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# A 'New' Journalist: The Americanization of W.T. Stead

Helena Goodwyn\*

## ABSTRACT

W. T. Stead, the journalist and editor, is known primarily for his knight-errant crusade on behalf of women and girls in the sensational investigative articles 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' (1885). The controversial success of these articles could not have been achieved without Stead's study and adoption of American journalistic techniques. Stead's importance to nineteenth century periodicals must be informed by an understanding of Stead as a mediating force between British and American print culture. This premise is developed here through exploration of the terms 'New Journalism' and 'Americanization'. Drawing from every stage of his career including his amateur yet dynamic beginnings as an unpaid contributor to the *Northern Echo*, I will examine Stead's unofficial title as the father of New Journalism and the extent to which this title is directly attributable to his relationship with America, or, to use Stead's term, his Americanization.

**Keywords:** New Journalism, W.T. Stead, America, international, popular journalism, Americanization, Transatlantic, Britain, newspapers

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For the journalist and editor W.T. Stead there could never be enough information about American life and culture printed in British periodicals. At the outset of his transition from apprenticed clerk to the world of newspapers, in 1870, we find him complaining to John Copleston, then editor of the *Northern Echo*, about the lack of American news published by the periodical press. In this letter we also witness an early glimpse of Stead's life-long aspiration for Anglo-American amity: 'I wish we had more American news in our papers. [...] Could you not do something in the way of producing union among our scattered English family?' Stead, a mere twenty-one years old at the time, yearned for more intelligence about the American way of life

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and was frustrated by the narrowly commercial international interests of the British press, which thought only to supply information on the price of ‘gold at so much and cotton at so much.’<sup>1</sup> Less than a year later, in April 1871, however, it was at this newspaper that Stead, now twenty-two, would become one of the youngest editors in the country, when Copleston left for America and a post at the *New York Herald*. From this relatively unchecked position Stead could therefore begin promoting in earnest his youthful ambition for a ‘huge earth-shadowing Confederation’ between the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Stead’s pursuit of a career in journalism, as documented in his early letters to Copleston and contributions to the *Northern Echo*, had attracted the attention of the proprietor John Hyslop Bell who took an unusual chance on the young and inexperienced, if passionate writer, in making him editor.<sup>3</sup> Stead’s article ‘Christianity and Democracy’, published in October of 1870, had garnered much local attention and, in Stead’s version of events, was the catalyst that thrust him upon the very public stage he had begun to crave.<sup>4</sup> Moving rapidly from infrequent and rarely paid contributor, to editor, without any real training in what Copleston had identified as Stead’s ‘very powerful pen’, Stead would go on to spend the rest of his career in journalism propagating ‘a new social era’ that would abandon the old codes of conduct in newspapers and in British

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<sup>1</sup> Stead to Copleston, quoted in Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, 2 vols (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925), I, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> ‘The New Year’, *Northern Echo*, 1 January 1873, p. 2. The 19th Century British Library Newspaper Archive is missing copies of the *Northern Echo* for the years 1871 and 1872. <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/northern-echo>> [accessed 22 January 2018].

<sup>3</sup> Estelle Stead quotes her father on his ‘initiation into journalism’ in 1870, during which time he contributed ‘a series of articles upon America and Americans’ and ‘one about Christianity and Democracy.’ These topics would remain Stead’s principal interests for the rest of his life. Estelle Stead, *My Father: Personal and Spiritual Reminiscences* (London: William Heinemann, 1913), p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> From an even younger age Stead wished ‘to be great and famous.’ His ‘Reminiscences’ on this subject are quoted in Estelle Stead’s, *My Father*, p. 33.

society more broadly.<sup>5</sup> As early as 1870, the young editor had his mind fixed on ‘the coming century’: of which he felt the watch words would be, Christianity, Democracy, and America.<sup>6</sup> In his quest to ‘produc[e] union among our scattered English family’, through his work as a mediating force between British and American culture, at a time when the balance of power was shifting from the Old World to the New, I suggest Stead’s significance as a newspaper revolutionary can be found.<sup>7</sup> His interventions in the structure and layout of the British periodical were of lasting importance to the development of the nineteenth and twentieth-century press. But more than this, I argue, his promotion of the values of the so-called New Journalism – with its focus on creating sensation, visually and through subject matter – can be traced to the dual influences of British and American culture upon him. His attention to the perceived needs of the reader, and interest in transnational communication models, mark him out from his contemporaries as a transatlantic writer and editor persistently working for Anglo-American reunification, or at least stronger connectivity. By refocusing our view of Stead as a transatlantic writer, channelling the dual influences of Britain and America, this article establishes that his interventions in the press, which have been of lasting significance to the development of the powerful concept of ‘government by journalism’, are a product of his Americanization.<sup>8</sup> My examination here of a range of evidence from Stead’s career in journalism begins with an analysis

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<sup>5</sup> During his brief time as contributor to the *Northern Echo* Stead was advised by editor John Copleston: ‘You have a very powerful pen and with very little practice you may command the attention of hundreds of thousands.’ Copleston to Stead, 21 February 1871, Baylen archive, private collection. In 2013 James Baylen kindly allowed me to visit his home to explore the archive of materials left by his father, the historian, Joseph O. Baylen. The research conducted during this visit and a subsequent trip in 2014 informs this article. Amongst Baylen’s notes he records that Frederic Whyte had access to the copybooks of Stead’s letters to Copleston which have since disappeared. Ingrid Hall, daughter of researcher John S. Stephenson, runs a Wordpress blog which features extracts of Stephenson’s unpublished biography of Stead which also contains references to the ‘Stead Papers’ and attributes his use of them to W. K. Stead (grandson of W. T. Stead). <<https://johnsstephenson.wordpress.com/>> [accessed 22 January 2018].

