

Háskóli Íslands
Hugvísindasvið
Bókmenntir, menning og miðlun

Writing for Money

*The Muse and the Market in the English Newspaper Novel
from the Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries*

Ritgerð til MA-prófs í Bókmenntir, menning og miðlun

Mark Asch
Kt.: 120684-5079

Leiðbeinandi: Júlían Meldon D'Arcy
Maí 2014

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract | 2 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| The Nineteenth-Century Newspaper Novel | 8 |
| Anthony Trollope, <i>The Warden</i> (1855) | 8 |
| George Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> (1871-72) | 12 |
| George Gissing, <i>New Grub Street</i> (1891) | 27 |
| The Twentieth-Century Newspaper Novel | 36 |
| Evelyn Waugh, <i>Scoop</i> (1938) | 36 |
| Malcolm Muggeridge, <i>Picture Palace</i> (1934) | 41 |
| Michael Frayn, <i>Towards the End of the Morning</i> (1967) | 46 |
| Philip Norman, <i>Everyone's Gone to the Moon</i> (1995) | 57 |
| The Twenty-First-Century Newspaper Novel | 65 |
| Annalena McAfee, <i>The Spoiler</i> (2011) | 65 |
| Tom Rachman, <i>The Imperfectionists</i> (2010) | 74 |
| Conclusion | 81 |
| Works Cited | 84 |

Abstract

The descriptor "hack," as in hack writer, was slang for a prostitute before becoming common shorthand for a journalist in the early years of commercial printing in England. In linking these two types of dubious work-for-hire, the implication is that writing, the ultimate act of human thought and expression, is, like the physical act of love, too important to be sullied by professionalism.

For the entire history of the print media, the dichotomy between muse and market—between soul and body—has been as theoretically pervasive as it has been functionally absent. This essay traces this dichotomy through a survey of the genre it identifies as "the English newspaper novel." The English newspaper novel considers the possibility of "hacks" producing work of objective aesthetic or public-service value within a subjective literary marketplace, and assesses the viability of writing as not just a profession but a genuine vocation, within the realities of the newspaper industry.

Selections from the nineteenth century—Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* (1855), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72), and George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891)—consider the rise of industrial capitalism, and the commensurately widening newspaper marketplace, and fret over the subsumption of culture into the sphere of economic and exchange, as well as of the potential mechanization of personal initiative.

As the genre progresses, greater professional specialization among newspaper workers leads to greater emphasis—often darkly comic—on the workplace as a fictional milieu, and the job as a subject of personal identification, in the twentieth-century newspaper novels *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh, *Picture Palace* by Malcolm Muggeridge, *Towards the End of the Morning* by Michael Frayn and *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* by Philip Norman.

In more recent times, as new forms of media chip away at the prominence of the newspaper industry, the cutthroat competition and obsolescence depicted in Annalena McAfee's *The Spoiler* and Tom Rachman's *The Imperfectionists* suggests the ultimate futility of personal identification with professional writing. Ironically, however, it is in the current moment that the newspaper novel draws its most positive conclusions about the objective value of newspaper work.

Literature has become a profession. It is a means of subsistence, almost as certain as the bar or the church. The number of aspirants increases daily, and daily the circle of readers grows wider.

-George Henry Lewes (299)

Hacks: An Introduction

The term "hack," as in hack writer, originally meant "hackney," a hired horse, before it became common shorthand for a hired woman, then for a hired writer in the early years of commercial printing in England (Clarke, 5). The obvious implication is of moral censure. In linking these two types of dubious work-for-hire, the implication is that writing, the ultimate act of human thought and expression, is, like the physical act of love, too important to be sullied by professionalism.

For the entire history of the print media, the dichotomy between muse and market—between soul and body—has been as theoretically pervasive as it has been functionally absent. In this essay, I will trace the relationship between this idealized dichotomy and the more muddled, pragmatic reality, through a survey of the genre I will call the English "newspaper novel."

By this I mean literary novels (specifically excluding thrillers) by English authors, which depict characters making their living from the periodical press. In my selections from the nineteenth century—Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* (1855), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72), and George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891)—the newspaper is more likely to be seen only from an exterior perspective, and to feature in its employ characters who are socially marginal relative to the overall scope of the novel; nor is journalism, in these novels, synonymous with the contemporary practice of reportage. These novels consider the rise of industrial capitalism, and the commensurately widening literary marketplace, and fret over the subsumption of culture into the sphere of economic and exchange, as well as of the potential mechanization of personal initiative.

As the genre progresses, we will see greater professional specialization among newspaper workers, and greater emphasis—often comical—on the workplace as a fictional milieu, and the job as a subject of personal identification. In the twentieth-century newspaper novels *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh, *Picture Palace* by Malcolm

Muggeridge, *Towards the End of the Morning* by Michael Frayn and *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* by Philip Norman, a thriving press is the milieu within which an entire class of hacks contemplates their literary work, drawing invariably cynical conclusions about the relationship between personal merit and professional practice.

In more recent times, as new forms of media chip away at the prominence of the newspaper industry, the cutthroat competition and transitory newswriting fads depicted in Annalena McAfee's *The Spoiler*, and the hard luck and obsolescence of the protagonists of Tom Rachman's *The Imperfectionists*, suggests the ultimate futility of personal identification with professional writing. Ironically, however, it is in the current moment that the newspaper novel draws its most positive conclusions. As the market for newspapers dries up, newspaper writing becomes not opportunistic hackwork, but literature worth preserving.

The major themes addressed in the newspaper novel throughout the rise of industrial and then post-industrial society were in place already in the pre-history of the newspaper, which, given the lack of compartmentalization in the first centuries of printed media, doubles as the prehistory of the newspaper novel and its reflections on literary production. In short, the question at hand has to do with the possibility of "hacks" producing work of objective and lasting value. By "objective," I mean, not dependent upon the judgment of a fickle, amoral marketplace for validation of its merit and utility.

Here is John Stuart Mill:

In France the best thinkers and writers of the nation write in the journals and direct public opinion; but our daily and weekly writers are the lowest hacks of literature which, when it is a trade, is the vilest and most degrading of all trades because more of affectation and hypocrisy and more subservience to the baser feelings of others are necessary for carrying it on, than for any other trade, from a brothel-keeper up [...] (qtd. in Elliott, 177)

This criticism was, however, already anticipated by the hacks themselves—as per usual. Ned Ward, the pamphleteer of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, had long since described the writer's life similarly, but much more flippantly, as

very much like that of a Strumpet [...] and if the reason be requir'd, why we betake our selves to be so Scandalous a Profession as Whoring or Pamphleteering, the same excusive answer will serve us both, viz. that the unhappy circumstances of a Narrow Fortune, hath forced us to do that for our Subsistence. (qtd. in Clarke, 5)

This is characteristic of the self-effacement—to put it mildly—which has always defined the reflections of those who write for money. As the status of the newspaperman has evolved, it has been informed equally by a veneration of the freedom of expression, and a deep moral suspicion of expression under the influence of professional expediency. The coexistence of idealized merit and market reality can be seen as early as the English Civil War and Interregnum, when the breakdown of print licensing laws, and the hunger for news of tumultuous times, led to both brave scrambles to break the news of the latest battle, and rank personal and political opportunism. Milton's eternal defense of free speech—"Let [Truth] and Falsehood grapple"—was published alongside "semi-pornographic newsbooks [containing] a mixture of genuine news and dirty jokes described as news" (Clarke, 17-26). Subsequent to the Restoration of both the monarchy and strict censorship laws, journalists were frequently on the payroll of various government agencies and factions (Clarke, 58), both for financial gain and as a safeguard against draconian punishments for sedition (Clarke, 54). Daniel Defoe received Treasury payoffs for his writing for both Whig and Tory papers, and was labeled, perhaps inevitably, "a mean and mercenary prostitute" (Clarke, 48).

For Marx, writing during a period in which literary production, like other human labor, was in the process of being harnessed by industry, "prostitution [was] only a *specific* expression of the *general* prostitution of the *laborer*" (Marx 1844). More generally, in Marx's conception of capitalism, there is always, necessarily, a gulf between "use value" and "exchange value." Entering into the labor marketplace means submitting to "socially-recognized standards of measure for the quantities of [...] useful objects" (Marx 1867). There is on the one hand the qualitative, objective value of every product of labor. On the other hand is its exchange value, by which measurement the products of labor are not qualitative but quantitative, "and consequently do not contain an atom of use value" (Ibid). Exchange value is "abstraction" of the usefulness of a product of labor, as well as of the labor which

went into making it, but exchange value is also "the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed" (Ibid). This abstraction of objective values into socially subjective commodities, has dire and profound implications for all work, but in particular for work thought to require expenditures of effort from a place beyond the mere body.

Igor Kopytoff, addressing commodity exchange from an anthropologist's perspective, has commented "non-saleability imparts to a thing a special aura of apartness from the mundane and the common" (69). Despite the spread of a capitalist cultural logic, which insists upon incorporating ever more diverse items into a common, coherent exchange system, there remains a desire to make things "sacred" and exempt from quantitative exchange, particularly things identified with the common social good, such as public lands (Ibid, 72-73). In particular, there are two categories which various groups shield most jealously from commoditization. The first is art, to which it is considered vulgar to affix a price tag (Ibid, 82-83). The second is people themselves, animated by "the notion that human labor should not be a mere commodity," exemplified in general by terms of opprobrium such as "wage slavery," and in particular by the continued illegality of prostitution—even as we acknowledge the purity of its transactional logic (Ibid, 84-85). Everything has its price—or his price, or her price.

This belief in—or, rather, this self-consciously illogical *hope of*—some kind of objective merit outside of the marketplace, is a central conundrum of the fictional genre which, continuing a tradition dating back to Ned Ward, saw professional literary men reflecting most unsentimentally upon the lives of those who write for money.

The newspaper novel considers the possibility of an objective aesthetic or public-service use-value existing within the realities of a subjective market. This is accomplished particularly through the self-reflexive depiction of characters, newspapermen and -women, who work within the newspaper industry, and personally identify with their literary production, as either a profession or a vocation—or both. As vocation negotiates a position for itself within the mass production of mass media, this personal identification becomes increasingly the subject of black comedy, as the genre's running media commentary and social history progresses up to the present moment. But this boom-to-bust trajectory ultimately brings us to an ironic reversal. Over the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century, the newspaper as a product of

industrial capitalism is in turn a threat, a cynical reality, and a subject for nostalgia. Over the novels surveyed in this essay, literary hack work undergoes a parallel transformation, from prostitution to art.

Literary Machines: The Nineteenth Century

The newspaper novel, like the mature newspaper, emerged out of the social flux of mass industrialization and mass enfranchisement, alongside thematic and social concerns that we will see resonate throughout the development of the genre of print-media self-portraits. In particular, a diversifying readership, and a shaken social hierarchies, introduced not only new opportunities for expression, but also uncertainties, into the life of the working journalist, while the prospect of mechanization loomed as a threat.

The Warden: Anthony Trollope and the Times

The emergence of the *Times* as Britain's paper of record, in the first half of the nineteenth century, coincided with the era's political reforms and emergence of a middle class; the newspaper's mission, in its own words, was to serve as an organ for the interests of the social class shut out of an unrepresentative Parliament (Clarke, 230-31). The *Times* was generally skeptical of radicalism but sympathetic to the growing hue and cry for political reform; this viewpoint, as well the paper's supremacy in circulation (28,000, twice that of any other daily, in 1841), was down to a scrupulous attentiveness to public opinion, insisted upon by editor Thomas Barnes (Clarke, 226-28). Thus there is some sting to Hazlitt's description of the paper as:

the greatest engine of temporary opinion in the world. It is the witness of the British metropolis; the mouthpiece, oracle and echo of the Stock Exchange, the organ of the mercantile interest. It takes up no falling causes; fights no uphill battles; advocates no great principle. It is ever strong upon the stronger side. (qtd. in Clarke, 228)

If this criticism has any truth, then it strikes to the heart of the journalistic enterprise. The *Times* described itself as an objective social value. As Robert Lowe wrote in the *Times* of 6 February 1852, the newspaper's mission was to seek truth in the public trust and the public service, to fulfill the "duty to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time, and instantly, by disclosing them,

to make them the common property of the nation" (qtd. in Elliott 182-83; Clarke 231-32).

There is, however, some difficulty in reconciling this lofty mission with the reality of its execution, which was characterized by the political ambition of a particular interest group. The *Times* of this period was edited by John Delane, who along with his star writers enjoyed friendship with, and access to, many members of government. The newspaper's self-described "monopoly" over domestic opinion in the mid-nineteenth century made it its own interest group; Lowe would later serve in Cabinet (Clarke, 229-30). Hence the heavy ironic tone taken by Trollope in *The Warden* (1855), when Tom Towers, of the *Jupiter*, expounds high-mindedly on the integrity of the press. He has just been asked to call off a social-justice crusade upon which the *Jupiter* has embarked:

"You think that I am able to keep certain remarks out of a newspaper. Your information is probably incorrect, as most public gossip on such subjects is; but, at any rate, you think I have such power, and you ask me to use it: now that is interference.

[...]

"And now suppose for a moment that I had this power, and used it as you wish: isn't it clear that it would be a great abuse? Certain men are employed in writing for the public press; and if they are induced either to write or to abstain from writing by private motives, surely the public press would soon be of little value."

[...]

The discretion of Tom Towers was boundless: there was no contradicting what he said, no arguing against such propositions. He took such high ground that there was no getting on to it. "The public is defrauded," said he, "whenever private considerations are allowed to have weight." Quite true, thou greatest oracle of the middle of the nineteenth century, thou sententious proclaimer of the purity of the press;—the public is defrauded when it is purposely misled. Poor public! how often is it misled! against what a world of fraud has it to contend! (223-24)

The Warden gives us an ideal view of the newspaper's, and journalist's, position in English society during the decades of reform. The novel, the first of Trollope's *Chronicles of Barsetshire*, concerns a low-ranking clergyman, Septimus Harding, who holds the position of warden of a charity hospital endowed centuries prior to provide for the basic sustenance of twelve aged local laborers in their decline, to be subsidized by a land bequest which has, thanks to its increase in value, left the Warden with quite a handsome living (1-10). Trollope was evidently inspired by recent scandals regarding the misappropriation of charitable funds by the Church of England (vi), to which he makes reference (11 and elsewhere). The reform of "Hiram's Hospital" is taken up by a local "Jacobin," John Bold, inconveniently in love with Harding's daughter (18-19), and word of reform causes much agitation among the hospital's residents, many sick or illiterate, who are split between those hungry for their "hundred a year," those offended by the agitators' ingratitude, and those who "couldn't think [but] made a noise like the bleating of an old sheep, which was intended to express the agony of his doubt" (48-60). Opposed to any sort of reform of the hospital trust, and indeed insulted by the scrutiny brought upon it, is the archdeacon, Dr. Grantly, son and effective proxy for the doddering bishop (41-42) and son-in-law of the Warden, in whom the entire institution of the Church seems to be personified: "he looked like an ecclesiastical statue placed there, as a fitting impersonation of the church militant here on earth" (71).

When the *Jupiter*, a London daily with a circulation of 40,000, and an estimated readership five times greater than even that, takes up the cause of the hospital's reform, it is a moment of excitement for the reformers—"to be engaged in the same cause and on the same side with the *Jupiter*; to have the views he had recommended seconded, and furthered, and battled for by the *Jupiter*!" (103) The residents of the hospital have "a glimmering, indistinct idea of the marvellous advocate which had now taken up their cause," embellishing the righteousness of their position, and the malfeasance of their opponents, with greater degrees of sensationalism, secure in the sense "that what the *Jupiter* said was acknowledged by the world to be true" (103-4). To Dr. Harding, his censure in the newspaper is the occasion for an acute pang of guilt (101), while Dr. Grantly insists that the attack must be ignored, as the Church neither ought to stoop, nor can hope to answer, the equivalent to "what the Czar is in Russia, or the mob in America" (102).

This last perspective on the newspaper, as an irritant and an insult to persons of consequence, is most in keeping with its position in English novels prior to the reform era. In Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, for instance, a typically scurrilous account of his father's death and uncle's disgrace precipitates the hero's dangerous flight to London (284; 287-88). The perspectives of these other, additional social classes, however, are new to the era. Nor are the claims of the establishment any more unchallenged. Trollope observes how the foundations of the Church have been shaken by attention, in the political arena and in the press, to the misappropriation of Church funds. Dr. Grantly, it is said, "has written letters in the public press on the subject [of the real-life cases of Rochester and St. Cross] which, his admirers think, must well nigh set the question at rest [...] [it is] stoutly maintained, and no doubt felt, by all the archdeacon's friends, that his logic is conclusive, and has not, in fact, been answered" (12). Here as elsewhere, Trollope's tone casts considerable doubt on his characters' certainties.

But as much as the newspaper is seen, in *The Warden*, to contribute to a new era of skepticism, the link between skepticism and absolute social justice is depicted as less clear-cut than Tom Towers and his ilk would believe. *The Warden* is a satire, and as such punctures the pretensions of journalists as much as of the powerful. The power of the press is, as we have already seen, partly cause for skepticism. The *Jupiter*, in keeping with its name, is said to originate from "Mount Olympus,—that high abode of all the powers of type," from whence Tom Towers, despite his protestations, is said to throw "thunderbolts for the destruction of all that is evil, and for the furtherance of all that is good" (195). In early 1831, the *Times* urged its readers to "thunder for reform," the basis of the nickname "The Thunderer" (Clarke, 227), which Trollope invokes (196). With typical sarcasm, Trollope describes the emergent power of the press: "It is a fact amazing to ordinary mortals that the *Jupiter* is never wrong. [...] Parliament is always wrong: look at the *Jupiter*, and see how futile are their meetings, how vain their council, how needless all their trouble! (197)

He also makes it clear that Towers's power, like Delane's and Lowe's, is very much his own: "It is probable that Tom Towers considered himself the most powerful man in Europe; and so he walked on from day to day, studiously striving to look a man, but knowing within his breast that he was a god" (208). Clearly Bold, disillusioned with Towers's self-serving reforming energies, is very on-target as he muses: "What is any newspaper article but an expression of the views taken by one

side? Truth! it takes an age to ascertain the truth of any question! The idea of Tom Towers talking of public motives and purity of purpose! Why, it wouldn't give him a moment's uneasiness to change his politics to-morrow, if the paper required it" (224).

The *Times* in particular, and the newspaper in general, are seen in *The Warden* to occupy an important yet worrisome position in English society. On the one hand, its challenge to the unquestioned authority of the ruling classes opens up new possibilities in society; on the other hand, in opening up these questions, the newspaper may be assuming the very authority it questions. Tom Towers and Dr. Grantly are *competitors*. And meanwhile the upper class felt towards the *Times* very much like Dr. Grantly felt toward the *Jupiter*. The year prior to *The Warden*'s publication, the *Times*'s coverage of the incompetent management of the Crimean War, including William Russell's account of the Charge of the Light Brigade, instigated an inquiry in Parliament and a change in government—but not before Prince Albert's complaint that "the pen and ink of one miserable scribbler is despoiling the country" (Clarke, 232-33).

This competition, however, is essentially stable and zero-sum, a contest, as Trollope's choice of classical name implies, over the same Olympian throne. But the *Times* was criticized from below as well. During the reforms of the first decades of the nineteenth century, working-class radicals resented the paper, which was thought to be more an organ of its own middle-class interests than an agitator for reform for reform's sake (Clarke, 227 and 231-32). This type of press criticism would only intensify as more radical newspapers, with a more working-class outlook, began to challenge the *Times*. As we continue to look at the nineteenth-century newspaper novel and its attendant social context, we will see how it is vested authority that feels most keenly the dissolution of old objective certainties into new, subjective factions—but only at first.

George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: Culture and Anarchy

Kopytoff observes that the designation of certain objects as sacred, which is motivated by judgments regarding some unquantifiable public good, is wrapped up with cultural and social power:

The values underlying such transactions [ie "sacred" transactions such as bequests to universities] are, on the whole, societywide, or at least held by the groups who

wield cultural hegemony in our society and define much of what we are apt to call our public culture. 'Everyone' is against commoditizing what has been publicly marked as singular and made sacred [...] (77)

As his scare-quotes indicate, cultural value is hardly a true consensus, let alone an objective designation. This becomes especially true in matters of aesthetics, where deep divisions over taste are more likely to be resolved in favor of the powerful (81-82), due in part, no doubt, to the historical consolidation of public goods as part of the patrimony of a ruling class (73).

So, while the sale of literature, like the sale of love, remained a special case for censure in the nineteenth century, this was a concern especially of the established classes. The challenge which newspapers posed was to a unified and coherent system of social value—the kind embodied by the statue-like Dr. Grantly, and proselytized for by Matthew Arnold.

