson and Adolphe Smith, *Street-life in London, with permanent photographic illustrations taken from life expressly for this publication* (London: Sampson Low, 1877), pp. 33-35. Image from LSE Digital Library, https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:qav226jay

Figure 5. (top left) Philip Henry Delamotte, *Breakfast time at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham*, (1852-4), Albumen print, British Library.

Figure 6. (top right) John Thompson, *The Temperance Sweep*, (1864), LSE Digital Library.

Figure 7. unknown photographer, *Photograph of a pit brow girl, Wigan, Lancashire*, (1900), National Archives.

cartes de visite of Lancashire 'pit-brow lasses', produced as curiosities by James Millard and other Wigan photographers.[18] These were studio photographs, and thus a reconstruction of an imagined workplace for commercial purposes. They were posed with hefty props such as shovels and riddles; sitters were asked to look as if they had done a day's work by posing in dirty clothes, and sometimes with dirty hands and faces. Sarah Edge has explored the power relationships in these images, in particular focusing on the collection of civil servant Arthur Munby, who liked pictures of pit-brow and other working women 'in their dirt' so much that he commissioned many himself. [19] Associating women with hard manual labour, wearing trousers, could clearly cause shock or titillation or both.

All these portrayals of workers use them as generic figures, signifiers of a wider cultural preoccupation; whether that be progress, the state of the city and the poor, industrialisation, commercial opportunity, morality, or sexuality. The selves of the sitters are less important than what they represent, and that is tied to their occupation. Andre Adolphe-Eugene Disderi, patentor of the *carte de visite* process, believed that a photographic portrait must allow the viewer to 'deduce who the subject is, to deduce spontaneously his character, his intimate life, his habits; the photographer must do more than photograph, he must "*biographe*"'.[20] By that definition, these images of workers are not portraits.

It is this which distinguishes the photograph of Skipsey in his mining clothes (see Fig. 1) from the more common generic images of workers. This is a portrait of an individual, fulfilling Desderi's requirement of intimacy and a sense of inner life. This intimacy comes from a collaboration between the photographer and the sitter, and such a relationship gives the sitter the same agency as that granted to the sitters in the aspirational portraits of writers discussed above. The photograph portrays Skipsey with the tools of both his trades, a book and a miner's lamp. His clothing clearly signifies 'miner' but his pose is thoughtful and 'Parnassian', inviting the viewer to think twice and not to simply interpret the surface. Unlike the unnamed writer of the *Lyrics*, this photograph is of a named man and one known for poetry; the portrait can thus be seen as carrying an overt message that a miner and a serious poet can be one and the same. This is a more

confident stance than that conveyed in the *Lyrics*.

Skipsey's strong visual sense, and his understanding of the meanings which can be conveyed through, or derived from, a visual image are evidenced in his description, cited in an 1881 spiritualist magazine, of a vision he claimed to have seen of a heroic miner. Leaving aside any discussion of spiritualism as a belief-system, this description is remarkable for its visual power, its immediacy, its focus on dress and objects, and the primary characteristic of the envisioned miner, which is intelligence:

> An open countenance and characterised – especially in his eyes – by an expression of a high order of intelligence. The dress he had on consisted of a large-checked grey-cloth coat...in his hand was what I at first thought was a small tin can, but which a second glance allowed was a safety-lamp. [21]

Of course, the idea of 'choosing' a visual image is also connected with Skipsey's aspiration to become part of the literary world, and what that might require him to do in order to gain recognition. By the time he sat for this photograph, Skipsey had spent his childhood and adult life as a miner, producing five collections of poetry which attracted a degree of acclaim in the North-East, though circulation was narrow (200

copies of his 1864 *The Collier Lad*, and 300 of *Poems* in 1871).[22] He had also experienced a brief period (1859-63) of alternative employment, before returning to mining. These alternative roles were secured with the help of patrons; firstly, he became an under-storekeeper at the Hawks and Crawshay ironworks in Gateshead through the influence of James Clephan, editor of the *Gateshead Observer;* he then briefly worked as a sub-librarian at the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, through the auspices of Robert Spence Watson, Gateshead liberal, solicitor, educationalist and secretary to the 'Lit and Phil.'[23]

This patronage was undoubtedly admiring, and instrumental in Skipsey's ability to continue publishing, but it carried assumptions which were not necessarily in keeping with Skipsey's own vision of himself as a poet. An early example is Clephan's reported statement at a Burns Night banquet for 'the principal inhabitants of the town' of Newcastle in 1859:

> Mr. Clephan, the editor of the *Gateshead Observer,* introduced a pitman poet, Mr. Skipsey...Mr. Clephan said that Mr. Skipsey had published that day a batch of poems which were equal to any in the English language, and yet he was in poverty. Before concluding the proceedings it was determined to devote the surplus, after paying the

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18 Photograph of a pit brow girl, Wigan, Lancashire, 1900 (COPY 1/447 f.145), https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-lives/pit-brow-girl/

19 Sarah Edge, 'The power to fix the gaze: gender and class in Victorian photographs of pit-brow women', *Visual Studies* 13.2, 1998, pp. 37-56.

