

W. JOSEPH CAMPBELL

1897

American Journalism's Exceptional Year

This article directs attention to the remarkable developments of 1897 and argues that year merits recognition as a pivotal moment in the trajectory of American journalism. In presenting that case, the article pursues a methodological frame—a single-year study—that has been little tested in journalism history, a field that leading scholars have criticized for resistance to fresh ways of considering journalism's past. The notable developments of 1897 included the publication of perhaps the most famous editorial in American journalism, the diffusion of the enduring epithet "yellow journalism," and a breakthrough in applying half-tone technology in daily newspapers. It also was the year when a choice between rival visions for the future of American journalism crystallized between the activist ethos of the New York Journal and the detached, fact-based antithesis of that genre, the New York Times.

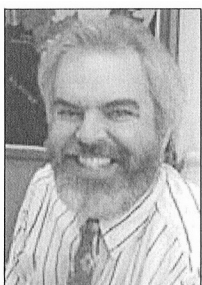
When the American Newspaper Publishers' Association convened its annual meeting in New York City in February 1897, the agenda included questions such as: "Should a newspaper furnish members of the editorial staff with stationery supplies, especially lead pencils?" Do typewriters "lower the literary grade of work done by reporters?" and "What is the rule in regard to paying car fare for reporters on the local staff of newspapers?"¹ While offering a glimpse into late nineteenth-century journalism, the topics² were inadvertently deceptive. They contained no hint 1897 was unfolding as an important moment of transition in American journalism, and they offered scant allusion to the convergence of events and forces that would make this journalism's exceptional year.

Eighteen ninety-seven was the year of publication of the most famous editorial³ in American journalism, the *New York Sun's* timeless "Is There a Santa Claus?"⁴ It was the year when "yellow journal-

ism" first appeared in print, a sneering pejorative that was swiftly diffused in the American press, and it brought a breakthrough in the use of half-tone photographs in main sections of large-circulation newspapers,⁵ a development that recast the appearance of daily American newspapers. It was the year of "jail-breaking journalism," according to the *Chicago Times-Herald*,⁶ when William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* organized the rescue of a female political prisoner in Havana during Cuba's insurrection against Spanish rule. It also was the year, some scholars say, of the first modern reference to "public relations"—in the *Yearbook of Railway Literature*.⁷ And it was the year when cinema was emergent⁸ and when a motion picture camera was first taken to war,⁹ and it marked the origin of the Katzenjammer Kids, now America's longest-running newspaper comic.¹⁰

But more significantly, it was when a choice would crystallize between rival and incompatible visions or paradigms for the future of American journalism—a choice between the self-activated, participatory ethos of Hearst's yellow journalism and the detached, sober antithesis of that genre, as represented by the *New York Times* and its lofty commitment to "All the News That's Fit to Print." Resolution of this clash of paradigms would take years and result ultimately in rejection of Hearst-style activism. But in 1897, the choice was clearly laid down.

That all of those developments¹¹ were rooted in 1897 suggests more than coincidence; they signal the critical nature of the year as a remarkable if little-recognized transitory moment in American journalism. Tentatively perhaps, journalists in 1897 sensed that signifi-



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cant transformation was afoot. “Be the causes what they may,” the *Journalist* trade publication noted “the methods of journalism are at present changing. Whether they have yet reached the limit of that change . . . is a question no man can answer.”¹² New practices and new devices certainly were being brought to newsrooms. The “signed article,” for example, was recognized as “more and more common,” representing “another departure in modern journalism,” according to the general manager of the Associated Press.¹³ The *Fourth Estate* noted a “rapid introduction of the typewriter into newspaper offices” and declared: “Though it is unfortunately true that many of the best reporters fail to save enough to begin a bank account, yet there is no reason why any man earning a decent salary should not possess a typewriter.”¹⁴ The extensive investment and capitalization required of large-city dailies—from typewriters to linotypes and high-speed presses capable of printing in color—prompted Lincoln Steffens to write: “The magnitude of the financial operations of the newspaper is turning journalism upside down.”¹⁵

This article directs attention to the remarkable succession of events and developments during that crowded year, particularly those in New York City surrounding the emergent clash of paradigms of the *Journal* and the *Times*, and argues that 1897 merits recognition as a pivotal moment in the trajectory of American journalism. In presenting that case, the article pursues a methodological frame—a single-year study—that has been little tested in journalism history, a field that leading scholars have criticized for its “restrictions on methodological approaches”¹⁶ and resistance to “new and better ways to study [journalism’s] past.”¹⁷

While critiques of journalism history have not specifically identified single-year studies as representative of methodological freshness, such approaches have proven revealing in other contexts. Scott Heller has described them as “a manageable way to narrow the scope, deal in specifics, yet still work with a beginning, middle, and end.”¹⁸ Because they offer detailed, sharply focused assessments, year studies can clarify trends, issues, and developments that otherwise may be obscured in the sweep of historiography. For example, the contemporaneous if passing interest in Hearst’s activist journalism is seldom recognized by historians. But a detailed examination of 1897 reveals that the activist paradigm won admirers, even among Hearst’s rivals and foes, and was seen as a promising agent in confronting official corruption and monopolistic excess.

Year studies, moreover, can offer insight into what may be considered familiar or even mundane topics. This article, for example, considers the emergence of the *New York Times*’ smug yet enduring motto, “All the News That’s Fit to Print,” and notes that it first served as an advertising and marketing device before taking a permanent place on the newspaper’s front page in 1897.

Year studies also can be intriguingly flexible and inclusive. As

Michael North, the author of *Reading 1922*,¹⁹ has usefully observed: “In the telling of history. . . a year can be used as a date, as if it were punctual and precise, or as a period containing a great many other dates.”²⁰ Such flexibility is apparent in the variety of recent single-year works examining the world on the cusp of modernity,²¹ the United States at a critical moment before its civil war,²² the nascent “American century,”²³ and the post-World War I peace conference in Paris,²⁴ among others.²⁵

Year studies are not without their risks, however. The most pronounced is placing too much significance in a single year while ignoring the broader evolutionary context. Indeed, it would be erroneous to characterize the significant developments in American journalism in 1897 as products of sudden inspiration.

Some certainly were. The *New York Sun*’s iconic Santa Claus editorial, according to an editor’s account, was written “in a short time.”²⁶

But other pivotal moments in 1897 clearly were the outcome of extended periods of experimentation. A telling example was the breakthrough in half-tone technology, specifically printing half-tones in the main section of newspapers published on high-speed presses. Such a process was believed impossible until the 1890s.²⁷ The breakthrough came January 21, 1897, when the *New York Tribune* published a half-tone photograph of Thomas Platt, New York’s U.S. Senator-elect, on its front page.²⁸ The portrait “startled New York” journalism, said the *Fourth Estate*,²⁹ which characterized the development as “undoubtedly, a new step in the art of newspaper illustration.”³⁰ The *Tribune* congratulated itself as “the first of all the metropolitan newspapers to make and print a satisfactory half-tone picture in its main sheet with its rapid, web perfecting presses, running at full speed, and using simply the regular everyday quality

of printing paper.” The newspaper also asserted: “We do not say The *Tribune*’s half-tones cannot be improved. . . . But the mechanical difficulty, hitherto deemed insuperable, has been at last overcome.”³¹ Within six weeks, the *Fourth Estate* reported a “distinct passion for half-tones” had “developed . . . throughout the country.”³²

Although the *Tribune*’s breakthrough was described by *Wilson’s Photographic Magazine* in 1900 as the start of a “wonderful revolution . . . in the illustration of great metropolitan daily papers,”³³ half-tones had appeared for years in illustrated weekly publications and in weekly supplements and special sections of newspapers. Their appearance in daily newspapers resulted from the sustained efforts of Stephen H. Horgan,³⁴ the *Tribune*’s art manager,³⁵ and from the recognition that half-tones offered greater timeliness and better fidelity³⁶ than artists’ sketches, and cost less, too.³⁷

As the *Tribune*’s innovation in half-tone technology suggests, the construct of a year study can capture or freeze-frame key moments in the trajectory of long-term change. This is not to say that no year other than 1897 could be considered as journalism’s exceptional year. Other candidates include: 1798 and the promulgation of the Alien and Sedition Acts, under which ten journalists eventually were con-

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victed;³⁸ 1833 and the emergence (disputed by scholars) of innovative techniques of the penny press;³⁹ 1972 and the *Washington Post*'s disclosures about the Watergate scandal, a constitutional crisis that led to the resignation in 1974 of President Richard M. Nixon;⁴⁰ and 1998 and the succession of well-publicized cases of ethical lapses and professional misconduct that shook American journalism.⁴¹ While each of those years is significant, even extraordinary, in American journalism, none appears to offer the variety of salient, pivotal moments that distinguished 1897.

