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A CITY ROOM OF ONE'S OWN:  
ELIZABETH JORDAN, HENRY JAMES, AND THE NEW WOMAN JOURNALIST

by

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A THESIS

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A CITY ROOM OF ONE'S OWN:

ELIZABETH JORDAN, HENRY JAMES, AND THE NEW WOMAN JOURNALIST

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University of Nebraska, 2017

Advisor: Melissa Homestead

This thesis considers the portrayal of the female journalist in the works of Elizabeth Jordan and Henry James. In 1898, Jordan, a journalist and editor herself, published *Tales of the City Room*, a collection of interconnected short stories that depict a close and supportive community of female journalists. It is, overall, a positive portrayal of female journalists by a female journalist. James, on the other hand, uses the female journalists in *The Portrait of a Lady*, "Flickerbridge," and "The Papers" to show his discomfort toward New Journalism and the New Woman of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These female journalist characters are virtually alone and are often painted in grotesque or hyperbolic strokes. Taken together, the works of Jordan and James reveal the wide range of opinions the public had about female journalists.

As journalism evolved in the late-nineteenth century, many writers found the field rife with material for fiction. Most writers who included journalist characters were journalists and editors in their own right, like Elizabeth Jordan and William Allen White, or were deeply connected to the field because of their fiction writing, like Henry James. Of particular interest to writers were female journalists, economically and socially independent women making their way into the center of public life in numbers and in ways never seen before. These women embodied the New Woman ideal that had suddenly fascinated and frightened traditional society, including fiction writers.

For Elizabeth Jordan, a female journalist herself, it was only natural to draw heavily from her experiences to create a fictionalized version of the newspaperwoman who unapologetically enters the male-dominated sphere. The best of her journalist fiction, and the most representative of her views of the field, is her 1898 short story collection, *Tales of the City Room*. In it, Jordan creates a three-dimensional world populated by a group of newspaperwomen who are successful in their genres and supportive of one another. As a single work, this collection serves as Jordan's positive outlook for female journalists, one where there are enough women working to create a support system and network of fellow women.

Henry James, on the other hand, disliked and even feared the changes he saw in journalism and the rise of the New Woman. In three of his works – *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), “Flickerbridge” (1902), and “The Papers” (1903) – James shows his unease with both of these ideas in the single form of his female journalist characters. Henrietta Stackpole, Addie, and Maud Blandy embody the worst of New Journalism as James sees it; these women help James articulate his fear of a disruption of spheres that separate the

public and the private and that separate the sexes. Jordan and James represent the strongest competing outlooks on New Journalism and the New Woman, and thus their fictional journalists are markedly different: while both sets are largely happy and successful in their positions, James often rolls the worst qualities of New Women into a single figure, creating a grotesquely exaggerated figure. Jordan's newspaperwomen, on the other hand, are truer to life and only occasionally idealized.

Most studies of female journalists (and journalism broadly) in fin-de-siècle fiction begin with an often lengthy explanation of the state of the female journalist and New Woman. This choice by scholars – including Donna Born, Sarah Lonsdale, Matthew Rubery, and Lorna Shelley – stems from an understanding that the fictional female journalist can only be fully appreciated if her non-fiction counterparts are understood first. By studying the state of women in journalism and others' opinions of them, scholars can contextualize the choices authors make in their creation of fictional female journalists. Only when it is known, for instance, that a growing number of male and female writers acted as foreign correspondents for American publications can Henry James' choice of assignment for Henrietta Stackpole be fully understood. Donna Born notes in one of her surveys of fictional female journalists that “fiction reflects cultural attitudes and shared experiences in society,” so it is only natural that society should be studied if fiction is going to reveal all it has to offer (1).

Change was the core idea of the New Woman – change in position, in power, and in employment. In *The Rise of the New Woman*, Jean Matthews describes this change as resulting from a “new consciousness among a sizable portion of American women that

the conditions of modern America both made possible – and even required – new fields of activity, a more active engagement with the wider world around them, even new modes of being” (4). Inspired by this shift in opportunities, some women chose to pursue charity work or join women’s philanthropic and intellectual societies, but many instead sought paid employment. Regardless of their chosen field, middle class women seeking employment had to leave the private and traditionally more feminine sphere of the home and enter male-dominated public spaces. Mary Ryan puts it another way: “In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, under the cover of a public language that recognized and acclaimed the private virtues of females, women were entering the public carrying interests of their own...” (174). They thus bucked social norms and expectations placed on “respectable” women in favor of new opportunities.

In *Women in Public*, Ryan’s chief argument is that there was no single “first cause or primary structure” that redrew “the borders between public and private, male and female” (174); instead, a number of cultural, political, and social factors led to the shift that New Women took advantage of. These strong-headed women seeking economic and social independence became “the focus of a battle to control cultural change,” an effort to stop them from disrupting the structural hierarchy too much (MacPike 369). This focus placed on New Women meant they became a favorite subject for writers, particularly fiction writers. This is the context in which the works of Jordan and James came about.

Journalism was among the male-dominated fields New Women entered at high rates. In 1870, only 35 women were listed as “editors and reporters” in American census records; this total increased to 288 by 1880 and 888 by 1890 (Fahs 18). But these numbers reveal only part of the story because most women working in journalism at the

end of the nineteenth century were not salaried. Instead, they often worked on “space rates,” meaning they were paid based on how much of their copy was published in the paper. Regardless of how they were paid, most female journalists worked outside the newspaper office, a traditionally male space. As Donna Born argues, this separation allowed woman journalists to write for a living while staying “within the isolation and propriety of the home,” thus keeping themselves within acceptable areas of society (2). Such women worked within private spaces, but the results of their labors – their journalistic writings – were distributed in a highly public manner.

This hybrid of tradition and advancement also applied to their fields of journalism. Most did not cover serious, front-page news; instead, they wrote exclusively for the newly formed “women’s page.” Beginning in the 1870s, newspaper editors started trying to increase their readership in the highly-saturated newspaper market by appealing to the largely untapped female readers. Their solution was to design a section dedicated to the topics and stories women would care about. In her classic history *Ladies of the Press*, Ishbel Ross succinctly describes this genre of writing as “fears, fashions, recipes, and women’s problems” (16). While patronizing in its origin (the assumption that women were not interested in serious news), the women’s page gave female journalists a safe and exclusively feminine space to begin their journalistic careers have the economic freedom they craved as New Women, all the while writing about acceptably “feminine” topics. The distance created by the different workspaces and different spaces within the newspapers themselves allowed female journalists to thrive alongside their male coworkers without having to directly compete.

Most turn-of-the-century female journalists, indeed most New Women, came from middle or upper-middle class families. These were women with the education and social background to allow for a successful career in journalism. While they were from respectable families, many female journalists “were not wealthy enough to live as leisured ladies” (Lang 30) or to “make a profession of volunteerism” like other, wealthier New Women did (Mathews 197). Instead, they had to find a way to sustain their standard of living, but their options were few: find either a respectable husband or a respectable job. Elizabeth Jordan herself, her female journalists, and James’ characters are faced with this decision. Jordan was educated by nuns and through her father’s connections found work at a newspaper in Wisconsin, while Henrietta Stackpole, from James’ *The Portrait of a Lady*, is a woman of relative privilege but is left “without parents and without property,” so she chooses to earn her own living as a journalist (65).

As the New Woman gained prominence in fiction, so too did journalism and female journalists in particular. In his analysis of “The Papers,” Matthew Rubery observes, “Curiosity, if not anxiety, about the profession helped to make the woman journalist a fashionable heroine in contemporary works” (361). Writers were fascinated by – or, as in James’ case, afraid of – these women who suddenly surged onto the public stage. Lorna Shelley argues that most magazine stories about female journalists focused on young “women entering newspaper offices and the resistance demonstrated towards them by members of the profession.” Curiously, Jordan and James do not rely on this kind of plot; Jordan is, for the most part, more interested in the feelings and experiences of established newspaperwomen, and James turns his attention to the opinions of society beyond the newspaper office. The subject came naturally to both – Jordan was herself a



journalist and James had written fiction and articles for newspapers and magazines – and it was one they cared deeply about. These characters embody the new “problem” of the New Woman and allowed the authors to grapple with their fear, excitement, and intrigue of women, the press, and the public.

#### Elizabeth Jordan on Camaraderie Among Female Journalists

*Tales of the City Room*, Elizabeth Jordan’s 1898 short story collection, is made up of ten interconnected stories. All but the final story features a female journalist at the fictional *New York Searchlight* newspaper, and all but “The Love Affair of Chesterfield, Jr.” has a female journalist as a main character. The nine *Searchlight* stories reveal strong camaraderie and interaction between the employees, especially the women who seem to work often in the office rather than from home. This camaraderie is fostered in no small part by the character of Ruth Herrick, Jordan’s stand-in who appears in eight of the stories as a main character or supporting player in others’ lives. While several characters appear in more than one story, Herrick’s presence serves as the strongest and most consistent link between plots and women.

