



Chapitre de livre

2013

Accepted version

Open Access

This is an author manuscript post-peer-reviewing (accepted version) of the original publication. The layout of the published version may differ .

---

## Stepping Out: “At Home” or “From Our Own Correspondent”? The Lady Writer or the Woman Journalist

---

Fehlbaum, Valérie

### How to cite

FEHLBAUM, Valérie. Stepping Out: “At Home” or “From Our Own Correspondent”? The Lady Writer or the Woman Journalist. In: Women in transit through literary liminal spaces. Basingstoke : Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:88404>

## Stepping Out: ‘At Home’ or ‘From our Own Correspondent’? The Lady Writer or the Woman Journalist?

Valerie Fehlbaum

‘Aunt Julia [...] thinks I am given over to the Evil One since I’ve become a journalist’ (Dixon [1894] 2004: 144), declares Mary Erle, one of the central characters in Ella Hepworth Dixon’s 1894 novel *The Story of a Modern Woman*. But what exactly was so diabolical about a woman earning her living by her pen at the *fin de siècle*? It was, after all, not new for women to write. Nor was it unusual for them to be castigated for doing so. One has only to think of Southey’s advice to Charlotte Brontë, warning her that ‘literature cannot be the business of a woman’s life, and it ought not to be’ (qtd. in Gaskell [1857] 1977: 173). Nevertheless, as is well known, throughout the nineteenth century many women novelists did indeed famously flourish. Such an invasion of the traditionally male sphere of *Belles Lettres* was obviously not to everyone’s taste. As Ella Hepworth Dixon (1857–1932) remarked in one of her weekly columns in the *Lady’s Pictorial*, the woman writer continued to irritate and had merciless detractors: ‘I have always been led to suppose, by a perusal of the so-called humorous papers, that if there was one thing on earth which the average man loathed, it was a female writer’ (Dixon 1896). Certainly magazines such as *Punch* systematically made fun of literary women.<sup>1</sup> However, if the female

writer engaging in the apparently ladylike occupation of penning prose fiction in the supposedly safe haven of home aroused scorn, how much greater was the animosity aimed at the woman journalist whose increasingly visible presence in public places was considered an anathema. This chapter will examine the reception and representation of such women, who found themselves, literally, socially and professionally in transit. By stepping out into the public arena they were not only physically caught between the outside world and the confines of domestic interiors, the usual site of both production and consumption of their work, but they were also braving social conventions, especially gender-stereotyping, and forging a space for themselves in the pages of journals and in the world at large. Separating themselves from stable conventions, women journalists entered a liminal space in which outcomes were uncertain, in the hope of transforming professional and social conditions for women.

These women were frequently the butt of scathing, misogynistic humour, but even more well-disposed critics occasionally expressed reservations about press work for women. For example, in one of the many articles on the subject of 'Journalism for Women' published in February 1890 in *Woman*, Mabel Collins cites the example of 'a naval officer of distinction [who] fell desperately in love with a lady journalist of some distinction also', but has difficulty accepting that she works for a living. Furthermore, for our present purposes his final comments to his beloved are most telling: 'At least you will give up newspaper work? I can understand a lady taking up her pen when she has *some fancy* she wants to express *prettily* – but *newspaper* work!' (Collins 1890: 2, emphasis added).

It should also be mentioned that even for men the liminal and ephemeral domain of journals, compared with the stability of fiction, was considered somewhat suspect and regularly looked down upon. In J.M. Barrie's novel *When a Man's Single* a short exchange between the hero's beloved and her mother is revelatory:

‘He is evidently to be a newspaper man all his life’.

‘I wish you would say journalist, mamma, [...] or a literary man. The profession of letters is a noble one’.

‘Perhaps it is, [...] but I can't think it is very respectable’.

(Barrie 1923: 188)

If the respectability of the male journalist was thus in doubt, how much greater must the anxieties about the female of the species have been.

