

Chapel Members in the Workplace: Tension and Teamwork in the Printing Trades in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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INTRODUCTION

The process by which journeymen became masters and came to run printing houses of their own was seriously undermined in Europe from the sixteenth century on. As a rule, there was a concentration of a few printing presses in a handful of urban workshops.¹ These were dominated by several fairly well-known families which encouraged the development of state control. This was a period of religious and political turmoil, particularly in England and France.² Few studies on the early history of the printing industry are as thorough and illuminating as Natalie Zemon Davis's work on Lyons. In this large and prosperous French city, the rapidly expanding sixteenth-century printing industry employed many male immigrants who often spent all their adult lives as wage earners working as pressmen or compositors in a trade that was very different from that of their fathers.³ Both government and guild intervention contributed extensively and almost continuously to the expansion of this urban body of permanent journeymen in the capital-intensive printing trade before the Industrial Revolution.⁴ Looking back on his

¹ See Figures 1 and 2. Conclusions and calculations have been based in particular upon English and French data given by Roger Chartier, "L'imprimerie en France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: l'état général des imprimeurs de 1777", *Revue française d'histoire du livre*, 3 (1973), pp. 273–279; Philippe Minard, *Typographes des lumières, suivi des "Anecdotes typographiques" de Nicolas Contat (1762)* (Champ Vallon, 1989), pp. 124–126; Henri-Jean Martin, "Une croissance séculaire", in Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin (eds), *Histoire de l'édition française: le livre triomphant 1660–1830* (Paris, 1990), p. 118; Jacqueline Roubert, "La situation de l'imprimerie lyonnaise à la fin du XVIIe siècle", in *Cinq études lyonnaises* (Geneva, 1966), pp. 96–97 and Donald F. McKenzie, "The Economics of Print, 1550–1750: Scales of Production and Conditions of Constraint", in Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Produzione e commercio della carta e del libro (secc. XIII–XVIII)* (Florence, 1992), p. 414: appendix A.

² Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book. The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800* (London, 1990), pp. 135–136 and A. E. Musson, *The Typographical Association. Origins and History up to 1949* (London, 1954), p. 24.

³ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Le monde de l'imprimerie humaniste: Lyon", in Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin (eds), *Histoire de l'édition française: le livre conquérant. Du Moyen Age au milieu du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1990), pp. 321–324.

⁴ In Germany, established urban corporations of various sorts (painters, bookbinders, merchants, etc.) had already forced the municipal government to include printers within their guild at the end of the fifteenth century (see Adel L. Jastrebizkaja, "L'imprimerie allemande, une nouvelle branche d'une production en série aux XV–XVIe siècles: structure socio-économique", in Cavaciocchi, *Produzione e commercio*, pp. 534–538). Judging gov-

career as a journeyman and foreman in the mid eighteenth-century Parisian world of printing, Restif de la Bretonne presumably articulated a widespread opinion when he wrote in his autobiographical writings that among printers “un ouvrier ne devient jamais maître [. . .] les maîtres engendrent des maîtres, et les compagnons des compagnons et ainsi de génération en génération.”⁵ In fact, the position of foreman in a printing establishment was the pinnacle of a lifetime of waged labour.⁶ The Dutch journeyman and overseer David Wardenaar in his manual *Beschrijving der Boekdrukkunst* (1801) described the journeymen (*knechts*) together with other wage earners as being without alternative prospects (“arbeiders [. . .] bedongen loon [. . .] om dat hij geen ander uitzicht heeft”) and as the workers of an unpayable craft (“gezellen de bearbeiders zijn van het nut [. . .] door deze onbetaalbare kunst”).⁷ Having no substantial part to play in the affairs of the guild, the literate and self-confident journeymen created their own unofficial conventions and rules, independent of the formal prescriptions of corporate regulation.⁸ Their existence never attained legal and corporate consent.⁹ However, this customary body did achieve a visible degree of organization in the larger towns and, when necessary, clandestinely preserved forms

ernment and guild intervention by Robert Darnton’s statement that “in many ways France can be compared best with England, a country that was also unified politically and dominated by a capital city” (Darnton, “Histoire du livre. Geschichte des Buchwesens. An Agenda for Comparative History”, *Publishing History*, 22 (1987), p. 41), it is clear that a strong governmental and corporative interference was also true of major centres of book production in other countries and in later periods. See for southern European examples: Venice (Horatio F. Brown, *The Venetian Printing Press, 1469–1800* (Amsterdam, 1969), pp. 86ff.) and Madrid (Diana M. Thomas, *The Royal Company of Printers and Booksellers of Spain, 1763–1794* (New York, 1984), pp. 2–37), and for the Netherlands in particular Frans A. Janssen, *Zetten en drukken in de achttiende eeuw. David Wardenaar’s beschrijving der boekdrukkunst (1801)* (Haarlem, 1982), pp. 43–49. For Antwerp, see below.

⁵ “[W]orkers never become masters [. . .] masters create masters, as journeymen do journeymen from generation to generation”. His *Monsieur Nicolas ou le coeur humain dévoilé* (1794–1797) and the eighteenth-century Parisian world of apprentices, *alloués* and masters have been discussed extensively in Minard, *Typographes des lumières*, pp. 74–100.

⁶ Conor Fahy, “Le ‘Istruzioni pratiche ad un novello capo stampa’ di Zefirino Campanini (1789)”, *Quaderni Storici*, 72 (1989), pp. 699–722.

⁷ Janssen, *David Wardenaar’s beschrijving*, pp. 227–228.

⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, “A Trade Union in Sixteenth-Century France”, *The Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 19 (1966), pp. 48–69. See also her contribution “Le monde de l’imprimerie humaniste”, pp. 321–327; Philippe Minard, “Agitation in the Work Force”, in Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche (eds), *Revolution in Print. The Press in France, 1775–1800* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 107–123.

⁹ Journeymen’s petitions against unemployment, low wages, excessive entry to the trade, etc., presented to the Stationers’ Court, may have been a part of the small role of the London journeymen in the Company itself, see Musson, *Typographical Association*, pp. 7–9.

of action and association.¹⁰ At workshop level, the journeymen's associations succeeded in realizing a tacitly tolerated formalization. This study is intended to show how the ideas and practices of these workplace associations were shaped and how they developed as their environment changed. I will trace the development of the organizational structure, examine how this structure came to meet the demands of master and men, and discuss its role in the formation of workers' collective experience and culture. In this article I shall discuss the printers' chapel in the Plantinian House (Figure 3)¹¹ which was highly institutionalized between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. This discussion complements recent work on networks of printing journeymen and workers' culture in pre-industrial Europe.¹²

THE CHAPEL

Works of reference on this subject often refer to Joseph Moxon's early description of the printing trade. In his *Mechanick Exercices* (1683–1684) he states that “every printing-house is by the custom of time out of mind, called a chappel [. . .] all the workmen that belong to it are members of the chappel”.¹³ In using chapel, Moxon is referring to the body of workers rather than to a religious institution, church building or a printing house producing work with a religious or ecclesiastical content. Nevertheless, the history of the term had become so clouded by this time that an explanation and retrieval of part of journeymen's history was required to raise public awareness of them.¹⁴ In his *Traité élémentaire de l'imprimerie ou le manuel de l'imprimeur* (1793) Antoine-

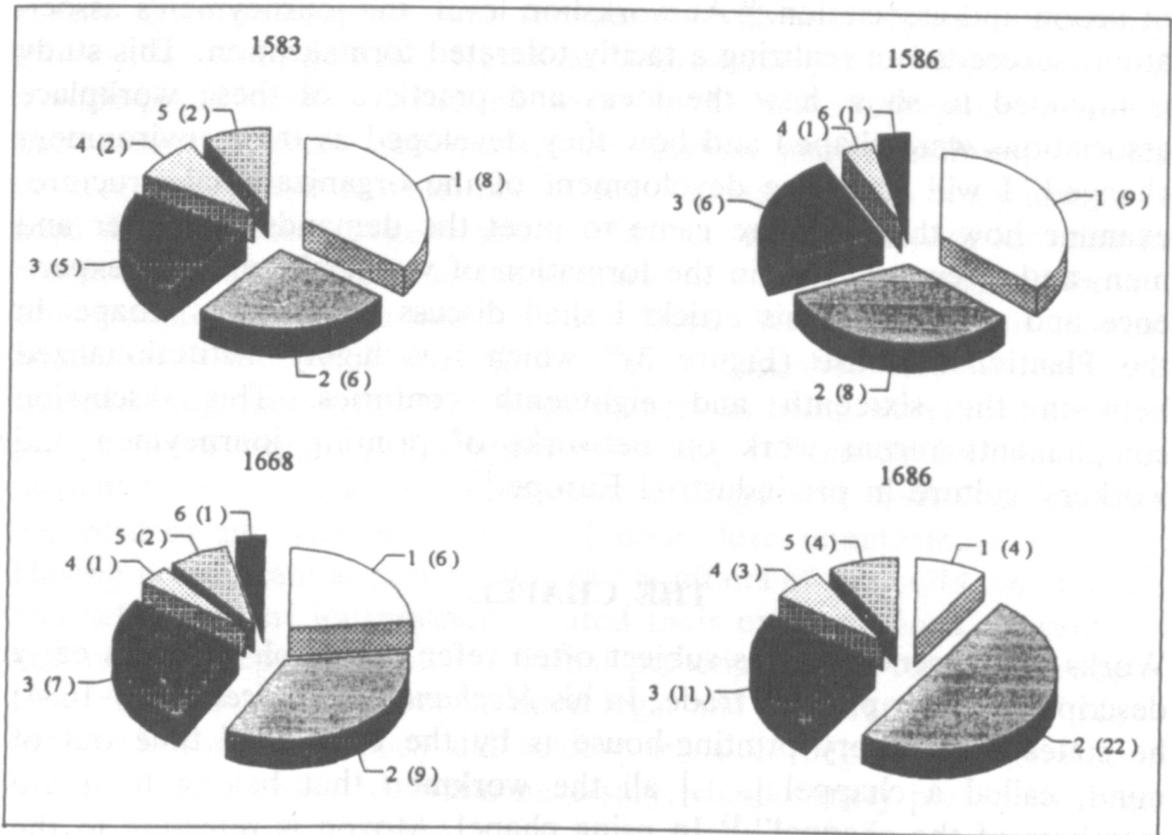
¹⁰ Paul Chauvet, *Les ouvriers du livre en France des origines à la Révolution de 1789* (Paris, 1959), pp. 3–204; Minard, *Typographes des Lumières*, pp. 159–169.

¹¹ In 1876 the entire property, including the building and almost everything inside, was sold by Edward Moretus to the City of Antwerp. On the early history of the archives and the inventory of Jan Denucé, *Museum Plantin-Moretus. Inventaris op het Plantijnsch Archief. Inventaire des Archives Plantiniennes* (Antwerp, 1926), see Jan Materné, “Archivering rond de eeuwwisseling: de vroegste inventarisatie van het Plantijns Archief (1876–1926)”, *De Gulden Passer*, 69 (1991), pp. 181–199. The issues raised in this paper will be discussed at length in my Ph.D. dissertation in progress: “Church Print and Capitalism. The Officina Plantiniana and the Moretuses in the Age of the Counter-Reformation”.