The eight newspaperwomen mentioned as working at the *Spotlight* and *Evening Globe* papers span genres and positions, serving as a representative sample of the roles women journalists filled during the end of the nineteenth century: Herrick writes local pieces and “specials” from across the country in a salaried position, much like Jordan did; Helen Bancroft, Mrs. Ogilvie, and Miss Van Dyke are all on the city beat; Alice Bertram works on space rates in an unspecified field; Miss Masters is the *Globe*’s stunt journalist; Helen is editor of the *Spotlight*’s Woman’s Page; and Virginia Imboden secures a job

writing about women's clubs, thanks to Herrick. Most of these women are friends, supporting each other inside and out of the office.

Just as the women are at their best when they support one another, the stories are best when taken together. Individually, each story in the collection has its merits, but the stories together create a varied, sensitive, and generally positive narrative of female journalists trying to find their place in the male-dominated field. Jordan does not shy away from the uncomfortable realities of being a woman in the City Room, particularly in the final story, but the volume as a whole advocates for journalism as a career and stresses the importance of the camaraderie that helps female journalists survive in a masculine arena.

The presence of so many women working regularly in a single newspaper office suggest that it was not unusual – certainly more common – for a woman to work in journalism. While this is the case, however, the anxieties, fears, and uncertainties associated with women entering public and masculine spaces had not disappeared. With the exception of the final story (which is set at a different paper), Jordan's stories touch on but are not defined by what Shelley correctly characterizes as the traditional frame of female journalist stories, namely giving “attention to women entering newspaper offices and the resistance demonstrated towards them by male members of the profession.” While Jordan does include smaller moments throughout that reveal the daily struggles of her fellow female journalists, she only addresses this part of the New Woman experience at length in the eighth and tenth stories.

Early in the first story, “Ruth Herrick's Assignment,” the narrator notes that the *Searchlight's* editor, a man, sees Herrick as “a very superior woman, with no nerves or

nonsense about her.” The editor thinks she has none of the drawbacks associated with woman reporters, qualities that would make him hesitant to assign interviewing an accused murderer to a woman. Whenever she is in a situation where “nerves and a woman were equally out of place,” these words give Herrick confidence; she knows that her editor, a man with power, has faith in sending her on assignments most women, in his eyes, would be unfit for. (Jordan 4)

The editor is aware of the career ambitions associated with New Women, and he gets her to take a difficult assignment by appealing to this quality; he tells her, “If you are ambitious, here is your chance to distinguish yourself” (9). He thinks Herrick will be unable to reject the opportunity to advance her career, and she proves to be the kind of woman he thinks she is. But when she fails to secure the story he wanted, the editor changes his tune: “Strange how Miss Herrick failed on that case; she felt it too...But, after all, you can’t depend on a woman in this business” (29). Disappointed by Herrick, the editor falls back on conventional opinions of women in journalism, namely that they cannot do the jobs male journalists can. Herrick’s failure to get the story he wanted colors the editor’s opinion of all newspaperwomen despite her previous successes and his previous fawning over her. The editor embraces well-trod expectations of newspaperwomen to account for this single failure.

Karen Roggenkamp has a more positive reading, at least of Herrick if not the editor. In her study of “Ruth Herrick’s Assignment,” Roggenkamp correctly sees Herrick as turning away from her career ambitions to save the life of a fellow woman; she further argues that in this story, “Jordan distinguishes between the efforts of men and the work of the female reporter” (40). In Roggenkamp’s reading, the editor was expecting Herrick to

produce the unfeeling work a man who had no shared experience with the subject might, rather than the more sympathetic story Herrick writes as a woman. “It is [men’s] writing, not the female reporter’s, which is flawed and finally unreal,” Roggenkamp argues, because they have not had the opportunity to interview the accused (41). The editor never wanted a “woman’s” take because a woman’s take would be too sympathetic; he wanted Herrick as a woman to conform to his pre-existing ideals of journalism.

At the beginning of “Mrs. Ogilvie’s Local Color,” before the death of her husband, Ogilvie does not produce great work; everyone, including Ogilvie herself, agrees that she does not have the spark that makes a great journalist. Her coworkers bemoan her “fine, large hand and schoolgirl style” of writing rather than her gender outright, only her gender as manifested indirectly by her handwriting (Jordan 108). This handwriting shows that she is educated – as most journalists were – but that she is also naïve, not having moved beyond the things she learned in school. Her style is less sophisticated than her fellow newspaperwomen, such as the strong and confident Herrick.

It is only in “A Point of Ethics,” Jordan’s eighth story, that the negative feelings associated with female journalists represented by the smaller moments above start to find a place in the larger narrative. In this story, Herrick and three of her female *Searchlight* coworkers - Imboden, Ogilvie, and artist Frances Neville (subject of “The Love Affair of Chesterfield, Jr.”) - have a serious conversation about one of their own. Alice Bertram is “a bright and charming young woman” who has been in the city and journalism for less than a year (165). Her past is a mystery, and it is this unknown history that has caused the problem. After months of goodwill and friendship on their part, the women hear “that she is a marked woman...that she is credited with a past, - that her reserve, reticence, and

gayety are making her talked about” (166). Because she is unwilling to reveal where she came from, Bertram has become the subject of scandal and rumor; her fellow female journalists now see themselves as having to decide between remaining friends with her, which risks the loss of their own reputations, and putting distance between themselves and her, which would protect their own images would also mean they lose a friend.

For the first time in the collection, public opinion of unattached female journalists is the subject of an entire story. The women, save Herrick, come at the Bertram problem from a place of self-preservation: they must act quickly before their own reputations are hurt by associating with a questionable woman. Even though they are confident in their place as female journalists, this Bertram incident reveals that others are not so comfortable with women in newspaper offices, that none of them are safe from public scrutiny, and that they could fall victim to scandal at any time. Some of the women are afraid that the very existence of such rumors is enough to ruin their own already precarious reputations. Imboden, for instance, says,

But I’m alone here in New York, and I have nothing in the world except my health, my very ordinary journalistic ability, and my reputation as a ‘hard-working and respectable lady,’ to quote my appreciated janitor. Can I afford to jeopardize the most precious of these by being the acknowledge friend of a woman whose reputation is, as a matter of fact, the subject of unpleasant talk?  
(169)

Imboden, like Bertram, is a woman alone in the city but has thus far avoided scandal. She does not want to give up her friendship, but her reputation is more important for her career and income than any relationship. Without her reputation, Imboden’s “very

ordinary journalistic ability” would prove worthless (169). If her reputation is lost, she has nothing.

Even while she is worried about any continued relationship, Imboden cannot fully abandon Bertram because they are in the same precarious situation: “I’m willing to help Miss Bertram in any way I can. I’ll advise her about her stories, I’ll divide my assignments with her, as we’re both space” (170). Both women work on space rates, meaning their income is based on how much of their work ends up in print; their income is neither steady nor fixed. It is entirely dictated by how many assignments they get and successful they are, and a scandal like Bertram’s could easily result in fewer assignments, meaning less money. At the expense of her own economic stability, Imboden offers to help Bertram. Even as she tries to preserve her own future, Imboden cannot help but show selflessness and reveal the lengths female journalists are willing to go to help one of their own in a field often antagonistic toward them.

Such camaraderie is seen throughout the collection. In “Mrs. Ogilvie’s Local Color,” Ogilvie and Herrick are already close coworkers and intimate friends; their conversation at the beginning of the story is normal office chat – Ogilvie is seeking the advice of Herrick, a senior coworker – but the story quickly reveals a more personal relationship. Ogilvie is a journalist because she needs to support her invalid husband; her marriage sets her apart from all of the others in Jordan’s collection and most of those throughout journalistic fiction. Unfortunately, her husband dies in a freak accident, and it is Herrick who must tell her the news. Herrick then accompanies her friend to the hospital and back to Ogilvie’s apartment in Harlem that night. Herrick does not want her to have to face such sorrow alone, even if there is nothing she can do for her. They are not merely

coworkers; they are good friends willing to lend a hand inside and out of the office. Even while their male coworkers take care of the arrangements, it is Herrick who comforts Ogilvie and acts as her companion through the trauma.