<sup>6</sup> ‘Democracy and Christianity’, *Northern Echo*, 14 October 1870, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> See Roger Luckhurst, Laurel Brake, James Mussell and Ed King, eds, *W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary* (London: British Library, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Stead most famously pronounced his thoughts on ‘Government by Journalism’ in 1886 in the *Contemporary Review*: ‘The Press is at once the eye and the ear and the tongue of the people. It is the visible speech if not the voice of the democracy. It is the phonograph of the world.’ (49 (1886), 653–74, (p. 656)). In *The Americanisation of the World*, published in 1902, Stead declared of American newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst: ‘he has grasped the idea [...] of government by journalism [...] Mr Hearst may become the most powerful journalist in the world.’ W. T. Stead, *The Americanisation of the World; or, the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (London: ‘Review of Reviews’ Office, 1902), p. 112.

of Americanization in the context of its negative associative qualities, before moving to a discussion of transatlanticism to further explore how Stead manipulated Old and New World practices. Finally, I demonstrate how the complex interplay between the two terms Americanization and transatlanticism can be directly mapped onto Stead's title as the unofficial father of New Journalism.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. AMERICANIZATION

The first term that is crucial to repositioning Stead is 'Americanization.' The term came into popular usage around the latter half of the nineteenth century when Stead was at his most influential and prolific. Americanization can be broadly understood as the influence of American culture on Europe, most often used in a derogatory sense, but seen as a positive, democratizing force by Stead and those like him.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, in November 1882, during the transitional period between John Morley and Stead's editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to where Stead moved after his stint at the *Northern Echo*, one of the first references to 'the partial Americanization of English journalism' appears in a leader article entitled 'Journalism and Public Taste.' In it the author is careful to suggest that the changes in the British press identified as Americanizations had been, thus far, been positive, but that 'the process could not perhaps be carried much further with advantage.' The rest of the piece is dedicated to explaining why, in

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<sup>9</sup> In attempting to establish the earliest usage of the term 'Americanization' the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the *Edinburgh Review* for the first use in 1830. "Americanization, n." *ED Online*. <www.oed.com> [accessed 22 January 2018]. The *Edinburgh Review* article in turn refers to the *Memoirs, Correspondence, and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (1829) in which Jefferson declared that after a period in Europe Americans 'return like foreigners, and like them require a considerable residence [...] to become Americanised [...]'. See 'Jefferson's Memoirs and Correspondence', *Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal*, 51 (1830), 496–526, (p. 497). Although the *OED* takes its definition of 'New Journalism' from the twentieth-century 'style of journalism that developed in the U.S. during the 1960s, characterised by the use of subjective and fictional elements [...]', it adds the caveat that it was 'also used earlier in a more general sense.' The earliest use is traced to *Scribner's Monthly*, an American literary periodical formed in 1870. "New Journalism, n." *OED Online*. <www.oed.com> [accessed 22 January 2018]. However, discussion of the influence of American journalism on British newspapers can be traced back even earlier to columns such as one found in the *London Evening Standard* in 1860 that refers to the 'new school of journalism' arising from papers such as the *New York Herald*. The author speculates that with such influence 'information and solidity' will 'give [...] way to the necessity of creating a sensation.' *London Evening Standard*, 26 October 1860, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle for example, was also a firm believer in Anglo-American unity and dedicated his 1891 novel *The White Company* 'to the hope of the future/the reunion of the English-speaking races.' (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1891).

actuality, certain reforms ‘can afford with safety to go somewhat further still.’ The “‘factless” superficiality of French journalism’ is used as a foil against the ‘overladen solidity of English’ journalism, perhaps to suggest that the influence of American journalism, livelier than English, but less fanciful than French, is a force for good.<sup>11</sup>

Even from a young age, Stead was busily constructing his imagined community of the ‘English speaking race.’<sup>12</sup> Combatting the lack of American news directly, according to the reminiscences of his daughter Estelle, Stead’s first article, ‘published in a little Jarrow weekly paper’ in 1865, was about the assassination of President Lincoln.<sup>13</sup> Another way in which he found expression for this community was through preserving the scant news of American life he gleaned from his scouring of the periodical press. Three years after his first article, in March 1868, when he was 19 years old, Stead began an *Index Rerum* written almost entirely in his distinctive cursive, except for the very first page, on which was pasted a cutting entitled ‘An American Journalist’s Index Expurgatorius.’<sup>14</sup>

Perusal of the American journalist’s list of banned words, reminds the reader of the ways in which language use evolves over time: ‘Authoress’, ‘Darky’ and ‘Poetess’ are now, as they were beginning to be considered then, offensive terms. But it also documents the speed with which terms such as ‘Humbug’, ‘Brother Jonathan’, ‘John Bull’ and ‘Rowdies’, despite attempts to banish them, can take hold of the collective imagination and then, just as quickly, go out of fashion. Whilst other forbidden terms such as ‘Taboo’, ‘Donate’, ‘Tariff’, and many other words on Bryant’s list were here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future, other terms – such as ‘Secesh’ meaning secessionist, ‘Casket’ meaning coffin, and ‘Fall’ meaning autumn – recall the aphoristic pronouncements of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw that ‘England and

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Journalism and Public Taste’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 November 1882, pp. 1–2.

<sup>12</sup> Stead, *The Americanisation of the World*, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> In Estelle Stead’s *My Father* Stead is quoted: ‘I had in 1865 and 1868, written two leading articles, one on the assassination of President Lincoln; the other on the disestablishment of the Irish Church. The former was published in a little Jarrow weekly paper, the other was published in the Sheffield Independent.’ Estelle Stead, *My Father*, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> W. T. Stead, *Index Rerum*, Baylen archive, private collection. Index Expurgatorius historically refers to a list of books banned by the Roman Catholic Church.

America are two countries separated by a common language.<sup>15</sup> Stead's early fascination with the relationship between the structuring of national identity and language is in evidence in his preservation of the article, but clearly Stead was not the only person to find the vocabulary choices of the American press worthy of attention.

By the time the cutting made its way into the pages of the young clerk's *Index Rerum*, it had travelled from the walls of the editorial office of the *New York Evening Post*, as a memorandum list of words that William Cullen Bryant forbade his contributors to use, across the Atlantic to a *Daily News* article by the Scottish journalist and author William Fraser Rae. It was then collected in a volume of his articles entitled *Columbia and Canada: Notes on the Great Republic and the New Dominion* (1877) and picked out as a result for special notice in the pages of *The Times* of London.<sup>16</sup> From *The Times* it was subsequently reproduced in at least one other northern newspaper, before being cut out and stuck at the front of Stead's copybook.<sup>17</sup> Rae's accompanying exaltation of the *New York Evening Post* as 'distinguished among its contemporaries for striving to preserve the use of idiomatic and irreproachable English' was reproduced in each case.<sup>18</sup> Its excerption in the London newspaper is evidence of an editorial insight into audience appetite, or appetite amongst members of the press at least, for scrutiny of American culture. This kind of interest, in what Joel H. Wiener has called 'cultural benchmarks', was one of the

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<sup>15</sup> This well-known quip, regularly attributed to George Bernard Shaw, is listed in the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* in a section entitled 'Misquotations.' The editor notes that it is not found in Shaw's published writings. Elizabeth Knowles, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 7th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 547. *The New Penguin Dictionary of Quotations* cites the reference for the quotation as *Reader's Digest*, November 1942. J. M. Cohen, ed., *The New Penguin Dictionary of Quotations* (London: Viking, 1992), p. 389. In *The Canterville Ghost: A Hylo-Idealistic Romance* (1887) by Oscar Wilde, the narrator opines 'we have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language.' Oscar Wilde, *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde: The Plays, the Poems, the Stories and the Essays including De Profundis* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Library Collection, 2007), pp. 189–212, (p. 192).