¹² Robert Darnton, “Work and Culture in an Eighteenth-Century Printing Shop”, *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, 39 (1982), pp. 34–47; Minard, *Typographes des lumières, passim*; Jacques Rychner, “Le travail de l'atelier”, in Chartier and Martin, *Le livre triomphant*, pp. 46–70. Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages. Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge, 1989), esp. pp. 10–22.

¹³ Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercices on the Whole Art of Printing (1683–4)*, ed. Herbert Davis and Harry Carter (New York, 1978), p. 323.

¹⁴ See also Nicolas Contat dit Le Brun, *Anecdotes typographiques où l'on voit la description des coutumes, moeurs et usages singuliers des compagnons imprimeurs*, ed. Giles Barber (Oxford, 1980), esp. pp. 38, 66–67; Minard, *Typographes des lumières*, pp. 150, 157–158.



master printers	1583	1586	1668	1686
presses				
1	8	9	6	4
2	6	8	9	22
3	5	6	7	11
4	2	1	1	3
5	2		2	4
6		1	1	

Figure 1. Number of presses in London printing houses, 1583–1686

François Momoro subscribed to the contemporary view: “La chapelle est le corps des chapelains” (“The chapel is the body of its members”).¹⁵ In spite of the fact that the term was only appropriately used in France from the eighteenth century onwards, the French origin of the word is usually assumed, as are the origins of a number of other words used in printing workshops and customs of the chapel.¹⁶ It is therefore significant that in Christopher Plantin’s printing house in Antwerp (c. 1520–1589),

¹⁵ Antoine-François Momoro, *Traité élémentaire de l'imprimerie ou le manuel de l'imprimeur* (Paris, 1793), p. 91.

¹⁶ Frederick C. Avis, *The Early Printers' Chapel in England* (London, 1971), pp. 13–19; Ellic Howe and Harold E. Waite, *The London Society of Compositors (Re-established 1848). A Centenary History* (London, 1948), pp. 31–32; Musson, *Typographical Association*, p. 11.

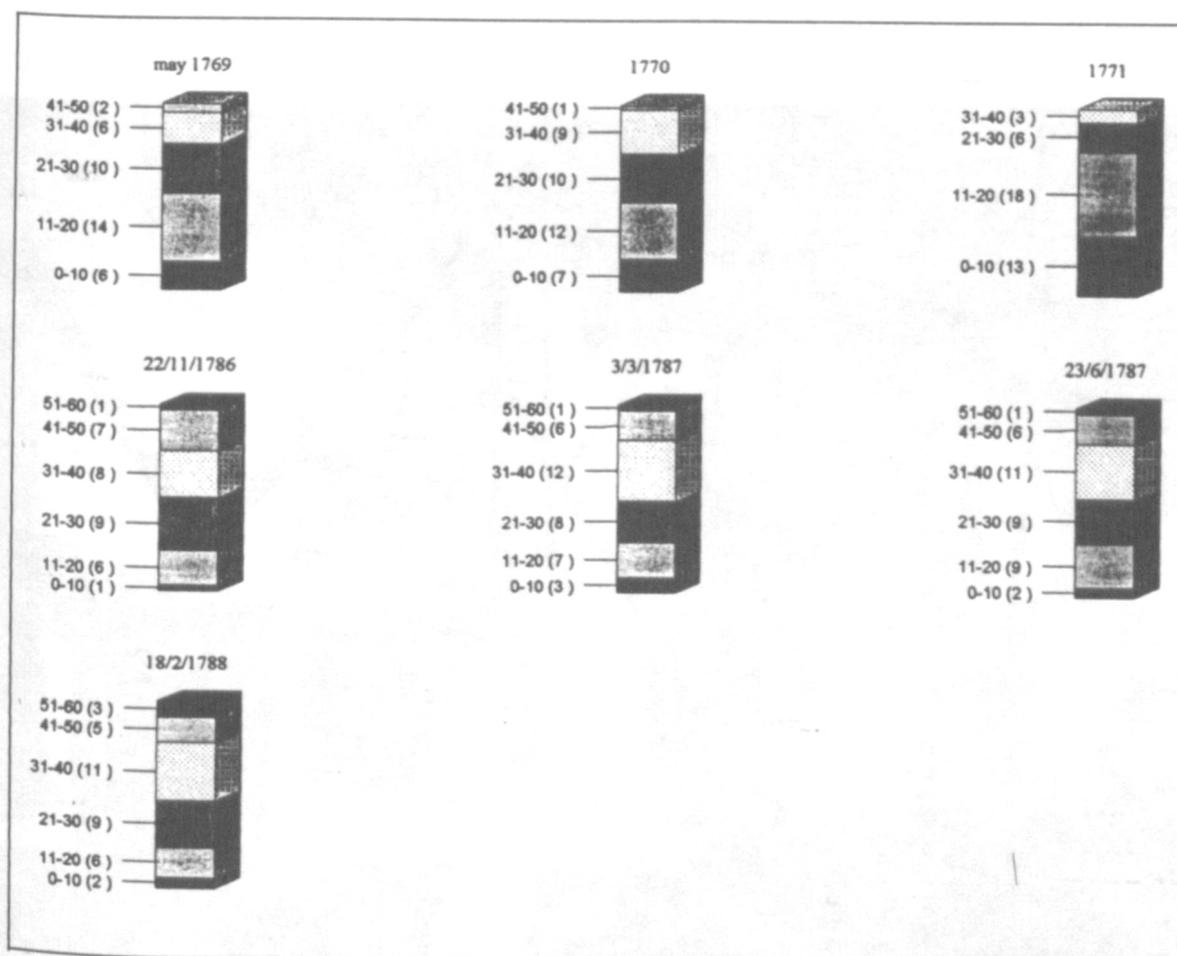


Figure 2. Distribution of letterpress printing workers in the Parisian shops, 1769–1788

as early as the mid-1550s, thus almost from the beginning of its large business, a workshop ordinance referred to the “printing-houses’ custom” (“costumen der druckerien”) and to the frequent theme of “for the good of the chapel” (“tot profijte van der cappellen”).¹⁷ If emphasized, the ubiquity of this custom at that time (“gelyck al om de coustume

¹⁷ Museum Plantin Moretus, Plantinian Archives, Antwerp [hereafter PA], ordinance G (1555–1556), according to the terminology and the dating of the former curator Maurits Sabbe, “De Plantijnsche werkstede: arbeidsregeling, tucht en maatschappelijke voorzorg in de oude Antwerpsche drukkerij”, *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie voor Taal – en Letterkunde* (July 1935), pp. 633–636 and Léon Voet, *The Golden Compasses. A History and Evaluation of the Printing and Publishing Activities of the Officina Plantiniana at Antwerp*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam, 1972), pp. 310–311.

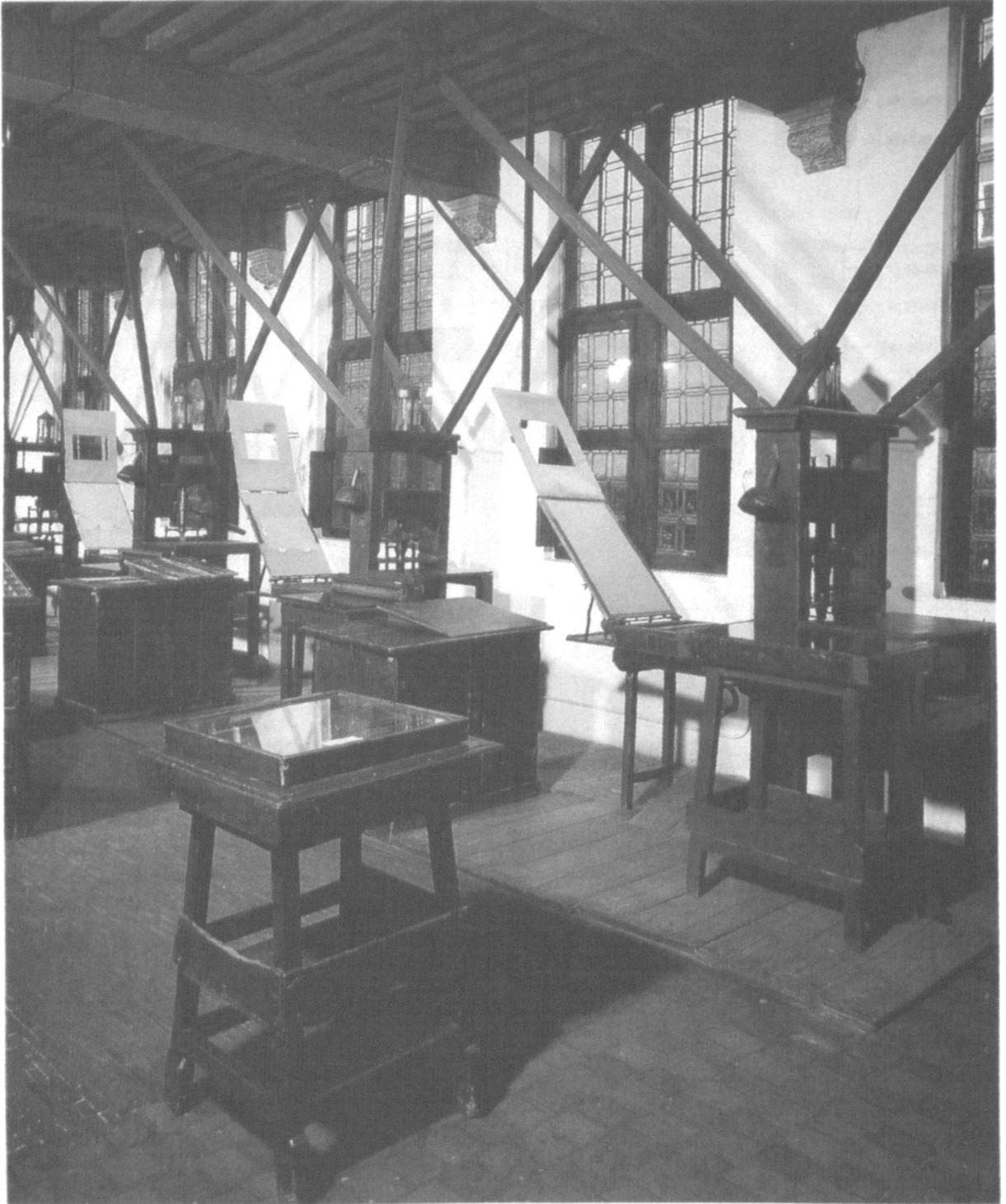


Figure 3. The printing works of the *Officina Plantiniana*, now Plantin-Moretus-Museum, Antwerp

is”) seems to provide a factual basis for Moxon’s strong sense of tradition. Yet the invention of this tradition seems to point to the continental origins of the new industry, particularly as England’s early printing industry is known to have been based largely upon immigrant workers.¹⁸

If there were any grounds for an international chapel tradition by the mid-sixteenth century, the early history of the Plantinian chapel marks its limits as well as revealing local peculiarities.¹⁹ In his own account books (1563–1567) Christopher Plantin called it a *compagnie des imprimeurs*, using the term “company” which was more familiar to contemporary journeymen’s organizations in Lyons and Paris.²⁰ Unlike the famous “Company of the Griffarins” of Lyons who organized assemblies and treasuries beyond the workshop, the early Plantinian printers’ company was an institution in which the journeymen delegates of the workforce joined with the master. The master’s influence was to increase from the 1570s after severe clashes between Plantin and his workers.²¹

However, the Plantinian association seems to have effectively adapted itself to changing circumstances and reinforced the position of the workers in the long run.²² It goes without saying that transformations into distinct forms of association took place using the opportunities and challenges of specific historical settings. Labour associations were varied and their constructions far from consistent, even within the same workshop. From the turn of the seventeenth century, when conditions in the labour market shifted in their favour, the Plantinian journeymen clearly became more powerful. It is almost paradoxical that, the less the master was directly involved in the working of the chapel, the more he contrib-

¹⁸ Colin Clair, *A History of Printing in Britain* (London, 1965), p. 105; H. S. Bennet, *English Books & Readers, 1475 to 1557, Being a Study in the History of the Book Trade From Caxton to the Incorporation of the Stationers’ Company* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 31 and for Antwerp in a wider context: Frederick C. Avis, “England’s Use of Antwerp Printers, 1500–1540”, *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 45 (1973), pp. 234–240. On these grounds I would rather invert Natalie Davis’s suggestion that “Plantin was imitating an institutional form which the English masters had pioneered” (“A Trade Union”, p. 69).