In 1855, the year of *The Warden's* publication and the year after the Charge of the Light Brigade, Parliament repealed stamp duties, which had previously suppressed the circulation of inexpensive newspapers for a lower-class audience; a desire to undercut the *Times* apparently overrode concern over the radical press. (One strategy by which a *Times* executive had protected the paper's market supremacy was to confide in the government his low "opinion of the sagacity of the uneducated people.") (Clarke, 238-39) New markets were largely filled by Sunday and illustrated papers whose sensational tone (Clarke, 240-50) also inflected the more politically engaged "new journalism." A notable case is W.T. Stead, whose crusading tenure as editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* was marked by exclamatory reports on the conditions of the working poor, demonstrations, the death penalty, and underage prostitution, in the infamous "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" series of July 1885 (Clarke, 258-62). Inspired by Stead, Matthew Arnold wrote, in 1887:

We have had opportunities of observing a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented. It has much to recommend it; it is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one great fault is that it is feather-brained. It throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them true; does not correct either them or itself, if they are false; and to get at the state of things as they truly are seems to feel no concern whatever. Well, the democracy,

with abundance of life, movement, sympathy, good instincts, is disposed to be, like this journalism, feather-brained. (Quoted in Campbell, 20)

This echoes the earlier thread of media criticism running through the larger social criticism of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (serialized 1867-68, published 1869). The newspaper, for Arnold, is symptomatic of a society without any regard for "things as they truly are."

Culture and Anarchy is a work against anarchy and for culture, which Arnold defines as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know [...] the best which has been thought and said in the world" (5). Arnold uses the word "perfection" throughout *Culture and Anarchy*, and means it; culture is "disinterested," as he also says several times (26 and elsewhere). Culture is above an all *objective* standard, which he uses to navigate the various political controversies of the age.

In particular, Arnold is reflecting on two eras of reform: the 1830s, and the 1860s, decades which mark the expansion of the franchise to the middle class and the working classes (50). Or, as he describes them, "philistines," and "populace," respectively, rivals to "barbarians" of the aristocracy (81-87 and elsewhere). Culture, for Arnold, stands in opposition to the favored "machinery" of each class—that is, to contingency, convenience, and unquestioningly received notions. "Machinery" is a very suggestive word choice for the middle of the nineteenth century, and indeed in Chapter VI, "Our Liberal Practitioners," Arnold does associate the term with what he sees as the false promise of free trade, mass industrialization, and other "operations" of progressive social sciences (155-66). But "machinery" is more frequently used as a general term of disapproval. The expansion of the franchise, for example, is mere "machinery," a flawed faith that "having a vote [...] has in itself some edifying and perfecting effect upon human nature," a notion patently disproved by the lack of "excellence" in the middle class since its own enfranchisement (51-52).

More important than having rights, says Arnold, is *being* right. Arnold finds it self-evident that the Anglican Establishment is the most valuable, public and collective source of authority possible (140-45), as opposed to the "machinery" of various religious reforms. Another type of machinery is the reflexive belief in "an Englishman's right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes" (62). It is evident by his choice of targets, and his emphasis on the demonstrations and

riots of the 1860s, that Arnold is most aghast at the newest reform movement, and attributes to it much of the "anarchy and social disintegration" which compromises "that profound sense of settled order and security" by which a society can meaningfully measure itself (66). Power is not the prize in a class war, as in *The Warden*, but the upholder of an enduring standard. This is no so far away from the establishment prerogative Trollope satirized with Dr. Grantly.

But in fact all three classes, for Arnold, are limited by their own self-interest and fixed notions; all are prone to doing "what one's ordinary self likes," which "differs according to the class to which one belongs, [but remains] machinery, and nothing more" (89). In opposition to one's "ordinary self" is the belief in culture, in the perfect ideal—but one difficult to discern, in the "absence of any powerful authority amongst us" (91). Rather, each class has its own literature, its own religion, and its own politics (91-95). Arnold describes society fragmenting into a low subjectivity; of our particular interest to us is his view of the proliferating newspaper industry, which he saw as characteristic of an era of pandering and relativism.

Though Arnold takes swipes at what he sees as the self-evident vulgarity of the daily newspaper press ("the voice which most hits our collective thought, the newspaper with the largest circulation in England, nay, with the largest circulation in the whole world, is the *Daily Telegraph!*", 47), he is most concerned with the prospect of a society too diffuse to recognize that some literature is objectively better:

[E]ach section of the public has its own literary organ, and the mass of the public is without any suspicion that the value of these organs is relative to their being nearer a certain ideal centre of correct information, taste, and intelligence, or farther away from it. I have said that within certain limits, which any one who is likely to read this will have no difficulty in drawing for himself, my old adversary, the *Saturday Review*, may, on matters of literature and taste, be fairly enough regarded, relatively to a great number of newspapers which treat these matters, as a kind of organ of reason. But I remember once conversing with a company of Nonconformist admirers of some lecturer who had let off a great fire-work, which the *Saturday Review* said was all noise and false lights, and feeling my way as tenderly as I could about the effect of this unfavourable judgment upon those with whom I was conversing. "Oh," said one who was their spokesman, with the most tranquil air of conviction, "it is true the *Saturday Review* abuses the lecture, but the

British Banner" (I am not quite sure it was the *British Banner*, but it was some newspaper of that stamp) "says that the *Saturday Review* is quite wrong." The speaker had evidently no notion that there was a scale of value for judgments on these topics, and that the judgments of the *Saturday Review* ranked high on this scale, and those of the *British Banner* low; the taste of the bathos implanted by nature in the literary judgments of man had never, in my friend's case, encountered any let or hindrance. (91-92)

Just as freedom of action is less important than correctness of action, "freedom of speech is necessary for the society of the future, but the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph* in the meanwhile are sacrificed" (49). The anarchy of violent action is associated with the anarchy of absurd thought, and Arnold's ultimate example of free expression devoid of "right reason" is quite suggestive:

A testator bequeathed 300£ a year, to be for ever applied as a pension to some person who had been unsuccessful in literature, and whose duty should be to support and diffuse, by his writings, the testator's own views, as enforced in the testator's publications. This bequest was appealed against in the Court of Chancery, on the ground of its absurdity; but, being only absurd, it was upheld, and the so-called charity was established. Having, I say, at the bottom of our English hearts a very strong belief in freedom, and a very weak belief in right reason, we are soon silenced when a man pleads the prime right to do as he likes, because this is the prime right for ourselves too [...] (63-64)

What sort of society, Arnold wishes us to ponder, permits men to write for money, irrespective of the value of their writing?

The answer to Arnold's question, of course, is a society without a clear and correct ideal of truth. And this is the sort of society in which *Middlemarch* (1871-72) is set. *Middlemarch* is, like *Culture and Anarchy*, a work written directly after the Reform Act of 1867, and concerned with the Reform Act of 1832. The "machinery" of middle-class liberalism is certainly present in *Middlemarch*, particularly in the character of Mr. Brooke, whose candidacy for Parliament seems to derive from what Arnold would call a dependence on the "one thing needful" of political reform, more

than from any profound understanding.

The parallel with Arnold that especially interests us here, however, is that *Middlemarch* is a novel about "vocation," to borrow the word Eliot uses in the passage describing Lydgate's discovery of medical science (135). From the opening pages framing the novel via the life of Saint Theresa, and lamenting the lives of women whose "loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognizable deed" (4), Eliot's great concern is with characters who, in a world of shifting social status, opportunity and peril, attempt to follow the imperative of one of Arnold's favored quotations (107 and elsewhere), that is, to go by the best light they have, and to take care that their light not be darkness.

It is the first half of this imperative which, for instance, inspires Dorothea Brooke to pledge her life to the aid of Casaubon and his *Key to All Mythologies*. Poor Dorothea, on her Roman honeymoon, is overwhelmed by the scope of "the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl" (181) from the provinces, with only a provincial education to guide her through the classics. When the artist Naumann asks Casaubon to sit as his model for a painting of Thomas Aquinas, Dorothea is nearly ecstatic with relief at this affirmation of the rightness of her choice (201), though this is only a cruel joke. (Arnold would get the joke. In the chapter "Hebraism and Hellenism," he invoked the great virtue of the classical world, and its attentiveness to "the whole play of the universal order," as a contrast to religion's pious and inflexible search for "reason and the will of God" [109].) A fundamental uncertainty over the rightness of action is a major source of pathos in the novel. Moreover, *Middlemarch*'s reform-era backdrop gives this uncertainty a sociopolitical tint, notably in two plotlines about money and professional ideals in an open economy.

Fred Vincy, who would be happy enough as a lazy gentleman of leisure, is motivated by love of Mary Garth, and his father's financial worries during a time of political uncertainty, to find a profession. He is taken on as an assistant by Caleb Garth—a bad match, according to the more genteel Vincys, though Garth's own field, engineering, will become more lucrative with the coming of the railroad, a coming industrial shift with which he is identified (522). Fred's first task, which sets the tone for his change in character, from idleness to industriousness, is to copy out some writing in longhand; his penmanship, we are told, is "gentlemanly"—that is,

illegible—and so he is instructed to “Go at it with a will, and sit up at night if the day-time isn't enough” (533-34). Fred’s commitment is noted six months later, when we are told that “by dint of severe practice had nearly mastered the defects of his handwriting” (630). Here, writing, to the specifications of an employer, is an act emblematic of the creation of a new career, new character, and new hope and opportunity.

In contrast to Fred’s triumph is the tragedy of Lydgate. Upon his arrival in Middlemarch, he struggles to establish his practice, due to his unwillingness to compromise his innovative medical ideas by pandering to the local preference for prescriptions; later, when he marries Rosamond Vincy, the necessity of keeping up appearances distracts him from his research. Unlike his brother-in-law Fred, who achieves his vocation through the flux of the market and the contingencies of demand, Lydgate is hindered by a society that does not recognize the superiority of his thoughts. And finally, he prostitutes himself, as it were, by tailoring his objectively valuable talents to the demands of the marketplace.

When Raffles lies ill in Stone Court, and Bulstrode contemplates the undesirable prospect of his recovery, he thinks of his recent refusal of a loan to Lydgate, and regrets not having instilled in the physician “a strong sense of personal obligation” (662). Later, when Bulstrode reverses his decision, Lydgate is disturbed to find himself “overjoyed at being under a strong personal obligation” to his benefactor (665), from whom he had always insisted on autonomy, despite the whispers of the town.

After Raffles dies—because of Bulstrode’s deliberate misconstrual of Lydgate’s instructions—there is the first of many intimations of a “bribe” (675). But Lydgate, who is in a position to dismiss these allegations as the mere appearance of impropriety, does not do so—and not out of pride, but out of shame:

[There] came the question whether he should have acted in precisely the same way if he had not taken the money? Certainly, if Raffles had continued alive and susceptible of further treatment when he arrived, and he had then imagined any disobedience to his orders on the part of Bulstrode, he would have made a strict inquiry, and if his conjecture had been verified he would have thrown up the case, in spite of his recent heavy obligation. But if he had not received any money—if Bulstrode had never revoked his cold recommendation of bankruptcy—would he,

Lydgate, have abstained from all inquiry even on finding the man dead?—would the shrinking from an insult to Bulstrode—would the dubiousness of all medical treatment and the argument that his own treatment would pass for the wrong with most members of his profession—have had just the same force or significance with him? (696)

Here, Lydgate is troubled not merely by the suggestion that he has sold his vocation, but by a lack of certainty in his own beliefs. His "independence" of thought, which had led him to pursue unpopular measures in the fulfillment of an objective public good, has been replaced by a fuzzy relativism in matters of treatment:

[...] If he had been independent, this matter of a patient's treatment and the distinct rule that he must do or see done that which he believed best for the life committed to him, would have been the point on which he would have been the sturdiest. As it was, he had rested in the consideration that disobedience to his orders, however it might have arisen, could not be considered a crime, that in the dominant opinion obedience to his orders was just as likely to be fatal [...] Alas! The scientific conscience had got into the debasing company of money obligation and selfish respects. (696)

Thus it is that, in departing Middlemarch, declaring his intention to "do as other men do, and think what will please the world and bring in money," he succumbs to the "pale shade of bribery which is sometimes called prosperity" (723). In the early passage depicting Lydgate's discovery of his "vocation," Eliot describes his desire to "to shape [his] own deeds and alter the world a little," not to join "the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them much in the same way as the tie of their cravats" (135).

Lydgate has a sort of kindred spirit in Casaubon's disreputable cousin, Will Ladislaw. Even without a newspaper subplot, *Middlemarch's* dialectic between vocation and contingency would be a strong thematic base for this essay; but the theme is all the more fascinating for being articulated through Will Ladislaw's adventures in journalism. Ladislaw breaks with a family income, chafing under a sense of obligation to his relative Casaubon (210). Brooke soon offers him the

editorship of the *Pioneer*: "the political horizon was expanding" (274), its expansion offering new ways of making a living, if not, initially at least, a vocation.

Meeting Lydgate late in the novel, Will recognizes in him a kindred spirit in disappointment: "We are on a perilous margin when we begin to look passively at our future selves, and see our own figures led with dull consent into insipid misdoing and shabby achievement. Poor Lydgate was inwardly groaning on that margin, and Will was arriving at it" (736). There is, however, a sore point of pride between the two of them, which out of tact Ladislav avoids mentioning: his refusal of a fortune offered to him by Bulstrode, in penance for his mistreatment of Ladislav's parents. Earlier, Ladislav and Lydgate had offended each other by suggesting that patronage creates compromising obligations, with Lydgate defending his alliance with Bulstrode at the hospital and Ladislav his alliance with Brooke at the *Middlemarch Pioneer* (438-39). That time, it was Lydgate who took the loftier position. There is something very Arnoldian in Lydgate's distaste for electoral politics, and insistence on correctness over contingency: while Ladislav defends the babbling Brooke as "good enough for the occasion" of reform, Lydgate insists that a "particular measure" (what Arnold would call an "operation") must not be confused with a "universal cure," and that Ladislav is "encouraging the superstitious exaggeration of hopes about this particular measure, helping the cry to swallow it whole and to send up voting popinjays who are good for nothing but to carry it" (437). Will Ladislav's profession leaves him vulnerable to precisely such criticism: as a newspaperman in the 1830s, he is writing for money, at a time of either "social disintegration" or, possibly, re-formation.

The status of journalism as a profession is suggested early on in Eliot's use of "a fine quotation from the Bible [...] in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper" (7) as a simile for incongruity, truth and aesthetic merit evidently making their way into the newspaper only by accident. This is certainly the perspective voiced most often by the novel's more prosperous characters—especially once Ladislav, with his slightly foreign origins and slightly radical politics, takes on the job at the *Pioneer*. To the Middlemarch gentry, he appears suspect, a "quill-driving alien" (356), in the words of Sir James Chettam, nicely conflating Ladislav's disrepute with his profession, as Mr. Cadwallader also does in the case of Keck of the rival *Trumpet* newspaper:

"His writing is sound enough, I believe, but he's such a low fellow, that I wished he had been on the wrong side."

"What can you expect with these peddling Middlemarch papers?" said the Rector. "I don't suppose you could get a high style of man anywhere to be writing up interests he doesn't really care about, and for pay that hardly keeps him in at elbows." (357)

The *Trumpet* is the organ of their own party, but that does not in their eyes elevate Keck from his disreputable profession; indeed the very fact that he expresses opinions for money (and not much money, at that) is proof against their integrity. And yet of course all the members of this class *read* the *Trumpet*, and indeed use its attacks to influence Brooke in his handling of his land (359-62).

Will's profession as a "quill-driving alien" is especially nettling to the Middlemarch gentry because of his connection to vested authority, that is to say, his family ties (357). This is an echo of Casaubon's own complaint, in a letter to Will: "there are certain social fitnesses and proprieties which should hinder a somewhat near relative of mine from becoming any wise conspicuous in this vicinity in a status not only much beneath my own, but associated at best with the sciolism of literary or political adventurers" (348). Writing is a high-status vocation—the reception of Casaubon's own monographs are the basis of his self-esteem (347 and elsewhere)—but a low-status profession; furthermore the distinction has to do with the shallow and profit-motivated writing produced. Will himself readily assents to Dorothea's characterization of newspaper work as "a sacrifice of higher purposes," in "settling to [it]" presumably out of professional exigency rather than the lofty aesthetic goals which had marked his earlier artistic attempts (345). But in his reply to Casaubon, he alludes to the necessity of making a living, and defends his new occupation as "not enriching certainly, but not dishonourable" (353).

Will and Casaubon's dispute is in Arnold's terms. Will's aspirations are for the *Pioneer* to be not merely a profitable panderer, but to make it "useful and honourable" (367), despite being a part of the relativism and anarchy of the period. Brooke buys the *Pioneer* at a time when opinions are in flux. The King is dead, and Eliot's narrator ponders, "how could men see which were their own thoughts in the confusion" of party and media allegiances (336). Each section of the public has their own political organ, to paraphrase Arnold: at one point, Will laments, "I never see Mrs. Casaubon, and am not likely to see her, since she is at Freshitt. I never go there. It is Tory ground, where I and the *Pioneer* are [not] welcome" (467).

During the period of Parliamentary debate around the Reform Act, marked by "a new definition of parties," Will, given a free editorial hand, is able to steer Brooke and the *Pioneer* towards the side of reform; impressed with Will's acuity, Brooke laments that there is not a pocket-borough for him—tellingly, recognition of objective merit is seen as a product of authoritative hierarchies, rather than democracy (431-32). This time of comparative anarchy marks Will's discovery of his political commitment—his vocation, which he had once assumed to be tied up only in the highest standards of aesthetic beauty:

Will felt that his literary refinements were usually beyond the limits of Middlemarch perception; nevertheless, he was beginning thoroughly to like the work of which when he began he had said to himself rather languidly, "Why not?"—and he studied the political situation with as ardent an interest as he had ever given to poetic metres or mediaevalism. Our sense of duty must often wait for some work which shall take the place of dilettanteism and make us feel that the quality of our action is not a matter of indifference.

Ladislaw had now accepted his bit of work, though it was not that indeterminate loftiest thing which he had once dreamed of as alone worthy of continuous effort. (435)

Will associates his work with a higher good, even though his choice of the timely over the timeless, and the particular over the universal, is a break with Arnold's conception of culture. And he never quite rids himself of a cynicism about his calling. Though he sees his writing as part of the tide of reform, he acknowledges the subjectivity of his work ("Do you suppose the public reads with a view to its own conversion?", 436), and claims, anyway, to be innocent of the "dirty business" of electioneering. And then there is the essential compromise, his employment by Brooke. After Brooke's truncated speech, which all Will's preparation and political savvy could not divert from disaster, Will broods over his intractable frustration of his employer as a vehicle for reform, and the likelihood of "slipping into deserved contempt as an understrapper of Brooke's" (476-77). This does not dissuade him from his profession:

[P]olitical writing, political speaking, would get a higher value now public life was going to be wider and more national [...] he could go away easily, and begin a

career which at five-and-twenty seemed probable enough in the inward order of things, where talent brings fame, and fame everything else which is delightful. He could speak and he could write; he could master any subject if he chose, and he meant always to take the side of reason and justice, on which he would carry all his ardor. Why should he not one day be lifted above the shoulders of the crowd, and feel that he had won that eminence well? (477)

It should be noted, however, that Will's twinned dream of an expanded franchise and an objective meritocracy, is in some ways a fantasy motivated by his love of Dorothea and his desire to be worthy of her. Furthermore, to the extent that this wider public life does reward his eminence, it is as a politician in his own right, not as a journalist.

He does eventually do well enough, we are told in the Finale, becoming an MP "in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days," (782), which seems a reasonable triumph if viewed through the lens of a basically pragmatic worldview. However, Eliot's ultimate conclusion about the possibility of a fulfilled vocation is in her deeply moving summing-up of the life of Will's eventual wife, that great striver Dorothea, whose "full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth" (785).

Ultimately, Ladislav's story is of a promising enterprise, marked by new possibilities for thought and expression in a widening market, but restricted by the prerogatives of its niche in that market. Lydgate sells his soul, Vincy earns his; but Ladislav's fate is much more ambivalent.

Eliot's ambivalence is an appropriately nuanced response, given that she was writing out of experience. Following her initial work as a translator of religious philosophy, and after the death of her father and her sojourns in Europe, we might mark the beginning of her association with John Chapman and the *Westminster Review*, in 1850-51, as a major turning point in her career as a professional writer (Gatens, 34). Her position as Chapman's unofficial consultant and shadow-editor on the *Review* involved advising Chapman on his conduct during the purchase of the *Review*, down to refining his grammar in his correspondence (Gray, 215-16); recommending writers and outlining detailed treatments of commissioned articles (Gray, 217-18); finessing contributors; and proofreading (Gray, 220). Her association with the *Review* was

formative, both personally and professionally. She and George Henry Lewes, subsequently her life partner, edited each other's work before they ever met each other, an arrangement facilitated in part by Chapman (Gray, 220). Too, the *Westminster*'s increasing emphasis on contemporary literature within the first year of her editorship (Gray, 220) surely reflects a period of growth and reflection for the future novelist.

Eliot's own reflections on the work at the time were varied. Beryl Gray relates that Eliot "suffered a characteristic bout of depression during the preparation of the October [1852] number," but recovered sufficiently to describe that issue in a letter as "a respectable figure after all—nine articles and two or three of them good, the rest not bad" (Gray, 221). Overall it appears that the arrangement was an opportunity for valuable work, but not without its compromises. One essential compromise was her very identity. Many journalists at the time wrote anonymously, but Eliot in her unsigned articles for the *Review* would assume the position of a male speaker, even before she officially assumed her pen name (Gatens, 34-35). Additionally, though Chapman can hardly have been as incompetent as *Middlemarch*'s Brooke, Eliot does seem to have handled her patron in a similar fashion. After initially dissuading Chapman, as owner of the *Review*, from also contributing his own articles, Eliot found herself doing damage control on his prose. Gray reprints part of one critique:

[W]henver you pass from narrative to dissertation, certain old faults reappear—inexactness of expression, triads and duads of verbs and adjectives, mixed metaphors and a sort of watery volume that requires to be reduced by evaporation. [...] "Suffice it to say" is the peculiar property of hack writers. (Quoted in Gray, 219)

"Watery volume" would be an apt description of Brooke's sherry-sozzled ramblings during his election speech, when he goes off-script with Ladislav hidden in the background (472-76). That Eliot was toiling for a "hack" must have been doubly stinging given that Lewes had tried unsuccessfully to buy the *Westminster Review* before Chapman did (Gray, 220). She also bristled at running a negative review of one of Lewes's books in the same issue in which a rival volume, published by Chapman, was praised (Gray, 221-22).

