Introduction

This is the first installment in the landmark study of “The Image of the Journalist in Silent Film, 1890 to 1929.” It covers 1,948 films from 1890 to 1919. Part Two will cover the years from 1920 to the beginning of recorded sound in 1929. This is the first comprehensive study of the beginning of cinema’s earliest depictions of the journalist, mostly newspaper reporters, editors, and publishers.

Newspaper fiction flourished at a time when journalism “was a revolutionary force, tearing up traditions, redefining public morality, and lending voice and encouragement to the disenfranchised. It reflected currents sweeping through every phase of American life. The skyrocketing circulations, the manic search for exclusive news, the sensational headlines, and the concentration of newspaper ownership were signs of an America changing from a rural society to an urban and industrial one. Since journalism so clearly mirrored and so loudly supported the new order, it became the preeminent symbol for the mechanization, standardization, democratization, and vulgarization of culture.” Historian Howard Good points out that the 1890s “represented a watershed not only in American journalism but also in American history. The decade saw the passing of the Old West, the shift of economic and political power from the countryside to the city, and the shattering...
impact of a torrent of immigration on traditional values and institutes.”² From 1890 to 1930, America was “transformed by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. The great potential wealth of the country dazzled the mind, capital, labor, natural resources, and inventiveness were in plentiful supply.”³

All of the journalist stereotypes commonplace in the 20th century began in the silent film era, with many derived from the novels of the 19th century. Silent films adopted unchanged the formulas that the novels originated and because of this “cross-breeding, the same stereotypes and story patterns appear in all the art forms.”⁴ Good, one of the first to study the image of the journalist in novels and films, points out that newspaper fiction helped to shape the public’s image of the press, and now gives historians insights into the journalism of 1890 to 1930 and how those who reported the news felt about their work and journalism in general.⁵ Young men and women read these novels, fell in love with the newsroom, and aspired to journalism careers.⁶

However, no matter how popular newspaper novels were, newspaper fiction as a whole never “attracted the mass audience the newspaper film did. The movies took common clay and breathed new life into it. Brought to the big screen, the image of the journalist was magnified and put in noisy and anarchic motion…the characters and settings readers once had to piece together in their own imaginations were immediately and volubly present to moviegoers.”⁷ On the big screen, the image of the journalist was magnified and put into motion. The journalists were defined on screen by brashness and cunning. They were creatures of the city familiar with its fast pace, crowds, and opportunities to get ahead. They reflected the American audience’s preference for action and accomplishment rather than ideology, and they embodied the myth of the self-reliant individual who pits nerves and resourcefulness against an unfair society.

By the 1890s, the “big-city newspaperman, who, supplied with a wad of copy paper, a stubby pencil and a nose for news,” had become “an unmistakable figure on the American scene.”⁸ These early images of journalists include reporters, editors, columnists, cub reporters and newsboys, war and foreign correspondents, magazine writers, pamphlet and book writers, newsreel camerapersons, photojournalists, and publishers. “The roots of today’s popular image of the journalist can be found in hundreds of novels and silent films dating back more than a century, when a host of characters emerged: the energetic, opportunistic newshound who would do anything for a scoop; the tough, sarcastic female reporter trying desperately to outdo her male competition; the enthusiastic ‘cub’ who wants more than anything else to be a bylined reporter; the big-city newspaper editor committed to getting the story first at any cost; and the ruthless media tycoon using the power of the press for his or her own selfish ends. Those archetypes carried over with relatively little variation into portrayals of radio and television newspeople and later of cyberjournalists. Such images—at once repellent and romantic, villainous and heroic—hint at a complex, contradictory relationship between the press and the public.”⁹ As Good writes, “Hollywood has given us reporters corrupted by cynicism, ambition and drink, careless of others’ lives and reputations, and ever reluctant to let the truth stand in the way of a good story.”¹⁰

In addition, as journalism film historian Richard R. Ness, whose groundbreaking research in the image of the journalist in silent film sparked this study, points out, “The public’s love/hate relationship with the fourth estate was in evidence on the screen almost from the beginning of cinema. While many of the early films presented journalists as crusaders who helped to right social wrongs, it was not uncommon also to find them portrayed as unscrupulous or
Good points out that the public “basically got the kind of portrayal of the press it demanded. Confused and threatened by the pace and direction of social change, people needed both a savior and a scapegoat and the journalist, a leading actor in the drama of the modern world, could be made to fill either role”—“a messiah who appeared out of nowhere to solve problems a community was incapable of solving for itself” but more often, “a frustrated hack with indecent and unnatural ideas in his head, whisky on his breath, no money in his pocket, and the gutter before him.”

Adds Good, “The mania to be the fastest to gather the news and the first to report it is enshrined in fiction...there are virtually no limits to what fictional journalists will do to run down their quarry and score a scoop.” An advertisement for the Hearst-Selig News Pictorial in 1912 with the headline “SCOOPS!” showed how much the public had become familiar with the word “scoop” and its value: “In the newspaper world, a ‘scoop’ or a ‘beat’ means putting it over on the other fellow. It means that certain exclusive and important information has been obtained and circulated through energy and enterprise. When a ‘scoop’ is recorded the office force from printer’s devil to editor-in-chief wear broad smiles. It is a season for mutual congratulations—and then everybody resolves to go forth and do it all over again. Some are born with ‘scoops.’ Some achieve ‘scoops,’ and others have ‘scoops’ thrust upon them—and it may be herewith stated that the Hearst-Selig News Pictorial ‘scoops’ are achieved.”

A newsroom is always filled with fast-talking, bright people whose main work is to speak to strangers, investigate a situation, get answers, develop a story. Since reporters are always finding out something about someone, they create countless stories with good beginnings, middles, and endings. The newspaper gave the moviemaker an endless flow of story possibilities in an atmosphere that soon became so familiar to movie audiences that journalists could be thrown into a film without the scriptwriter having to worry about motivation or plot. “No other profession could match journalism for the variety and intensity of experience it offered.”

By the early 1920s, audiences already knew that reporters were always involved in some kind of story, no matter how bizarre or melodramatic. They accepted it as a matter of course. In the, they got not only large doses of entertainment but also a series of lasting impressions about the news media that has stayed in the public mind. Silent films became “the most powerful medium of communication in the world—a universal language.”

Some historians, including Good, believe that the period from 1890 to 1930 was a golden age of journalism, the years when young people went to college to learn journalism—necessitating the creation of journalism textbooks—and journalists themselves began to take their profession seriously by creating press clubs and publishing trade journals. But it was also the age of yellow journalism (a name derived from a newspaper comic character called the Yellow Kid), which was in full swing. From the 1890s, yellow journalism had, in the words of one historian, “choked up the news channels on which the common people depended with a shrieking, gaudy, sensation-loving, devil-may-care kind of journalism,” twisting stories into the “form best suited for sales by the howling newsboy.”

The people loved it. Even conservative newspapers were forced to take on a yellow hue to sell their products. Early filmmakers often took their ideas for the movies from newspapers, adapting current events to their scripts. “Many workers, illiterate and foreign-born, read no newspapers,
and the nickelodeon was thus a source of astonishment. Almost three quarters of the audience came from the working class.”

By 1900, nearly a third of the metropolitan dailies were turning news stories into melodramas that could be summed up in one loud headline. It was the perfect time for moving pictures.

**Literature Review**

There is no complete study of the image of the journalist in silent films.

Pioneer journalism film historian Richard R. Ness, in his book, *From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography*, offers a definitive account of films featuring journalists from 1890 to 1929. His filmography and capsule reviews are referred to throughout this project. His filmography (subtitled “The Silent Era,”) was invaluable in creating the initial list of films to be included and his commentaries and capsule reviews were also used extensively throughout the study’s 11 appendices.

Although many of the silent films featuring journalists have been lost forever, a fairly accurate picture emerges through reviews and commentaries about the films when they first appeared on the screen. Publications referred to include *The Moving Picture World*, *Motion Picture News*, *Exhibitor’s Herald*, *Motography*, *The Film Daily (Wid’s Daily)*, *Variety*, *The New York Times*, *Billboard*, *New York Clipper*, *Picture-Play Magazine*, and *The Bioscope*, as well as other publications including *Edison Catalog and Biograph*, *Thanhouser*, and *Reel Life* (Mutual Film Corporation). Descriptive critics offer detailed plot and character summations that often rival a viewing of the film itself in addition to capturing the mores and prejudices of the time.

Three key references used throughout are the Internet Movie Database (IMDb; imdb.com), “the world’s most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content,” the American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films (afi.com), and the online IJPC Database of the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture Project. These comprehensive databases were used in resolving conflicts involved in decisions concerning inclusion, date and genre determination, spelling, and other details.

Another important online resource is the Silent Era Web site (www.silentera.com), a collection of news and information pertaining to silent era films, which also includes a comprehensive search feature and was invaluable in evaluating the status of any silent film included. The Web site also offers a complete listing of silent film websites.

Four books by Howard Good, professor of journalism at SUNY New Paltz and the first historian to investigate the image of the journalist in popular culture emphasizing novels and films, were valuable resources in dealing with novels and films from 1890 to 1930.

Research from the books *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* by Joe Saltzman (Los Angeles: Norman Lear Center, University of Southern California, 2002); and *Heroes and Scoundrels: The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* by Matthew C.

Methodology

The first problem was to identify any silent film dealing with journalism. We started with the films listed in Ness’s From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography, which yielded 210 films featuring journalists and those silent films listed in The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture (IJPC) database (ijpc.org), which yielded 931 results.\textsuperscript{41} We then searched through dozens of periodicals and books for films featuring journalists. The American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films was invaluable in this search process as were the periodicals listed in the literature review.

In The Image of the Journalist in Silent Film, 1890 to 1929: Part One 1890 to 1919, a total of 1,937 films, with each character and event identified and all of the information encoded for the tables, were annotated and put into 11 appendices: Appendix 1, 1890-1909; Appendix 2, 1910; Appendix 3, 1911; Appendix 4, 1912; Appendix 5, 1913; Appendix 6, 1914; Appendix 7, 1915; Appendix 8, 1916; Appendix 9, 1917; Appendix 10, 1918; Appendix 11, 1919. In the endnotes, future researchers can also find a complete list of films dealing with specific journalists, such as cub reporters, female reporters, or pack journalists.

We also decided to include films made outside the United States since silent films were usually made for international audiences. Titles in the original language were either translated or, if deemed unnecessary, left out. “While silent films were well suited to consumption in a variety of cultural contexts, this was due less to their status as a universal language of images than to their intertitles and the flexibility they provided. Intertitles were not simply translated from source to target languages but creatively adapted to cater to diverse national and language groups: the names of characters, settings and plot developments, and other cultural references were altered as necessary in order to make the films internationally understandable for different national audiences. By 1927, the intertitles of Hollywood films were routinely translated into as many as thirty-six languages.”\textsuperscript{42}

Although most of the silent films featuring journalists have been lost forever\textsuperscript{43}, a fairly accurate
picture emerges through reviews and commentaries about the films when they first appeared on the screen. Descriptive critics in a variety of publications offer detailed plot and character summations that often rival a viewing of the film itself in veracity and commentary.

Whenever possible, the silent films were viewed and annotated. But many silent films are either lost or their whereabouts unknown, and some prints only exist in various museums around the world. We have noted whether a film has been viewed or not by listing the film’s status and whether it was “Unavailable for Viewing,” “Not Viewed,” or “Viewed” in the 11 appendices.

The size and quality of the entries were dependent on the various sources involved. That is the reason some films are given a paragraph and some films are given several pages. The importance of a specific film on the image of the journalist in popular culture does not always coincide with the amount of space given that film. It all depended on the availability and quality of the secondary source involved (periodicals covering the silent film era). An individual periodical might change over a period of time, covering the films in less detail and even ignoring some films because of lack of space. We printed the best descriptions of the film available, emphasizing the journalism in that film, or filling in important plot details necessary to understand in evaluating the final product for encoding purposes. If a film is located and screened, then more details are included under “video notes.”

Each film is categorized by decade, genre, gender, ethnicity, media category, job title, and description (evaluation of the image presented by each journalist or group of journalists on a subjective scale from very positive and positive to negative and very negative, to transformative positive and transformative negative to neutral). When a film features more than one journalist character, multiple instances of gender, ethnicity, job title, and description were recorded. These results were checked and re-checked until accuracy and consensus were confirmed.

A journalist is defined as anyone who performs the journalist’s function: to gather and disseminate news, information, and commentary, regardless of the medium.

The most difficult category was in determining whether a character’s image is positive or negative. Often a central character combines both positive and negative attributes. The journalist could get away with anything as long as the end result was in the public interest. The journalist could lie, cheat, distort, bribe, betray, or violate any ethical code as long as the journalist exposed corruption, solved a murder, caught a thief, or saved an innocent. If the journalist, however, uses the precious commodity of public trust in the press for his or her own selfish ends; if the journalist uses the power of the media for his or her own personal, political, or financial gain; if the end result is not in the public interest, then no matter what the journalist does, no matter how much he or she struggles with his or her conscience or tries to do the right thing, evil has won out.

A positive designation was given if the journalist primarily serves the public interest or if the journalist is just doing the job expected of him/her.
A negative designation was given if the journalist fails to act in the public interest, or if the journalist was using the power of the media for his or her own personal, political, or financial gain.

Very positive and very negative were reserved for those images that left no doubt whether the journalist was a hero or a villain.

Transformative positive and transformative negative were deemed necessary to isolate those journalists who (1) act negatively throughout the film, but who in the end serve the public interest and transform into a positive image, or those journalists who (2) act positively throughout the film, but end up not serving the public interest and using the news media for personal, economic, or political gain, transforming into a negative image.

Neutral was reserved for mostly anonymous journalists who were in groups or seen in the background, or who figured slightly in the plot or action of the film or television program. Most were just doing their job in a quiet, unobtrusive way.

One of the key problems in doing a fair evaluation is that an audience may view a journalist positively even if that journalist acts in unethical and unprofessional ways. This can occur because of a variety of factors: an attractive actor in the role, a character the audience wants to succeed no matter what he/she does, a situation where the end (true love) outweighs the means (negative behavior on the part of the journalist). We have tried to evaluate the images as they might be conceived by the audiences of the period using the standards of the time, not the standards of today. While we might abhor a journalist who steals, lies, deceives, and ignores basic rules of journalism and label his/her actions negative, the audiences of the period often considered such journalists heroes and judged them as a positive image. Obviously some of these decisions are debatable even after hours of debate. This is a subjective category and we worked hard to reach consensus, but it is still a subjective description. However, any researcher can go through each appendix, check each film’s encoding, read the comprehensive reviews, and determine whether the description should be revised.

We divided characters identified as journalists into major and minor categories. A major character influences the outcome of the story or event. He or she is usually a leading character played by a major actor of the time. A minor character does not play a significant role in the development of the film. He or she is usually a part of a larger group—i.e., journalists in a news conference or roaming around in packs, or those journalists who function as a part of the editorial or technical staff. Films with unnamed characters or characters who appeared briefly and then disappeared are included in the minor category.

We decided to include films in which a newspaper story played a significant plot point. Examples include articles or pieces that expose scandals and wrong-doing, provide erroneous information (such as a fake death), alert principals about some important news, or events that cause the characters to take important actions. Journalists in films with such articles were identified as “Unidentified News Staff.”
We also made a decision to include scanned copies of the original reviews in the 11 appendices whenever possible. We felt this would make it easier for future researchers who would not have to search through original periodicals as we did. When an original review was barely readable, we would retype it for easier reading. Also, summaries of the journalists/journalism in the film were also typed up.

Finally, in many of the periodicals covering the silent film industry, there are occasional articles we believe would be of interest to this audience. We’ve added some at the end of each appendix.

Results

The following 10 tables summarize the results by decade, genre, gender, ethnicity, media category, job title, and descriptions of the journalist’s professional and personality traits.

**Decades**

A breakdown by years appears in the following Table 1. A total of 1,937 films were documented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Movies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
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<td>310</td>
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<td>272</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>1937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Genres**
The 1,937 films were separated into generally accepted genres to see how the image of the silent film journalist was treated in action-adventure, animation, drama, comedy, crime-mystery-thriller, romance, satire/parody, science fiction/horror, serial, sport, true story-biography-documentary, war, and western.

**TABLE 2: Genres**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Action-Adventure</th>
<th>Animation</th>
<th>Drama</th>
<th>Comedy</th>
<th>Crime-Mystery-Thriller</th>
<th>Romance</th>
<th>Satire/Parody</th>
<th>Science Fiction/Horror</th>
<th>Serials</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>True Stories/Biography/Documentary</th>
<th>War</th>
<th>Western</th>
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<td>851</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender**
As expected because of the social mores of the time, most of the journalists are male, but there are a surprisingly large group of active and hard-working female journalists included.

**TABLE 3: Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Movies MALE</th>
<th>Movies FEMALE</th>
<th>Movies GROUP</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1890-1909</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>1731</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>1031</td>
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</table>
**Ethnicity-Race**
As expected because of the social mores of the time, practically all of the journalists were white. As newsrooms were integrated in real life in the mid-to-late 20th century, so did the movie newsrooms. But it happened long after the silent era was over.

**White**—a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

**Black or African-American**—a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

**Hispanic or Latino**—a person who classifies him/herself as Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or anyone who indicates that they are “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

**American Indian or Alaska Native**—a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

**Asian**—a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and residents of Hong Kong, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands and Thailand.

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**—a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

**Unspecified**—Mostly groups of journalists who are not easily identified by ethnicity. Also, includes journalists who do not fit into ethnic categories, or were not identified as major or minor characters such as Asians, American Indian, and Indian people.

**TABLE 4: Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic Latino</th>
<th>American Indian Alaska Native</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890-1909</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
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<td>1911</td>
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**Media Category**
The five areas of employment in journalism listed are newspaper, newsreel, magazine, radio, and undefined (includes any media category that is undefined in the film). Newspapers dominated the media category depicted in most silent films.

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**Job Titles**
There are 18 specific job titles. Here are the definitions. Note: these definitions are used for all of the IJPC studies, so there will be job titles that weren’t created until long after the silent film era was over. They are included for consistency of definition.

**Anchor, Commentator:** a person who presents news on television, radio, the Internet, or other media, a news presenter also known as newsreader, newscaster, anchorman or anchorwoman, news anchor, or simply anchor. This category also includes Commentator: a person who adds analysis and occasionally opinion to his or her news reports for any media, usually radio or television. Also a Radio Announcer.

**Columnist, Blogger:** a person who writes a regular column or opinion piece for a newspaper, magazine, pamphlet, Internet site, or any other medium.

**Critic:** a professional judge of art, music, literature, such as a film critic or a dance critic who evaluates and appreciates literary or artistic works. Forms and expresses judgments of the merits, faults, value, or truth of a matter.

**Cub Reporter:** a person who is young and inexperienced and works in all media. An aspiring reporter who ends up in the job, a novice reporter, a trainee. Knows little about journalism. First job in journalism.
**Editor, Producer:** a person who assigns stories and edits copy for a newspaper, magazine, Internet, or other medium. Usually referred to as a city editor, managing editor, or editor-in-chief. This category also includes producer and executive producer: a person who controls various aspects of a news program for television, radio, the Internet, and other media. He or she takes all the elements of a newscast (video, graphics, audio) and integrates them into a cohesive show. Title includes the producer of a specific news program, a field producer who is in charge of field production of individual news stories, a producer in charge of news programs. In many silent films, the editor and publisher are indistinguishable. If the journalist is primarily working as an editor—gathering the news, writing the stories, headlines, and editorials, being the person responsible for the production and distribution of the newspaper—we use that job title (editor). If the journalist does little as an editor, but acts mostly as the owner making publishing decisions, we use that job title (publisher).

**Illustrator, Cartoonist:** a person who provides decorative images to illustrate a story in a newspaper, magazine, or other media. A commercial artist-journalist. A cartoonist creates drawings that depict a humorous situation often accompanied by a caption. Drawings representing current public figures or issues symbolically and often satirically as in a political cartoon. A caricaturist: drawing humorous or satirical cartoons.

**News Executive:** a person at a broadcast station or network or other media who is in charge of the news department. Executive in charge of news. A management position. Newsreel supervisor.

**News Employee:** a person who works in any media with a non-descript job such as editorial assistant and other newsroom employees, printers, and other workers in composition, telegraph operators, copy boy or girl, office boy or girl, newsboy or newsgirl, web developer, graphic designer, audio and video technician, multimedia artist, digital media expert. Also includes Printer’s Devil, typically a young boy who is an apprentice in a printing establishment who performed a number of tasks, such as mixing tubs of ink and fetching type.

**Photojournalist, Newsreel Shooter:** a person who creates still or moving images in order to tell a news story. Titles include photographer, cameraman or camerawoman, shooter, stringer, paparazzi, and anyone else using a photographic device to make a photographic record of an event. Also includes newsreel cameramen and camerawomen.

**Publisher, Media Owner:** a person who is a successful entrepreneur or businessman who controls, through personal ownership or a dominant position, a mass media related company or enterprise. Referred to as a media proprietor, media mogul, media baron. A publisher usually specifically refers to someone who owns a newspaper, a collection of newspapers, magazines, or newsreels.

**Reporter, Correspondent:** a person who reports news or conducts interviews for newspapers, magazines, television, radio, Internet, or any other organization that disseminates news and opinion. Referred to as a journalist, a newspaperman or newspaperwoman, newsman or newswoman, a writer, a sob sister, a magazine writer. A freelance writer for any multimedia.
Real-Life Journalist: a person who exists in real life. Uses real name and real occupation in a fictional film or TV program. He or she is not played by an actor.

Sport Journalists: a person who writes, reports, or edits sports news and features for any media. Includes writers, reporters, editors, columnists, commentators, hosts, online specialists.

War Correspondent, Foreign Correspondent: a correspondent is a person who contributes reports to a variety of news media from a distant, often remote, location, often covering a conflict of some sort.

Press Conference Journalists: a person who attends a news conference or press conference in which newsmakers invite journalists to hear them speak and, most often, ask questions.

Pack Journalists: a person who joins other reporters chasing after stories. They often travel in packs, usually armed with television cameras and microphones. They cover fast-breaking news by crowding, yelling, shouting, bullying, and forcing their way into breaking news events. They often show up with their lights, cameras, microphones, and digital recorders as they shout out questions to the usually reluctant newsmaker in question. Pack Journalism is also defined as journalism practiced by reporters in a group usually marked by uniformity of news coverage and lack of original thought or initiative. A pack of journalists can also be a group of reporters, photojournalists, war correspondents, freelance writers, even newsboys following a story or a specific activity.

Miscellaneous: individual journalists unidentified in the film or TV program as to job description. Usually in the background functioning as editorial and technical staff.

Unidentified News Staff: use of the news media—newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet, multimedia—by some unidentified news personnel or by some monolithic news organization as a significant plot point. Examples include articles or pieces that expose scandals and wrong-doing, provide erroneous information (such as a fake death), alert principals about some important news or events.
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**Descriptions of Major and Minor Characters**

**Major Character (Major):** a major character influences the outcome of the story or event. He or she is usually a leading character played by a major actor of the time.

**Minor Character (Minor):** a minor character does not play a significant role in the development of the film or TV program. He or she is usually a part of a larger group—i.e., journalists in a news conference or roaming around in packs, or those journalists who function as a part of the editorial or technical staff.

**Very Positive:** this is the journalist as a heroic character. This is the journalist who does the right thing, who fights everyone and anything to get the facts out to the public. He or she often exposes corruption, solves a murder, catches a thief, or saves an innocent. Everything he or she does is in the public interest. This is the kind of an image that makes the public believe that journalists are invaluable to any democracy. Journalists in a film would be evaluated as Very Positive (VP) if they have the following characteristics:
*Shows that the journalist is an unqualified hero—he or she does everything possible to get a story out to the public, resulting in making the world a better place to live.*
*Shows the public that journalism is an important profession that holds the public interest above all else, that without journalists representing the public interest, corporations, government, and individuals would do terrible things. It makes the viewer feel that journalists are essential to making democracy work, to giving the public the kind of information it needs to make informative decisions in a democracy.*
*Presents an unvarnished image of the journalist as a heroic, important member of society.*

**Positive:** these journalists will do anything to get a story that they believe is vital to the public interest, to the public welfare. They try to do their job without hurting anyone, basically people trying to do the right thing, but often frustrated by the system. They may be flawed, they may make mistakes, they may drink too much or quit their jobs in disgust, but they always seem to end up doing the right thing by the end of the story.
*Shows the journalist often doing wrong things in pursuing stories that are in the public interest. The good the journalist does, however, outweighs the bad.*
*Shows the public that even when journalists are offensive, their jobs are important in making a democracy work.*
*Presents an overall impression that the journalist is more of a hero than a villain.*

**Transformative Positive:** a journalist who conveys a negative image throughout the film, constantly doing negative things (unethical behavior, drinking heavily, stealing, wearing disguises, committing crimes to get a story), but who in the end serves the public interest and transforms into a positive image.

**Transformative Negative:** a journalist who conveys a positive image throughout the film, but ends up not serving the public interest and using the news media for personal, economic, or political gain.
Negative: these journalists are villains because they use the precious commodity of public confidence in the press for their own selfish ends. They use the power of the media for their own personal, political, or financial gain. They care less about the public interest than their own interests. They are interested in making more money, gaining power, doing anything to get what they want.