A similar brand of intimacy is also felt during “At the Close of the Second Day,” a story that takes place prior to “A Point of Ethics.” Virginia Imboden has been let go from her job at the *Globe* and is destitute and about to commit suicide when Herrick happens upon her. Sensing her friend’s plight (they are friends despite not working at the same paper), Herrick takes Imboden to her own apartment and offers Imboden a place to stay until she gets “thoroughly settled.” Unasked, she also says she will introduce the young woman to the *Searchlight*’s city editor, who had been “asking to-day for some one to do the news of the women’s clubs when the season opens.” Even though they are not at the same paper, Herrick and Imboden are bonded as female journalists and know they must look out for each other. They are close and will become even closer once Imboden joins the *Searchlight*. (76)

This intimacy is also manifested physically in “A Point of Ethics.” The *Searchlight* women obviously care for one another, but they are also very comfortable with each other. In the story, Ogilvie, Imboden, and Neville have joined Herrick for a quiet night in her apartment; this alone suggests a particularly intimate relationship. Herrick had already stayed the night in Ogilvie’s apartment, but this evening is not a fluke or the result of an unfortunate and unexpected event. Also, the Bertram affair was not the reason for meeting; Neville seems surprised that it is being discussed when she says, “You have put the case much too strongly...*if* you are speaking of Miss Bertram” (163, emphasis added). Had Bertram been the reason for their coming together, Neville

would not be suggesting that Imboden's comments came out of nowhere with her "if." This was intended to be a social gathering, but Imboden changes that.

Before the conversation turns irrevocably to Bertram, the women are very casual in their postures:

Miss Herrick, who was at the piano, carelessly playing Chopin, caught it, and whirled round on the stool to face the group of friends who were scattered about her apartment in various attitudes of restfulness. Virginia Imboden lay on the rug before the grate, her fair head vividly outlined by the dancing flames. Frances Neville was stretched on the broad divan near her, and in the depths of a great easy-chair, Mrs. Ogilvie...had been dreamily listening to the music... (163-64)

Herrick's "careless" playing immediately points to this evening having more casual than might be expected, and this is confirmed by the others being "scattered about" and showing "restfulness," being comfortable in someone else's home (163). These are not the positions of women presenting themselves in public; the positioning of Imboden and Neville is obviously not "ladylike," but even Ogilvie is "in the depths" of the chair rather than sitting on the edge with her feet firmly planted on the floor as a lady should. These are women in a private place with only other women around, safe from the judgment of men and society as a whole. They are among their own and able to throw off the performative qualities of their public selves. This atmosphere is also inviting enough that at least one can enter her own deeply private life: Ogilvie "had been dreamily listening to the music, which swept her thoughts back to the old days when she and John were so happy together" (164). Ogilvie dreams of the happy life she had with her husband, tying her present and exclusively female comfort to him.



When Herrick becomes involved with the serious conversation, she “turns on the electric light” and the others change “their positions to more conventional ones” (164). Under the cover of darkness - without the electric light - the women are unencumbered by societal expectations, able to lose themselves in the happiness of their intimacy with one another. Herrick returns them to their public, “proper feminine” selves when she turns on the light. They immediately change “their positions to more conventional ones,” how the women would present themselves in public (164). Herrick’s intention is not to make the women put on their public personas. Instead, she says with a laugh, they “will need all the light there is” if they are to discuss Bertram (165). She is quite literally shining a light on the situation.

While she turns on the lights, Herrick is not interested in revealing the newspaperwomen to the outside world when they are in this private situation. To make up for the sudden light, Herrick “drew the shades to screen the rooms, with their picturesque group, from the gaze of inquisitive neighbors” (164). To make her point that this is still a private evening, Herrick “dripped into a ‘cosey hollow’ near the fire and clasped her hands behind her head in her favorite attitude of rest and reflection” (165). Elizabeth Jordan knows that in real life, even in their own homes, women are not safe from the prying eyes of the outside world, so she stresses the “inquisitive neighbors,” the kind of people who could start a rumor that would ruin their reputation. New Women must always be alert of the outside world, even when they think they are in a private space. The women are not said to resume their original positions even after the shades are drawn, but Herrick certainly thinks they are safe from the probing eyes once again. Herrick drawing the curtains shows again her willingness to look out for her fellow

female journalists, an act representative of attempts to protect their own when they are “embattled within the masculine environment of periodical journalism” (Underwood 176).

Unfortunately, in “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story,” the collection’s concluding story, the female journalist is not lucky enough to have this kind of protective support system, making her especially susceptible to the opinions of those around her, particularly her male coworkers. Van Dyke only appears in this story, so, unlike the women in “A Point of Ethics,” she is disconnected entirely from other female journalists both in the short story and in the context of *Tales of the City Room*. The only other female journalist who appears in this final story is Miss Masters, the *Evening Globe*’s stunt journalist, but they are neither close nor friendly. Other women at the paper are referred to, but they never appear in the story and are never named individually. By setting this story at a different paper and at the end of her collection, Jordan effectively strands Van Dyke even further away from her fellow female journalists.

This is arguably the most traditional of Jordan’s journalist tales. At least on the surface, it is the one to conform most to the conventions of female journalist fiction laid out by Lorna Shelley and Doug Underwood. Van Dyke encounters “resistance demonstrated towards [her] by male members of the profession,” the cornerstone to such fiction (Shelley). Such plots are described by Underwood as “forceful woman journalists embattled within the masculine environment of periodical journalism” (176). While Van Dyke would not be described as “forceful,” she does conform to the second feature Underwood describes: “the typecast of the career-driven woman reporter who still longs for the traditional female life of hearth and home” (177). As will be seen, Van Dyke is

not quite as strong as the *Spotlight*'s female journalists, and her lack of a homosocial support system means she is all alone, unable to protect herself from attacks or push against traditional societal expectations.

The *Evening Globe* appears to have far fewer women working in the newspaper office, given that only two are named and Van Dyke is said to only interact with male reporters. Unlike at the *Spotlight*, both Masters and Van Dyke are made spectacles of. When Van Dyke joins the paper, the men "bestowed on her a due amount of critical observation," further suggesting the novelty of having a woman reporter on staff (Jordan 209). Masters, the *Globe*'s stunt journalist, "smokes and drinks, and is regarded as 'a good fellow' by the boys" (229). She seems to embrace and encourage the kind of attention she receives from her male coworkers and is essentially the absolute opposite of Van Dyke, who spends a good deal of time fielding questions from her male coworkers about romance and relationships. This developed into her own kind of "good-fellowship with her associates," one that does not make her "a good fellow" and is not centered around drinking, smoking, or being like them in any way (209; 229).

In return, the men look after her and her reputation: "On the very rare occasions when she worked late at the office, one of her fellow-workers escorted her home, or, if this was impossible, the city editor sent the messenger boy with her...They felt it was quite out of the question for her to be on the streets at night alone, - in which opinion Miss Van Dyke concurred" (209-10). The men - and Van Dyke herself - are aware of the potential risks, both physical and social, a young woman can encounter while out alone at night. The male reporters see themselves as her protector. This is the one act of

selflessness the men show to her, quite unlike the consistent shows of camaraderie the *Searchlight* women show to each other.

Their familial, gendered relationship, however, does not last. On election night, hoping to secure favor with the new editor, Van Dyke suggests a special unlike any she has written before: "I want you...to let me do the Tenderloin to-night - to describe its celebrations of Tammany's victory from a woman's point of view" (217). Despite protests from her male friend and colleague Matthews that such a dangerous and salacious piece is more Miss Masters' field of expertise, Van Dyke sets off with a male reporter to act as her guide and chaperone. Van Dyke's work on Election Day is truly her "best story." It is so affecting that its "realism haunted many a man and woman who read it the next day" (221). Before the story is even printed, her colleagues see her differently; for instance, no one walks her home because they assume "that a young woman who had done an election night special, describing the gayest scenes in gay New York, could afterwards make her way home alone" (221-22). She is suddenly no longer the innocent Miss Van Dyke; they strip her of that moniker and refer to her only by her last name, just like they would any male coworker or the masculine Masters, whose name itself suggests masculinity.

Now that Van Dyke's "true self" – true in the eyes of her male coworkers – has been revealed, Miss Masters takes it as an opportunity to get back at Van Dyke, whose "deep respect shown by the staff" she "had always resented keenly." Masters is the antithesis of the meek Van Dyke: she is brash, she smokes and drinks, and wears red makeup and likely dyes her hair. Masters makes herself the center of attention through her actions and appearance, just as a good stunt journalist is supposed to. In this way, she

is the *Tales* woman who pushes against societal expectations the most. Instead of being treated like a “lady” as Van Dyke is, Masters is “one of the boys,” able to talk to them on their level without a perceived gender divide. This is the divide Van Dyke crossed when she went into a dangerous public space for her special. (223)

Despite her having many male friends in the office, none seem able to stop the tide of change that sweeps her up. They are “bitterly chagrined by the step she had so innocently taken,” but no one steps in to help her navigate this shift (224). Wheeler, one of her friends, laments that he could have warned her about the assignment being a “serious blunder” and one “no woman should have taken, and no good woman would have dreamed of attempting it - if she had realized what she was doing” (227). He implies that because she did not defer to the men around her, including Matthews (who cautioned her against the assignment) she has irrevocably changed her reputation. Even as Van Dyke’s friends support her, they cannot help but act differently in her presence: “One of the girl’s friends swore softly at this and she heard him. He would not have sworn in her presence last week” (226). Because they are not women, these coworkers and friends cannot empathize with Van Dyke’s plight quite like the *Searchlight* women could; instead, they are more likely to express disapproval and disappointment that she did not heed the words of their fellow men.