At this point it is surely worth asking, as Sarah A. Tooley does in an interview with Mrs Meynell, the President of the Society of Women Journalists, entitled precisely ‘Women in Journalism’, ‘What is that subtle line of demarcation which divides the Press from literature proper?’ (Tooley 1898: 229). Tooley goes on to mention some of ‘the profession's most distinguished members’, such as Addison, Johnson and Steele, as well as contemporaries such as W.T. Stead who are ‘proud to be called journalists’(ibid.). However, she then remarks:

In spite of the fact that women as distinguished as Harriet Martineau and Frances Power Cobb for many years wielded the ‘*dirty pen*’ in the writing of articles and ‘leaders’ for the newspapers, and that George Eliot wrote for periodical literature for some fifteen years

before she penned a line of fiction, women show some conventional distaste at being called journalists.

(230, emphasis added)

No wonder women expressed ‘conventional distaste’ if journalism was equated with a ‘dirty pen’ of the ephemeral.

In her introduction Tooley offers several tentative definitions of a woman journalist, the first being simply ‘a person who wrote to order for the Press’ (229). As Wilhelmina Wimble had noted in a slightly earlier article entitled ‘Incomes for Ladies: Journalism’, ‘The necessity having been admitted of attracting women as readers, the natural development followed of getting women to write for women’ (Wimble 1897: 467). A glance at any overview of the press in the 1890s does indeed reveal a phenomenal increase in the number of periodicals in general and in particular those aimed at the female reader. An overview of ‘Fifty Years of Women’s Papers and Magazines’ in the 1896 *Newspaper Press Directory*, for example, begins by mentioning the astounding increase from ‘only four periodicals and magazines purporting to be especially for women’ to ‘close on fifty’. ‘Nothing [...] is more astonishing than the extraordinary increase during the last few years in the number of papers and periodicals devoted to the interests of women’, declares the author of another article entitled ‘Journalism for Women during the Reign’ (Anon. 1897: 33) published on the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee.<sup>2</sup> Mrs Meynell in *The Humanitarian* interview even claims ‘that the only special periodicals which realize fortunes are the ladies’ papers and magazines. Their success is immense’ (Tooley 1898: 233). The fourth estate, therefore, was providing many women

with reading material, catering specifically to their interests as well as furnishing for some the possibility to gain both a voice and a new form of livelihood.

Wilhelmina Wimble had further commented: ‘This recognition by the Press of the feminine point of view is part of the movement for giving to women a greater share in life generally’ (1897: 467), and perhaps this pinpoints precisely one of the underlying anxieties. Opportunities for the fair sex to enjoy a ‘greater share in life generally’ might well be considered the thin edge of the revolutionary wedge. An earlier article in *Woman* entitled ‘Women as Journalists’ signed ‘A Man Editor’ sheds further light on the matter:

There can be no doubt as to the increasing opportunities which journalism as a profession offers to a bright, clever woman, but I am not among those who are disposed to believe that the newspaper of the future is to be altogether the work of the ladies, and I may perhaps be permitted to point out where, according to my experience, *their true sphere* in journalism lies, and how they may best fit themselves for it.

(Anon. 1890: 3, emphasis added)

And, in case there was any doubt about what was meant here by ‘their true sphere’, the author specifies ‘A woman’s sphere in journalism generally lies far away from the office or composing-room’ (ibid.) Ella Hepworth Dixon’s fictional Aunt Julia was clearly not alone in expressing concern about the transgression represented by the visible presence of women in that particularly public sphere, the newspaper office. Moreover, Dixon’s *The Story of a Modern*

*Woman* contains several unsavoury descriptions of editors' offices and certain types of journalist, no doubt with the intention of demarcating the threshold of the office. Nevertheless, Mary Erle, the novice writer, is in no way confined to domestic interiors and in fact resembles to some extent the second definition of a woman journalist offered by Sarah A. Tooley in her interview with Mrs Meynell: 'a person who spent her time rushing about London to gather news and then sitting down to scribble it out at the Writers' Club' (Tooley 1898: 229). Mary Erle has to produce her prose in rather dingy lodgings, but otherwise she does indeed spend a good deal of her time in transit, out and about on the streets of the city.

Nor was it only in periodicals aimed at female readership that the topic of the appropriate sphere for the woman journalist was discussed; more prestigious papers also felt the need to join the debate. For example, in March 1894 the *Sunday Times* published a lengthy article ostensibly dealing with 'Employment for the Ladies'. After a rather long preamble, the 'real subject of this paper' is revealed to be 'woman's work on the Press'. Whilst declaring that 'our sisters of the pen are doing splendidly, and that scores (it may be hundreds) of ladies are earning livelihoods suitable to the estate of gentlewomen with the assistance of the ink-stand', the author nonetheless concludes:

This article is written in a less lively strain than usual. The reason may be that the struggle for existence amongst the 'poorer sex' is a very serious matter indeed. Not only serious to women but serious (in spite of the 'equality of the sexes' nonsense) to men also.