<sup>16</sup> The articles that make up the volume were composed whilst Rae was Special Correspondent to Canada and the United States.

<sup>17</sup> The young Stead did not note which newspaper his cutting came from, but as it was common practice for regional newspapers to reprint articles from the London press it is likely that it was from a local paper such as the *Darlington & Stockton Times*.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Stead, *Index Rerum*. Baylen archive, private collection.

ways in which the British press performed its resistance to ‘the sweeping forces’ of Americanization.<sup>19</sup>

And yet, by 1877, print media were making these kinds of transatlantic, hopscotch journeys with increasing regularity and speed, as ‘scissors-and-paste’ journalism expanded its parameters to include more international news than ever before.<sup>20</sup> The formation of news agencies such as Reuters, in 1851, for the particular purpose of handling foreign news, ensured that provincial newspapers had increasingly better and cheaper access to national and international news. Other agencies, such as the Press Association, formed in the same year as Stead began his copybook, were also concerned with collating news, for a reader interested in a less London-centric view.<sup>21</sup> Stead’s cutting out and keeping of the ‘Index Expurgatorius’ is further evidence of his passionate interest in transatlantic debates about the future of journalism, and his privileging of it, at the front of his *Index Rerum*, is indicative of his keen interest in all things American. In *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010* Mary Nolan has explained that ‘Americanization includes not only what was and was not adopted, but also how such borrowings were selectively appropriated and negotiated, how they functioned and acquired particular meanings.’<sup>22</sup> Even at this early stage in Stead’s literary life we can see the would-be journalist engaged in thinking through such borrowings, appropriations and negotiations.<sup>23</sup> In the

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<sup>19</sup> Joel H. Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830–1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Catherine Freely describes scissors-and-paste as covering ‘a number of different editorial strategies, ranging from agreed syndication to unacknowledged piracy’, *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism in Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (London: Academia Press, 2009), p. 561. Work in this area includes Melodee Beal’s ‘Scissors and Paste’ database: <<http://scissorsandpaste.net/>> [accessed 22 January 2018]; Rod Kirkpatrick’s, ‘Scissors and Paste: Recreating the History of Newspapers in Ten Country Towns’, *BSANZ Bulletin*, 22.4 (November 1998), 232–46; and most recently Stephan Pigeon’s ‘Steal it, Change it, Print it: Transatlantic Scissors-and-Paste Journalism in the *Ladies’ Treasury*, 1857–1895’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 22.1 (March 2017), 24–39.

<sup>21</sup> The Provincial Newspaper Society was chiefly responsible for the formation of the Press Association. The Association and Society together were successful in campaigning for the nationalisation of the telegraph system, which, in turn, created the conditions to allow provincial newspapers to expand their coverage and increase readership. See the *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 513–14.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> The term literary is used deliberately here, in order to emphasise the fluidity of Stead’s movement between literary techniques and those deemed ‘journalistic’, as well as his movement between the more distinct modes of fiction, criticism, and journalism in his various publications. For discussion of some of the theoretical implications of this see: Laurel Brake, ‘Culture Wars? Arnold’s *Essays in Criticism* and the Rise of Journalism 1865–1895’, in *Conflict and*



journalistic practice he would go on to develop, Stead was committed to negotiating the gradual Americanization of the British newspaper. Marrying American innovations, such as the interview, or the exaggerated ‘scare-head’ headline, with legitimating voices from the establishment, such as elected politicians, Stead sought to fundamentally alter the way in which the periodical press represented social and political issues concerning Britain.

The negative insinuation that often accompanied the term Americanization in its nineteenth-century usage, and which persists, is of further importance to this discussion because it encapsulates that which was threatening about the influence of American culture to some, and liberating to others.<sup>24</sup> To privileged members of Victorian society America represented a classless mob, which, Matthew Arnold warned in 1861, was a dangerous model of power, ‘with no adequate ideal to elevate or guide the multitude.’<sup>25</sup> Stead saw no such danger in the shift towards mass politics in Britain because he was determined that the newspaper would replace the aristocracy (in Arnold’s conservative formulation) as the elevating and guiding organ of the commonwealth.<sup>26</sup>

An example of Stead’s introduction of American journalistic techniques to the British press, balanced by legitimating establishment voices, is found in his recollection of having been the journalist who introduced the interview to Britain, recorded in the article: ‘The First Public Man Interviewed in England.’ In September 1902, in the ‘Leading Articles of the Month’ section of Stead’s monthly periodicals the *Review of Reviews* and the *American Monthly Review of*

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*Difference in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. by Dinah Birch and Mark Llewellyn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 201–212.

<sup>24</sup> Günter Bischof discusses the development of the ‘abstractions “Americanism,” “Americanization,” and “American-ness”’ and refers to the work of Thomas Fröschl who argues that anti-American sentiment expressed in such a way was in fact prevalent in Europe from America’s discovery in the sixteenth century. Günter Bischof, ‘Two Sides of the Coin: The Americanization of Austria and Austrian Anti-Americanism’, in *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945*, ed. by Alexander Stephan (Oxford: Beghahn Books, 2006), pp. 147–183, (p. 165).

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Arnold, ‘Democracy’ (1861), in Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. by Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–25 (p. 15).

<sup>26</sup> In ‘W. T. Stead and Democracy: The Americanization of the World’, Laurel Brake compares Arnold and Stead in relation to America. *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776–1914*, ed. by Ella Dzelzainis and Ruth Livesey (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 161–178.

*Reviews*, an article entitled ‘The First Public Man Interviewed’ and ‘The First Public Man Interviewed in England’ (respectively) appeared. The articles were provoked by newspaper editor Sir Wemyss Reid’s contribution to the British, evangelical, penny weekly *Great Thoughts*, in which he discussed the shocking Americanization of the British press. Reid claimed that the politician W.E. Forster was the first ‘public man’ to be interviewed in England, in ‘1880 or 1881’, revealing that he had ‘reproached [Forster] for having countenanced such an abominable innovation from America.’ As the interviewer was Stead however, the introduction of such an abominable American innovation is hardly surprising, and is entirely consistent with his Americanization agenda.