*Show that the journalist ignores the public interest in favor of personal, economic, or financial gain, thus losing the public’s respect.

*Shows the public that journalism is—more often than not—a profession that is more concerned with personal gain than serving the public interest. It makes the public suspicious of journalists and creates a bad impression of what journalism is all about.

*Presents an overall impression that the journalist is more of a villain than a hero.

Very Negative: These journalists often engage in unethical and often unlawful activities getting what they want at all costs, even committing murder or serious crimes. They are manipulative and cynical. Often, they are publishers who use their power to corrupt government or business, to take advantage of the public. They are cheaters who are only interested in what is good for them, no one else. They usually are involved with the tabloid or sensationalistic press and often make up the anonymous news media chasing after individuals without regard for their privacy or safety.

*Show that the journalist is an unqualified villain who has no redeeming value, who has no concern for basic values, who will do anything to get what he or she wants regardless of the damage caused.

*Shows the public that journalism is a profession filled with arrogant, morally bankrupt individuals who only care about themselves and not about the public or an individual. These journalists ignore the public interest completely.

*Presents an unvarnished image of the journalist as a villain who engages in unethical and often unlawful activities including crime and murder.

Neutral: These journalists usually make up the anonymous members of the press corps and usually can be seen at press conferences taking notes or reacting to what the person is saying. They are usually nondescript characters who are simply there as journalists doing their job without offending anyone. They are often in the background and figure slightly in the plot or action of the film or television program. They are not major characters.
TABLE 7: Descriptions: Major and Minor Characters

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### TABLE 10: Descriptions: Major Characters by Job Title

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Discussion

The image of the journalist in the silent film era (beginning in 1890 and ending in 1929) would be familiar to any generation living in the 20th or 21st century. The ace reporter who will do anything to get a scoop, who solves crimes faster than law enforcement, who exposes crooked politicians and businessmen, and who, in the process, is a crusader working in the public interest. The cub who wants more than anything to be a reporter, hoping he can break the story that will make his career but fumbles more often than not along the way. The sob sister who is better than any male reporter, who can stand up to any editor and can drink and throw out witty remarks with the best in the newsroom, but who secretly pines for a good man she can love, marry, and with whom she can raise a family. The editor who chews out his reporters for not getting that headline story by deadline, and who will fight anybody, even his own publisher, to do what is right and necessary to inform the public. The publisher who uses his magazine or newspaper for his own personal economic or political gain and slants the news to get what he wants. These stereotypes were alive and well at the beginning of the 20th century and they populated one silent film after another.

Through it all, journalists in silent films were portrayed as they were in 19th century novels—“by turns as idealists and hardened cynics, crusaders and midnight conspirators. Our attitude toward them continually swings from dark to bright and back again.” Real-life journalism was becoming more sensational as tabloids sprang into existence after World War I. “The gutter journalism of the tabloids set off a fresh round of attacks that lasted through the 1920s,” wrote historian Howard Good. “Despite or perhaps because of its popularity, tabloid journalists were attacked by the custodians of official culture.” The charges were “reminiscent of those hurled at yellow journalism in the 1880s and 1890s.”

Good continues, “Under repeated barrages of criticism, reporters and editors lost faith that journalism was a career worth pursuing … Noisy journalists were viewed as perverts and parasites.” And this general lack of respect gnawed at the conscience of the newspaper journalist and showed up repeatedly in the fiction of the day. Some of this showed up in the silent films, but for the most part, movies involving the press kept the stereotypes intact, played by the top actors of the day as familiar, good-hearted, and well-meaning images.

The silent films established news images that lasted throughout most of the 20th century and even are used today. A title card in the 1914 Making a Living shouted, “Extra! Extra!” and another in the 1928 The Power of the Press had the cub reporter yelling, “Stop the Presses!” The way newspapers were printed—from the composing room to linotype machines—were explored in documentary fashion as early as 1904 (A Newspaper in Making). Other familiar images that became synonymous with newspapers in the public mind included close-ups of fingers rapidly typing out a story, packs of journalists chasing after newsmakers, and the ever-present telephone.

The ubiquitous use of the telephone in film after film showed the influence of this late 19th century invention in the way newspaper journalists reported the news. In 1877-78, the first telephone line was constructed, a little more than a year after Alexander Graham Bell won the first U.S. patent for the device. In 1900, there were nearly 600,000 phones. By 1910, there were 5.8 million phones in use. Films featuring journalists showed off the most popular phone from the 1890s to the 1930s—the candlestick phone, which was separated in two pieces. The
mouthpiece formed the candlestick part, and the receiver was placed by the journalist’s ear during the phone call. For newspapermen and women, the telephone provided fast access to sources of information all over the world. Telephone lines linked the entire continent. Silent movie editorial newsrooms featured the telephone and the typewriter (invented in 1843) as integral parts of a newsperson’s way of getting and transmitting information. Flying fingers on the typewriter and anxious questions into the mouth piece made the “sound” of newspaper work as real to silent movie audiences as the images. Audiences were familiar with the telephone’s ring—a jangling sound bringing news from the outside world to their homes. For the real and fictional newspaper people, the telephone allowed the reporter to be in direct contact with sources sometimes separated by vast distances without leaving the newsroom. By skillfully using the telephone, silent movie reporters could get a story quickly and efficiently by interviewing a variety of people in a short amount of time. Because of movie magic, the audience could see the source on the other end of the line answering the reporter’s questions.

In silent movies featuring journalists, the use of the telephone both in and out of the office was as commonplace as the cell phone is in today’s modern movies. A reporter on the phone in a busy editorial room became an indelible image of the journalist in the minds of silent movie-going audiences throughout the early years of the 20th century. In How Molly Malone Made Good (1915), the phone booth is as much of a character in the film as Molly and the other journalists. In the Beatrice Fairfax serial (1916), the phone is a lifeline to one story after another with reporter Jimmy Barton ending episodes by phoning in the story to a rewrite man to make the early edition of the newspaper, scooping everyone else. In The Social Secretary (1916), reporter Adam Buzzard, an unscrupulous journalist on the lookout for juicy scandals, uses the phone as a weapon to force society women and men to pay him so he won’t reveal their secrets in his newspaper society column.

Male Reporters

The hard-bitten, tough male reporter was an image in popular culture long before the silent films were invented. “The contradictory portrayal of the journalist as part knight-errant, part scoundrel and part wise guy has its roots in popular literature,” writes Howard Good. By the end of the 19th century, the reporter as hero was commonplace and by the beginning of the sound era in 1929, when “talkies” appropriated the character, he had already hardened into a distinct type. “He was an exaggerated reflection of his creators, newspapermen and former newspapermen with ambivalent feelings about what journalism had done for them and to them,” but through it all, there was still an affection for these poorly paid, hard-drinking, cynical, ambitious tireless workers who did whatever they could to expose corruption, capture a criminal or save an innocent.

The first film made by Charlie Chaplin, who was to become the most popular comedian in silent film history, featured Charlie asSharper, an out-of-work swindler who decides to earn his living as a newspaper reporter, steals a camera, turns in the film, and scores a big scoop, fighting his rival reporter all the way (Making a Living, 1914). One reviewer described the unknown young Chaplin as a reporter this way: “The clever player who takes the role of nery and very nifty Sharpere in this picture is a comedian of the first water, who acts like one of Nature’s own naturals.”
Male reporters in silent films had what would become a stereotype in future decades: the “whatever it takes” mentality with reporters and editors subscribing to the idea that the means justifies the ends as long as they got the story and they got it first. This resulted in reporters doing ethically dubious things, even breaking the law. They would break into houses to get information (For Lack of Evidence, 1917); they would pretend to be someone else, taking on disguises to conceal the fact they were reporters (A Divorce Scandal, 1913); they would make love to a source in order to get information (The Clever Reporter, 1909); they would chase crooked oil tycoons over roofs, land, and water for fame and money (John D. and the Reporter, 1907); they would do anything to fulfill an assignment including dressing as a servant, getting inside a basket of flowers, or climbing a painter’s rope (Foolshead, Chief of Reporters, 1910). And sometimes no matter how many stunts they employed to get the story, the story eluded them (The Tie That Binds, 1910).

By far the most popular dramatic presentations of the male reporter in silent films were the crime fighters – crusaders and investigative reporters unraveling a mystery, solving a crime, exposing corruption or a far-reaching conspiracy. Historian Good points out that in newspaper fiction and silent films “crusading reporters will do almost anything short of murder to score an exclusive.” Reporters would uncover a conspiracy and save the day. In The Conspirators (1914), a keen reporter gets a line about a band of conspirators plotting a South American revolution, traces them to their headquarters, rescues a female Secret Service operative, and captures the conspirators as they are about to sail away with a shipload of ammunition. A reviewer wrote, “Having done their duty to their superiors they find that Cupid has the call and they plight their troth.”

In The Plot (1914), a reporter meets and falls in love with the daughter of the new Russian ambassador to the United States while investigating a plot to assassinate him. The reporter overhears the lethal plans of the conspirators, is knocked out, and captured by the assassins. Their leader puts the reporter under a hypnotic spell so he will carry a concussion bomb to the ambassador’s home and hurl it at the ambassador. Just as the reporter raises the bomb to hurl it at the ambassador, the daughter rushes up and seizes his arm. The assassin boasts that no one can break the hypnotic spell he has cast on the reporter, but the girl’s love proves stronger.

The reporter discovers that corrupt businessmen, politicians, or gangsters are terrorizing the community and proceeds to expose the conspiracy and defend the innocent against the bad guys. In a larger sense, the crusader “establishes the basis for civilization in what had been a moral wilderness, only to vanish once his utility is gone. He resembles the cowboy hero who sets the stage for frontier settlement and his own demise by driving off Indians and gunning down outlaws.” Good points out that newspaper fiction published from 1890 to 1930, the basis of most of the silent films about journalists, reflects the myth that “every great government scandal is revealed through the work of enterprising reporters who by one means or another pierce the official veil of secrecy … and may have been partly responsible for creating it.”
The crusading journalist, involved in crime, violence, and even sex, appealed to the same readers of the yellow press who flooded the early cinema. Even early movie producers weren’t above using crusades as a blatant appeal for larger audiences who loved seeing the establishment exposed as crooks and manipulators of the public trust, but most newspaper crusades were spurred on by the rise of the muckraking journalist who took on the establishment and defended the weak and the poor—most of the people in the movie audience—while exposing a serious social problem. Crusading reporters, editors, and even publishers were heroes of the early cinema fighting for the “little guy,” exposing corruption at the highest levels and proving that as long as there was a newspaper willing to risk all, nobody was above the law.

*The Power of the Press* (1909), one of the first films using that title, shows how a clever newspaperman succeeds in breaking up a corrupt political gang, winning the love of the ringleader’s daughter who saved him from lynching, and ending in “a reunion, which demonstrates the oft-repeated fact that true love doesn’t have an especially smooth pathway.”63 *The Power of the Press* (1914) showed a reporter stopping at nothing, even using suspect methods, to clear an innocent man. In *The Grafters* (1913), a reporter crusades for cleaner government. In *Reporter Jimmie Intervenes* (1914), star reporter Jimmie finds out that a city council member has sold out to a railroad trust made up of “respectable” businessmen. The reporter breaks into the home of the railroad president, binds and gags the head of the trust, and punches out his secretary. He escapes with evidence that the president was bribed and is pursued by the villains, but gets his scoop and goes to the council meeting where he shoves the “extra” under the nose of the corrupt councilman.64 It all began when the city editor remarked to his star reporter, Jimmie: “This is the biggest steal that any corporation tried to put over the municipality. Run it down, break it up, and you will own the shop: Jimmie went after the new assignment fast and furious. One reviewer put it this way: “A big, telling, trenchant, up-to-date newspaper story of an attempted municipal franchise steal. How the reporter gave the ‘once over’ to the man higher up, scored the big ‘Beat,’ and won a wife in a swift, moving and absorbing entertainment.”65

The 20-chapter serial *Graft* (1915-1916) goes after various trusts that are deceiving and stealing from the American people. Various journalists are constantly threatened and risk their lives including investigative newspaper reporter Jim Stevens who is introduced in *Graft: Episode Three: The Traction Garb*. In this episode, the reporter finds evidence that an inspector of materials is being bribed to pass inferior cement on a subway construction project. His paper is controlled by the trusts and Stevens’s expose is promptly torn up by the editor. So Stevens quits his job and goes to *The Independent*, which prints his article. *The Independent* appears on the street with the expose of the Traction Grab, together with the news that the grand jury had returned indictments against the heads of the Traffic Trust.66

Many exposes have to do with the stock market. In *On the Dawn Road* (1915), Bob Allen, the star reporter of the *Blade*, gets a hunch that there is something big breaking in a stock control bid. He goes out on the story, is captured, and thrown in a deserted shack by two crooks hired by an unscrupulous financier. In the shack, he finds a woman bound and gagged. The reporter overcomes the crooks in a fight, rescues the woman, and drives to town in time for a directors’ meeting where he denounces the financier and saves the day. The woman, of course, falls in love with him. In *The Main Spring* (1916), Lawrence Ashmore is a man who is penniless because his late father was ruined on the stock exchange; he goes to work as a reporter. He is assigned to
investigate an allegedly dying Wall Street wizard. He stumbles on the scoop of a lifetime but is held prisoner so what he has learned may not become public property and thus cause a financial panic. In *The Honor of Kenneth McGrath* (1915), the reporter falls in love with an heiress whose uncle is involved in a stock scheme. He is sent to interview his uncle and is refused admittance to the office. He threatens the uncle that he will write a complete exposure of the scheme. He gives him the alternative of dropping the scheme or being exposed as a fraud. The uncle gives in. Because of bad investments, the girl is no longer an heiress. She and the reporter get married and the uncle is forced to quit his crooked dealings.

Oftentimes, the crusading reporter is compromised by the fact that he is in love with the daughter of the crook he is investigating. In *The Clause in the Constitution* (1915), newspaperman Edward Clay is in love with the daughter of a ward politician who is furious when he finds out about them and drives Clay from his home. Clay’s editor assigns him to interview the governor about a controversial bill. The reporter overhears a crooked deal, finding out the politician will stop the governor from signing the bill. He waits until the governor leaves the state and he gets the lieutenant governor, now acting governor, to sign the bill. It becomes law and Clay’s paper publishes the exclusive news, defeating the politician, and Clay wins the girl. In *The Clean-Up* (1915), George Prescott, a young reporter, is assigned to expose gambling conditions, which are flourishing in the city. He is in love with the daughter of a wealthy politician who secretly profits from the gambling. She hears George denounce her father as a grafter and breaks off the engagement. George, in his search for gambling evidence, has come upon a fashionable resort where a raid is planned and executed. Among those captured is his girlfriend who has taken up with the “fast society” set involved in the mania for games of chance. Her father sees the light, runs as a reform candidate to clean-up the evils of gambling, and through the energy of Prescott and his paper, the “clean-up” party wins. The grateful politician blesses the reunion of the reporter and his daughter who become betrothed.

In *Convicted for Murder* (1916), reporter Elliot Reynolds covers politics for *The Call* and receives an assignment from Bob Kingdon, the city editor and his closest friend, to investigate charges of graft against the city administration. The problem is that Elliot’s fiancee is the daughter of the man behind the political machine and so the reporter anticipates trouble, but accepts the assignment as a matter of duty. In order to play fair, the reporter tells the corrupt boss that he is investigating him, but the man makes light of the warning because he thinks his future son-in-law won’t press the investigation too hard. He is wrong. The reporter is preparing a major expose and begs the city editor to hold the story until he can explain his position to the political boss. His friend agrees to do that. The reporter visits the political boss and they get into a violent quarrel. A shot rings out and Elliott is standing over a dead body He is arrested and convicted. His fiancee is prostrated and Bob’s efforts to aid Elliott are in vain. It turns out that the political boss had committed suicide and Elliott is cleared and returns to his future wife.

In *Dust* (1916), Frank Kenyon is a muckraking journalist who rails against the deplorable conditions in a factory owned by his sweetheart’s father. He pleads with her to persuade her father to improve working conditions, but she refuses. Frank, as a champion of the working people, is elected to the legislature and gets his bill for better factories passed. A fire breaks out killing its owner, the woman’s father. As a result, she comes to understand the necessity for reform, donates large gifts to charity, renews her engagement to Frank, and vows to help him fight for more reforms.
Crusading journalists in early films were not always presented as heroes. Sometimes the underbelly of crusading reporting was revealed. Unscrupulous, manipulative publishers of sensational newspapers who only wanted money and power used crusading “merely as a bind for their sordid ambitions.” By the time World War I broke out, American cynicism had replaced the turn-of-the-century innocence documented in many a silent film. The crusading journalist still remained a hero, but a slightly tarnished one.

Reporters who commit themselves to an insane asylum to expose conditions was a common plot device in the early silent films, obviously inspired by the Nellie Bly stunt journalism in 1887. In The Cub Reporter (1909), the young man is assigned to an insane asylum and is promptly captured by the inmates before being rescued. In In Again, Out Again (1917), the editor of the Clarion sends his star reporter to investigate conditions in the State Asylum. The star reporter fails and the job is given to a “cub.” The young fellow pretends to be insane and is admitted to the asylum. He falls in love with the warden’s niece, although he deplores the fact she is weak-minded. After a secret inspection of the books, he determines to escape and is pursued by guards to the doors of the newspaper office where his editor protects him. The next day he returns his possessions, all except his heart, which is permanently lost. In The Lost House (1915), a reporter fakes insanity in order to be committed to an asylum so he can rescue an heiress who is being held by her evil uncle.

Reporters would do anything to get a story and most of the time that involved pretending to be someone else. Anything goes when it comes to figuring out how to get the story. In Paid Back (1911), a young reporter disguises himself as a waiter to expose a case of bribery involving a judge, his grandfather, who destroyed his parents because they got married. The reporter promises his mother on her deathbed that he will not rest until the judge is brought to justice. In A Divorce Scandal (1913), Billy, a young newspaper reporter must get a raise to get married. The city editor tells him to secure a certain packet of letters that contain all the details of a divorce action in a prominent society family. He disguises himself as a milkman to get entrance into the house of the society woman. He gets the letters and “at the newspaper office everything is in a rush on the front page and Billy has his raise.”

In The Countess (1914), reporter Richard Hasbrook, played by silent film idol Francis X. Bushman, is an ambitious reporter on the Morning Globe who takes a job as the butler of a countess in order to get an exclusive story. In The Human Octopus (1915), reporter Tom Horton, assigned to investigate graft conditions in the Tenderloin for his newspaper, goes disguised as a tramp, and gives information to police that results in a raid. In Who Violates the Law (1915), Bob Nelson, a young reporter, is assigned by his paper to run down the illegal sale of liquor, disguises himself as an old soldier to get the evidence, is eventually charged with murder and finally exonerated. In Local Color (1917), after the city editor fires him because he lacks local color in his stories, reporter Don Paxon of The Hornet goes undercover as a criminal to join a gang so he can write authentic crime stories. He ends up writing a story with proper local color and saving a woman involved with the criminals by marrying her.

In Billy’s Scoop (1915), reporter Billy of the Daily Hawker gets fired from his job for failing to turn in his copy on time because he was spending more time with his girlfriend than his job. He learns that his former boss is making strenuous efforts to obtain “copy” from the millionaire father of his sweetheart. So he redeems himself when he gets an exclusive interview with his
girlfriend’s millionaire father by disguising himself as a fireman to get past a gardener who has been turning the hose on “the besieging pressmen.” Billy had obtained “a complete fireman’s outfit, which he dons and thus fortified, he storms the citadel. Billy wrestles with the gardener and takes the offending hose away from him. He turns the water on the reporters, the gardener, and finally threatens the millionaire with the hose until he obtains from him the items which go to make one of the biggest scoops of the season. Billy proudly turns his ‘copy’ in to his former boss and is immediately re-engaged. The millionaire learns from his daughter that the daring young pressman who so cleverly held him up and succeeded where so many others had failed, is her lover. After a momentary fit of anger, he sends for Billy. The millionaire looks from the glowing face of his daughter to the expectant Billy, and finally extends his arms to both.”

Closely related to the crusading journalist was the crime reporter, often more of a detective than a journalist. As early as 1912, The Old Reporter presented the journalist as more of a detective than a reporter. In fact, it was often difficult to notice the difference in a mystery film that featured either a reporter or a detective since they both operated in much the same way.

Reviewing a 1916 film, one writer described the reporter this way: “The despised reporter, like all good men of his craft, is something of a detective.” In The Queen of Spades (1912), a reporter infiltrates a suicide club and has to be rescued by his boss and members of the editorial staff. In The Man Trap (1917), reporter John Mull for Steadman’s Chronicle is framed by his crooked managing editor R.H. Steadman and a police inspector and sent to prison after uncovering evidence of graft. He escapes vowing vengeance. Editor Steadman is killed by the police inspector, and John wrings a confession from him and ends up with the woman he loves, the managing editor’s niece.

In The Grim Game (1919), Harvey Hanford, played by the world-famous illusionist Harry Houdini, is a reporter for The Call known for his nerve and daring in gathering news. He agrees to the newspaper scheme to work up a big sensation for the paper by planting evidence for a fake murder of his uncle, implicating himself in order to argue against circumstantial evidence. Three men know of the plan—a lawyer, a physician, and Clifton Allison, owner and publisher of the newspaper. The uncle is really killed and Harvey is arrested for the murder because the three men, including the publisher, killed the uncle and want the reporter to go to jail for the real crime. Harvey then goes through a series of remarkable escapes from handcuffs, chains, and a straightjacket, culminating in a mid-air airplane collision. Finally, he is vindicated and marries the woman he loves, his uncle’s ward. One reviewer pointed out, “Then commences a series of Houdini escapes, the last one being a genuine thrill and the most dangerous of the Handcuff King’s career. While trying to change in midair from one flying machine to another, the two airplanes crash into each other. This, of course, is an accident, but the camera caught it and also the dive to earth of the two machines which followed. None of the actors in the accident were seriously hurt, and The Grim Game is able to show on the screen an escape: that is a thriller of thrillers.”
Historian John Belton of Columbia University explained why the reporter was the perfect character to solve a mystery: “The audience is trying to solve whatever mystery there is, and the reporter is our agent. He has the power to see things and make sense out of them. We identify with him as an ideal ego because he can do more than we can.” William Everson of New York University attributed to the reporter “the individualism, excitement and get-up-and-go of the old-time cowboy. He’s very much on his own and willing to take on the mob to win a point.”

Crime reporters were courageous but often unprincipled. They were expected to hang around with mobsters, bootleggers, underworld criminals large and small, and to solve the mysteries they were assigned. Police reporters were no exception. In *The Blood Stain* (1912), the star reporter solves a case proving an artist is innocent of murder. In *The Man Who Made Good* (1912), an out-of-work reporter captures a burglar single-handedly after a desperate struggle, lands the biggest scoop of the year and a much coveted berth on the staff of a major metropolitan daily. In *The Rise and Fall of Officer 13* (1915), Jack is a reporter who follows his detective bent in assisting the capture of criminals by going out wearing a policeman’s uniform and badge as a disguise. In *The Phantom Shotgun* (1917), reporter Larkins becomes involved in a murder on board a ship, is shot and wounded, but solves the crime. In *Waifs* (1918), a young, poor police reporter rescues a woman who ran away from home because she refused to marry the nephew of her wealthy father’s business partner. The reporter, who is on the trail of a thief who escaped from Sing Sing, saves her and the girl’s father decides the reporter would be an excellent husband. Crime and murder stories grew to dominate silent films. As one reviewer wrote in 1919, *The Woman Under Cover* “does convey a good idea to the spectator of the way in which murder stories upset the general routine of affairs in a newspaper office and the general precedence they take over other events in ordinary times.”

Being a crime reporter occasionally meant that you had a passion for justice and would do anything to capture the criminal, but more often the detective-reporter wanted an exclusive, a scoop that would make his reputation and make him hero not only to the public but to his fellow newspaper journalists. Perhaps the most famous crime reporter could be found in a series of silent films starring Fantômas (Fantomas) beginning in 1913 and still going strong through 1916. His name is Jerome Fandor, a clever reporter for *La Capitale* (*The Capital* in English translation) newspaper, one of the most widely read newspapers in Paris. He is the collaborator of a French inspector in chasing after the master criminal Fantômas, the mysterious lawbreaker in a desperate duel with the authorities. Fandor looks like a Frenchman’s idea of an American reporter—he wears a hat, uses a walking stick, and smokes cigarettes; he has his own informants that he uses to get exclusive stories, uses a gun when necessary, is seen in *La Capitale* editorial offices with other journalists, gets tips by phone, and immediately turns them into stories. The copy desk even asks him to write stories and he files stories regularly. Fandor has a gift for getting into anywhere and he knows almost every secret hiding place in the underworld of Paris, including abandoned quarries and empty houses. Fandor is more of a detective than a reporter, heroic and ready to risk death to do the right thing. In *The Man in Black*, he is left to die on a runaway train, jumping to safety just in time, is attacked by bandits, and trapped in a circle of blazing casks and only escapes by jumping into an empty barrel and letting it roll through the fire into the river. In *The Mysterious Finger Print*, Fandor barely escapes dying in an explosion, is pushed into the sewer waters, and left for dead.
Another popular and famous journalist-detective is another French reporter, Joseph Rouletabille, the star reporter of The Globe. In The Mystery of the Yellow Room (1913, remade in 1919), Rouletabille, a handsome and energetic young journalist, uses pure logic and deductive reasoning to solve one of the first “locked-room” mysteries. In the sequel, The Perfume of the Lady in Black (1914), Rouletabille gets caught up in murder and intrigue while trying to find his long-lost mother.