20 Andre Adolphe-Eugene Disderi, *Renseignements photographiques indispensables a tous,* Paris, 1855, cited and translated by Elizabeth McCauley, *A. A. E. Disderi and the carte de visite photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), Chapter 2: 'The carte de visite and the search for markets.' No page numbers given in electronic edition, A&Ae Portal: https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3893/?id=-19522

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21 'Poetry and second sight among the coal miners', *Light: Journal of Psychical, Occult and Mystical Research*, 5th March 1881, pp. 66-7.

22 Miles, ibid, p. 516.
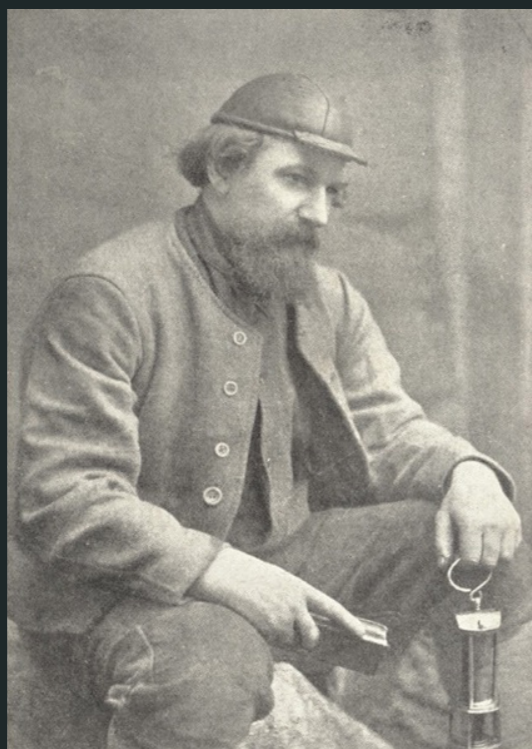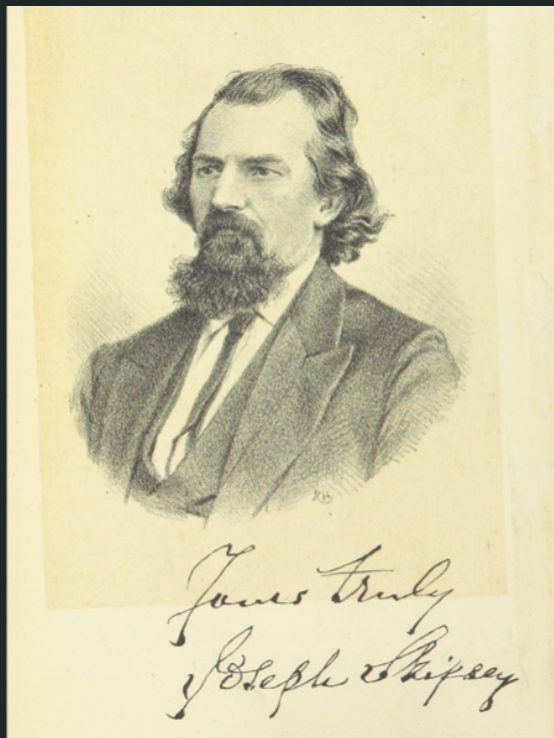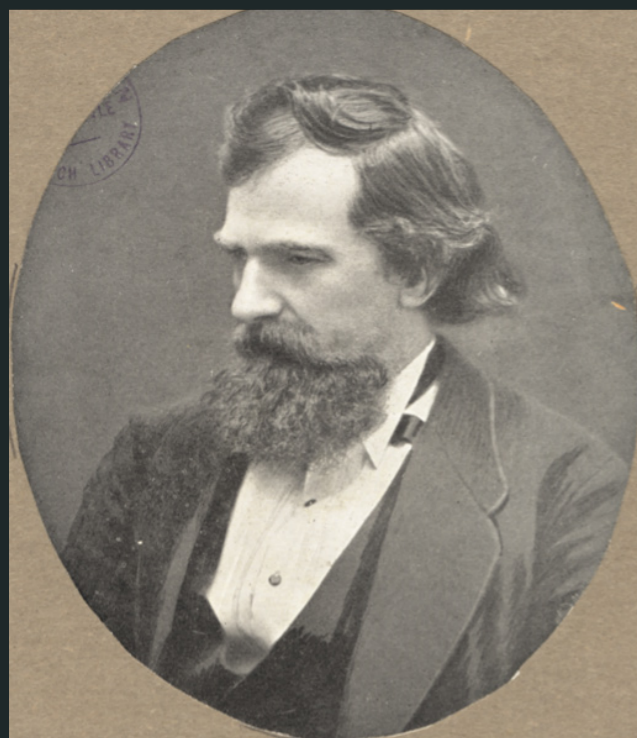
23 Spence Watson, *Joseph Skipsey*, pp. 47-9.