Both *Reviews* then quote from the *Westminster Gazette*, which had also noted Reid’s piece in *Great Thoughts*. The *Gazette* added that ‘Mr. Forster [...] was much blamed at the time for having submitted to being interviewed’, ‘much’ presumably referring to opinions published in the periodical press that perceived the interview to be an Americanization of the British newspaper. The rest of the two articles are then given over to Stead the self-publicist. Noting the considerable ‘interest’ the *Great Thoughts* piece was receiving, Stead narrates the circumstances of the ‘first’ interview and its publication in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He recounted having sent a ‘proof’ of the interview to Forster, on receipt of which Forster replied that he thought the ‘observations’ made by him should be published in his name. Stead countered that he ‘never thought he (Forster) would stand it, because there was such a prejudice against interviewing public men.’ But Forster returned that in certain instances the interview was an appropriate mode of communicating and testing ideas and so the name of the first public man to be interviewed in England was made, to great consternation, public.<sup>27</sup> Through delicate manipulation, by allowing Forster to see proofs of the interview first and adjust them as he saw fit, Stead achieved this Americanization. Furthermore, that the subsequent debate reignited by Reid more than twenty

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<sup>27</sup> ‘The First Public Man Interviewed in England’, *American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 26 (1902), p. 362; W. T. Stead, ‘The First Public Man Interviewed’, *Review of Reviews*, 26 (1902), p. 368.

years later was reported in the *American Review of Reviews* as well as the *Review of Reviews*, demonstrates the way in which journalistic techniques and ideas about their appropriate or inappropriate use flowed back and forth across the Atlantic in the latter part of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth century – with Stead often at the centre of such debates.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. TRANSATLANTICISM

The nineteenth-century neologism, Americanization, serves to remind us that the latter decades of the 1800s saw an upsurge of New World influence on the Old. That the term carries such negative, politically-charged associations, however, suggests that a more proportionate term – ‘transatlantic’ – best captures the most appropriate sense of Stead’s engagement with and contribution to the development and direction of the British press. Transatlantic, moreover, more faithfully reflects his direct ideological and literary influence through other periodical publications. The transatlantic contains, within its etymological roots *transeo*, the implication of ‘a cultural transferring [...] from one location to another.’ And just as the term New Journalism places its primary emphasis on both the new and the innovative, Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor identify the rhetorical trope *translatio studii et imperii*, rising from *transeo*, as embodying the ‘skilful weaving of recognised (authoritative) patterns and elements into a new web of relationships.’<sup>29</sup> Stead’s approach to journalism, as I have shown, skilfully wove the voices of authoritative British figures such as W. E. Forster, or General Charles Gordon, with American journalistic practices, such as the aforementioned interview, or the ‘scare-head’ headline, such as the glaringly large ‘TOO LATE!’ printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the wake of General Gordon’s death in Khartoum in January 1885.<sup>30</sup> Joel H. Weiner considers ‘typography and

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<sup>28</sup> The *American Review of Reviews* was edited by Albert Shaw with independent editorial control from Stead’s London-based *Review of Reviews*. It does not necessarily follow that the article would have been published in both *Reviews*.

<sup>29</sup> Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor, ‘Introduction: What is Transatlantic Literary Studies?’, in *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader*, ed. by Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 1–13 (p. 9).

<sup>30</sup> ‘Too Late!’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 February 1885, p. 8.

interviewing' to share a 'common strand' precisely 'because they exemplify Stead's continuing efforts to adapt American ideas to Britain.'<sup>31</sup> Stead's selection of important political moments (in the case of Forster his role in the 'Eastern Question', and in General Gordon's the crisis in the Sudan) as the vehicles for introducing American newspaper techniques, aligns the transatlantic closely with Nolan's definition of Americanization as each instance demonstrates Stead selectively appropriating and negotiating according to circumstance.

As well as in his selective appropriation of American journalistic techniques, substantiation of Stead's transatlanticism can be found in his literary style, which, he insisted, was defined by the influence of a variety of figures from both sides of the Atlantic, most prominently: Thomas Carlyle, Oliver Cromwell, James Russell Lowell and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Growing up in a fervently religious household, the son of the Congregationalist minister Reverend William Stead, Stead the younger said of Cromwell that he felt 'more passionate personal love...' for him than 'for the divine figure of Jesus of Nazareth.'<sup>32</sup> Whilst still a boy he wrote an essay on Cromwell under the pseudonym W.T. Silcoates for *Boy's Own Magazine* which won him an order of merit and a prize equivalent to the modern-day book token. With it he purchased, amongst other things, the poetical works of Lowell.<sup>33</sup> Worship of the model-Puritan Cromwell therefore led Stead to Lowell, entwining the two influences in the young boy's imagination as meaningfully connected. Reading Lowell's 'The Pious Editor's Creed', Stead wrote, was the call to arms he needed in order to dedicate his life to journalism. Benjamin Flower quotes Stead as having said:

In looking back I am convinced that it was Lowell's preface to 'The Pious Editor's Creed' that set my mind in the direction of journalism. To me Lowell's declaration that the high mission of the true editor was to find tables of the new law among our factories and cities, in the wilderness of sin called civilization, and become the

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<sup>31</sup> Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press*, p. 173.

<sup>32</sup> W. T. Stead, 'Oliver Cromwell and the National Church', *Review of Reviews*, 19 (1899), p. 425.

<sup>33</sup> W. T. Stead, 'James Russell Lowell: His Message and How it Helped Me' *Review of Reviews*, 4 (1891), pp. 235–38 (p. 237).

captain of our exodus into the Canaan of a truer social order, was a revelation, and it has remained a constant guide and inspiration through all the years of my journalistic career.<sup>34</sup>

Stead was inspired despite the fact that “The Pious Editor’s Creed’ and other poems contained in Lowell’s collection entitled *The Biglow Papers* were satirical. Estelle Stead confirms: ‘before he won the “Prize” volume of poems’ he came across a “yellow-backed shilling edition of the Biglow Papers, lying side-by-side with a well-thumbed copy of Artemus Ward as a specimen of American humour”’, but it was ‘not the humour of the delicious verse that made a dint in [his] mind.’ Instead the ‘Pious Editor’s Creed’ preface was the inspiration for ‘The New Journalism’:

I feel to-day, [...] as if, all my life long, ever since I read them, I had been doing little else but trying, as best I could, to circulate and propagate the ideas contained in this preface. All that is real and true in what Matthew Arnold called ‘The New Journalism,’ which he said I had invented, is there in germ.<sup>35</sup>

Here Stead informs us that his conception of the New Journalism was a direct attempt to translate the ideas of James Russell Lowell into his own writing, and Stead’s admiration of Lowell is crucial to understanding Stead’s transatlanticism.