(Anon 1894: 4)

Evidently the ‘equality of the sexes nonsense’, notwithstanding its parentheses, was a matter for concern. Having said, ‘it seems to me a pity to suggest any distinction between the sexes so far as journalism is concerned’, the writer nonetheless maintains ‘certain portions of a newspaper fall *naturally* to the pens of our lady scribes’ (emphasis added). As in many such commentaries, the author then attempts to distinguish between the journalist and the reporter, expressing doubts ‘that our sisters will make their way’ as the latter, such a transformation being threatening ‘to men also’.

Society’s double standards and gendered separate spheres were therefore to be upheld in the newspaper world, too. If it was acceptable for ladies to send in accounts of social occasions, interviews of celebrities and works of fiction, all produced within the confines of the home, it was considered very unladylike to cross the threshold of the newspaper office itself, a bastion of male privilege, and even worse to engage in the liminal activity of investigative journalism as a reporter.

Some women writers themselves also seemed to act as gatekeepers to their sex by propounding this idea of separate spheres within the profession. *Winter’s Magazine*, for example, ran a six-part series from November to December 1893 on ‘How to Become a Lady Journalist’ which provided exercises for the ‘budding journalist’, and several other journals ran similar series over the next few years. For instance, from October 1896 to September 1898 *Atalanta*, a magazine especially aimed at girls and young women, ran a series entitled ‘School of Journalism’ which offered practical advice for beginners in the field. This included various writing exercises for which prizes were offered and the



best articles were then published. Perhaps the most famous advice manual for the would-be woman journalist was Arnold Bennett's *Journalism for Women: A Practical Guide* published in 1898. This was followed a few years later by Frances Low's *Press Work for Women: A Textbook for the Young Woman Journalist* (1904).

It seems that it was felt essential to specify the sex of the putative journalist, even by writers such as 'John Strange Winter' (Henrietta Eliza Vaughan Stannard 1856–1911) and Frances Low. But why would such guides even be deemed necessary? In *The Haunted Study*, in his chapter on 'Novelists and Readers', Peter Keating points out that by the last decades of the nineteenth century 'literary advice had become a marketable commodity', leading to the extensive 'publication of literary handbooks, manuals, guides, reference works and periodicals' (Keating 1989: 71). Most of these were addressed to women, as if the conduct manuals of the beginning of the century had been recycled to different ends. One particularly interesting exception is W.T. Stead's 'How to Become a Journalist', originally published in January 1891 in *The Young Man*, and republished the following year in a collection of his essays entitled *A Journalist on Journalism*. It is worth noting that in this enthusiastic defence of the profession no distinction is made between men and women journalists. As usual, Stead was ahead of his time, and certainly not expressing a majority opinion.

Perhaps an attempt was generally being made to distinguish not only between the sexes, but also between amateurs and professionals. Many of John Strange Winter's comments, such as describing women writers' work as

‘amateurish’ and ‘infantile’, show no tenderness towards her sex, and foreshadow many of Arnold Bennett’s criticisms. It could be argued that in both cases they were expressing concern about a lack of professionalism amongst women who, to quote from the concluding sentences of Arnold Bennett’s *Guide*, ‘regard it [journalism] as a delightful game. The tremendous seriousness of it they completely miss’ (Bennett 1898: 98). This in turn is highly reminiscent of an article on ‘What Women May Do – Journalism’ which had appeared in *Woman* in 1892, where the author claims to be addressing ‘the few and not the many’, certainly not those who merely wanted to ‘*dabble in* journalism’ (Anon. 1892b: 3, emphasis added). Sarah A. Tooley, also gatekeeping for men,<sup>3</sup> likewise claimed that women ‘do not take the same pride in their profession as men seem to do’ (Tooley 1898: 230), and then went on to stress, ‘the Society of Women Journalists is a society of *professional workers*, not of *irresponsible amateurs*’ (231, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, in most *fin-de-siècle* evaluations of woman’s place in the press, a need was felt to stress the femininity of the female writer, as Ella Hepworth Dixon herself does in her description of a gathering organized by the Society of Women Journalists. She begins:

Ungallant suspicions have been so frequently cast upon the social and domestic capacities of the writing-woman, that even a misogynist might have rejoiced to see how ‘John Oliver Hobbes’ and the Society of Women Journalists refuted such calumnies by giving one of the prettiest parties of the season at Stafford House.