Journalist Walter Jameson of The Star, a kind of Dr. Watson to popular scientific detective Craig Kennedy, is a quick-fisted partner who is a first-rate newspaperman, Kennedy’s roommate, and the chronicler of his stories. Jameson is featured in three dynamic serials in 1914-1915 (the 14-chapter The Exploits of Elaine and the 10-chapter The New Exploits of Elaine) and another in 1919 (The Carter Case). Jameson and Kennedy end up in one thrilling escapade after another. In one episode, a story written by Jameson plays an important role in the plot. Throughout, Jameson is an interested observer, occasional participant, and second banana to the scientific detective, Kennedy.

One of the most lauded police reporter serials of the silent film era was Grant, Police Reporter (1916-1917), seen in 29 one-reel thrillers with each story complete in itself featuring police reporter Tom Grant of the New York Chronicle. The series was praised by real-life New York police reporters who said many of the episodes were based on real cases. The first episode, The Code Letter, sets the stage for these action thrillers: Grant travels hand over hand on a circular iron pipe suspended between two skyscrapers; he walks along a narrow ledge from one window to another high above the street; and he crawls down a rope to a scaffold only to have the rope cut by the villains. In future films, Grant’s daredevil thrills show off the police reporter as a daring detective who will do anything to capture the crooks and rescue the good guys.

Many serials used reporters as key players in unraveling mysteries over a series of episodes. Sometimes they just show up for one episode and then disappeared. But for the most part, they are the heroes of the popular silent film chapter-plays. In a 23-chapter serial, The Million Dollar Mystery (1914, 1918), reporter Jim Norton, who is no stranger to dress suits and frock coats, does everything possible to get the story and, as with most heroic reporter-detectives, he ends up with the girl. Silent film audiences couldn’t get enough of these daredevil crime reporters whose exploits resulted in an explosion of synonyms for reckless, daring, and fearless.

In the 20-chapter serial, Zudora (aka The Twenty Million Dollar Mystery, 1914-1915), reporter Jim Baird plays a minor role escaping a lynch mob, but by Episode 8, Baird becomes a dashing and inspiring hero. In a 10-part series, Les Vampires (1915-1916), reporter Philippe Guerande is a crack newspaper writer who works for The Paris Chronicle and investigates a bizarre secret society of criminals called The Vampires, a Paris gang that preys on the rich while trying to elude their nemesis. The crusading reporter and his loyal friend and co-worker who is working undercover for The Vampires battle the secret organization. In the 20-chapter serial The Fatal Ring (1917), Reporter Tom Carlton plays a supporting role to the serial queen of silent films, Pearl White. In the second episode, she and the reporter are trapped in a room with closing walls. The reporter tries to pull the lever to stop the walls from closing, but the episode ends with the reporter dropping from exhaustion beside the lever while the walls are starting to crush the adventurers within.
Daredevil reporters weren’t restricted to serials. They showed up in film after film as a hero willing to do anything to get the story and save the heroine. In *Plotters and Papers* (1916), Johnny, a newspaper reporter, fails to get an interview with the key witness in a murder trial. The editor is angry with the reporter when the star reporter comes rushing in and informs the bunch that the woman witness has been kidnapped. The city editor assigns Johnny to find the woman and get her testimony. The reporter is captured by a band of anarchists and sentenced to be tortured to death. He is bound to the torture cylinder, studded with spikes which slowly revolves toward the corner of the room when a secret panel opens and one of the plotters releases Johnny. It turns out he is a secret service agent. Johnny finds the missing witness tied up and held prisoner, thrown on the floor. The reporter discovers a knothole in the floor and whispers into the ear of the witness who gives him the testimony through the knothole. He pokes a pencil through the hole into the teeth of the woman who signs her name in this manner. Johnny escapes, notifies the police, and “makes a flying run to the office. The papers come out with an EXTRA lauding the deeds of Johnny ‘the star reporter,’ and he becomes the lion of the hour.”

Often the investigative journalist risked his life to get a story. Sometimes the reporter was severely beaten up or killed in action when he got too close to solving the crime. In *A Terrible Tragedy* (1916), reporter Emile Scribbler discovers a gang of subversives, but they capture him and imprison him in a box. In a furious ending, the reporter and everyone else is killed. In *One Wonderful Night* (1914), the reporter is killed as he steps from a taxicab by criminals later caught and punished. In *Ill Starred Babbie* (1915), a reporter covers an impending strike in the coal fields. A young, beautiful woman saves the reporter from a beating at the hands of the strikers. He responds by proposing to her, but she refuses and the newspaperman is compelled to flee the town. In *An Inside Tip* (1915), Jack Morrison, a police reporter for *The Herald*, infiltrates a gang of river pirates and when they get wise to him, they plan to drop him, gagged and bound, in the river under cover of darkness. A girl of the underworld dives after him while a gun battle is on and with the aid of one of the policemen she gets him unbound and into the motorboat. After the crooks have been rounded up, Jack’s editor, who has been called to the police station, says he will be responsible for the brave girl who had sold newspapers for a living. But Jack relieves his chief of that responsibility. The reviewer for *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, wrote: “Newspaper reporters continue to live highly sensational lives in pictures, if not in reality.”

Crime reporters dominated silent films, a trend that gained even more momentum in the 1930s and 1940s. They came in all shapes and sizes. In *Within Three Hundred Pages* (1914), Reporter Spider solves a mystery involving a priceless necklace that has been stolen and in the process humiliates the chief of detective in unraveling the mystery and recovering the gems. In *A Woman Scorned* (1914), police reporter Jack Flynn teams up with a detective to capture some robbers. In *Wasted Lives* (1915), Bobbie Sharp, a young newspaper reporter, discovers several clues in finding a killer-robber. In the process, he marries a young heiress. In *The Avenger* (1916), a young reporter helps solve a murder mystery involving a secret Hindu ceremony. In *The Accusing Voice* (1916), Hard Luck O’Hagen, a newspaper reporter known as a “just missed it” reporter, uncovers a celebrated criminal case and secures a big “scoop” for his paper with the help of another reporter, Blanche Palmer. He is congratulated by the editor and his associates and is reinstated to his position. Blanche is promoted to star reporter but she doesn’t hold the job long because O’Hagan, on time for a change, claims her for his bride. In *The Voice in the Night* (1916), an enterprising young reporter on the lookout for “live” copy witnesses a murder and
spends the rest of the film tracking down the guilty man. In *The Man in the Attic* (1915), a reporter proves a girl’s drunken mother did not strangle her miserly benefactor. In *The Mystery of Room 13* (1915), a reporter uncovers the killer of an unscrupulous count. In *The Man in Irons* (1915), the 12th and final episode has a reporter “covering” the Grand Hotel involved in a counterfeiting ring. In *Steve O’Grady’s Chance* (1914), reporter O’Grady loses his job on a New York paper and heads south for work. He ends up in a small town where he chases after a large reward offered for the capture of some bank robbers. He meets a girl who helps him capture the leader of the gang. They get the hidden money and O’Grady then sends the “scoop” to the city paper, is reinstated and marries the girl.111

All reporters, but especially the crime reporter, were interested in “the scoop,” which was, in Will Irwin’s words, the “royal road to prestige, circulation and prosperity.” And city rooms “lived in a state of murderous competition.”112 Adds Good, “The mania to be the fastest to gather the news and the first to report it is enshrined in fiction … There are virtually no limits to what fictional journalists will do to run down their quarry and score a scoop.”113 In *The Judge’s Vindication* (1913), a young reporter clears a judge and wins the girl. The judge’s daughter had appealed to an editor who assigns a reporter to the case. One reviewer pointed out, “He picks pockets, holds up several men and does many things that reporters seldom ever do.”114 In *The Double Room Mystery* (1917), a young newspaper reporter captures an escaped convict who killed his shyster lawyer. He hits him with a bottle, draws his revolver, and then handcuffs him. He then dashes to the police station and to his office to write up his scoop clearing a woman accused of the crime.115 In *The Sketch With the Thumb Print* (1912), a reporter discouraged at lack of news, reads about a great diamond robbery and wishes he were lucky enough to locate the criminal. “The reporter gives his paper a ‘scoop’ which reinstates him in the favor of the city editor and the closing scene shows him in high favor with the artist’s pretty daughter.”116 A reviewer pointed out, “It shows us the newspaper man in wide awake need of a good story and making intelligent use of chance meetings and apparently insignificant happenings that help him eventually to uncover a criminal … The reporter proves himself a good newspaper man and at the same time wins a girl.”117

When a reporter’s relatives and friends get involved in a story, it makes it difficult for the reporter to know quite what to do. In *Society’s Driftwood* (1917), city reporter Tilson Grant is exposing a crooked embezzlement deal when he discovers the man behind it is his brother, a former judge who is now a corporation attorney. He threatens to give the story to the newspapers but before he can, a man the judge sentenced to jail on circumstantial evidence is released, and kills the judge, releasing the reporter from his dilemma.118

Sometimes a reporter was simply portrayed as a decent fellow.119 Occasionally, a reporter made errors because of stupidity or laziness or lack of professionalism in checking out information he is given.120 Some reporters need the love and assistance of a good woman to make a success of themselves.121 Other times, a newspaper reporter would act out of jealousy and anger because he thinks he is being betrayed.122 Sometimes the reporter was a second banana, a friend of the protagonist, who often engaged in mischief.123 More often than not, they just did their job.124

Reporters sometimes try to do the right thing after they do the wrong thing. In *Professor Jeremy’s Experiment* (1916), a reporter discovers that a professor has invented a truth spray. After his story appears, everyone wants to get the professor’s formula and he is so pestered with
requests, he turns to the reporter for help. The reporter writes up the whole affair as a hoax on the public and is accepted as the professor’s son-in-law.\footnote{\textit{The Other Girl} (1915), a reporter on the Times with “a keen sense of humor but a decent sort.”}\footnote{\textit{In The Wolf of the City} (1913), police reporter Mark Haggarty is known as the Wolf of the City because of his savage attacks through the medium of his pen. He gets a scoop on a society man spotted in a car with an adventuress. The man’s suffering wife persuades the reporter not to run the story. He sees bruises that have been made by her husband. The good-natured reporter decides not to print the photo and he refuses to write up the story. The reporter urges the husband to ask his wife’s forgiveness, which he does. Haggarty is fired on the spot by the furious city editor after Haggarty destroys the story and the photo negative. In the final scene, Haggarty shrugs his shoulders and goes out, “the full stature of a free man to face the world unafraid.”} An advertisement in \textit{The Moving Picture World}, emphasizes the reporter: “This is the Reporter with a nose for news, who scandalized a clergymen, shocked his congregation and nearly caused disaster for ‘The Other Girl.”\footnote{In many films, reporters have to choose between their job and what they believe is the right thing to do. Often this means putting their personal interests and future happiness above their duties as a reporter. Sometimes this involves the worst thing a journalist can do: suppress a story rather than publish it. In \textit{The Wolf of the City} (1913), police reporter Mark Haggarty is known as the Wolf of the City because of his savage attacks through the medium of his pen. He gets a scoop on a society man spotted in a car with an adventuress. The man’s suffering wife persuades the reporter not to run the story. He sees bruises that have been made by her husband. The good-natured reporter decides not to print the photo and he refuses to write up the story. The reporter urges the husband to ask his wife’s forgiveness, which he does. Haggarty is fired on the spot by the furious city editor after Haggarty destroys the story and the photo negative. In the final scene, Haggarty shrugs his shoulders and goes out, “the full stature of a free man to face the world unafraid.”}

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In \textit{The Big Boss} (1913), Dick, a young reporter, and his editor plant a dictaphone to catch a boss in an incriminating conversation. The reporter is nearly beaten to death by the boss who discovers the little machine. While Dick is preparing his article for the press, the boss, who has experienced a change of heart, stops the graft and becomes an honest man. Dick, who is in love with the boss’s daughter, flings his graft scandal story into the fire as a wedding gift. In \textit{Double-Crossing the Dean} (1916), a town reporter withholds a story about a dean being caught up in a clandestine affair complete with alcohol so as not to embarrass her or her school. In \textit{No Story} (1917), a reporter concludes that a drama of human souls he has unearthed is too sacred to be profaned and goes into the office saying, “No story.” In \textit{Out of the Wreck} (1917), an editor and a reporter are so moved by a wife’s account of her past life that they decide to bury the story.

Deciding not to publish the story can be traumatic and usually results in the reporter being fired. In \textit{Suppressed News} (1914), star reporter George Garfield discovers by listening at the keyhole, that a bank is on the verge of failure. He sneezes, is discovered, and locked up in an ante-room to prevent the publication of the story. Garfield writes the story, drops his notebook out the window and his girlfriend, the banker’s daughter, carries it to the office of the \textit{Express} where the “scoop” causes a good deal of excitement. Garfield falls asleep and dreams about a number of tragedies that develop because of his “scoop.” He learns that enough currency has been brought into the building to save the bank if there is no publicity in the matter, so he volunteers to go to the newspaper office and suppress the news. He appeals to the managing editor to “kill” the story, but he refuses and the two men quarrel. The editor is seized with a fit and becomes unconscious. Garfield sees an opportunity. Pretending to be the managing editor, he picks up the telephone and orders “that story killed at once” and is obeyed. The bank is saved. Then Garfield stumbles
in and drops into a chair, sobbing, “I have betrayed my profession,” but the banker’s daughter enters and consoles him. He loses his job, but he saved the bank and won the girl.

In *Patterson of the News* (1916), reporter Jack Patterson goes after a crooked banker and the city editor tells him if the banker “is really crooked it will be the biggest story of the year.” Jack goes to the banker’s mansion and pretends to be a federal bank examiner who is willing to take a bribe to look the other way. As the banker pulls out his wallet, Jack throws his card on the table and the banker recognizes the name of the shrewd reporter. Jack pulls out a pistol and declares it is his duty to remove from society a man who endangers the funds of small depositors. As the banker pleads, Jack sees a photograph of the woman he loves on the banker’s desk. The woman suddenly appears, having heard the conversation. Jack tells the banker to make good before exposure comes, “if not for your own sake, then for her.” Under the gaze of his daughter’s eyes, the banker bows his head in shame. The reporter doesn’t file a story, saying, “It’s all in my line of work.” He promises to keep his information to himself provided the banker makes restitution. He has fallen in real love with the daughter and places the engagement ring on her finger as the picture fades out.

At times, a newspaper reporter would put aside his professional ethics to do favors for the woman he loves, friends, or businessmen. In *The Reporter’s Scoop* (1913), reporter Bob Norton sacrifices a “scoop” to help a senator, whose daughter Norton wants to marry, stop a crooked railroad president from blackmailing him. The reporter lands a different kind of a “scoop” when the senator unexpectedly gives his daughter into his keeping. In *The Real Imposter* (1913), a newspaperman distorts news coverage to help a friend from ignominy. In *God’s Man* (1917), a reporter refuses to write up a story of a wild dinner party given by the son of a candidate for Congress because one of his old college chums is involved. He is fired from his position. In *The Beggar King* (1916), a reporter discovers that the man behind a begging graft operation is the father of the woman he loves. He finally writes a note to the editor resigning his position, saying he has not discovered the name of the beggar king. As the reporter leaves their house, gunmen take aim and fire, and the beggar king rushes up shouting a warning to Paul and receives the shot. Fatally wounded, the father confesses and the reporter promises the girl he loves that the secret of her father’s life will never be known. In *The Forbidden Game* (1917), a reporter learns that the brother of the woman he loves is the head of a gang of crooks, but he promises the dying brother that he will never reveal the secret to the man’s sister or anyone else. Loving a woman more than the job, many reporters end up doing anything to not lose the woman or her love. Most real-life journalists were not too sympathetic to their plight.

Sometimes a reporter, seduced by alcohol, would neglect his work. *The Power of the Press* (1914) showed reporters drinking and womanizing and acting in an unprofessional manner. In *The Big Scoop* (1910), the crack reporter on one of the large New York dailies is addicted to alcohol, is fired, and redeems himself by exposing a crooked bank deal. In *The Derelict Reporter* (1911), Bob Finnegan, “a reporter of dissipated and somewhat uncertain character,” is fired when he shows up late and groggy from his night’s spree. He begs and gets one more chance—to cover the governor investigating strike conditions at a quarry. An explosion takes place and the governor is hurt. Finnegan scoops the competition by getting some telegraph linesmen repairing wires to tap in the story to his newspaper. “Returning to the city, he is received by the Managing Editor of his paper with open arms, heartily congratulated and rewarded with a better job and increased salary.”
In *The Woman He Feared* (1916), newspaperman John Gray is a drunkard. When he loses his position on a newspaper because of this, he goes to a sanatorium where his cure is eventually consummated. In *A Case at Law* (1917), reporter Jimmy Baggs has inherited a tendency to drink and loses his job as a reporter because of it. His girl friend persuades him to seek new surroundings in an effort to rid himself of the habit. They elope and go to a small town in Montana where Jimmy gets a position on the paper in Sago City, but the young reporter is unable to keep away from drink. His wife goes to see a doctor who has fought a desire for liquor and can help her husband. A saloon-keeper gets the reporter drunk and when the doctor finds out, he shoots the saloon-keeper who is badly wounded. At the trial, he is acquitted and Jimmy is brought to his senses. One reviewer called the film “one of the strongest pleas ever made for the suppression of the liquor evil.” In *The Night Workers* (1917), a brilliant city star reporter becomes a drunk and is saved from disgrace and a wrecked future by a girl reporter on the same big city daily. In *The Win(k)some Widow* (1914), a minor character is described as a “bibulous reporter,” a journalist who is always under the influence of alcohol.

Sometimes a reporter, seduced by gambling or drugs, would neglect his work. In *His Last Chance*, a reporter neglects his work to play cards with a fast crowd. He is warned to attend more closely to business or else. In *The Chinatown Mystery* (1915), Frank Sloan is the best reporter on the *Daily Metropolitan* and is assigned to solve the mystery of the disappearance of a Chinese slave girl. But the reporter’s nerves become unstrung from overwork and he develops an opium habit. He loses his position on the newspaper and is turned down by the girl to whom he is engaged. While in an opium den, Sloan overhears a man confessing to the murder and ends up solving a big murder mystery in Chinatown. Sloan tells a police captain “that he has located the murderer and will deliver him over to the authorities if the captain will promise to keep the arrest a secret for an hour, in order to allow Sloan to secure a ‘scoop’ for his old paper.” That night, as a last resort to save Sloan and cure him of his habit, his friends resolve to shanghai him aboard a schooner bound for a long voyage. This is done and, after much suffering, Sloan is cured. On his return, he is met by the girl to whom he has been engaged and they are happily reconciled.

Sometimes a reporter succumbs to a lifestyle that is destructive to his career as well as his person or leaves journalism to go off on a series of adventures. In *Piccadilly Jim* (1919), American newspaper reporter James (Jim) Braithwaite Crocker’s madcap escapades in London earn him notoriety and the nickname “Piccadilly Jim.” The reporter decides to reform once he returns to America to see if he can’t make good. In *The Chechako* (1914), journalist Kit Bellow from San Francisco makes a prospecting trip to the Klondike and with his uncle has a series of adventures.

Occasionally, a reporter will use information he gets on the job to make a fast buck. In *The Star Reporter* (1912), Jack has a nest egg of two thousand dollars in a bank reported to be shaky. The editor of Jack’s paper assigns him to look into the matter for the next morning’s edition. Jack gets into the director’s room and hides. He overhears that they will close the bank at 3 o’clock that very day. Jack is discovered and as the bank officials try to detain him, the reporter breaks away and makes a bee-line for the newspaper office with his story. He telephones his wife to go to the bank and withdraw their money. She gets there just in time. As she comes from the bank, Jack’s report is being shouted by the newsboys, announcing the bank’s failure. The reporter and his wife purchase a new home with their savings. In *The Gypsy Trail* (1918), a breezy young Irish reporter is hired to kidnap the woman a man loves because she hints that she would like to
get whisked off and romanced à la caveman methods. The reporter’s dashing manner fascinates the woman, but the Irishman prefers the unencumbered life of a rover and runs off to a gypsy camp. It turns out the reporter is wealthy and has a title and an estate in England.146

Sometimes a reporter was depicted as a villain. In Officer Murray (1912), reporter Joe Slattery is “a perverted, prevaricating reporter on the Evening Times.” Slattery has a grudge against Officer Murray and he gets his paper to print a sensational story filled with the lies resulting in getting the officer fired for cowardice. Later, after an explosion, the officer saves many, including the reporter’s mother. The story of his bravery vindicates him. In The Forbidden Way (1913), a newspaper reporter is secretly a member of a notorious gang and learns that a member of the gang is squealing. He continually gives information he gets as a reporter to the head of the gang, enabling the gangster to escape from police on several occasions. In The Protest (1915), two reporters are paid by gangsters to “cover” a story from a biased point of view. In The Vanity Pool (1918), a newspaper wants to damage the good name of a candidate for governor for political reasons. In The Volcano (1919), journalist Alexis Minski is depicted in anti-Semitic terms as “a radical long-nosed Bolshevik writer...a repulsively erratic sort” who will do anything for his cause including bombing the opposition.147 In Ambition (1915), an unscrupulous journalist deliberately publishes a story ruining a banker who is trying to preserve the savings of hundreds of poor people so he can get a promotion to head his newspaper.148 In Gatans barn (aka Street Children), a young journalist will do anything to ruin the career of a successful magazine journalist, who marries an irresponsible woman and ends up committing suicide.

One of the most vicious journalists is depicted in The Social Secretary (1916). Gossipy Reporter Adam Buzzard (played by the sinister-looking Erich von Stroheim) is on the lookout for juicy scandals. The unscrupulous journalist causes problems for everyone by revealing their secrets in his newspaper society column. He is an early version of a paparazzo, a villainous yellow journalist.149

Worse than a villain, reporters sometimes were depicted as traitors. In The Hero of Submarine D-2 (1916), journalist James Archer is a prominent, unscrupulous spendthrift who is secretly in league with the Ruanian ambassador who is endeavoring to obtain for his country inside information as to the United States’ naval resources. Archer hears of a new battery invention for submarines and informs the Ruanian ambassador, who offers the traitorous journalist almost any sum to secure the plans. While Archer fails at this, the ambassador, who now completely controls Archer, directs him to have a Ruanian merchant ship lay a series of mines in the channel through which the warships must pass. But a brave seaman blows up the mines before this can happen.150

Sometimes reporters went after spies who were trying to do harm to America. In On the Jump (1918), Express reporter Jack Bartlett, an enterprising, patriotic journalist, interviews President Woodrow Wilson on the importance of the Fourth Liberty Loan and returns from Washington D.C. to find that a German agent has taken control of his newspaper. When this new owner-publisher tears up the story, Jack resigns and joins the Liberty Loan campaign.151 In The Ranger (1918), Texas ranger Jim Slater poses as a reporter for The Silver City News to expose editor Carl Werner who is a German spy spreading anti-American propaganda.152 In Unexpected Places (1918), Dick Holloway is a wide-awake cub reporter who disguises himself as a lord from England to expose a group of German spies.153 In Wife or Country (1918), writer Gretchen
Barker, in search of local color, visits a skid row bar where she rescues an alcoholic attorney. They get married without Gretchen informing him that she is a German spy.154

In *Leap to Fame* (1918), a judge sends his son, Charles Trevor, who is just out of college, to New York City to work for *The Clarion* because he wants him to improve himself instead of wasting his life. His first assignment takes him to night court where he sees an accused German spy escape from the courtroom. Trevor saves the daughter of the inventor from spies who are trying to steal a valuable formula for a new invention and scores a scoop for his newspaper. Trevor’s father welcomes his son and new daughter-in-law home. Before all this can happen, the reporter is involved in chases in automobiles, on motorcycles, on horseback, and in motorboats.155

Reporters and editors became such a reliable part of fabric of society that villains and spies would claim they were reporters to get access to valuable material. In *At the Risk of Her Life* (1913), a German spy interviews a contractor to get information and photographs with the pretense of being a reporter. In *Shell Forty-Three* (1916), a German spy masquerades as an American newspaper correspondent. In *Draft 258* (1917), a spy poses as a newspaperwoman. In *The Burden of Proof* (1918), the editor of a Washington newspaper turns out to be a German agent. In *A Romance of the Air* (1918), a German spy impersonates an American war correspondent and plants evidence so an American soldier is condemned to death, but the man is saved through the timely arrival of the real correspondent who reveals the trickery.156

Other times, reporters were tapped by government agencies for special projects or to be special agents.157 Sometimes private investigators or agents pretended to be reporters to get valuable information resulting in the arrest of a thief.158 Whenever anyone wanted to get information quickly and efficiently, he or she would pretend to be a reporter and the audience accepted that premise easily.159

From 1890 to 1930, both newspaper fiction and silent films featuring journalists portrayed journalism in highly contradictory terms. It invited college men into the newsrooms and then ridiculed them for even going to college instead of the school of hard-knocks. It nurtured aspiring young writers, giving them the best practical experience available before it destroyed their initiative, their talent, and their sense of well-being through the rigors, the stress, the constant, often unreasonable deadlines and endless days of being eyewitness to one urban horror after another. In fiction and silent films, “Journalism was a school of practical experience” and also “a cemetery crowded with graves and ghosts.”160 In *The Old Reporter* (1912), Joe Norris, who has worked on *The Star* for 35 years, is fired when a new owner takes over. After a week’s search, he lands a place on another paper as a space writer with very uncertain pay. Joe is sent out to cover a story where he is involved in capturing some art thieves. He rushes off to write his story. The reviewer adds, “A habit of thirty years is not easily broken, and in his enthusiasm over getting the story, Joe unconsciously goes to the *Star* office and to his old desk. When the city editor sees him, and looks over his shoulder at the scoop, he promises Joe to see that the boss takes him back, for he has done what none of the new regime could accomplish.”161 In *The Tramp Reporter* (1913), a young reporter sacrifices his career so that an old newspaperman might be reinstated.162
Newspaper journalists, tired of being in a profession that gave them no respect or status, always seemed to strive for a better life, usually by writing a play for Broadway or a movie for Hollywood or a novel or book. In *The Cycle of Adversity* (1914), a journalist works at a linotype machine in a newspaper office by day and writes his play by night. Worn out by the strenuous labor, he falls asleep over the completed manuscript and is late for work. He is fired. In a fight over his girlfriend, he is knocked over the head, rendered unconscious, and is removed to a hospital for an operation. In the meantime, his play is a great success. The journalist-playwright is reunited with his sweetheart and together they watch the play. In *A Modern Free-Lance* (1914), a young reporter tries to hold down his reporting job while writing a play and loving a girl at the same time. Since he is writing a play when he should be at work, he loses his job and nearly his girl, and in an almost starving condition he finishes his play, but is injured while trying to help his girl. In the meantime, his play is accepted and makes a great sensation, but the theatrical office lost his address and he doesn’t know this until he reads in the newspaper that the play is a hit and he has several hundred dollars coming in as royalties. He grabs the money and the girl and is a happy ex-reporter.