That year, in broad respects, was characterized by a sense of vigor and welcome change in American life. A deeply unpopular president, Grover Cleveland, left office in March 1897 after presiding over four years of ruinous economic decline, or what the *New York Herald* called "the Slough of Despondency."⁴² Decreasing numbers of business failures and expanding farm exports signaled an economic recovery in 1897.⁴³ "In contrast with the four preceding years," the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* declared in an extravagant year-end assessment, "1897 was as the genial spring which follows the long, cold, dead winter, and sets aflow the currents of a new life in stream and tree and plant."⁴⁴

Midsummer 1897 brought confirmation of fabulous-sounding gold strikes in the Klondike, in Canada's sub-Arctic Yukon Territory, setting off North America's last great gold rush. A cycling craze, offering the allure of both speed and liberation,⁴⁵ neared or reached a peak in 1897.⁴⁶ Century runs—excursions of 100 miles—had become so popular as to be unremarkable, the *Philadelphia Item* declared.⁴⁷ "The bicycle has coaxed us all out of doors," the *New York Herald* observed. "This glorious exercise, followed by a glorious appetite three times a day and sound sleep at night is making us all over again."⁴⁸

The cycling craze would subside with the emergence of the automobile,⁴⁹ which in 1897 left indelible impressions. "The horseless carriage," the *New York Tribune* declared at year's end, "has apparently come to stay."⁵⁰ A year-end review in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* noted: "Horseless carriages

have ceased to be the butt of the cartoonist's pencil and the joke writer's pen. In three great cities of the world—London, Paris and New York—motor carriages have become such a familiar sight as to be an object of curiosity to none but country visitors."⁵¹ Presciently, the *New York Tribune* suggested at the close of 1897 that the world was "probably on the threshold of more stirring scenes and more important changes than have occurred in the year now closing."⁵² Within months, America had entered the world stage,⁵³ projecting its military power in Asia and the Caribbean during a brief war that ejected Spain from Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

The exceptionality of 1897 was becoming evident by the time the Publishers' Association met in New York. At the end of January 1897, just days after the *Tribune* printed its landmark half-tone, the *New York Press* published the evocative yet scathing sneer—"yellow

journalism"—to impugn the aggressive and invariably self-promoting "new" journalism of Hearst's *Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*.⁵⁴ The pejorative spread rapidly and lives on as an epithet for journalistic misconduct of all kinds. But rather than recoiling in embarrassment, the *Journal* took the insult as a compliment. It embraced yellow journalism and noted in 1898 that "the sun in heaven is yellow—the sun which is to this earth what the *Journal* is to American journalism."⁵⁵ Although that claim was typically self-congratulatory, the *Journal* had done much to merit such a characterization in 1897, which was a year of remarkable, if often controversial, exploits and successes.

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By late 1897, the *Journal* proclaimed it had developed a new kind of journalism, one infused with an activist ethos that "does not wait for things to turn up"⁵⁶ but cut through the inertia of bureaucracy to "get things done."⁵⁷ This, the *Journal* declared, was the "journalism of action," and it represented "the final state in the evolution of the modern newspaper."⁵⁸ The "journalism of action" enabled a newspaper to "fitly render any public service within its power."⁵⁹ This offered a clear choice for the future—a paradigm of agency and engagement that went beyond gathering, printing, and commenting on the news.⁶⁰

The brashness inherent in the "journalism of action" reflected the spirit of the late 1890s, especially the sentiment of "épater le bourgeois"⁶¹ (to shock middle class values). Its dynamism corresponded well to what John Higham has called the "clamorous vitality"⁶² of *fin-de-siècle* America. What's more, the "journalism of action" reflected the *fin-de-siècle* fascination with the "new," an adjective widely applied at the time to connote exceptional modernity.⁶³ "Not to be 'new' is, in these days, to be nothing," Henry D. Traill, a British journalist and literary critic, wrote in *The New Fiction*, a collection of essays published in 1897.⁶⁴ "New" found expression in *Art Nouveau*, the New Woman, New Politics, New Hedonism, New Drama, and the New Journalism (a term that critics began using interchange-

ably with "yellow journalism"⁶⁵). The *Journal* characterized itself as the exceptionally modern newspaper, asserting: "From a news point of view, there are two classes of papers in New York—the *Journal* and all the others."⁶⁶

The "journalism of action" was more complex than merely self-congratulatory. It was characterized by a panoply of activist strategies by which the *Journal* injected itself as the self-activating *participant* in solving crime, extending charity,⁶⁷ influencing foreign policy, and thwarting what it deemed abuses of municipal government. "A newspaper, hardly less than a government, is the guardian of the people's rights," the newspaper insisted.⁶⁸ Repeatedly in 1897, the *Journal* stepped into the vacuum left by government

incompetence and indifference to secure legal injunctions to block suspected “grabs” and “giveaways” in the award of municipal transportation and utilities contracts. In December 1897, it recounted its successes in such efforts, proclaiming on its front page: “The *Journal* Stops: Gas Franchise Grab in Brooklyn, Trolley Franchise Grab in Brooklyn, Death Terminal of the Bridge, Dilatory Work on Fifth Avenue, \$10,000,000 Light Monopoly in New York.”⁶⁹ The accompanying article declared: “Having devised and developed ‘the journalism that acts,’ the *Journal* will be found constantly fulfilling the particular duty it has taken unto itself—acting when public service requires; acting in the way to accomplish beneficent results.”⁷⁰

While not ignoring the swagger and excesses of the “journalism of action,” the *Journalist* trade publication identified the strength and popular appeal of the *Journal*’s method: “It is the freshest news brightly presented, the sham sharply punctured and, above all, the feeling . . . that behind and through the paper there beats a warm, generous, human heart alive to the troubles and miseries of humanity and anxious to alleviate them.”⁷¹ Considerable hope was attached to the *Journal*’s campaigns. The “journalism of action” was seen as “honest, fearless, unpurchaseable journalism,” according to Henry A. Crittenden, a reform-minded commentator, in the *Journalist*. He added: “It is not too much to say that the vital interests of the national progress and of the civilization demand that Mr. Hearst and the new journalism shall win in this titanic battle”⁷² against trusts and corruption.

While no doubt owing a modest debt of inspiration to the *World* and its “stunt journalism” of the 1880s and early 1890s,⁷⁴ the “journalism of action” most strikingly evoked an 1880s British notion of “government by journalism.”⁷⁵ The principal advocate of “government by journalism” was William T. Stead, a central figure in Britain’s “new journalism” movement and the editor in the late 1890s of the *Review of Reviews*.⁷⁶ His was a breathtaking description of powerful media effects, in which the journalist applied decisive influence. “Every day,” he wrote in 1886, the journalist “can administer either a stimulant or a narcotic to the minds of his readers.”⁷⁷

Stead was quite certain of the effective power of the press, which he maintained was made more profound by an increasingly literate populace. He wrote:

I have seen Cabinets upset, Ministers driven into retirement, laws repealed, great social reforms initiated, Bills transformed, estimates remodelled, programmes modified, Acts passed, generals nominated, governors appointed, armies sent hither and thither, war proclaimed and war averted, by the agency of newspapers. There were of course other agencies at work; but the dominant impulse, the original initiative, and the directing spirit in all these cases must be sought in the editorial sanctum rather than in Downing Street.⁷⁸

Stead was keenly aware of the *New York Journal*’s activism and, notably, congratulated the newspaper for its “splendid deed of knight-errantry” in organizing the jailbreak in Havana in October 1897. “No more worthy use can be made of the sceptre of modern journalism than this,” he declared, adding “the *Journal* has added a laurel to journalism of which every journalist in the world has a right to feel proud.”⁷⁹

In resurrecting⁸⁰ and expanding upon Stead’s vision, the *Journal*’s activist paradigm projected a sense of new energy and new possibilities in *fin-de-siècle* American journalism. Hearst’s principal rivals at the time—Pulitzer of the *World*, James Gordon Bennett Jr. of the *Herald*, Whitelaw Reid of the *Tribune*, and Charles A. Dana of the *Sun*—were older by at least fifteen years and their newspapers were better established than the *Journal*. The notable exception was Adolph Ochs of the *Times* who was, like Hearst, a newcomer to New York City journalism. In 1897, Hearst was thirty four and in his second full year as the *Journal*’s publisher; Ochs was thirty nine and in his first full year at the *Times*. The latter was cultivating a rival vision for American journalism. This was an emphatically counter-activist paradigm of authoritative, detached, news-based journalism that found expression in the motto, “All the News That’s Fit to Print.”

