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*‘Women and the origins of mass circulation: Virtuous, victorious,  
or victims and vicious?’*



*Role of female representation and readership in the origins of mass circulation daily newspapers – appears in*

Gender, Citizenship and the Media:  
Historical and Transnational Perspectives

by Jane Chapman and Kate Lacey,  
2012 Palgrave Macmillan



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## Cultural Citizenship and the Rise of Consumer Society

What was at stake in the double articulation of media as conveyors of consumerism and media products such as newspapers as consumer goods?





ASPECT DE L'ANGLE DU BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE ET DE LA RUE RICHELIEU LE JOUR DE L'APPARITION D'UN NUMÉRO DU *Journal illustré*. Dessin d'H. DE HEY.

The excitement outside *Le Petit Journal* headquarters is over record circulation figures, appreciated by a respectable looking female standing in the foreground.





# The Northcliffe *Legend*

- Underplays visits to Paris. Instead ‘visits to 12 countries and the Dominions’
- *Daily Mail* invents female audience
- ‘Alfred has always championed the rights of women – in his own peculiar way. He had pioneered their mass readership of newspapers, and he continued to define the market’ (Taylor, 1998)
- ‘first daily newspaper for gentlewomen’ (*Daily Mirror*) is based on *La Fronde* (Kennedy Jones)
- First on circulation figures, actually achieved by PJ in 1880s
- *Daily Mail* invents advertising by stores
- Like PJ, claims ‘non-political’

*Petit Journal* 1863 & 1896 and *Daily Mail* 1896. Percentage of female-oriented articles representing citizenship or consumerism of 33% of total amount.

	Articles on women	Citizenship	Consumerism
<i>Petit Journal</i> - 1863	418	76.3%	23.6 %
<i>Petit Journal</i> - 1896	656	80.9%	19.3%
<i>Daily Mail</i> - 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 1896	307	76 %	24%
<i>Daily Mail</i> - 4 <sup>th</sup> May – 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 1896	2007	96%	4%

# A change in priority of article type.

## *Petit Journal – sensational crime*

1863	1896
Victims – 34 %	<b>Victims – 49 %</b>
N/A – 30.4%	N/A – 18.7 %
Virtuous – 16.4 %	Vicious – 14.4 %
Vicious – 12.3 %	Virtuous 11.2 %
Victorious – 10.7%	Victorious 7.7%

## *Daily Mail - educative*

17 <sup>th</sup> Feb -3 <sup>rd</sup> May 1896	4 <sup>th</sup> May – 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 1896
Virtuous – 43 %	<b>Virtuous – 52.8%</b>
N/A – 19%	Victims – 16%
Victims – 17%	Victorious – 14.2%
Vicious – 14%	Vicious – 11%
Victorious – 7%	N/A – 6%

# Conservative feminisation =

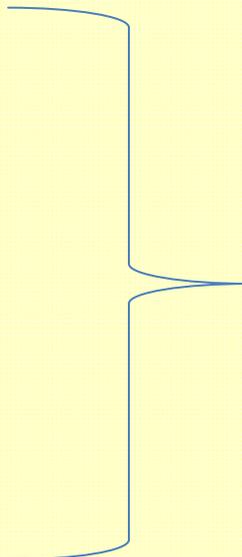
- trivia coverage rather than radical movements
- negative representation (e.g. crime coverage)
- political support of proprietors for centre and right (Bonapartist and Conservative)
- obsession with bottom lines (circulation, dividends, profits)
- patronising leadership role in defining audience tastes
- encouragement of traditional upper class values in novels and features

*Le Petit  
Journal*

*The Daily Mail*

*La Fronde*

*Daily Mirror*



Tension between 'conservative  
feminisation' and a radical  
concept of news produced by  
and for women

## Women and University Education - 2 views



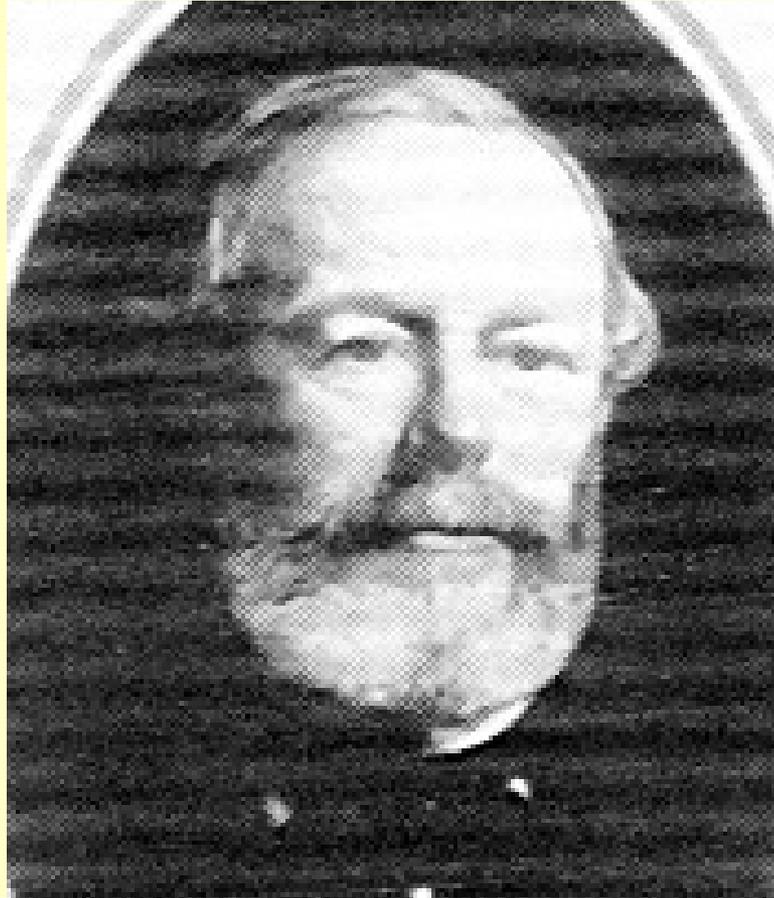
***La Fronde***, 1898: A wealthy woman points out the Sorbonne University in the distance to her poorer neighbour, and infers that education offers women a means of self betterment