In *The Failure* (1915), reporter Tom Warder exposes a theatrical scheme that leads girls who want to become stars astray. Disgraced, the manager sends Tom a note threatening to kill him and leaves town. Tom marries and has a child. Years later, the corrupt manager steals the newspaperman’s play and plants evidence on Tom who is sent to the penitentiary. Tom’s baby dies of malnutrition. He learns his wife is ill, so he escapes prison only to find her dead when he arrives home. Tom tricks the theatrical manager to come to a café and slips a bottle of poison in his pocket after drinking half of it. Dying, Tom tells police that the manager killed him and produces the threatening letter as proof. In *Back to the Woods* (1918), newspaperman Jimmy Raymond wants to be a novelist. The daughter of a rich lumber merchant conceals her identity and is lured to Raymond’s cabin where she is led to believe that he means to assault her, only to find out that she is being used as a model for a character in his novel.

In *Framing Framers* (1918), reporter Gordon Travis is an ambitious reporter who, like many screen journalists, aspires to being a novelist. He is anxious to write one exposing the graft system in vogue among political powers. In *A Daughter of the Poor* (1917), a journalist is a socialist who believes that the rich are evil and writes a book attacking the evils of capitalism. His opinions change about the rich when his book results in a fat royalty check, which enables him to marry the woman he loves.

Other times, a journalist plays a minor character instantly recognized by the audience because of his contacts and access to various levels of society. In *The Phoenix* (1910), a young reporter rescues the heroine from drowning in the icy waters of a lake and then from a burning building. In *The Social Pirates: Chapter 14: The Music Swindlers and Chapter 15: Black Magic* (1916), reporter Grant comes to the aid of two women who finally tire of being taken advantage of by men, and vow that they will stop these cads from preying on helpless young girls. Reporter Brandon shows up in several episodes of *The Strange Case of Mary Page* (1916) including *Episode Three: The Web*, in which he gives testimony in a controversial trial involving Mary Page. In *Where Love Leads* (1916), a reporter rescues two girls, the daughters of a woman who was his former sweetheart. All ends happily when the two are reconciled through the efforts of her daughters. In *The Finish* (1917), a reporter is summoned by a jealous husband who gives him a front-page story of his wife’s perfidy with a wealthy young clubman. It turns out it is just a moving picture being filmed. In *Hashimura Togo* (1917), an American reporter comes to the aid
of the hero and an American heroine by proving the villain’s duplicity—the villain appropriated all of a girl’s deceased father’s funds and now promises to save the family from financial ruin if the girl marries him. The marriage is stopped and in the process the hero’s name is cleared and he can return home to his sweetheart in Japan.

In *Fair Company* (1918), a reporter is assigned to write a story about the tearing down of an old house once owned by an arctic explorer’s family. The two discover, concealed in the wall, a confession by the man’s ancestor that he was a pirate, a discovery that changes the man’s life. In *A Modern Musketeer* (1918), a reporter shows up briefly to warn the hero that the man he is in conflict with is the richest man in Yonkers who has three wives hidden away. In *Winner Takes All* (1918), a hired gunman goes to the hero’s cabin to shoot him so he can collect his fee, but instead shoots a reporter who is standing in the door of the cabin. In *The Woman of Lies* (1919), a burglar who has reformed and becomes a newspaper reporter marries a girl previously wronged by a man she loved, starting her off on a campaign of vengeance. In *The Woman Under Oath* (1919), a newspaper reporter is the sole member of the press covering a case in the New York criminal court. He sends a drawing of the first female juror in New York to his paper as a “scoop.”

Reporters became such familiar characters that they became ripe for satire. *Mutt and Jeff as Reporters* (1911) put the two popular comic figures in the daily newspaper newsroom with Jeff mingling with the well-to-do, turning in a “dandy scoop” and being rewarded with “an enormous salary.” Mutt ends up with “low-brow chaps” to “unearth foul doings of the denizens of the underworld.” He is beaten up and gets fired in the process. In *Bunny a s a Reporter* (1913), a popular comic John Bunny disguises himself as a woman to get into a suffragette meeting so he can prove to an editor he deserves a job as a reporter on the newspaper. In *Cutey Tries Reporting* (1913), Cutey works for a country paper and is courting the editor’s daughter. The editor tells him that unless he brings in some live news, he will be fired and not allowed to call on the editor’s daughter. He decides it is up to him to manufacture some “live stuff.” He robs a country bank, then claims the reward for recovering the money. The editor is still not satisfied. So Cutey manufactures a bomb, throws it into a grocery store, and then saves the day. He is greeted as a hero. The editor’s young son exposes Cutey’s adventures, but the angry editor is impressed with Cutey’s inventive turn of mind and offers him another chance.

In *Nabbed* (1915), two reporters act as comic relief after a new chief of police orders a red light district closed. In *Potts Bungles Again* (1916), Eddie, a local newspaper reporter, is told by his managing editor to write a story on a police woman who has been appointed the first police woman on the force in the history of the city. It turns out Eddie has been going with the woman for some time, but is not aware she is connected with the police department. In *Bad News* (1918), a reporter photographs a cop flirting with a girl and publishes the picture, but the girl happens to be a daughter of the newspaper publisher. In *Bill’s Baby* (1918), a fat, baldheaded, jovial newspaper reporter named Bill (and played by “Smiling Bill” Parsons, a well-known comic at the time) “borrows” a baby to carry off the first prize in a neighborhood baby show. Bill is assigned by the city editor of his paper to write a story about the baby show. A photographer who works with Bill and is a disgruntled suitor for the hand of the reporter’s fiancée, snaps a picture of the baby and her proud mother and “father.” “The complications this causes when the picture gets into the paper are many including Bill all but losing his lady love to say nothing of his life.” In *The Bullshevicks* (1919), two newspaper reporters, Eddie and Lee (the real names
of two popular vaudeville comics, Eddie Lyons and Lee Moran), for the *Morning Guess* are assigned to interview a Russian countess. While waiting for her, the two boys smoke some cigarettes they find. A series of wild incidents ensue when the beautiful countess mistakenly believes the reporters are Bolshevik assassins. Eddie and Lee, who commit all sorts of crimes, wake up to discover it was all an hallucination—the cigarettes were doped.\(^{173}\)

Mistaken identity in which the reporter bears a striking resemble to a royal personage seemed to amuse audiences of the day. In *His Highness, the Prince* (1914), a journalist is a look-alike to a prince and for a day enjoys being mistaken for royalty. In *A Dangerous Double* (1917), a young newspaperman finds himself mistaken for the prince of a small European country. He is then caught up in a web of spies, mistaken identity, kidnapping, conspirators, and court intrigue.

Sometimes a silent film was based upon a famous case that Americans had become acquainted with through the newspapers. The film brought to life the headline case. *The Caillaux Case* (1918) is one such film. A reporter marries a woman who later divorces him to marry the Minister of France, causing the reporter to commit suicide. Then his editor, Gaston Calmette of *Le Figaro* learns that the woman’s new husband is involved in a political conspiracy, but she kills the editor before he can expose the plot. Eventually the conspiracy is uncovered and the spies are caught.\(^{174}\)

Occasionally, real-life journalists showed up in silent films.\(^{175}\) *Pathe News Weekly Man* (1916) is a profile of the Pathe News man—reporter, cameraman, booster, student, and everything that a news weekly man must be to get the stuff for the film newspaper. He arrives home from Mexico, stays home long enough to get a pair of shoe laces and a can of film, then hurries off to shoot the big dam break back of San Diego, which swept hundreds of farmhouses away and did other damage.\(^{176}\) In *Lovely Mary* (1916), five reporters from New York newspapers make their screen debut seated at a table reporting the trial. In *What Doris Did* (1916), five newspapermen play reporters in the film. A tongue-in-cheek article, “What Ruby Did” in *The Moving Picture World* related how the five reporters became actors in the film.\(^{177}\)

**War Correspondents**

The reporter was always a natural candidate for exotic adventure yarns.\(^{178}\) So, sending the reporter to war as a correspondent, especially with World War One just around the corner, made perfect sense to filmmakers who were always looking for an untarnished hero. As early as 1898, a very short film shows about a dozen war correspondents from different New York newspapers rushing to a cable office to file their stories (*War Correspondents*, 1898).\(^{179}\) Often a war correspondent was thrown into a film as a minor character without explanation since the silent film audiences were well acquainted with what war correspondents did.\(^{180}\)

War correspondents gave silent film makers a chance to explore and exploit exotic locations. They showed up in Mexico (*The War Extra*, 1914; *The Romance of the Mexican Revolution*, 1914; *War Correspondents*, 1917), Italy (*War Correspondents*, 1913), Africa (*Stanley in Darkest Africa*, 1915), the Philippines (*Across the Pacific*, 1914), Central America (*The War Correspondent*, 1913), Turkey (*War Correspondents*, 1913), Cuba (*The War Correspondent*, 1913), France (*A Soldier’s Oath*, 1915), Russia (*The Yellow Ticket*, 1918), Britain (*Her Double Life*, 1916), and Belgium (*The Siege of Liege*, 1914).
By 1913, war correspondents\textsuperscript{181} began showing up in one film after another,\textsuperscript{182} an indication that war in Europe might become a real possibility. Journalists were shown covering major world events before wars had started. In \textit{The Yellow Ticket} (1918), American journalist Julian Rolfe writes a series of articles attacking Russia of crimes the state perpetrates on its citizens. His source is a young Jewish girl in Czarist Russia, whose mother has been killed in a massacre and who is forced to degrade herself in order to visit an ill father by obtaining a yellow passport, a badge of dishonor worn by prostitutes and frequently given to young Jewish women by police. The journalist and the girl are captured by the secret police and the girl ends up killing the sinister head of police to save her honor. The journalist secures their release by threatening to create an international scandal, leaving the two free to plan a secure future in America.\textsuperscript{183} On the \textit{Jump} (1918) showed journalists fighting enemy agents, a recurring theme every time the United States was involved in a war, hot or cold.

The same rules applied to war correspondents as they did to reporters: get the story at all costs and “the climatic race to get a big story provided a perfect structural device for the silent era.”\textsuperscript{184} Sometimes the war correspondent was just thrown into the plot to give the war film credibility. A bizarre example is \textit{The War Dog} (1914), in which a war correspondent covers the war with his dog.

War correspondents were among the most heroic of all the journalists. In \textit{Every Inch a King} (1914), Walton, an American war correspondent, rescues a woman held captive by an evil queen and summons U.S. marines to stop a fight between two kingdoms. In \textit{A Christian Slave} (1912), a young newspaper war correspondent is captured, receives a sheik’s hospitality, falls in love with a Christian slave, escapes, and brings back Italian troops to rescue her. In \textit{A Mexican Mine Fraud; or The Game That Failed} (1914), war correspondent George Ferguson of the \textit{Daily Truth}, falls in love with the daughter of a banker who has been selling stock in a Mexican gold mine scheme. His editor informs him of the banker’s fraudulent stock scheme and tells him to hurry to Mexico to make a thorough investigation. After a series of daring adventures—escaping from a cage of 10 lions and a raging fire—Ferguson makes a miraculous escape and writes an article denouncing the fraudulent gold mine proposition in glowing headlines.\textsuperscript{186}

War correspondents were often reckless, devil-may-care journalists who lived a rough and unorthodox lifestyle, even for a reporter. In \textit{The Galloper} (1915), written by the famous real-life war correspondent Richard Harding Davis, a divorced war correspondent known as “The Galloper” divides his time between dodging alimony-hunting divorced wives and various creditors. When the war between Turkey and Greece breaks out, Kirke Warren, a famous war correspondent who uses the \textit{nom-de-plume} “The Galloper,” leaves for Athens to escape his creditors. When his ex-wives’ demands for alimony become pressing, he lends his identity to a young American millionaire who needs a journalist’s identity to be near his girlfriend, a Red Cross nurse, at the front. At the end, the war correspondent is reunited with his former wife.\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Paddy O’Hara} (1917), the star reporter on the London \textit{Blade}, is dispatched to cover the war between two Balkan principalities. With spies hot on his trail, Paddy saves a count’s niece from the conquerors, marries her, and after many adventures, they escape to safety. But as Paddy is wiring the story to the \textit{Blade}, his new bride is whisked away in a plane by emissaries of the enemy. Paddy returns to London and is offered a large bribe in return for the annulment of his marriage. An enraged Paddy says he will never give up the wife he loves. Overhearing his remarks, the woman comes out of hiding and proclaims her love for her husband. She “has
learned to love the gallant Irishman during the stormy days of battle and flight, and convinces
him that the hurried wedding in the Balkans will stand good for all time.”

In *A Romance of the Mexican Revolution* (1914), a reporter is sent by his New York newspaper to cover the Mexican war, falls in love with the daughter of an estate owner who he asks to report back to him the activities of a rebel spy, tries to interview Pancho Villa, saves the woman he loves from being killed, and ends up giving up journalism to manage the estate and marry the estate owner’s daughter.

When all else failed, a cub reporter was sent as a war correspondent. In *The War Extra* (1914), Fred Newton, an ambitious cub reporter for the *Herald*, begs his editor to send him to Mexico to cover the Mexican War. The editor, desperate for news, tells the cub to get real news and send it to the newspaper regardless of the censors. He is attacked by outlaws after rescuing a woman and gets an exclusive on a battle, wiring the important news directly to the paper. One reviewer added, “At the *Herald* office all of the machinery of the issuing of a great daily paper is set in motion as the news of the battle is received from Fred. The story is edited at the copy desk, set up by linotypes, made up in the forms, and stereotyped and placed on the presses. As the papers are distributed and the bulletin boards announce the scoop of the ‘young reporter on the firing line,’ Fred’s future as a newspaper man is assured.”

Female war correspondents were sometimes featured in silent films. In *The Grip of Evil: Episode Eleven: Mammon and Moloch* (1916), Madge Kerr is sent to the war front in Mexico as a newspaper correspondent. She is captured by a bandit chief and rescued.

Some war correspondents are depicted as cowards or drunks, saved by the compassion of a fellow reporter they usually wronged. In *The Crucial Test* (1911), Charles Channing “was a reporter from the ground up: a writer who could catch the public and hold it.” He is sent to Santiago as a war correspondent, but when he doesn’t send any startling news back because there was nothing to send, he is fired and stranded in Cuba without a job or money. His replacement, J.R. Keating, has nothing to do so he starts drinking heavily while Channing grows weaker, broke and hungry sleeping on the docks. Keating arranges for a tug to visit the American fleet and arrives just in time for the momentous Battle of Santiago. Channing, who secured a job on the tug, finds Keating drunk and almost insensible as the Spanish war fleet is shattered, broken and sunk. Channing writes the story of the victory, rushes to the telegraph office, and files a sensational scoop—in the name of the man who replaced him.

In a review, the writer pointed out that the film is “instructive as showing something of how a war correspondent does his work.”

In *The War Correspondent* (1913), two reporters have a falling out over a young lady. Martin, the star reporter, gets Jack Fisher fired and he leaves for Central America looking for new opportunities. Martin is sent to the same place as a war correspondent. He ends up a drunk and when a decisive battle occurs, he lies in a stupor at a tavern. Jack happens into the room and seeing the condition of the war correspondent, takes his credentials and hastens to the front. When the defeated army retreats, Jack sends a full dispatch to his paper. Just as he finishes the story, the office is stormed by insurrectionists and he is led away a prisoner. Martin is given full credit for “the scoop” and as peace has been arranged, he is ordered back to America. While the real hero languishes in a disreputable prison, Martin steadfastly keeps his secret. After six months, Jack manages to escape and seeks protection of the United States Consul using Martin’s
credentials. Martin is forced to confess. Back in America, Jack wins the hand of the woman in the office and secures the position made vacant by Martin’s dismissal.\textsuperscript{192}

Other war correspondents battle a rival to win the hand of the woman they love, showing heroic actions in the process. In \textit{In Love and War} (1913), a journalist and a lawyer are in love with the same girl. When war comes, the journalist is rejected as a soldier because of a deformity to his hand while the lawyer goes to war. The disillusioned journalist becomes a war correspondent and ignores all efforts of safety as he covers the details of battle in masterful style, the horrors of wartime strife being read by the girl back home. The journalist is covering the lawyer’s unit in battle when he sees the lawyer break from his command and seek safety in cowardly flight. The journalist catches the lawyer’s mount, rallies the disorganized company into a furious charge and succeeds in driving back the opposition and regaining the valuable position. The lawyer, who crawled away in hiding, sees the turn and rejoins his men. The journalist has received a severe wound in his deformed arm, but he refuses surgical attention until he finishes the story of the battle—a story of heroism wherein he tells of the lawyer and his fighting men turning the tide of battle into a victory. As the last line is dashed off, the journalist reels and falls. His mangled arm is amputated and he lies in stupor while back home the local papers ring with the valorous generalship of the lawyer and his heroic company. The girl welcomes the lawyer home while “in his silent room, bowed down in grief is the journalist who ‘knows’ the stump of an arm forever bars him from the love for which his soul yearns. The lawyer’s conscience revolts and he confesses all, then seeks out the sorrow-stricken journalist and tells him where there awaits a girl who knows all and who is tearfully watching to welcome the man who gave up his arm for another’s cause.”\textsuperscript{193}

In \textit{The Man Who Saved the Day} (1917), journalist John King is one of two suitors for a girl’s hand. He has an accident and loses the use of an arm. War is declared but John is rejected because of his arm. The girl does not know that he has been rejected for physical reasons and denies herself to him. John tries in every way to get to the front and at last succeeds in being sent as a war correspondent. One day his heroism is instrumental in saving the Union army from defeat. In writing the story for his paper, he gives the credit to another soldier, who was his rival for the girl’s love, in the hopes of making the woman happy. At the end of the war, the soldier can no longer accept the praise which he did not earn. He confesses it was John and not himself who saved the regiment from disaster. John is then declared the real hero and marries the girl.\textsuperscript{194}

Rival war correspondents stop at nothing to get that exclusive story. In \textit{The War Correspondents} (1913), rival war correspondents try to get news of the Turkish-Bulgarian battles. Bretton has official papers and his rival, Clark, steals them when Bretton falls from a precipice while observing the battle. Without his papers, Bretton is arrested as a spy, but assisted by a peasant girl who aids him in scooping his rival. In the climax, the rival reporter tries to stop the girl from getting yet another scoop by blowing up a train, but she leaps from it before the explosion. The girl, after being wounded and captured by the Turks, escapes from a hospital mosque and then saves Bretton, whose plane has crashed, from being burned to death. Again, she helps Bretton file a story ahead of Clark. She returns home with him as his wife. They are congratulated warmly on their work by the newspaper’s publisher. They meet Clark, their former enemy, and all differences are ended in a warm handshake and the declaration that “all is fair in war and love.”\textsuperscript{195}
War correspondents were often played for laughs, the audience giggling through what could have been a serious war battle. In *The Battle of Chili Con Carne* (1916), a reporter on the *Bugle*, who learned journalism in correspondence school, is sent to cover the Mexican War, but a secret document that he hopes contains the story of the century turns out to be a new recipe for chili con carne. In *When Eddie Went to the Front* (1914), a cub society reporter is sent to cover the Mexican War as a war correspondent for his paper. He meets all sorts of adventures, falls in love, falls out again, and barely escapes with his life, deciding that a society column is good enough for him. In *War Correspondents* (1917), A. Pokes and Jabbs are sent to the Mexican border to get news for a sensational daily newspaper, but things are quiet and news is scarce. A telegram telling them to send in some thrilling news items or quit arouses them to action.

One of the more bizarre tributes to the war correspondent occurs in a 1916 cartoon, *Nosey Ned*. A war correspondent transforms himself into a bean to get past the authorities. Searching for Pancho Villa in Mexico, Nosey Ned is barred by the authorities. After the transformation, Ned takes his place in a bag of beans and distinguishes himself by lassoing William Jennings Bryan on a Mexican desert.

In rare instances, the war correspondent was depicted as a traitor. In *The Stolen Wireless* (1909), the war correspondent steals a dispatch, accuses a soldier of treason, and gives the information to the enemy before he is killed. In *A Soldier’s Oath* (1915), a war correspondent is a corrupt journalist who steals jewels given to a soldier by a dying count, then kills the count’s wife and later poses as a count to seduce his daughter. The war correspondent is exposed and sent to prison. In *Her Double Life* (1916), a war correspondent meets a Red Cross nurse at the front and tries to have his way with her but she is saved when the hospital tent is bombed. To get away from him, she takes the identity of a dead girl and runs away.

Real-life war correspondents were featured in newsreels and weekly features. An example is *With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia* (1919), featuring the popular war correspondent personality Lowell Thomas, who traveled with his silent films giving lectures around the world on what he had seen and heard. A seven-chapter serial, *Stanley in Darkest Africa* (1915) chronicles the search for Dr. Livingstone by Correspondent Henry Morton Stanley of the New York *Herald*. Most everything in the serial is made-up. The Stanley party first tries to rescue the sweetheart of Jack Wilson, another reporter who is a member of the expedition, from the Slave Traders into whose hands she has fallen. One adventure follows another in this chapter-play based on a real-life war correspondent hero.

**Female Reporters**

All of the stereotypes of female reporters were also created in 19th century fiction and mirrored in the silent films that followed. Historian Donna Born’s pioneering study of the image of the woman journalist reveals that the female journalist is “single and young, attractive, independent, reliable, courageous, competent, curious, determined, economically self-supporting, professional and compassionate. She is most often a reporter assigned to write stories about society, human interest, corruption and crime.” But adds Born, “Reflecting the contemporary cultural attitude, she still seeks her ultimate self-fulfillment and happiness in marriage, despite the pleasure and happiness that she clearly finds in her work as a journalist.”
In the earliest journalism films, “at a time when women were still fighting for the right to vote, journalism was one of the few professions depicted on the screen where women were able to have a career outside the home” writes film historian Ness. “The early films in particular seem to have been influenced by the exploits, real or fictionalized, of journalists such as Nellie Bly, and provided opportunities for the heroine to be put in precarious positions from which to be rescued in the nick of time. While the women reporters often were depicted as somewhat less worldly than their male counterparts and usually opted to give up their careers for marriage at the fade-out, these films at least provided an alternative to the roles of homemakers and waifs to which actresses of the period were largely relegated. The melodramatic nature of many of the silent films and the emphasis on romantic triangles placed a greater emphasis on the home life of the journalist than was evident in works of later decades with the profession often serving merely to provide character background.”