¹⁹ The early history of the Plantinian chapel and its historiography have been largely discussed by Léon Voet, “The Printers’ Chapel in the Plantinian House”, *The Library*, 5th ser., 16 (1961), pp. 1–14.

²⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, “Strikes and Salvation at Lyon”, in Natalie Zemon Davis (ed.), *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 4.

²¹ PA, ordinance D (1570–1572): the master did not allow all kinds of workers’ meetings and he became a central figure in the settling of quarrels: “dat de ghesellen hier werckende [. . .] hen gheensins [. . .] maecken oft te hebben eenighe woorden vergaderinghen oft handelinghen alhier met eenighe ghesellen; alle gheschillen ende twisten [. . .] sullen overgebracht worden aen den meester [. . .] die de selve zal hooren informatie daer op nemen ende alleen ordeelen.” For a general description of the situation throughout these years, see Voet, “Printers’ Chapel”, pp. 9–10.

²² PA, nos 334, 478: see especially *Aenwysinghe van Artikelen* [. . .] until *Cort begrijp* [. . .]; ordinance L (1609 to 1700). In 1715 (ordinance I, art. 3) it was stated that the master would only interfere in serious problems (*alle merckelijcke oft swaere gheschillen*).

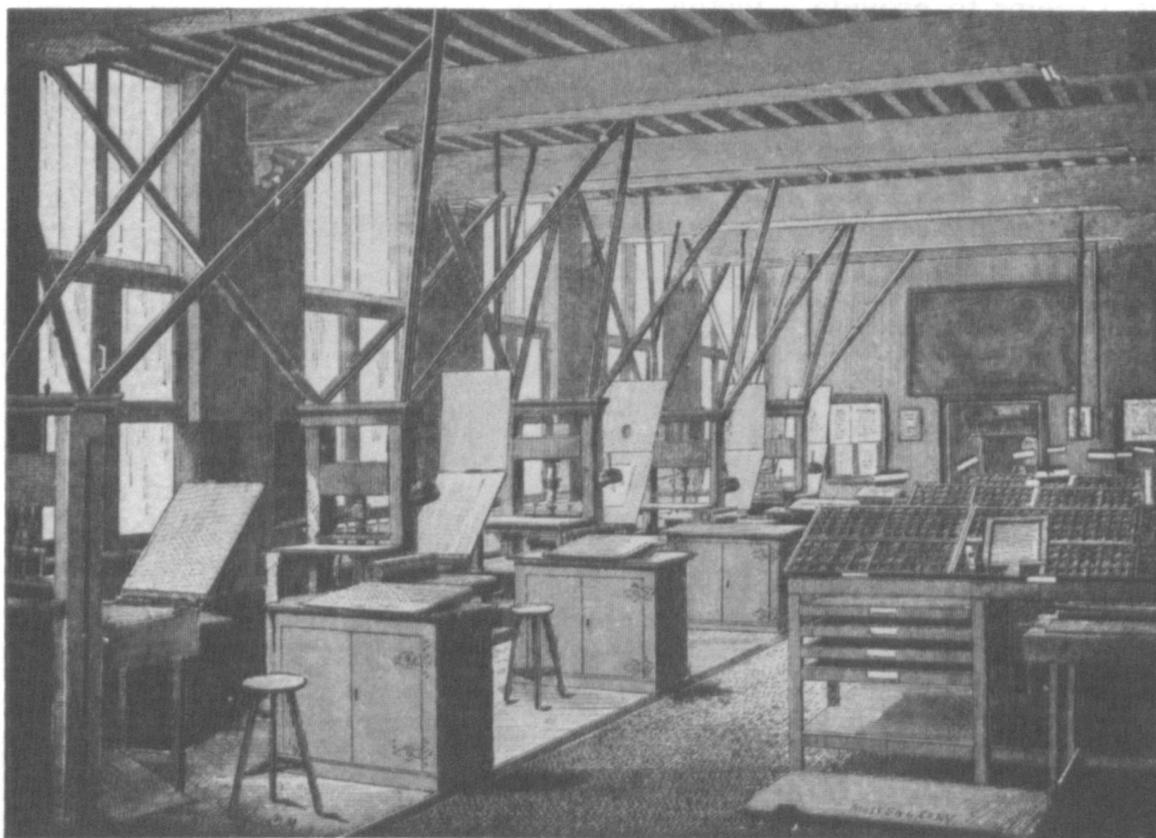


Figure 4. The printing room of the Plantinian Office. Heliogravure, published in *Demorest's Monthly Magazine*, vol. XVIII, no. 12, October 1882, p. 795. (Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, press cuttings, cat. no. 1).

This illustration of the printing office was made a few years after the restoration of the Plantin house and its opening as the Plantin-Moretus-Museum on 19 August 1877. The original printing presses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stand along one side of the room. Opposite the row of presses are the type-cases of the compositors.

uted financially and spiritually to its development and became someone to turn to as a last resort. The emancipation of the local chapel under Plantin's successors, the Moretuses, clearly kept abreast of structural and economic changes in general, as well as changes in the workshop. Increasing specialization in labour-intensive, exclusive, high-quality printing for the Catholic Church, in a city that was no longer a leading centre for the printing and paper trades, forced the Moretuses to establish a local standard for the regulation of the industry, a stable workforce and strong labour relations among workers who worked closely with each other.²³ Nearly all piece-workers, who remained relatively tied to one job in a collective and a complex labour process (Figure 4), the compositors and the crews of pressmen in particular were interested in

²³ Jan Materné, "Restructuring the Plantinian Office. The Moretuses and the Antwerp Economy in a Time of Transition (Seventeenth Century)", in Erik Aerts *et al.* (eds), *Studia Historica Oeconomica. Liber Alumnorum Herman Van der Wee* (Leuven, 1993), pp. 283–301.

regulation. By way of a common box system of fines, gifts and contributions, good social conduct and a certain code of behaviour for skilled craftsmanship could be enforced. In early modern Europe, chapel working was generally suited to all aspects of printing in an era of technological stability. However, its influence culminated in the Plantinian shop in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As an active spiritual centre for the community, the chapel was a place where grudges and needs could be expressed by journeymen who were forced to rely very heavily upon each other within a limited work space during long fourteen-hour working days, from Monday to Saturday almost every week of the year. Defending their own piece-work in a regularly supplied workshop with an advanced division of labour gave rise to many day-to-day work-related issues which demanded collective action.²⁴ Militancy among journeymen was not directed at the master, but towards offensive or negligent workers. Disharmony in the workplace and disruption of the production process were often caused by bad behaviour, both verbal (swearing, singing, telling lies, being insulting, etc.) and physical (fighting, gambling, drunkenness, absenteeism, etc.), and by technical inefficiency or negligence on the part of individuals.²⁵ According to workshop rules or judgements,²⁶ a whole range of penalties, fines and forfeitures were levied on individuals to be spent collectively after being approved by the chapel. If necessary, offenders could also be temporarily deprived of chapel benefits or worse. Craftsmen were very proud and the chapel did not appreciate its authority being undermined. The plaintiff's claim and the defendant's reply were fully discussed, although criticism of the chapel's final verdict and its officers was forbidden. Contemporary statements in their complaints books clearly show that the Plantinian journeymen were always prepared to show offenders mercy. Their aim was not to relieve their colleague of his hard-earned wages, but to nurture feelings of friendship within the group. The journeymen did not

²⁴ This function of the chapel is stressed in the definition given by David Wardenaar stating that "chapel [. . .] is een woord dat betrekkelijk gemaakt word als alle de personen, die op een drukkerij werken bijeenkomen om over een of andere onbetaamelijkheid te oordelen welke men zijn medgezel zoo in woorden als daden [. . .] mogt hebben aangedaan", see Janssen, *David Wardenaar's beschrijving*, pp. 158–159.

²⁵ These problems are listed and registered in pre-industrial printing offices all over Europe. See e.g. Christian Coppens, "Un règlement de l'imprimerie de Jean-Louis de Boubers en 1781", *Quaerendo*, 19 (1989), pp. 83–116; Conor Fahy, "A Printers' Manual from Bodoni's Parma: the 'Istruzioni pratiche' of Zefirino Campanini (1789)", *The Library*, 6th ser., 13 (1991), pp. 104–105; Jacques Rychner, "A l'ombre des Lumières: coup d'oeil sur la main-d'oeuvre de quelques imprimeries du XVIIIe siècle", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 155 (1976), pp. 1925–1955; *Rules and Directions to be Observed in Printing-houses*, ed. D. Wyn Evans (Greenock, 1988).

²⁶ Many examples can be found in PA, ordinances A–L and nos 264, 334, 340, 478, 697. See also Sabbe, "Plantijnsche werkstede", pp. 595–694 and Maurits Sabbe, "In de Plantijnsche werkstede. Ordonnantie op het gebruik van vuur en licht", *De Gulden Passer*, 14 (1936), pp. 145–151.

phrase their statements in this manner because they were obliged to justify their association to their masters. Workshop rules and a collective social fund (small chapel fund) and mutual benefit fund (small chapel fund, but founded separately as a sick fund in 1653 (Figure 5)²⁷) were aimed in particular at improving sociability and co-operation among the interdependent journeymen (“vermeerderen de affectie die de selve wercklieden daghelijcks ‘t samen werckende tot malkanderen behooren te hebben”).²⁸ Aberrant individual behaviour had to be held in check by collective regulation. Notwithstanding its visible capacity for fraternity and order, the chapel could barely cope with the high tension, harsh words and bitter fights which happened between its members. The complex organization of prefactory printing labour put severe pressure on the journeymen in the workplace. On several occasions, the Moretuses insisted that all common decisions should be strictly respected. The complaints books naturally focus on the conflicts between the men themselves to the exclusion of other causes of strife.