The men (and Masters) now see Van Dyke as “one of themselves, with a good-natured *camaraderie*” (228, emphasis original). Her coworkers do not think this supposed revelation of her true self is bad. They can now treat her more like Masters, and this creates a friendship closer to that of equals, rather than a brother-sister relationship. This kind of camaraderie is not, however, the sort Van Dyke wants; the moment she pushed

against the gender lines to go reporting on election night, she became just “one of the boys,” on their level and stripped of the femininity she holds dear. According to Matthews, her work is “getting more and more objectionable,” meaning that it is getting further away from what is considered appropriate for a young woman (229). Her reputation has been forever changed by her change in journalistic genre, and Van Dyke hates the result: “I’m chained here, and there’s no chance of my getting away” (230).

Despite her frustration and bitterness, Van Dyke sees no way out because she needs a job. At the end of the story, understanding her trouble, Matthews offers her a new assignment: becoming his wife. Their relationship will be discussed at length below, but it is important to note that this is the only story in Jordan’s collection that ends in the female journalist married, engaged, or attached to a man in any way; other than Ogilvie’s happy marriage that ends with her husband’s death, all of the *Searchlight*’s female journalists and the stories about them are largely unconcerned with their unmarried status. Their careers and friendships are more important to them.

This makes Jordan’s decision to put “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story” last in her collection confounding and makes the story itself a subject of great interest. Along with “Ruth Herrick’s Assignment” (as seen in Roggenkamp’s work), this story is the most discussed story from the collection. While the collection has never been analyzed at length, Underwood and Jean Marie Lutes devote some space in their respective books to the ending of “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story.” For instance, Underwood suggests that “Jordan utilizes irony in describing how one of the male reporters ‘rescues’ the young woman...by marrying her and taking her away from the newsroom” (179). The story ends with a newspaperwoman previously happy in her profession willfully giving up a

career to return to the traditional feminine sphere of the home by marrying her fellow journalist. While the final sentence – “For the first time since Tammany’s return to power, the cloud lifted from the brow of Matthews” (232) – strikes a positive tone, it is positive for Matthews, the man “rescuing” Van Dyke from her predicament. The paragraph preceding her acceptance also includes the line “After all, a woman’s place is in a home!” (231); such sentiments are antithetical to the stories of empowered, independent women Jordan portrayed in the earlier stories. Unlike those women, Van Dyke accepts that she cannot get back her position as a traditional woman in a non-traditional world and takes on the even more traditional role of an unemployed wife. The only way to understand Jordan’s intention with this ending is read it alongside the rest of *Tales of the City Room* and as an ironic warning against the traditional view that “a woman’s place is in the home.”

When read at the end of a collection about strong female journalists, Van Dyke becomes a cautionary figure for aspiring New Women. The rest of the collection shows that journalism is a good profession for young women, and “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story” is not enough to discourage readers from entering the field, but it does caution them against going it alone. *Tales of the City Room* as a whole is instead a celebration of female friendship and unity in a male-dominated public space, showing how important it is to have a network of women if one is going to last in the field. Ending the collection with a story devoid of female friendship further emphasizes Jordan’s apparent point that only a community of supportive women can combat the anxiety and antagonism men and all of society feel toward female journalists.

This does not, however, mean that everyone who read Jordan's collection when it was first published understood it this way. In an otherwise positive notice for *Tales of the City Room* in *Life*, the reviewer writes, "The conclusion is inevitably forced on the reader that modern journalism is a pretty poor business for a woman of refinement to engage in. Sympathy and consideration for the feelings of other people are serious drawbacks" ("Bookishness"). Though the reviewer does not name "Miss Van Dyke's Best Story," it undoubtedly played a role in this interpretation. While there are struggles throughout the stories (particularly in "Ruth Herrick's Assignment," which plays into the reviewer's ideas at the end of the above quote), Jordan does not, on the whole, depict the newspaper office as "a pretty poor business" for women. Only Van Dyke leaves the field because she feels that her reputation has been ruined; Bertram, the subject of "A Point of Ethics," on the other hand, leaves journalism because her "secret" is that she is wealthy and only got a job to prove to her father that she could.

Another reviewer, this time in *The Literary World*, also found much to say about "Miss Van Dyke's Best Story." Calling it out by name – "Miss Van Dyke's 'Best Story' is also Miss Jordan's best story" – this reviewer applauds Jordan for writing a story that, while "a little 'yellow,' perhaps, in tone...has a moral and rings true, besides being entertaining" ("Collections"). This is a decidedly conservative and positive reading of Miss Van Dyke's end, one Henry James might agree with. While the *Life* reviewer's feelings are left somewhat ambiguous, *The Literary World's* reviewer reads the ending as a true-to-life moment that shows how inappropriate the "yellow" newsroom is for women, confirming the *Life* reviewer's reading. Jordan's choice to end her collection in this manner obviously colors how her book is read to the point where the first reviewer



seems to forget the positive stories that came before, and the second reads “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story” as confirming a traditional view of journalism and women, rather than as ironic like twenty-first century critics have.

#### Henry James on New Women and New Journalism

In all of his journalism fiction, Henry James cautions against the distortion and merging of the public and private spheres. As Allan Burns notes, all of these works prominently feature “the dissolution of the private sphere, a prevailing preoccupation with things of the moment...and the collapse of social ‘forms’ and manners” (1). For Burns, James articulating his discomfort with American democracy’s influence on culture, but it could just as easily be James’ discomfort with modernity regardless of its origin. The New Journalism that gained prominence in the late nineteenth century placed an emphasis on the personal, notably profiles of private lives with interviews conducted in subjects’ homes. While Burns is writing focused on journalists from James’ fiction of the 1880s, this reading holds true when considering Maud Blandy in “The Papers,” Addie in “Flickerbridge,” and the revised Henrietta Stackpole in *The Portrait of a Lady*, all published twenty years later. Each woman disrupts the clearly defined public and private spheres, as well as the gender norms James cherishes in traditional society, raising questions about how such women should be seen and how they affect the world around them. James’ works attempt to make sense simultaneously of the New Woman and New Journalism, but unlike Elizabeth Jordan, he neither identifies with nor is interested in the experiences of female journalists themselves. Instead, he identifies with and focuses on the characters who critique the New Women.

By James' own judgment, Henrietta Stackpole appears too much in *The Portrait of a Lady*. In his preface to the 1908 New York edition, James describes Stackpole and Maria Gostrey (from *The Ambassadors*) as "but wheels to the coach...neither belongs to the body of that vehicle [their respective novel's main plot], or is for a moment accommodated with a seat inside" (*Portrait* 15). They are on the outside looking in, but they keep reappearing for no obvious reason. Initially, Stackpole was merely a plot device – a wheel, helping Isabel Archer's story move, but not part of the story herself – but she took on a more important role, forcing her way into the story, into the coach, much like her fellow New Women pushed their way into male-dominated spaces. Most of Stackpole's plot takes place off the page – outside the coach – but even when she enters the story, James remains troubled by her journalistic invasion of the private sphere, just as he is with his other journalist characters. For Stackpole's part, most of her action takes place off the page – outside the coach – as she navigates the outside world for her *Interviewer* columns.

*The Portrait of a Lady* is set during the 1870s and was originally published in 1881, placing Stackpole and James near the start of the rise of the New Woman. Stackpole writes letters for the *Interviewer*, an American publication, in which she describes the people she meets and the places she sees on her travels around America and eventually through Europe. She is essentially a traveling social correspondent, placing her well within the socially acceptable parameters of the women's page but in a way that allows for some freedom. Stackpole's experiences in America are not quite as adventurous as some of Ruth Herrick's in *Tales of the City Room*, but she still exerts a similar degree of independence simply by traveling alone for work.

Stackpole's *Interviewer* letters are "universally quoted" (65), and she sees herself as "drifting to a big position – that of the Queen of American Journalism" (181). She knows she is good at her work and has had considerable success, but she wants to be the best in her field, not just successful. Stackpole intentionally positions herself in competition with other female journalists rather than with her male contemporaries because the work she does is "feminine": profiles, character studies, and travelogues. Stackpole is happy working in a branch of journalism that is not as serious as the work most men did because she likes it and knows she is good at it. In *Tales of the City Room*, there is never any sense of competition between the women, except perhaps between Van Dyke and Masters; instead, Ruth Herrick, a serious journalist, is pitted against her male coworkers who have failed to succeed at interviewing the accused female murderer in "Ruth Herrick's Assignment."