Lowell believed himself to be the first American poet to ‘endeavor[] to express the American Idea’ and in his 1865 essay ‘New England Two Centuries Ago’ wrote:

Puritanism believing itself quick with the seed of religious liberty laid without knowing it the egg of democracy. The English Puritans pulled down church and state to rebuild Zion on the ruins, and all the while it was not Zion, but America, they were building.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> B. O. Flower, *Progressive Men, Women, and Movements of the Past Twenty-Five Years* (Boston, MA: The New Arena, 1914), p. 257.

<sup>35</sup> Where Estelle Stead quotes her father she is often vague. In reference to this particular quotation she writes ‘he adds elsewhere.’ Estelle Stead, *My Father*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>36</sup> In a letter to C. F. Briggs—journalist, author and editor—Russell Lowell wrote ‘[...] I am the first poet who has endeavored to express the American Idea, and I shall be popular by and by.’ James Russell Lowell, *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, ed. by Charles Eliot Norton, 2 vols (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1894), I, p. 148; James

Figured in this way, America was a place where religion and democracy were inextricably linked and therefore it was particularly appealing to Stead. His belief in America as the ‘new’ and unifying force of the future was most powerfully manifested in his attempts to bring some religious coherence to his own country and age. Hugh Kingsmill’s *After Puritanism 1850–1900* highlights the tension between Stead’s puritanical leanings – from which came his desire to become a ‘worthy leader of a regimented people’ – and the comparably chaotic, permissive movement towards modernity in which he existed professionally.<sup>37</sup> Kingsmill argues that Stead’s ‘dreams of Imperial Federation, and an Anglo-American Republic, expressed his unconscious desire to compress the unmanageable modern world into a single community.’<sup>38</sup> In this way Kingsmill makes the necessary observation that Stead was driven by a desire for order and unity but he has little to say about the fact that Stead’s admiration for America stemmed largely from his view of that vast country as more in tune with his ideals than his own nation. An overtly religious rhetoric in aspects of the press as well as in government, an emerging international dominance, and a classless impulsive embrace of ‘new’ ideas were to Stead a powerful convergence of what made America the future.<sup>39</sup>

In his political views, vision for international fellowship, and adaptation of the periodical press, Stead was, as Laurel Brake puts it, ‘in conversation with America.’<sup>40</sup> The scale of this transatlantic dialogue, in which Stead was one of many participants, has yet to be documented in a way that examines the mutualistic influence it implies.<sup>41</sup> Joel Wiener’s *The Americanization of the*

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Russell Lowell, ‘New England Two Centuries Ago’ in *Among my Books* (Boston, MA: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1870), p. 228–90 (p. 238).

<sup>37</sup> Stead, private journal MS, 14 January 1877. Baylen archive, private collection. Baylen cites the Stead Papers held at the Churchill archive but adds that since Robertson Scott’s usage of them many are missing from the collection. Grace Eckley also notes the loss of many of W. T. Stead’s papers in *Maiden Tribute: a Life of W. T. Stead* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2007), p. 423.

<sup>38</sup> Hugh Kingsmill, *After Puritanism 1850–1900* (London: Duckworth, 1929), p. 218.

<sup>39</sup> When the Titanic sank in April 1912, with Stead aboard, he was on his way to address the Men and Religion Forward Movement at Carnegie Hall in New York. The movement appealed to him because it hoped to ‘realize [...] the ideals’ of his ‘Civic Church.’ W. T. Stead, ‘The Men and Religion Forward Movement’, reproduced in Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, vol. 2, pp. 312–13.

<sup>40</sup> Brake, ‘W. T. Stead and Democracy’, p. 162.

<sup>41</sup> An exception to this is Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier, eds, *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880–1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

*British Press 1830s–1914* is representative of analysis that focuses on the influence America exerted on Britain, whilst Mark Hampton's *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950* looks at the British press, as it was 'conceptualized' by 'British elites'.<sup>42</sup> Both critics consider the 'debates that helped to lead the British to the point where informing readers and toppling governments [...] could appear as the appropriate function of journalism.' However, more attention to the crucial and active role played in these debates by Stead, and others who were never members of the 'elites' but who *were* fully engaged in the enterprise of making the newspaper the centre of the public sphere, is needed.<sup>43</sup> Had Stead been of the establishment in terms of class, education, or even religious denomination, he would not have been attracted to the powerfully revisionist space that the transatlantic embodies – poised somewhere between the Old and the New.

Anecdotal evidence from his contemporaries repeatedly emphasize Stead's exclusion from the 'elite', highlighting his brash manner and what George Bernard Shaw termed his 'stupendous[] ignoran[ce]' of hierarchical social etiquettes and class distinctions. His obliviousness to the rules, according to Shaw, prevented Stead from 'playing the game', or even realising that there was one.<sup>44</sup> This supposed naivety with regard to the social mores dictating class divisions has sometimes been held up as proof that Stead was from an 'uneducated' background, that he was 'poor' and therefore low-born.<sup>45</sup> This reported ignorance was an image Stead in fact cultivated himself in order to bypass certain niceties and conventions that he otherwise would have had to respect. In *The Life of W. T. Stead* Frederic Whyte quotes a London correspondent to the *North Eastern News* who said of Stead: 'He throws himself into a chair or on a bench with a truly American disregard of the angles of society postures, and he uses phrases which, both in their character and in their vigour, smack of the Far West.'<sup>46</sup> Stead's alleged

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<sup>42</sup> Wiener's *The Americanization of the British Press* asks questions such as 'why were and are American journalists more likely to undertake serious investigative reporting than their British counterparts?', p. 8; Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain*, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> George Bernard Shaw quoted in Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, vol. 1, pp. 304–6.

<sup>45</sup> W. Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead* (London: Robson Press, 2012), p. xii.