It has been suggested that the "slashing" style of reviewing ultimately proved

unsuitable to Eliot's literary ambitions (Hampton, 105). But equally, scholars have frequently viewed Eliot's essays for the *Westminster Review*, after the end of her editorship, as preparatory for her novel-writing. Gray proposes that, "if in [her] editorial phase [...] we witness her application and developing confidence, then it's from the belletrist phase that the future novelist clearly emerges," pointing to her contributions, after returning from Germany with Lewes, to the "Belles Lettres" section of the publication, including articles on Ruskin and Realism, the natural sciences, and "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (Gray, 222-24). Moira Gatens has also described how Eliot's and Lewes's critical writing saw the two develop, in concert, a definition of literary realism as the belletristic pursuit, across different genres of knowledge, of an ideal form, with the wide-ranging and social-scientific *Middlemarch*—with its own interest in ideals—being this form's crowning achievement (Gatens, 36-39). On the whole, Eliot's association with the *Westminster Review*, like Ladislav's with the *Pioneer*, seems to have been a necessary, productive, frequently exasperating experience, which she eventually outgrew.

Lewes's own feelings about writing for money were expressed more explicitly than Eliot's, in a piece he wrote for *Fraser's Magazine* before they met, in 1845. It is worth excerpting at length, here, for its reflections on an emerging economic reality in which the resourceful, nonspecialized man of letters might make a living. "If we reflect upon the great aims of literature," he wrote, "we shall easily perceive how important it is that the lay teachers of the people should be men of an unmistakeable *vocation*." (Emphasis added.) To induce these worthy men to dedicate their lives to the pursuit, Lewes opines that "[literature] should be a profession, just lucrative to furnish a decent subsistence to its members, but in no way lucrative enough to tempt speculators" (Lewes, 299). His essay is at once a full-throated, open-hearted championing of the social value of literature and an extraordinarily specific, name-naming inquiry into the finances of men of letters. It is idealistic, but that is not to say that Lewes has total faith in the valuations made by an unregulated marketplace of ideas:

To rescue men of letters from the sad necessity of living 'from hand to mouth,' and to enable them to labour seriously at serious works, without being haunted by the fear of poverty, without being forced to write down to the popular taste, government's best, and indeed only means is, to institute professorships, and open

public offices to writers. It has been said, and with some show of justice, that government has no more to do with the remuneration of authorship than it has with the remuneration of other professions; literature being for the public, the public will pay for its wants. But in this argument one very important point is overlooked. Literature is a profession in which the author has not only to struggle against his brother authors, but also against a host of interlopers. Authors without engagements cannot step in and eke out their income with a little chancery practice, or a bit of common law; but lawyers without clients can and do step into the field of literature. Thus the professional author is surrounded with rivals, not only as hungry as himself, but willing and able to work for lower wages, because they are not, as he is, solely dependent upon literature. As this state of things is inevitable, it must be evident that some protection would be more justly bestowed upon authors than upon other professions. That protection should not be pensions, but employment.

Pensions there should be, but only for those who are old, or disabled by ill-health. [...] Strange that no legislator has the courage to take some step in this direction! No man will deny the claim of a decayed author. The veteran writer, battered in long and hard-fought service—in that service grown old and almost useless, is surely as much entitled to a pension from the government as the veteran soldier. The man who has devoted his talents and energies to the laborious task of improving and amusing mankind, has done the State as much service as the man who marched at the head of a regiment, even if every march had been followed by a victory. (Lewes, 304-05)

So much is revealing here: the prickly exceptionalism of the full-time creative professional, a paranoia even extending to unworthy careerists within the field; and the nagging self-doubt of that "even if," amid the insistent defense. Art's awareness of its dependence upon some form of patronage or subsidy is eternal (and, latterly, shared by serious criticism and reportage). Can belief in the power of the written word survive the economic pragmatism of the writing life? This is the question asked by George Gissing's *New Grub Street*—at least seemingly.

George Gissing's *New Grub Street*: the Unfortunate Profession

New Grub Street (1891) surveys a professional field even more developed and competitive than that observed by Lewes decades prior. By this time "newspapers were no longer composed in taverns" (Clarke, 103), nor were writers any more accustomed to lining their pockets ghostwriting the prodigious volume of newspaper ads for cures of worms or venereal disease (Clarke, 144), or seeking "suppression and contradiction fees" from the subjects of their articles (Elliott, 174). Still, the status of the individual journalist approached respectability at a rather laggardly pace. The same year as Lewes's article, the *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* reported that "penny-a-liners," the famed "stragglers of the London press," had "of late years [...] so far advanced in the world as to receive three-halfpence per line." Contributing these space-filling reports of lurid crime and sundry misfortune, long a signal employment for the stereotypical Grub Street hack, offered, according to the authors, "a precarious and generally miserable experience; having £10 in his pocket one week, the proceeds of some interesting murder, and starving the next because people are too moral or too fortunate to afford him, for the time, anything to write about." This particular existence—"simply to contribute, to all journals alike, whatever scraps of news they may be able to collect" by "hang[ing] about hospitals, fire-offices, and coroners' quotes; besiege police-officers, churchwardens, overseers, and magistrates; and ... perpetually going about in watch for what the chapter of accidents may throw their way"—was not, according to *Chambers's*, without its roguish appeal, and its practitioners were not to be confused with "who pretend to the same connexion [with the press], and live by the frauds they commit under that assumption" ("Penny-a-liners," 295-96). Still, any writer contributing to a newspaper up to that point would have been familiar with the casual ethics—plagiarism, recycled content and "urban myth" were industry-standard for many years (Clarke, 68-70; Elliott, 174)—and nose for prurience.

Even as increasing specialization and professionalization led the reporter to solidly middle-class status (Elliott, 174-79; Clarke, 256), the economic realities of the profession continued to demand a flexibility of both talent and attitude from those who would chance it for a living. Charlotte O'Connor Eccles, writing in 1893, recalled that upon her initial arrival in London after an apprenticeship in the provincial press, "I took to journalism, in the first instance, because magazine work was irregular and precarious, and I could not afford to waste time in trying if it was in me to write a

good novel. [...] I wanted to make £100 or £150 a-year, and was prepared to take anything that was offered me" (Eccles, 330). What was offered her was, initially, one a gig writing "'spicy' articles—the naughtier the better" (Eccles, 331), and another gig writing pieces to be published under the name of another, better-known journalist, from notes provided by a middle-man who earned his living by soliciting gratuities from the merchants whose wares he mentioned in articles (Eccles, 333). At last, she reports:

A weekly newspaper offered me 30s. a-week for all my time from nine in the morning until six in the evening. I did a column of 'mems.' on current events; two columns of educational news; a number of sub-leaders; two Ladies' Letters; Answers to Correspondents; a 'Children's Corner,' most troublesome of all, as it involved competitions and prizes; corrected all the proofs; and had in my hands the selection of the matter for the weekly, and for an educational paper. (Eccles, 334)

New Grub Street, which is set in the 1880s, concerns working journalists of Eccles's generation. One survey describes the novel's plot as concerning the "tragedy" of Edwin Reardon, a talented but unpopular author, which "is set against the calculating rise of [his journalist friend] Jasper Milvain, who ruthlessly exploits the publishing situation." The critic further claims that, through these opposing characters, Gissing "explores the isolation of the independent serious writer in a market increasingly dominated by economics and literary fashion" (James, 182-83). The moral thread of the book can be traced through the trajectory of Reardon's wife Amy, who parts from her husband as his professional fortunes decline, and finishes the novel married to the successful Milvain, who had earlier jilted Amy's virtuous cousin Marian Yule, herself a striving woman of letters. The novel, with a populous supporting cast of professional literary types, casts journalism as objective art's inevitable, degrading concession to subjective economic realities.

We should first clarify the classification of *New Grub Street* as a newspaper novel. Though it is frequently cited as such (see Hitchens, Skidelsy), it is also commonly regarded as "the crucial English novel about novelists" (Matz, 213). In fact, as one commenter has pointed out, novel-writing is just one point of the spectrum of literary production practiced by Gissing's cast of professional writers, making it more appropriate to classify *New Grub Street* as "a novel about the literary

man and the man of letters" (Severn, 172). This is in keeping with the nonspecialized nature of literary work at that moment in history (Hampton, 104-5); and it is perhaps not so different from one phrasing of the original claim, John Halperin's declaration that "*New Grub Street* is perhaps the greatest novel ever written about the collision of the creative impulse with material circumstances" (qtd. in Matz 213). If *New Grub Street* is a novel about novel-writing, it is so primarily in a metaphorical sense, and with a primary focus on writing as a business. It is the business of writing with which this essay is, similarly, concerned; and the bare fact of writing as economic activity, with all that that implies, is never more evident than in the shifting professional obligations of the newspaper writer.

There are newspapers in *New Grub Street*—and newspapermen, notably Sykes, who sells London letters to the provincial press, having failed at fiction, and who works in a penny-admission reading room rather than heat his own lodging; his friends mourn that he earns just money enough to drink away (377-80). Clearly, the professionalization of newspaper writing, specifically, would come later, as indeed we shall see in subsequent sections of this essay. But *New Grub Street*, set in the decade prior to its 1891 publication, demonstrates the truth of Lewes's claim about literature becoming a profession thanks to the flowering of the periodical press, represented here by the more prestigious weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies—*The Current*, *The Study*, *The Wayside*, *The West End*, *The Will o' the Wisp*—and new publishing ventures which support, to varying degrees of comfort, Gissing's gallery of London literary types. These are Severn's "men of letters," who derive their identity and social status from their recognition as credentialed specialists in their field—the late Victorian age being marked by a stratification along professional lines as industrialization elevated more and more of the populace into full participants in the culture (Severn, 169-71). The question is whether this profession can also be a vocation.

Chiefly the problem is, that with a rising demand for literary material comes an anxiety about the dilution of the supply. Gissing's two main protagonists take opposing attitudes towards the matter: Jasper Milvain advises his apprentice sister that a piece of journalism she is about to submit has "rather too much thought in it, perhaps. Suppose you knock out one or two of the less obvious reflections, and substitute a wholesome commonplace" (387), and he is compulsively blithe about the ultimate utility of his work, which he contrasts with the "nobly unremunerative"

spheres of literature (326). He understands social climbing to be more important than literary merit in earning a living from literature: "You have to obtain reputation before you can get a fair hearing for that which would justify your repute" (385). Whereas the novelist Edwin Reardon, whose ambition is not a professionally useful reputation, but a lasting literary legacy (436-37), finds himself producing inferior work in a desperate, unconvincing attempt to appeal to public tastes and maintain a standard of living for himself and his wife Amy (121-24).

Milvain and Reardon's conflicting attitudes, and aptitudes, are two of the ways in which Gissing establishes them as mirror images of each other. This apparent binary reflects the familiar divided self-image of the professional writer, and it has informed many readings of *New Grub Street*. And indeed, there are echoes in *New Grub Street* of the old Grub Street suspicion about writing for money. Reardon, by this point clerking in a charity hospital and disillusioned with literature, recalls an encounter with a patient:

"a tall, good-looking, very quiet girl, poorly dressed, but as neat as could be. She gave me her name, then I asked 'Occupation?' She said at once, 'I'm unfortunate, sir.' [An "unfortunate" being a euphemism for a prostitute.] [...] And, do you know, I never felt so strong an impulse to shake hands, to show sympathy, and even respect, in some way. I should have liked to say, 'Why, I am unfortunate, too!'" (367)

The profession of literature is, again, aligned with whoring, a degradation of innate dignity. It is money which makes femininity, or literature, unclean—this suggests a basic moral censure of "Jasper of the facile pen," (455), a barbed honorific bestowed by Gissing's narrator, which the character gladly lives up to.

But the morality of the novel is more complicated than its basic structural opposition suggests. Severn speaks of "an argumentative tug-of-war in which the narrator consistently attempts to both undermine any positive perceptions of Jasper and mitigate any negative images of Edwin that emerge from the characters' actions or comments" (Severn, 163). Milvain is self-deprecating about his literary skills, even as he insists upon their suitability to the market ("Rubbish for the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*. Listen to this paragraph [...] They'll have to pay me more," 414). But he is not without a certain amount of pride—witness his bristling snobbishness at his sister's

impending marriage to his colleague Whelpdale, who has just made an even more base appeal to public tastes with *Chit-Chat* (507). (This lowest-common-denominator publication is obviously inspired by *Tit-Bits*, a weekly launched in 1881, which with great success targeted readers who "will read anything which is simple and sufficiently interesting," in the admiring words of Alfred Harmsworth, later the founder of the *Daily Mail* [Clarke, 262-67]).

Milvain's pride is warranted. He is his friends' ideal reader—though he speaks of book reviewing as a social calculation, an opportunity to ingratiate oneself with the well-positioned (181) or help out a friend (456), his posthumous advocacy for Reardon's novels is selfless and critically deft (462-3). And Reardon is less a martyr to literature than an inapt technician, who describes a rejected thriller as "too empty to please the better kind of readers, yet not vulgar enough to please the worst" (219). He is susceptible to writer's block, and convinced of his novels' merit only to a limited degree (77).

It really is this simple: Milvain is good at his job; Reardon is not. Both are gifted writers, in their way. And even the personal morality is hardly binary: both are sometimes their best, sometimes their weakest selves over the course of their initially hopeful, then disintegrating relationships with the Yule cousins. Perhaps the sensitive Reardon and the loyal literary helpmeet Marian would have been as happy together as the upwardly mobile Jasper and the refined Amy. *New Grub Street* is thus similar to *Middlemarch* in its ultimately ambivalent, pragmatic understanding of the people acting out Arnold's oppositions of culture and anarchy, of objective aesthetic and subjective market value.

That it is Milvain who succeeds, and not Reardon, with his "intellectual temper [which] was that of the student, the scholar" (59), with his visions of Athens and precious editions of Homer, is evidence of Gissing's main, sometimes conservative fear: that subjective values, conditioned by contemporary tastes, are more relevant than objective, classical values. In one passage, Reardon declares that "The best moments of life are those when we contemplate beauty in the purely artistic spirit—objectively. I have had such moments in Greece and Italy," and relates a page-long description of a sunset he witnessed in Athens (369-70). In this passage, Reardon seems to hearken back to both Arnold's Hellenism, and to Dr. Grantly's reverie in the English countryside, in which the landscape seems to enforce the "right reason," in Arnold's words, of the Anglican Church: "Who could be hard upon a dean while

wandering round the sweet close of Hereford, and owning that in that precinct, tone and colour, design and form, solemn tower and storied window, are all in unison, and all perfect!" (Trollope, 64)

But the shades of gray in both Milvain and Reardon's characterizations show that his engagement with this disquieting notion is hardly a polemic. Matz observes that Milvain's maxim, to fulfill public demand and so have access to the best things in life, "is in alarming harmony with the lessons of Gissing's novel, and our inevitable discomfort emanates as much from our knowledge that Milvain is right as it does from the obvious and unwavering fact that he should be loathed. Gissing both satirizes Milvain and assigns him the truth" (Matz, 247-48).

New Grub Street is characterized by an unresolved tension between literary ideals and skepticism at their plausibility. Matz highlights a vein of distrust, running through the novel, with the era's then unprecedented volume of literary production (Matz, 228-29), pointing specifically to Milvain's jest to John Yule, a paper manufacturer who looks with skepticism on the life of the mid: "I understand that you have devoted most of your life to the making of paper. If that article were not so cheap and so abundant, people wouldn't have so much temptation to scribble" (23). The suggestion is that the economic and industrial conditions under which literature is produced are not incidental to it—quite the opposite. Rather, literature is a necessary component within a process of industrial production.¹

This is key when contemplating the nature of the difference between Milvain and Reardon. It is not simply that one succeeds as a writer while the other fails. It is that one participates in the workforce, and the other drops out. Reardon anticipates a menial career at a school in Croydon, where he will not write, and "shall read very little, and that only in the classics" (439). More, he foreswears love, forever soured by the money troubles that caused the rift with Amy (369). That Reardon's unfettered pursuit of objective beauty requires a denial of love is an indication of its illustory status. Reardon's freedom consists of an existence bound by a handful of shillings a week to live on, sickness, and death within months. Reardon's dwindling away into

¹ Here, the contemporary reader may consider a parallel to online "content," web pages featuring articles reverse-engineered to frequent search engine queries, and "optimized" to include certain keywords as frequently and prominently as possible, in keeping with search engine ranking algorithms.

irrelevance and death would seem to buttress Severn's claim about profession and identity, that "calling [someone] a 'man of letters' defines who he *is*" (Severn, 172).

Even the acknowledged literary purist of Gissing's characters, Reardon's friend the realist novelist Biffen, is a participant in the literary marketplace. Never happier than when arguing over Euripidean esoterica (376), Biffen would seem to exemplify an objective outlook on literature, a sensibility unsullied by contemporary material conditions. But his project, the rigorously boring realist novel *Mr. Bailey, Grocer*, though of an unquestionable integrity—he believes it will be a "a great book—a great book!" (211), though fundamentally unprofitable (370)—is hardly a book out of time. The manuscript is associated with an act of risky, heroic devotion to pure literature, when Biffen rushes back into his burning apartment to rescue the completed manuscript (429-33). But as a literary act, its virtue is subjective. For what is the *Mr. Bailey, Grocer's* relationship to the classics? Inspired by the life of a vulgar shopkeeper and neighbor of the author, the novel is meant to outdo even the new French realists in its pure documentary account of common life: "If it were anything *but* tedious it would be untrue. I speak, of course, of its effect on the ordinary reader" (145). Biffen means the book to uphold classical values—by being an affront to contemporary public taste.

There is no literary virtue untouched by the influence of the market—the market conditions the act of thinking itself. The very first page of the book introduces Milvain's unique suitability to this state of affairs—"A Man of His Day," per the chapter title. Reading the newspaper at the breakfast table with his mother and sister, he announces:

"It happened to catch my eye in the paper yesterday that someone was to be hanged at Newgate this morning. There's a certain satisfaction in reflecting that it is not oneself."

"That's your selfish way of looking at things," said Maud.

"Well," returned Jasper, "seeing that the fact came into my head, what better use could I make of it? I could curse the brutality of an age that sanctioned such things; or I could grow doleful over the misery of the poor fellow. But those emotions would be as little profitable to others as to myself. [...] The tone in which I spoke was spontaneous; being so, it needs no justification." (5)

Of the figures in *New Grub Street*, Milvain is the one who can point his thoughts most easily in "profitable" directions. He does not seek to repair an unjust system—just as well, for what use would come of it? He is self-absorbed, but self-aware enough that it does not become arrogance. And he can produce observations that are "spontaneous," disposable but suited for consumption in the moment.

New Grub Street is not, finally, an attack on the degradation of literary Art by vulgar Commerce. Rather, it documents the impossibility of conceiving of the value of the work that we do as separate from its value in some marketplace beyond ourselves. This is true even of work as intimate as literature—or perhaps, given the utter instability of aesthetic criteria, especially of work as intimate as literature. *New Grub Street* documents the psychic toll of subjecting personal work to the market—but shows how the binary holding the work separate from the market (you may have my body, but not my soul) is merely an intermittently comforting fantasy.

New Grub Street is a novel with a strong, and singularly agitated moral sense, but Gissing, as many critics have observed, wrote about social ills with an attitude that was diagnostic, rather than prescriptive. Orwell reflected that Gissing "had no very strong moral purpose. He had, of course, a deep loathing of the ugliness, emptiness and cruelty of the society he lived in, but he was concerned to describe it rather than to change it" (qtd. in Matz, 243). When Milvain ends his engagement to Marian, he alludes to "the happiness you deserve," to which she replies: "Deserve! [...] Why do I deserve it? Because I long for it with all my heart and soul? There's no such thing as deserving. Happiness or misery come to us by fate." (502-03) "Fate" here also means money—the lost inheritance that would have allowed her to marry Milvain—but Gissing, like Milvain, is clear that, if London's literary economy is a meritocracy, the standard of merit is essentially self-contained.

Marian, toiling in the reading room at the British Museum, muses:

A few days ago her startled eye had caught an advertisement in the newspaper, headed "Literary Machine"; had it then been invented as last, some automaton to supply the place of poor creatures as herself, to turn out books and articles? Alas! the machine was only one for holding volumes conveniently, that the work of literary manufacture might be physically lightened. But surely before long, some Edison would make the true automaton; the problem must be comparatively such a

simple one. Only to throw in given number of old books, and have them reduced, blended, modernised into a single one for to-day's consumption. (107)

Jasper Milvain is such a literary machine, or close to one. Though emotional turmoil sometimes interferes with "manufacturing 'copy,'" he also has occasion to announce to Marian and his sisters, after a day's work: "I've just been trying what I really could do in one day if I worked my hardest," an output which amounts to reading and reviewing (at a length of three quarters of a column of newsprint) a new title; composing his Saturday column; sketching out and half-completing a paper; reading four newspapers and two magazines and recording potential material noted in each; and two hours of work on a longer project. Asked the value of the day's work, he estimates, "Ten to twelve guineas"; when his interlocutor clarifies that the question referred to the work's "literary value," he replies, "Equal to that of the contents of a mouldy nut" (180-81).