The professional woman of the period was usually educated, single, and middle or upper class. One historian writes of the successful real-life female journalist of the 1890s: “In the world of modern wild-cat journalism the woman reporter lasts about four years. She brings her education, her personal attractions, her youth, her illusions, her energy, her ambition, and her enthusiasm to the encounter, and the first year she rises rapidly. The second and third years she enjoys the zenith of her popularity; with the fourth year she begins the descent, lingers about the horizon for a time, and then she disappears from view. There is no vocation into which women have entered where disillusions materialize so rapidly as they do in journalism.” Most women quit their jobs when they married, and found fulfillment as a woman by being a wife and mother.

Historian Frank Mott writes that “women flocked into newspaper work in the eighties.” By 1886, 500 females worked regularly on American newspapers. Two years later, there were 200 women working on New York newspapers alone. By 1900, bylines for women were more common than for men. The 1900 census recorded 2,193 women in journalism, 7.3 percent of the profession. Few women worked as reporters in a newsroom. Many worked at home writing columns or articles thought to be primarily of interest to women. Some were true “sob sisters” writing sentimental stories. Others were more adventurous, undertaking muckraking exposes.

Not much early fiction featured newswomen. Before 1880, there were few newspaperwomen and only about five novels written about them. During the last 20 years of the 19th century, there were no more than 10 novels written about women journalists and few of those chronicled women working as printers, freelance contributors, book reviewers, columnists, travel and fashion writers, crime reporters, and editors. Historian Donna Born writes that the woman journalist in fiction at the turn of the century is “single and young, attractive, independent, reliable, courageous, competent, curious, determined, economically self-supporting, professional and compassionate.”

Most female journalists in fiction ended up in marriages or disillusioned, or both. Critics of the time conceded that most of the novels written about journalism were written by men and women “who have worked in newspaper offices at one time or another.” Because of this, they could not understand why few revealed the “journalistic sphere in its true light.” Most deplored the “fiction type of women particularly,” since women “hardly can be said to flock into newspaper offices.”
Hollywood’s female reporters, as one newspaperman put it, “did more glamorous work than most of those who toiled on real papers. Too often, young female reporters, even on big city papers have been confined to covering ‘social’ news, ‘women's page’ features, and the like. There have been notable exceptions ... but for every widely known female reporter who gets to cover top stories there have undoubtedly been thousands who spent most of their working lives at weddings, social events, interviewing outstanding mothers, listening to luncheon-club lecturers or otherwise helping to fill those pages that editors know their female readers turn to habitually.”

Even before the movies could talk, it became clear that female reporters were perfect for film. Motion pictures offered the meatiest roles for female actors and created the perfect battleground of the sexes: the underrated girl reporter could prove she was as capable as the male, and the boy reporter could gloat that no girl could possibly keep pace with him. The sob sister became a popular newspaper heroine.

By the early 20th century, the metropolitan newspaperwoman was one of the most recognizable popular images of the woman writer in America. More likely than her male counterparts to be pictured along with her stories, the newspaperwoman was a conspicuous anomaly, hard to ignore even by those who wished she would go away. A reviewer of a 1915 film wrote, “The opening of the story would lead one to suppose that it has been designed to champion the cause of woman in the world of journalism, showing the difficulties which she meets in combating the masculine opinion that a woman is incapable of performing man’s work in that field. It simmers down, however, to the usual love story.”

The female journalist was such a popular figure that one of the first pre-silent films featured the adventures of a female reporter (Miss Jerry, 1894) in a picture-play in which still pictures and a written narrative set the stage for things to come. Geraldine (Jerry) Holbrook shows up at the office of the New York Daily Dynamo having made up her mind to do something on her own. She meets a young city editor, Hamilton, and they eventually fall in love. But that first meeting is typical of the male editor-female reporter relationship with the editor’s “severe repose” and “judicial air” greeting Jerry’s clumsy attempt to explain to him why she wants to be a newspaper writer.

Time for Press (1911) touched all the buttons of the early newspaper film. A rancher’s daughter, Edith Gates, wants to be a newspaperwoman but is turned down by one editor after another. When she is insulted by the star reporter of The Blade, cub reporter Jack Burton comes to her assistance and is fired for his gallantry. Jack gets a job on The Express, the deadly enemy of The Blade. The two reporters end up covering the same train holdup. The Blade reporter tricks Jack by pretending to be injured, then knocking him out. Jack staggers to a nearby ranch where he is surprised to see Edith there. “When the plucky little woman learns the particulars, she is anxious to outwit the man who has insulted her and offers to ride with the story to the nearest wire. In the race that ensues, she wins, and gets her story into the office of The Express just as that ink-spattered martinet, the pressmen, declares finally that the paper is ‘going to bed.’” Jack recovers and “a romance matures which finally finds its way into print via the ‘Wedding Column.’”
The life and times of the fictional female reporter is beautifully documented in a 1914, 12-chapter serial, *The Active Life of Dolly of the Dailies.* Dolly Desmond comes to New York without any previous experience to become a newspaperwoman. Manhattan opportunities prove few for a young woman on her own. Dolly ghostwrites a gossip column, publishes a comic poem or two, and even models dresses in a store until sexual harassment from the owner forces her to quit that job. By Episode 4, Dolly gets her first scoop by impersonating a Reform League member to uncover a slumlord’s attempted bribe. By Episode 5, Dolly has become a fearless reporter in the New York City newspaper world and the only woman seen working in the offices of her daily paper, *The New York Comet.* She rescues a kidnapped heiress, escapes a Chinatown tong gang, survives a fire and contrives to keep the story from both the police and the heiress’s family until she can publish her scoop—and all in one reel. By Episode 6, she has become a star reporter for *The Comet.* One narrative thread shows the evolution of a new managing editor named James Malone from condescension toward Dolly’s abilities to devoted admiration. She also gets a story but refuses to write it because it concerns old friends of her. The editor is wildly indignant at first, until she calmly explained she knew perfectly well what she was doing. In Episode 7, she foils anarchist bombers and is nearly blown to bits. In Episode 8, she rescues a male reporter from the Italian American Mafia. He is so grateful he proposes marriage but Dolly “wasn’t quite ready to give up her adventurous life.” By the end of the series, the managing editor becomes ill and Dolly takes over as editor. But personal problems—her father’s bank is on the verge of ruin—forces her to return home to help her father save his bank. In the final episode, editor Malone comes to town to propose marriage “and that is how we leave Dolly, with one career behind her and another and far finer one ahead.”

Just like their male counterparts, female reporters in serials were daredevil, courageous heroes who risked everything to get a story and save the day. In 1915, a 22-chapter series, *The Broken Coin* features San Francisco newspaperwoman Kitty Gray, who finds in a broken coin, inspiration for a great story, but the individual parts are valueless until joined together so the Latin inscription giving the location of hidden treasures may be read. A count and a king hold the other pieces. She is a brave and adventurous reporter who, in one instance, jumps from a window and is caught by a count, hanging from the fire escape by his knees (Episode 3). Kitty is held by knifepoint in Episode 4, is handled roughly by two captors (Episode 5), is held by Apaches and escapes on horseback, and as Episode 6 ends, the barrel of a gun is pointing at her and she sees a man’s hand slowly taking careful aim at her head. Kitty is kidnapped in Episode 7 and is hit in the head by a small stone that has a note wrapped around it: “Better write a fake story for your paper and return to America. Give up the coins and you will gain your freedom; refuse and you will fare badly.” She escapes by climbing down a rope. In the final episode, Kitty and the count put the coin together in the torture chamber of the palace and locate the missing treasure. He then lays claim to the throne and Kitty’s heart. “Kitty telegraphs back to the managing editor in the newspaper office at Los Angeles: ‘Lost my bet, but won a husband.’” It is signed: “Kitty, Queen of Gretzhoffen.”

In the 18-episode serial, *The Midnight Man* (1919), reporter Nell Morgan is the intrepid newspaperwoman who enjoys personally solving baffling mysteries. In one daredevil stunt after another, Nell helps capture a gang of villains and marries the hero. In the process, she is captured, beaten up, single-handedly holds off the gang with a revolver, escapes a burning cabin, survives one cliff-hanger after another, and repeatedly saves the hero from death. In the
15-chapter serial, *Hands Up!* (1918), New York journalist Echo Delane finds trouble aplenty when an Inca tribe believes her to be the reincarnation of a long-lost princess. She is captured by Indians, narrowly escaping death; she throws renegades off a box car of a rapidly moving train; falls from a high embankment into the waters below; escapes from a runaway stage coach; escapes death after being tied to her horse; is rescued from a den of lions; and is finally set free when a bolt from heaven sets fire to the sunworshippers’ temple and destroys it.\(^{224}\)

In the serial *The Fatal Fortune* (1919), newspaperwoman Helen travels to a South Seas island to search for buried treasure.\(^{225}\) In the 19-chapter serial *The Lion Man*, in which only the first chapter was released in 1919 with the rest in 1920, reporter Stella Donovan is a newspaper girl sent out to cover a society circus being given by a millionaire where reporters are not allowed, but Stella contrives to assume the role of a lady performer. In Episode One, she even carries out the wire-walking act of the performer she is impersonating.\(^{226}\) In the 15-chapter serial, *The Neglected Wife* (1917), Margaret Warner is a beautiful, young girl striving to succeed as a magazine writer. After a series of adventures, she marries her editor.\(^{227}\)

One of the most realistic portrayals of the girl reporter in the silent film era was in the 15-episode *Perils of Our Girl Reporters* (1916-1917), billed as “newspaper life as it really is. Real stories of the thrills of newspaperdom. The editor tells the girl reporter to ‘Get the Story!’ She always gets it. But few of us realize the exciting events connected with the securing of the news of the day. HOW it is secured forms the basis of this snappy and unique serial.” Another advertisement added, “Female journalists expose crooks and capture counterfeits. It pictures newspaper life from the ‘inside.’ It depicts the trials and tribulations encountered by reporters in securing front page news.”\(^{228}\) Articles praised the fact that the author of the stories was Edith Sessions Tupper, “one of the most active and well-known newspaper women in the United States.” “Her intimate acquaintance with newspaper women and the interior policies of newspaper offices, has qualified her to place before the motion picture public some of the most thrilling episodes in the lives of girl reporters on metropolitan newspapers, and this she has done in most dramatic style.”\(^{229}\)

Although many film reporters were an exaggeration of reality, Diana Pearson in *The Daring of Diana* (1916) was praised for her authenticity. Pearson is hired by editor John Briscoe as an investigative reporter for a New York tabloid, *The Daily Argus*. He wants her to specialize in political and social issues. One reviewer wrote, “Anita Stewart as Diana Pearson has invested the role with all that belongs by right of profession to the character of the alert newspaperwoman, plus her own personal charm.”\(^{230}\) Another reviewer pointed out, “Diana Pearson, star reporter of the *Argus*, enters and commands the attention of all those present”\(^{231}\) and an advertisement adds, “Though she fought in the face of death itself, her loyalty to the paper and to its young chief made it a work of love.”\(^{232}\)

For silent film audiences, Irene Hunt was the face of the female journalist in film after film. She appeared in 120 films between 1911 and 1915, nine of them featuring her as a journalist. They watched her as cub reporter Bella of *The Daily Blade* tracing counterfeits to their lair (*The Floating Call*, 1914) and as a cub reporter planting a dictograph in a restaurant, enabling her to expose graft by a local councilman in *The Exposure* (1915); as reporter Helen Harris rounding up opium smugglers in *The Hop Smugglers* (1915); as a reporter discovering the secret of a wealthy woman’s life in *Her Buried Past* (1915); as reporter Jane Pepper for *The Record* saving a detective from motor boat bandits in *The Motor Boat Bandits* (1915); fighting for a scoop with a
rival male reporter (*Added Fuel*, 1915); as reporter Adele Block of *The Morning Dispatch* capturing a gang of spies (*The Celestial Code*, 1915); as reporter May rounding up a gang of Chinese smugglers in *The Chinese Lottery* (1915); as reporter Helen Dale in *The Girl Reporter’s Scoop* (1917) stopping a gang’s robbery. One reviewer wrote about Hunt’s portrayal of a journalist: “This is another of the very excellent newspaper dramas, in which Miss Irene Hunt gives her clever performance of the girl reporter.”

The best female reporters were more than the equal of their male counterparts. In *Dot on the Day Line Boat* (1915), a young female reporter who writes under the name of “Dorothy Dimples” secures an interview with a financier who thinks she is an innocent young lady who knows nothing about financial affairs—until he opened the New York paper and saw the story the girl reporter had written, which created a sensation on Wall Street. The financier hates reporters more than ever, but “Dorothy Dimples” didn’t care—she landed a scoop, which always brings joy to a good newspaperman or woman. In *The Touch of the Key* (1916), Jane Randall is a young girl newspaper reporter who, after a series of strange adventures, manages to secure a “scoop” for her paper. In *The Food Gamblers* (1917), when a food riot takes place on the East Side, June Justice, a special reporter on the *New York Globe*, is assigned by the city editor to get the story. She interviews store keepers, jobbers, commission men, and farmers, and concludes from the investigation that the middlemen are manipulating prices, causing the food gamblers to take action. In *The Master Crook* (1918), a newspaperwoman and her lover, a detective, solve a crime that is baffling the police. The successful duo, flushed with real accomplishment, decide it is time for a wedding. In *The Vanishing Cinderella* (1915), Florence Kingston, a young newspaperwoman, wants to interview a young novelist but he will not talk for publication and tells her so. So she goes to his hotel and takes an apartment directly over his, stages a fake fire with plenty of smoke, jumps out on her fire escape, and screams loudly for help, causing the novelist to rescue her and giving her that interview. More often than not, a female reporter’s assignment begins with getting an interview no one else can get. In *The Girl Reporter* (1913), reporter Pearl White is ordered by her newspaper to get an interview with the mayor. She goes to the mayor’s house and mistakes a sneak thief for the mayor. The thief locks her in a room and when the mayor returns, he discovers her and thinking she is a thief pulls out a revolver. The reporter now thinks the mayor is a thief as well. He’s about to phone the police when by a trick she wrests a revolver from him. The police arrive just as the butler has captured the sneak thief and eventually all entanglements are straightened out. Pearl gets the interview and all ends well.

In *The House of Tears* (1915), a female reporter on *The Evening News* is sent to interview a man and they become “very friendly and their acquaintance soon ripens into love.” It turns out the man shot her mother and left her dying in a Western cabin. Thinking his “dead” wife is an apparition, the man flees and in a half-crazed mood, drives his automobile blindly through the streets, ending by running off a bridge when he is hurled to death. Mother and daughter, now reunited, seek a happier existence. In *Wanted a Wife* (1912), a “pretty newspaper woman” was sent to get the story of a man who had to be married in 20 days to claim his uncle’s fortune. He advertised for someone who would marry him and then get a divorce. A swarm of women besieged him, but he cared for none of them. The newspaperwoman was in great need of money and told him so as to persuade him to give her the interview. Instead he asked her to marry him, and for her sick mother’s sake, she accepted. He gave her the $10,000 that the advertisement
offered before they separated. To the man’s surprise, he finds that he has fallen in love with the reporter and really wants her for his wife. He rushes to the girl’s home and finds that she has also fallen in love with him, and after a little persuasion she falls into his arms and receives the blessings of her mother.\(^{246}\)

In *How Cissy Made Good* (1915), an editor offers an impoverished writer a chance to prove herself by interviewing the leading actors and directors of the Vitagraph Company. At the end of the film she is offered a position on the magazine and faints with joy.

Stunt reporters, following the lead of real-life daredevils Nellie Bly (the pen name of Elizabeth Cochrane), Annie Laurie (the pen name of Winifred Sweet or Winifred Black) and Jennie June (pen name of Jane Cunningham Croly) “had insinuated themselves into prisons, hospitals, asylums, circuses, and brothels, joined caged animals in zoos, kicked up their heels with cabaret dancers on stage, and caught rides in their newfangled vehicles from automobiles to airplanes. Although newsmen occasionally staged stunts—Stephen Crane’s ‘experiments’ in misery and luxury come to mind—they were not defined by these stunts in the way newspaperwomen were. For men, participatory journalism was a choice; for women, it was one of the few ways to break out of the women’s pages.”\(^{241}\)

In *The Reporter’s Romance* (1911), a successful magazine writer, is asked by her managing editor to do a story about the life of the underworld. She gets the story by disguising herself as a “habitue of the underworld and mingling with the people whose lives her facile pen will portray.”\(^{242}\) She gets the goods on a gang of notorious robbers who are arrested and thrown into prison. But she also meets a man, falls in love, and they live happily ever after.

In *A Columbus Day Conspiracy* (1912), a girl reporter uncovers a plot to kill an Italian count with a bomb in New York City’s Columbus Day parade, and in *The Conflict’s End* (1912), a girl reporter runs down a gang of Italian counterfeiters.\(^{243}\)

These courageous girl stunt reporters would do anything to get that exclusive story.\(^{244}\) In *Some Fools There Were* (1913), a “very pretty” magazine girl reporter goes incognito to get pictures and information on male guests at a summer resort for an expose.\(^{245}\) In *The Mayor’s Manicure* (1914), the editor of the *Journal* had assigned a young male reporter to get an interview with the mayor, but he fails and the furious editor, who is amused by the reporter’s “greenness,” sends Gail, the star reporter, to get the story. She pretends to be a manicurist and obtains valuable secrets from the mayor’s office. When the mayor finds out who she is, he discovers that the manicurist has other accomplishments than “filing nails.”\(^{246}\) In *Trapped in the Great Metropolis* (1914), a girl reporter attempts to expose a white slave ring by disguising herself as a South American slave buyer. She is beaten in the process, but gets the story.\(^{247}\)

In *The Celestial Code* (1915), reporter Adele Block of *The Morning Dispatch* is tipped off by a private detective about a group of Salvadorian spies headquartered in Los Angeles. She joins the group, is discovered, seized, gagged and bound, pretends to accept one of the gang member’s advances, grabs his gun, wounds him, and fights her way downstairs and into an automobile where she drives at top speed to a boating landing, and jumps on ship to pursue the spies. “On deck, Adele corners the Salvadorian, who leaps into the sea. She goes overboard with him. The detective shows up just in time to save Adele from being drowned by the Salvadorian, with whom she is fighting desperately.”\(^{248}\) In *The Exposure*, the managing editor sends reporter Helen West to cover a large graft story, exposing the corruption of municipal officials. She gets the story and while the grafters are arrested, “the boys can be heard with the extras” outside the council chambers.\(^{249}\) In *The Lucky Transfer* (1915), Helen Holland, a reporter on *The Herald*,
investigates the burglary of a jewelry store, follows the robbers to their lair, is captured, then rescued while the crooks and the loot are seized.

To get a story, female reporters weren’t above using their sex to gain an advantage while trying to get an exclusive story. In *The Scoop* (1912), society reporter Beulah Mead for *The Sun* gets an exclusive interview with a press-shy millionaire by gaining access to the man’s estate and sitting on his clothes while he is taking a swim in his private lake. As she uses the man’s apparel for a cushion, she compels him to answer her questions before she leaves. She gets her story, scoring a “scoop.” A reviewer pointed out that this female reporter wasn’t above using her femininity to get over the barricaded wall of the millionaire’s summer home. She cannot drop from the wall unassisted, and the millionaire’s son who is working in the garden, agrees to help her for a kiss and to assist her by telling her where she can find his father. “She has to pay two kisses … to get out of the garden. She seems to be indignant, but finally laughs as she bids him good-bye.”

These brazen, I’ll-do-anything-for-a-story females would disguise themselves as a maid or some other female worker to get the story before revealing their true identities. In *The Girl Reporter’s Big Scoop* (1912), Aline, the girl reporter, disguises herself as a maid to get a photo of an heiress about to marry a count and ends up getting a scoop by exposing a plot by the count and the chauffeur to steal the wedding gifts. One reviewer sums up the action: “That night the young lady secretes herself in the parlor and touches off the flash just as the count and the chauffeur are about to make away with the valuables. The house is aroused and while the startled family turns on the unscrupulous count, Aline hastens to the office to prepare her ‘scoop.’”

In *The Girl and the Explorer* (1914), the daughter of a publisher wants to get an exclusive story from a famous explorer who is evading reporters. She goes to his home and is hired as a housemaid. They meet and it is love at first sight.

In *The Adventures of a Girl Reporter* (1914), Ethel Grandon, a society reporter, backed by Tom Wall, another reporter for *The Clarion*, clear up a famous jewel robbery. When Tom is unable to get an interview at a home where the jewels were stolen, he gets Ethel to pose as a maid. She has little trouble in securing the position. A gentleman crook catches her while she is phoning in her story, but she escapes and gets the scoop. “She returns to her desk at the newspaper and gets out her ‘big story.’ And Tom — well, he is far from being jealous over her success for, as it is said, love is blind.”

In *Love and Journalism* (1916), a female journalist poses as a maid to get an interview with a returning Antarctic explorer from the South Pole, scooping all the male reporters in sight. She decides to marry the explorer and give up the newspaper profession. The editor of the newspaper loses both the interview and his lady journalist, but she gets the man she loves.

In *The Haunted Bedroom* (1919), Betsy Thorne, a reporter and special writer on the *New York Intelligence*, is sent by her managing editor to Virginia to investigate the disappearance of a man at a haunted estate. After hearing that reporters have been barred from the house, Betsy passes herself off as a maid to get into the estate, corners a ghost, solves the mystery that baffled detectives, exonerates a young local doctor’s son falsely accused, and quits the newspaper to marry him. Catch Line: “How a Clever Girl Reporter Succeeded in Solving a Mystery That Had Baffled the Best Detectives.”

Sometimes the reporter’s size helped because she could disguise herself as a child to get the story. In *The King of the Wire* (1915), when a female reporter fails to get a much-desired interview with a senator, Patricia Beverly applies for the assignment and gets it. She dresses up
as a little girl and meets the senator’s two daughters, ingeniously manages to join the girls in the house, and eavesdrops on the senator to get what she needs for her story. In *The Power of Publicity* (1915), Edna Morris, assistant to the editor of the women’s pages on the *News*, wants to write hard news and tries to get an exclusive by dressing as a boy. She hides in a room, eavesdrops on political crooks plotting, is discovered, manages to escape, and files her exclusive story. The editor so much admires her courage, he asks her to become his boss for life.

When stunt girl reporters infiltrated gangs of crooks, they took great risks if their disguises were discovered. In *Nobody Would Believe* (1915), reporter Violet Dare of *The Star* is sent by her editor to disprove a social reformer’s statement that hundreds of girls are lost in the cities every year. She comes into the city disguised as a country girl, is captured by a gang of crooks, and confined in a tenement attic. After a daring escape, the crooks are captured. “Violet reaches her home “and though nearly exhausted spends the remainder of the night in writing her wonderful story for the paper. When she hands in her copy the next day, she is met with a curt statement from the editor that he wanted a true story and not a fake one. When Violet protests that it is all true, he says that no one would believe it if it were published. Violet remains home in tears over her disappointment, but when the reformer comes to her disclosing his true identity “she finds happiness in the awakening love between them.”

In *A Newspaper Nemesis* (1915), reporter Molly Sayre adopts a disguise and infiltrates the slums of the town where the underworld resides so she can track the murderer of a jeweler. She is almost captured by a killer, but is rescued by a policeman she later marries. She “brings a killer to justice and incidentally wins a scoop for the paper and a husband for herself.” In *The Girl Reporter’s Scoop* (1917), Helen Dale, a reporter on a big daily, returns from her vacation to find the office agog with excitement over some daring robberies. She convinces the gang she is a thief and tips the police when the crooks plan a new job. They are captured and Helen receives the praise of her staff as well as the reward for capturing the thieves.

Reviewing *The Diamond Path* (1912), a critic wrote, “Dorothy happened to be a reporter, and a reporter always happens to be where things are happening.” Dorothy doesn’t let down the reviewer. She discovers gentlemen jewel thieves, exonerates an innocent girl, the maid of an heiress, and in the end, “Dorothy and honesty triumph.”

Female reporters would even break the law to get the story. In *Her First Assignment* (1912), reporter Ethel was ambitious to become a newspaper reporter and stumbles upon a chance to demonstrate to the public the ease with which the homes of the elite of the city may be entered and robbed. In *A Female Reporter* (1909), Miss Flip, a society reporter on *The Daily Knocker*, is ordered by her editor to undertake a burglary to prove that the police are not on the job. After a series of misadventures, Miss Flip “settles herself at the dining table, takes out her notebook and pencil and begins writing a glowing description of her midnight adventure.”

Sometimes the reporter used the power of the press to help an innocent and punish the guilty. In *The Forged Testament* (1915), 5eporter Muriel Manning helps a wronged woman. She teams up with a widow’s daughter to deal with a gentleman of leisure who married her mother to get her fortune. Sometimes the reporter used the power of the press to help or hinder the man she loved. In *The Girl Reporter* (1910), a newspaper office romance between two reporters results when the female clears her sweetheart of false accusations and places the blame where it belongs —on the criminal. In *Over the Shading Edge* (1911), a female reporter is engaged to a wealthy
man, but she discovers he is part of gigantic swindling scheme involving bribery and graft. But duty to the press is more important to her. She and her editor expose the gang, sending them all to prison and “a pathetic parting takes place between the lovers. She promises to wait for him.”