CHAPELS, MASTERS AND GUILDS

The chapel’s scope for action did not reach far beyond this kind of conflict which could not be settled more publicly. Close surveillance and support from the master made it an inefficient instrument for the organization of industrial resistance. Moreover, as a subsidized mutual aid society, and a bank providing credit to indigent journeymen,²⁹ the large sick fund rather accentuated exclusivist tendencies among the Plantinian workers *vis-à-vis* the other workshops. On the other hand, the journeymen who stayed in the town having left the Plantinian Office either through a temporary lack of work, or for other reasons, but who were not guilty of antisocial behaviour towards fellow journeymen, could remain as members of the sick fund.³⁰ There is, however, evidence of intertrade divisions and conflicts. Some of the Moretuses’ concerns became increasingly tied up with those of their workers. This distanced them from the concerns of other masters, including both large employers and small producers within their own corporation. Chapel working therefore also seems to have contributed to the heterogeneity of interests within the corporation itself. The language of love and fraternity that characterized much of Plantinian chapel discourse cannot be reduced to

²⁷ James C. Riley, “Sickness in an Early Modern Workplace”, *Continuity and Change*, 2 (1987), pp. 363–385; Sabbe, “Plantijnsche werkstede”, pp. 611, 688–694; Voet, *Golden Compasses*, vol. 2, pp. 372–375.

²⁸ PA, nos 334, 432, 772.

²⁹ Several examples of financial activities can be found in PA, e.g. no. 772.

³⁰ Of course, the financial health of the fund was another incentive. Later on, several measures were taken to keep it going on (e.g. loans from the master, financial transfers, etc.).

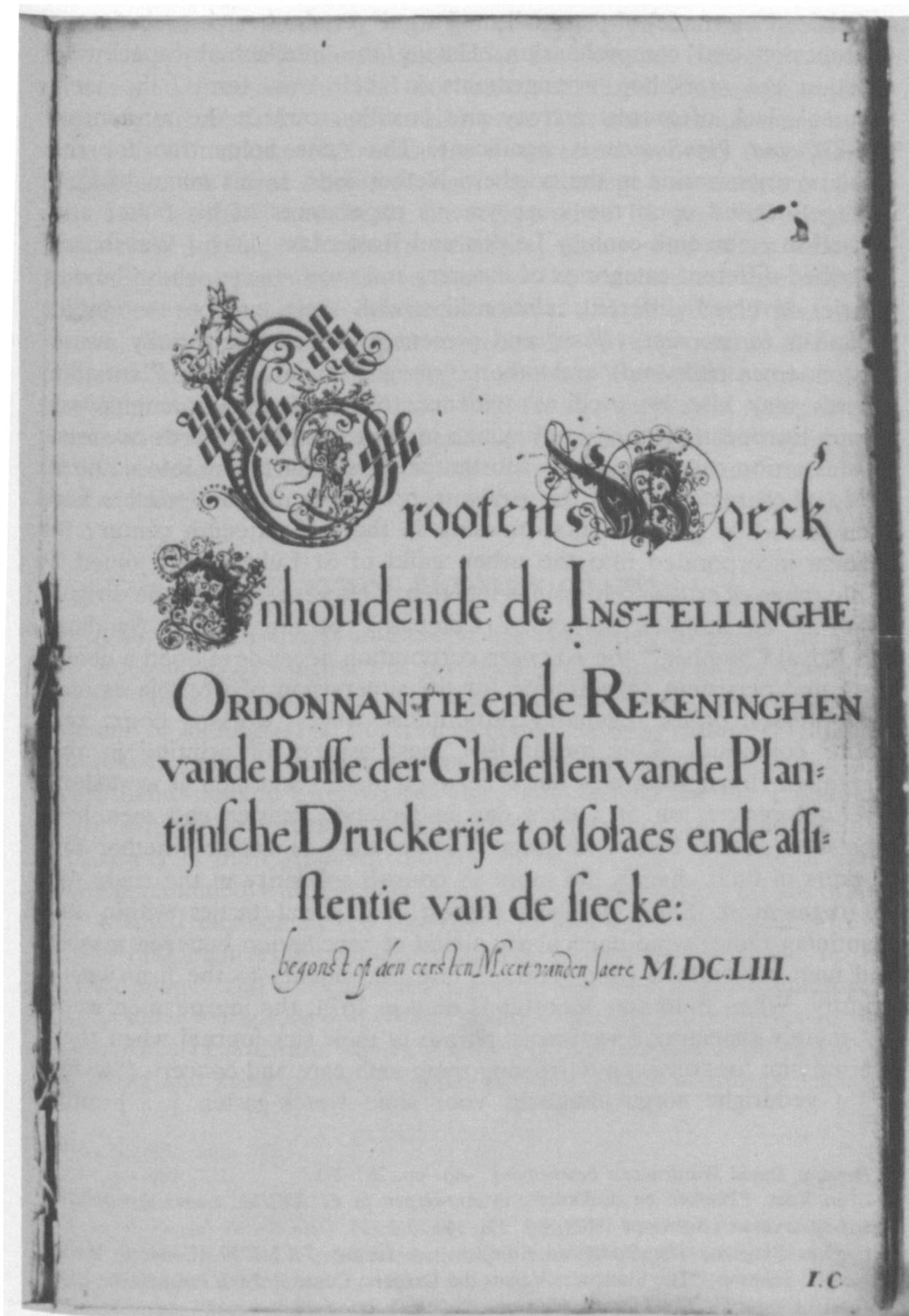


Figure 5. The new sick fund ledger of the Plantinian Office (1653). Title page: *Grooten Boeck Inhoudende de INSTELLINGHE ORDONNANTIE ende REKENINGHEN vande Busse der Ghesellen vande Plantijnsche Druckerije tot solaes ende assistentie van de siecke: begonst op den eersten Meert vanden Jaere M.DC. LIII.* (Museum Plantin-Moretus, Plantinian Archives, no. 432)

a cliché-ridden model of paternalism. I argue yet another vision in favour of cohesion and comprehension. Having the intellectual capacity to question the workshop arrangements in their own terms, the journeymen's lack of protest activity and hostility towards the masters of the *Officina Plantiniana* is significant. The same holds true for the printers' organization in the northern Netherlands. In his manual which is largely based upon the journeymen's experiences of his father and himself in eighteenth-century Leiden and Rotterdam, David Wardenaar described different categories of *meesters* and *meesteressen* whose labour policies involved different relationships with their employees: absent capitalists (*aristocraat, rijken*) and present professionals; socially aware masters (*menschlievend*) and others (*gierigaarts*), etc.³¹ The Plantinian records may also be used as evidence to reveal certain ambiguities among European printing journeymen in their attitude towards masters. This assertion cannot really be substantiated without taking into account the local characteristics of the Antwerp printing craft. The printers had been forced by governmental pressure in the mid-sixteenth century to become incorporated into the urban guild of St Luke which joined a whole range of artistic professions together.³² However, unlike the dirigist policy of the London Stationers' Company³³ or the Parisian Syndical and Royal Chamber,³⁴ the Antwerp corporation never developed a deliberate and persistent organization for the supervision of workplaces and hand-presses, or for regulating promotions, wages, working hours and labour conditions. This meant that most aspects of printing in the Plantinian House were negotiated between master and men at workshop level. Moreover, on St Luke's day in October, master and men had their own annual feast and mass. It is not easy to decide whether the workers in their chapels did more to nourish solidarity in the trade, or to fragment it. Still, the facts suggest that social tactics within the Plantinian Office were particularly aimed at conciliation between master and men rather than confrontation, and that fidelity to the firm was a priority. When Balthasar Moretus II died in 1674, the journeymen were not merely repeating a well-worn phrase in their sick-journal when they praised him for consistently treating them with care and concern ("wiens [. . .] gedurighe sorghvuldigheijt voor sijne werck-gasten [. . .] altijt

³¹ Janssen, *David Wardenaar's beschrijving*, esp. pp. 267–271.

³² Léon Voet, "Boeken en drukkers", in *Antwerpen in de XVIIIde eeuw: instellingen, economie, cultuur* (Antwerp, 1952), pp. 331–340.

³³ Cyprian Blagden, *The Stationers' Company. A History 1403–1959* (London, 1960); Gerald D. Johnson, "The Stationers Versus the Drapers: Control of the Press in the Late Sixteenth Century", *The Library*, 6th ser., 10 (1988), pp. 1–18.

³⁴ Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle (1598–1701)* (Geneva, 1969); David T. Pottinger, *The French Book Trade in the Ancien Regime, 1500–1791* (Cambridge, 1958).

moeten gepresen worden").³⁵ As the co-founder of the new great sick fund which provided financial assistance for sickness, old age, requiem masses, and funerals, he had not only subsidized it through regular quarterly payments for each working press, but also through many extra donations to mark special occasions: a successful recovery from illness; the safe return home from a voyage; the marriage and noviciate of his sons and daughter; and finally his legacy when he died.³⁶ During the first decade of the sick fund's existence, almost half of its financial reserves were paid by the master.³⁷ The Moretuses' contribution responded to the shop's industrial activity and its general piece-rate system, as well as to the workers' own culture of reciprocity in the event of births, weddings, deaths, etc. In this context, Wardenaar proposed the establishment of a national mutual fund for the support of sick and old journeymen in the northern Netherlands. He underlined the importance of this reciprocity, fulminating against those masters who refused to do so and who looked upon the journeymen as "beggars" (*bedelaers*).³⁸

RELATIONS BETWEEN CHAPELS

No other printer's chapel in Europe has committed to paper the rules and proceedings by which it was governed as thoroughly as the Plantinian House. The evidence, which has been extremely well preserved, is the outcome of its long-term, workplace-centred business culture (Figure 6). Whereas in many European printing shops a core of faithful and established hands looked after chapel rules and activity, in the Plantinian Office almost any worker could achieve a position of responsibility, particularly in the eighteenth century. In fact, a large majority of journeymen remained with the Moretuses for relatively long periods, while only a small number moved frequently in and out of the shop.³⁹ Most of the mid eighteenth-century Plantinian workforce was made up of married men,⁴⁰ and some journeymen even saw their children employed by the same workplace and living nearby. The level of turnover in the labour force in Antwerp was extremely low and did not at all resemble the hiring and firing policy of similar printing houses in Europe such as

³⁵ PA, no. 772, folio 312.

³⁶ PA, nos 432, 772.

³⁷ Riley, "Sickness", p. 384.

³⁸ Janssen, *David Wardenaar's beschrijving*, pp. 228–231. Wardenaar's proposal went beyond the workshop and referred to practices in France. For these practices, see Minard, "Agitation in the Work Force", p. 120.

³⁹ Jan Materné, "Social Emancipation in European Printing Workshops before the Industrial Revolution", in Thomas M. Safley and Leonard N. Rosenband (eds), *The Workplace before the Factory. Artisans and Proletarians, 1500–1800* (Ithaca, 1993), pp. 204–224.

⁴⁰ General State Archives, Brussels, Officie Fiscaal, nos. 392–405.

AL DE
ORDONANTIEN
VAN DE
PLANTIÏSCHE
DRUCKERY

Die ghemaect sijn t'sedert het
jaer 1609. tot het jaer 1700.