(Dixon 1896)

Likewise, in a series in *Woman* on 'Women Editors of London'<sup>4</sup> much was made of women journalists' 'social and domestic capacities', and in a *Lady's Pictorial* series on 'Lady Journalists'<sup>5</sup> which began in November 1893, whether describing Mrs Crawford, Miss Emily Faithful, Mrs Roy Devereux, Mrs Meynell or Ella Hepworth Dixon, emphasis was always placed on their 'womanliness', their 'unvarying kindness and courtesy', 'their unimpeachable taste' and their overall refinement. Each written biography was accompanied by a photo-portrait, revelatory of various types of literary women, from the motherly to the austere, from the dowdy to the elegantly refined, as if to reassure the reading public that earning one's living by writing, even writing for periodicals, in no way infringed upon one's womanliness.

In her memoirs, entitled *As I Knew Them: Sketches of Those I Have Met Along the Way*, published in 1930 after over forty years in the profession, Ella Hepworth Dixon relates her own early efforts which initially appear to meet perfectly the criteria of *Woman's* 'Man Editor'. She describes, for instance, contributing several 'Chats with Celebrities' to the *Sunday Times*, working with Oscar Wilde when he took over the *Woman's World* in 1888, and also contributing a little fiction and a few 'interviews at home' of some personal friends. However, as she observes, Oscar Wilde soon decided to end the series because 'People [were] beginning to tire of the silver ink-pots, the Persian rug, the brass paper-weight, the palms in pots'. She recognizes that 'He was right. Made attractive at first by Edmund Yates in *The World*, this kind of journalism had become passably absurd' (Dixon 1930: 34–5). Nevertheless, in spite of her claims, this is precisely what, according to several of the overviews of women

and the press, many other women journalists were still writing and what Mary Erle's editor asks her to do in *The Story of a Modern Woman*. Finding a journalistic mode by which to be in transit through this liminal publishing world was obviously subject to the tensions of gender expectations and possibilities.

Ella Hepworth Dixon also gives the impression of always having been on the most cordial terms with her editors; unlike her novice journalist Mary Erle who was made to feel less than comfortable in Grub Street, where even her fiction was censored. Nor does she mention any disapproval for engaging in some more sensational, 'yellow', journalism for which her American sisters in particular were regularly criticized. She tells, for instance, of trying 'a 'prentice hand on travel articles' for *The World*, one of which recounted her trip to a leper hospital at Molde in Norway, which she 'visited with the ship's doctor in the role of an English nurse, no outsiders being permitted' (1930: 161). This was precisely the sort of activity that aroused disapprobation, as expressed by the 'Man Editor' in his advice to would-be women writers:

I am of course assuming that a woman's *aspiration* in journalism is limited to the work which is most congenial to her sex and habits. In America, lady journalists enjoy a somewhat wider range than at present they care to adventure upon in England, and editors send young women to break the record in globe-trotting, or commission them to personate thieves and lunatics, in order to furnish racy descriptions of the inner economy of prisons and mad-houses for the delectation of their readers. Work of this kind is hardly, however,

what English ladies have in mind when they talk of Journalism for Women.

(Anon. 1890: 3, original emphasis)

As was often the case, a curious sort of double standard was at work in the male gatekeepers to publication. For it was not only North American women writers who were so openly transgressing the boundaries and negotiating their transition into the wider world through their liminal journeys. Nor were the ensuing articles always met with disapproval. In 1890, for instance, Menie Muriel Dowie (1867–1945) published, to great acclaim, *A Girl in the Karpathians*, describing her rather audacious journey across Europe. As was often customary, the author had submitted an initial essay on the topic, entitled ‘In Ruthenia’, to the periodical press, this time the *Fortnightly Review*, before publishing in book form. Menie Muriel Dowie consequently became the subject of various society articles and, literally making a public spectacle of herself, lectured on her adventures to large audiences. The reporter from the *Woman’s Herald*, giving a rather different slant to the typical concern with dress and fashion in women’s magazines, noted that ‘the part of the lecture of most interest to women was that where Miss Dowie described the dress she wore during her stay in the mountains’. Daringly, ‘it consisted of a shirt, knickerbockers, short skirt and jacket’ (qtd. in Dowie [1895] 1995: xxviii). After the success of such pioneering journalism, Menie Muriel Dowie, like many of her contemporaries, then tried her hand at what might have been considered more ladylike fiction. However, her 1895 New Woman novel, *Gallia*, caused quite a public stir, mainly due to its central theme of eugenics. At