The motto, which Ochs moved to the top left corner of the *Times*’ front page on February 10, 1897, has been a source of enduring comment and fascination over the decades. The *Wall Street Journal* has fittingly termed it the “leitmotif not merely for the *Times*, but also, by a process of osmosis and emulation, for most other general-interest papers in the country, as well as for much of the broadcast media.”⁸¹ Interestingly, the leitmotif for American journalism was used first as an advertising and marketing device. Perhaps the earliest appearance of “All the News That’s Fit to Print” was in a small advertisement in the *Fourth Estate* in mid-October 1896.⁸² It also was displayed in advertising that month on a large electric sign in Madison Square.⁸³

The motto first appeared on the *Times*’ editorial page on October 25, 1896, the day the newspaper announced it would pay \$100 to the person who proposed in ten words or fewer “a phrase more expressive of the *Times*’s policy” than “All the News That’s Fit to Print.”⁸⁴ The contest elicited thousands of suggestions. Among the entries sent on postcards were: “Full of meat, clean and neat,” and “Clean, crisp, bright, snappy; read it daily and be happy.”⁸⁵ Others—such as “All the News Worth Telling” and “All the News That Decent People Want”—were decidedly and unimaginatively derivative.⁸⁶

As the contest went on, the *Times* altered the stakes, saying it would not abandon its motto after all but would still pay \$100 for the best suggestion.⁸⁷ It tried to characterize the contest’s unmistakable self-promoting quality as really an exercise in high-mindedness: “In asking its readers to suggest a phrase that would aptly set forth its policy of publishing a clean and decent newspaper, the *Times* has set

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the people of this city to thinking upon the subject of newspaper decency in a more attentive and specific way than has been their custom."⁸⁸ A committee from the *Times* staff narrowed the entries to the 150 best, and these were submitted to Richard Waterson Gilder, editor of *The Century* magazine. He selected the prize winner: "All the world's news, but not a School of Scandal."⁸⁹

What the *Times* came to call its "covenant to print 'All the News That's Fit to Print'"⁹⁰ represented another option for the future of American journalism. As the motto was meant to suggest,⁹¹ the *Times* represented everything that the *Journal* was not. It published no multicolumn headlines, no dramatic layouts, no color comics, no front-page illustrations, no participatory journalism. The *Times* lacked the resources of the *Journal* and seldom competed in 1897 with the latter's enterprise in expensive, far-flung newsgathering. But the *Times* did emerge that year as a moral counterweight to the excesses of yellow journalism, challenging more often than other New York City newspapers the wisdom, ethics, and even the legitimacy of the *Journal's* ambitious forays into activism. In its frequent censure, however, the *Times* often seemed a predictable scold.

The transitory nature of 1897 was underscored in October of that year by the death of the "pope" of American journalism,⁹² Charles Dana, the erudite but ill-tempered editor of the *New York Sun* who had been a force in American journalism for fifty years. By 1897, he was seventy-eight-years-old and among the last of the nineteenth century's prominent, old-time American editors.⁹³

His death may not have been deeply mourned; indeed, the *Fourth Estate* said that he had "hosts of admirers and legions of enemies."⁹⁴ Dana and the *Sun* were nothing if not adamantly resistant to the typographical innovations of the late nineteenth century. The old editor, one contemporary wrote, "set his face firmly against any of the 'freaking' and other devices which have converted so many American newspapers into curiosities of typographical delirium tremens."⁹⁵ He likened himself to "an old-fashioned expert" and was more hopeful than prescient in predicting in an 1894 lecture at Cornell University that illustrations in newspapers would prove "a passing fashion."⁹⁶ He conceded to never having taken a liking to the linotype "because it didn't seem to me to turn out a page as handsome, in a typographical point of view, as a page set by hand."⁹⁷

In Dana's last months, the *Sun* lent enthusiastic support to two widely publicized if clumsy attempts to restrain what the newspaper termed the "leprous new journalism."⁹⁸ One effort was a noisy campaign in early 1897 to expel the *Journal* and *World* from social clubs, reading rooms, and libraries across metropolitan New York. The other was legislation that sought to forbid unauthorized publication of caricatures in newspapers in New York state. Although both campaigns ended in quiet failure, they revealed how the transitions in American journalism troubled and unnerved not only journalists who were traditionalists but many politicians as well.

The Newark Free Public Library was the first institution to ban what the *Sun* called "the chronicles of crime, of lust and of general nastiness."⁹⁹ The library's trustees voted on February 4, 1897, to cancel subscriptions to the *Journal* and the *World* and remove back issues of the newspapers from the library's files.¹⁰⁰ By May 1897, the *Journal* and *World* had been banned by nearly ninety institutions,¹⁰¹ including the Century Club in New York, the New York Yacht Club, the Harlem Branch of the YMCA, the Montauk Club of Brooklyn, the Flatbush Young Republican Club in Brooklyn, public libraries in Bridgeport and New Haven, Connecticut,¹⁰² and the reading room at Yale University Library.¹⁰³ The inchoate protest, which faintly evoked the "moral

war" against James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald* in 1840,¹⁰⁴ withered by mid-year 1897. In its energetic and enterprising newsgathering, the *Journal* (and, to a lesser extent, the *World*) effectively overwhelmed the protest because the newspaper's successes in 1897 were too interesting to shun, too engaging to boycott for very long.

The boycott was spreading in metropolitan New York about the time the state legislature began considering a measure to prohibit publication of portraits and cartoons without the subjects' written consent. The legislation proposed fines of \$1,000 and jail terms of up to one year, and it was aimed unequivocally at the perceived illustrated excesses of the *Journal* as well as of the *World*. The measure was sponsored by the state senate's mirthless Republican leader, Timothy E. Ellsworth, who gained a reputation of never having smiled in public.¹⁰⁵ What came to be called the Ellsworth Anti-Cartoon Bill won approval in the state senate¹⁰⁶ before dying without a vote in the lower house.¹⁰⁷

Most New York City newspapers condemned the measure. The *Times* characterized the Ellsworth Bill as "an ill-contrived sort of trip-hammer for crushing a loathsome but rather puny reptile, which it might miss after all while smashing a lot of harmless if not useful things that might fall in its way."¹⁰⁸ The *Journal*, which justifiably claimed it "made more extensive use of pictorial journalism than any other" newspaper, said its 500,000 daily circulation was evidence that readers preferred illustrations with their news and thus wanted no part of the Ellsworth Bill.¹⁰⁹ Journalism trade publications assailed the measure as "a shield for unscrupulous politicians against deserved criticism"¹¹⁰ and an incontrovertible "abridgement of the power of the press."¹¹¹

But Dana's *Sun*, which largely eschewed cartoons and other illustrations, favored the legislation as "a wholesome, enlightened, and proper measure."¹¹² It declared:

No one can now be summoned into public view without the certainty of having not merely his portrait flaunted to the rabble, but of having the same subjected to every conceivable distortion and deformity. No more outrageous assault upon the privacy of a citizen can be devised than is implied in these infamous publications. Their purpose and effect is to hold him up to ridicule by the most vulgar and offensive expedients; to prejudice him permanently in the eyes of the community at large, and to wound with undisguised brutality the sensibilities of his family. If there ever was an evil that called for whole restraint by law, it is surely this.¹¹³

While ill-considered and almost certainly unconstitutional, the Ellsworth Bill signaled an urgency in sorting out the ferment roiling American journalism in 1897. This ferment has not been adequately recognized or analyzed by scholars. Michael Schudson has perhaps come closest to identifying and assessing the forces that made the period so enduringly significant. But he interpreted those forces narrowly, distilling them to a dichotomy of "journalism as information" and "journalism as entertainment."¹¹⁴ The *New York Times*, he said, represented the former, and the *New York World* was the latter. A class consciousness infused his argument. He said the *Times'* information orientation appealed to "wealthier people in New York"¹¹⁵ while the *World's* storytelling approach appealed to "the working class reader."¹¹⁶

While intriguing, Schudson's analysis is rigid and, in the end, unpersuasive. The dichotomy of journalism as information *versus* journalism as entertainment is imprecise and not mutually exclusive. The *World* was known to devote considerable resources to reporting



Evangelina Cisneros achieved fame when the Journal helped her escape from prison in Havana and then smuggled her on a ship to New York. The paper claimed her imprisonment was an example of how harshly Spain routinely treated Cuban women.

the news. Such commitment was suggested in the succession of assignments that Sylvester Scovel, perhaps the best-known foreign correspondent of the time, took on for the *World* in 1897. His assignments traced the arc of the year's most important international events, including the Cuban insurrection, the brief war between Greece and Turkey, and the rush to the Klondike gold fields.¹¹⁷