Met consent vande Camer bij een
vergadering onder den Prins
JOANNES BROECKMANS

door

Jacobus van Pinxen.
int jaer van jubilé.

Figure 6. The Chamber's statement of the ordinances of the Plantinian Office (1700). Title page: *AL DE ORDONANTIEN VAN DE PLANTIÏSCHE DRUCKERY Die ghemaect sijn t'sedert het jaer 1609. tot het jaer 1700. Met consent vande Camer by een vergadering onder den Prins JOANNES BROECKMANS door Jacobus van Pinxen in 't jaer van Jubilé (1700)* (Museum Plantin-Moretus, Plantinian Archives, no. 334 fo. 7r)

the Bowyer's shop in London or the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel.⁴¹ The Plantinian workshop did experience some changes in its labour market as workers were attracted to the leading Dutch printing industry, although they were never as extensive as in late eighteenth-century France, when the labour market drastically changed in the journeymen's favour.⁴² The Antwerp printing labour market was centred around the Plantinian workshop since in 1738 approximately half of all journeymen in the Antwerp trade were working within its walls.⁴³ Movement between shops, which only occurred in a few large centres, was rather like travelling between cities.⁴⁴

Geographical mobility would suggest informal relationships and similarities between various chapels. More evidence is available of these similarities than of the informal relationships. Chance encounters on the streets and in the taverns of the trade while travelling around France; accidental meetings such as the annual printers' feast or the most important meeting in the kingdom of chapels in London;⁴⁵ the exchange of letters between French journeymen in search of better work, higher wages, more conviviality, a mild overseer and so on;⁴⁶ all these facts point to connections between journeymen within a wider context and without chapel intervention. From the outset, chapel life was primarily directed towards preserving the workshop's closed-door social harmony and technical order. However important it could be for self-confidence and relationships between journeymen printers, chapel working always included a deal with the master which underlined what they had in common rather than what divided them. It is certainly no accident that the Plantinian journeymen's records have been preserved as a part of the employer's archives. Within this framework journeymen were not cut off from administrative responsibility. Plantinian workshop ordinances usually addressed points of general interest and the contribution of both master and men, however unequal their economic and

⁴¹ Keith Maslen, "Masters and Men", *The Library*, 5th ser., 30 (1975), pp. 82–83; Rychner, "Running a Printing House in XVIIIth-Century Switzerland: the Workshop of the S.T.N.", *The Library*, 6th ser., 1 (1979), p. 13.

⁴² Robert Darnton, "L'imprimerie de Panckoucke en l'an II", *Revue française d'histoire du livre*, 33 (1979), pp. 359–369.

⁴³ PA, no. 793, folio 169 recto. Voet, "Boeken en drukkers", pp. 338–339: 16 master printers employed 59 journeymen (*gezellen*) and 12 apprentices (*leerjongens*).

⁴⁴ PA, e.g. nos 264, folio 21 recto and 793. Plantinian journeymen only occasionally referred to the other shops in the town such as the larger shop of the Verdussen family. The eighteenth-century foreign workers in the Plantinian Office seem to have come from outside the city (particularly the Rhineland) and left the city afterwards. The involvement of Antwerp in the famous "tour de France" and beyond has been indicated by Claude Lannette-Clavier, "Les tours de France des imprimeurs et libraires à la fin du XVIIe siècle", *Revue française d'histoire du livre*, 3 (1973), pp. 215, 225.

⁴⁵ A quotation from Avis, *Printers' Chapel*, p. 24.

⁴⁶ Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment. A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775–1800* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 206, 244–245.

institutional relationship might have been. After all, the master was the only intermediary between the craft and public authorities.⁴⁷

Chapels did not naturally lend themselves to counteracting trade unionism. If journeymen's chapel life and structures were underdeveloped, which was more often the case in workshops aiming for temporary employment on a job only basis, they were replaced and complemented on the side of the workers by other informal sources of information, recreation and protection. If chapels did not exist, or did not meet their expectations, the journeymen tapped other resources available to them. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that focusing too much on the strong Plantinian chapel model could have meant a reduction of workers' collective experience to a workplace-centred culture. Moreover, the local consultative closed-shop structure was the direct outcome of the Moretuses' personal involvement, their long-term employment policy and the relative lack of journeymen's hierarchies based on age and experience. In French printing workshops, a great hostility towards the *bourgeois* masters was latent and gave birth to typical journeymen's entertainment such as the famous cat massacre.⁴⁸ Moreover, in the case of a small workplace or a weak chapel, the social body at workshop level was not very structured and certainly not built up across the board.⁴⁹ In many places of this kind, the role of the general overseer or the *prote* became prominent.⁵⁰ As the most regular journeyman in the shop, he could become the only binding force on the shop floor, and head of the chapel. Relations between a foreman and the army of temporary journeymen were difficult and there was often a strong feeling of resentment towards him. The description of the printers' chapel in eighteenth-century Paris by the former foreman Nicolas Contat is not then the product of an institution representing the culture and concerns of an entire workforce.⁵¹ Bringing all the different printing workers into line, he often gathered the more sophisticated tasks for himself and took over some of the master's and chapel's activities such as controlling work and organizing labour which widened the gap between master and men. Many workshops in urban Europe adhered to this model. The Plantinian Office, however, was much more collective in its organization

⁴⁷ This was also true when, for example, the Moretuses acted on behalf of the sick fund before the public authorities, see PA, no. 432.

⁴⁸ Robert Darnton, "Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin", in Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), pp. 75–104. The article has been discussed largely between 1985 and 1988 in the *Journal of Modern History*.

⁴⁹ Avis, *Printers' Chapel*, pp. 28–29.

⁵⁰ Jacques Rychner, "Fonctions et tribulations d'un prote au XVIIIe siècle: Jacques-Barthélemy Spineux, 1738–1806", in Rychner and Michel Schlup (eds), *Aspects du livre neuchâtelais. Études réunies à l'occasion du 450e anniversaire de l'imprimerie neuchâtelaise* (Neuchâtel, 1986), pp. 187–269.

⁵¹ Sonenscher, *Work and Wages*, p. 19.

and disciplining of the workforce which weakened the fundamental positions of opposition between master and men. The Moretuses kept individual wage negotiations with the journeymen exclusively to themselves; but the Plantinian chapel did not allow its journeymen to undercut their colleagues.⁵² Preferential rights of employment were certainly influenced by the circle of Plantinian workers, though the master had the final say on the matter and paid the travel costs for foreign workers coming to Antwerp.⁵³ The master was also ultimately responsible for discharging workers, though the other journeymen did have some influence.⁵⁴ Control of the workplace and the labour force was largely left in the moral hands of the community and, to some extent, to a particular journeyman such as the *gouverneur*, who was assigned the duty – at least as far as the inspection of the costly typecases was concerned.⁵⁵

PRINTERS AND OTHER WORKERS

A highly articulate and literate group, the printing journeymen did not only define themselves in relation to their masters, but also in relation to workers in other crafts. The printing journeymen's interaction with the network of the *compagnonnages* and the other crafts remained rather exceptional.⁵⁶ Printers' customs only rarely permitted the gathering of a wider range of workmen or outsiders and even then it was usually in connection with their printing activities, for instance when authors and visitors entered the workplace.⁵⁷ Even within the printing office, social structures did not necessarily include all the workers (see Figure 7).⁵⁸ The establishment of the new sick fund in the Plantinian Office, which replaced and improved the old chapel's insurance box, included as before

⁵² PA, ordinance D (1570–1572) and no. 334.

⁵³ PA, no. 793.

⁵⁴ PA, nos 334, 432.

⁵⁵ PA, especially ordinance I (1715).

⁵⁶ Minard, *Typographes des lumières*, pp. 127, 161.

⁵⁷ PA, nos 264, 334.

⁵⁸ The figure emphasizes the activities of the Plantinian printing house in the first half of the eighteenth century. The bookshop and the subcontracted work, which involved auxiliary activities such as book illustration in particular, are not included. Compared to the seventeenth-century business, these activities (e.g. copperplate printing) had been integrated into the eighteenth-century Plantinian office at a time when the local industry was in decline (see also Figures 8 and 9. One of the preparatory drawings by Jan van der straet (Stradanus, 1523–1605) for these two engravings, originally published as illustrations of new inventions in a book called *Nova Reperta*, bears the date of 1550. Whether inspired by Italian or Flemish workshops, the processes of printing they represent took place in a similar way in both locations. Although the plates are supposed to have been engraved by Hans Collaert (1566–1628), there were presumably several successive states signed by different members of the Galle family, whose workshop had very close connections with the Plantinian Office.) See in this respect also Alfons K. L. Thijs, *Antwerpen internationaal uitgeverscentrum van devotieprenten, 17de–18de eeuw* (Leuven, 1993), pp. 112–113.

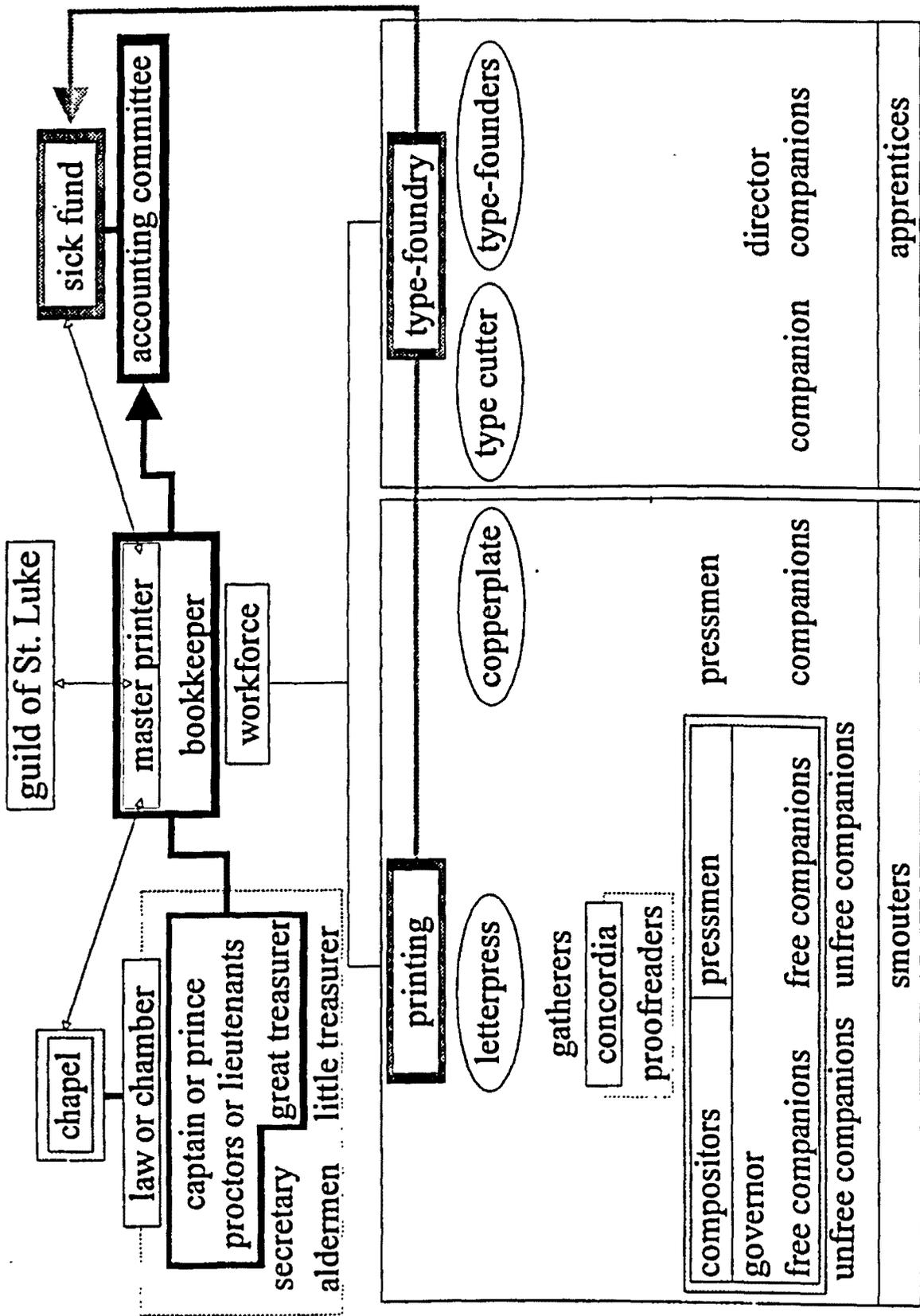


Figure 7. The social architecture of the Plantinian printing house in the first half of the eighteenth century