the heart of several polemical transgressions, Menie Muriel Dowie never again enjoyed quite the same degree of literary celebrity.

Also in 1890 the *Lady's Pictorial* published in serial form Sara Jeanette Duncan's *A Social Departure: How Orthodocia and I went Round the World by Ourselves*, an even more transgressive account, as the title suggests, of the narrator's travels around the globe accompanied only by a lady friend. Literally in transit, far away from the security and stability that the ideas of home and place convey (Tuan 2008), such liminal writing was regarded as sensational. The articles were subsequently published in book form by Chatto and Windus. Duncan (1861–1922) had already made quite a name for herself in her native Canada, primarily as the first woman to be hired as a professional journalist, using the pen-name Garth Grafton,<sup>6</sup> on the *Toronto Globe* in 1886, although she had previously written articles for prestigious papers such as the *Washington Post*. She later became the parliamentary correspondent on the *Montreal Star*. After her world-wide trip and her subsequent marriage she gave up her journalistic activities and concentrated her efforts on fiction, one of her most popular novels being *An American Girl in London* (1891). Like Ella Hepworth Dixon, she also wrote a novel centred upon a would-be journalist, *A Daughter of Today*, in which the main female protagonist, rather like Mary Erle, originally sets out to pursue an artistic career, rejects offers of marriage and is then obliged to turn to writing for her living. Interestingly, she is not allowed to write on political topics, but travel articles are perfectly acceptable, as if female political journalism were still so transgressive as to render a novel unsaleable.

In many ways the *Lady's Pictorial* (1880–1921), which, to quote from Ella Hepworth Dixon's memoirs, 'had an enormous vogue in Suburbia' (1930: 162), and to which incidentally she contributed on a regular basis for many years, embodied the blatant contradictions at the heart of the debates pertaining to women's role in journalism. When asked by a journalist from the *Sketch* to explain the exceptionally long-life of the *Lady's Pictorial* at a time when periodicals flourished and perished rapidly, Alfred Gibbons, its first owner and editor, claimed that the competition was actually good for the magazine: 'it's the competition that keeps us awake and makes us successful' (*Sketch* 1895: 23). In *Woman's* overview of 'Journalism for Women during the Reign' in 1897, sounding rather like the motto of *Woman*, 'Forward, but not too fast', Gibbons described the magazine's '*raison d'être*' as appealing to 'both the lighter and the graver side of woman's life', the 'frivolous' and the earnest zealous section that aims at the intellectual and material progress of women, the amelioration of their condition as a body, and the eventual emancipation of the sex from all disabilities imposed upon them as women, and their due establishment upon an equality with men in all the essential conditions of industrial, professional and social life.

(Anon. 1897: 36–7)

Perhaps this explains the somewhat ambiguous conclusion to *A Social Departure*. During the course of the necessarily extended journey Orthodocia, like Sara Jeanette Duncan, met the man she was to marry and then looks forward to a new, supposedly domestic, life in far-flung Vancouver. When

asked, not surprisingly, if ‘it is entirely safe and wise for young ladies to travel by themselves’, the narrator’s reply is ‘the wisdom of that must always depend upon the young ladies themselves; and as to the danger – you see what befell Orthodocia!’ (Duncan 1890: 417). Orthodocia points out that such a ‘danger’ might have happened anywhere, but is Sara Jeanette Duncan suggesting that marriage itself might be dangerous, or is she merely being ironic? The reader is left to choose. But the corollary would be that such a journey may now be considered no more dangerous than marriage.