Still, while some real-life newswomen did go into stunt journalism, the majority of female journalists were not permitted to write on important topics. Front-page assignments, politics, finance, and sports were not usually given to women. Top newsroom positions were for men only. Novels and short stories of Victorian America offered the prejudices of the day: newspaper work, like most work outside the home, was for men only. Women were supposed to marry, have children, and stay home. To become a journalist, women had to have a good excuse—perhaps a dead husband and starving children. Those who did write articles from home kept it to themselves. Few admitted they wrote for a living. Women who tried to have both marriage and a career flirted with disaster.

Editors used female reporters to cover the human angle or color sidebar of a story. “If somebody accused of a crime happened to be a woman, a female reporter might be assigned to play up the emotional aspects of the story. Or, if the accused were a man, he might have a wife, girl friend or mother” whom the female reporter could interview and play up any heart-tugging angles, any emotional aspect of the story. “What they wrote came to be referred to as sob stories” and female reporters came to be known, at least in the movies, as sob sisters. Few real-life newspaper people remember female reporters being called sob sisters in the city room.

Pioneer female journalist Ishbel Ross tells a story about the origin of the term sob sister that has been picked up by many commentators. She claims the derogatory name dates from the 1907 trial of millionaire Harry K. Thaw who was accused of killing architect Stanford White for being his wife’s lover. Four female journalists covered the trial—Ada Patterson, Dorothy Dix, Winifred Black, and Nixola Greeley-Smith. Male reporters believed that the only reason the four women reporters were there was to give the woman’s point of view, accusing them of sympathizing with the adulterous wife, Evelyn Nesbit Thaw. One male seeing the four at the press table, nicknamed them “sob sisters” and the name stuck. Journalism historian Howard Good sums up how female journalists felt about the name: “Most women reporters resented this label because it reinforced the stereotype of women as big-hearted but soft-minded, emotionally generous but intellectually sloppy.” Slang dictionaries define a sob sister as “a woman news reporter who appeals to readers’ sympathies with her accounts of pathetic happenings.”

By 1914, the term became so well known that audiences knew exactly what to expect when they went to see The Sob Sister in which reporter Nell Gwynn for the Times (“who comes under the newspaper sobriquet of ‘sob sister’”) is sent out to get a story on a girl who has run away from boarding school. John Tracy, the managing editor, is “one of those relentless fellows who believes in the publication of news regardless of who it hits or the harm that it may due to innocent persons.” Nell gets the story and saves the girl from an awful fate. But it turns out the girl is the managing editor’s daughter. Endeavoring to shield the girl, Nell “tries to dissuade the managing editor from using the story. Her pleas fail. When she completes her story, she is fired by Tracy for insubordination. Tracy, without reading the story, orders it printed on the front page of the newspaper.” When Tracy finds out the girl is his daughter, he stops the press. When he
offers the sob sister her old position, she refuses, telling him that she is planning to marry the sporting editor. As a reconciliatory present, Tracy raises the sporting editor’s salary.

Sometimes “sob sister” was a derogatory term for a female reporter working on a scandal sheet. In Bondage (1917), newspaperwoman Elinor Crawford has drifted into the lowest brand of sensational writing on a New York scandal sheet. After being seduced and abandoned by the editor of a racy weekly, she ends up poverty-stricken and marries a lawyer who is determined to silence the editor’s “slanderous tongue and lashes the journalist into submission with blows from an avenging horsewhip.”

Occasionally, the sob sister shows signs of feminine frailty. Some female reporters eventually need rescuing by the most available male. When a female reporter is trapped in an opium den in Chinatown, for example, the reviewer writes: the girl reporter “now conscious of danger, loses the mannish spirit which has characterized her in the newspaper work, and the woman in her is apparent.”

Occasionally, a film would focus on the reporter’s private life, showing the underbelly of the profession. In Her Greatest Story (1916), Mazie King is “sob sister” on one of the large daily papers, but because of domestic troubles at home her stories have lost their “punch.” She is called “upon the carpet” by the managing editor, and told that there must be some improvement in her stories. The city editor overhears the talk and tries to comfort his reporter. The problem is Mazie’s home life is a mess—her husband is a gambler and dope fiend who threatens harm to her and their child unless she gives him money. Things reach a climax when Mazie is given one week’s notice and she has to borrow money from the city editor to give it to her husband to rescue her child who he has taken to a low saloon. Her husband ends up in a fight and is killed. The managing editor learns of the killing and assigns Mazie to the case, telling her to get something out of it. That evening, Mazie writes the real story of her life and closes with the episode of her husband’s death. The story makes a hit with the editor and he holds the presses to get the story in for the Sunday edition. He remarks to the boys that the story reads like truth. Meanwhile the city editor tries to cheer the unhappy girl and there is reason to believe she will depend more and more upon him in the future.

Sob sisters populated many silent films. They were gutsy journalists until the final reel when they usually married the man who had been wooing them throughout the film. In The Woman Under Cover (1919), Alma Jordan is referred to throughout one review as “the little sob sister.” She’s in love with Mac, the managing editor of The Leader, a newspaper under new management trying to sell more newspapers by publicizing a sensational story. The newspaper owner threatens to fire the entire staff unless they get a major scoop. After many complications, she gets that front-page story. Wrote one reviewer, “The editor wins his little sob sister reporter and transfers her from his editorial staff to happy home environments.”

In When the Press Speaks (1913), the leading “sob-sister” on The Globe, Miss Lizzie Ellison, is assigned to get an interview with a woman-hating professor. She ends up rescuing him from a den of anarchists who have put a barrel of gunpowder beneath his chair and a lighted bomb beneath his nose.
Lizzie comes in and offers to rescue him if he will grant her the designed interview. He consents. Lizzie, back at The Globe office, gets a great surprise when she receives a telephone call from the professor, who proposes marriage to her and tells her not to publish the interview as he has entirely changed his mind about women.

In The Boob Detective (1914), the pretty girl reporter Hazel meets a “country boob” while covering a case of grafters and gets him out of one jam after another. In The Terrible Alternative (1914), a girl reporter discovers she and her sister are on opposite sides of a murder conspiracy originating in Constantinople. She must then choose between her sister and her lover, who is marked for assassination. In The Happier Man (1915), a young female reporter envies a rich bachelor mine owner until she learns his story. After interviewing him, the reporter learns that there are some joys which great wealth cannot buy.

In Getting Father’s Goat (1915), Helen grows tired of society life and decides she wants to be a reporter. Her father, a judge, secures her a position on The Evening Scoop. Her editor asks her to dig up some material for her paper. She ends up at a gambling house where her father and boyfriend are engaged in a poker contest. The police raid the joint, but the judge escapes. The reporter finds his I.O.U. on the table and takes it. In court, the judge, angry at Helen’s boyfriend for beating him at poker, sentences him to 10 days of hard labor. Helen shows the judge his I.O.U and terrifies him into freeing her boyfriend. “Later, the judge comes upon the boy in the act of embracing Helen. The father separates the two but Helen again waves the tell-tale paper in his face and the judge is glad to allow the two to love each other in peace.”

The early decades of the 20th century “brought an increasingly self-confident newswoman to comic strips, movies, short stories, and novels.” Especially in the movies, women reporters were independent, hard-boiled “dames” ready and willing to do anything their male counterparts would do to get a story. But from the beginning, the image of the female journalist in popular culture revolves around a dichotomy never quite resolved. The female journalist faces an ongoing dilemma: how to incorporate the masculine traits of journalism essential for success—being aggressive, self-reliant, curious, tough, ambitious, cynical, cocky, unsympathetic—while still being the woman society would like her to be: compassionate, caring, loving, maternal, sympathetic. Female reporters and editors in fiction have fought to overcome this central contradiction since the 19th century and are still fighting the battle today.

In The Eternal Conflict (1912), one reviewer spoke to the usually unspoken attributes of a female reporter: “Ability was not the greatest newspaper asset Miss Leonard possessed, though that was more than considerable. It was her charm, the sweet, appealing charm of a ‘feminine’ girl, that cannot be analyzed or denoted, but that just, merely, simply, creeps into you and influences you with a dominant impulse to confide in her. That was the reason Miss Leonard was being talked about in newspaper circles—that, and of course, her intrinsic, native ability.” Since no male reporters can get evidence of corruption and conspiracy in city government, the city editor assigns the girl reporter to the job. After a series of adventures, Miss Leonard gets the story of an illegal plot by politicians, but is shocked when the editor-in-chief destroys the story “for the reason that only editors-in-chief and corrupt politicians know. The girl’s heart broke a little as she loses a little of her faith in truth and right.”
In *Her Whole Duty* (1912), Myra is a reporter on *The Times* when her boss, Marvin, learns that there is material for a good story at the police station. What happens next is indicative of a woman’s place in the newsroom. As one reviewer wrote, Marvin “is buried with work and irritated. He goes to the reporters’ room and finds Myra the only occupant. He orders her to go to the police station and get the story.” She goes to the station and discovers the story involves her father, a judge addicted to alcohol. “She returns to the office and tells Marvin that she cannot write the story. He is petulant and orders her to write the story quickly, under a threat of dismissal from the staff. She writes the story and lays it on the desk of Marvin and goes out. He reads the account of the arrest of the once prominent man who is the father of the woman he loves. Hastily turning his work over to an assistant, he rushes from the office without coat, hat and vest and reaches the street, where he inquires of a policeman if he has seen Myra, describing her. The cooper points in the direction of the river front. Marvin rushes to the dock just in time to prevent Myra from throwing herself into the river. He takes her in his arms and begs her to forgive him. They clinch.”

In a 1911 Swedish film, *Hon fick platsen* (also known as *She Got the Place*), five female journalists apply for a position on a newspaper. All are given the same assignment—to find a man from Portugal who is staying incognito in Stockholm. A beginning reporter scoops the rest in tracking down the man and photographing him. The editor congratulates her and hires her as the reporter on the newspaper.

The sob sister always has to prove herself. She has to persuade the males around her that she is worthy of their respect. She often screws up before winning her stripes, but, by and large, she is an independent, hardworking reporter who never lets her newspaper down. In *The Floating Call* (1914), a reviewer summed up the problems young female reporters had on all-male staffs: “Bella is the ‘cub-ess’ of the *Daily Blade* and the men reporters are jealous of her apparent pull with the managing editor. To discredit her with her boss, they send her on a ‘fake’ murder story which never happened, hoping thus to get her off the staff. She goes to the place, finds she has been tricked, but falls across a scoop in which she recognizes twice as a big a story as the murder would have been. This puts the laugh on the reporters who then have to accept her.” The big story involves counterfeiters. “Bella buys a melon at an Italian fruit stand and on opening it, finds it full of counterfeit money. She sees instantly that this is the channel through which the counterfeiters and their confederates make connections.” Dressing up as an Italian girl, she goes to the fruit dealer, ends up at the truck farm, is suspected of being a spy, and made captive. She floats a message down the irrigation canal to a secret service man and his posse. “The counterfeiters are caught, Bella lands the biggest sensation of the year, also the secret service man and she come to a happy understanding.”

In *The Scoop at Bellville* (1915), a male and female reporter duke it out for an exclusive. They get a confession from a prisoner, but the rival male manages to slip away and get to a telegraph office before the girl reporter and he won’t relinquish it until after deadline. The plucky female hires an automobile and hurries to a neighboring town but she has an accident on a lonely road several miles from the town. A telegraph lineman cuts into the wire, cutting the rival reporter’s line dead and then telegraphs the girl’s story to her newspaper, assuring her the scoop. It turns out the lineman is a millionaire the reporter had ridiculed in print for not holding an honest job. He had resolved to prove her wrong. Now he asks her, Won’t you marry me and help me spend
that ten million? And as a good little girl should when the right man proposes, the little reporter said yes.”

In *Her Great Scoop* (aka *Her Big Scoop*, 1914), Fanny Stone, a society reporter, overhears two men planning a robbery, follows them, teams up with editor Bert Bailey of *The New Era* to capture the crooks, and after a struggle she saves the editor’s life. The next morning, *The New Era* is out with extras about the capture of the robbers, tripling the circulation in a single day. The two decide to become partners in the newspaper and partners for life as well. In *Added Fuel* (1915), reporter Jane Pepper for the *Daily Mail* hears her father’s and brother’s business difficulties are being aired on “the street,” and begs Sim West, a rival reporter working for the *Express*, to print a denial. Instead, he would rather get a scoop and prints the entire scandal. When Jane’s father is mysteriously murdered and her brother is arrested, Sim, feeling his news story must have added fuel to the fire, sets about to aid Jane, solving the mystery of the theft and saving her brother. Through Jane’s persistent efforts, the butler is caught and tricked into confessing.

More often than not, the female reporter outwits, outfoxes, and out reports every male reporter in sight. Only then does she become one of the guys. The highest compliment you can pay a female journalist is to call her “a newspaperman.” In *The Reform Candidate* (1911), the film critic says this about the female reporter: “The pivotal character is not the one indicated in the title role—though the honors are his in the end—but is that of a girl reporting for a daily paper attired as are the better class of business and professional women in our daily lives, who conducts herself with a combination of modesty, high spirit and intelligence that is thoroughly representative of a type that we all recognize.” Reporter Edith Sinclair works with the reform candidate to expose corrupt politicians conspiring with a public utilities company. The financier of corrupt practices tries to influence the reform candidate through his daughter and unwittingly furnishes the material for his own downfall to the keen-witted girl reporter. “Her adventures are perilous enough to thrill, and the outcome of her splendid scoop is one that will win the approval of every right-minded man and woman in the audience.”

In *The Star Reporter* (1911), Bess Reynolds, the star reporter of one of the daily newspapers, saves a young man from the death chair by detecting a flaw in the chain of circumstantial evidence. According to a reviewer of the film, “She follows a plan common among reporters and more often acknowledged as superior to the tactics of the detective force and clears the young man from the charge of murder. But the editor not only wanted to clear up the mystery, but was also looking for a beat: he holds a press in readiness and when Miss Reynolds brings in her copy it is immediately set up by the waiting compositors, then locked up in a form, rushed to the press room, and two minutes later the cry of EXTRA is heard on the street, in the shrill voices of the Metropolitan newsboy.”

In *The Girl and the Grafter* (1913), one reviewer wrote, “The paper had one girl reporter, and contrary to precedent, the city editor admired her. Womanlike she understood the situation, but knew that there would be no romance in her life, not even a proposal, if the city editor was discharged. Therefore, she hated the boss, oh, how she hated him.” Out on assignment, “being a bright newspaper woman she was convinced that something was wrong, and that perhaps she might have a chance to checkmate her enemy. She discovers her boss is involved with a money scheme that she exposes in the newspaper. The city’s editor did not lose his job. Neither did he
‘make up with the boss,’ as he had been ordered to do. There was no necessity, for the boss went
to the penitentiary and was unable to attend the wedding of the city editor and the girl reporter,
even had he cared to do so.”

In *The Hop Smugglers* (1914), Reporter Helen Harris tries to get a job on a newspaper in order to
care for an invalid mother. Refused a job unless she brings in a real news story, Helen
dejectedly sallies forth on a still hunt for opium smugglers then operating successfully on the
Mexican border.” She discovers some opium smugglers who float dope across a river on small
boards. The smugglers are captured with all the evidence. Helen gets an exclusive story for the
paper and is handed a job as a daily news reporter. In *Selina of the Weeklies* (1915), a girl
reporter tracks down spies in England. In *False News* (1913), two reporters—Miss Walker and
Jack Morgan—receive exclusive information of the death of a famous financier and are asked to
keep it quiet for three days. Morgan sees a chance of making a profit and suggests to Miss
Walker that any financier of standing would pay handsomely for the information. The girl,
however, refuses to break her promise and the two come into conflict. But when Morgan is
killed, Miss Walker finds out that the news of the millionaire’s death is false.

In *How Molly Malone Made Good* (1915), the pretty Irish lass with an engaging smile and
plenty of nerve arrives in New York and goes to the office of *The Tribune* wanting “an
opportunity to do a little reportorial work herself. The Sunday editor gives her the hardest kind of
an assignment—interviews with stage favorites, who don’t want to be bothered. Two discredited
employees of the same paper try to thwart Molly at every turn. But the plucky young woman
goes right ahead with her task. Her visits enable the filmmakers to show the country homes of
celebrities of the day. Molly experiences thrills when her life is threatened—a carriage is crushed
between two trees, there is an automobile smash-up at a railroad crossing, and a heavy rainstorm.
Here is a story of a female reporter who never said, “It can’t be done.”

Sometimes a female journalist lets her natural instincts decide whether or not to print a story. In
*Her Buried Past* (1915), a clever newspapergirl, Muriel Manning on the *Evening Statesman*,
learns that a $500 mortgage is about to be foreclosed on her aged father’s home and she is
insanely anxious to win the prize of $500 offered by her paper to any reporter who discovers the
murderer then engaging the interest of the city. She traces the murder to the wife of the president
of the local trust company who is foreclosing on her father’s home. She forces a confession from
the wife, who tells her a pitiful story of blackmail and lost reputation and how she inadvertently
killed the gambler involved. “Muriel hurries home to write the story for the last edition. But
visions of the woman in her terrible distress, of her two children and of her aged mother, are too
much for the young reporter.” When the last edition reaches the woman, it contains only a brief
paragraph referring to the murdered as “unknown.” Muriel had suppressed the story. The woman
with trembling hands put away the pistol she had been holding in readiness. Meanwhile she had
found on the floor where Muriel had dropped it, the letter concerning the mortgage. She
persuades her husband to cancel the demand, charging the sum to her own allowance.

In *The Melburn Confession* (1913), the female reporter displays the “heart of a loving mother”
when she destroys a forged confession rather than publishing it. In *The Chinese Lottery*
(1915), a girl reporter helps round up a gang of Chinese smugglers. May gets a job on a paper
through the friendly help of the wild son of a newspaper owner. She is sent to locate a shop
where a lottery scheme is taking place. She notifies the police but makes them promise not to
raided it until the following night so that she may have time to get the story for her paper. She then discovers the owner of the shop is the newspaper owner’s son. She has no way of heading off the police though she resolves to “throw” her paper for the boy’s sake. She hurriedly runs out, takes down the laundry sign and puts it upon a shack two doors away. The police raided an innocent place and May returns to the office and is fired for failing to get the story. The next day the son learns of this, confesses to his father, and May is restored to her job.¹⁰¹

Often an instinct to do the right thing resulted in the printing of fake news stories under the assumption that the means justified the ends. In *The Phantom Extra* (1915), Hazel Flemming, a star reporter on a newly elected State senator’s home paper, goes to the Capitol to interview the senator, who also happens to be her fiancé. The reporter, who is also the editor’s daughter, is amazed to find that lobbyists have gotten to him over a miners’ bill he had advocated requiring the installation of new safety devices in the coal mines. “She realizes the fight is lost unless she can make him realize the mistake he is making. To do this she has a phantom extra printed telling in thrilling headlines of a horrible accident in the coal mines, wherein 200 miners have lost their lives. She hires a newsboy to throw the extra under the senator’s door and when he reads of the horrible accident, he wakes up and realizes he was about to betray those who trusted him. When he returns to his office, Hazel goes to him and confesses she had the phantom extra printed in order to gain his vote for the bill. Later, he forgives the girl for her trickery.”¹⁰²

Female reporters were so familiar to silent film audiences that they could be used for comic relief. In *A Gale of Verse* (1917), Lizzie Loose is a country poetess who insists on reading her poetry aloud to everyone. She is anxious to sell her poetry to the town newspaper, but is not successful. Her father offers a large reward if the editor can get her to return to the farm. The editor and the paper’s star reporter plot to frighten the girl by sending her to a deserted house. What they don’t know is that in that house lives a band of desperate counterfeiters. The reporter is seized and condemned to death. Lizzie arrives thinking the whole thing is a frame-up because she overheard the reporter’s plot. So she sails in and confronts the gang. She reads poetry to them until they are helpless and the police arrive. She wins the reward, saves the reporter from death, and tells him if she unties him, he’ll have to marry her. “Marry you? To get out of here I’d marry the _____ himself,” and Lizzie takes that for a compliment.¹⁰³

Some female journalists are depicted as self-assured women wanting to right the wrongs of the world. In *A Man’s World* (1918), journalist Frankie Ware helps an unfortunate girl who dies after giving birth to a child out of wedlock. She then writes a book questioning the one-sided social laws that make this a man’s world. Her publisher falls in love with her, but it turns out he had seduced that young girl. Frankie breaks the engagement and marries another man. In *Nach dim Gesetz (According to Law)*, 1919), journalist Sonja Waler is an idealistic, committed journalist who campaigns for a penniless medical researcher. In her pursuit of raising money, she frequents a loan shark, finally killing him. She is sentenced to jail at the end of the film. Serene scenes of the journalist’s romance are interspersed with scenes of sickness, poverty, and death.

In *The Other Half* (1919), reporter Katherine Boone of *The Beacon* starts out as the sweetheart of the son of the owner of an iron works who has gone to war. “She is a fine young woman in almost every way, but she has not yet learned to take an interest in those below her social station.”¹⁰⁴ The son takes over the business when his father dies and he becomes as grasping in dealing with the men as was his father before him. Katherine has seen the light herself and
refuses to marry the son until he reforms. Caleb Fairman, the kindly old editor of *The Beacon*, a small populist paper that aims to uplift humanity, is aided by Katherine to keep his publication going. One of Katherine’s articles gets the son to see the light and the two reconcile.

In *The Recoil* (1915), Edna Gardner is a special writer for *The Spotlight* and is sent by her editor to cover the first amateur boxing exhibition under a new law against professional prizefighting. She discovers there is one law for the rich and another one for the poor when it comes to gambling, and decides to do something about it.305 In *The Unchastened Woman* (1918), a female journalist runs a model tenement in New York and by her newspaper writings tries to uplift the condition of the poor and pay for her husband’s art studies.

Female reporters sometimes became villains. In *The Guilty Ones* (1916), a reformed ex-convict is now a reporter, but succumbs to her former underworld pal when the newspaper sends her to interview a philanthropist and it turns out to be the male ex-convict. He gets her to join his scheme but as they prepare to leave the city, both are arrested.306 Female reporters were so familiar to audiences that it wasn’t surprising when the hero of a film impersonated one to get information. In *Should a Wife Forgive?* (1915), a devoted wife pretends to be a newspaper reporter to find out about a woman her husband is interested in.

Often, female journalists were thrown into the plot as minor characters who added color, humor, villainy, or sex to the film. In *A Dog-Gone Baron* (1913), a court reporter stops an elopement between an heiress and a delicatessen owner pretending to be a baron. In *Her Vocation* (1915), Jean Halliday, a “special” writer for a metropolitan newspaper is assigned to do a story of night life in the city for the Sunday edition. In *Billy Van Deusen’s Fiancée* (1916), a “newspaper lady” writes a full Sunday supplement story on a man’s engagement based on something she overhears, but the story is not true. In *What a Clue Will Do* (1917), two burlesque detectives spot a reporter in a saloon who has gone to the telephone to give her story to the editor. They think she is a criminal, but soon realize they are wrong. In *The Beauty Market* (1919), a society paper spy discovers that a woman was given a check by a wealthy man to pay her debts, causing her fiancé to disown her. In *The Cabaret Girl* (1919), a society reporter writes up the actions of a young woman who is told by the mother of the man she loves that their relationship would be his undoing. So she assumes the part of a woman of the world to disgust the man. The cabaret owner exults in the publicity the story brings his establishment and attacks the woman just as the man she loves arrives to save her and ask her to become his wife. In *Woman! Woman!* (1919), a journalist is a radical young English writer who preaches the gospel of “free love” and proposes a union with a woman bored with life.307

A propaganda film called *Women Who Win* was issued in 1919 to show women the advantages of going to school to get a profession. The film shows a widow and her daughters joining the Women’s Service Training Bureau in England to become a nurse, journalist, and landscape gardener. Ella Graham trains to be a journalist in the Women’s Service Training Bureau and is eventually commissioned to write up the work of women in an aircraft factory. The film promotes the Training Bureau for women and Queen Mary makes an appearance, chatting with the workers.

Occasionally real-life female journalists became known to the public through newsreels that promoted them. In 1915, Hearst-Selig Reporter Grace Darling was shown visiting Washington to
interview prominent persons (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 10); arriving in San Francisco to visit the exposition (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 26); exploring a scenic railroad (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 28); visiting an old chief, the last of the California Indians and taking a 90-mile an hour jaunt with race car driver Barney Oldfield (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 30); visiting a jungle zoo and making friends with Bonita the leopard (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 34); and visiting the California Panama Fair (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 36). In Universal Screen Magazine No. 67, muckraking journalist Ida Tarbell is interviewed on the question, “Are Men Happier Than Women?” The interview takes the form of a story with a moral: the inspiration to be gained from this feature is for the woman who does not realize the privilege that is hers in providing sunlight and happiness in the home of the laborer. In Universal Screen Magazine No. 68 (1918), an interview with the noted love expert columnist Dorothy Dix, who has advised more than a million couples about their matrimonial troubles, includes the eternal question, “What’s the Matter With Marriage?”

As historian Deac Rossell points out, “By the 1920s, newspapering was firmly established as a genre where women could take the leading roles, the active and successful parts, as well as men...Where women had been typically the love object, or the dramatic and emotional catalyst between male leads in most films, here she could have a job, move independently through society, be a leader. All without necessarily endangering her femininity or being typed as man-less.”