If anything, the *World* in late 1898 intentionally de-emphasized the sensational (or news-as-entertainment) components of its report.¹¹⁸ The *Times*, on the other hand, was not above frivolity in advertising. During his first months as publisher, Ochs promoted the *Times* "with every gimmick he could think of," according to Susan E. Tift and Alex S. Jones, who made a definitive study of Ochs and his heirs.¹¹⁹ He conducted a variety of contests, including the appeal for a new motto, in an effort to boost daily circulation,¹²⁰ which probably was less than 20,000.¹²¹

Schudson's dichotomy, moreover, fails to recognize the ascendancy of the *New York Journal*, which in 1897 became America's most compelling newspaper. Even Pulitzer conceded its exceptionality. Invoking "Geranium," his code name for the *Journal*, Pulitzer told the *World's* business manager, Don C. Seitz, in a letter in December 1897:

I personally think Geranium a wonderfully able & attractive and popular paper, perhaps the ablest in the one vital sense, of managing to be talked about; of attracting attention; of constantly furnishing something which will compel people wherever they meet, whether in the drawing room, or in the poor house, elevated car or dinner table, to talk about something in that paper. That is the sort of brains the *World* needs. Pardon me for saying also, that with all its faults, which I should not like to copy—though they have been exaggerated—it is a newspaper.¹²²

It was a surprising acknowledgement by Pulitzer, who usually

was dismissive in characterizing the *Journal*. Yet his argument was unassailable: The *Journal* had become the country's boldest, most energetic, most-talked-about newspaper. Its impressive string of successes in 1897 began in the spring with coverage of the brief war between Greece and Turkey for control of Crete. The *Journal* offered what it termed "a veritable kinetoscope picture of the scene of war," publishing reports from no fewer than a dozen correspondents,¹²³ including two women¹²⁴ and Stephen Crane, author of *Red Badge of Courage*.¹²⁵ In June 1897, the *Journal* arranged for Mark Twain to report from London on Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.¹²⁶ The association with Twain allowed the *Journal* to puncture rumors about the writer's supposedly failing health and to publish his famous though often-distorted comment: "The report of my death was an exaggeration."¹²⁷

The *Journal's* crowded year was not without embarrassing lapses, such as the newspaper's erroneous, graphically illustrated report in February 1897 about the strip-search of a Cuban woman aboard a U.S. passenger steamer.¹²⁸ The article was written by Richard Harding Davis, who reported that Spanish authorities boarded the steamer, the *Olivette*, as it prepared to leave Havana and searched several passengers for contraband. Among the passengers was a young Cuban woman named Clemencia Arango, whose brother was a leader in the insurgency against Spanish rule.¹²⁹ The article was ambiguous about who had conducted the search, but an accompanying illustration by Frederic Remington depicted leering, male detectives clustered around a naked woman.¹³⁰ The *World* punctured the *Journal's* sensational report, quoting Arango as denying that men had strip-searched her. That task, she said, had fallen to a matron, an "inspectress."¹³¹ Davis, in a letter to the *World*, blamed Remington for having drawn "an imaginary picture" and insisted his dispatch had not said that men had conducted the search.¹³² In any event, the discredited story underscored for critics a sense that the *Journal* was unreliable and prone to publishing "fakes" and other thinly documented reports.

But the *Journal* soon shook off the embarrassment of the strip-search story. By summer 1897, its activist ethos was producing stunning results. The newspaper deployed a phalanx of reporters in late June and early July to solve the mystery of a dismembered torso that washed up in the East River. The *Journal* and the *World* locked in frenzied competition to unravel the whodunit, competition which the *Journal* swiftly won but which the *Times* found in exceeding bad taste. "Let the enterprise, the public spirit, the ingenuity, and the 'newness' of this latest accomplishment of The *Journal's* kind of neurotic journalism be frankly admitted; and then let us hope the subject will soon be dropped," the *Times* said, adding, "There has been nothing in the development of this case from the beginning that could be read without disgust."¹³³ To be sure, the *Journal's* accounts of the case—"a murder, most foul, deliberate, mysterious and terrible"¹³⁴—were filled with grisly detail.¹³⁵ But the wider significance was in the *Journal's* sleuthing and its activist role in solving the East River murder mystery.

Within three days of the body's discovery in the East River, the *Journal* identified the victim as William Guldensuppe, a masseur at a Turkish bath, and directed authorities to two murder suspects: the victim's former lover, an unlicensed midwife named Augusta Nack, and her new paramour, Martin Thorn.¹³⁶ Key to the *Journal's* detective work was tracing the oil cloth in which the torso was wrapped to a dry goods dealer in Queens, New York.¹³⁷ The *Journal* broke the case "in a manner so speedy and certain," the *Fourth Estate* said, "that it is a question whether the press is not a more terrifying Nemesis to evildoers than the officers of the law."¹³⁸ Nack and Thorn soon were indicted. Nack, who testified at trial against Thorn, was sentenced to

nine years for manslaughter, and Thorn was convicted of first-degree murder and executed.¹³⁹

Even more daring, and certainly more ethically dubious, was the *Journal's* "forcible liberation"¹⁴⁰ of Evangelina Cossío y Cisneros in October 1897. In one of the most extraordinary episodes in journalism history, Karl Decker, a correspondent for the *Journal*, spirited the eighteen-year-old woman from prison in Havana, where for more than a year she had awaited trial on murky charges¹⁴¹ of conspiring against Spanish rule. Her imprisonment, the *Journal* maintained, was emblematic of Spain's routinely harsh treatment of Cuban women.

Once out of jail, Cisneros was hidden in Havana for two days and then, dressed as a boy, smuggled aboard a steamer to New York.¹⁴² The *Journal* organized a rousing outdoor reception at Madison Square to welcome Cisneros and Decker, who had returned separately, aboard a Spanish-flagged vessel.¹⁴³ Tens of thousands turned out¹⁴⁴ for what the *Journal* called "the greatest gathering New York has seen since the close of the [Civil] war" in 1865.¹⁴⁵

The *Journal* declared the Cisneros rescue "the greatest journalistic coup of this age,"¹⁴⁶ an episode that confirmed the logic of its activist paradigm. It further stated on the day that Cisneros arrived in New York:

Action—that is the distinguishing mark of the new journalism. It represents the final state in the evolution of the modern newspaper. The newspapers of a century ago printed essays; those of thirty years ago—the "New journals" of their day—told the news and some of them made great efforts to get it first. The new journal of to-day prints the news, too, but it does more. It does not wait for things to turn up. It turns them up.¹⁴⁷

A newspaper's duty, the *Journal* maintained, must not be "confined to exhortation." Rather, when "things are going wrong it should set them right, if possible." The Cisneros case, it said, represented a "brilliant exemplification of this theory."¹⁴⁸

The rescue also was, in effect, a case of the *Journal* pursuing its own foreign policy, a development the *Times* deemed utterly indefensible. The rescue, the *Times* said, "was without the shadow of legal excuse," and it warned that "if acts like this are to be committed, international relations become impossible, and war is the only condition in which nations can exist."¹⁴⁹ The *Times* suggested, without offering supporting evidence, Spanish authorities connived in the escape¹⁵⁰ and raised doubts about Cisneros' disguise. "The most adroit and experienced performers on the stage rarely succeed in this effort, and usually they fail to a ludicrous degree," the *Times* said. "A glance should have told the Spanish detectives [checking identities of passengers boarding the steamer] the secret of this amateur masquerader" dressed as a boy.¹⁵¹

Significantly, no other New York newspaper was as searching, critical, or indignant as the *Times* in its reaction to "jail-breaking journalism."¹⁵² But the *Journal* brushed aside the criticism. For days after Cisneros' arrival in New York, the *Journal* published excerpts from newspaper editorials saluting its exploit.¹⁵³ The commendations came from across the United States and thus suggested broad interest in the *Journal's* activist paradigm.