There are no other female journalists depicted or named in *Portrait*, which emphasizes Stackpole's independence and distance from other women in her field. She is more independent than Miss Van Dyke, but they share the lack of a safety net in common. Stackpole, however, handles it much better than Jordan's journalist; she is in her element when traveling alone for work and certainly does not seek to be seen as a "typical" woman. Stackpole may have entered her occupation out of necessity, but she is not happy just getting by; she is just as driven and focused on her career as other New Women and female journalists who pursued more serious jobs.

Like Mrs. Ogilvie, Miss Imboden, and many real newspaperwomen, Henrietta Stackpole is a journalist because she has no other means to independently support herself. She and Isabel Archer, *Portrait's* main character, are young women "without parents and

without property.” After their parents’ deaths, Stackpole and her siblings were left without much in the way of an inheritance or means of support, such as property that could produce income. Instead of securing a husband to support her, Stackpole, an educated but unmarried woman, chose to enter the workforce and put her education and interest in people’s lives to use. It is never explicitly explained why Stackpole chose journalism over another career, but it is very clear that the freedom her brand of writing grants her certainly had an effect. Plus, Stackpole’s income is not a benefit to only her; the money she earns by writing also supports “three of the children of an infirm and widowed sister” who is too ill to support them, much like Ogilvie working to support herself and her invalid husband. (65)

Despite this selfless streak, Stackpole’s personal career ambitions are her focus, as seen by her desire to be “the Queen of American Journalism.” She will do whatever is necessary to reach the highest possible position in her public life. Her newest desire, one that will undoubtedly help her rise in journalism, is to write letters for *The Interviewer* from Europe. This is a natural progression from her American correspondence and in line with other journalists in the late nineteenth century. After the Civil War, both male and female journalists began acting as foreign correspondents for periodicals at much higher rates (Fahs 234). Historian Alice Fahs attributes this to “the ‘mania’ for European travel [that] gathered steam in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s,” right in the middle of which sits Henrietta Stackpole (234). Both she and Addie of James’ “Flickerbridge” are American female foreign correspondents in Europe exploiting the interest in the continent by writing letters and stories for papers back home. Unlike the casual or even nonexistent

agreements between other would-be correspondents and their publishers, Stackpole leaves for Europe with what Fahs calls “a more secure arrangement” than is usual (235).

In a letter to her friend Isabel Archer, Stackpole writes that the *Interviewer* has finally “come round to my figure,” so she can now leave for England (James, *Portrait* 96). Stackpole suggests here that she initiated the assignment and knew how much she expected to be paid, which is much different than the casual arrangements Fahs describes many real correspondents as having. She is unwavering in her desires – they came round to *her* figure – and does not compromise. Stackpole is unafraid to exert strength, just like other New Women, and such confidence leads to the kinds of behaviors that James does not like in these women, namely forcing their way into public, typically masculine spaces. Stackpole has leverage with her bosses because she is no stranger to travel correspondence: for the *Interviewer*, she has written “from Washington, Newport, the White Mountains and other places,” giving her ample experience that can be transferred across the Atlantic (65). Even though she has only travelled along the east coast of the United States, such experiences and her being “universally quoted” show that her correspondence from Europe would be well-written and likely widely read (65).

Stackpole’s American travels and travel writing are similar to Ruth Herrick’s in one significant way: neither woman travels with a companion. While Herrick does, in “From the Hand of Dolerita,” use a guide in the Virginian mountains, she has neither a conventional chaperone nor companion at her side when she travels elsewhere. Stackpole similarly travels without a companion in America or on her trip to England to join her friend. Such independent travel shows that both Herrick and Stackpole are New Women, entering public spaces with a purpose and on their own. Both women only follow

gendered social norms when it is convenient or helpful to their work. Herrick uses a mountain guide, while Stackpole “wished to start off at once” for England with Archer and Archer’s aunt, Mrs. Touchett, but was delayed by her contract negotiations (66). This excuse allows Stackpole to travel alone, rather than be tied down by an older woman chaperone. Her initial choice to travel with Archer and Mrs. Touchett was merely out of convenience (they initiated the travel, and Mrs. Touchett would likely have paid some of Stackpole’s travel costs), but it was not necessary.

Stackpole and Herrick are at their most comfortable when traveling alone; it shows their independence and confidence in unfamiliar spaces and is emblematic of the New Woman and most journalists. *Portrait*’s narrator acknowledges this: “Henrietta was a literary woman, and the great advantage of being a literary woman was that you could go everywhere and do everything” (140). This passage likely relays Archer’s impressions of her friend, but it nevertheless shows a widely held perception of the freedom female journalists were granted in the late nineteenth century. If these are Archer’s thoughts, they show that she admires and even envies Stackpole’s ability to travel independently, and she relishes the opportunity to experience this alongside Stackpole.

Such un-chaperoned travel bucks the social norms concerning young, unmarried women’s travel. In the nineteenth century, as Mary Suzanne Schriber writes in her study of nineteenth-century American women’s travel writing, limits on “female travel for travel’s sake have been” connected to “women’s sexual vulnerability” (23). It was widely believed that “women were subject to a host of perils large and small” when they travelled alone and were largely “subject to suspicion” (24). Most important to Stackpole’s situation is Schriber’s point that female travelers, “particularly when they

went abroad at their own behest and independently rather than ‘accidentally,’ made incursions into male territory” (27). Stackpole embodies this idea: she travels alone; enters public, male spaces; and publishes her work for public consumptions in a field dominated by men. This “incursion into male territory,” distorting the male-female divide, is where much of James’ discomfort with New Women comes from.

Once in England, Stackpole intends to continue her independent “incursion,” this time accompanied by Isabel Archer. She has thus far been disappointed by England and wants to travel to London for “some impressions of real [English] life,” the kinds of things her audience want to read about (James, *Portrait* 139). Unfortunately, her plan – two young women traveling to and in London un-chaperoned – is openly mocked by Ralph Touchett, Archer’s cousin: “It’s a delightful plan...I advise you to go to the Duke’s Head in Covent Garden, and easy, informal, old-fashioned place, and I’ll have you put down at my club” (140). To Touchett, their plans are farcical and perhaps even dangerous; because women would not be able to travel in this way without sparking suspicion or gossip, Touchett casts Archer and Stackpole as men who could stay at his club.

Understanding his meaning, Archer responds, “Do you mean it’s improper? ... With Henrietta surely I may go anywhere; she isn’t hampered in that way. She has travelled over the whole American continent and can at least find her way about this minute island” (140). Again, Stackpole’s experience with independent travel is seen as an advantage; Archer is sure her friend can navigate England because it is much smaller than America, even if one only includes the eastern portion Stackpole has travelled in.

This is not, however, the view of society or of James. Many of the male characters, including the narrator, in *Portrait* (and later in “Flickerbridge”) are proxies for James and act as defenders of tradition. They are his way of influencing the action so that modernity does not take hold. In this scene, for instance, Touchett knows that the traditional, upper-class society Archer and Stackpole seek to enter would look down on their traveling without a chaperone. So, under the guise of taking “advantage of her protection,” Touchett offers to join them (140). He knows that joining them is the only way they will remain in good standing and preserve the social norms Stackpole has spent her career disrupting.

Later in the novel, Casper Goodwood, an acquaintance from America, takes up the mantle of Stackpole’s social savior and James’ preserver of tradition. Schriber explains that women who did not have the safety of an appropriate companion or chaperone, who could guard them against supposed perils, were often referred to as “unprotected women” (24). After Stackpole announces her intention to travel by train alone, Goodwood thinks of her in that way: “it struck him that this would be an insult to an *unprotected woman*” (James, *Portrait* 480, emphasis added). Despite not wanting to spend the day alone with her, Goodwood offers to be Stackpole’s travel companion because it is “his duty to put himself out for her” (480).

Knowing that Goodwood is playing his part by offering his services, Stackpole consents. Because it is the appropriate thing to do, Stackpole does her part as damsel in distress grateful to be saved. She does not see a problem with traveling alone, but she accepts his offer, even if neither of them wants to do it. Stackpole is aware of what society expects of her, and she conforms to it when given the opportunity. In this way,



she assuages some of the anxiety James, Goodwood, and others would have felt if she had continued with her original plan to travel alone. As will become evident, however, Stackpole does not go out of the way to conform, particularly in her travels with Mr. Bantling.

Casper Goodwood also serves as an example of what Alice Fahs characterizes as Henry James' "two minds about the traveling woman correspondent as a new public figure" (236). He, like James, objectively appreciates Stackpole's position, but neither man is comfortable with what the positions results in: over confidence, over familiarity, and willful disregard for traditions and norms. The narrator notes that Goodwood "thought her very remarkable, very brilliant" and had "no objection to the class to which she belonged. Lady correspondents appeared to him a part of the natural scheme of things in a progressive country" (James, *Portrait* 480). Goodwood willingly admits that Stackpole is brilliant and acknowledges the role female journalists play in advancing society, but he also dislikes her move away from traditional femininity.