Columnists

By far, the most common columnist is the advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist who dispenses advice via the newspaper to desperate men and women in love who want answers to their problems. In silent films, the great majority of columnists were female. Often the letters they received became the plot for a film. In a 15-episode serial, Beatrice Fairfax (1916), advice columnist Beatrice Fairfax offers advice to the lovelorn and in each episode helps her readers with their romance problems. She is assisted by her cub reporter boyfriend, Jimmy Barton, an energetic young man fond of disguises. The title character was inspired by the real-life popular advice column, “Ask Beatrice Fairfax,” which had been the world’s first newspaper column of its kind when launched in 1898. The column was started by journalist Marie Manning and ran in newspapers owned by William Randolph Hearst. In the first episode, the actual editor of the New York Evening Journal, Arthur Brisbane, makes an appearance. Beatrice is also at her desk opening her mail and the letter she opens along with Jimmy’s crime assignments key the action for the episode. Both Beatrice and Jimmy escape one death-defying scene after another. In Episode One, Beatrice and a letter-writer are forced into a room where a fire is started that produces a deadly gas. They are rescued just in time by Jimmy and the police who battle the robbers and restore both women to consciousness. The two journalists rush back to the office where they write the story of the capture of bank robbers and the recovery of the plunder for a midnight “extra.” A gang of thieves battle Beatrice and Jimmy, in disguise with a bomb in his hand, and then surrender just as the police arrive. A female letter-writer swears that had it not been for the advice of Beatrice Fairfax, her whole life would have been wrecked (Episode 2). They deal with kidnappers (Episode 3), an Indian prince (Episode 4), a Japanese girl in love with a secret agent (Episode 5), and a gang of counterfeiters. At the end of each episode, Jimmy and Beatrice hurry away to tell the world through their newspaper of their thrilling adventure. Here is the definitive picture of the advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist as journalism hero.
Though fictional female columnists often followed real-life examples of advice-to-lovelorn columnists, most were portrayed as far more adventurous and courageous than their real-life counterparts. In *The Lost Princess* (1919), advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist Ethel Williams helps Samuel Blevins Jr., a young reporter who took a correspondence course on newspaper reporting, after heartless editors turn down his articles time after time. The Sunday magazine editor loves Ethel and tries to ruin Sam’s career by giving him the difficult task of writing a feature article for the next Sunday issue. When Sam fails to think of a good story, Ethel, who has fallen in love with him, comes up with a bizarre story about a lost princess of Burvania who is hiding in the United States. Sam’s story causes the archduke of Burvania to search for the princess, but it turns out Ethel is really the princess. After she is persuaded to return, Sam rescues her from a trap. He then awakens to discover that the story is a dream and that Ethel is just plain Ethel. He writes another story, which lands him a steady job and he finds happiness with the lovelorn columnist.\(^\text{312}\) One reviewer wrote that the young man who takes a correspondence course on how to become a newspaperman “leaves for the city to try to dig up a living with a pen. As any writer knows, a shovel is a much better implement for this purpose, and (Sam) soon finds that out.”\(^\text{313}\)

Sometimes the advice-to-the-lovelorn columnist is a male writing under a female pseudonym. Silent film makers seem to have delighted in the idea of a male journalist masquerading as a female columnist dispensing love and romance advice, a plot device common throughout the 20th century. In *Madame De Mode* (1912), Harry Fenton is the up-to-the-minute young newspaperman who replies to all correspondence from the lovelorn under the nom-de-plume of Madame de Mode. As one reviewer put it, “Although he conducts his column successfully, Harry personally is backward with women.” He is love with a woman who returns his love, but he never seems to acquire courage enough to propose. So the woman, “in her despair finally decides to seek advice and accordingly writes” Madame de Mode. His advice works. Among the wedding presents is one from the newspaper office with the following note: “To Mr. and Mrs. ‘Madame’ de Mode from the boys in the office.” This is the telltale note that leads the bride to discover that bashful Harry is none other than the lovelorn columnist who advised her how to encourage her young man to propose, and which ended in bringing about a very happy union.\(^\text{314}\)

In *The Real Miss Loveleigh* (1914), newspaperman Leo Whitney runs the “Helps to the Lovelorn Column” as Eveline Loveleigh in one of the world’s great daily newspapers. One reviewer writes: “Little did he know that the love god would take possession of him. We see ‘her’ very much a man, seated in his office smoking an immense pipe, and answering such silly letters as ‘A young man calls on me several evenings a week, but has not proposed as yet. Would you advise me to start making my trousseau?’ Of course he has a good laugh over each letter and gives the writers expert advice, but when he in turn falls a victim, he falls so hard that the laugh is on him.”\(^\text{315}\) Whitney has a romance of his own and lucky for him, the woman he cares about writes to Eveline Loveleigh for advice. In *The Question and Answer Man* (1914), newspaperman Ben Johnson is in charge of the question department of the “Heart and Home” column for the *Globe* writing under the name “Madame Leonora.” One reviewer said, “A good story of the Editorial rooms, caused by a mix-up of proper names and nom de plumes. The newspaper man joins in the love game and wins out.”\(^\text{316}\) In *Cupid’s Column* (1915), the old maid editor of “Cupid’s Column” in *The Daily Clarion*, Sister Samantha, resigns her job and the editor appoints Rodney, a male reporter on his staff, to take her place. His amusing replies create havoc among the lovelorn youths and maidens who write in for advice on courtship. He and his friends are seldom sober, celebrating his promotion so frequently that his wife writes “Samantha” of her
troubles using an assumed name. Rodney writes back advising her to try loving kindness and waiting on him hand and foot. His wife follows the instructions so closely her husband figures out she wrote the letter. She discovers, however, that he is “Samantha” and decides to get even. She writes another letter asking “Samantha” if she should find another husband. Rodney is furious. After many amusing complications, he gets on his knees humbly begging for her forgiveness. In *The Clever Mrs. Carfax* (1917), newspaper publisher Temple Trask answers the “Letters to the Lovelorn” column under the nom de plume, “Mrs. Carfax.” In the process, he manages to prevent two society swindlers from robbing a wealthy old woman and at the same time to win the heart of her charming granddaughter. He also becomes the hit of his college reunion when he revives his female impersonation act and fools everyone concerned.

The idea of a man editing the woman’s page was also something that amused the silent film audience. In *The Floor Below* (1918), Stubbs is a grizzled veteran newspaperman who edits the woman’s page. He answers questions of the lovelorn, suggests recipes for food conservation, advises mothers how to cope with growing girls, and fulfills generally the exalted functions of a feminine mentor. In reality, he is gruff, very masculine and a misogynist.

*Romance In and Out of the Newsroom*

Romance was often a key ingredient in silent films featuring journalists. As one reviewer put it in a review of *Scooped by Cupid* (1914), the plot, in this newspaper yarn, “is not to be taken seriously and serves only to make an appealing little love story.” Practically every silent film featuring a female journalist had her falling in love and getting married by the end of the film. Female audiences loved the independent, daredevil female doing what she always imagined she would like to do, but when they left the theater, they wanted to see that even the bravest, most courageous, independent female journalist still pined for what they had—a husband and motherhood. Male reporters usually fell in love with the women they encountered on assignment or in the office. For silent film journalists, love was always in the air. In *Shadows* (1914), for example, Fanny Turner is a girl reporter investigating a gang of counterfeiters. A detective is also on the case. The reporter is captured by the gang, and the detective, in the disguise of a telephone repairman, is trapped in the den. A fight and an explosion take place. The story ends with the capture of the crooks. Then follows a closeup, showing the detective’s hand “placing a solitaire diamond ring on Fanny’s hand, a novel way of showing that the adventure ultimately lead to their engagement.” It doesn’t hurt that two of the silent film’s most attractive stars—Francis X. Bushman and Irene Warfield—portray the detective and the reporter.
One reviewer of a 1914 film summed up the image of the female reporter in silent film in the early part of the century: “The potential genius of For the Last Edition is a plucky young reporter, impersonated by Irene Hunt. She is treated fairly by the newspaper men among whom her lot is cast, and proves that only a little such encouragement is necessary to prove the genial fire of her sex. Creative by instinct, yet pitiful with those who err, the girl reporter undertakes to rebuild an unfortunate reporter’s reputation and restore him to the career of his aspirations. To do this she takes desperate chances to aid him in a grand scoop.” In Mumps (1915), Helen Wright receives a note from her editor saying he would like her to write a story telling how two young people, thrown together, can fall in love, within a month. Knowing nothing of love, the female reporter decides to make it a real story. She inserts an ad in the newspaper looking for a nice young man to be her secretary. A rich man decides, as a lark, to answer the ad, is accepted, and the two fall in love.

Many male reporters fall in love with women whose fathers or guardians reject journalists because they are not good enough for their daughters—they either don’t make enough money or are part of a profession that is not an honorable way to make a living. Often male reporters would do almost anything to win the blessings of the parents or guardian. In Above Par (1915), a reporter is engaged to the daughter of a Wall Street broker who has little regard for the reporter’s profession. After the reporter exposes a stock manipulation scheme and brings the culprit to justice, the Wall Street broker changes his mind about newspaper men. In A Victim of Circumstances (1913), a young reporter who loves a prominent man’s daughter is at first refused his consent. Later the man relented, but it must be admitted that he still had forebodings. In The Theft of the Mona Lisa (1911), a young reporter is told by his girlfriend’s father, “As soon as you have done a good piece of work as a journalist, I will consent to the marriage.” In All for a Girl (1912), a young reporter is told by his chief, if he will secure certain letters connected with a prominent divorce scandal, he will raise his wages $10 a week. The pay raise makes it possible for the reporter to marry his sweetheart.

In The Cub Reporter’s Assignment (1914), Wilson, a reporter, interviews an old inventor and falls in love with his daughter. When the reporter captures a man trying to steal his revolutionary invention for automobiles, the inventor, filled with gratitude, consents to the reporter’s marriage to his daughter. In Jilted in Jail (1917), reporter Sam loves a police chief’s daughter, but her father, wants her to marry his assistant. Sam and the girl plan an elopement. She dresses up in boy’s clothes and is arrested as the accomplice of a crook posing as a minister. Sam arrives with the real minister and they are arrested too. They are all put in a cell together and, just as the chief arrives, the marriage takes place. In The Count That Counted (1910), “Jimmy Little, a Lowly Reporter” falls in love with the daughter of a millionaire who believes the poor Daily Howl journalist only wants her money. In a plot “illustrating the resourcefulness of a reporter and how it was turned to good purpose,” Jimmy outwits the millionaire and wins the woman he loves. In The Golden Idiot (1917), a reporter is too poor to propose marriage to the woman he loves, but when his uncle dies, he inherits a fortune and can marry his sweetheart.

Sometimes the reporter manages to get the approval of the father or guardian in less than ethical ways. In A Girl, a Guard and a Garret (1915), cub reporter Billie is stopped from seeing the woman he loves by the girl’s father who hires a special guard to keep him away from her, but “love finds a way” as usual. The reporter’s sweetheart finds some incriminating pictures of her father as “a gay young blade.” The reporter threatens to print the pictures unless he consents to
giving his daughter “to have and to hold.” He shows the father “proof sheets of the article, highly embellished with the photographs.” This is more than the father can bear. Relentlessly, the young reporter insists the father pay the price, whereupon the minister is called in and the knot is tied. In *Via the Fire Escape* (1914), Aneta Bowen, the society reporter for the *Morning Post*, goes to a hotel hoping to beat out other reporters anxious to get a personal interview with a millionaire—the same millionaire whose son is in love with her. She tries, but isn’t successful. “Finally she takes a room directly above his and climbs down the fire-escape into his room. At first he is curious, but realizing that he is dealing with no ordinary young lady, he grants her an interview. Aneta, being a wise young lady, decides to procure his consent to her engagement with his son. She manages to involve him in several little compromising situations. Finally to extricate himself, he gives the requested consent.”

Sometimes the parents reject the reporter because they come from another culture or country. In *The Old Shoemaker* (1915), an American reporter is in love with a shoe cobbler’s daughter but her old father doesn’t like foreigners and forbids her to have anything to do with him. The reporter met the girl while taking a pair of his shoes to be repaired. When “a flashy Italian” gets fresh, the reporter whips him. The man abducts the woman and says he will keep her a prisoner until she agrees to marry him. The American rescues her and her father is more than willing to accede to the reporter’s suit for his daughter’s hand. In *His Parisian Wife* (1919), Fauvette, a beautiful French girl with education and enough brains to be a reporter on a Paris newspaper, falls in love with a Boston lawyer and before she quite realizes what has taken place, she finds herself married. His parents disapprove of their imported daughter-in-law, souring him on the relationship. When his friend comes to dinner and the girl appears in a low-cut gown, he upbraids her. They separate and the lawyer turns to drink while Fauvette thrives in New York as a famous author. Seeing her success, the lawyer reforms and vows to win Fauvette back. He begs forgiveness and they start a new, married life together.

In one film, the father of the reporter doesn’t want his son to marry a shop girl because he thinks she is beneath his station. In *The Moral Deadline* (1919), reporter Hal Oaker meets a shop girl while walking in Central Park when he retrieves her blown-off hat from a stream. After a few dates, they marry but the reporter’s father, a wealthy financier who is trying with his wife to break into high society, learns of the marriage and induces his son to go West for a year without telling the girl to test the strength of their love. The reporter leaves and is shanghaied by sailors and taken to sea. While he is gone, the father makes a vain attempt to buy off the wife, but she refuses to get a divorce. She has their child and becomes a professional dancer to support herself. When the baby needs an operation, she dances at a disreputable café to raise the money. The Vice Society, led by Hal’s mother and the police, raid the café and make an effort to arrest the girl but her dances are harmless. Hal, having escaped the sailors and is a reporter again, defends his wife and begs her forgiveness. The couple is reunited happily at the close.

Reporters may also be the cause of the problem when their pride gets in the way of romance. In *The Money Mill*, Jack Burton, a young reporter, is so poor he is on a breadline when a minister gets him a job on a newspaper. He falls in love with a rich socialite, but will not marry her because of her wealth. When crooks try to rob her of a gold mine, he helps her regain possession of the mine and realizes his true love for her and they are reconciled. In *A Desperate Remedy* (1916), a poor newspaper reporter is in love with a wealthy girl and won’t marry her until he makes enough money to do so.
Sometimes the course of true love just doesn’t run smoothly. In *Below the Dead Line* (1913), *Chronicle* reporter Joe Emerson, sent to cover a fashionable reception for a big write-up, sees a woman stealing a necklace, takes it from her and returns it. He makes her promise to reform. Later, he is accused of killing her father and is sent to prison after declaring his love for the woman, asking her to wait for him. She decides to save the reporter by getting the real murderer, an absinthe drinker, to confess. In *Fedora* (1914), a reporter falls in love with an actress, fights a duel with a rival, is wounded and nursed back to health by the actress who fears that the reporter is really her brother since their father is the same man. She plans to take real poison during a play, but the reporter stops her just in time and then reveals he is only the adopted son. The film ends with the reporter and the actress enjoying their honeymoon in a villa in southern Italy.

In *The Wedding Write-Up* (1913), Mary Logan is engaged to be married, but she leaves him when her career takes off and she moves to the city. While Mary rises in the newspaper field and becomes society editor for a prominent paper, *The Clarion*, the man meets another woman and proposes. Mary, in spite of her success, longs for her lost fiance. A date is set for the man’s wedding and an announcement of the event is sent to the newspaper with their photographs. The engagement is broken off when the bride-to-be meets the man’s mother and is repulsed by her. The man rushes to the newspaper office to prevent the wedding announcement from appearing in the paper and there finds the society editor weeping over the article. He recognizes Mary, then realizes that his love for her has never died, slowly tears up the “Wedding Write-Up” and takes in his arms the girl who gladly gives up a career to be his wife. In *The Sixteenth Wife* (1917), reporter Jimmy Warburton is a breezy, ingratiating American newspaperman who helps a dancer who once worked for a weekly paper in his hometown escape from a Turk who wants her to be his sixteenth wife. She escapes to New York and marries the reporter.

Often, the romance is played for laughs. In *Poetical Jane* (1910), an editor falls in love and promises to marry a lousy poet if she agrees to never write another poem. In *The Quincefille Raffle* (1911), editor Ezra Higgins of *The Bugle*, played by silent film heartthrob Francis X. Bushman, needs a wife and money. He gets a great idea: holding a grand raffle with himself as the prize. A stupid boy clerk makes an error and the result is that Higgins has been won by nearly all of the aspirants for his hand. He tries to make a getaway, but is chased by the women and at last captured. In a similar plot five years later, *The Lottery Man* (1916, remade in 1919), a reckless newspaperman who is a former football star (played by an actor who one reviewer says “suggests the dash and spirit of wholesome young manhood”) discovers a newspaper reporter’s income is meager and puts himself up as a prize for the fairer sex to make some money. No sooner has the newspaper printed his proposition then he is swamped with matrimonial officers, but he promptly falls in love and is ready to do anything to cancel the agreement, but it is too late.

In *The Vows* (1911), a young naive reporter, who had studied for the priesthood but thinks he should see the world before taking his vows, is assigned to interview a famous actress and they fall in love. A priest convinces the woman to give the young man back to the church. In *The Star Gazer* (1914), the daughter of an aged astronomer falls in love with a newspaper reporter who eventually saves her father by proving he is not an arsonist. The old man is released. He secures his fire insurance and the daughter thus gets her trousseau. In *The Eugenic Girl* (1914), reporter Billy is one of five suitors determined to win the hand of a young lady who is an enthusiast regarding athletes and believes in eugenics. She determines to marry the best man and arranges a
lot of athletic stunts in which they are to compete. The newspaper reporter, knowing his failings, engages a professional and disguises him as an unknown who is the winner. Later, the reporter dons the disguise and fools the girl who accepts him. In *Proving His Love; or The Ruse of a Beautiful Woman* (1911), a young reporter is assigned by his managing editor to interview a famous actress. He gets the interview, secures her photograph, and falls in love with her. She is injured in an automobile accident, and to test the love of her many admirers, she disfigures her face with an ugly scar. Only the reporter declares his undying love. The actress removes the painted scar and the two embrace.

*The Jester* (1916) offers a love story with a new angle. The girl reporter doesn’t reform her man and marry him after sympathetic care. She ridicules him, having plenty of chances to do so as she is a reporter and he is the dissolute son of a millionaire whose highly publicized escapades are many. The girl calls him a jester and thinks he’s a joke. Their paths cross frequently and they are principals in several thrilling experiences—including a “couple of battles in which the young woman sees her man stripped of the pose of the bon vivant and made over into the kind of masculine being that an aggressive girl would like to have make love to her.”

Sometimes a reporter will romance the source of his story or the person they have been assigned to interview, causing all kinds of complications. However, the ethical implications of sleeping with a source or a co-worker were seldom explored. In *Some Steamer Scooping* (1914), Clara Lane, a newspaper reporter, is assigned to investigate a baron who is getting married. “She is further instructed to make a scoop of their movements.” The reporter falls in love with the baron and when the baron breaks off his engagement, it gives Clara more newspaper material and a ray of hope. The baron is interested in Clara, but she has kept her identity a secret and she has qualms of sending in her big scoop to the paper now that she herself loves the central figure involved. Accidentally, the baron discovers that Clara is a reporter, and thinking she has purposely ensnared him for the purpose of getting news out of him, he reproaches her bitterly. Matters are straightened out and the baron pulls the biggest “scoop” of all when he captures the willing Clara.

In *Sue* (1915), a star reporter on *The Herald*, reluctantly covers a senator’s daughter posing for a contest to decide the most beautiful girl in the city. When the reporter is assigned the story, he goes to the studio in a very peevish frame of mind. But when he meets the girl, they fall in love at first sight. The girl is chosen and he brings the good news to her and they declare their love. In *The Winning Loser* (1915), Marian Forrest, society reporter on the *Tribune*, is sent to cover a dance and reception and gets an interview with the woman’s son. The next morning, he reads Marian’s account of the dance in the paper and asks her to go motoring with him. She accepts, but has to refuse an invitation to dine with him owing to an evening assignment. The next day, he calls and promises her a “big story,” providing she will dine with him that night. Her professional instinct is aroused and she accepts the invitation but refuses to listen to his “big story,” telling him that the man she marries must not be of the idle rich, but must “do something.” He decides to enter a champion automobile speed race and does well until a crook causes his car to catch fire. Learning of the accident as it comes over the wire, Marian rushes to him and tells him that even though he did not win the race, his attempt to “do something” has won her love and Jack’s disappointment at losing the trophy is more than recompensed by his great joy in winning Marian.
Male reporters often fell in love with an heiress, a princess, or a wealthy woman usually after one misadventure after another. *Thirty* (1915) was one of the first to show a reporter romancing the source of his story who is a heiress. Enterprising young reporter Dick Thompson of *The Clarion* played by silent film heartthrob Francis X. Bushman (who “supplies the requisite amount of dash, nerve and physical perfection demanded of the hero”) courts an elusive millionairess who hates the press, only to learn that she is the owner of the newspaper he works for. The city editor sends Thompson, star reporter and poker player, out on the story. He climbs a wall and enters the woman’s garden, only to be set upon and beaten by two giant guards. They take him to the woman and he immediately falls in love with her. Because he loves her, he agrees to do so. “Ellen admits that she loves him, finds out that she owns *The Clarion*, and makes Dick her husband and managing editor of the great newspaper.”

One reviewer added that the film was “a bully good yarn, even if no real newspaperman will ever believe that the wonderful luck which falls to the star reporter in the photoplay has the slightest foundation in fact.”

In *The Heart Breakers* (1916), cub reporter Jimmy Morris loses his job and goes to his mother’s home at the beach, chagrined and disappointed. He meets a maid who unbeknownst to him is an heiress he has been trying to interview when he was fired for failing to get the story. He plots with the “maid” to get the heiress’s story about her strange suitors and proposes to divide the fee for the scoop. Jimmy and his maid have a startling romance interrupted by her parents who take her home. Jimmy confesses his love to the maid and the heiress at last finds herself in love. She tells her father about Jimmy and her father, who is a silent partner in the newspaper company, orders Jimmy installed in a good position. Meanwhile, the heiress tells Jimmy he “can beat the town” by announcing that the heiress is going to marry him.

In *I’ll Get Him Yet* (1919), reporter Scoop McCreedy, played by Richard Barthelmess, who would play more reporters in future films, returns from France a hero and a wealthy heiress falls in love with him. When her father throws him out, Scoop swears never to marry a rich girl, but the heiress, undaunted, pursues and finally persuades him to marry her on the condition they live on his salary. One of her suitors turns out to be Scoop’s editor and he promptly fires him. They move to small town where Scoop becomes editor of the local paper. He protests a railroad company’s decision not to stop in the town without knowing that his wife owns the company. After she confesses, Scoop becomes the general manager of the railroad company and learns to live with his wife’s millions.

In *Her Luckless Scheme* (1916), Jack Bryson, star reporter of the *News* is investigating working conditions in the department store and the owner of the largest store and his heiress daughter aren’t happy about it. When she shows one of Bryson’s articles to her father, he tells her he is negotiating for the purchase of that paper to try and stop the scurrilous articles Bryson is writing about them. The heiress “resolves to work in her father’s store as a shop girl hoping to meet Bryson and in some way revenge herself upon him. She is behind the counter when Bryson appears and starts quizzing her to gain some locale for his article.” She takes a liking to him. Jack is arrested on a fake pickpocketing charge, but threatens to expose the frame-up in the newspaper and leaves. He makes a date with the shop girl-heiress and she brings tears to his eyes describing how she lives on four dollars a week. He asks her to marry him right away and she consents to run away with him that night. He writes an article for the morning edition titled “The Shop Girl” while the heiress arranges to elope with Jack, then tell the town about it, and make
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Jack the laughing stock among newspaper men. Jack, after writing his story, leaves to purchase a wedding ring but at the jewelry store sees a picture of the heiress and learns her identity. This makes him angry. The girl’s father, who has bought the newspaper that afternoon, vows to discharge Jack in the morning. But his daughter reads the shop girl story and knew then “that Jack was the man for her, as no one ever spoke of her except as a pillar of wealth.”

In Mr. Buttles (1915), a London newspaperman masquerades as a chauffeur to get a story and ends up winning the love of an American heiress. In The Reward (1915), Hugh Grey, a smart young reporter, recognizes a girl who arrived at his boarding-house as the lost heiress. The reporter lays siege to her affections and believing that at last she has found her true romance, she promises to become his wife. On the day before the wedding, she realizes that she has fallen into the clutches of a fortune hunter. The unscrupulous reporter is determined to win a $10,000 reward offered for the heiress’ safe return. He locks her in her room, gets the check for the reward, but loses the woman after getting a trounced by the man who loves her. In An Amateur Widow (1919), a writer, Irving Mason, has been posing as a chauffeur so he can court a woman he believes is the heiress’ secretary. The woman, who is really the heiress, runs away from home and Mason is shanghaied. The writer falls from grace by getting drunk. A newspaper notice reports that Mason has died, so the woman assumes the role of Mrs. Irving Mason and is befriended by his relatives. She goes to work in the family’s general store. Mason escapes his captors and returns home, surprised to find himself presumed dead and the woman his widow. When the family store catches fire, he saves the heiress. They reveal their true identities and the journalist and the heiress are soon married.