<sup>46</sup> Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, vol. 1, p. 169.

philistinism should be read as deliberate and effective; his self-styling as a ‘barbarian of the North, detesting conventionalities [...]’ allowed him to play his own game, or at least operate under a different set of rules, ignoring certain codes of the British social-class system. He was fully aware of how adopting certain ‘Americanisms’ of style, both literary and bodily, might further his ends.<sup>47</sup> Stead actively promoted this iconoclastic image as can be seen in early correspondence between him and the Russian, self-styled diplomat Madame Olga Novikoff. He knew when to use his unconventional appearance and the aforementioned lack of knowledge of ‘the game’ of society to his advantage.<sup>48</sup> Stead wrote manipulatively to Novikoff after she refused an invitation to visit him, by insinuating that her refusal had to do with his position in society – the position he was supposedly unaware of:

It is not for a poor and humble individual as me and my wife to entertain Excellencies. We do not associate with the aristocracy. We don’t even associate with the local grandees of our town [...] they do not mix with such humble people as newspaper editors [...] social superiors I suppose are much the same all over the world.<sup>49</sup>

It is clear to the reader of this letter extract that Stead understood the nuances of a class system he had lived in his whole life, and yet, as Edward Harold Begbie recorded elsewhere, Albert Grey, 4th Earl Grey said of Stead (during his editorship of the *Northern Echo*): ‘I found that this provincial editor of an obscure paper was corresponding with kings and emperors all over the world and receiving long letters from statesmen of every nation.’<sup>50</sup> Stead knew the strictures of the British class system required certain forms of deference and formal address, but he frequently chose to adopt an American air of irreverence, or ignorance of those forms in

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<sup>47</sup> W. T. Stead, ‘Journal Entry (4 July 1880)’, quoted in J. W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper: An Account of the Temperaments, Perturbations and Achievements of John Morley, W. T. Stead, E. T. Cook, Harry Cust, J. R. Garvin and three other Editors of the Pall Mall Gazette* (London: Methuen, 1952), pp. 113–115 (p. 112).

<sup>48</sup> See Whyte’s *The Life of W. T. Stead* for details of the ‘deplorable check suit’ and other examples of Stead’s eccentric appearance.

<sup>49</sup> Stead to Olga Novikoff (19 October 1877), Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Eng. Misc d. 182.

<sup>50</sup> Begbie’s *Albert, Fourth Earl Grey: A Last Word* quoted in Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, vol. 1, p. 39.



order to serve his purposes. That Stead was at once aware of the system, but convincingly able to plead ignorance of it when he saw fit, is an expression of his transatlanticism. Due to his irreverent attitude towards barriers of class and nobility Stead was becoming – as Novikoff assured him in her reply to his ostensibly supplicatory letter – quite a celebrity. But it was through his own fearless self-promotion and distinctive abandonment of Old World codes of social and journalistic practices that Stead actually came to take on the unofficial title of the father of New Journalism. His articles, such as: ‘Government by Journalism’ (1886) and ‘The Future of Journalism’ (1886); interviews like ‘The Church of the Future’ (1891), and his thoughts on the interview as a journalistic tool published in the *Idler* magazine in 1895; campaigns such as his agitation in the wake of the Bulgarian atrocities and on behalf of the London poor; as well as the 1902 publication *The Americanisation of the World; or, the Trend of the Twentieth Century*, are evidence not only of the pertinence of such a title but also of how the twin influences of British and American culture allowed Stead to develop a transatlantic style of journalism that would go on to prove internationally influential and effective in ways that continue today.

#### 4. NEW JOURNALISM

When in 1880 Stead began a new stage of his career as assistant editor at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a newspaper then headed by John Morley, he moved from Darlington in the North of England, having been drawn to the metropolis by the ‘unquestionabl[e] gain in power’ the position would afford.<sup>51</sup> Upon Morley’s election to Parliament in 1883, Stead became editor-in-chief at the age of thirty-four, expressing the opinion that now was the time to ‘revolutionise everything.’<sup>52</sup> Stead’s so-called revolutionary tactics, according to Joel Wiener, included: ‘sensationalism; typography and interviewing; and news condensation.’ These are some of the components most

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<sup>51</sup> W. T. Stead, MS ‘Summary of My Life to 1880’, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, ‘The Papers of W. T. Stead’, box 3, file 2.

<sup>52</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 120.

readily associated with the New Journalism along with the gossip column.<sup>53</sup> As Wiener points out, by the time Stead began implementing these tactics at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, they were all already prominent features of the American press.<sup>54</sup> Stead's New Journalism revolution, was, therefore, not a revolution, but a gradual move towards the print newspaper format we are familiar with today, as negotiated through the adoption and adaptation of features recognisably taken from the American press.<sup>55</sup>

In *The Americanisation of the World* Stead explained his admiration of the American press:

The American newspaper from the first [...] represented far more faithfully than its English contemporaries the aspirations, the ideas, and the prejudices of the masses of the people. [...] It is the fashion among English people, especially among those who know nothing about it, to sneer at American newspapers; but take them altogether, the American newspaper is distinctly ahead of its English contemporaries. To begin with, there is more of it, more news, more advertisements, more paper, more print.<sup>56</sup>

He argued that the American newspaper was actually more like a 'Gazetteer or an Encyclopaedia' but without the facility to alphabetize its contents: thus the need for the 'exaggerated headings or scare-heads' that 'offend[ed] so many English readers.'<sup>57</sup> He explained: 'headlines are almost indispensable as a guide to the contents of the paper' because they tell a 'man hurrying to business in a tramcar or railway' which column is of interest to him and allow him to gain a broad sense of the contents of that day's newspaper simply from scanning the headlines. This description of the American press demonstrates Stead's awareness of and positive attitude

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<sup>53</sup> Robertson Scott attributes the introduction of the gossip column to Stead in *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 237.

<sup>54</sup> Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press*, p. 172.

<sup>55</sup> The terms 'New Journalism' and 'yellow journalism' (as it was referred to in the US), are products of intense transatlantic debate and negotiation in periodicals and literary works of the period. For further discussion of the definition of 'New Journalism' see Joel H. Wiener, ed., *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (London: Greenwood Press, 1988). Wiener also discusses the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s 1882 leader 'Journalism and Public Taste' in *The Americanization of the British Press*, p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> Stead, *The Americanisation of the World*, p. 110–111.

<sup>57</sup> Stead, *The Americanisation of the World*, p. 111.

towards the necessity for the periodical press to adapt to changing models of reading. Stead criticized *The Times* – representative, for him, of the old guard of elitist newspapers resistant to change – for rarely using large headings, before going on to compare scare-heads to window-dressing.<sup>58</sup> ‘Comparatively few English journalists’, Stead tells us at the outset of the twentieth century, understood that ‘good journalism’ is the ‘proper labelling and displaying of your goods’ rather than the ‘writing of leading articles.’<sup>59</sup> The commercial metaphor is indicative of Stead’s early embrace of techniques that are today a commonplace feature of British journalism but were then examples of notable differences between American and British press practices. Stead had begun to practise the American innovations he praised in *The Americanisation of the World* as early as 1870, in his rebellion against anonymity in journalism, and from 1871 in the position of editor at the *Northern Echo*.<sup>60</sup> Editing a small northern paper had allowed Stead to experiment with such American innovations away from the reactionary eye of London traditionalists but upon arriving in London Stead needed to find a way to justify his desire to Americanize the British press without the negative connotations the word carried. Thus we find Stead equating the New Journalism with New World journalism in the 1886 article ‘The Future of Journalism’ published in the *Contemporary Review*.<sup>61</sup> Stead explained that American newspapers were ‘ahead of those in Europe.’ In order for Europe to reach American standards Stead argued that there needed to be a ‘new journalism’ whose messiah ‘m[ight] be [...] not yet born’ – although privately he believed himself to be this messiah.<sup>62</sup> Thus the ‘New’ in New Journalism, for Stead at least, included the translation of American journalistic techniques to his corner of the British press.