Beyond the disruption of gender norms, James also exhibits great discomfort with the way female journalists merge and change the public and private spheres of society. Each of his female journalist characters inherently disrupts the spheres by their choice of occupation, and their work presents private matters for public consumption. As Fahs notes, such actions are emblematic of trends in New Journalism because women "quickly developed a reputation for" personal, non-traditional subjects (5). Over the course of the 1880s and 1890s, interviews became a staple of newspapers and magazines. In his excellent study of intimacy and publicity in "The Papers," Matthew Rubery explains that interviewing, like what Blandy and Bight do in the story, "was considered by many in the

industry to be a distinctly feminine branch of journalism, for it gave disproportionate attention to private life” (361). At the center of “The Papers” is James’ long-standing fear that new modes of journalism were breaching the divide and making private matters public. Rubery notes earlier that an event in 1886, almost twenty years before James wrote “The Papers,” had a profound influence on “his attitude toward journalistic invasions of privacy” (347). With women being so tightly linked to the form – they are supposed to be private beings, so it only seems right that they would take up pseudo-private journalism – James’ dislike for female journalists makes even more sense.

Stackpole and Addie in “Flickerbridge” are not interviewers like Maud Blandy in “The Papers,” but they do disrupt the boundaries between the spheres in their own ways. Their disregard for the distinction between the public and private is manifested in a habit of writing intimate profiles of people and places without approval or consideration of the effects. Stackpole, for instance, is unapologetic in her pursuit of a good piece. Only when Isabel Archer voices her objection does Stackpole agree to not publish a piece detailing the Touchett estate:

“I don’t think you ought to do that. I don’t think you ought to describe the place.”

Henrietta gazed at her as usual. “Why, it’s just what the people want, and it’s a lovely place.”

“It’s too lovely to be put in the newspapers, and it’s not what my uncle wants.”

“Don’t you believe that!” cried Henrietta. “They’re always delighted afterwards.”

“My uncle won’t be delighted – nor my cousin either. They’ll consider it a breach of hospitality.”

Miss Stackpole showed no sense of confusion; she simply wiped her pen, very neatly, upon an elegant little implement which she kept for the purpose, and put away her manuscript. “Of course if you don’t approve I won’t do it; but I sacrifice a beautiful subject.” (James, *Portrait* 100)

Stackpole is determined to give her readers what they want – detailed accounts of English society – and if it were not for Archer, she might have deeply offended her hosts in the process. She does not see the harm in publishing intimate details without approval from her subjects, just as she did not see the harm of traveling alone. She does not consider the implications such actions would have on others and only concedes to not publishing the account in this scene because her friend insists on it, not because she agrees with the argument.

This trait is shared with Addie in “Flickerbridge.” Addie is often spoken of but is never seen in the story, but as Jean Marie Lutes writes in *Front Page Girls*, Addie’s “potentially venomous presence haunts the story” (115). Frank Granger, Addie’s fiancé and the story’s main character, paints her as a negative specter hanging over his time in England. She has stayed behind in Paris to continue her work as foreign correspondent for an American paper, but Granger has travelled to England first for work and then to meet a distant relative of Addie’s who owns a large estate. Addie’s letters to Granger are “briefer snatches” than his letters to her because she “had other play for her pen...a regular correspondence for a ‘prominent Boston paper’” (James, *Better* 144). Her journalism and fiction writing take up so much time and energy that she is not able (or

perhaps willing) to spend much time on personal correspondence, and this has proven worthwhile. Addie “had thirty short stories out and nine descriptive articles” published, giving her some degree of success in America, not unlike Stackpole (144).

Simply put, she is a good deal more successful than Granger the painter. This difference – his “poor show compared with these triumphs” (144) – irks Granger, his frustration made even worse because she wants to return to America, having gotten almost everything out of Europe she can. The situation in “Flickerbridge” with Addie and Granger inverts that of Stackpole and British aristocrat Bantling, whom Stackpole eventually marries, and the relationship of Blandy and Bight, a male journalist more successful than her, in “The Papers.” At its base, “Flickerbridge” is a story of a man frustrated that the woman to whom he is romantically attached is more successful than him because of her professional disruption of traditional values he holds close.

Just as Stackpole takes advantage of everything and everyone around her, Addie’s strongest trait, one that certainly contributed to her success, is that she uses everything as a subject for her writing. When Addie discovers that she has an English relative on an old estate, the narrator notes how odd it is “that she should have had one so long only to remain unprofitably unconscious of it. Not to have done something with it, used it, worked it, talked about it at least, and perhaps even written” about it (146). A wealthy English relative is exactly the kind of subject Addie would write about if given the material. This passage draws Addie as ruthlessly professional, not interested in developing a personal relationship with her cousin; instead, she sees the relationship as a wonderful job opportunity, and she will get everything she possibly can from this woman for her own professional gains.

It is this brash nature that Granger comes to fear most. He becomes obsessed with the cousin and Flickerbridge, the cousin's estate. In particular, he loves how she and her estate are "absolutely composed and transmitted, with tradition, and tradition only, in every stroke, tradition still noiselessly breathing and visibly flushing" (155). What he admires in Flickerbridge is what James most admires in society: adherence to tradition against the tide of radical change. It is a refuge from the distortions and noise of the modern world. Granger thinks of Addie's cousin, Miss Wenham, and Flickerbridge as Sleeping Beauty "in the deep doze of the spell that has held you for long years, and it would be a shame, a crime, to wake you up" (157). Granger fears that Addie will be the one to wake Flickerbridge, shattering the traditional atmosphere by revealing it to the outside world:

She'll rave about you. She'll write about you... You'll be too weird for words, but the words will nevertheless come... and all Addie's friends and all Addie's editors and contributors and readers will cross the Atlantic and flock to Flickerbridge, so, unanimously, universally, vociferously, to leave you. You'll be in the magazines with illustrations; you'll be in the papers with headings' you'll be everywhere with everything. (161)

Granger knows Addie's ways, that she will want to write about Flickerbridge, and that all of her readers will want to make the sojourn to see the idyllic estate and the wonderful owner. As soon as this happens, everything he loves about Flickerbridge will be lost; it will be on public display, no longer a private escape. Instead of a haven of tradition, Flickerbridge will be engulfed by the modern world.

Granger's fears articulate James' own; both worry about private lives entering public discourse through journalism, and Addie is the unforgiving personification of this reality. Without someone like Isabel Archer to stop her from writing about Flickerbridge, she will think only of her own success and the audience she hopes to impress. She is a spectral reminder of the threat modernity poses to traditional femininity and the concept of a "private" life. The fact that Addie never appears in the story – Granger departs Flickerbridge before she arrives – intensifies the fear of her that James creates. The onslaught against private space and traditional gender roles (she is more successful than her male fiancée) that she represents has no face, no way to identify it until it is too late. Lutes correctly characterizes Granger's choice to break off his engagement with Addie as "not because of any personal failing of hers but because of the publicity machine she embodies" (115). Granger likes Addie, but he cannot stay with someone he sees as the personification of "the publicity machine" he dislikes. He is willing to give her up if it means not having a hand in the destruction of traditional society.

Appearing in the same collection – *The Better Sort* (1903) – James' "The Papers" presents a similarly unpleasant but ultimately more humorous depiction of "the publicity machine." The story falls tonally somewhere between "Flickerbridge" and *The Portrait of a Lady*, but its differences are not limited to tone. Maud Blandy, the story's female journalist, is not as successful as Addie or Henrietta Stackpole; her friend Howard Bight is the one whose articles are regularly published in The Papers (the monolithic name James gives the newspapers in this story). It takes Blandy almost half the story to get her interview published. Despite such career setbacks and the fact that she is British rather

than American, Blandy appears to fall in line with the portrayals of James' other female journalists, but she proves to be quite different.

Early in the story, Blandy is depicted by the narrator as a decidedly masculine New Woman:

Maud Blandy drank beer – and welcome, as one may say; and she smoked cigarettes when privacy permitted, though she drew the line at this in the right place...She was fairly a product of the day...she was really herself, so far at least as her great preoccupation went, an edition, an 'extra special'...Maud was a shocker, in short, in petticoats. (313-14)

While this "shocker in petticoats" smokes like the unpleasant Masters in "Miss Van Dyke's Best Story," she does so only in private, knowing it is not appropriate for her to do it in public. In this way, she seems to be self-conscious about her modern-ness, not willing to fully embrace things that go against the social norms. She is "a product of the day," but she tries to hold on to some tradition. Several scholars, including Rubery and Lutes, zero in on the masculinization of Blandy. Lutes argues that James made her "a pseudo-man," meaning she cannot use her femininity to have journalistic success (115), and Rubery sees Blandy and Bight as inverting gender, meaning they cannot marry until both perform gender appropriately (362). Such readings suggest that Blandy is not a success in either her career or personal life because she is too modern, too masculine. In other words, even if she is hesitant, she has taken being a New Woman to such an extreme that, as far as James is concerned, she is unappealing to everyone. For James, a modernizing society will only accept New Women to a point, but even the newspapers will not touch them if they cross too far beyond the gendered line.