A few years later the *Lady’s Pictorial* published articles by an even more notorious North American, Elizabeth Banks (1870–1938). In her autobiography, published in 1902 when she was only thirty-two years old, Elizabeth Banks describes how, having already acquired a certain notoriety in the press world in London and having heard that Alfred Gibbons had spoken kindly of her work, she visited him in his office, rather daring in itself, introduced herself and offered to write for his magazine. ‘Nothing would please me better!’ was apparently his immediate reply. ‘I’ve been going to send for you to come and see me these many weeks.’ He then made her remain in the office for several hours until she came up with a suitable subject for the pages of the magazine.

Up to this point Elizabeth Banks’s fame, as the title of the published collection of her articles suggests, had largely been due to her so-called *Campaigns of Curiosity: Journalistic Adventures of an American Girl in Late Victorian England*. For Alfred Gibbons, perhaps thinking it was the American aspect which appealed, she first proposed to draw on her own experiences back home and write about life in an American girls’ boarding school. This was not



at all to the editor's liking; he obviously wanted another 'campaign of curiosity' in England, and in the end he suggested strawberry picking in Kent, to which she reluctantly agreed. There ensued a series of articles which must have shocked the more conservative arbiters of women's role in the press since she described in every detail the harsh conditions of such employment. Even Alfred Gibbons was somewhat surprised that she had taken her engagement so seriously that she had picked strawberries in the rain and suffered ill-health as a result, accepting such a trial in order to complete her transit into print.

In her autobiography, Elizabeth Banks describes her overriding ambition from the outset to become 'a newspaper girl'. Growing up in Wisconsin, a far-remove from the urban environment of the likes of Ella Hepworth Dixon, she was actually brought up with the idea that education would enable her to 'take care of [her]self when she was older' (Banks 1902: 2). With this certainty, she writes 'it seemed to me I should like best to earn my living by writing for newspapers' (ibid.), and to that end she set about learning shorthand and typing, and consequently offered her services to all the newspapers she had ever heard of – to no avail. Curiously enough, this did lead to her first extraordinary experiences as a public figure. Having obtained a job as a typewriter girl, she spent her days typing letters and keeping the accounts in a grocer's shop where her desk was positioned in the window among 'the tastefully displayed exhibits of sugars, coffees, teas, soaps, and canned goods' (1902: 4) in full view of all the passers-by, a sort of advertisement for the grocer's, until, at her request, he pulled a curtain down and moved her desk to an obscure corner. Naturally, she quickly grew tired of such work and wrote her first long article, not entirely

surprisingly, ‘All About Typewriter Girls’, which she sent to the principal local paper, and to her delight saw in print the following Sunday. However, when she approached the owner of the paper, he was disinclined to offer her a job and only changed his mind when, rather like Dreiser’s Sister Carrie, she threatened to leave for Chicago.

After that, for about two months she acted, predictably perhaps, as ‘a sort of private secretary and confidential typist to the proprietor of the *Daily Hustler*’. At the same time, however, he set her on the course which would ultimately lead to her fame if not her fortune:

I would be bidden [...] to think up things for newspaper stories, to go out and about the town and see what was happening, to look into shop windows and observe all the new fashions, to go among the city’s poor and discover their joys and their sorrows, to ride on the cable cars that traversed the principal streets of the town, and then to return and write on my typewriting machine all about the things I had seen and heard.

(8)

This was naturally excellent training for her future experiences in London. The proprietor then promoted her to the more traditional womanly role of ‘society reporter’ which was much less to her liking. In describing her discontent with the ‘snobs and snobbery’, where most people ‘seemed to regard [her] only as a machine to make notes of their doings’ (14), she draws attention to difficulties facing the woman journalist who, unlike Ella Hepworth Dixon, was not writing about ‘friends of the family’. Such a ‘press girl’, just like the women whose

lowly jobs she worked at in London, such as flower-sellers or road-sweepers, was in a way dehumanized, desexed, and ultimately, rather than being too visible, became quite simply *invisible*. Indeed, in her memoirs Ella Hepworth Dixon even admits that in the ‘gay nineties’ when she ‘spent a winter Season in New York’, she ‘was *prudent enough* to conceal the fact that [she] had ever written for any journal. A “newspaper woman”, over there, had no social standing whatever’ (Dixon 1930: 100, emphasis added).