all composing and printing journeymen (“alle de gasten”) and, if they so wished (“ist dat die de Busse willen genieten”), proofreaders, gatherers and typefounders could also join the box club. In 1667, it was decided that only pressmen, compositors and gatherers taking up work in the Plantinian Office had to observe the monthly contributions to the great sick fund.⁵⁹ Indeed, not all other categories of workers chose to join the sick fund. However integrated prefactory printing workplaces were, they remained small and relationships between workers in different trades were limited. Only occasionally was it possible to cross the craft lines. Such an opportunity in England was at the chapel’s annual way-goose feast, when the printing journeymen invited correctors, founders, smiths, joiners and ink-makers. On that day the master not only entertained them in his own home, but also gave them money to spend in their favourite alehouse.⁶⁰ Workers’ meetings also took place beyond the walls of the workplace in Antwerp. Workshop ordinances even covered conflicts and suitable behaviour by chapel members in the streets and taverns.⁶¹ Private and family affairs, however, were banned as a topic of conversation. The journeymen’s women and children were usually excluded from chapel life, both in the workshop and the tavern. As a rule women hardly featured in the printing trade at workers’ level, except as unskilled workers who gathered sheets of printed paper.⁶²

Although there is some resemblance to contemporary autocratic and despotic thinking in arbitrary *prote* usages and expressions such as the “chapel cannot err”,⁶³ this journeymen’s body fostered democratic practices in the workplace in several respects. Membership was supposed to embrace all compositors and pressmen, whose endemic task-related tensions required the establishment of balanced conditions.⁶⁴ Other auxiliary professions were generally excluded even if represented in the workshop.⁶⁵ However, in English printing houses which cast their own type, the craftsmen involved could also become members. In particular, many early printers employed founding workers who seemed to have received integral chapel membership.⁶⁶ After his removal from the printing house, according to Moxon the typefounder also called his Founding-House a *Chappel* but “to make a competition with printers”, that is, “the customs used [. . .] are made as near as may be to those of a printing-

⁵⁹ PA, no. 334.

⁶⁰ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercices*, p. 327.

⁶¹ PA, nos 334, 478.

⁶² There are no regular or complete entries for women at work to be found in the wages accounts. The employment of women in the Plantinian shop took the form of isolated cases. Compare with Voet, *Golden Compasses*, vol. 2, pp. 330–331.

⁶³ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercices*, p. 323.

⁶⁴ Materné, “Social Emancipation”, p. 224.

⁶⁵ Avis, *Printers’ Chapel*, p. 28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

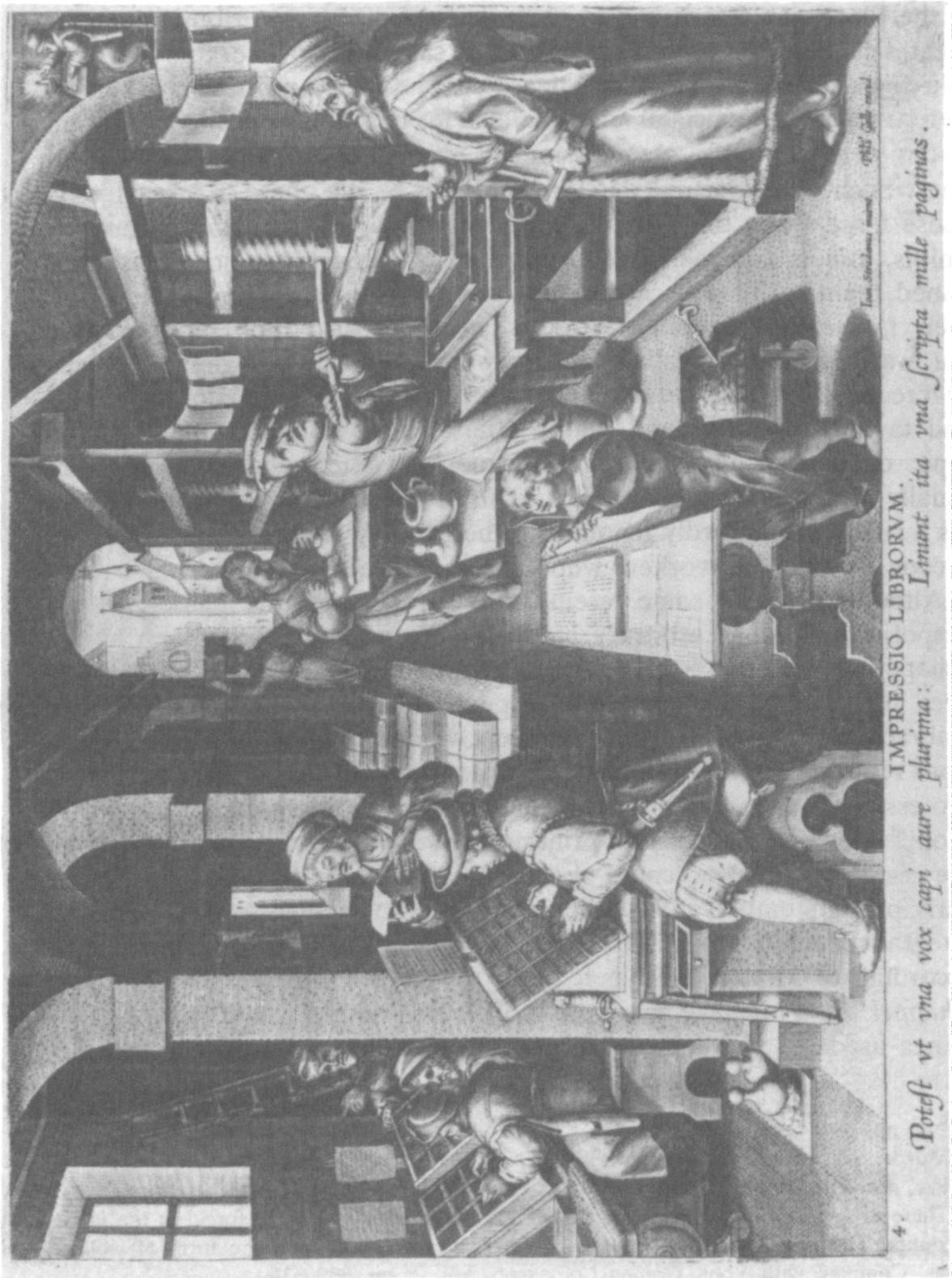


Figure 8. The Galle workshop: the printshop. Engraving: *IMPRESSIO LIBRORUM [. . .] Ioan. Stradanus inuenit. Phls. Galle excud.* (Stedelijk Prentenkabinet, Antwerp, cat. no. III/G 966) (Copyright: Museum Plantin-Moretus, Prentenkabinet, Antwerp)

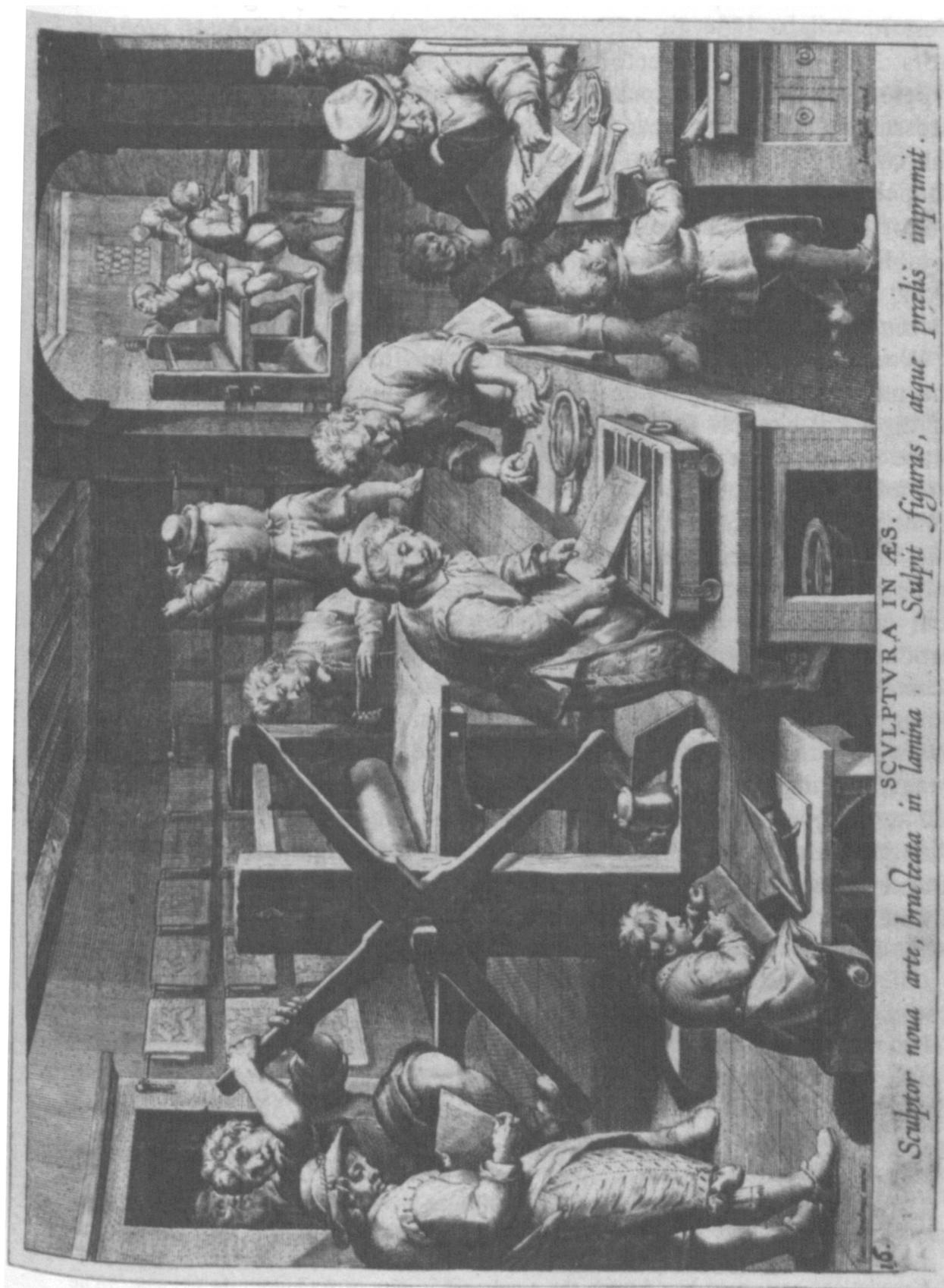


Figure 9. The Galle workshop: the printmaker's studio. Engraving: *SCVLPTVRA IN AES* [. . .] Ioan. Stradanus inuent. Ioan. Galle excud. (Stedelijk Prentenkabinet, Antwerp, cat. no. R 198, p. 16) (Copyright: Museum Plantin-Moretus, Prentenkabinet, Antwerp)