Blandy has more in common with Jordan's Miss Van Dyke than with James' other female journalists, who are depicted much less sympathetically. She does not persevere and continue her work in journalism; instead, by the end of the story, she and Bight have chosen to give up their careers and marry each other. The more sympathetic portrayal is likely a result of them being more cogs in the periodical machine than instigators of the breach in the public-private divide. For instance, Richard Salmon argues that their "subjects are willing victims," fame-hungry men demanding the publicity and attention Blandy and Bight can provide (139). The world James depicts in "The Papers" is full of those seeking publicity and those willing to assist them. Salmon reads this rather bleakly as James' "apocalyptic, if grotesquely comic, vision of publicity" (139). This bleak outlook is not inaccurate, but Rubery sees "The Papers" as moving from satirical "to something approaching sympathy for" Blandy and Bight (358).

These "sympathetic" journalists do not seem to square with James' other journalists, just as Van Dyke does not immediately fit in with Jordan's other characters. To James, Maud Blandy is the more sympathetic character because she is not meant for journalism and happily leaves it behind; unlike Addie and Henrietta Stackpole, who never show a sign of giving it up – indeed Mrs. Touchett is sure Stackpole will sell the library bequeathed to her and use the earnings to establish her own paper – Blandy willingly leaves the field *and* becomes a traditional wife in the process. James casts her in a (non-ironic) sympathetic light because she conforms to tradition, just as James wants. Despite her modern beginning, Maud Blandy is the one of James' female journalist characters who embraces tradition in the end, and he applauds her for it.



## On Love and Marriage

The similarities between the female journalist characters and plots in Jordan's and James' works are few. While each of James' female journalists has some kind of romance, very few of Jordan's do – her focus is almost exclusively on the women forming female friend groups but being independent of men in their personal lives. Despite the striking differences between their female journalist fictions, Jordan and James do portray heterosexual relationships that are, at times, rather similar, specifically in “The Papers” and “Miss Van Dyke's Best Story.” Jordan's and James' stories create a complicated view of such relationships and, as a result, a complicated reading of their opinions of female journalists, New Women, and their place in romance.

In *The Portrait of a Lady*, James does not make Henrietta Stackpole a grotesque, celibate, asexual New Woman spinster. Instead, he makes her a romantic and potentially sexual person and creates a partner, Mr. Bantling, who is her equal. This unconventional relationship humanizes Stackpole and shows New Woman having success in public and private, an idea antithetical to much of what James argues about tradition and women elsewhere.

The “universally informed” Mr. Bantling and Stackpole take an immediate liking to one another; unlike other men, he is filled with “neither difficulty nor dread” when speaking to the sometimes off-putting, wildly independent New Woman (James, *Portrait* 155). He takes every opportunity to spend time alone with her and “laughed immodestly at everything Henrietta said,” suggesting a break from traditional propriety (155). Bantling is willing to disregard social norms and is much more casual and open when he is with Stackpole than expected in polite society. For Stackpole, it is Bantling's

intelligence and “impressibility to feminine merit” that she likes (157). She can tell that he is receptive to her qualities as a New Woman; unlike Isabel Archer’s eventual husband or others in the upper classes, Bantling is intrigued by Stackpole’s independence rather than put off by her newness.

She also sees the professional advantages Bantling can bring. He knows a great deal about European history, much more than she does, and such knowledge is of particular use to a journalist expected to write about intelligibly about the European setting for her American readers. Bantling provides for her an “answer to almost any social or practical question that could come up,” answers that she finds “convenient” because they are an Englishman’s words about his home and because they make less work for her (233). In France, Bantling acts as her “constant guide and interpreter,” using his “remarkable knowledge” to teach her everything about Paris and Versailles (232). They end up spending three days just in Versailles because Stackpole wants “to see it thoroughly,” and Bantling happily obliges (233). He is a perfect and willing source for a largely uninformed American correspondent. She enjoys his company, but she appreciates his usefulness just as much.

Most of Stackpole and Bantling’s relationship takes place off the page, away from the main action of the plot. The two travel extensively as a pair, but these travels are rarely depicted; most of their excursions are told after the fact or through letters to Archer. Even the carriage ride in London, their first truly private moment, is only discussed by Archer and Touchett – they make guesses about what will happen, but the reader is never told what actually happened. Unlike Casper Goodwood, Mr. Bantling willingly joins Stackpole when she intended to walk alone. As she begins to take her

leave, Touchett balks at her independence for a second time, to which she responds indignantly, “I suppose you mean it’s improper for me to walk alone!” (158). In this tense moment, Mr. Bantling intercedes: “There’s not the slightest need for you to walk alone,” he says, because he would be “greatly pleased to go with” her (158). This is not a perfunctory exercise of chivalry. It is, instead, Bantling’s attempt to spend more time with a woman he finds interesting.

In addition to his wealth of knowledge, Bantling’s presence is also useful to Stackpole as ammunition against accusations of impropriety, while not restricting her independence and travel: if confronted, Stackpole could present Bantling as her chaperone (like Touchett and Goodwood elsewhere), even if most would not find an unmarried man who is close in age to her is an appropriate chaperone. She had planned to leave Archer and Mrs. Touchett behind in England to travel to Paris alone – exerting her regular independence that had been suppressed since she had joined them – but it is later revealed that Bantling actually accompanied her across the Channel to Paris and then Versailles. On the face of it, each fulfills their expected responsibilities, but their travel companionship turns acceptable behavior on its head.

Of this time in Paris, the reader is only told that Stackpole and Bantling “had breakfasted together, dined together, gone to the theatre together, supped together, really in a manner quite lived together” and “had led a life of great personal intimacy.” For twenty-first century readers, this may seem rather innocuous, but the situation is somewhat more scandalous in a late nineteenth century upper-class context. That they “really in a manner quite lived together” could just mean that they spent all of their time together as “groping celibates,” or it could suggest that it was in Paris where they moved

from “true friends” to a romantic and perhaps even sexual relationship. While no other characters confront them with this possibility, for the reader, the argument that Bantling was acting as the chivalrous male companion to the lone traveler is thrown out the window because the two were engaging in the exact behavior he was supposed to be protecting her from. (232)

If Bantling and Stackpole are already romantically attached at this point, as Carolyn Mathews suggests, they would have been “dispensing with the usual patterns of courtship, which emphatically forbade un-chaperoned mingling of couples” (199). But, at least publically, they are not a romantic couple. Instead, Bantling takes on the role of chaperone rather than partner, and Stackpole puts herself in the role of the escorted, making their relationship theoretically appropriate in the eyes of society. Even if they were not anything beyond friends at the time of their trip to France, their relationship is still unusual, and Stackpole’s resistance to traditional rules governing travel for young, single women suggests that this is her compromise: bring a man along who, because of his position in the English aristocracy, could be seen as an appropriate travel chaperone, if others did not consider it too long, even if the reality is anything but appropriate.

Their relationship, and specifically this matter, is made somewhat clearer and much less appropriate when Bantling proposes “that they should take a run down to Spain.” By this time, they have known each other for several years, and Bantling has travelled to America for to visit her. Stackpole naturally agrees, and the two travel to Spain alone. As with their other travels, this excursion is only described in the barest details after the fact; in fact, the reader is only clued into what happened through others’

opinions and the titles of her *Interviewer* dispatches. These letters proved to be “the most acceptable she had yet published.” In particular, the letter titled “Moors and Moonlight” was “generally passed for her masterpiece.” This trip proved to be Stackpole’s best possibly because of her intimate relationship with Bantling. (James, *Portrait* 408)

“Moors and Moonlight” is “dated from the Alhambra,” which implies that Stackpole and Bantling travelled to the south of Spain to visit the Moorish palace in Granada at night (408). The nighttime setting suggests an intimate, very likely romantic adventure. It is never explained what made Stackpole’s letter so good, but such intimacy has been largely absent from her other letters, so it can be assumed to be the cause. Stackpole has preferred to fill her *Interviewer* work with accounts and observations of her surroundings, but placing the reader in a time of day places Stackpole at the Alhambra at a specific time and thus at the center of the narrative. This choice is uncharacteristic, and her writing about the nighttime visit (with Bantling) is an admission of socially unacceptable behavior; even if their behavior was appropriate, the very act is questionable and suggests a closer relationship than would be allowed. While nothing is ever made certain, the narration and Stackpole’s own letters suggest something beyond a platonic friendship, especially by this point in their narrative.