For a brief interlude Elizabeth Banks then became an ‘American Girl in Peru’, serving in the diplomatic corps as secretary to the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States, but, homesick and unhappy. She quickly returned to North America and her first love, journalism, this time finding a post on a prestigious Southern paper. There, although she expressed a desire to be treated like a man, to be regarded as a journalist first and a woman second, her male colleagues thought otherwise and took particular care to maintain a strict sense of propriety:

When I arrived on the scene an attempt was made to give me a little privacy by boarding off a corner with what might be called a ‘quarter partition’, since it only extended three or four feet in height. [...] One morning I arrived to find that my corner had been further walled in by the addition of a skilfully twisted wire whereon hung, all unhemmed, a rainbow-hued print curtain. This being placed over the partition made a wall fully six feet high.

‘We fellows did it!’ I was informed when I investigated the matter, and it turned out that the real cause of my barricade was that

as the hot Southern summer came on, the question of the propriety of working in shirt-sleeves with a lady in the office had been mooted, and the high print curtain, which would prevent my noting this breach of etiquette was the result.

(Banks 1902: 37).

However, it was her own sense of propriety which got her into trouble and led directly to her departure for London, for, although she desperately needed to earn her living, there were limits to what she would do. For instance, she drew the line at streetwalking in particularly dangerous areas, just as later in London, for different reasons, she would refuse to impersonate a Salvation Army Lassie. Sounding rather like Ella Hepworth Dixon, who in an interview with W.T. Stead described her *Story of a Modern Woman* as a ‘plea for a kind of moral and social trades-unionism among women’ (qtd. in Stead 1894: 71), Elizabeth Banks came into conflict with her boss because she was unwilling to betray another woman’s secrets. Having elsewhere remarked on women’s unkindness to other women, she had promised ‘never to try to get fame or money by writing things that will hurt another woman’ and ‘never to crush any other woman in [...] climbing [...] the ladder to success or happiness’ (1902: 48).

On one level her *Campaigns of Curiosity* in London could be read as liminal journeys of transit that seek an alternative future in defence of women. For instance her experiences in domestic service drew attention to the problems of both mistresses and servants. The *Campaigns* could equally be read more as travel articles, written not about strange far-off lands, but about so-called

civilized England, seen through the eyes of a foreigner. In certain ways, Elizabeth Banks, like male writers such as Conrad and Stevenson, could be seen to be indicating that the 'Heart of Darkness' was right in the centre of the Empire, and that an urban environment, whilst offering certain opportunities, could also present dangers. Interestingly, in recent years her experiments have been repeated both in America and in France, leading to the publication of *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich in 2002 and *Le Quai de Ouistreham* by Florence Aubenas in 2010. Clearly, there is more than gender at issue here: whilst it was the visibility of the bourgeois lady writer woman that was cause for concern, in exposing the public activities of some lower-class women workers, the woman journalist actually became totally *invisible*.

The lady writer and the woman journalist initially often found themselves decidedly unwelcome in the public sphere and in transit between two domestic spheres, one where their prose was produced and the other where it was consumed. However, at the same time as they started leaving the confines of home in order to obtain copy, so their readers were also venturing out into public reading spaces such as libraries. They thus found themselves psychologically and socially in transit, in tension between the ideologically-constructed roles from which they separated and their own desires for a fuller life as a result of their transition and reassimilation. Most of these women retired fairly early from the world of journals and either abandoned writing altogether or turned to fiction. As late as 1925 writing in the *Westminster Gazette* on opportunities for women, Ella Hepworth Dixon maintained, 'One of the last citadels to fall was the newspaper office. Here prejudice reigned

supreme.’ Fortunately, she could conclude, ‘But today the Bastille of Journalism has fallen’, although her choice of metaphors is surely indicative of the hostilities that women had had to overcome both inside and outside the profession, at the entry and exit of the professional tunnel through which they had attempted to negotiate passage.

## Notes

## Works cited

- Anon. [‘A Man Editor’] (1890), ‘Women as Journalists’, *Woman*, 3 July: 3.
- Anon. (1892a), ‘What Women May Do: 1 – Journalism’, *Woman*, 23 March: 3–4.
- Anon. (1892b), ‘What Women May Do: 1 – Journalism, Continued’, *Woman*, 30 March: 3–4.
- Anon. (1894), ‘Employment for the Ladies’, *Sunday Times*, 11 March: 4.
- Anon. (1897), ‘Journalism for Women during the Reign’, *Woman*, 16 June: 33–7.
- Aubenas, Florence (2010), *Le Quai de Ouistreham*, Paris: Editions de l’Olivier.
- Banks, Elizabeth L. (1894), *Campaigns of Curiosity: Journalistic Adventures of an American Girl in Late Victorian London*, London: Cassel and Co.
- Banks, Elizabeth L. (1902), *The Autobiography of a Newspaper Girl*, London: Methuen and Co.