The "literary machine," arising at the time in which the newspaper makes the vocation of writing into a feasible profession, seems to confirm Arnold's fears, that the "machinery" of social reform would bring about a subjective culture characterized by the laws of supply and demand. The laboring writer would only become more, let us say, "industrious" in the following century, as innovations beginning with the telegraphy shaped the increasingly standardized profession of journalism. It is those standards which are frequently travestied in the twentieth-century newspaper novel, as Jasper Milvain's cynicism becomes the dominant tone.

Unprofessional Standards: The Twentieth Century

The newspaper industry boomed in the twentieth century. This gave literary tradesmen the opportunity for identification with the profession of journalism. However, such identification was only ever made with an attitude of cynicism, a response to the ethical compromises inherent to work within a newspaper industry characterized by the ambitions of the proprietors and the demands of the market. At its most optimistic, the newspaper novel breezily satirized the unprofessional excesses inherent to the newspaper industry, denying the seriousness or competence of newspapermen and -women, as if to short-circuit any real debate over the inherent value of their work. All the while, the prospect of death, departure and obsolescence also lurks.

Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*: RUSH FACTS

Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* (1938) hinges on a case of mistaken identity—albeit one of little consequence. At a society luncheon, Mrs. Algernon Stitch recommends the novelist John Courteney Boot to Lord Copper, of the *Daily Beast*, as a rising young writer ideal for covering the developing situation in Ishmaelia, in the horn of Africa. But this attempt at cronyism is garbled when Lord Copper's cowed underlings recruit instead William Boot, who writes their *Lush Places* column. The Managing Editor and Salter, the foreign news editor, desperately seeking confirmation that they've got the right man, recall that Lord Copper's new boy is "supposed to have a particularly high-class style," as evidence of which they seize upon a passage of description: "*Feather-footed through the plashy fen passes the questing vole.*" "That must be good style," says the Managing Editor. "At least it doesn't sound like anything else to me" (16). In any case, the boss, repeating a rumored preference of the Prime Minister, is thought to like it. And in the foreign-correspondent game, one Boot will prove to be as useful as another.

Scoop's publication coincided with a high point in the image, at least, of the foreign correspondent—the "myth[ic]" man on the scene at historical turning points, shaping public opinion at home with his scoops from abroad (Elliott, 187). During the tumultuous years leading up to the Second World War, the foreign correspondent, in the public imagination at least, was swashbuckling enough to be not just a daring observer but an active participant, as in Eric Ambler's spy novel *Uncommon Danger*

(1937), or Hitchcock's 1940 film *Foreign Correspondent*, based on the bestselling memoirs of Vincent Sheean, who covered the rise of Stalin, Mussolini, and Chiang Kai-shek out of the Paris bureau of the *Chicago Tribune* (Hamilton).

Still, despite these high-profile assignments, the profession of journalism was by this point less a matter of writing than of reporting. The professional newspaper writer was no longer one of Clarke's "hacks or demagogues," churning out essays, reviews, accounts of disaster, and sundry plagiarisms, but rather a qualified professional with a distinct beat, such as Parliament or the courts (Clarke, 254-56). The 1880s—the decade in which *New Grub Street* is set—saw the formation of a National Association (later the Institute) of Journalists—dedicated to "the interests of journalists, raising their status and qualifications, supervising their professional duties and testing qualifications for membership"—and the National Union of Journalists followed in the new century (Elliott, 175). The standardization of journalistic practices grew alongside newspaper readership, and the "authority" and "respectability" of journalists was to no small extent dependent upon their responsible mastery of new methods for recording and transmitting the news: first shorthand (Clarke, 255-56), and then the telegraph. The instantaneous "'hard' news" from Reuters, the first and most influential English news agency, increased readers' sense of connectivity with, and appetite for news from, the remoter parts of the world, and as Clarke argues, "shaped the news. The preference for instant news by telegraph over belated news sent by letter, and the high per-word cost of telegrams, meant that the descriptive prose of the correspondent took second place to the compact messages of the telegraph" (Clarke, 221).

The just-the-facts ethos of the telegraph is the subject of one of Waugh's more prominent running gags. What we might call the news-speak of Boot's instructions from his *Beast* editors is composed in syntax efficiently compressed into neat blocks of near unintelligibility: "OPPOSITION SPLASHING FRONTWARD SPEEDILIEST STOP ADEN REPORTED PREPARED WARWISE FLASH FACTS BEAST" (68). Neologisms—"upfollow" for "follow up", suffixes like "-wise" for relation and "-ward" for direction—save words, and thus money. Boot, for his part, types with one finger, and is in the habit of signing his telegrams "YOURS BOOT" (138); his wordy, scatterbrained communiqués mock his own unsuitability, and puncture journalistic convention, as in this first draft of history:

NOTHING MUCH HAS HAPPENED EXCEPT TO THE PRESIDENT WHO HAS BEEN IMPRISONED IN HIS OWN PALACE BY REVOLUTIONARY JUNTA HEADED BY SUPERIOR BLACK CALLED BENITO AND RUSSIAN JEW WHO BANNISTER SAYS IS UP TO NO GOOD THEY SAY HE IS DRUNK WHEN HIS CHILDREN TRY TO SEE HIM BUT GOVERNESS SAYS MOST UNUSUAL LOVELY SPRING WEATHER BUBONIC PLAUGE RAGING. (146)

Boot's dispatch shoots off into tangential, unbackgrounded references to personal gripes (against Benito, an Ishmaelite official) and old school acquaintances (Bannister); his relaying of information is casual and anecdotal; and his wordiness is expensive—which makes his sporadic attempts at reportorial shorthand ("governess says most unusual") seem even more absurd.

Boot has an interpreter, his fellow-journalist Corker, of the Universal News agency:

"'Opposition splashing' means that the rival papers are giving a lot of space to this story. 'Frontward speedilest'—go to the front as fast as you can—full stop—Aden is reported here to be prepared on a war-time footing—'Flash Facts'—send them the details of this preparation at once." (69-70).

Corker advises Boot to "just cable ADEN UNWARWISE" (72). Fluent in telegraphic language, Corker, even more explicitly than Jasper Milvain, is pleased to identify himself with a machine—to channel his thoughts not just into a set, saleable format for the written word, like a review or a column, but to the specifications of a device of mass production.

In *Scoop*, unlike in *New Grub Street*, the identification of workers with the subjective standards of their job is near total. Competition is fierce: when the reporter Shumble breaks the story of a Russian spy in Ishmaelia—in fact an invention, vaguely inspired by a railway employee with an odd beard—the rest of the foreign press, inundated with telegraphs from the office ("RUSH FOLLOW," "RUSH FACTS"), led by the American correspondent Wenlock Jakes, joins up to solicit an official denial; Jakes is said to have made the decision "gravely, for he hated to kill a good story" (96-98). When it turns out that Shumble, in spite of himself, was on to something

about a Russian presence, Corker informs Boot that the truth of the story is irrelevant now that it's been officially denied (101-2). Journalists, like any other workers, answer to entirely subjective market forces: selling papers by being first to a story, or at least keeping up with the competition by not being too late to one. After the Russian story dies down, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock, of the *Daily Brute*, files a report from Fascist headquarters at Laku, and every journalist in town save Boot heads out to upfollow—though there is no such place as Laku. The precise irony here is that the journalist's professional status derives from a notion of objectivity: not Edwin Reardon's idealized beauty and literary merit, but actual capital-t Truth.

The status of journalism is entwined with the ideal of journalistic objectivity, of Robert Lowe of the *Times*'s "earliest and most correct intelligence [made] the common property of the nation." The reporter is valued because he provides facts, in keeping with a professional standard holding that "truth [is] the unique responsibility of a profession of journalism (Elliott, 189); the press as an institution is valued because its objective presentation empowers citizenship (Elliott, 188).

In *Scoop*, the ideal of journalistic objectivity is the stuff of farce, particularly the caricatured Press Baron, Lord Copper, who instructs Boot, prior to his departure, "'with regard to Policy'":

"[...] I expect you already have your own views. I never hamper my correspondents in any way. What the British public wants first, last, and all the time is News. Remember that the Patriots are in the right and are going to win. *The Beast* stands by them foursquare. But they must win quickly. The British public has no interest in a war which drags on indecisively. A few sharp victories, some conspicuous acts of personal bravery on the Patriot side and a colourful entry into the capital. That is *The Beast* Policy for the war." (42)

Corker informs Boot that his editors at *The Beast* "will be able to work up something at the office" from "ADEN UNWARWISE," the terseness of telegraphic reports suiting the industry practice of filtering reportage through in-house political bias (Clarke, 221).

Copper's outsized political ambitions, and the vulgar milieu of the thriving newspaper industry more generally, suggest the confirmation of Gissing's pessimism in reality. In 1904, Alfred Harmsworth, the former *Tit-Bits* contributor who had by

then become Lord Northcliffe, took over the *Times* (Clarke, 241, 267). The mass expansion of literacy and political participation during the Industrial Revolution saw increased circulation and expanded content, along with more specialization, notably a division of responsibilities between editors and their politically ambitious publisher-proprietors (Clarke 225-26). "I was a journalist, not a political animal. The policies were Lord Beaverbrook's job, the presentation mine," the *Daily Express* editor Arthur Christiansen reflected in 1949 (Elliott, 181). Those policies tended to be the same respectable ones held by the class to which the press barons aspired, while idealistic pronouncements about the freedom of the press were often merely justification for the newspapers' demagogic aspirations (Clarke, 228-32). Corker, expositing an insider's view of the business to the tyro Boot, puts it bluntly: "We're paid to supply news" (66). The supply feeds both the subjective ambitions of the newspaper barons, and the market demand for reading material.

Corker's blithe, professional inventions, and Lord Copper's simultaneous contradictory demands for Truth, marketability, and a favorable political outcome, satirize the standards and practices by which journalists, and the institution of journalism, set such store. However, the enthusiasm with which Corker and others compete to be the best supplier is genuine. This is the purely market-driven ideology into which the reporters of *Scoop* throw themselves—except for Boot, who, well into his Ishmaelite sojourn, is still cabling headquarters to say "WILL CABLE AGAIN IF ANY NEWS" (121).

That the Wrong Boot should turn out to be an authentic journalistic genius is, then, Waugh's crowning joke on the profession.² While Corker is stuck in the mud on the way to the nonexistent Laku, Boot breaks the story of the real Revolution in Ishmaelia ("NOTHING MUCH HAS HAPPENED EXCEPT..."); before he composes his follow-up cable, his diplomatic contact lays out the international situation for him, thinking that Boot has been sacked by *The Beast*: "Now that you've stopped being a journalist I can tell you these things" (154). When Boot returns triumphant to England, he refuses all offers of plum assignments, inexplicably to both his editors and to the young trainee sent to pick him up from the station, who asks for

² This same joke was made earlier by P.G. Wodehouse, whose glib Old Etonian Psmith becomes, on a lark, the editor of the New York weekly *Cosy Moments*, and makes a smashing success as a crusading journalist before returning to Cambridge for the fall term, in *Psmith, Journalist* (1915).

his autograph. Bateson the trainee, currently laboring at *The Beast* for free, comes to them fresh out of a correspondence course in journalism: "I'm a graduate of the Aircastle School. I paid fifteen shillings a month and I got a specially recommended diploma" (187).

Severn, discussing "Britain's professional culture" in his article on *New Grub Street*, defines an entire rising class who gain their "institutionalized identity" from their professional credentials: "Professional qualifications are objects (often literally, in the form of diplomas, licenses, and membership cards) of desire" (Severn, 169). Waugh, through Boot, sets the entire structure of professional bona fides and aspirations on its head. Despite Boot's refusal of professional accolades, Lord Copper contrives to acquire a knighthood for Boot by pulling some strings at the Prime Minister's office—*The Beast*'s prior star foreign correspondent was also a knight, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock, who invented the Laku story, and previously, "straddling over his desk in London, [...] chronicled day by day the horrors of the Messina earthquake" (66). But once again, an attempt at upper-crust cronyism is misinterpreted by bumbling aides, and the knighthood goes to the novelist John Courteney Boot, for—and this is something like Waugh's definitive statement on the relationship between professionally earned status and objective merit—"Services to Literature" (182-83).

Malcolm Muggeridge's *Picture Palace*: Valid Ideals

Lord Copper is foolish in his certainty that no distinction need to be made between objective truth and his own ambitions. Malcolm Muggeridge's *Picture Palace* (1934) also skeptically depicts the disconnection between a newspaper proprietor's sense of his own significance, and the reality of work for his employees, though Muggeridge's tone is embittered, frankly vindictive. *Picture Palace* is enraged by what Muggeridge sees as the foolish but nevertheless fatal vanity of Old Savory, the powerful editor emeritus of the fictional *Accrington Courier*, first seen reading hagiographic press clippings about himself: "He played with such phrases, using them, like bricks, to rebuild the past, to recreate its triumphs and certainties, its happiness and fulfilled ambition. How he had been able to dominate the circumstances of his life! How clearly he had seen and how resolutely spoken!" (1) Old Savory is near death as *Picture Palace* opens; the novel traces the decline of his health alongside the disillusionment and professional idleness of Pettygrew, a leader writer at the the newspaper.

In fact, *Picture Palace* was borne of Muggeridge's disillusionment with the *Manchester Guardian*, where he, like Pettygrew. Initially intoxicated by the "yeasty aroma of newsprint," Muggeridge became progressively embittered by the dynamic at the paper, where the very influential editor-owner C.P. Scott, nominally retired, continued to exert influence over his son and successor Ted, Muggeridge's close friend, until his own death of old age and his son's accidental death shortly thereafter. The older and younger Scott are very thinly fictionalized as *Picture Palace*'s Old Savory and son Arthur—Muggeridge is said to have "made scarcely any effort to cover his tracks"—and the novel is in large part an excoriation of the man who told Muggeridge, as Old Savory tells Pettygrew, that "Truth should be economized, lest we should make a hard task harder," before softening one of his leaders. In fact, the novel was withdrawn shortly after its publication, under the threat of legal action from the *Guardian*, over the claim—not untrue—that the paper's operations were funded by the profits of the disreputable tabloid the *Manchester Evening News* (here the *Accrington Evening Gazette*). The book would not re-emerge until the 1980s (Ingrams). This latter plot strand is one of several within the novel which challenge the lofty ideal of objective truth and moral virtue. These values are shown to cover up the true motivation behind the *Accrington Courier*, which is, as with the thundering *Jupiter* of Tom Towers, the drive of a particular group for political power. Moreover, political ambition is here synonymous with self-serving vanity, to a degree advanced even from Lord Copper or Mr. Brooke, Old Savory hopes that with his newspaper he can cheat death, become as immortal as the ideals he champions. In this he is shown to be delusional: his legacy is not timeless, but rather as mortal as the day's newspaper.

The *Accrington Courier* is a product of the Liberal society viewed with such dismay by Matthew Arnold, in which "each section of the public has its own literary organ," a media outlet to legitimize preferences with the impression of institutional authority. Early in *Picture Palace*, Old Savory gives a garden party for members of Accrington's liberal establishment, featuring representatives from the worlds of "art, learning, the Church, commerce, the University, and the Municipality" (19). The guest of honor, Sir Daniel Cohen, an ally of the *Courier*, gives a sycophantic speech, praising Old Savory and the *Courier*, which "continues to champion the best kind of Liberalism; to champion, that is to say, ideals which, however circumstances may have changed I, for one, believe to still be valid," and to

these platitudes each guest is reported to respond with gratitude, thinking of "[i]deals which were still valid. Of course, still valid. The old world, their world. Still valid. Themselves still valid. They had sometimes doubted; but now, in a pleasant garden on a summer's afternoon, sipping tea and munching little sugared cakes, listening to Sir Daniel, their doubts were set at rest" (20-21). The fatuous local dignitaries muse, each in their own way, on their still valid ideals, like Arnold's philistines with their own set of cultural institutions, and clamor for a speech from Old Savory: "For fifty years he had provided them with their opinions, voiced their hopes and beliefs. Let old Savory tell them that their ideals were still valid" (21-22). In fact, however, Old Savory, his mind cluttered and confused, his thoughts preoccupied with the decay of industrial Accrington (as noted on 11), gives a disordered speech, crying out repeatedly that "'the world is falling into ruin,'" a proclamation which momentarily causes the assembled to question their sinecures in government and academia (23-24), before their certainties are restored and they gather again at the Accrington Reform Club, secure again in their institutional bubble, to mourn the failing health and mental faculties which had surely inspired Old Savory's moment of despair (30-31).

His despondent display at the garden party is a low moment, however clear, for Old Savory, who for the first half of the novel is largely depicted as raging against the dying of the light, in denial about the "ruin" of himself and his ideals. In the opening pages, Muggeridge depicts—quite savagely—Old Savory, surrounded by his press clippings, seeking reassurance against death and impermanence: "His name would live! [...] If his name lived, then death lost much of its terror." The clippings are "trophies of his fame, words that enshrined his greatness, fragments of himself carefully sifted from an immense dust-heap of vanity and pretentious folly and obscenity on to which for fifty years he had discharged his daily bucketful" (2). At other moments he is conscious of his loosening grip on the world, "the significance of his life already musty and yellow like old newspapers" (7). The association of newsprint with disposability is key, as it underscores the impossibility of Old Savory's goal, to achieve immortality through his work. He is terrified that the paper after his death will diverge from his own politics and so pervert his legacy, will "take some line I'd never have approve" (8); as a hedge against this, so that "it should go on being his paper until he died, after he died, for ever [...] should be his immortality," he has dominated his son Arthur "so that his own restless spirit, when he died, might have a suitable dwelling place" (10). Muggeridge's tone of moral censure is hard to

miss, in his descriptions of Old Savory hollowing out his son, to make a better receptacle for his legacy. And, too, the impossibility of such an arrangement is obvious, even, occasionally, to Old Savory, who in his more honest, depressive moments recognizes his plan as "vanity, an illusion" (34).

Why this is so becomes increasingly obvious as Old Savory's health declines. (One way Muggeridge traces this development is through Old Savory's weakening comprehension of current events [57 and elsewhere]. He is only tenuously associated with the vitality of the everyday.) That is, in intending the newspaper as "his immortality" Old Savory has invested his hopes in a medium unfriendly towards the objective and enduring. His "valid ideals" are no such thing. When his grandchildren visit, he plays affectionately with them, but is "somehow a stranger to them. All the time he was looking for himself in them, and not finding it. Himself in the *Courier*, himself in leading articles, himself tapped out on a typewriter, himself put away in files, himself picked out in type and set in machines, but not in these children" (66). There is a fundamental difference between their vitality and him: he has, to phrase it in Arnold's terms, invested too much faith in machinery, in the lifeless tapping and typesetting. This is underscored with his death scene. On New Year's Eve, Old Savory returns to the deserted newspaper office. He writes a leading article which will never be published, another in a long line of identical anodyne hope-filled editorials on the new year; he moves on to "the file-room where, ranged on shelves and bound in brown leather, was his life," the newspaper's archives and his as well (83-85). He dies in this "musty" room, alone, "his face buried" in the pages of old newspapers, consigned to the past (85-86).

At Old Savory's funeral, the assembled liberal dignitaries are anxious that any reference to valid ideals "would be flat, unconvincing" in the wake of his death (88). Pettygrew, for his part, condemns Old Savory's idealism as essentially self-serving, his causes taken on for his personal glory, noting the hypocrisy of the high-minded *Courier*'s connection to the "racing tips and pornography" of the *Evening Gazette*, and declaring that the dead man's career amounted to nothing but "a picture palace with shadows flitting restlessly across a white screen," all his valid ideals and the words which underpinned them essentially transitory, unreal, and all for show (96-98). Pettygrew, for his part, is so drained of his own initiative that he cannot think what to do with his life, except to continue to work for the newspaper "until the picture palace's screen is rent asunder" by "reality" (98). At this point in the novel,

Pettygrew cannot conceive of an escape from this realm of shadows and false ideals—the character of Pettygrew, like that of Edwin Reardon, shows how writing for a living, in fulfillment of false values such as Savory's ideals or market preferences, is spiritually exhausting. The virtues of "reality," of objective good and beauty, are remote from Pettygrew.