house, but [. . .] their working is different, therefore such different costumes are in use.”⁶⁷ This development did not take place in the Plantinian workshop in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In August 1734 the Moretuses employed 22 pressmen, 10 compositors, 3 collators, 4 correctors, 1 copperplate pressman, 1 type cutter, 4 typefounders, and 3 apprentices in the type-foundry.⁶⁸ Only the free pressmen and compositors formally participated in the organization of the chapel. The Plantinian type-foundry played no part in the printers’ chapel, neither did it have a separate society. The Plantinian proofreaders or correctors were also excluded from chapel membership,⁶⁹ though they established their own *Concordia* in 1664 to “enjoy themselves after work, to form a tight group and to establish friendly relations”. *Concordia* membership was certainly not imposed.⁷⁰

Workshop ordinances generally insisted that a letterpress printing journeyman on taking up employment was obliged to become a member of the local chapel. Entrance to the sixteenth-century Plantinian workplace involved the payment of a *willecoem* (*bienvvenu*) on arrival and a *proficiat* about a month later, after receiving approval from master and men.⁷¹ In the two centuries that followed, entrance to the workplace and the chapel seems to have involved more extensive treatment. Bound journeymen not only had to make payments in the form of cash, beer and cake on arrival at the workshop, on commencing a job in the production process, and at the first consecutive meeting of the “chamber” (*camer*), the chapel’s governing body. Initiation to freedom now went along with a much more elaborate baptismal ceremony after over one to two years of practical experience in the workplace: a special oath, songs, beatings, a baptism with godfathers, and a lot of beer and bread, all at the journeyman’s expense. Whereas the cost of the *proficiat* in Plantin’s time amounted to about one and a half guilder and 5 st. per journeyman employed,⁷² the price of the ceremony and its extras had probably doubled to about 23 guilders 6 st. or about the monthly income of a common journeyman.⁷³ Some ordinances suggest that the buying

⁶⁷ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercices*, p. 329.

⁶⁸ PA, no. 793.

⁶⁹ Yet, work-related issues arising between proofreaders and letterpress printing journeymen involved some negotiation and mutual complaints on the shop floor, see PA, ordinances A–L.

⁷⁰ PA, no. 329; Sabbe, “Plantijnsche werkstede”, pp. 631–632; Voet, *Golden Compasses*, vol. 2, pp. 175–193.

⁷¹ The following data are based upon PA, ordinances A–L; nos 334, 478; Sabbe, “Plantijnsche werkstede”, pp. 595–694; Voet, *Golden Compasses*, vol. 2, pp. 309–375.

⁷² 1 guilder = 20 st.

⁷³ Calculations have been based upon the employment data of Raymond de Roover, “The Business Organization of the Plantin Press in the Setting of Sixteenth-Century Antwerp”, *Gedenkboek der Plantin-dagen, 1555–1955* (Antwerp, 1956), pp. 112–113.

of informal drinks and similar duties could only have increased the entire cost of initiation. This passage to freemanship of the shop was hard. For several long-established Plantinian workers, however, it was the last, great initiation they would encounter in their dull career as journeymen.

Although this ritual automatically made the newly recruited worker an eligible member of the Plantinian chapel, he did not have access to its governing body without paying a few more admissions: 1 guilder 4 st. for his first election in the law and four pots of beer (probably equal to about 14 st. according to the ordinances) at his first chamber meeting as a commissioner; 1 guilder for every nomination in an office not yet served; 2 guilders 8 st. for his first appointment as a chief treasurer.

It must be emphasized here that the initiation of apprentices was into the trade and not into the chapel.⁷⁴ Throughout the eighteenth century, about one third of all the boys apprenticed in London became freemen of the Stationer's company, thereby gaining further access to mastership and to the Company's charity in old age or sickness. Moxon clearly distinguished the Company's and chapel's freemanship: "An apprentice when he is bound pays half a crown to the chappel, and when he is made free, another half crown to the chappel; but is yet no member of the chappel; and if he continue to work journeywork in the same house, he pays another half a crown, and is then a member of the chappel."⁷⁵ In Antwerp, Christopher Plantin and the Moretuses never had many apprentices, pressmen and compositors, and a large number of them did not even serve a full apprenticeship in the workshop.⁷⁶ The Plantinian ordinances hardly concerned the apprentices. Although they were certainly not formal members of the chapel, they could still be sentenced by the chamber, as also presumably happened to all bound journeymen. If a free journeyman accepted an apprentice (*leergast*) for six months or longer, it was decided in 1641 that he should pay a *bienvenu* and some box money from his profits. In the same year, however, another ordinance stated that a freeman could not take on apprentices (*leer-jongers*) without consulting all his free colleagues. The relative absence of apprentices is born out by the average age of 29 of a group of nineteen compositors and pressmen on their arrival in the Plantinian workshop in the early eighteenth century.⁷⁷ Plantinian chapel life in the latter part of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries therefore did not really experience the tensions of a group of letterpress printing apprentices. Between the Spanish and Austrian Succession Wars

⁷⁴ Avis, *Printers' Chapel*, p. 37.

⁷⁵ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercices*, p. 329.

⁷⁶ Voet, *Golden Compasses*, vol. 2, pp. 351–352.

⁷⁷ PA, nos 334, 432.

(1713-1740), only a few traces of *smouters* working at press could be found.⁷⁸ Elsewhere in Europe and particularly in England, chapels were more closely concerned with the apprentices' social and technical conduct. The apprenticeship ritual was attended by all chapel members and often resembled a pre-initiation ceremony into their community. Apprentices approaching the end of their term were also permitted to participate in routine meetings as observers.⁷⁹ Once freed and accepted, the journeymen would enjoy the full rights and privileges of chapel membership and at the same time bear their responsibilities as proud artisans and sociable men. In the Plantinian House under the surveillance of the Moretuses, newcomers usually completed a term of one year and six weeks before they had to be freed or leave the workplace. The rules were more or less respected in theory and practice during the early part of the eighteenth century, since most printing workers formally participated in the working of the chamber after about one year. The waiting time for chapel membership varied from shop to shop. In the famous Parisian workshop of the Hérissant family, it was fixed at three months in 1760.⁸⁰ Official changes to the length of this period could occur even within the same workshop. Problems which arose with a Plantinian journeyman, Joris Spirinx, who appealed to his Spanish freedom to evade the local initiation,⁸¹ may have influenced the decision to extend the term to two years in 1640, but some time after his leaving in 1642 an ordinance of 1644 brought the term back to the standard of one year and six weeks. The Plantinian journeymen had forced him to obey and had even brought the case before their master. Thomas Gent had a similar experience when being freed in a London printing office in about 1712. "Yet, when the master himself insisted it must be done", he wrote in his autobiography (dated 1746), "I was obliged to submit to that immemorial custom, the origin of which they could not then explain to me."⁸² Master and men had a common interest in making every journeyman a free and law-abiding member of the shop's chapel.

On several occasions, the chapel was only a part of a whole printing establishment with many different workers. This was certainly true of the early eighteenth-century Parisian printing shops which employed a growing number of underqualified printers known as *alloués*.⁸³ And however small the number of pre-industrial printing workers per unit

⁷⁸ PA, ordinances A-L: *smouters* or apprentices could also work at the typecase. On the different meaning of smouting in English, see Avis, *Printers' Chapel*, pp. 34-35.

⁷⁹ Avis, *Printers' Chapel*, p. 37.

⁸⁰ Chauvet, *Les ouvriers du livre*, p. 438.

⁸¹ PA, no. 117.

⁸² Cited in Ellic Howe (ed.), *The London Compositor. Documents Relating to Wages, Working Conditions and Customs of the London Printing Trade, 1785-1900* (London, 1947), p. 27.

⁸³ Minard, *Typographes des lumières*, pp. 90-95.

was, the chapel's governing body did not automatically include all free journeymen, pressmen and compositors alike. Nevertheless, it was remarkably open and democratic considering the era in which it started, and it operated at workshop level as a legislative body, court, police force, and as the beating heart of a social club and a mutual benefit society.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPEL

English chapels usually had a small executive committee formed by the president or "father" (usually abbreviated as FOC, father of the chapel), the clerk, and the treasurer.⁸⁴ Each member was allowed to voice his opinion at chapel, but did this mean he could also become a member of the executive? And exactly how representative of the workforce was this governing body? These points inevitably draw attention to the level of participation in the chapel, from an institutional, and practical and personal point of view. Were all eligible members prepared to take up positions on a committee? The Plantinian journeymen books offer unique and more precise information on this subject.⁸⁵ They are also a record of local peculiarities and the growth of chapel institutions. These records reveal in particular a continuous interaction between custom and circumstances. Or, as Moxon has put it, the customs and by-laws made and intended for the "[. . .] good government of the chappel".⁸⁶

The early Plantinian chapel of the late 1560s, in addition to the master, had only three or four commissioners or judges who represented between 10 and 25 per cent of all pressmen and compositors.⁸⁷ From at least the early 1570s, the position of treasurer was clearly defined. The stronger self-governing chapel of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Plantinian workshop hugely expanded its executive staff. Besides the captain (*kapitein*) or prince (*prins*), the secretary (*secretaris, schrijver*), and one or two treasurers (*cleynen busmeester* and *groten busmeester* from 1653 onwards), the Plantinian chapel also included two proctors or lieutenants (*procureurs* or *luytenants*) and seven aldermen (*schepenen*). Together they formed "the law" (*de wet*). Only the law was entitled to assemble on any matter concerning the printing house ("al t'samen vergaderen om van eenigher saken der druckerye aengaende te tracteren"). The majority vote decided what had to be done for the good of the chapel ("met den meesten voys besloten ende gheaccordeert

⁸⁴ Avis, *Printers' Chapel*, pp. 28–32.

⁸⁵ In my research on membership of the chapels' governing body I have focused upon the years 1671–1707 and 1712–1734, see PA, nos 334, 1168.

⁸⁶ Moxon, *Mechanick Exercices*, p. 323.