Owen Mulpetre has questioned ‘the widespread assumption that New Journalism was a name and concept generated by Matthew Arnold in his famous critique of Stead’s editorial style

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<sup>58</sup> See ‘Character Sketch: *The Times*’, the *Review of Reviews*, vol. 1 (1890), pp. 186–9.

<sup>59</sup> Stead, *The Americanisation of the World*, p. 111.

<sup>60</sup> Owen Mulpetre refers to Stead’s use of ‘American style headlines and intriguing subheads’ during his ten-year editorship of the *Northern Echo*, in ‘W. T. Stead and the New Journalism’ (unpublished MPhil thesis, Teesside University, 2010), p. 73.

<sup>61</sup> See W. T. Stead, ‘The Future of Journalism’, *Contemporary Review*, 50, (November 1886), pp. 663–679.

<sup>62</sup> Stead, ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 667. In his journal he referred to himself as a prophet in relation to his role as a journalist and the causes he supported. Private journal MS, 14 January 1877. Baylen archive, private collection.

at the *Pall Mall Gazette*,’ and argues ‘that Stead himself was the ‘pivotal figure in this process.’ Mulpetre’s study of Stead and the New Journalism contends that Stead ‘orchestrated press debate surrounding the New Journalism in response to Arnold’s comments.’<sup>63</sup> Now recognised as the principal pronouncement on the New Journalism, as well as an allusion to Stead, Arnold’s commentary in the 1887 essay ‘Up to Easter’ is clear in its views:

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*.<sup>64</sup>

The New Journalist is figured here as part of that great troubling mass ‘the [new] democracy.’ Arnold labels the ‘new voters’ incapable of ‘reason’ or of thinking ‘seriously’ or ‘fairly’, just as he argues that the New Journalist:

[...] 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.<sup>65</sup>

Arnold has been recognised by scholars such as Joel Wiener, Harry Schalck, Richard Fulton, Laurel Brake and Joseph Baylen as the progenitor of the term New Journalism, but Mulpetre’s thesis takes issue with this.<sup>66</sup> He suggests that modern historians of the press perpetuate hierarchies of cultural position by attributing the invention of the phrase to Arnold. This is partly because Stead published his treatise on ‘The Future of Journalism’, which contains

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<sup>63</sup> Mulpetre, ‘W. T. Stead and the New Journalism’, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Matthew Arnold, ‘Up to Easter’, originally printed in the *Nineteenth Century*, 123 (1887), in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1977), vol. 11: *The Last Word*, pp. 190–209 (p. 202). Italics are reproduced from original.

<sup>65</sup> Arnold, ‘Up To Easter’, in *The Complete Prose Works*, p. 202.

<sup>66</sup> Harry Schalck, ‘Fleet Street in the 1880s: The New Journalism’, in *Papers for the Millions: the New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. by Joel Wiener (London: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 73–87; Joseph O. Baylen, ‘Matthew Arnold and the *Pall Mall Gazette*’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 68 (1969), pp. 543–55; Joseph O. Baylen, ‘The “New Journalism” in Late Victorian Britain’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 18 (1972), pp. 367–85; and Richard Fulton, ‘Sensation War Reporting and the Quality Press in Late Victorian Britain and America’, in *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850–2000*, ed. by Joel H. Wiener and Mark Hampton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 11–31.

several references to the New Journalism, as well as being devoted to the subject, a year earlier than Arnold published 'Up to Easter', which contains only two references to journalism. But also, and more importantly, Stead took Arnold's 'passing reference' to it and 'through a masterly orchestration of public debate' developed the term into one of significant cultural weight.<sup>67</sup>

However, one of the key ploys of Stead's 'masterful orchestration' was just what Mulpetre charges modern historians with reproducing uncritically: by forcing the connection between Arnold and the New Journalism, through repetition of the association, Stead used Arnold's cultural cachet to establish the designation and lend it authority.<sup>68</sup> In a letter to the journalist John William Robertson Scott, dated 24 August (probably 1887), on *Pall Mall Gazette* headed paper Stead wrote:

You don't seem to know that the "New Journalism" was a phrase invented by Matthew Arnold [...].

I am interested in seeing that you mention as a chief feature of the New Journalism the conscientiousness will at all times to get at the bottom of things before pronouncing upon them; wh. is precisely an opposite remark to that made by Matthew Arnold who imputed to me – most unjustly – an indifference to my facts.

If there is one thing wh. I am always preaching it is 'Get to know your facts.'

Your article is interesting and I fancy it will make a good many people swear.<sup>69</sup>

Stead leaves no doubt here as to whom he wants to be credited with the invention of the phrase and highlights the aspersions cast by Arnold as contradictory to that which he considers to be his professional ethos. He imagines Robertson Scott's article piquing those who associate the New Journalism with unscrupulous behaviour, creating a 'sensation' and encouraging further debate.

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<sup>67</sup> Mulpetre, 'W. T. Stead and the New Journalism', p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Mulpetre quotes an article by Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette* that declares that the newspaper was the 'originator of the New Journalism' (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 May 1887, p. 4), 'W. T. Stead and the New Journalism', p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Stead to Robertson Scott, Baylen archive, private collection. There is no indication of the year, but it is likely to be from 1887.

Despite Stead's work to promote the essential connection between himself and the New Journalism, its associations began to shift away from 'ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, [and] generous instincts' in the 1890s and early twentieth century. As Laurel Brake, Owen Mulpetre, and others have shown, T.P. O'Connor's *The Star* (1888) and Lord Northcliffe's *The Daily Mail* (1896) were the newspapers now most readily associated with the term New Journalism, and the accompanying definition is not Americanization but 'commercialism.'<sup>70</sup> This transition is not surprising as the growing dominance of advertising gradually changed the landscape of the nineteenth-century press.<sup>71</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Victorian era as an age of transition is a well-worn conceit – used not only by contemporary critics but by the Victorians themselves – and it is often employed in discussions of the New Journalism.<sup>72</sup> But the pace of change, and extent of the divergence between Old and New Journalism is a transition that can easily be misread as a national rather than transnational process.<sup>73</sup> In her work Laurel Brake stresses 'continuities' between the 'Old and New' journalism and methodically unpicks the hyperbolic rhetoric of journalists, including Stead, who were given to overemphasising the speed with which New Journalism changed the makeup of the British

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<sup>70</sup> Arguably the charge of a lack of attention to 'facts' remained part of the definition. See Laurel Brake, 'Government by Journalism and the Silence of the *Star*', in *Encounters in the Victorian Press*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Julie F. Codell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 213–35; R. C. K. Ensor, *England 1870–1914* quoted in Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 238.