Early in the novel, Pettygrew is at work in the *Courier* offices, producing an editorial on riots in Bombay, a topic which has recently caught Old Savory's interest. Noting Old Savory's continued commitment to his ideals, Pettygrew muses, "Strange that [Old Savory] should still believe in principles as principles. Strange that he should still look at them, their abstract statement, to resolve conflicts, order chaos." For Pettygrew's own part, having questioned the reality of the boss's axioms, he sits down at the typewriter to compose the article; looking out the window, he sees "[I]f it wash[ing] up and down the street like tides washing up and down a shore [...] No contact with it, Pettygrew thought bitterly. [...] Only patterns forming, unforming, reforming. Only... He began to type [...]" (5). Pettygrew has become severed from reality—"Rioting in Bombay, he thought, is at least real. It happens; but I, writing about it here, translating it into terms of shadowy, unfelt hopes, empty principles, am nothing" (6)—but he continues to type. This, perhaps, is because he has become a literary machine. "Practice had made him able to write slickly about Hindu-Moslem rioting. So much, he thought, for the facts; now to relate a principle to them [...] It only remained to round off the whole by expressing a suitable hope. This was easy, because, though facts and even principles changed, the *Courier's* hopes remained the same" (6). Stock phrases, particularly, "It is greatly to be hoped," are how the *Courier* translates real events into abstract principles—Old Savory's "valid ideals." Later in the novel, Muggeridge describes Pettygrew composing the "three hundred words on education that had served him well many before, and would serve him again," just as soon as he finds a quote from a recent speech that can be plugged into the article to serve as a "peg," to make it once again newsworthy; in this way, Muggeridge writes, "serious-minded men and women [are] provided with breakfast table and train reading matter" (39-41). The formula of reality plus principles has been so ingrained in Pettygrew that, home from work and drifting off to sleep, he can compose a *Courier* leader about the state of his marriage just as he can about the rioting in Bombay: "It is greatly to be hoped that the passage of time will dull their sensibilities..." (18).

As the newspaper is haunted by "dead causes" after Old Savory's death (101), so Pettygrew is haunted by his own apathy, his disbelief in love or any objective principles (104). Literature, too, is beyond him: he has been working on a novel, however its characters are all "dead before they were born; abstractions, like the ideas he spun out each evening into leading articles." The only thing he is capable of writing is the promotional material, his author biography, formulaic praise (135-37). When Arthur Savory dies unexpectedly, Pettygrew, at work on his friend's obituary, is "sickened" by the ready journalistic phrases with which he eventually pads out his account of the man's life: "all lies [...] How much have I ever written that has not been lies?" (148-50).

It is just after he has completed this betrayal of his friend's spirit that the *Courier's* headquarters catches fire: "A terrible joy took possession of [Pettygrew]. [...] Arthur's obituary would never be published. [...] Flames would consume the papers already printed; melt the leaden type, lately arranged, into a shapeless mass of molten metal; destroy [...] every trace of [Old Savory]" (152). These flames, which will burn the daily papers, efface their words, and destroy the machinery which produces them: excite Pettygrew, who experiences the fire as "purifying" (152), a cleansing, both material, in the newspapers reduced to embers, and spiritually as well. Pettygrew is at least free to leave; he travels to London, where, eventually, he overcomes his cynicism to reunite with his wife, and to believe, once again, in life. He stays with her during a period of illness; the novel ends with her fever breaking: "she was alive, and he was alive. Their love was alive. They had triumphed over death" (205). Only after the traces of Old Savory are burned away can Pettygrew find what eluded the newspaper potentate: a real connection, a source of true and resilient vitality. "'Soon we'll make some plans,'" Pettygrew tells his wife (206); surely, these plans will not involve any more newspaper work.

Michael Frayn's *Towards the End of the Morning*: Against Entropy

Scoop and *Picture Palace* share an attitude of cynicism, dismissing outright any connection between enduring literary and social importance, on the one hand, and the practice of journalism, on the other. But the gravity with which *Picture Palace* observes this state of affairs marks it as an outlier in the newspaper-novel genre. The image, and self-image, of the newspaperman in mid-twentieth-century British fiction looks much like William Boot and his colleagues. Every standard of professional

competence and ethics is cheerily dismantled; newspaper work is identified with a highly specialized style of unprofessionalism. If this reflects a moral judgment on writing for money, it also stands as a point of perverse pride—a self-mythologization which also begins to tilt towards the nostalgic.

In a 2005 survey of the genre, Christopher Hitchens observed "[a] few themes [which] seem to be emerging from the way in which our novelists have treated our journalists: copious [alcohol consumption], mediocrity, cynicism, sloth, and meanness of spirit. [...] shameless and indeed boastful fabrication. [...] the fiddling of expenses." Among the rolls of dishonor, Hitchens counts *Scoop* as well as Waugh's *Decline and Fall* and *The Loved One*, with their evocation of a disinterested press which can only be roused by whisky; by Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*, which opens with the murder of a gin-sozzled newspaper correspondent sent to the South Coast as part of circulation stunt; by the boundless contempt shown by editors for reporters in Kingsley Amis's *Girl, 20*, and by journalists for their readers in Martin Amis's *Yellow Dog*; and by the "port-soaked" journalist "Books" Bagshaw, in Anthony Powell's *Books Do Furnish a Room*:

He possessed that opportune facility for turning out several thousand words on any subject whatever at the shortest possible notice: politics: sport: books: finance: science: art: fashion—as he himself said, "War, Famine, Pestilence or Death on a Pale Horse". All were equal when it came to Bagshaw's typewriter. He would take on anything, and—to be fair—what he produced, even off the cuff, was no worse than what was to be read most of the time. (Qtd. in Hitchens)

The authors he lists, Hitchens observes, were written by newspaper reporters, editors, freelancers and columnists, "[y]et they all unite in employing the figure of the journalist, or the setting of a newspaper, as the very pattern and mould of every type of squalor and venality." These books, he continues, were "written by journalists and for journalists," and are indeed beloved by journalists precisely *because* of their extensively depicted professional misbehavior. Hitchens's own personal favorites are the novels of Michael Frayn.

Towards the End of the Morning (1967) is set in an unnamed newspaper which has been taken to stand in for both of Frayn's former employers, the *Guardian* and the *Observer* (vi-x). Frayn establishes his merciless, loving satirical tone in the first

pages, which introduce the staffers responsible for the crossword, the daily Meditation and the “Country Day By Day” column. Editor John Dyson is “heading for a crack-up,” driven to frantic anxiety by the copy to be proofed, the offers of free merchandise and complimentary tickets to be refused, and the contributors to be reached on the phone, which he cannot bear to dial, so overwhelmed is he by the crush of his responsibilities. He takes his neuroses out on his underling, the hapless Bob, alternating between unfiltered anguish (“I honestly sometimes wonder how I’m expected to carry on [...] I slave and slave to keep this department going! I work my guts out doing three men’s work! I literally work myself into the ground!”) and unmodulated praise (“Bless you, Bob! [...] You’re a poppet, you really are. I’m sorry I went on about it like that. I know how busy you are. We’re all busy. We’re all under strain. I’m sorry, Bob.”). In the corner sits “old Eddy Moulton,” dozing and dreaming of a long-gone colleague, Stanley Furl— who once gave himself a black eye with the gold-plated handle of his own cane—and then copying out century-old clippings, in “close, careful longhand,” for a feature called “In Days Gone By” (1-6).

Elsewhere at the newspaper, a similar atmosphere of inconsequentiality and aversion to engagement also obtains. The Editor hides from his staff (6-7). Reg Mounce, the Pictures Editor, repeats an anecdote about “practically” bluffing his way past the police and into a restricted area to get a scoop; derides a staff photographer for taking “crap” pictures of local sights, which he quickly decides to run anyway; and browbeats the same photographer into lending him five pounds, to be paid back (with interest) by the newspaper courtesy of an expense form, made out “at random [...] two nights expenses in Wolverhampton, with lunches and entertainment for contacts” (7-10). The abuse of expense forms is a recurrent feature in newspaper novels, signifying regularized unscrupulousness. It also suggests a complete disconnection between compensation and real work.

Lunch is at the Gates of Jerusalem, the paper’s regular watering hole, where “Dyson and Bob [find] Bill Waddy, the News Editor, with Mike Sparrow, Ralph Absalom, Ted Hurwitz, and Andy Royle. It was that sort of set which went there” (12). In addition to its inevitability, lunchtime social life also heavily features pointless unfinished anecdotes and reciprocal round-buying, and lasts about an hour and a half, at which point the journalists straggle back to the office, “walking a little more slowly now as the day began to tell upon them” (12-14). After lunch, work begins, after a fashion: Bob begins work on a freelance book review, and Dyson on a

radio script, until he is overtaken by fatigue: "I must cut out this beer for lunch [...] God, I was going to have a blitz on crosswords this afternoon" (14-16). By tea-time, the sounds of typewriters begin to distinguish the newspaper office, at last, as a place of work. The belated, almost incidental shaking to life of the newspaperman after a long, boozy lunch is a trope of the newspaper novel, à la Powell's Books Bagshaw. Keith Waterhouse also paid extended tribute this aspect of the trade in his columns, Fleet Street memoirs and especially his play, *Jeffrey Bernard Is Unwell*, taking its name from the excuse made whenever the eponymous columnist was too drunk to file his copy (1989). More generally, the ability to write with ease on deadline, to suit the needs of the market without the literary self-consciousness of writer's block, however drunk, is what passes for professionalism. Eddy Moulton at one point recalls: "[r]eal journalists. Real professionals. Stanford could turn you out an impeccable paragraph on any subject you liked to name at the drop of a hat. He'd have done a par about the lead in his pencil if you asked him—a stick and a half—a column—whatever you needed; and all of it full of wit and erudition" (90). This is "facile penmanship" to rival Jasper Milvain; it is not any depth of knowledge which is valued, but adaptability to demand, often emphasized with an air of swashbuckling apathy—the (un)professional pride alluded to earlier.

Finally, "just after eight o'clock the glass in all the windows start[s] to vibrate," lamps rattle, loose items fall off desks, as the printing presses in the basement begin to churn out the next day's first edition (16-17). Again, the newspaper business is dominated by the imperatives of its industrial machinery, as, here, the office atmosphere of time-marking and raging ennui is at last channeled into productive labor. The writing produced at last in the last hours of a fitful workday is as grist for the mill, in fulfillment of the fearsome machine's daily quotas. Frayn's newspapermen are "manufacturing copy," like Jasper Milvain, but without Milvain's thrill of entrepreneurship. Rather, Dyson, perpetually falling behind on his backlog of crossword puzzles, is an ironic version of Edwin Reardon, who Gissing describes churning out pages to pay the rent, "regularly at work [...] ticking off his stipulated quantum of manuscript each four-and-twenty hours," so as to finish a new novel he will not care for, in time to sell by Christmas (120-21). The difference, of course, is that Dyson gives no thought to the merit of his obviously disposable newspaper work; and by now, almost a full industrialized century later, Dyson's place on the assembly line is enough to ensure him an acceptably comfortable lifestyle.

The workday rituals Frayn establishes in his first chapter are repeated for comic effect throughout the novel. The following day, Dyson is high-strung, Bob passive, and old Eddy Moulton moulders in the corner, "dreaming about someone he had not thought of for years and years—a character called Stanley Furl, who had fallen downstairs at the Press Club one night and blacked out his eye on the silver knob of his cane" (46-47). Lunch is at the Gates—it's Ralph Absalom's round this time—and in the afternoon, Bob returns to his private correspondence, and Dyson yawns: "God, I was going to have a blitz on "Thoughts" this afternoon [...] I must knock off this beer at lunch" (50-53). The barroom refrain of "same again?" begins to take on an almost sinister force. The *dailiness* of newspaper life becomes associated with numbing repetition, and unskilled, inconsequential production.

It is in this context that Dyson dreams of a move out of journalism and into the lofty domains of television. Nagged by the mundanity of his work and the compromises of his personal finances, he aspires to do dazzling work, to be surrounded by dazzling people, and, in doing so, to make dazzling sums of money (59-61). Television is associated with status, prominence, recognition of merit, and commensurate compensation—at least in Dyson's head. In fact, his eventual appearance on a TV panel discussion, with prominent fellow-guests, is characterized by pre-show socializing at least as anodyne and repetitive as any conversation in the Gates; and a disastrously untelegenic on-air appearance which none of his colleagues watch (76-85; 97).

That one must get out journalism by age 40, into a more prestigious or specialized field, is a piece of professional wisdom repeated frequently by Dyson and others (15-16 and elsewhere). In the US, *Towards the End of the Morning* was originally titled *Against Entropy* (v), and entropic breakdown, a slowing cycle of "same again," is Dyson's destiny. Frayn, in his 2000 Introduction, acknowledges as well that his intended theme, a man grappling with the limitations of middle age and the creep of obsolescence, is also applicable to the profession, journalism, he was then himself leaving (xi).

A major turning point in the novel is the death of poor old Eddy Moulton. The day after Dyson's TV washout, Eddy, "in an unusually forthcoming mood," regales Dyson and Bob with tales of old colleagues—a litany of proper names as dizzying as those of "the Waddy-Absalom-Hurwitz set"—as well as notorious stories covered, articles written, drinks consumed, punches thrown, and funerals attended; his

memories appear to be jumbled up with the stories recently copied out for "In Days Gone By" (90-92). Upon returning from lunch at the Gates, and wracked by self-doubt and fear of failure, Dyson thinks to himself, in a moment of guilty solidarity, that he ought to take Eddy out for a drink, "get him talking, and then listen, really listen, while old Eddy disinterred one man's life from the dust of time, and put it together again before his eyes"—it is subsequent to train of thought that Dyson notices that Eddy is not sleeping but dead (99-100). On the car ride to Eddy's funeral after a lunch at the Gates, Dyson and his colleagues belch rudely, discuss the wisdom of getting out of journalism before age 40 (an age many have passed), and remember old colleagues who are themselves beginning to die off (142-45). They are the rising generation of Eddy Moultons; Dyson, at the funeral, imagines his colleague as a schoolroom chalkboard "wiped clean [...] tiny grains of chalk fleeing before the duster, filling the air, and settling upon shiny surfaces, totally and eternally discharged of" any meaning (148). It is telling that death reminds Dyson of daily, replaceable writing. As in *Picture Palace's* funeral scene, death is a reminder of the impermanence and inconsequence of newspaper writing.

From the past to the future: Eddy's desk is soon occupied by one Erskine Morris, as identified with new media as Moulton is with Fleet Street's bygone days. Morris, whose "eyes [are] ageless and neutral," seems almost some new form of information technology, as he is introduced writing at an implacable pace, his every gesture fearsomely efficient:

He was writing something in longhand, the paper turned sideways, the pen flying along the lines away from him at great speed. His left hand rested on the desk, [...] and between the first and second fingers a cigarette with a thin blue tape of smoke rising steadily from it. [...] As Bob looked at it, the hand performed a sudden evolution like a conjuring-trick, turning over and producing from nowhere a pack of American cigarettes, with one of the cigarettes extended towards Bob. The right hand continued to write. The blue tape of smoke from the left hand snaggle for a moment, then the snaggle slid up the tape and disappeared, leaving the smoke rising as steadily as before from the underside of the hand. (154-55)

Morris is a literary machine, his gestures automatic and his pace steady: the flow of words from his pen is a constant action of physical production.

Morris has thrown away all of poor old Eddy Moulton's possessions by the time Bob and Dyson arrive in the office (157). Morris switches to the shared office typewriter, "driving the carriage of the department's battered portable along with his two hammering fingers just about as fast as it would go" (159). On his lunch break, he buys an electric typewriter with his own money. This last action, especially, throws Dyson into an irrational fit (162-63). Morris's "impassive" expression and the "quiet drumming of the electric typewriter" are said "to cramp Dyson's style," to make him self-conscious on the phone with his rural contributors, anxious about his afternoon laziness, and angry at Morris; Morris's effective "blitz" on the "In Years Gone By" feature—more than a month's worth of old articles have now been copied out on the typewriter—has revealed the department's work as menial, automatable, and insignificant, though Dyson insists upon his professional wisdom as the basis for his authority. He asks Bob, "what else *can* I give him to do? [...] He's just a trainee—he doesn't know how to do anything" (167-68).

Bob's kinder attempts at mentorship are equally unconvincing: at the Gates, where Morris orders a Pernod instead of beer, Bob's explanations of familiar office social dynamics are rendered newly ridiculous with Morris's neutral, placating, undermining replies of "sure, sure." Bob also "show[s] him how to make out his expense chits, filling in 'Office duties, 5s. 6d.' for each day of the week, as laid down in the house agreement between union and management" (161-63). When Bob attempts to train Morris in the intricacies of subediting copy, Morris assigns the copy to *him*—"You do it, Bob [...] I'll look it over when you've finished it"—and corrects his work: "'Exhilarating' with an 'a,' Bob" (179-80). Though credentialed, authenticated by their union membership, Dyson and Bob are shown to have little to no specialized knowledge—let alone specialized merit. Frayn adds an additional degree of parody to *Scoop*'s earlier satire of professional standards. Dyson and Bob's newspaper work, producing the industrial quota of crosswords and "In Years Gone By," is not just separate from any real skill: it is also eroding what other basic competencies they may possess, contributing to their entropy.

Morris, however, makes a great success of the newspaper business, producing features and articles for other, higher-profile departments (168), and working with the editor on a new section, a "pre-teen page," to tap into the youth market: "There's a lot of advertising in pre-teen[s]," he explains to Bob (179). Morris tells Bob: "I'm interested in newspapers, Bob. I think they still have a big future in front of them. [...]"

I see myself owning one" (189). What Morris is specifically interested in is the newspaper as a center of an empire of niche publications, magazines, targeting specific demographics, "the right markets. [...] Lots of markets still untapped, Bob. [...] Lots of money there, Bob. Sell them [things]" (189). If Morris is productive as a writer, it's because he understands that the content only exists as a broker between readers and the advertisers who desire to reach them. (Weekend magazine supplements such as Morris seems to be describing will play a significant role in *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* and *The Spoiler*, both discussed below.)

Given Morris's evident skill for meeting market needs, and the equally evident stagnation of the newspaper industry, it is inevitable that Morris will be associated not just with a brave new world of reverse-engineered content production, but with new media. The first thing he is seen to be writing, when Bob meets him, is a script for a TV crime drama (157). When he accepts Bob's invitation for dinner, Morris spends the evening watching Westerns and medical and legal dramas on Bob's telly, raptly attentive and serious (unlike Bob, who laughs at infelicities in the scripts); he also watches a pop singer—one of his many fashionably dressed, perpetually bored-seeming friends, it transpires—perform a song on a variety show, "I Can't Stop Crying," the insipid lyrics to which Morris himself wrote: "It's what the children like," he shrugs (170-72).

The novel ends with Morris having taken over Dyson's spot on another TV panel discussion. The hapless careerist Dyson, and the indecisive Bob, who had the opportunity to appear and inadvertently invited Morris to do so, close out the novel watching observing Morris, this emissary of a future that is not theirs, a perfect TV presence in stark contrast to Dyson: "his voice flow[ing] on like the smoke rising from his cigarette, steady and unemphatic, but definitely hypnotic [...] gaz[ing] impassively [...] with the suggestion of a cryptic smile" (220-21).

As a corollary to *Towards the End of the Morning*, Frayn's previous novel, *The Tin Men* (1965) also makes great fun of professional journalistic standards, and looks forward to the newspaper industry's replacement by a new set of machines.

The Tin Men is set at the William Morris Institute of Automation Research, where Goldwasser, head of the newspaper department, cuts a figure rather similar to Dyson's: he is plagued by intellectual self-doubt, afflicted by "a sort of cerebral

hypochondria," obsessed with his own IQ and worried that his faculties are declining, his former promise surrendering to entropy (15).

As Frayn explains, Goldwasser's department is engaged in "demonstrati[ng] that in theory a digital computer could be programmed to produce a perfectly satisfactory daily newspaper with all the variety and news sense of the old hand-made article [...] Once Goldwasser and his colleagues had proved the theory, commercial interests would no doubt swiftly put it into practice³" (37). Goldwasser's department breaks down news stories into basic plots with variables and invariables, noting also the frequency with which the stories run. The story file "Child Told Dress Unsuitable by Teacher" contains:

ninety-five cuttings about children who had been told their dress was unsuitable by their teacher, an analysis of the cuttings into their elements, and a report from the researcher who had prepared the file. The report read:

"V. Satis. Basic plot entirely invariable. Variables confined to three. (1) Clothing objected to (high heels/petticoat/frilly knickers). (2) Whether child also smokes and/or uses lipstick. (3) Whether child alleged by parents to be humiliated by having offending clothing inspected before whole school.

"Frequency of publication: once every nine days." (38)

As Dyson discovers when Erskine Morris replaces Eddy Moulton in *Towards the End of the Morning*, the writing for which newspapers pay is a kind of industrial drudgery. Journalism is one of "the great areas of life which have ossified, where activity has been reduced to the manipulation of a finite range of variables" (123), in the words of Goldwasser's rival, Macintosh of the ethics wing.

This point is underscored by the automated articles themselves, which lack all merit, being either anodyne, as above, or else callously manipulative, as in "Paralysed Girl Determined to Dance Again," which the sensitive Goldwasser puts off work on (37). Meanwhile his unsavory research assistant, Nobbs, tabulates statistics on reader interest in disasters: "The crash survey showed that [...] [a] road crash with ten dead,

³ This is, in fact, prescient on Frayn's part: the firm Narrative Science has successfully programmed computers to compose prose accounts of baseball games, based upon algorithms which fit play-by-play and box score data into a narrative framework (Levy).

the majority felt, was slightly less interesting than a rail crash with one dead [...] a rail crash was always entertaining, with or without children's toys still lying pathetically among the wreckage" (69).