⁸⁷ One could object that this group was comparable to the later delegation of negotiators (the captain and the proctors) who spoke with the master. However, at that time, the real judges were the aldermen! See below.

[. . .] voor goet ende van weerden voor alle het gheheel gheselschap”). This committee was renewed each year at the end of April or the beginning of May, except for the position of chief treasurer of the new sick fund whose term began in March. The free journeymen came together to choose the members of the law among themselves (*onder haer lieden*). The committee, which usually comprised 11 to 13 executive members, now contained many more representing all the printing journeymen. Between 1712 and 1734 the ratio of law members to compositors or pressmen, both free and bound alike, working in the Plantinian office at the time of the annual election, fluctuated between 38 and 59 per cent. On average almost half of the letterpress printing hands employed in the early eighteenth century had a representative in the law each year. Compositors, usually the most literate members of the workforce, had a slightly greater chance of being elected. The average ratio of pressmen to compositors in the workshop at election time during the period 1712–1734, was 2.1:1. The same ratio in the Plantinian law amounted to only 1.6:1. However, more than twice as many pressmen were elected to the position of secretary and almost three times that number served as treasurers of the small fund. As many compositors as pressmen served as proctors keeping order in the shop, but they did not necessarily operate side by side every year. Compared with the compositors, only a few more pressmen became treasurers of the large fund between 1712 and 1734. The regular turnover of committee members was in theory guaranteed by the rule that every journeyman was obliged to quit office a year after his election, unless there were not enough freemen left in the printing shop. However, in practice an average of 36 per cent of the resident law stayed in power during the years 1712–1734, despite the relative abundance of free journeymen, though it is true that only an average of 15 per cent of the law members occupied the same positions as they had done in the previous year. In the early eighteenth century, the office of captain, and to a much lesser extent, the functions of alderman and proctor, regularly remained in the same hands after the annual renewal of the law. In practice, the prince or captain was the only one who could stay in power from the time of his election almost until the end of his regular workshop career. Although it is not certain that chapel custom formally required the eldest free journeyman or senior freeman to act as president, as was the case with the father or dean of the chapel in England,⁸⁸ Plantinian captains were certainly elected more than once, irrespective of their relative length of service in the workplace. This is not to say that everyone could rise from the ranks straight away. On the contrary, all Plantinian princes elected between 1671 and 1734 worked in the printing shop on a regular basis for on average a quarter of a century before

⁸⁸ Avis, *Printers' Chapel*, p. 29; Howe, *London Compositor*, p. 28.

becoming captains. All the captains whose careers can be traced completely, passed through several committee offices in random order before achieving the highest position. Before achieving the status of prince, Jan Broeckmans and Jan Musson served more than half this time in other offices, thereby gaining a considerable degree of expertise and respectability. In this respect, there was no real distinction between composers and pressmen: among the seven captains identified in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, I noticed three composers and four pressmen. The law was presided over twice as long by pressmen, which reflects the fact that there were more of them. Composers and pressmen did not necessarily alternate as chapel captains.

Taking a certain amount of inflexibility at the top into account, it is surprising to see how many journeymen did in fact participate in the elected chapel committee. Sixty-one (86 per cent) out of 71 eligible journeymen at least once occupied a seat in the law during the years 1712-1734;⁸⁹ 3 (4 per cent) held the office of captain; 19 (27 per cent) became secretary; 17 (24 per cent) held the position of treasurer of the large fund and 22 (31 per cent) that of small treasurer; 28 (39 per cent) became proctor and 52 (73 per cent) became aldermen. These figures still conceal some other fixed characteristics caused by the accumulation of a whole range of functions or the occupation of one particular seat for many years. The appointment of the composers' *gouverneur* Guillaume Laureyssens in consecutive years and at statutory intervals to the position of proctor was a typical instance, but was not really surprising. Within the law, proctors seem to have had the position of a lieutenant, and it is always the lieutenant who replaces the captain in the event of his absence. Besides, all of the identified captains on record once held the office of proctor on the committee. The captain and proctors were the only intermediaries between master and men since a chapel member was not allowed to lodge a complaint directly with the master. These two officials were also responsible for auditing the chief treasurer's sick fund account each year.⁹⁰

There were only a few instances of individual members of the law combining two offices during the late seventeenth century. Very occasionally the function of proctor was combined with that of secretary or treasurers of the large or small funds. In about 73 per cent of the combination positions registered, journeymen served as alderman and chief treasurer (*grote busmeester* or *busmeester*) at the same time. However, the treasurer of the small fund (*cleynen busmeester* or *busmeester*)

⁸⁹ This figure only takes into account the members at election time. Although the position of captains, proctors and treasurers of the large fund in particular can be checked in the accounts and the books recording complaints and breaches of the rules, some replacements might have been missed.

⁹⁰ In practice, the annual control of the sick fund accounts was usually done by the master, the two proctors and the treasurer of the large fund, see e.g. PA, no. 432.

never simultaneously occupied the office of alderman. Conditions of literacy did not particularly influence this state of affairs, since illiterate journeymen were also selected as treasurers of the large fund. However, the treasurer of the large fund was assisted by the local bookkeeper in the presentation of the annual accounts. Evidence suggests that the chapel on May day wished to confirm his earlier election to the general employees' sick fund, by giving him the seat of alderman on its traditional committee.⁹¹

Judging from the ratio of eligible members to the number of years they were elected as law members, it is clear that 51 per cent of the committee held one office or another for more than half the time they were employed in the printing shop as free journeymen during the early part of the eighteenth century. And, judging from those law participants whose workshop career fell entirely within this period, it is clear that newcomers were easily integrated into the chapel committee, and that all served at least once in the law. Indeed, apart from the position of captain, all of these newly employed journeymen held a committee seat within the first two years they were eligible, irrespective of the commission's composition at the time: 1 newly recruited freeman started as secretary, 2 as chief treasurer, another 2 as small treasurer, 4 as proctor, and 10 as alderman.

Even more striking is the institutional flexibility reflected in an established redemption system existing in the Plantinian chapel. Free workers nominated for law membership could be released from the duty if they were prepared to pay. In 1632 an ordinance stated that all journeymen who did not want to take up their position had to pay 1 guilder 5 st. per quarter. In 1676 it was decided that any journeyman who was unable to write could be permanently exempted from all his duties as a secretary in exchange for a payment of 1 guilder 10 st. The signatures on an agreement on the insurance box in 1653 show that four pressmen among a group of twenty-six compositors and pressmen were unable to write their own names. Indeed, the great majority of all single redemptions per office registered and identified in the years 1671–1707 and 1712–1734, concern the more demanding offices of secretary (47 per cent) and treasurer of the small fund (35 per cent). However, the proportion of pressmen's to compositors' redemptions from the positions of secretary and small treasurer amounted to 3.2:1 and 1.6:1 respectively. This reflects a relatively high proportion of pressmen compared to the proportion of their representation in the law. Although the lack of personal capabilities might have influenced their releases to some extent, particularly in the case of the pressmen, there were still several candidates among the smaller workforce of more literate compositors who wanted to buy

⁹¹ In the 1670s, the listings of the law did not always contain the treasurers of the large fund, although they were elected at that time.

themselves out anyway. It is not therefore the case that journeymen were unable to take part in the committee, but that on many occasions they were apparently just too willing to make life easier for themselves. Some workers took on the most demanding positions, but they refused another term later on. Others bought themselves out of these duties, but accepted other less demanding positions in their stead, especially the position of alderman, or they took on the more arduous tasks at a later date. It is significant that, in 1734, three recently baptized journeymen bought themselves out of the secretaryship, while at the same time one of the three chose to take on the position of alderman, and that another newly recruited freeman became secretary. Indeed, pleasure, profits and power were the prerogative of those serving in at least one of the law seats at the regular quarterly or other meetings. However different their individual income might have been, those who wanted to buy themselves out always ran the risk of having to pay more for a shorter period than was indicated in the ordinances. Redeeming the secretaryship could involve different payments, both at the time and later on, which released the journeyman for a number of years or for life. Even in the case of a lifetime redemption, the journeyman could change his mind and pay a new entrance fee which cancelled the lifetime exemption. A lifetime redemption from all offices was not advisable. The few requests which verged on this involved large payments in the form of cash or beverages, and more importantly, such redemptions were unpopular with the workforce. In 1698 two journeymen, a compositor and a pressman, paid 6 guilders (or almost a week's income) and 3 guilders 10 st. respectively to buy off all future nominations to the chamber, except for the position of treasurer of the large fund. The law subsequently declared that any similar proposal received in the near future would be unacceptable, which is borne out by the only exception on record. It was therefore no accident that the following annual report from the chamber in 1699 (*iaer-scrieft*) clearly expressed the journeymen's willingness to preserve the law. As a rule, absence from meetings, feasts, masses, funerals and other forms or duties of communal chapel-life was punishable by a fine.

CONCLUSION

Between the mid-sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries the number and size of workplaces in the leading European centres of printing did not drastically change. The sixteenth-century boom in printing and the political machinery of control largely contributed to the establishment of urban workshops which employed a pool of journeymen cut off from mastership. These print workers, particularly in larger workplaces like the Plantinian House in Antwerp, tried to organize themselves into societies and chapels. Although the European printers' chapels had many

features in common concerning the regulation of labour relations and work within small, integrated, prefactory shops with limited technological improvements, the Plantinian chapel was characterized in particular by its continuity and cohesion, and the extent to which the workforce was represented in its partnership and governing body. Most chapels in Europe had a small core of established experts who embodied local traditions on a very small committee. This contrasted with the huge number of journeymen and apprentices continuously joining and leaving the workshop. Quite the opposite was true of the Plantinian chapel. It built up and regularly renewed a relatively large and representative committee of both old and new hands alike to represent a majority of journeymen employed on a long-term basis. Continual tensions between the mutual standing estates of pressmen and compositors, and among the almost permanent groups of compositors at the typecase and the two-man crews at the press, were tempered by rigorously enforced disciplinary measures directed by an alternating board of the free journeymen's electorate. However, identifying the ideas and the practice of this chapel association as those of a body of lifelong companions oversimplifies the matter. The Plantinian chapel clearly reinstated several elements of corporate tradition. Policing work and the workforce was the affair of master and chapel members since regulation in Antwerp was largely decided at workshop level. As a result, the Plantinian chapel members applied a very local interpretation to their extremely well-developed institution.

The Plantinian chapel and its regular sick fund did not survive the gradual economic decline of the Moretuses' workshop in the revolutionary years of the late eighteenth century, when larger urban typographical societies came into existence in an exploding European world of books, newspaper printing and minor jobbing.⁹² After all, the continuous existence of the Plantinian print shop in the nineteenth century, and the discontinuation of its social infrastructure and chapel life at that time, underline the close relationship between the scaling down of the workshop and the role of its unofficial, yet institutionalized journeymen's association. Rather than insisting on polarization, with closed workshop associations at one end, and sporadic or more lasting urban trade unions at the other, I have drawn attention to different labour strategies and craft policies which led to variable habits in workers' action and association.

⁹² For England and France, see Musson, *Typographical Association*, *passim* and Minard, "Agitation in the Workforce", pp. 107–123.