The *Journal* filled the void of government inaction as 1897 closed by organizing a New Year's Eve celebration to mark the consolidation of the five boroughs of New York City. Officials had planned no special event to celebrate the occasion. William Strong, the outgoing mayor and an opponent of consolidation, suggested a mock funeral would be a more appropriate commemoration. Having none of that, Hearst stepped forward to organize¹⁵⁴ what the *Journal* called a

"great carnival"¹⁵⁵ and what the *Fourth Estate* hyperbolically described as the "most remarkable undertaking ever conceived by any American newspaper."¹⁵⁶

By any measure, the New Year's Eve celebration was an extravagant close to the *Journal's* triumphant year. Even the *New York Sun* complimented the *Journal* for organizing and underwriting the event.¹⁵⁷ The *Journal* spent at least \$25,000¹⁵⁸ (the equivalent today of about \$500,000) to save "Greater New York from having come into being without a salvo of guns or a single public expression of the importance of the occasion."¹⁵⁹ Weather conditions made for an awful night as rain turned to ice and snow in the waning hours of 1897. Even so, it was unquestionably the *Journal's* moment: The parade and the festivities went on with no small amount of self-promotion. As *Fourth Estate* reported:

The heavens were brilliant with serpentine flames and blazing stars and bursting bombs, while red and green and yellow and blue fire was burned by the barrel. Searchlights, dozens of them, played every now and then an aurora borealis act. . . . 'Read the *Journal*' ads danced up and down the neighboring buildings and on the clouds. Ads of the paper were everywhere and in all the popular places. There was a procession of floats and bands and militia, with their calcium lights. . . . Of course there was lots of advertising in this, but it was of a good sort, and we comment upon it for that reason. The *Journal* had pledged itself to do something and it surpassed itself. That is a good way for a newspaper to become popular. . . . It carried off its enterprise in a manner that defied horribly adverse weather and delighted a vast multitude. . . . We offer our congratulations to William R. Hearst.¹⁶⁰

At the close of 1897, the *Journal* undeniably was America's ascendant newspaper. It had repeatedly demonstrated the effectiveness and appeal of its journalism by injecting itself conspicuously into civic matters and even into foreign affairs. It had shown that it could bring speedy resolution to untidy matters, as demonstrated by the East River murder mystery, the Cisneros jailing, and the New Year's Eve celebration of an amalgamated New York City. Moreover, the *Journal* had received plaudits from its keenest rivals, including Pulitzer and the *New York Sun*. Other observers attached no small hope to the *Journal's* eagerness to take on corrupt and powerful political and economic interests.

Such recognition signaled that the *Journal's* activist paradigm had inspired more than faint or passing interest among journalists and civic reformers by the close of 1897.¹⁶¹ The "journalism of action" was by no means an idle notion. Others had taken favorable note of its successes and the *Journal* declared the "journalism that does things has come to stay."¹⁶² It further vowed: "We expect to see great results flow from this work. The immediate results [in 1897] are important in themselves, but the ultimate effects will be greater yet."¹⁶³

But the promise of the "journalism of action"—that a newspaper could and should "render any public service within its power"¹⁶⁴—flattered and ultimately failed to become a defining standard for American journalism. There are several explanations. For one, activist journalism was expensive and few newspapers could or would match Hearst's lavish spending.¹⁶⁵ Not even Hearst's reservoir of financial support was limitless.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, activist journalism was not always or routinely applicable. The *Journal's* successes in 1897 demonstrated that the "journalism of action" was most effective when confronting official indifference, incompetence, or corruption. But such conditions emerged episodically, and exploring them often proved better suited to long-form magazine articles to which journalists could

devote extended periods in researching and writing. The muckraking movement of the early twentieth century demonstrated this.

Additionally, the *Journal's* overheated coverage in 1898 of the destruction of the U.S. battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor and the run-up to the Spanish-American War tainted activist journalism. Rather than searching and bold, Hearst's journalism seemed intemperate and extreme. The *Journal's* pre-war exaggerations, especially its unequivocal yet thinly sourced accusations of Spanish complicity in the *Maine* disaster, allowed the *Times* to sneer: "The grotesque inventions of the yellow journalist's fancy must still produce tumultuous excitement among stable boys and scullery women, but they now interest intelligent people only by their weird deformity."¹⁶⁷ The notion took hold that the *Journal* had brought about an unnecessary war.¹⁶⁸ It was an enduring though mistaken interpretation that tended nonetheless to discredit the "journalism of action."

Perhaps most significantly, "the journalism of action" effectively became a platform for Hearst's political ambitions during the years after the Spanish-American War. The *Journal's* campaigns against private ownership of municipal utilities and corrupt officials took on a politicized dimension as Hearst became a figure in national politics.¹⁶⁹ By 1900, editorials appeared in the *Journal* signed by "W.R. Hearst, President of the National Association of Democratic Clubs."¹⁷⁰ Perhaps the politicizing of the "journalism of action" was inevitable, given Hearst's ambitions, but it did little to enhance the paradigm's appeal.

Although the "journalism of action" was unable to consolidate the promise of its impressive successes in 1897, the appeal of activism has never entirely passed from American journalism. That impulse resurfaced most recently in the "civic" (or "public") journalism movement of the 1990s, which envisioned the news media as a problem-solving force, especially in rejuvenating participatory democracy in the United States.¹⁷¹

If the *Journal's* activist paradigm became clouded and suspect in the years after 1897, the *Times's* climb to preeminence in American journalism soon accelerated. Ochs' decision in October 1898 to trim the *Times's* price from three cents to one cent, which was a desperate move evidently intended to prevent the disclosure that its circulation figures were inflated,¹⁷² helped ensure the newspaper's emergence in New York's crowded newspaper market. The price cut further differentiated the *Times* from its rivals, a process that had begun with its frequent critiques of the *Journal's* activism in 1897. The *Times's* self-described "covenant" of offering "All the News That's Fit to Print"—its enduring riposte to activist yellow journalism—also helped establish the counter-activist standard for American journalism.

This article, in directing attention to the exceptional and pivotal moments in American journalism during 1897, has shown that the year's exceptionality warrants keener recognition by scholars. It also signals the merits of single-year studies as a methodological frame for considering decisive periods in American journalism.

NOTES

¹ "Bulletin 408A," American Newspaper Publishers' Association, Jan. 18, 1897, 9.

² This is not to say that the Publishers' Association concerned itself solely with trivial issues at its meeting in 1897. The agenda included questions of incorporating the association and exploring ways of ascertaining claims of newspaper circulation. Other agenda items were: "What benefits if any come from the publishing of special editions, like 'Christmas Number,' 'Fourth of July Number,' 'Bicycle Number,' etc.?" and "What is the present status in

reference to colored supplements, books, pictures, music, art and fashion supplements, and all other circulation schemes?" See "Bulletin 408A."

³ For such characterizations of the editorial see, for example, Geo Beach, "Shop Talk at Thirty: 'Yes, Virginia,' 100 Years Later, Provides Enduring Reminder of Print's Power," *Editor & Publisher*, Dec. 20, 1997, 48.

⁴ "Is There a Santa Claus?" *New York Sun*, Sept. 21, 1897. The editorial's author, Francis P. Church, was identified at his death in April 1906. The *Sun* said in an editorial: "At this time, when the sense of personal loss is strong upon us, we know of no better or briefer way to make the friends of the *Sun* feel that they too have lost a friend than to violate custom by indicating him as the author of the beautiful and often republished article affirming the existence of Santa Claus." See untitled editorial comment, *New York Sun*, April 12, 1906.

⁵ See, among others, Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene: A Social History, 1839-1889* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), 446.

⁶ "Jail-Breaking Journalism," *Chicago Times-Herald*, Oct. 12, 1897.

⁷ See Burton St. John III, "Public Relations as Community-Building, Then and Now," *Public Relations Quarterly* 43 (Spring 1998): 34. The reference to "public relations" appears in the preface of *The Yearbook of Railway Literature* (Chicago: Railway Age, 1897).

⁸ Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Scribner's, 1990), 107. He identifies cinema's "novelty year" as the period from late April 1896 to May 1897.

⁹ See Michael S. Sweeney, *From the Front: The Story of War* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2003), 101.

¹⁰ The cartoon, drawn by Rudolph Dirks, first appeared in *New York Journal* in December 1897. It remains in syndication.

¹¹ The year also is famous for an often-recounted anecdote that almost certainly is apocryphal—William Randolph Hearst's purported vow, in a telegram to the artist Frederic Remington, that he would "furnish the war" with Spain. If such a message had been sent, it would have been in mid-January 1897, at the end of Remington's brief assignment to Cuba to cover the insurrection against Spanish rule. For a detailed analysis about why the anecdote almost certainly is apocryphal, see W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 71-95.

¹² "The New Journalism," *The Journalist*, June 5, 1897, 51.

¹³ Melville E. Stone, "Newspapers in the United States: Their Functions, Interior Economy, and Management," *Self Culture* 5 (June 1897): 305. He was the general manager of the Associated Press.

¹⁴ "The Typewriter," *Fourth Estate*, July 29, 1897, 6. Its account described the typewriter "as positively necessary" in most newsrooms and noted: "The rapid introduction of the typewriter into newspaper offices is largely due to the fact that it is of the most positive value in connection with the typesetting machine. The typewriter means practically perfect copy that can be readily distributed in small 'takes.'" Similarly, the *Journalist* declared: "There is no modern invention except, perhaps, the bicycle, which has so evidently filled a long-felt want and taken its position in the economy of modern business life as the typewriter." See "Bye-the-Bye," *The Journalist*, May 29, 1897, 45.