Goldwasser later observes that his colleagues are:

all handicapped by the fact that even the biggest known computer has only a fraction of the capacity and complexity of the human brain. Goldwasser was not. The human brains he was replacing, he discovered as he analysed the newspaper files, suffered from neither capacity nor complexity. Or if they did, they didn't let it interfere with their work. As if foreseeing the limited intellects of the digital computers which would one day replace them, they had introduced the most drastic simplifications into their work already. (108)

The newspaper conventions, Goldwasser observes, have reduced the English language into flashy, essentially meaningless shorthand, "a simplification to the point of abstraction," so that words do not describe or influence the world but merely become a closed system, like mathematics, referring only to themselves: "A man who manufactured shoe polish, or marketed shoe polish, or appeared in television commercials for shoe polish, or organised a strike against the shoe-polish manufacturers, or ate shoe polish, was simply 'Mr. Shoe Polish'" (109-110).

Goldwasser had earlier developed "UHL [...] Unit Headline Language [...] a comprehensive lexicon of all the multi-purpose monosyllables used by headline-writers," words like "ban," "dash," "fear," "strike," "threat," which can be arranged at random to create the impression of meaning, and allow a newspaper to give the impression, at least, of covering weighty issues:

Goldwasser had had a survey conducted, in fact, in which 457 people were shown the headlines

ROW HOP MOVE FLOP

LEAK DASH SHOCK

HATE BAN BID PROBE

Asked if they thought they understood the headlines, 86.4 per cent said yes, but of these 97.3 per cent were unable to offer any explanation of what it was they understood (68).

This is very similar to *Scoop*'s telegraphic speech, the easy merging of man and machine into blurted staccato syntax, which signifies the streamlining of writing into commercial imperative; and this, in turn, invites us to look back further. Frayn's "Tin Men" of the Institute of Automation Research are literary machines, "automatons" which manufacture new writing out of old for an eager marketplace. The alternative, genuine literary merit, is laughable. Rowe, of the sports department, is attempting to compose a novel; however for most of *Tin Men* he, like Pettygrew, can only get as far as his author biography: "He knew what he wanted to write, but he couldn't say it. Or write it, really. [...] the visions he wished to describe were as warm and fugitive as dreams" (59). *The Tin Men* ends with a description of one of the Institute's machines composing its own author biography, for the book jacket of its first novel, *The Tin Men* (191). There can be no industrial counter-revolution.

Despite this, and unlike the heroes of other novels, Dyson and Bob actually appear to stay at their newspaper jobs—where perhaps they, like Eddy Moulton, will die at their desks. For Hitchens, Frayn's novels are beloved by journalist not just because they appeal to a hack's quixotic pride, but to a sense of nostalgia as well: "Probably nothing is as boring as the reminiscences of an old Fleet Street hand, but I shall have to say that I pity those now in the trade who won't remember [its] atmosphere [...] the smell of printer's ink, the thunder of the presses [...] the suicidal imbibing [...] the callousness and gallows humour." Frayn makes a similar point, thirty-plus years and innumerable industry upheavals after *Towards the End of the Morning*'s original publication, in his 2000 Introduction. Frayn, like Hitchens, mourns the dispersal of newspaper headquarters away from Fleet Street, and recalls the smell of printer's ink and the presses "left over from some earlier industrial age," as well as the particular pubs of each paper, the "rather gentlemanly pace" of work, and "that astonishing ability to drink until the floor tips and still write a thousand words on the shocking decline in standards of behavior" (v-ix). The paper at which his novel is set, Frayn speculates, "has presumably been relocated to a more remote and less congenial environment, if not to the footnotes of media history," like other defunct papers he mentions earlier (x). "Now, I suppose, the evening is drawing on," he concludes, "and here am I [...] rambling on about the past like poor Eddy Moulton" (xi-xii). The work

may be meaningless, and carried out with profound ethical indifference, but it is nevertheless recalled fondly, as a thing of the past.

Philip Norman's *Everyone's Gone to the Moon*: Cold Salmon

With *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* (1995), Philip Norman indulges in a nostalgia for that era from several decades on, just as Eddy Moulton eulogizes his colleagues from the era of *Scoop*. In fact, Michael Frayn even makes an appearance in *Everyone's Gone to the Moon*, albeit off-screen as it were, his name listed among the guests on Granada TV's *What the Papers Say*, to recall the era of British journalism in which the novel takes place (6). Journalism in the 1960s is a thrilling proposition for Frayn's protagonist, Louis Brennan, a young provincial reporter at the start of the novel. Word of London, and the Swinging 60s comes to him via the full-color "magazine supplement" of the formerly staid *Sunday Dispatch* newspaper, in which bold, stylized photojournalism from Vietnam mingles with Tom Jones photographed by David Bailey, and "famous or notorious" fashion-forward advertising spreads; Louis reads the magazine supplement with an attitude "of mingled admiration, envy, desire and hopelessness" (5-6). Louis's excitement over the advertisements is similar to that of his contemporary, *Towards the End of the Morning*'s Bob, who from his position in the backwaters of the newspaper industries marvels at the impossibly slender, on-trend appearance of the models photographed in fashion magazines, and the singers with whom Erskine Morris socializes (29-30, 172). The *Sunday Dispatch* magazine is, like Morris's planned "pre-teen" page, a bold intervention in the marketplace. Initially a money-losing "folly," the full-color magazine supplement grows in popularity as English culture undergoes seismic changes in the 1960s—"so many marvelous things were happening," particularly the artistic endeavors of young men and women in their 20s—becoming, by the start of the book, "the marvel of Fleet Street, a commercial gold-mine built on the unlikely foundations of quality, daring and extravagance." Circulation is up to an "unprecedented" 1.6 million, and copycats abound, none succeeding in replicating the *Dispatch* magazine's status "as the mirror and chronicler of suddenly stylish, affluent, double cream-gorging, 'swinging' Britain" (20-22). English consumer society is suddenly the center of the world. The magazine supplement's success in the marketplace, in terms of its extensive, expensive color adverts as well as its high circulation numbers, confirms its importance as the meeting-point of the newspaper industry and the zeitgeist.

Upon arriving in London as a staff writer for the *Sunday Dispatch* Magazine Supplement, Louis is thrown headlong into this zeitgeist. He is present at England's World Cup Victory (87-89), and the Rolling Stones drug bust in which the police find Marianne Faithfull dressed in nothing but a rug (274-97); he meets Twiggy (58) and Ronny Kray (215), and interviews Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in the Alps for the shoot of *Where Eagles Dare*, so becoming privy to their tempestuous relationship and insatiable appetites (215-36). The novel is about a shining moment in journalism, when the dictates of the market are perfectly in step with historical significance. Historical significance, that is, at least as far as the author is concerned: the names Norman drops throughout the novel, alongside extensive mentions of Carnaby Street fashion, British Invasion music, and other signifiers, may actually be more subjectively than objectively momentous. Still, the cumulative effect of so much celebrity and still-recognizable cultural iconography at the very least evokes a particular historical moment. *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* is about a golden age, both for English society as Norman remembers it, and for the media, which shares in the values of the times.

That the moment is necessarily a brief one, however, is clear from the outset. The *Dispatch* magazine, at the forefront of its industry, is also at the forefront of the sort of unprofessional excess so beloved in novels by and for journalists, particularly in terms of food and drink consumption, and expense-fiddling. Louis learns, like his colleagues, to fill out the slip for an "advance on expenses," almost doubling his monthly salary with walking-around money to use on food, drink and clothes (73). Meanwhile, the weekly "Ideas Lunch," at the office of the magazine's editor—the benevolent "God," Toby Godwin—regularly boasts a catered spread to rival any of the fancy, expenses-paid lunches which keep the staff away from their desks during most of the workday. A typical ideas lunch array includes:

a whole cold salmon, elaborately decorated; a joint of beef, a ham and a tall, sculpted game pie. There were silver platters of salad in variegated colours, avocado halves, chicken mayonnaise and giant prawns, half a Stilton, a whole Brie, celery, French loaves, cheese biscuits, strawberries, raspberries, peaches and bunches of pink grapes. [God's secretary] Tessa was taking white-topped wine bottles out of the refrigerator to add to the half-dozen red-topped ones already drawn up. (67-68)

Despite its despite its Herculean expenses, and its habit of turning away unfashionable advertisers, the magazine's profits prop up the rest of the newspaper. In fact, when Louis begins work there, "God" commissions freelance articles on a spree to keep the magazine from spending under its budget: "I've asked [...] all our big-name writers—Mailer, Capote, Tony Burgess—they can go and do a piece anywhere they like... just stick a pin in the map" (70). The magazine's position as a style leader may also encourage its longtime staffers to cultivate, rather than soften, their attitudes of superiority: shooting down Louis's suggestion of a Paul McCartney profile, Features Editor Terry Bracegirdle and brilliant lead feature writer Evelyn Strachey complain that "The Beatles have been done to death," and that "McCartney's pretty boring actually [...] Ringo Starr's much the more interesting one of the four because he's so transcendently uninteresting" (71). Such a paradoxical, ahead-of-the-curve assessment of current trends is clearly the luxury of the magazine, which is so interesting it can afford not to take interest. (It is also so interesting that many of its staffers can afford not to write anything at all, such as Freya Broadbent, who spends the better part of a year traveling the world on expenses in order to research a story about De Gaulle's brief residence in a Kentish village, without managing to write a single word.)

Clearly, though, if the magazine lives by the fashion of the times, it will also die by them. Ad bookings, raging throughout 1965 and 1966, drop precipitously in 1967 (337), and the stylish excesses of the magazine turn decadent, ultimately climaxing with a budget-busting Victorian-themed photo-shoot bacchanalia:

Lunch under the willow tree took a further three and a half hours. It began as a Victorian picnic, styled and photographed after the Magazine's characteristic assumption that all Victorians picnicked on lobster, salmon and sea trout supplied by Fortnum and Mason, with wines by Grants of St James and silverware from Mappin & Webb. Towards the end, at no very clear signal, it turned into a food fight à la Mack Sennett [...] with Twiggy squashing a fresh raspberry gâteau into [Godwin's face] [...] Amid the splattering cream and meringue, [Louis] felt a sudden odd premonition, indefinable and very slight, which he would afterwards liken to that first oh-so-gentle bump against the impregnable bulkheads of the *Titanic*. (411)

Godwin will soon be fired, with many of his staff also leaving.

Even before the bust, though, the boom is not without its restrictions, which are familiar from the experience of previous generations of hacks. The excitements of the magazine's timeliness can only obscure for so long the limitations it inevitably places on literary endeavor. Mailer, Capote and Tony Burgess may be writers of note, but they are also celebrities, and Louis finds his own opportunities for expression to be blocked by office politics, with the dismissal of his Beatles pitch the first in a pattern. Competition is endemic: according to Severn, in his article on *New Grub Street*, identification with one's profession, the acquisition of qualifications and bona fides, is an intense form of social competition in an age no longer defined by ancient class hierarchies (Severn, 166-70). Despite the satire of professional practices, the competition for professional status is just as fierce as the competition for political influence in the previous century—and just as unrelated to any objective standard.

Called "Poet" by his mentor Jack Shildrick (more on whom shortly), Louis is presented as a preternaturally gifted prose stylist—writing is not just his profession, but also his vocation. A publisher corners him at a party and hounds him, not for the first time, about writing a novel; when Louis weakly replies that he lacks the time, the publisher advises him, "Have you ever read Connolly's *Enemies of Promise*? About the blighting effect of journalism on true literary endeavor" (207). As Louis's pieces—some of them, anyway—begin to find their way into print, he continues to struggle to produce *true* literary endeavor. David Kausman, a brilliant advisory editor to the magazine, a voice of reason and an admirer of Louis's writing, is even more emphatic. Having read the completed chapters of the novel Louis has finally begun, Kausman is full of effusive praise, and tells him to quit his day job:

"You're spoiled rotten. And it's had the worst possible effect on you. When you first came from your provincial paper last year, you were a whirlwind. You'd sit and rattle out a piece in a couple of hours... then be raring to go for the next one. I've watched you over the months getting slower, more complacent and arrogant. [...] What do you want to be at the age of thirty? And forty [...] writing the same piece over and over again? In journalism—I should know!—the years fly by. And nothing ever changes. The same backstabbing and intriguing goes on over the same

meaningless titles and squalid little offices. The same battles to the death are fought over who controls the same pathetic plots of space." (393-94)

Here, again, is the advice to get out of the newspaper business while still a young man, but with a renewed urgency, as the expense slips and excessive food and drink—the fruits of the magazine's popularity—are viewed as a cozy, numbing sinecure. To fulfill his gifts, Louis is told, he needs to write for himself.

Critiques of the magazine come most harshly from the editor of the *Sunday Dispatch*, Louis's former mentor Jack Shildrick, who, disgusted with one risqué feature—"are we The Sunday Dispatch or bloody Tit-Bits?"—points out the magazine's less than nurturing atmosphere, and dismisses its journalistic seriousness: "It's no place for you, Poet... or for any serious journalist. If you ask me, they're out of bloody control down there, thanks to this ridiculous carte-blanche they get [...]. They've lost all regard for what the ordinary reader wants." He acknowledges the magazine's appeal for Louis: "It's the life of bloody Riley. [...] Just don't think it'll necessarily go on like that forever" (205). The fashionable frivolity of the magazine is in striking contrast to Shildrick's relentless public-interest journalism: as the magazine staff jokes about their "What Did Christ Really Look Like? feature ("we could give the whole portfolio to Scotland Yard and ask them to make up an Identikit picture. The cover could be like a wanted poster... 'Have YOU seen this Redeemer of Mankind?')", Shildrick, in his latest of a long line of crusades, is fighting court injunctions against reporting on a deadly engineering bug present in a "leading British-made luxury car." The automaker threatens to withhold advertising; the story runs and circulation spikes (250-51). This may seem like a victory for the view of the newspaper as a force for truth and social—Lowe's "most correct intelligence of the events of the time," becoming "the common property of the nation." But the version of journalism embodied by Shildrick is not as virtuous and objectively valuable as it initially seems.

Shildrick is not above "economizing the truth," as it were, to make it more market-friendly. When Louis profiles "Singapore Charlie," a bumbling sailor whose attempted circumnavigation of the globe will be covered exclusively by the *Sunday Dispatch* proper, Shildrick cuts juicy details in order to portray Charlie in a more flattering light (112-13). This is linked, as well, to the familiar characteristic of personal ambition: Singapore Charlie becomes not just a circulation boost to the

newspaper, but an important victory for Shildrick personally, in his climb up the newspaper hierarchy (154-56). The magazine initially operates completely autonomously from the "Steam Section," as Louis's magazine colleagues regularly, derisively refer to the rest of the *Sunday Dispatch*; however Shildrick's influence over the magazine grows, as his campaigns draw more attention, and magazine ad revenues drop. His ideas for a more useful, reader-responsive magazine are not always motivated purely by a regard for the objective social value of journalism. At the same Ideas Lunch at which Shildrick arrives uninvited—an obvious power grab, a claim on the magazine's territory—he suggests not just a comically altruistic "ABC of Teeth—a reader-service guide to better oral hygiene," but also, more firmly, a profile of Cat Stevens by one Fran Dyson, his new protégé, star reporter, and lover (315-19).

Fran Dyson's rise through the newspaper hierarchy does not just underscore the less than objective considerations which inform Shildrick's stewardship of the *Sunday Dispatch*. In fact, Fran emerges over the course of the novel as something like the consummate newspaper hack—both a pen and a body for hire. Initially a romantic possibility for Louis, she soon embarks on a series of affairs with men in progressively higher positions within the media hierarchy: first the magazine's Features Editor; then Shildrick; then, it is implied, a producer at the BBC, where she works for a time, before Shildrick, desperate to keep her in London, offers her the job of editor for the *Sunday Dispatch* magazine—a job he had previously promised to Louis (437-38). Even beyond the general contours of her character arc, however, Fran's rise is associated with specific acts of borderline prostitution. She first comes to the attention of Louis's superior after volunteering to pose nude for the cover of the magazine (164-70). Sex sells, both for Fran and for the media in general: when the issue runs, the entire print run sells out within a day, inspiring both censure and copycatting, as well as more progressive (and fashionable) coverage of sex throughout the newspaper industry: "Few could doubt that British journalism had taken arguably its greatest leap forward since front pages abandoned small-ads in favour of news" (192-93). As with Shildrick's campaigns, socially important journalism is merely a byproduct of the desire for sales and personal advancement.

Louis also experiences Fran's manipulations firsthand: she attempts to steal one of his stories, an exciting anecdote from the Burton and Taylor piece, after offering to take dictation, and receive the affections, of a love-struck Louis (234-36, 238-39). Norman, perhaps sensing the potential misogyny within his characterization

of an only vaguely talented, sexually opportunistic career woman, allows Fran to explain her rationale as a sexually objectified "dolly bird in a big man's world" (324). Regardless, Fran's career trajectory is not so different from Shildrick's—or, for that matter, for Louis's, whose professional opportunities are not always achieved strictly through merit. For instance, Shildrick rewards his discretion over the affair with Fran by offering Louis a few weeks as the author of the *Sunday Dispatch*'s prestigious "Cicero" diary column (335-36).

It is this path that Louis ultimately rejects. The novel ends with Norman's protagonist, disillusioned with the Fleet Street lifestyle, leaving the *Dispatch* offices for good, turning his back on journalism—like Will Ladislaw, Boot of the *Beast*, and *Picture Palace*'s Pettygrew. He has, by this point, gotten out of journalism—and well before age 40—by striking deals to publish two books: both the long-gestating novel, a fictionalized account of his colorful childhood as the son of a ballroom owner on the Isle of Wight; and a comprehensive nonfiction account of the Beatles, a project suggested by Kausman, which will go beyond the surface skimmed in the disposable "millions of words," which have killed the group as a serious subject for a Sunday Magazine article (395). Louis, who had recently been present at Brian Epstein's house when the Beatles manager is found dead—another fortuitous reporting gig—tells Fran the inside story about his depression and possible suicide; to her exclamation, "Christ, what a story," and her questions about whether he plans to write about it for the Magazine, or the Sunday newspaper, Louis replies, "I'm not doing it for anyone [...] I mean, not for anyone except me. It's the prologue of my book [...] Nobody gets to read it until then" (425). He is valuing his work above the competition for status within the magazine section, and between different sections of the paper; he is transcending the news cycle.

In fact, Philip Norman himself began his career as an author with an autobiographical novel, *The Skater's Waltz*, about a boy—called "Louis"—growing up on the Isle of Wight, where his father runs an amusement hall; as well as *Shout! The Beatles in Their Generation*, an ambitious work on the history and cultural importance of the band, which Norman described as "set[ting] down a marker in a field where the overwhelming majority of books were shoddily produced paperbacks, retelling the same facts in half-literate prose" (Proctor). His subsequent books about the Beatles and the Rolling Stones had their genesis in his work, beginning in the late 1960s at the age of just 22, as a journalist for the Magazine supplement of the *Sunday*

Times (Ibid). *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* is, quite obviously, a roman à clef; in reviews at the time of the novel's publication, members of the English media were quick, and consistent, in their identification of major and minor figures in the novel with their real-life counterparts from the *Sunday Times* (Connolly, Walsh). Prior to the novel's publication, Sir Harold Evans, the former *Times* editor and model for Jack Shildrick, corresponded with the book's publisher, waiving his right to sue for libel, while noting that the novel was "[a] bit hard on my wife maybe"—Fran Dyson is Tina Brown, with their courtship moved up a decade to fit the novel's chronology—"but one bows one's head to dramatic licence in a work of fiction" (Linklater). (As the editor of Random House, Evans himself published the book in the US, telling one subordinate, presumably in the familiar Northern English dialect which identifies Shildrick, "I wouldn't want anyone else to pooblish this book, would I?" [Menaker]) Like *Picture Palace*—and perhaps *Middlemarch*!—*Everyone's Gone to the Moon* is an account of how the lure of the newspaper business was gradually extinguished for its writer. Likewise, the existence of the novel itself, an account of journalism written only once its author became an ex-journalist, is proof of the incompatibility of literary ambition with the everyday compromises of a newspaper job.

Yet, even more explicitly than *Towards the End of the Morning*, *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* is a novel in mourning for the era whose unprofessional excesses it lovingly caricatures. "As Louis approached the automatic glass doors" that would lead him away from the *Sunday Dispatch* for good, Norman writes, "he wondered if this might not be the worst mistake even he had ever made. Before [...] the doors noiselessly drew apart, he decided that on the whole it probably was" (441). Though Louis's persistence past self-doubt is defiant, there is a sense of regret in his leave-taking as well; this comes through in the "curious miscellany" Louis takes with him, an inventory Norman lingers over, listing both mementos, artifacts of vignettes from earlier in the novel, and traces of Fran, which associate Louis's tenure at the magazine with his unfulfilled romantic impulses (435-36). The awareness of loss that informs *Everyone's Gone to the Moon* will increasingly come into play in the 21st century newspaper novel. The progression of the newspaper industry in recent decades have made the job of writing for money, formerly a target of cynicism, into a dream as remote as the past.

“Just a Fad, Bound for Obsolescence”: The Twenty-First Century

The newspaper novels of the last decade have dealt head-on with the prospect of obsolescence, as threatened by competition not just from TV, associated with the rising generation of Erskine Morris and Fran Dysons, but from online media. With the expectation of free content comes the reality of job loss, and professional identification evolves accordingly: fictional journalists are no longer cast in ironic celebrations of seat-of-the-pants ethics or decadent “cozy sinecures.” The machines are winning, and the prospect of professional identification, mocked throughout the twentieth century, is lost entirely. Journalists in the twenty-first-century newspaper novel are either a new breed of hacks, serving the market demands of the new 24-hour news cycle with valueless reports on celebrity culture; or else they are life’s losers, hanging on amid decline and death.