<sup>71</sup> See Alan Lee, 'The Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press, 1855–1914', in *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day*, ed. by George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate (London: Constable, 1978), pp. 117–29. Wiener demonstrates that, as a whole, the British press resisted American 'innovations in advertising methods' and 'lagged somewhat behind' in the amount of advertising contained within its pages, though, he admits 'the evidence for this is sketchy and impressionistic.' *The Americanization of the British Press*, pp. 110, 108.

<sup>72</sup> Walter Houghton draws attention to a long list of celebrated names who used the term 'transition' or 'transitional' to describe their present: Sir Henry Holland, Prince Albert, Mathew Arnold, Baldwin Brown, Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Disraeli, Frederic Harrison, Edward Bulwer Lytton, W. H. Mallock, Harriet Martineau, John Mill, John Morley, William Morris, Herbert Spencer, Hugh Stowell, J.A. Symonds, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. See Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (London: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> See Joel H. Wiener, 'How New was the New Journalism?' in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. by Joel H. Wiener (London: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 47–71.

periodical press.<sup>74</sup> However, it is the case that, during a period of fairly rapid transition toward the professionalisation of journalism – disapproved of by Arnold and his contemporaries – Stead was *the* archetype of the New versus the Old journalist. Brake quotes J.F. Stephen, a lawyer, writer and judge, best remembered for his role in the conviction of Israel Lipski (1887) and Florence Maybrick (1889), writing disparagingly in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1862 of journalists ‘pure and simple.’ Men ‘who have no other occupation or position in life than those which they derive from newspapers, and no other prospect than those which lie in their success.’ In this notion of the ‘journalist [...] pure and simple’ we see the prejudices of the Old Journalism confront the circumstances of the New. Stephen’s declaration implies that the danger of journalism-for-journalism’s-sake is a hurried, harried, and financially-motivated endeavour lacking in integrity and artistry, and not the independent, investigative, politically powerful vocation Stead saw it as. Stephen added that these career journalists lacked ‘much other education than the newspaper itself supplies’, pre-empting Arnold’s description of the New Journalist as ‘feather-brained.’<sup>75</sup>

These class-based assumptions had so far worked, and would continue to work in Stead’s favour, as they consistently underestimated the capabilities of the New, Americanized Journalist. His first journalistic campaign, the success of which launched his career as an editor and journalist of international fame, leading him to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and London, is indicative of just how short-sighted estimations of Stead as ‘journalism-lite’ would prove to be. This first campaign took place in the wake of the ‘Bulgarian Horrors’ committed by the forces of the Ottoman Empire during the Bulgarian rebellion of 1876. Stead’s agitation has since been referred

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<sup>74</sup> Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. 92.

<sup>75</sup> Brake quotes J. F. Stephen, ‘Journalism’, originally published in *Cornhill Magazine*, 6 (1862), pp. 52–63, in *Subjugated Knowledges*, p. 89.

to by Brian Harrison as the act that ‘launched the Liberal Party on the road to electoral recovery in 1880’.<sup>76</sup>

During his time as editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* Stead ran many further successful, and several infamous campaigns, including: ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ (1885), ‘General Gordon and the Soudan’ (1884), and ‘The Truth about the Navy’ (1884). He also published ‘Government by Journalism’ (1886) and ‘The Future of Journalism’ (1886): two texts that set out his beliefs about journalism and its political and religious significance. These two essays have become ‘cultural benchmarks’ in themselves as treatises of the New Journalism school. In ‘The Future of Journalism’ Stead also introduced another of his ‘big ideas’ – that of the secular or civic church – which, in this early stage of its conceptual development, at the height of his success as an editor, Stead believed could be led by a newspaper, which would function as a ‘democratic university’ as well.<sup>77</sup> The idea was provocative, and likely to upset the sensibilities of Arnold, J.F. Stephen and others, as what begins to emerge in this highly idealistic account of the future of journalism – as envisaged by Stead – is an attempt at a new religion, a religion of newspapers, influenced heavily in doctrine by the heroes of his youth: Oliver Cromwell and James Russell Lowell. It was a synthesis of the dual influences of both nations: it was, in style and substance, transatlantic.

He had no qualms about exciting British nationalist feeling against such a transatlanticist position, writing to a fellow ‘muckraker’, the American journalist Henry Demarest Lloyd, in 1901: ‘I want to wake up John Bull, and I think that it will give him fits to have it rubbed into him that Uncle Sam is beating him hands down.’<sup>78</sup> One of Stead’s favourite journalistic tactics was giving John Bull fits. ‘The Maiden Tribute’ may well be Stead’s most memorable example of

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<sup>76</sup> Brian Harrison, ‘Press and Pressure Groups in Modern Britain’, in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 261–295 (p. 273).

<sup>77</sup> Stead, ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 678.

<sup>78</sup> ‘W. T. Stead to Henry Demarest Lloyd’ (12 October 1901, Lloyd Papers), quoted in Robert Frankel, *Observing America: The Commentary of British Visitors to the United States, 1890–1950* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 65.



this, as it had all the qualities of what we would consider today to be a tabloid campaign. In Stead's feverish denunciation of the 'scandalous state of the law' and 'mothers' for their 'culpable refusal [...] to explain to their daughters the realities and the dangers of their existence', we might be forgiven for thinking we were reading a contemporary piece in today's *Daily Mail* – a newspaper which saw its inaugural issue six years after Stead left the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1896.<sup>79</sup> Stead's sensational journalese, ratcheted up to a new level during 'The Maiden Tribute', and his use of the interview in such instances as 'General Gordon on the Soudan' (1884), provide us with distinct examples of his adoption of American journalistic techniques, which illustrate a transatlantic exchange of ideas and methods that informed the development of his journalistic style. Furthermore, Stead's personal musings on government by, and the future of, journalism demonstrate his determination to endorse and adapt the American innovations in print culture that had enabled the American press to represent 'far more faithfully than its English contemporaries the aspirations, the ideas, and the prejudices of the masses of the people.'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> W. T. Stead, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon II: The Report of our Secret Commission', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 July 1885; pp.1–6 (p. 2).

<sup>80</sup> Stead, *The Americanisation of the World*, p. 111.

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