¹⁵ J. Lincoln Steffens, "The Business of a Newspaper," *Scribner's*, October 1897, 448. The *Fourth Estate* reported in July 1897 that the country's "largest linotype battery" was at the *New York Herald*, which had fifty-two machines; the *World* had fifty-one linotype machines and the *Journal* had fifty. In all, *Fourth Estate* said, 4,150 linotype machines were in use at 600 locations in North America. See "The Linotype," *Fourth Estate*, July 29, 1897, 2.

¹⁶ Margaret A. Blanchard, "The Ossification of Journalism History: A Challenge for the Twenty-First Century," *Journalism History* 25, 3 (Autumn 1999): 110. Blanchard also cited a "need to broaden our horizons as to what research approach will yield the most accurate pictures of our mediated world."

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 111. Blanchard's appeal renewed and extended a critique that dates at least to 1974 and James W. Carey's "The Problem of Journalism History," in *Journalism History* 1, 1 (Spring 1974): 3-5, 27. Carey said that the "study of journalism history remains something of an embarrassment" and argued that scholars in the field "have defined our craft both too narrowly and too modestly and, therefore, constricted the range of problems we study and the claims we make for our knowledge." For a somewhat more optimistic assess-

ment, see Donald Lewis Shaw and Sylvia L. Zack, "Rethinking Journalism History: How Some Recent Studies Support One Approach," *Journalism History* 14, 4 (Winter 1987): 111-17. The authors concluded: "If our field once was an embarrassment to some, it no longer is."

¹⁸ Scott Heller, "What a Difference a Year Makes," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan. 5, 2001, A17.

¹⁹ Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Michael North, "Virtual Histories: The Year as Literary Period," *Modern Language Quarterly* 62 (2001): 408.

²¹ John E. Wills, *1688: A Global History* (New York: Norton, 2001).

²² See Louis P. Masur, *1831: Year of Eclipse* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); and Kenneth M. Stamp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

²³ David Traxel, *1898: The Birth of the American Century* (New York: Knopf, 1998). He principally explored the political and military significance of 1898 and dwelt little on the journalism of the time. He did not explore the exceptionality of 1897 in American journalism.

²⁴ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002).

²⁵ A more narrow approach was taken in Jay Winik's *April 1865: The Month that Saved America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001).

²⁶ See Edward P. Mitchell, *Memoirs of an Editor: Fifty Years of American Journalism* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1924), 112.

²⁷ "The Development of Illustration," *Wilson's Photographic Magazine*, May 1900, 232. See also Michael L. Carlebach, *American Photojournalism Comes of Age* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institutions Press, 1997), 28.

²⁸ "Platt Elected Senator," *New York Tribune*, Jan. 21, 1897.

²⁹ "The Problem of the Hour," *Fourth Estate*, Feb. 25, 1897, 6.

³⁰ "Half-Tones for Perfecting Presses," *Fourth Estate*, Jan. 28, 1897, 6. Other sources concur. Robert Taft wrote: "The year 1897 really marks the advent of half-tone illustration as a regular feature of American newspaper journalism." See Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 446.

³¹ "Half-Tone Pictures," *New York Tribune*, March 31, 1897. An account in *Fourth Estate* said the *Tribune* had developed a way to embed the half-tone into the curved stereotype plates used on the newspaper's press. See "Half-Tones for Perfecting Presses," 6.

³² Untitled editorial comment, *Fourth Estate*, March 11, 1897, 7.

³³ "The Development of Illustration," 232.

³⁴ See Harry W. Baehr Jr., *The New York Tribune Since the Civil War* (1936; reprint, New York: Octagon, 1972), 235. See also Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 446; "Twenty-Years Progress in Half-Tone Work," *Fourth Estate*, May 30, 1903, 5; "Half-tones 50 Years Old," *New York Times*, March 4, 1930; and Lida Rose McCabe, *The Beginnings of Halftone: From the Note Books of Stephen H. Horgan, "Dean of American Photoengravers"* (Chicago: Inland Printer, 1924). However, two newspapers in Minnesota claimed, in letters to *Fourth Estate* in 1897, that they had introduced half-tones in daily editions before the *New York Tribune*. See "Who Holds the Half-Tone Record on Fast Presses?" *Fourth Estate*, Feb. 11, 1897, 7. The trade journal apparently made no attempt to investigate these claims.

³⁵ Horgan reportedly was dismissed from the *New York Herald* in the early 1890s for insisting a way could be found to publish half-tones in the newspaper's main section. See "Horgan, Inventor of Halftone, Dies," *New York Times*, Aug. 31, 1941.

³⁶ The *New York Tribune* described the half-tone as "a perfect reproduction of a photograph, and thus avoids the possible distortion of features or inaccurate conception of a given scene through the necessary haste of the daily newspaper artist." See "Half-Tone Pictures."

³⁷ Carlebach, *American Photojournalism Comes of Age*, 29. See also Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 252.

³⁸ Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960*, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 149. Although the Alien and Sedition Acts were allowed to lapse in 1801, journalists still faced the threat of criminal libel, the prosecution of which typically fell to the states. See Norman L. Rosenberg, "The Law of Political Libel and Freedom of the Press in Nineteenth Century America: An Interpretation," *American Journal of Legal History*, 17 (1973): 337.

³⁹ The notion that the penny press emerged in 1833 and reshaped American journalism has been disputed by historians, notably by John Nerone in "The Mythology of the Penny Press," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4 (1987): 376-404. He wrote: "The penny press is properly understood as a mutation in one class or species of newspaper, rather than as a revolution in editorial policy and business strategy. The innovations associated with the penny press are functions of forces external to the papers themselves rather than the results of unique personal initiative."

⁴⁰ Some analysts have rejected the decidedly media-centric view that the *Washington Post's* reporting brought down the Nixon administration. The roles of Congress and the federal courts in compelling testimony and the production of evidence were far more decisive to that outcome. See Edward J. Epstein, *Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism* (New York: Vintage, 1975), 19-32.

⁴¹ The well-publicized ethical lapses that year included the dismissal of two columnists for the *Boston Globe* for citing fictitious characters in their work; the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* illegal intercept of corporate voicemail messages in its investigation of the Chiquita banana company; and the disavowed "Operation Tailwind" report by CNN, which charged U.S. military forces in 1970 with using deadly nerve gas against defectors in Laos. Nineteen-ninety-eight also was characterized by often-frenzied reporting about President Bill Clinton's sex-and-lies scandal with a White House intern.

⁴² "A Happy New Year to the New City and Its People," *New York Herald*, Jan. 1, 1898.

⁴³ Ray Ginger, *Age of Excess: The United States From 1877 to 1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 196-98.

⁴⁴ "1897 in St. Paul," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Jan. 1, 1898.

⁴⁵ Richard Harmond, "Progress and Flight: An Interpretation of the American Cycle Craze of the 1890s," *Journal of Social History* 5 (Winter 1971-72): 236.

⁴⁶ The cycling craze "reached its high point in 1896," according to Richard Harmond in *Ibid.*, 250. However, newspaper reports in 1897 suggested the popularity of cycling only increased from the year before. See, for example, "The Growth of the Cycle," *Philadelphia Item*, June 4, 1897.

⁴⁷ "The Wheel Annihilates Distance," *Philadelphia Item*, May 11, 1897.

⁴⁸ "The Bicycle," *New York Herald*, March 5, 1897. The *Herald's* commentary was prescient in suggesting that "there is something better than the bicycle in the future; possibly a horseless carriage which will convert us all into globe trotters in companies of ten, or possibly a balloon or flying machine will enable us to loaf among the stars. We are grateful for what we have, but, like Oliver Twist, we should like a little more."

⁴⁹ Harmond, "Progress and Flight," 251.

⁵⁰ "The Year's Scientific Progress," *New York Tribune*, Dec. 31, 1897.

⁵¹ See "Retrospective: View of the Dying Year," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Dec. 26, 1897.

⁵² "The Year and the World," *New York Tribune*, Dec. 31, 1897.

⁵³ Traxel, *1898*, 317.

⁵⁴ For a discussion about the emergence and diffusion of the term "yellow journalism" in early 1897, see Campbell, *Yellow Journalism*, 25-49.

⁵⁵ "A Large Observer of a Large Thing," *New York Journal*, May 13, 1898.

⁵⁶ "The Journalism that Does Things," *New York Journal*, Oct. 13, 1897.

⁵⁷ See "The Development of a New Idea in Journalism," *New York Journal*, Oct. 3, 1897.

⁵⁸ "The Journalism that Does Things."

⁵⁹ "The Journalism of Action," *New York Journal*, Oct. 5, 1897.

⁶⁰ See "More Journal News Triumphs," *New York Journal*, May 6, 1897. The *Journal* editorial said "the difference between the new journalism and the old" was that old journalism was "satisfied to sit still and wait for things to come to it; the *Journal* reaches out for news and regards the whole world as the field for its efforts."