- Bennett, Arnold (1898), *Journalism for Women: A Practical Guide*,  
London: John Lane.
- Collins, Mabel (1890), 'Journalism for Women', *Woman*, February:
- Dixon, Ella Hepworth ([1894] 2004), *The Story of a Modern Woman*,  
Peterborough: Broadview.
- Dixon, Ella Hepworth (1896), 'Pensées de Femme', *Lady's Pictorial*, 4 July:  
33.
- Dixon, Ella Hepworth (1925), 'The Modern Way: A Social Causerie',  
*Westminster Gazette*, 14 January: 6.
- Dixon, Ella Hepworth (1930), *As I Knew Them: Sketches of Those I Have Met  
Along the Way*, London: Hutchinson and Co.
- Dowie, Menie Muriel ([1891] 1892), *A Girl in the Karpathians*, London: Philip  
and Son.
- Dowie, Menie Muriel ([1895] 1995), *Gallia*, London: Dent.
- Dreiser, Theodore ([1900] 1981), *Sister Carrie*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Duncan, Sara Jeanette (Mrs Everard Cotes) (1890), *A Social Departure: How  
Orthodocia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves*, London:  
Chatto.
- Duncan, Sara Jeanette (Mrs Everard Cotes) (1891), *An American Girl in  
London*. New York: D. Appleton and Co.
- Duncan, Sara Jeanette (Mrs Everard Cotes) (1894), *A Daughter of Today*, New  
York: D. Appleton and Co.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara (2002), *Nickel and Dimed: Undercover in Low-Wage USA*,  
London: Granta.

- Gaskell, Elizabeth ([1857] 1977), *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gosse, Edmund (1894), 'How Things Are Done (By the Author of "Written on the Spot" and "Green-Room Recollections")', *Sunday Times*, 11 March 1894.
- ([1895] 1997), 'The Decay of Literary Taste', *The North American Review*, 161: 116, cited by Sally Ledger in *The New Woman*, Manchester, 1997: 177-178.
- Keating, Peter (1989), *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875–1914*, London: Secker and Warburg.
- Low, Frances (1904), *Press Work for Women: A Text Book for the Young Woman Journalist*, London: L. Upcott Gill.
- The Sketch* (30 January 1895): 23
- Stead, W.T. (1892), 'How to Become a Journalist', in *A Journalist on Journalism*, ed. E.H. Stout, London: J.Haddon and Company.
- Stead, W.T. (1894), 'The Novel of the Modern Woman', *Review of Reviews*, X: 64–74.
- Tooley, Sarah A. (1898), 'Women in Journalism. An interview with Mrs Meynell (President of the Society of Women Journalists)', *The Humanitarian*, XII (4): 229–35.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu ([1977] 2008), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wimble, Wilhelmina (1897), 'Incomes for Ladies: Journalism', *Lady's*



*Realm*, August: 467–8.

*Winter's Magazine*, 2 December 1893: 79.

- 
1. See Terry Gifford's chapter below (Chapter 6) for the targeting of women mountaineering writers.
  2. The queen had actually reigned for sixty years, but no better word could be found for this at the time unique event.
  3. Teresa Gómez Reus also records in her chapter (Chapter 7) instances in which women act as gatekeepers for men. See, for example, the episode between Elsie Knocker and Mai Sinclair.
  4. The series began with Mrs Woodhull-Martin of *The Humanitarian* (22 December 1897: 15), and concluded with Mrs Beer of the *Sunday Times* (10 August 1898: 12).
  5. 'Lady Journalists', *Lady's Pictorial* (11 November 1893: 734; 25 November 1893: 823; 9 December 1893: 928–9; 23 December 1893: 1020; 10 February 1894: 176–1).
  6. Deploying a journalistic male pseudonym like the first women writing for the *Alpine Journal*. See Chapter 6 by Terry Gifford.