Figure 8. (top left) Unknown photographer, *Joseph Skipsey* (n.d.), black and white print, Newcastle Libraries.

Figure 9. (top right) Ralph Hedley, *Joseph Skipsey* (c.1878), lithograph, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums.

Figure 10. *Skipsey in his working clothes*, see figure 1.

expenses of the meeting, to purchase copies of Mr. Skipsey's book to be circulated amongst the Mechanics' Institutes of the North.[24]

The *Newcastle Courant*'s account of this occasion attributes the proposal to seek donations from those assembled to a second speaker, Mr Barkas. This support is double-edged: the speakers offer practical financial assistance and seem to support Skipsey's claim to be a serious poet; yet Clephan introduces him as a 'pitman poet' (a term he coined for Skipsey in a review in his newspaper), envisages the potential marketplace for his work as Mechanics' Institutes, and positions Skipsey simultaneously as poet and supplicant through his physical presence among the great and the good.[25] This patronage relationship is complex and cannot simply be interpreted as patron*ising.* Clephan and Spence Watson, and later Dante Gabriel Rossetti, regarded Skipsey's work with genuine admiration and not just as "quite good for a miner"; however, there is undoubtedly a sense in which these patrons gained impetus for their own liberal agendas by portraying Skipsey as a 'pitman' poet

and not simply as a 'poet'.

The only Skipsey publication to contain an image of the poet is his 1878 collection, *A Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics*.[26] Of a number of extant images from this period, Skipsey chose (or approved for publication) the central one, which was produced as a lithograph by Newcastle artist Ralph Hedley, possibly based on photographs taken alongside the first image. Skipsey used the lithograph as a calling card, inscribing it to supporters including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, to whom he sent a copy with his latest volume in 1886.[27] The 'miner' image was published retrospectively by Skipsey's patron, Robert Spence Watson, in an 1898 collection of Lit and Phil lectures where Skipsey was used to illustrate excellence in the continuation of the Northumbrian ballad tradition.[28]

It is tempting to suggest that the published lithograph dresses Skipsey in a respectable but plain collar and tie, rather than the grander dinner suit to the left, or the miner's flannels to the right, positioning him in the middle ground between his Parnassian poet and miner identities.[29] The 'miner'

24 'Burns Celebrations', *The Times,* 27 January 1859, p. 10. *Newcastle Courant*, 28 January 1859.

25 *Gateshead Observer*, 10 October 1858, p. 6.

26 Joseph Skipsey, *A Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics* (Bedlington: Richardson, 1878), frontispiece.

27 Ralph Hedley, lithograph of Joseph Skipsey, Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums, https://collections-searchtwmuseums.org.uk/#details=ecatalogue.314256. TWAM dates the lithograph from the accompanying letter to Rossetti, 1886, but their copy is identical to the image in the 1878 *Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics.*

28 Robert Spence Watson, 'Ballads of Northumberland', in: *Lectures delivered to the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on Northumbrian History, Literature and Art* (Newcastle: printed for the Society, 1898), p. 77 and p. 92.

29 *Joseph Skipsey*, black and white print, n.d, Newcastle Libraries Biography Collection, Local Studies, https://www.flickr.com/photos/newcastlelibraries/4076619948/in/photolist-7deK5Q-7da4P4-7da4yx/

image presents both of these personas in the same image. Skipsey's choice to 'try on' a multiplicity of visual personas through the emerging art of photography provides a parallel to the development of both his lyric voice, and his identity as a poet in the world outside his poems.