⁶¹ As Holbrook Jackson wrote, "Young bloods of the period delighted to épater le bourgeois, as the phrase went, and with experience a new kind of art came into vogue: the art of the shocking." See Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (1922; reprint, New York: Knopf, 1972), 126.

⁶² John Higham aptly invoked the phrase to describe the dynamism characteristic of American political and social culture in the 1890s. See John

Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's," in John Weiss, ed., *The Origins of Modern Consciousness* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1965), 40.

⁶³ See Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties*, 21-22.

⁶⁴ Henry D. Traill, *The New Fiction and Other Essays on Literary Subjects* (1897; reprint, Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1970), 1.

⁶⁵ See, for example, J.B. Montgomery-McGovern, "An Important Phase of Gutter Journalism: Faking," *Arena* 19 (February 1898): 240.

⁶⁶ "If You Don't Read the *Journal*, You Don't Get the News," *New York Journal*, Aug. 1, 1897.

⁶⁷ See, for example, "Aid the Cold and Hungry; *Journal* Hears the Cry and Opens a Relief Fund," *New York Journal*, Jan. 27, 1897.

⁶⁸ "A Newspaper's Duty to the Public," *New York Journal*, Nov. 15, 1897.

⁶⁹ "The *Journal* Stops," *New York Journal*, Dec. 3, 1897.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ "What We Want," *The Journalist*, May 1, 1897, 12.

⁷² Henry A. Crittenden, "Mr. Hearst and the New Journalism," *The Journalist*, Dec. 4, 1897, 34.

⁷³ The *Journal's* anti-corruption campaigns in the years immediately after 1897 won similarly high praise. Disclosures about the corrupt Ice Trust in 1900 prompted the editor of New York's *Town Talk* gossip sheet to write: "The *Journal's* exposure and pursuit of the criminal officials who betrayed the people in the interest of the Ice Trust will stand for many years as one of the most splendid and useful achievements of the modern newspaper." Quoted in David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 151. For a brief discussion about the Ice Trust scandal of 1900, see Campbell, *Yellow Journalism*, 3-4.

⁷⁴ See, notably, the escapades of Nellie Bly, including her around-the-world adventure in 1889. The *World's* forays into activist journalism never were as frequent, successive, or flamboyant as were the *Journal's* during 1897.

⁷⁵ W.T. Stead, "Government by Journalism," *Contemporary Review* 49 (May 1886): 653-74.

⁷⁶ See Ray Boston, "W.T. Stead and Democracy by Journalism," in Joel H. Weiner, ed., *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (New York: Greenwood, 1988), 91-106.

⁷⁷ Stead, "Government by Journalism," 662.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 664.

⁷⁹ "Editor Stead Hails It with Joy," *New York Journal*, Oct. 13, 1897.

⁸⁰ A biographer of Stead wrote that "Government by Journalism" and "The Future of Journalism," a subsequent article by Stead for *Contemporary Review*, "did not receive the widespread attention he probably thought [they] would and should." See Raymond L. Schultz, *Crusader in Babylon: W.T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 209.

⁸¹ Tunku Varadarajan, "Hooray for the Lowbrow Media," *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2001.

⁸² See, "Advertising Medium," *Fourth Estate*, Oct. 15, 1896, 9.

⁸³ "For the *Times* Motto," *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1896.

⁸⁴ "\$100 for 10 Words," *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1896.

⁸⁵ "For the *Times* Motto."

⁸⁶ "The Motto Competition," *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1896

⁸⁷ "To Award Motto Prize," *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1896.

⁸⁸ "The Motto Competition."

⁸⁹ "The Prize Motto Selected," *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1896. The other finalists were: "Always decent, never dull," "The news of the day, not the rubbish," and "A decent newspaper for decent people."

⁹⁰ "The New Spirit," *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1901.

⁹¹ The *Times'* motto also has been characterized as "a war cry, the slogan under which the . . . *Times* fought for a footing against the formidable competition of the *Herald*, the *World*, and the *Journal*. What it meant, in essence, was that the *Times* was going to be as good a vehicle of news as any of those papers, and that it would be free from their indecency, eccentricity, distortion or sensationalism." See Elmer Davis, *History of the New York Times, 1851-1921* (1921; reprint, New York: Greenwood, 1969), 199-200.

⁹² A.B. [Arthur Brisbane], "Hon. Charles Anderson Dana," *The Journalist*, May 15, 1897, 26. Brisbane wrote: "If the newspaper business were religious, which it isn't, Mr. Dana would be the pope."

⁹³ See "The Death of Editor Dana," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 18, 1897;

and "Death of Charles A. Dana," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 18, 1897.

⁹⁴ "Profession or Trade?" *Fourth Estate*, Oct. 28, 1897, 4.

⁹⁵ "The Death of Editor Dana."

⁹⁶ Charles A. Dana, "The Making of a Newspaper Man," published in Dana, *The Art of Newspaper Making: Three Lectures* (New York: Appleton, 1895), 98. Dana also said of newspaper illustrations: "I don't believe so many pictures are going to be required for any great portion of the next century."

⁹⁷ Dana, "The Making of a Newspaper Man," 74. Despite such reservations, Dana was well versed in the innovations and developments in newspaper technology of the 1890s, a period that he referred to as "the age of experiment." See Dana, "The Making of a Newspaper Man," 96.

⁹⁸ "Leprous New Journalism," *New York Sun*, Feb. 27, 1897.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* See also "Freak Journals Reprobated," *New York Times*, March 3, 1897.

¹⁰¹ "Yellow Journalism Denounced Everywhere," *New York Press*, May 3, 1897.

¹⁰² These and other similar decisions were reported on the front page of the *Sun*. See "World and *Journal* Put Out," *New York Sun*, March 7, 1897; "World and *Journal* Cast Out," *New York Sun*, March 9, 1897; "World and *Journal* Cast Out," *New York Sun*, March 11, 1897; "World and *Journal* Kicked Out," *New York Sun*, March 14, 1897; and "World and *Journal* Shut Out," *New York Sun*, March 17, 1897. See also "New Journalism' Removed," *New Haven Evening Register*, March 22, 1897.

¹⁰³ "New Journalism' at Yale," *New York Times*, March 15, 1897.

¹⁰⁴ This observation was made by, among others, Hy B. Turner in *When Giants Ruled: The Story of Park Row* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 128.

¹⁰⁵ See "Down on Cartoons," *Troy Press*, Feb. 25, 1897. The *Troy* newspaper said Ellsworth was "the one member of the legislature who has the reputation of never having smiled in public," adding, "If he could see a few cartoons of one Timothy Edwards Ellsworth of Lockport perhaps his physiognomy would broaden into an occasional smile." Other newspapers characterized Ellsworth as the servile agent of Republican machine politics. See, for example, "Soldier of Politics," *Buffalo Morning Express*, Feb. 11, 1904.

¹⁰⁶ See "Wants the Press Muzzled," *New York Herald*, April 7, 1897. The state senate's vote in favor of the Anti-Cartoon Bill was 35-14.

¹⁰⁷ "Danger Is Over," *Fourth Estate*, April 29, 1897, 3. In 1898, Ellsworth proposed another measure to restrain the press. His "Newspaper Bill" called for a year-long prison term and a \$1,000 fine for anyone who "conducts or engages in the business of editing, publishing, printing, selling, distributing, or circulating any licentious, indecent, corrupt or depraved paper." See "New York Legislature," *New York Times*, March 2, 1898. That measure died without a vote in the legislature. See "Newspaper Bill Dropped," *New York Times*, March 9, 1898. Editors of the state's Republican-oriented newspapers told Republican legislators that supporting the measure would be "suicidal from a party standpoint." See "Ellsworth Bill Is Killed," *Fourth Estate*, March 10, 1898, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Untitled editorial comment, *New York Times*, April 7, 1897.

¹⁰⁹ "Facts Are the Best Argument," *New York Journal*, March 12, 1897.

¹¹⁰ See "The Ellsworth Bill," *The Journalist*, April 24, 1897, 6-7. *The Journalist* also stated: "It must be admitted that newspaper art has improved wonderfully within the past ten years, but it still would seem that portraits are published, not because they look like anybody, but because, in the minds of the editors, they ornament the papers."

¹¹¹ "The Ellsworth Bill," *Fourth Estate*, March 18, 1897, 6.

¹¹² Untitled editorial comment, *New York Sun*, April 9, 1897.

¹¹³ "A Bill to Suppress Outrage," *New York Sun*, Feb. 27, 1897.

¹¹⁴ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978): 88-120.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹¹⁷ Scovel's assignments in 1897 are recounted in Joyce Milton, *The Yellow Kids: Foreign Correspondents in the Heyday of Yellow Journalism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

¹¹⁸ For a description of the *World's* move to de-emphasize sensation in its report, see untitled notes of the *World's* news staff meeting, Nov. 28, 1898, Joseph Pulitzer papers, container 2, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁹Susan E. Tift and Alex S. Jones, *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind the New York Times* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999), 45.