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***Petit Journal***, 4th March 1896 : 'university madness has overtaken our unfortunate French families, pushing thousands into ruin and misery by accepting over intelligent daughters'



Marguerite Durand  
– Editor, *La Fronde*



Gustave de Rothschild  
-sponsor of *La Fronde*

# La Fronde

*La Fronde's* galaxy of star writers:

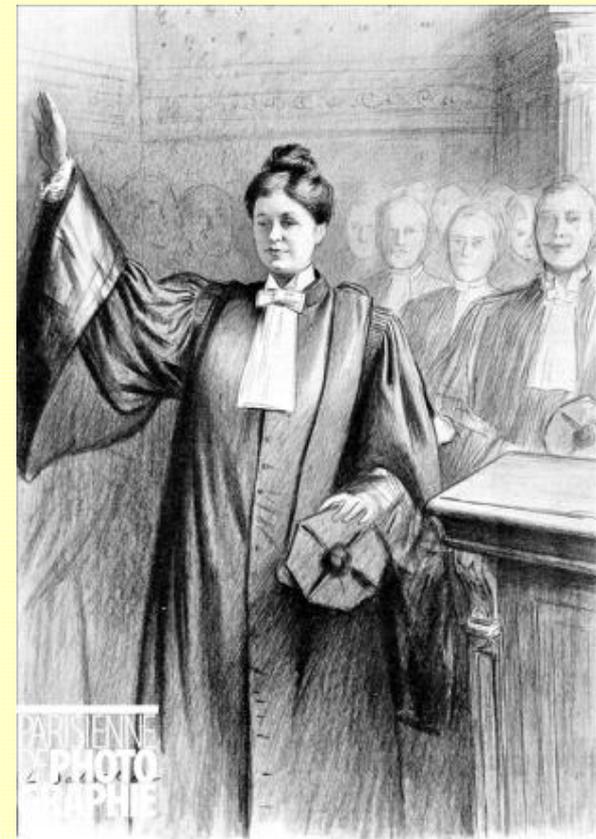
- **Severine** (Caroline Remy ) - with a national reputation as a reporter
- **Clemence Royer** – a scholar , translator of Darwin into French and the first woman to teach at the Sorbonne
- **Daniel Le Sueur** (Jeanne Lapauze) – playwright, novelist and one of the first women nominated for the Legion d'Honneur
- **Jeanne Chauvin** – one of the first women admitted to the bar as a lawyer
- **Blanche Galien** – the first female pharmacist in France
- **Dorothea Klumpke** – the first female astronomer to join the Paris observatory



Severine



Clemence Royer



Jeanne Chauvin



*‘an unholy alliance of crime, bathos and self-improvement’ (Taylor, 1988)*

Articles included:

- ‘Divorce by Dagger’
- ‘A Page of Interesting Books’
- ‘Baby in a Dustbin’
- ‘Cut Off by Tide’
- ‘Beauty in the Bath’

*Harmsworth berates editor for content ‘below the intelligence of the average fourth housemaid’ (BL 62234)*



## *Daily Mirror*

- ‘women can’t write and don’t want to read’
- when circulation falls from 276,00 to 24801 within weeks, ‘I will make women read it’

Alfred Harmsworth



LES JOURNAUX DE PARIS :

## Significance of Research

- Comparative research challenges Northcliffe legend
- Dates 'tabloidisation' trends to an earlier period
- Challenges some existing interpretations of the effects of mass culture (positive democratisation theses - Anderson (1991), Delporte (1998), Kalifa (1995), Jean-Yves Mollier (2002))
- Resonates with criticisms of today's media stereotyping of women



Hamilton Fyfe, instructed to sack all female journalists:

‘They begged to be allowed to stay. They left little presents on my desk. They waylaid me tearfully in corridors. It was a horrid experience – like drowning kittens’.