Annalena McAfee’s *The Spoiler*: Ravening Hunger

Everyone’s Gone to the Moon, published in 1995, looks back to the mid-to-late 1960s of *Towards the End of the Morning* as a comparative golden age. Similarly, Annalena McAfee’s *The Spoiler*, published in 2011, is set in 1997, with the changes wrought by the internet age only lurking around the corner. The novel concerns two newspaperwomen: Honor Tait, once a glamorous mid-century foreign correspondent, struggles with the knowledge of her obsolescence, which is embodied in the personification of the contemporary newspaper industry sent to interview her, the young Tamara Sim, who is herself blithely unaware that her own obsolescence is not so far off.

Honor Tait, periodically mistaken for Martha Gellhorn (89, 281), with whom she shares a fierce privacy and certain biographical details (Jardine), is a globe-trotting reporter-hero in the mold savaged by *Scoop*, but in thrilling earnest. Her c.v. suggests a biography aligned with historical consequence, at perpetual personal risk: “the Spanish Civil War in the Thirties, post-war Berlin in the Forties, Korea in the Fifties, Algeria and China in the Sixties, Vietnam in the Seventies” (39). Her professional “motto” evokes an unimpeachable moral virtue and objective eye: “Through patient observation, the meticulous accumulation of detail and a ravening

hunger for the truth, the bigger picture will emerge. It is the duty of the reporter to champion the weak and to shine a searchlight in the darkest corners of human experience" (49). Her Pulitzer Prize-winning report "On Goethe's Oak," about the liberation of Buchenwald, framed with an allusion to the area's literary history (121-22), confirms the loftiness of her mission. The significance of Honor's work is further underscored by her intersection with figures of geopolitical and artistic import, like a more objectively consequential Louis Brennan: iconic photographs, dredged out of the archives for use in TV specials and feature articles, show Honor interviewing Franco (while wearing daring shorts) and dining with Sinatra (39-40).

However, Honor also recognizes that her once-galvanizing brand of "New Journalism" is, by the late 1990s, "superseded by even newer forms," and she is, effectively, retired, with no new articles published in the current decade "and her last piece, on the plight of Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong [...] turned down by the *New Statesman*" (6-7). Her reportage once featured in general-interest magazines like *Time* and *Collier's*, but over the years her published pieces have more frequently been expansive, dry book reviews for the *New York Review of Books*, and "long grey slabs of print" in "even worthier, illustration-free magazines" which McAfee does not name (46). Despite Honor's self-described "allergy to the first person singular" (82) and her intensely private nature, the novel opens with Honor preparing to meet a young journalist who is to interview her about her life and career on the occasion of a new collection of her reportage. In acceding to the interview, Honor has caved in to the desperate urgings of her admiring publisher, who is keeping her work in print, and thus providing Honor with some much-needed income (10-12). In order to keep her work alive, and herself solvent, Honor must lower herself into the new (newer?) media marketplace. In order to sell her work, she has to sell herself, at least in the parlance of the times.

Her interviewer is Tamara Sim, an enterprising hack. Sim is a four-day-a-week "freelance sub editor and occasional writer" for the *Monitor* newspaper's "primary-colored," "Saturday celebrity gossip and TV listings magazine" *Psst!* (17). A typical day's work involves planning listicles on topics such as "Best and Worst Boob Jobs," and "ring-rounds" soliciting quotes on a particular topic from self-promoting second- and third-tier celebrities (291-92). Like Fran Dyson, she's slept with her editors, though with less permanent professional success (21); she is also an expert forger of receipts for expense slips (45). The Honor Tait interview is her first commission for

the *Monitor*'s prestigious *S*nday* section, a weekly magazine supplement which, like the *Sunday Dispatch*'s color magazine in *Everyone's Gone to the Moon*, represents the best and brightest of literary culture in periodical form—"a meditation on medieval aesthetics by Umberto Eco, a disquisition on Kierkegaard by George Steiner and an essay by Susan Sontag on the Polaroid, accompanied by instant photographs" (17)—and is also, for Tamara, a dream of professional status and security. Her aspiration for "a staff job or a fat freelance contract with the most admired publication in the UK" (21) tellingly conflates a desire for personal advancement and professional worthiness.

Like provincial reporter Louis leafing through his own idealized magazine supplement, Tamara even marvels at *S*nday*'s advertisements, redolent of the high class and fashionability to which she aspires (47); unlike Louis, however, she finds actually *reading* her ideal publication to be "tough going," though she stands ready with a dictionary and thesaurus, prepared to shape her prose to the house style (47-48). Looking over Honor's clips and archival photographs, Tamara cannot tell Franco from Castro, but is "on home territory" with the likes of Sinatra (39-40). Her status as a celebrity-culture obsessive (40-41) has at least stood her in good stead in the pages of *Psst!* and elsewhere. In her rise to the middle of her profession, Tamara has proven "more resourceful than prolific," frequently spinning stray quotes from one celebrity interview into captions and photo features for other tabloids (35-37); she has developed a reputation, within other departments of the *Monitor* and with the editors of other newspapers, "as a reliable supplier of humorous, low-cost fillers" (19). Comparing Tamara's clip file to her own "fourteen bound volumes" of published writing, Honor wonders at "[t]he frivolity of the press" (53-54). Clearly the "low-cost fillers" in which Tamara specializes are the most disposable content for a disposable age.

Over the course of Tamara's first interview with Honor, the stark contrast between the two journalists, already so clearly established, has calamitous consequences. Tamara, browbeaten when she tries to turn the questioning to the personal—"If their chief concern is this sort of trivia, then your readers aren't worthy of consideration," Honor says (84)—and out of her depth with every topic save Honor's famous friends, is at one point reduced to tears (65-90). During a more generous moment, Honor specifically blames the degraded, consumerist contemporary newspaper industry for Tamara's line of questioning, thinking to

herself: "The girl was the product of an age in which history had been jettisoned along with seriousness. The young were all gunslingers now, each one a little Goebbels, reaching for their revolvers whenever they heard the word culture. And truth had been reduced to the subjective. This is *my* truth; what's yours?" (93) Here the emphasis is on both objectivity, both in terms of "truth," as opposed to the merely "subjective," and also as associated with "culture," the objectively understood merit to which Tamara's generation is presumably hostile.

However, Honor's claim to the high ground of objectivity is not to be taken fully at face value, as becomes clearer by their second lengthy interview, near the novel's conclusion. By this point in the novel, Honor is a full if unwilling participant in the personality-driven media market. Using tabloid techniques—stealing Honor's mail (200-202), camping out outside her flat (231-38) and stalking her around London (243-54)—Tamara gets her claws into a source willing to dish some dirt.

However, her piece for *S*nday* by now well and truly dead, Tamara first must convince a tabloid editor that Honor Tait is a celebrity worthy of a public shaming. The editor of *Sunday Sphere* initially refuses, being apathetic about Tait's legacy and having already committed most of its features budget to a "Slap a Paedo, Win a Twingo" campaign (366); however, Tamara's list of Honor's famous associates (Sinatra, Picasso), piques the editor's interest, and finally he relents, having first taken a good look at the archival photographs of Honor as a young woman (368-69). Tamara, armed with a suitcase full of £50,000 in cash, spirits her source away to a hotel for a marathon weekend session transcribing his room-service champagne-fueled tell-all exclusive.

Tamara also sleeps with her source. But though this is not the first time Tamara has used her body in pursuit of a story—as part of a tabloid drug sting, she once promised oral sex to the teenage son of a high-ranking police official (117)—in this instance she and her source, Dev, manipulate each other. The morning after their encounter, her probing questions, attempting to confirm her suspicions of the link between Dev and Honor, actually serve to shape his story: his intimations about having dirt to dish remain vague until Tamara, trying to pin him down, suggests that "if, for example, she were sleeping with someone [...] younger, much younger," it might be worth a five- or six-figure payoff (354-60). In fact, the tell-all exposé that Tamara writes is a fiction: a cash grab, reverse-engineered to suit market conditions;

and also, in the humiliation and moral censure it brings down on Honor, a character assassination by an embittered intimate. A subjective truth, perhaps.

Still, Dev's story has the consequence of leading Honor Tait back into the public eye, albeit as a tabloid sensation, doorstepped by rival highbrow and lowbrow newspapers (397). There is a renewed interest in her career as the story spreads worldwide (403), though the work is now the context for the really important business, the life, rather than the other way around. But was Honor Tait's work ever actually valuable and interesting in its own right?

Though Honor is upset, reading contemporary newspapers, to see news of war and injustice shunted off the front page in favor of prurient gossip (345), her nostalgia is also personal, and more ethically complicated: "For the foreign correspondent in an overlooked region, the local skirmish that becomes an international war brings guilty exultation. The higher the body count, the bigger the story, the greater the glory" (255). And though Picasso and Sinatra are a step above Tamara's corresponding (fictional) icon, like the erratic model Pernilla Perssen in terms of personal importance, Tamara is justified in reminding Honor that her own celebrity, and looks, helped her career considerably—not least in the early, reputation-making photograph of the skimpily-clad Honor interviewing Franco (408-9). Even Honor's honorable brand of journalism is not above a little judicious self-promotion in the marketplace. Throughout the novel, she anticipates her own death: "her life, a comet's tail streaking unobserved across the night sky. A falling star. One among countless billions" (311). The oblivion of her work—being "unobserved"—will follow; as at Eddy Moulton's funeral, the words fade soon after the body fails. What remains of Honor at the end of the novel is not permanent, worthy or truthful: merely her obituary, written by Tamara, a piece augmented with celebrity photographs from the clip file, and inaccurate but tabloid-friendly speculation about lovers and plastic surgery (435-37). Tamara, for her part, is indeed reaping the professional benefits of the Honor Tait story, with a better job in the offing, and honed reporting skills of great use in the new media landscape: she's just learned how to illicitly listen to Pernilla Perssen's voicemail (434-35).

If *The Spoiler* ends with Tamara Sim having prevailed over the previous generation, the victory is obviously short-lived. Though the *Monitor* and its workings bear considerable resemblance to the 1960s newspaper as depicted in novels, McAfee's perspective on journalism is leavened by a considerable dose of hindsight,

beginning with the novel's epigraph, which includes the newspaperman Simon Jenkins's 1997 assessment of the internet as a fad, like Esperanto and CB radio, which "will strut its hour upon the stage and then take its place in the ranks of lesser media" (qtd. in McAfee).

Everyone's Gone to the Moon's atmosphere of 1960s excess is largely intact in *The Spoiler's* 1997: though there's no weekly buffet spread of cold salmon, Tamara and her supervisor regularly enjoy lengthy champagne lunches on expenses (134, 260, 339, etc.), and a press awards banquet, featuring alcohol, cocaine, profane heckling, nudity, punch-ups and promiscuity, strikes Honor as reminiscent of "The Fall of Rome" (272-84). Too, competition, both between newspapers, and especially between the different sections of the same newspaper, is rampant. At the *Monitor*, the editorial outlook is split between "a tabloid robustness in its gossip and celebrity coverage and a rigorously cerebral approach in its Opinion pages and [...] *S*nday*," the function of its history as the paper of a liberal-leaning "social-climbing northern industrialist," similar to many Industrial Revolution-era newspapers, and its more recent circulation-boosting efforts under the ownership of a conservative, foreign-born media mogul (102-3). As such, the rivalries within the paper are as fierce as without: different highbrow and lowbrow sections of the paper regularly scoop each other's features by running preemptive coverage of the same events (111), just as the *Monitor* and its rival the *Courier* run "spoilers" of each other's planned bumper features, rushing articles which discredit the authors of forthcoming exclusives for the competition, or rushing copycat campaigns to press ahead of their originators (170-71, 332-33). At "Morning Conference," the *Monitor's* section editors compete for the favor of their Editor-in-Chief, Austin Wedderburn, usually by disparaging their colleagues' ideas (161), just as Louis Brennan's colleagues frequently shoot down his pitches at God's "Ideas Lunch."

It is at Morning Conference, in fact, that Tamara learns that her *S*nday* profile of Honor Tait has been spoiled by one of her colleagues, the conspicuously similarly named Tania Singh (336). Tania Singh runs the *Monitor's* nascent website, and McAfee establishes her as the yin to Tamara's yang: she is highbrow where Tamara is lowbrow (149), sober where Tamara is buzzed (223), and the two share an office space, the disreputable *Psst!* and the website team both being relegated to the low-status enclave of the *Monitor* headquarters' basement (103).

If Honor Tait does not ultimately live up to her motto's promises of objective, big-picture "truth," Tamara's relationship to truth, like her relationship with art, is much more casual. She can, in fact, be strikingly oblivious. Her perspective is so narrow and subjective that, contemplating Honor's appearance in her old age from a position of youth, Tamara cannot conceive of herself as equally mortal: "she could not help thinking that the visible effects of extreme old age—the withered skin, the drooping jowls and shrivelled lips—were the result of simple carelessness. [...] Tamara was scrupulous about her beauty regime" (247). It is unlike that Tamara Sim will become the first immortal journalist, however; and just as Tamara cannot comprehend her own mortality, so too does she miss the many, many signs that her own brand of journalism is destined for only a finite moment in the sun.

At an earlier Morning Conference, Tamara, standing in for her boss, readies herself to speak as Wedderburn introduces "a guest at this morning's conference [...] [who] is going to play an increasing role in the life of the paper," only to be crestfallen as Tania beings to discuss her plans for the newspaper's expanding web presence (166-68). And Tamara at the subsequent Morning Conference is blindsided by the news that the Honor Tait profile was assigned to her, rather than Tania, only in error: this despite Tania's notoriously frequent pitches to *S*nday*, the telltale clues of her reading material she leaves around the office (Honor Tait's previous books, with many passages underlined!), her presence at Honor Tait's public appearances, and her being observed at lunch in "animated" conversation with *S*nday*'s editor (133-36, 149, 223).

Tamara and her boss, Simon Pettigrew (not Jenkins) are equally blindsided by the coming internet age. Even after the shock announcement that *Psst!* is to cease to exist as a print entity, and instead be folded into the website under the supervision of Tania Singh, Simon dismisses the internet as "just a fad, bound for obsolescence" (304-6). In fact, self-described "old-fashioned fun-loving hack" Simon (344) is the obsolete one; he is ultimately fired for fiddling with his expense sheets (434). Tamara greets digital future as the end of a "golden age," though a less sympathetic colleague remarks that "The gravy train has been derailed" would be more apt, with the permanent news cycle overtaking the more "gentlemanly pace," in Michael Frayn's words, of the weekly publishing schedule (307-8). In an echo of the dissipating chalk dust envisioned by John Dyson at Eddy Moulton's funeral, and Honor Tait's falling star, Tamara forsees

[A] twenty-four-hour, multi-platform universe, in which every newspaper and magazine would be sucked up by the technological twister, swirling skywards from newsagents and tube stations, from desks and coffee tables, cafés and kitchens, dustbins and gutters, recycling centres and landfill sites, darkening the sky before shrinking to a shower of pixels and falling to earth as magic dust, minute particles of information that would shimmer in plastic boxes in every house in the land. (308-9)

Here, the daily, ritual of newspaper consumption—purchase, reading, disposal—is dematerialized, with the newspaper, and the work that goes into it, become “dust,” completely insubstantial. The prospects of professional advancement and prestige, as well, are seen by Tamara as dire: “*S*nday*—too august to be annexed by Tania’s digital dystopia—was no longer an optional escape route but a lifeline” (309).

The irony, as observed by one of the less distraught *Psst!* staffers, is that the web is a “perfect outlet” for the supplement’s disposable, celebrity-obsessed, photo-heavy content. Indeed, despite Tamara and Simon’s disinterest, they would be well-positioned to take advantage of the coming media landscape, and guide it rather than follow along in its wake. But, still sticking to a previous old model of success—the “gravy train” of long champagne lunches on expenses—Tamara’s destiny is not the same as Tania Singh’s. As a quick look at the online media landscape suggests, the future of journalism looks much like the career Tamara is, at the outset of the novel, desperate to climb out of: “humorous, low-cost fillers” written in bulk by scrambling freelancers.

In the meantime, however, the media landscape in which *The Spoiler* is set, in particular the celebrity-driven culture in which *The Spoiler* is set, foreshadows the dubious conditions under which journalism continues to survive, even to thrive, in recent contemporaneously set novels. In Martin Amis’s *Lionel Asbo: State of England* (2012), the materialistic, atavistic, metaphorical rise of the titular “lotto lout” is reflected in the daily mirror, if you will, of the tabloid press. Chummy first-name basis coverage and daily twists of sympathy or derision are barometers of chav millionaire Lionel’s standing with a fickle but intensely interested public. In Matthew

Arnold's terms, this is the victory of the subjective and self-interested standards of the "populace" over any objective standard of self-worth.

Similarly, *The Afterparty* (2011), by the *Guardian* journalist Leo Benedictus, concerns a hapless subeditor who becomes embroiled in a celebrity scandal for which the media serves a ubiquitous backdrop, chasing stars around town or camping out outside their homes, armed with everything from flashbulbs to helicopters, on a round-the-clock hunt for signs of drug use or marital discord, or else grief to exploit or misbehavior to condemn. Particular press techniques depicted include the hiding of sources from the competition; buying stories; and the dangled carrot and brandished stick of sympathetic and damaging coverage when negotiating access for "exclusives" (322-26).

Benedictus also calls into question his own integrity as a detached dramatist. The main action of the novel is presented as a manuscript, *Publicity******, doled out chapter-by-chapter in email attachments by a mysterious author, which has some notable similarities to a (fictitious) real-life scandal. The author of *Publicity****** is eventually revealed to be one of the participants in the scandal, on the run from the law, telling his side of the story so as to at last get some more favorable publicity, and also to earn some desperately needed cash. The novel itself is presented not as art, but as a work somewhere on the continuum between journalism and publicity—a self-serving, money-grubbing first-person account, like that sold by Tamara Sim's source. To further the ruse, the *Guardian* journalist "Leo Benedictus" is enlisted to serve, for a price, as a front for the author of the novel-within-the-novel. Thus, the objective author is a hack-for-hire.

The media as depicted in *The Afterparty* and *Lionel Asbo* is at least vibrant and ever-present, even if the reporters, with their parasitic dependence upon notoriety, and casual ethics, bear no more relation to literature than did a previous era's "penny-a-liners." There is, however, an alternate fate for journalism, one which takes into account the "technological twister" described by McAfee, and the accompanying profound fear of obsolescence and vanishing. This is presented in Tom Rachman's *The Imperfectionists*, about a cast of characters who, like Frayn's, stick around in a job well past its, and their, expiration date. But Rachman's characters, as they cling to a vanquished age of newspaper journalism, suggest, at last, an argument for the inherent value of the writing done for money—at least now that no one is willing to pay for it.

Tom Rachman's *The Imperfectionists*: The Newsroom as Graveyard

This essay has moved from tragedy to farce, and will now move back to tragedy. In *New Grub Street*, the individual's absorption into a standardized industrial-age profession is a tragedy to be bemoaned, if not changed; by the time of *Scoop* and even the twenty-first century tabloid novels, the individual's identification with his profession is so complete, and at such a pitch of busyness, as to be satirized. Tom Rachman's *The Imperfectionists*, published in 2010 and set in the years immediately prior, is the downside of the arc: now, the "literary machines" with which its journalist characters identified have rendered them superfluous to their profession.

The Imperfectionists, set at an unnamed English-language newspaper in Rome (where the English-born, Canadian- and American-educated author Tom Rachman was stationed, as an Associated Press correspondent), traces the downward arc of the newspaper industry following the war years. Chapters profile in turn the paper's motley, dwindling employees, while interstitial sections relate the history of the paper from its founding to the present. In 1953, the American tycoon Cyrus Ott recruits Betty Lieb, an old flame, and Leo Marsh, her husband, as his editorial team, rescuing them from hack work:

Leo, the Rome correspondent for a Chicago newspaper, had mastered every cliché, his pieces unfolding in that journalese realm where refugees are endlessly flooding across borders, cities bracing for storms, voters heading for polls. Betty was a freelancer for U.S. women's magazines, specializing in light humor pieces about life abroad and cautionary tales about American girls seduced by Italian skunks. In the old days, she'd had ambitions. (24)

Leaving his wife and son behind in Atlanta, Ott chooses identification with the paper during its hard-boiled, money-losing early days reporting on the rapidly progressing Cold War (50-51). After his death and years of declining circulation the paper reinvents itself, with more original reporting and light entertainment designed for mass appeal (178)—emphasis on the latter. Typewriters are "replaced by video display terminals," circulation hits 25,000, the paper turns a profit and its hungry young reporters cash in their scoops for higher-profile jobs elsewhere (200-201). Beginning in the 1990s, though, circulation declines again, "reflecting declining

readership across the industry” in the era of 24-hour cable TV news, when “morning newspapers, written the afternoon before, seemed increasingly out-of-date” (221). Culture coverage is cut back and more news comes from wire services, rather than staff reporters (222). By the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the main part of the novel takes place, Cyrus Ott’s grandchildren have foisted the paper off onto his black-sheep grandson Oliver, who arrives in Rome to nosediving readership and ad revenues, pay freezes and looming staff cutbacks, and industrywide malaise:

Competing entertainments abounded, from cellphones to video games, from social-networking sites to online porn. Technology was not merely luring readers; it was changing them. Full printed pages didn't fit onto monitors, so portion size shrank, dicing news into ever-smaller morsels. Instant updates on the Internet bred contempt for day-old headlines in ink. Even the habit of exchanging money for information dwindled—online, payment was merely an option. (245)

It’s this state of decline into which the novel enters immediately, the current staff, as sketched by Rachman, are cast-offs, personally and professionally, from the very first pages. As his wife moves in with a younger man, Lloyd Burko, the onetime Paris correspondent, calls in out-of-touch pitches, which the news editor, Craig Menzies, declines: “It’s a tight day—four pages in news. [...] You know our money problems, Lloyd. We’re only buying freelance stuff that’s jaw-dropping these days. [...] Anything else we basically take from the wires. It’s a money thing” (5). The novel ends, as it must, with Oliver Ott delivering news of the paper’s impending closure.