¹²⁰Ibid., 46.

¹²¹The *New York World* in March 1897 estimated the *Times*' circulation at 19,000. See "The Derelicts of Journalism," *New York World*, March 28, 1897. Tift and Jones wrote that the *Times* in July 1898 was printing 25,000 copies a day but selling fewer than 10,000 copies in Manhattan and a small number in nearby areas. See Tift and Jones, *The Trust*, 53.

¹²²Joseph Pulitzer to Don C. Seitz, Dec. 23, 1897, Joseph Pulitzer papers, container 2, Library of Congress. Emphasis in the original.

¹²³See "The *Journal*'s War Correspondence," *New York Journal*, April 30, 1897. Some correspondents evidently were local residents who filed only occasionally. Even so, the lengths to which the *Journal* covered the Greece-Turkey conflict anticipated the intensity of its reporting from Cuba during the Spanish-American War in 1898.

¹²⁴One of the female correspondents was Stephen Crane's companion, Cora Howorth Stewart, who wrote under the byline "Imogene Carter." See Michael Robertson, *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 142.

¹²⁵One of Crane's dispatches, critical of the Greeks, was published under the headline, "The Blue Badge of Cowardice." See Stephen Crane, "The Blue Badge of Cowardice," *New York Journal*, May 12, 1897.

¹²⁶Mark Twain, "The Great Jubilee as Described by the *Journal*'s Special Writers," *New York Journal*, June 23, 1897. Other bylines from London on the *Journal*'s front page that day included those of Julian Ralph, Frank Marshall White, and the drama critic Alan Dale.

¹²⁷Frank Marshall White, "Mark Twain Amused," *New York Journal*, June 2, 1897. See also Louis J. Budd, "Color Him Curious About Yellow Journalism: Mark Twain and the New York City Press," *Journal of Popular Culture* 15 (1981): 32.

¹²⁸Richard Harding Davis, "Does Our Flag Shield Women?" *New York Journal*, Feb. 12, 1897. Davis' report was incorrect in doubting Spain's authority to conduct searches of U.S.-flagged vessels in Havana harbor.

¹²⁹"Tale of a Fair Exile: Senorita Arango's Own Story of the Olivette 'Search Outrage,'" *New York World*, Feb. 15, 1897.

¹³⁰Remington drew the illustration based on Davis' report, which was ambiguous about whether male detectives were present during the search. The illustration appeared on page 2 of the *New York Journal* on Feb. 12, 1897.

¹³¹"Tale of a Fair Exile." Arango stated in the *World*'s report that she had not been "ill-treated, except [for] the humiliation of being stripped by a strange woman." She was unequivocal in saying that "no men were admitted into the rooms nor could they have seen into them."

¹³²Richard Harding Davis, "Mr. Davis Explains: The 'Olivette Search Outrage' Is Now Made Clear," *New York World*, Feb. 17, 1897.

¹³³"The Noisy Detectives' Work," *New York Times*, July 1, 1897. The *Times* speculated that "the grossness and needless explicitness of this kind of news reporting must have a demoralizing influence upon the younger generation."

¹³⁴The comment was attributed to a coroner's physician named O'Hanlon. See "More of the Headless Body is Found," *New York Journal*, June 28, 1897.

¹³⁵See, for example, "Beheaded, Cast Into the River," *New York Journal*, June 27, 1897. The *Journal* argued: "To show crime in its . . . most revolting aspects is to perform a service to law. To bring a murderer to justice is to discharge a great public duty." See "The *Journal* and the Nack Case," *New York Journal*, Nov. 11, 1897.

¹³⁶"Discovered by the *Journal*," *New York Journal*, June 30, 1897. See also Gerald Gross, ed., *Masterpieces of Murder* (New York: Avon, 1966), 236-37.

¹³⁷For a descriptive account of the *Journal*'s role in solving the East River murder case, see John D. Stevens, *Sensationalism and the New York Press* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 92-94.

¹³⁸"Enterprise Means Success," *Fourth Estate*, July 15, 1897, 4. The *Journal* was characteristically self-congratulatory, declaring: "But for the *Journal* the arm of the law would have been palsied." See "The *Journal* and the Nack Case."

¹³⁹See Stevens, *Sensationalism and the New York Press*, 93-94; and Gross, *Masterpieces of Murder*, 238.

¹⁴⁰Evangelina Cisneros and Karl Decker, *The Story of Evangelina Cisneros Told by Herself: Her Rescue by Karl Decker* (New York: Continental Publishing, 1898),

59.

¹⁴¹The Spanish accused Cisneros of plotting to kill a senior military officer, but the *Journal* claimed she was defending herself from the Spanish officer's unwelcome sexual advances. The *Times* suggested that it was possible both versions "were quite true so far as they went," which was an entirely plausible interpretation. See "Personal," *New York Times*, Aug. 28, 1897. The *Journal* mounted a petition drive during the summer of 1897 in a failed attempt to force Spain to release Cisneros.

¹⁴²The jailbreak and flight of Evangelina Cisneros was aided in no small measure by Havana-based U.S. diplomatic personnel and their associates. For an account about their previously undisclosed roles in the case, see W. Joseph Campbell, "Not a Hoax: New Evidence in the *New York Journal*'s Rescue of Evangelina Cisneros," *American Journalism* 19, 4 (Fall 2002): 67-94.

¹⁴³Cisneros and Decker, *The Story of Evangelina Cisneros Told by Herself*, 116-17.

¹⁴⁴The *New York Times* said the crowd was "nearly 75,000 people." See "Ovation to Miss Cisneros," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1897.

¹⁴⁵"The People's Welcome to Evangelina Cisneros," *New York Journal*, Oct. 18, 1897.

¹⁴⁶Charles Duval [Karl Decker], "Evangelina Cisneros Rescued by the *Journal*," *New York Journal*, Oct. 10, 1897.

¹⁴⁷"The Journalism that Does Things."

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹"Personal," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1897.

¹⁵⁰"Rescue Made Easy," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1897.

¹⁵¹"Personal," *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1897.

¹⁵²See "Jail-Breaking Journalism." Most New York newspapers avoided editorial comment about the exploit, no doubt reluctant to give the *Journal* even more attention.

¹⁵³See, for example, "Editors on the *Journal*'s Rescue of Miss Cisneros," *New York Journal*, Oct. 12, 1897.

¹⁵⁴See Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 1219.

¹⁵⁵"Every One Calls the Carnival Superb," *New York Journal*, Jan. 2, 1898.

¹⁵⁶Untitled editorial comment, *Fourth Estate*, Dec. 30, 1897.

¹⁵⁷"Creditable Newspaper Enterprise," *New York Sun*, Dec. 23, 1897.

¹⁵⁸Cited in "Pyrotechnical Journalism," *Fourth Estate*, Jan. 6, 1898, 6.

¹⁵⁹"The Greater New York Carnival," *New York Journal*, Jan. 1, 1898.

¹⁶⁰"Pyrotechnical Journalism," 6.

¹⁶¹For example, the *Augusta Chronicle* in Georgia described the *Journal* as "a pioneer in progressive journalism. Its radical departures cause criticisms, but the *Journal* goes on conquering and to conquer." The *Journal* reprinted the commentary on its editorial page. See "A Pioneer in Progressive Journalism," *New York Journal*, July 21, 1897.

¹⁶²"The Journalism of Action."

¹⁶³"The *Journal*'s Settled Policy," *New York Journal*, Dec. 3, 1897.

¹⁶⁴"The Journalism of Action."

¹⁶⁵This point also was made by Ted Curtis Smythe in *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 192.

¹⁶⁶For references to Hearst's financial resources during his first years in New York City journalism, see Nasaw, *The Chief*, 98, 146.

¹⁶⁷"Spanish Alliances," *New York Times*, March 1, 1898.

¹⁶⁸For an early statement of this enduring but misleading argument, see Brooke Fisher, "The Newspaper Industry," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1902, 751.

¹⁶⁹Hearst became head of the National Association of Democratic Clubs in 1900, won a seat in Congress in 1902, and unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination for president in 1904.

¹⁷⁰See, for example, "The Paramount Issue," *New York Journal*, Nov. 2, 1900.

¹⁷¹For a discussion of the parallels between "civic" journalism and Hearst's "journalism of action," see Campbell, *Yellow Journalism*, 180-83. See also Thomas C. Leonard, "Making Readers into Citizens—The Old-Fashioned Way," in Theodore L. Glasser, ed., *The Idea of Public Journalism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 85-90.

¹⁷²See Tift and Jones, *The Trust*, 54-55.