While the specifics of their relationship remain uncertain and nontraditional, the fact that theirs is the most stable and successful romantic relationship in the novel is certain. For Nina Baym, Stackpole “is the character in the novel to achieve a successful and meaningful life” (193). This “successful and meaningful life” is part professional and part personal. Compared to the other relationships in the novel, her relationship with Bantling is one of equals that developed out of genuine affection, rather than a desire for

money or position. Indeed, Lutes argues that while James “does not celebrate Henrietta’s match with Mr. Bantling...it may be the most promising marriage in the book” (191). By the end of the novel, the two are engaged, which surprises Isabel Archer and quite possibly the reader: Stackpole has, until this point, shown no active interest in marriage, and Bantling has not appeared in the main plot for several dozen chapters. His absence from the novel, however, does not mean he has been absent from Stackpole’s life. She confesses to Archer that he “goes everywhere with” her (James, *Portrait* 583). Even after five years, Stackpole and Bantling are inseparable; his devotion and willingness to do her bidding means that he is not the dominant figure in their relationship, subverting the kind of traditional gender roles that Granger desired in “Flickerbridge.”

If *The Portrait of a Lady* were James’ only work featuring a female journalist, his opinion of this class of women could easily be read as ambivalent but ultimately supportive. His other female journalists’ romantic relationships, however, reveal more traditional opinions of women and heterosexual relationships. In “Flickerbridge,” there is little romance between Granger and Addie, and their engagement seems casual or at least unofficial until Addie confirms it to her cousin: Miss Wenham says, “Oh yes, she said you were engaged...But *aren’t* you?” to which Granger responds, “Assuredly – if she says so. It may seem very odd to you, but I haven’t known...We *were*...engaged a year ago; but since then...I haven’t quite known how I stand” (James, *Better* 156). The lack of connection between them is, of course, partly a result of their being in two different countries, but this confusing engagement suggests that Addie is in no hurry to marry because her career is going to so well, which is similar to Stackpole’s feelings on the subject.

In the end, it is Granger who breaks off the engagement, despite him not being certain of its existence until days before. He does this, as Lutes observes, “not because of any personal failing of hers but because” of what he knows she will do to Flickerbridge (115). Granger insists that his hostess has “made me see her as I’ve never done before” (James, *Better* 166). Before, he was distracted by Addie’s supposed charm and beauty, but Flickerbridge helped him see that she is part of the never-ending stream of modernity, taking with it everything he (and James) cares about. Instead of being attracted to her newness like Bantling is to Stackpole’s, Granger is repulsed by it. While Stackpole and Bantling might have a more casual public relationship, they never seem confused about it, unlike Granger and Addie: *Portrait*’s Stackpole and Bantling are always the other’s companion, and after a long relationship, they choose to marry. While she and Addie share many characteristics, their romantic relationships could not be more different.

As has been discussed, Maud Blandy in “The Papers” is more like Van Dyke and Masters in “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story” than like James’ characters. Of note, her romantic relationship is strikingly similar to Van Dyke’s. At the end of the final story of both *Tales of the City Room* and *The Better Sort*, Jordan and James shows a woman in journalism embracing the traditional views held by the society, but only James’ story is consistent with his other female journalist stories. Both “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story” and “The Papers” center around a heterosocial friendship – Van Dyke and Matthews, Blandy and Bight. These relationships appear to be between equals, particularly Blandy and Bight’s friendship, but when they marry, the effect is more traditional than when Stackpole and Bantling do.

While they are clearly friends, Matthews also thinks of himself as Van Dyke's protector and advisor; he does not see her as able to care for herself, and she submits to this view at the end of the story. However, she exhibits strength and independence when she first proposes the "best story" and Matthews openly objects: "'She can't go...It's madness. I don't know what you're thinking of'" (Jordan 217-18). This is not a suggestion; it is a command. He is perplexed by her decision because it does not fit his view of her or of what is appropriate. During the aftermath of the article, Matthews finally tries again to take action when all hope seems lost for Van Dyke at the end of the story:

Matthews seized his opportunity, clever man that he was.

"Let me give you an assignment," he said earnestly. He leaned over her desk and took from her little hand the pen with which she had been drawing erratic designs on her desk blotter as she spoke.

"Drop this," he said urgently, his dark face flushed with earnestness.

"Drop it for all time and come to me. Let me take care of you forever. Surely there is nothing finer in being a self-supporting woman than in marrying a poor human being like me and making him happy." (230-31)

Matthews is Van Dyke's "loyal friend," but until this moment, she has not seen him as her protector. This changes when Matthews' "stalwart form...between her and the desks near hers" suggests that he could act as "a human bulwark between her and the world" (231). She suddenly sees him as her best hope at happiness. And the narrator seems to be on his side, calling him throughout this scene a "clever man" who speaks "earnestly" and "urgently" and whose face is red with "earnestness." Matthews is outwardly humble,



referring to himself as “a poor human being,” but he is portrayed as anything but. Even though she was confident about her career at the beginning of the story, Van Dyke submits to his call to give it up. Her independence costs her her happiness, and turning from a “self-supporting” female journalist to a subservient wife helps her regain it. Early in their friendship, before the events of the story, Matthews “laid his heart and hand at her feet,” but Van Dyke rejected him (229). The reason for her rejection is not revealed, but it can be assumed that her career ambitions played some part, given the independence and single-life many female journalists, including Stackpole and Addie, enjoyed. With this reading, her choice to leave at the end makes more sense because she no longer likes or wants her career now that it has turned sour.

Bight’s proposal to Blandy in “The Papers” similarly originates from her unhappiness: “I hadn’t, upon my honour,” Bight says, “understood you were so down” (James, *Better* 349). In an effort to rescue Blandy from her frustrating career, her good friend offers himself up as an alternative, but she, like Van Dyke, initially rejects him. Blandy explains, in part, that she was not so down as to abandon her career and that if they were to marry, she “should spoil the business,” meaning she would ruin both of their careers, leaving them destitute (359). Blandy’s is a sound argument that shows, whatever her career failures, she is still aware of what it means to have a sustainable life and career. Afterward, they are able to keep their friendship, even if there is some resentment underneath from Bight because he believes that his “exclusives story would ensure the success of both of them” (365).

At the story’s end, however, Bight does not make a formal proposal. Instead, they enter into a mutual, unspoken agreement that they will marry and *both* leave journalism

behind. Once they make these occupational intentions known, “they turned again...presenting their backs to Fleet Street,” the historical home of London journalism, symbolically leaving their past careers behind (426). When they are finally alone together, Bight casually asks, “Whom will *you* marry?” and Blandy “gravely” kisses him in response (429, emphasis original). There is no discussion in these final pages of marriage, but they seem to have come to the decision individually because their journalistic careers are no longer in the way. Free of the problems associated with their jobs, Bight and Blandy can revert to their socially acceptable roles – because, according to Rubery, “no marriage can take place between the two journalists until they are transformed into appropriate gendered personae” (363). These are the roles Bight tried to get Blandy to conform to several chapters before with his proposal, but she, like Van Dyke, has come to favor tradition.

There is no indication at the end of “The Papers” that Blandy will indeed become an unemployed wife, but given their previous conversation and expectations of the time, such assumptions are not unwarranted, especially when “The Papers” is compared to “Miss Van Dyke’s Best Story.” Both stories follow a similar trajectory: a pair of journalist friends (one successful man, one woman frustrated with her position) decide to marry after the woman rejected a previous proposal, and at least one of them leaves the field. Such similarities suggest that Van Dyke’s decision to leave the public sphere all together would not be out of the question for Blandy. Both authors put their female journalists into traditional positions by marrying them off to a man and removing them from their occupation of choice; when Matthews offers Van Dyke a new “assignment,” Lutes reads it as reframing “marriage as a professional occupation” and affirming

“unpaid domestic work as women’s true business” (105). To James, this move does “affirm” his belief in the traditional distinction between public and private, male and female; for Jordan, it is a commentary on dangers female journalists face when alone. By ending their short story collections in this manner, the authors made conscious decisions to leave their readers with a message of tradition in marriage and occupation; it is just that their intention with this message was very different.

Because of the many differences between the female journalist characters of Jordan and James, their works help construct a larger narrative about the troubles female journalists faced in the late nineteenth century and how others in society viewed them. As a career journalist herself, Jordan was privy to her fellow journalists’ intimate experiences and was able to use her own experiences working in the male-dominated space as inspiration for many of her stories. James, on the other hand, had some experience in the field, but his writing largely grew out of his discomfort with changes in journalism and gender. He was much more interested in what women in the field meant for society than what it meant for the women themselves. Both authors took advantage of the growing interest in the New Women and female journalists in order to consider the changes and problems they could bring about, and both also felt the pull of the marriage plot and its powers to subvert the New Woman and remove her from public spheres. It is simply that they approached these subjects from remarkably different sides: Jordan looked inward, considering personal lives and intimate homosocial relationships, while James focused outward on their merging and distortion of public and private spheres.

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