At the novel’s conclusion, Rachman follows the fates of his characters to their jobs at other papers, or in other fields; he also takes a last visit to the newsroom: “The place was ghostly: abandoned desks and cables leading nowhere, broken computer printers, crippled rolling chairs” (269). As the bond of employees with their place of work is severed, Rachman notes especially the broken office machinery. Earlier, during the paper’s 1950s heyday, “any visitor stepping out of the elevator [would] landed directly in a vibrating newsroom,” one featuring “wooden swivel chairs, varnished desks, brass banker's lamps, a custom-built horseshoe table for the copy editors, shiny black phones for the reporters, thirty-eight Underwood typewriters imported from New York City,” and the bustle of secretaries, copyeditors, sales staff, bookkeeping, makeup staff, art editors (49), and one other major also turning:

Printing took place in the subbasement, but it could have been another land. Unionized Italian laborers ran the deafening press down there, yet few of them ever met anyone who wrote the paper just floors above. In the late afternoon, a truck arrived with a vast roll of newsprint, which the workers slid down the incline at the back, slamming it into the loading bay shuddering the building up to the third floor. Any journalists lazing around up there—joshing with one another, legs kicked up on desks, brimmed hats dangling on shoe tips, cigarettes smoldering in ashtrays—jerked upright in immediate panic. "Fuck, is it that time already?"

Miraculously, by the 10 P.M. deadline the paper had filled every line down every column, no matter the last-minute heart palpitations and blaspheming. Editors rose from their desks for the first time in hours, shrugging tortured shoulder muscles, attempting to exhale. (50)

Here, as in *Towards the End of the Morning*, with its vibrating windows, archetypal newsroom, with its jawing reporters, "discreet cocktail bar" and "copyboys buzz[ing] back and forth like pollinating bees" (50), snaps into action belatedly, and bends its back to toil, at the groan of the subterranean machines. With the benefit of Rachman's hindsight, we know that these are the good years; they are also the years in which labor is synced most exactly to the whirr of industrial machinery. This goes back to origins of the first English newspapers as "a means of using up spare printing capacity" (Clarke, 99), and an echo persists even into the present. Menzies, the workaholic news editor, returns home late to the apartment he shares with his girlfriend, his mind still set to the rhythms of the workplace:

When the late edition closes, everyone else goes home and he puts the newsroom to bed [...] On the bus ride home [...] headlines that stream across his mind like a news ticker: "Iran test-fires 3 new missiles ... 90% of maritime life forms extinct by 2048 ... Evangelical leader resigns over gay hooker scandal." He takes the elevator upstairs. The news ticker continues: "Keys in right pocket, officials say ... Unlock deadbolt, sources suggest ... Call Annika's name, report recommends." (184)

This is partly a sign of the times, of jobs being "careers" requiring total commitment, and partly a parallel to Corker, the Speaking Telegram, or to Pettygrew, the Human

Leading Article. But the contemporary twist which distinguishes *The Imperfectionists*, forshadowed in novels from recent decades, is the one that has complicated the modern newspaper industry to no end: the technology with which it has thrown its lot is devaluing human labor. A very recent report from a "career guidance firm"—a report probably designed to attract the attention of journalists with daily web-content obligations, but still—has declared "newspaper reporter" to be "the worst job of 2013," out of 200 surveyed and assessed on the basis of "pay, outlook, work environment, and stress," noting especially the demanding hours and poor long-term employment prospects in newsrooms losing readers and revenue to online sources (Smith). And Corker's terse telegraphic mind has its contemporary model not in the newsroom but on Twitter, where news is often broken in real time, through the personalized "social media presences" of individual amateurs.

Rachman's paper doesn't even have a website, sticking to their outdated model out of a Simon-esque conviction of the frivolity of online news, evinced most fervently by the corrections editor, Herman Cohen (222), who spends his days battling the infiltration of jargon into the paper from an office "overstuffed" with esoteric books like *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* (77-78), and loses himself in letters to the editor recalling a time when the paper was still the vanguard of the type of global connectivity now enabled by the web:

[The readers are] usually on the old side—he can tell from the palsied scrawl and the diction ("Dear Sir, I expect you receive a great many letters, yet I must express my dismay over ..."). Admittedly, the paper's readership is only about ten thousand people nowadays, but at least they are passionate. And the postmarks come from all around the world, which is heartening. For many, especially those in remote locales, the paper is their only link to the greater world, to the big cities they left, or the big cities they have never seen, only built in their minds. The readers constitute a sort of fellowship that never meets, united by loved and loathed bylines. (83)

Out with the mechanical, in with the cloud: Lloyd Burko, fading into irrelevance even faster than the paper, doesn't even have a computer (4). In a comic chapter obviously inspired by *Scoop*, concerning an inexperienced, incompetent, passive African correspondent and the blithely dubious ethics of his mentor-competitor, access to a single laptop charts the power struggle between two reporters

auditioning for the same job (137-151). The paper's obituary writer, Arthur Gopal, meets with a subject who, like a more forthcoming Honor Tait, waxes anxious on the subject of mortality and memory: "My own life, for example, has been so inadequately realized. I will scarcely be recorded anywhere. Except, of course, in your eccentric newspaper. I won't question why you've chosen me—thank God someone has! It extends the lease on my illusions" (37). Her reflections on ephemerality are underscored by the office to which the obituary writer returns:

[H]e glances around, at the senior editors' offices along the walls, the horseshoe copydesk in the center of the newsroom, the spattered white carpeting that smells of stale coffee and dried microwave soup, its acrylic edges curling up but held down in places with silver gaffer's tape. Several cubicles are empty nowadays, the former occupants long retired but never replaced, their old Post-its fluttering whenever windows open. Under the abandoned desks, technicians have stashed broken dot-matrix printers and dead cathode-ray-tube monitors, while the corner of the room is a graveyard of crippled rolling chairs that flip backward when sat on. (41)

The office falling apart, the "graveyard" of broken things, the eerily empty work stations, and all the useless, superseded technology—even before our "ghostly" final glimpse of the office, the aura of obsolescence is thick around the place. It is hard not to view this as a climax, of sorts, following the hints of death and obsolescence dropped throughout the genre. The current media catchphrase "the death of print" comes to mind. In *The Imperfectionists*, this is partially literal: the publisher, Oliver Ott, read the paper, but "spreads it across the table and places his plate of leftovers on top" for his ill-fated dog, a very messy eater (252).

Surely the paper's most dedicated reader is Ornella de Montecchi, who loves and loathes its bylines (212), and has read every word of the paper beginning in the 70s—all the way up to April of 1994. Having fallen behind the times due to her news completism, she keeps two decades of unread daily papers in a closet, waiting their turn, though she's falling further behind, unable to continue on to the paper whose date signals the beginning of the end of her marriage (207-12). The metaphor is obvious: in both her media diet and emotional preoccupation, she is living "In Days Gone By," to borrow Frayn's phrase. Ornella has never heard of the internet.

Ornella's chapter is one of the more baroque examples of a recurrent device of Rachman's, namely the dramatization of the newspaper industry's decline via the pathos of his characters' personal disappointments. Some characters have their illusions punctured: Abbey Pinnola, the CFO agitating for a leaner workforce, rationalizes her standing in the newsroom—"she's the one keeping *them* employed [...] She got the Ott board down from sixteen [layoffs] to nine" (229)—but discovers, through sexual humiliation, just how loathed she is by the editorial staff (243). Some are luckier, and contrive strategies to manage the limitations of their existence: Lloyd Burko first invents a foreign-affairs scoop—like Shumble or Jocelyn Hitchcock, or even Dr. Johnson, except that it isn't published—based-on an off-the-record conversation with his son, who works in the government. When he finds out his son was lying about being employed, the two fantasists move in together.

These, then, are life's losers. To what extent does this make them romantic figures? The surprise of *The Imperfectionists* is that the very idea of newspaper work is redeemed by the failure of its practitioners. Because whatever reason Rachman's characters have for doing the work that they do, they certainly are not in it for the money.

Literature After All? A Conclusion

The Imperfectionists, by looking at newspaper writing produced for a dried-up market, becomes the lens by which we can perhaps, for the first time, clearly discern an objective value to the work.

At a panel discussion, asked, "Will the newspaper industry survive?", Kathleen Solson gives an answer that seems very familiar to the reader of contemporary media commentary:

Obviously, we're living in an era when technology is moving at an unheralded pace. I can't tell you if in fifty years we'll be publishing in the same format. Actually, I can probably tell you we *won't* be publishing in the same way, that we'll be innovating then, just as we are now. But I assure you of this: news will survive, and quality coverage will always earn a premium. Whatever you want to call it—news, text, content—someone has to report it, someone has to write it, someone has to edit it. And I intend for us to do it better, no matter the medium. [...] My work is putting together *the* outstanding publication in its class. If we can do that, readers will turn up. (103-4)

Is this true? Is journalism an enterprise with merit independent of the esteem in which it is held by the consuming public? Is journalism *literature*?

Trollope, Frayn and especially Waugh had a laugh at the idea; Gissing and Muggeridge had rants; Eliot, Norman and McAfee shook their heads sadly. During Marian Yule's reverie over the "literary machine," she ponders the purpose of "the manufacture of printed stuff" for the periodical press:

She kept asking herself what was the use and purpose of such a life as she was condemned to lead. When already there was more good literature in the world than any mortal could cope with in his lifetime, here was she exhausting herself in the manufacture of printed stuff which no one even pretended to be more than a commodity for the day's market. What unspeakable folly! (Gissing, 106-7)

The "printed stuff" which Rachman's imperfect people strive to produce was once the vulgar noise drowning out the conversation. Real literature, writing of objective value, has been defined in part as unfashionable—as unfashionable as *Mr. Bailey, Grocer*, at the extreme, or at least as unfashionable as Louis Brennan's killed pieces. Kathleen Solson's invocation of "quality coverage," however, recalls Robert Lowe's "earliest and most correct intelligence," or Honor Tait's truth. Rachman does not endorse this statement, but his more modest claims still come the closest of any newspaper novel to finding *some* kind of objective value to all that "printed stuff."

In a certain sense, Solson's answer is all merely boilerplate from someone unconvinced of its truth (see 104), but hoping to keep her job, and the status that comes from a name at the top of a masthead (both Solson and the previous editor Milton Berber took the e-i-c job at an overseas paper because of blocked career trajectories at home, 178, 245). Her cagey use of the phrase "content," contemporary code for reverse-engineered web articles designed to drive up a site's traffic numbers, squared uneasily with her insistence that "someone has to write it," and presumably be paid a living wage to do so.

Ott founded the paper as a romantic ploy, as suggested throughout the book and revealed definitively in an unsent letter, addressed to Betty and discovered by his grandson Oliver: "I never cared about the news. I came to be in the same room as you, even if I had to build that room, fill it with people, with typewriters, the rest. I only hope you understand that the paper was for you" (254). A few days later, the Ott Group in Atlanta—the descendents of the son Ott practically abandoned in favor of the paper—pull the plug on the enterprise. This revelation makes the employees' entwinement with the paper seem all the more arbitrary. "Why does the paper exist?", Milton Berber asks his assembled staff in a section dated 1994:

"Why did Cyrus Ott come all the way out here to found this place? [...] The story is that Ott had a righteous passion for news, and he believed that the world needed a solid publication. I don't buy that. [...] As for me, I can't pretend to any higher motives myself. I just love putting out a newspaper: headlines and deadlines."

(221)

In fact, Berber is announcing his retirement; released from the daily production cycle, he dies within three months. As Oliver Ott prepares to inform the staff of the paper's termination, he reflects:

Most of the paper's employees have worked here for years. They married based on their earning prospects, took out mortgages because of this place, started families knowing that the paper would find their children's lives. If this place folds, they're ruined. All these years, they have vilified the paper, but now it's threatening to quit them, they're desperately in love with it again. (261)

This is a degree removed from Milton Berber's identification with the work of the newspaper—more an identification with the *job* of the newspaper. But the identification is perhaps even more complete for being void of any particular attachment to the work.

Is there, then, any objective value to the paper? Or is the tragedy here simply that a group of people made a purely empty commitment to the production of a subjectively valued quantity—to the unloved daily quota of the literary machine? Rachman tips his hand on the final page of the novel. As the newspaper shuts down, he reports on the dispersal of Cyrus Ott's art collection, including a Turner painting, formerly a favorite of Betty's, which goes "to a shipping company in Hong Kong, which mounted it behind a receptionist's desk" (269). It is not unintentional that the paper's demise is associated with international business's indifference to beauty.

The elegy that closes the novel mourns "The paper—that daily report on the idiocy and brilliance of the species" (269). Each chapter of *The Imperfectionists* is titled after a headline: "U.S. General Optimistic on War," is the chapter for Kathleen Solson, who offhandedly fields a text about CENTCOM commander John Abizaid's testimony before the Senate Armed Forces Committee on her way back from her panel discussion; "Gunman Kills 32 in Campus Rampage" is the chapter for Oliver Ott, who breaks the news of the paper's demise as the newsroom is preparing its covering of Seung-Hui Cho's shooting spree at Virginia Tech—which would place the date of the staff meeting on April 16, 2007. This device, then, locates the characters within the major and minor events of history—the consistent background buzz of their personal lives. Part of the novel's value is as a running document of the

period of its composition, the cumulative impact of which is suggested by the cascade of the years descending on Ornella's floor when she pulls down her back issues:

A boldface headline catches her eye: "... Afghan Capital." She tugs out the edition, which tears slightly under her. The headline reads, "Taliban Fighters Capture Afghan Capital" (the paper of Sept. 28, 1996). She digs through the pile and picks another paper at random: "In Record, Dow Closes Above 6,000" (Oct. 15, 1996). And another: "Clinton Beats Dole to Win 2nd Term" (Nov. 6, 1996). She is lying on 1996, it seems.

[...]

And then 2007: "Amid Fanfare, Apple Introduces iPhone" (Jan. 10, 2007); "Bush to Send 21,500 More Troops to Iraq" (Jan. 11, 2007); "Humans Are Cause of Climate Change, Panel Finds" (Feb. 3, 2007); "In Historic Bid, African-American Senator to Run for President" (Feb. 11, 2007).

With that, she is done. This, approximately, is the present. (218-19)

"Approximately," but still. What we have here is that elusive thing Matthew Arnold called "culture," which Edwin Reardon sought in Greece, and the hapless editors of the *Daily Beast* pretended to see in William Boot's purple prose. Here, Rachman posits a way of understanding the objective value of the written word. The measurement by which the value of the written word can be understood, at last, is time.

The prospect of obsolescence, so present in the newspaper novel from the mid-twentieth century onwards, in Frayn's entropic middle-agers, Norman's retrospective view, and McAfee's two generations of formerly fashionable reporters, is not merely due to nostalgia over a lost prospect for professional identification. It is of a piece with the strivings of newspaper writers in the industry of their times, feeding the market with news of the tumultuous nineteenth-century reforms, of foreign wars, of Sixties Swing, of celebrity scandal. What all these have in common is the intensely present-tense feeling of day-to-day engagement—subjective, perhaps but increasingly valuable artifacts. As the newspaper is relegated into the past tense, it becomes clearer that its real audience was not the literary marketplace, but posterity.

WORKS CITED

Ambler, Eric. *Uncommon Danger*. 1937. London: Penguin, 2009. Print.

Amis, Martin. *Lionel Asbo: State of England*. 2012. London: Vintage, 2013. Print.

Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. 1869. Ed. Ian Gregor. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971. Print.

Benedictus, Leo. *The Afterparty*. 2011. Paperback ed featuring "deleted scenes." London: Vintage, 2012. Print.

Campbell, Kate. "W. E. Gladstone, W. T. Stead, Matthew Arnold and a New Journalism: Cultural Politics in the 1880s." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 36.1 (2003): 20-40. JStor.

Clarke, Bob. *From Grub Street to Fleet Street: An Illustrated History of English Newspapers to 1899*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. Print.

Connolly, Ray. "Mick 'n' Keith 'n' Richard 'n' Liz 'n' Twiggy." *The Independent* 17 June 1995: Arts + Ents, no page given. independent.co.uk.

Eccles, Charlotte O'Connor. "The Experiences of a Woman Journalist." *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*. Ed. Andrew King and John Plunkett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. 330-334. Print

Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. 1871-72. Ed. David Carroll. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

Elliott, Philip. "Professional Ideology and Organisational Change: The Journalist Since 1800." *Newspaper History: From the 17th Century to the Present*. Ed. George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate. London: Constable, 1978. 172-191. Print.

Frayn, Michael. "A Note on the New Edition." 2000. Preface. *Towards the End of the Morning*. By Frayn. London: Faber and Faber, 2005. v-xii. Print.

---. *The Tin Men*. London: Collins, 1965. Print.

---. *Towards the End of the Morning*. 1967. London: Faber and Faber, 2005. Print.

Gatens, Moira. "Gender and Genre: Marian Evans, George Henry Lewes and 'George Eliot.'" *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 13.2 (2008): 33-44. EBSCOhost.

Gissing, George. *New Grub Street*. 1891. Ed. John Goode. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Gray, Beryl. "George Eliot and the *Westminster Review*." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 33.3 (2000): 212-224. JStor.

Hamilton, John Maxwell. "Interpret the World." *Columbia Journalism Review* 14 August 2008. cjr.org.

Hampton, Mark. Rev. of *The Dynamics of Genre: Journalism and the Practice of Literature in Mid-Victorian Britain*, Dallas Liddle, and *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor. *Journal of Victorian Culture* 17.1 (2012): 104-108. EBSCOhost.

Hitchens, Christopher. "Fleet Street's Finest." *The Guardian* 3 December 2005: Review 9. [Theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com).

Ingrams, Richard. "Introduction." Preface. *Picture Palace*. By Malcolm Muggeridge. 1934. London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd., 1987. vii-xiii. Print.

Jardine, Cassandra. "The war for Martha's memory." *The Telegraph* 15 May 2001: Culture, no page given. telegraph.co.uk

James, Louis. *The Victorian Novel*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. Print.

Kopytoff, Igor. "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process." *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. Ed. Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge: UP, 1986. 64-91. Print.

Lewes, George Henry. "The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France." 1845. *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*. Ed. Andrew King and John Plunkett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. 299-305. Print.

Levy, Steven. "Can an Algorithm Write a Better News Story Than a Human Reporter?" *Wired* 24 April 2012: no page given. Wired.com.

Linklater, Magnus. "Who was who on the mag." *The Spectator* 2 June 1995: 42. archive.spectator.co.uk.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume 1*. 1867. Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Friedrich Engels. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887. Marxists.org.

---. "Private Property and Communism." *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Trans. Martin Mulligan. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967. Marxists.org.

Matz, Aaron. "George Gissing's Ambivalent Realism." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 59.2 (2004): 212-248. JStor.

McAfee, Annalena. *The Spoiler*. 2011. London: Vintage, 2012. Print.

Menaker, Daniel. *My Mistake*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013. Excerpt at npr.org.

Muggeridge, Malcolm. *Picture Palace*. 1934. London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd., 1987. Print.

Norman, Philip. *Everyone's Gone to the Moon*. 1996. London: Arrow Books, 1995. Print.

"Penny-a-Liners." 1845. *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*. Ed. Andrew King and John Plunkett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. 295-298. Print.

Proctor, James. "Philip Norman." *British Council - Literature*. The British Council, 2013. Web. 25 April 2014.

Rachman, Tom. *The Imperfectionists*. 2010. New York: Dial Press Trade Paperbacks, 2011. Print.

Scott, Walter (Sir). *Waverley*. Ed. Claire Lamont. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. Print.

Severn, Stephen E. "Quasi-Professional Culture, Conservative Ideology, and the Narrative Structure of George Gissing's *New Grub Street*." *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory* 40.2 (2010): 156-188. ProQuest.

Skidelskiy, William. "Where did all the newspaper novels go?" *The Guardian*.com, 23 Sep. 2011.

Smith, Jacquelyn. "The Best and Worst Jobs for 2013." *Forbes*.com, 23 April 2013. *Forbes.com*.

Trollope, Anthony. *The Warden*. 1855. London: Everyman's Library, 1949. Print.

Walsh, John. "Diary." *The Independent* 1 June 1995: News, no page given. *independent.co.uk*.

Waterhouse, Keith. *Jeffrey Bernard Is Unwell*. 1989. London: Samuel French, 1991. Google Books.

Wodehouse, Pelham Grenville. *Psmith, Journalist*. 1915. Hazelton, Pennsylvania: The Electronic Classics Series, 2013. PDF file.