In The First Man (1911), a reviewer writes, “Young Earl Whitney is a cub reporter on the staff of the Morning Herald, a metropolitan daily. He is a clean-cut earnest young man who takes his calling very seriously when one day his city editor hands him an assignment, which looks like a hard one, he reads with interest the following: HAS NEVER TALKED TO A MAN.” A young heiress is forced by the conditions of her father’s will to be secluded from all male society until she becomes of age in order to inherit vast estates. No reporters are allowed to talk to her, but the cub finds a way and falls in love with her. He then writes a note to his city editor, “I hereby resign from the staff. I can’t turn in my story because I am in love with the girl and I can’t marry her until she becomes of legal age. I’ve got to wait about two years until she is 21. Darn the luck.” In a caustic reply, the editor writes, “Resignation declined. Girl of legal age at 18, not 21. Marry her, you boob, and return to new job as sporting editor. Congratulations from the staff.”

In The Princess of Park Row (1917), New York reporter Tom Kearny, demoted to covering hotels, mistakes a princess for a hotel maid. He woos and wins her and they fall in love. He tries to rescue her when she is abducted, but he is caught. The princess escapes and returns with the police. The reporter risks life and limb in her father’s defense, saving him from crooks and the king rewards him with the title of “Prince,” so Tom and the princess are now free to marry. In The Way Out (1918), Robert Barr, a successful young journalist, is in love with a society girl. Her mother has other plans for her daughter and secretly brings about an estrangement by taking the girl with her on a trip to Europe. There she marries a French count. At the outbreak of the war, both men are involved in the conflict and the count succumbs to wounds received in battle after being carried from “No Man’s Land” by the journalist who had joined the American Ambulance Corps. While the journalist recovers, he is free to pursue a life of happiness with the girl.
Even women reporters who showed great independence usually ended up with the man who loved them. In *The Hater of Men* (1917), reporter Janice Salsbury, a special writer on one of the big city newspapers, covers a sensational divorce case for her “sob” column. She becomes disillusioned and disgusted with the institution of marriage, saying that marriage is another name for slavery. Convinced her impending marriage to fellow reporter Billy Williams will result in a loss of her freedom, she breaks her engagement and indulges in a wild Bohemian lifestyle. She loses all respect from her friends, but her mentor, an elderly “drawing-room philosopher” finally brings a reconciliation between Billy and Janice.\(^{355}\)

Sometimes two reporters working on the same paper or on rival papers end up falling in love and getting married.\(^{356}\) When this happens, the woman usually gives up her career to become a wife and mother. *For the Last Edition* (1914) introduces Bess Landers who secures a job as a special writer on a daily paper and meets Robert (Bob) Barry, a young reporter who is not very successful. They become acquainted and finally fall in love. Bob is ordered to dig up a story on a local strike at a grain company. He is unable to get any news and fears for his job, and tells Bess about it. She gets a tip that troops are being called in. They go together to the grain company’s office. Bob creates a disturbance so Bess can slip in and hide in a closet. From her hiding place she learns of a plot to blow up a freight car containing grain and claim the strikers did it. Then they will have legal cause for calling out the troops on the grounds that the strikers precipitated the first violence. “Bess is locked in after she secures her evidence and the guard discovers her, but she eludes him by sliding down a fire hose which she unwinds and throws out a window, gets her tip to Bob, who hurries back to the office to start his ‘beat.’ Bess gets the police and they catch the two men red-handed as they blow up the freight car. She hands her final evidence over to Bob and a great big story secures Bob a raise and the two marry.”\(^{357}\)

In *The Lonely Widow* (1916), Dolly comes from college and is told by her father, a publisher, that “she couldn’t earn her salt.” “Angered, she secures a position on her father’s own newspaper under another name and is assigned by the grumpy city editor to secure an interview” from a widow who has advertised for a mate. Meanwhile, Tom, the city editor’s son, has been expelled from college and dad is determined to put him to work—and his first assignment is also to interview the widow. After misadventures, Tom and Dolly meet and determine to form a life’s partnership. In *Scooped by Cupid* (1914), a reviewer writes, “By profession, Mabel is a ‘Sob Sister,’ that is, she is a woman newspaper reporter. Kellog is the star reporter on the *Herald*, the opposition paper. A tip for an important story is dropped to the *Tribune*. Mabel is the only one on the job. With misgivings, the city editor lets her learn the inside of a bribe charge against the mayor.” Reporter Kellogg is covering the same story for the *Herald*. Mabel bests Kellog by getting an exclusive interview with the mayor, so Kellog trades places with a delivery boy to get into the mayor’s office. He finds a sheet of Mabel’s note pad, giving him an idea of the interview. “He jumps into a taxi and races toward the telegraph office overtaking Mabel, but in passing, the taxi crowds the machine occupied by Mabel into a ditch. Mabel is injured. Kellog writes his story and hands it to the operator. He has won. Then he begins to think of the little ‘Sob Sister’ he left in the ditch. He takes his story from the operator, addresses it to the *Tribune* and signs Mabel’s name. He then returns to his office, admits that he has been scooped and quits. A short time later the city editor of the *Herald* calls at Mabel’s home, where Kellogg happens to be calling, and makes the following declaration: ‘You and Cupid scooped the *Herald’s* best man, but we cannot afford to lose him and from now on his salary is raised to family size.”\(^{358}\)
In *The Breaks of the Game* (1915), reporter Marjorie Vale refuses to take fellow reporter Bob Carpenter’s romantic suit seriously until he scores a “scoop.” “Usually there is little time for sentimentality in the newspaper office, but Bob and Marjorie found a little now and then between assignments,” wrote one reviewer. The star reporter goes out to prove to the girl reporter he has the stuff to be her serious suitor. He gets a tip about a gang of opium smugglers scheduled to land a quantity of the drug that night. He and Arthur Vale, Marjorie’s brother who is also on the paper, accompany the police to the pier and get on a police boat. Marjorie get curious about the story, strolls into Chinatown, and is trapped in an opium den. Meanwhile, the police and reporters are chasing the smugglers through dark alleys near Chinatown. Bob and the police capture the smugglers, discover Marjorie, and “Bob explains that he has the biggest story that has broken in months and Marjorie remembers her promise.”

In *Husks of Love* (1916), Mary Holmes, a reporter on one of the daily newspapers, is in love with Jimmy Hale, who works on the same paper. Jimmy is also in love with Mary, but she finally decides to marry a society man. After marriage, she goes to live at his home where life is made miserable for her by his mother who feels that her son has married beneath his station. Her husband becomes equally disagreeable. Mary leaves him to live with her father, but goes back to her ailing husband out of duty. Meanwhile, Jimmy has been plugging along at his newspaper work and one day is given an assignment for a society story. He calls upon Mary, then leaves as her jealous husband returns thinking his wife has been unfaithful. They struggle, and the man takes a vase and is about to throw it when Mary shoots him. Jimmy and the whole household comes to the rescue just as her abusive husband sinks to the floor. Later he dies, so the lovers are free to marry.

In *Under Suspicion* (1918), society reporter Virginia Blake of *The Signal* doesn’t like the “idle rich,” but Gerry Simpson, a millionaire, played by silent film idol Francis X. Bushman, falls in love with her and decides to become a poor cub reporter on the paper to win her affection. After a series of misadventures in which Virginia thinks that Gerry is a jewel thief, the cub rescues the girl reporter and wins her heart. The reporter promises to marry him even though he is rich.

Romance between a reporter and an editor or a publisher usually doesn’t go very well. In *What Love Can Do* (1916), reporter Lil Magill becomes infatuated with Calvert Paige, a wealthy mine owner who owns the paper. They become lovers and she thinks he will marry her. She is beloved by the city editor, known as “old Grouch” who is ignorant of her liaison. Lil has gained the reputation of being one of the brightest newspaper women in the game and is the author of several books. Paige, who in the beginning was intrigued by her independence and personality, tires of her and it turns out the newspaper owner is playing fast and loose with Lil. Their estrangement grows when Lil takes the side of striking miners against him. She is fired by Paige. The scorned woman fills up on liquor and rushes to Paige’s home with a revolver in her handbag. Paige’s daughter, who is familiar with Lil’s writing, helps the drunken woman who is waiting for her father. Paige enters and flies into a rage on seeing his daughter and the woman he has begun to despise. Lil, in her fury, tries to shoot him but fails to do so. Meanwhile the strikers have surrounded the house. One disgruntled miner breaks through and rushes upon Paige who grabs Lil’s revolver. The man wrests it from him and fires. Lil throws herself in front of him and saves Paige’s life. During Lil’s long recovery, Paige, realizing that she has saved his life, proposes to her and there is a reconciliation.

One reviewer, writing about a 1919 film, put it this way: “Pity the editor who is in love with his ‘sob-sister’ reporter. If he assigns her to big stories and she
makes good, he feels sure that the domestic appeal will grow less in her eyes. And at the same time, he loves her so much that he just wants to help her in every way to make good for the newspaper which holds a place in his heart only second to her. Editors generally are supposed to be very wise men. But can they be wise and also be in love?\textsuperscript{363}

Sometimes the reporter got into a lot of trouble by romancing the editor’s daughter. In \textit{Kicked Out} (1917), Carter, a young newspaper reporter, wants to marry his editor’s daughter, but the father refuses until Carter proves himself worthy. Carter is sent to get an interview with a man noted for his hatred of all things connected with newspapers. He goes to the editor’s house to tell the daughter, but “somehow a Kodak accidentally snaps a picture” of Carter with the editor’s wife. Carter has a hard time getting into the house of the man he is supposed to interview, but does so in a laundry basket. He is caught and ejected. Later, he overhears a plot to kidnap the man, calls the police, and then single-handedly collars the crooks and their prey in a limousine and drives them into the jail yard, where the crooks are arrested and the man is rescued. Out of gratitude, the man offers Carter anything he wants and Carter at once demands an interview. He gets it and then hurries to the editor’s house with the scoop. The editor is pleased and Carter gets the girl but even as they embrace, a clerk arrives with the printed Kodak picture. This proves to be Carter’s undoing, for before he can explain, the editor grabs him and throws him outdoors. By the end of the film, all ends well. He keeps his job and gets the girl.\textsuperscript{364}

When editor romanced editor, it was the early version of two opposites hating each other before they fall head-over-heels in love. This plot would be used over and over again in films about journalism throughout the 20th century. \textit{The Sporting Editor} (1912),\textsuperscript{365} as one reviewer says, is “an excellent story of how two antagonistic spirits were brought together.”\textsuperscript{366} The sporting editor is Milton Burbank, who hates all women, but especially the editor of the society page, Gloria Driscoll. He is forced by the managing editor to take her to a baseball game and romance is in the air. The film starts with Milton complaining that he cannot work amid the noise and bustle of the reporter’s room and insists he must have more quiet quarters. Gloria has a nice big room all to herself so the managing editor tells her that she will have to share the room with the sporting editor. Gloria is furious and lets Burbank know it by being as disagreeable as possible. Soon there is open warfare. In an attempt to bring harmony back to the newspaper office, the editor assigns Gloria to go to a baseball game and write an account of it. She complains that she doesn’t know the game, so he sends Milton with her. As the game waxed hot and hotter, a hometown player hit a three-bagger and Milton slapped Gloria on the back. Gloria squeezed Milton’s arm. “Long after the grandstand was emptied the sporting editor and the lady editor, and as the shadows began to grow real dark, each realized that their own story was just commencing.”\textsuperscript{367}

The same problems applied to a romance between an editor and the newspaper owner. In \textit{The Other Sister} (1915), Jane Forrest is the assistant editor of \textit{The Evening Blade}, owned and managed by Henry Arnold, who has come to depend upon Jane as his “right-hand man.” Arnold likes Jane well enough and finds her companionable as well as efficient, but he never guesses that she is hiding a love for him. When Arnold tells her they are just pals, Jane knows that her love for Arnold is hopeless. When he meets Jane’s sister, he falls in love with her and they are married. The sister has long been used to pleasure and finds life with Arnold more than dull since he often chooses the office over their going out. He realizes his wife is lonely and asks Jane to go and spend the evening with her. She finds one of her sister’s former lovers at the house. While
Arnold is away on business, her sister plans to run away with this man, but Jane ensnares him, showing her sister what kind of a man he is. When Arnold returns, Jane’s sister embraces him and Arnold tells Jane that he is going to retire from the paper and turn it over to her. And that is all Jane now thinks about.368

A complicated newsroom story threw together the female writer, the managing editor, and the paper’s owner in an ethical dilemma that almost overshadowed the office romance. Reviewing Her Big Story (1913), a critic wrote: “Beatrice Nevin was the Union’s utility woman who did ‘space’ writing369 for a living which is another way of saying that Beatrice was very poor. Joel Hammond, the managing editor, grew very fond of Beatrice for he was a bachelor and a much-abused newspaperman. The owner of the Union, a banker and mayor of the town, was a mysterious personage whom the staff discussed in whispers. Beatrice then was seized with a mania to pry into the city affairs of the ‘boss’ and see what story she might uncover. From then on she shadowed the boss and neglected her regular work, and one day when Joel could no longer stand her charming beauty, he kissed her and they plighted their troth then and there, although Joel, as managing editor warned her not to go too far on the Big Story.”370 An advertisement summed up the film’s plot in more sensational terms: “She loved the managing editor, but she also loved the joy of the big exclusive story. A corrupt political boss and the Mayor of the town got her job, but couldn’t keep the story from an opposition paper. How she landed it, in the Mayor’s private library, laid him out with a statuette when he grabbed her and finally found consolation in her over-managing editor, makes a charming story.”371 After Beatrice got the story, she made the mistake of telling the boss she had the story and that the Union that night would print it. The boss-mayor laughed at her and she was fired on the spot. “Back she raced to the office and hammered out her story. Then she took it in to her sweetheart, Joel and he read it with a frown and tried to tear it up.” Then the boss entered and ordered Joel to destroy the story. “But Joel, seeing his sweetheart’s waning faith in him, threw all to the winds and resigned. The opposition paper that night carried the ‘Big Story’ and Joel crept through dark alleyways to the dreary rooms of Beatrice. Love settled the editorial difference of opinion.”372

Even in the future, female reporters would continue to be girls who fall in love and get married. In Votes for Men (1914), the year is 1927 and the entire social order is reversed. Militant suffragettes are in charge. Gwendolyn Jones, a young reporter, falls victim to a young man. She and a friend find out that the female boss of the city is plotting to stuff the ballot boxes and deprive the men of their vote. Gwendolyn gets incriminating evidence on a dictagraph and confronts the women with the evidence. They threaten to publish the story unless they can marry the boys they love and give mankind its vote. They succeed.373 It is 1950 and the women have taken over in a 1916 sarcastic film, Otto the Reporter. Otto works for The Morning Argus and is a shy and bashful man loved by both the city editor Dorothy and the married female general manager, who makes her husband stay at home and mind their baby. Otto is assigned to settlement work where he sees many disagreeable sights—the women are masters and handle the men harshly. Dorothy finally wins Otto and men who are trying hard to again get control of politics look to him for their leader. When Dorothy finds Otto addressing a meeting of the men, she denounces them and takes her husband home. She puts the baby in his arms and tells him home is where he belongs.374
Both newspaper fiction and the silent films that came out of them helped popularize the image of journalism as the great school of hard-knocks and practical experience. Audiences learned to consider the city room “the greatest classroom in America. No other occupation could approach journalism as a way to get to know the world.” Newspaper work might be arduous, unremunerated and at times disreputable, “but college men, particularly the literary sort, were drawn to it because it offered a chance to accumulate” not only experience of every nook and corner of the urban lifestyle, but also the equivalent of a college degree in writing, reporting and story-telling. Throw in how to work under incredible pressure, how to drink everyone under the table and how to get a story before anyone else, and you have a heroic, albeit flawed character with which everyone in the audience could identify.

No one was better suited to take the audience on the journey of being a journalist than the cub reporter who showed up in one novel after another and one silent film after another from 1890 to 1930. Historian Howard Good sums up the reason for this: “It begins with a young, college-educated man entering journalism, full of ideals and literary ambition and immediately suffering a series of humiliating setbacks. His stories are either killed or cut beyond recognition. He is snubbed by copy boys, abused by editors, and ignored by the rest of the staff. Then, just when he is about to be fired, he scores a sensational scoop and saves his job. He has learned through bitter experience what makes a good story and a successful newspaperman.”

In film after film, the cub reporter is bullied, pounded and pushed into something resembling a reporter. He usually starts out as an enthusiastic and plucky copy boy or newsboy and through one adventure after another moves up to the coveted position of a “newspaper reporter.” The most popular example was “Gallegher: A Newspaper Story,” a short story written by the popular heroic journalist Richard Harding Davis and published in Scribner’s Magazine in August 1890. When it appeared in book form, Gallegher sold more than 50,000 copies and was copied over and over again, made into silent films, talking pictures and eventually television programs. The first film based on Davis’ story was Gallegher (1910 and remade in 1917 and in 1928 as Let ‘Er Go Gallegher). Gallegher is a fighter by birth, a student of crime by choice and an office boy at The Press by necessity (Gallegher, 1917). A sensational murder case is going the rounds of all the newspaper offices. A millionaire has been murdered. Gallegher and the sporting editor Dwyer are hot on the story and Dwyer sends a note to the city editor urging him to hold back the forms for the next morning’s issue as long as possible. The pair get the story, but Dwyer is mistakenly arrested and it’s up to Gallegher to save the day—he leaps into a cab and drives away at top speed with Dwyer’s copy in hand. By dint of grit and cunning, he succeeds in reaching the office of the Press just as the city editor is about to give the order to close the forms. The Great Scoop (1910), made in France, is almost a direct copy of Gallegher—an office boy in a Paris newspaper office is fired for a bit of mischief, overhears two thieves planning a robbery, tells the chief reporter about it, they see the robbers at work and are arrested by mistake, but the boy rushes the reporter’s copy to the editor and is given a new job on the paper as a boy reporter.

Cub reporters mirrored more mature reporters in the stories they covered and the scrapes they got into. In For the Sunday Edition (1910), the cub gets a tip on a smuggling operation, disguises himself as a convict, infiltrates the gang, is rescued by his colleagues and writes the story of his gruesome imprisonment and the rescue. In Mum’s the Word (1913), a cub reporter is sent to
cover a Deaf and Dumb school. Although he can’t talk to anyone because he doesn’t know the language, the cub takes good notes, and even meets a girl who turns out to be another reporter and “they decide to take notes together in the future.” In The Cub (1915), Steve Oldham, a happy-go-lucky cub reporter for The Louisville Gazette is sent to cover a hillbilly feud because the editor can’t spare anyone else. He gets caught in the war between feuding hill families, falls in love with a schoolteacher, gets drunk and kisses another girl who then tells her relatives they are engaged. A fight between the two clans takes place until the cavalry arrives to save the cub and the woman he loves. In The Beat of the Year (1914), the headless body of a young man is found in the river and Connors, a newspaperman and Bruce, a cub reporter, are sent out on the story. One reviewer wrote, “It is really a detective story, involving the gradual unfolding of a crime mystery by a cub reporter of natural talent and a tendency to take the bit in his teeth and make the running. He is sent out on an assignment as an assistant to the star reporter, but he cuts loose on his own account, gathers a number of small clues and, through a process of reasoning that involves quick perception as well as infinite pains, he clears up a perplexing problem in time to make the scoop of the year.” In The Gang’s New Member (1915), a cub newspaper reporter who attempts to make good with his paper gathers a number of small clues and, through a process of reasoning that involves quick perception as well as infinite pains, he clears up a perplexing problem in time to make the scoop of the year.” In The Kidnapped Stockbroker (1915), Cub Reporter Alan Hyde of The New York Trumpet, aided by the cleverness of his sweetheart, solves the mysterious disappearance of a wealthy stockbroker nearly losing his life before the case is solved. In Acquitted (1916), Ned Fowler, a clever cub reporter, helps clear a bookkeeper accused of murdering his partner who was actually killed by a coke-sniffing night watchman. He ends up marrying a woman he meets on the case. In The Pursuing Vengeance (1916), Cub Reporter Jack Godfrey does what most everyone considers impossible — captures a Paris jewel thief, solves the murders of several people killed while inspecting an antique cabinet, and gets the scoop in the process.

Cub reporters also showed up in serials playing the dare-devil, courageous journalist always in jeopardy. In the 15-chapter serial, The Mystery of the Double Cross (1917), Cub Reporter Dick Annersley is played by Gladden James, an actor who had been a reporter on the Columbus Dispatch, and he knows only “reel reporters” use note-books. Dick, playing a supporting role, solves the case and then marries the woman he loves. In the 18-chapter serial, The Mystery Ship (1917-1918), Jack Fay of The Herald is a wealthy man working on a newspaper for the excitement of it. Fay is in the center of the action when he and another man go to rescue the heroine after natives threaten to offer her as a sacrifice into the seething lava of the burning volcano (Episode 5, 1917).

When the star reporter fails to do the job or is unavailable, desperate editors call on their cubs to save the day. In His Crazy Job (1913), the managing editor of the Clarion is determined to get information on graft in the management of the State Asylum. The reporter he sends to investigate fails — “his arrogant and impertinent methods result in his being forcibly ejected from the asylum.” The reporter returns and says the inside facts are impossible to get. The editor is disgusted. “Only too gladly he gives the cub reporter a chance to secure the facts.” The cub feigns insanity to get into the asylum. After learning all the inside dope, the cub attempts to escape but is recaptured and placed in the iron cell flanked on either side by wild men. The warden’s niece is attracted to the cub and helps him get over the wall and, pursued by guards, the cub runs all the way to the newspaper office where the editor protects him from the pursuers.
“On the following day the warden’s niece returns the cub’s wallet and watch and proves her sanity by admiring the cub immensely.” In *The Cub Reporter* (1912), Jack Denning, a cub on “one of the biggest sheets in town,” is assigned a train wreck because the star reporter is “on a spree.” His girlfriend, Molly, a telegrapher, works near the wreck, takes photographs and writes up the complete details of the story she got from the conductor. The star reporter sees the city editor give Denning his instructions and when the cub lays down his notes, the star reporter changes the instructions. Even after a wild automobile ride, Denning still misses the train, but Molly sends him the complete story which he relays to his newspaper scoring a scoop. “Molly leaves on the first train to give Denning the films of the wreck. Sure of promotion for his ‘beat,’ Denning lifts Molly to the train and carries her off to the city. They are congratulated by the city editor and Denning receives the promotion which enables him to marry Molly.”

In *The Cub Reporter’s Big Scoop* (1912), the absence of the star reporter also gives the cub a chance to interview a big sugar merchant. On the way to the man’s house, he rescues the man’s daughter from a robber. When he arrives at his destination, the businessman, who detests interviews and has no love for reporters, refuses to give him an interview. When he tries to climb in a window to phone his editor, the daughter recognizes him and phones her father to give the cub the interview. The big scoop earns Jack a salary increase and his able write-up of the sugar deal mollifies the businessman who finally agrees to say, “Bless you, my children.”

A reviewer in *The New York Times*, writing about *Say! Young Fellow* (1918), had some advice for future journalists: “He is a newspaper reporter in the play, and all ambitious young reporters anxious to learn about the future, even by the process of elimination, should go to see the film so that they may know some of the things that, no matter how exciting and varied their experience, they can never be and do.” The film stars Douglas Fairbanks —“The Young Fellow” —who is one of the greatest stars of the silent film era. The Cub Reporter for *The New York Herald* is assigned to get an interview with a financier who made a million dollars in one day and refused to talk to the paper’s star reporter. He scales the millionaire’s wall, breaks into his house through the second story and gets the interview at gunpoint after sitting on the man’s chest in bed. The financier offers The Young Fellow a chance to make money through questionable methods but he decides his first loyalty is to the paper. The editor, much impressed, then assigns the cub to unearth the facts concerning a scheme by the millionaire to defraud a group of minor stockholders in a small town. With the help of an attractive secretary, the cub’s spinster landlady, the determined reporter climbs walls, jumps from roofs, battles a gang of crooks, finds a perilous perch over revolving flywheels and ousts the crooks at the last minute, obtains a sensational story and wins the secretary’s heart. One of the cleverest gimmicks in the film is that whenever the cub reporter is troubled or undecided, The Hunch, a miniature version of the cub, perches on his shoulder offering common-sense advice and encouragement at decisive moments in his career starting off with the words of the title.

Often cub reporters were pitted against mature reporters to get the story and prove themselves worthy of the job. In *An Unexpected Scoop* (1916), the Herald’s city editor gives Bert Allen, cub reporter, an opportunity to scoop The Express by ordering him to interview the mysterious country architect who has just won a prize in the court house design contest. At about the same time, Jim Baker, veteran reporter of the Express sets out to scoop on the same story. While waiting to rent a rig, Bert hears a scream from a pretty girl with a baby in her lap whose purse has been snatched by a thief. Bert gives chase to the tramp and after a battle recovers the purse and consents to watch the child. Meanwhile, Jim Baker has arrived and bribed the blacksmith to
hire him the rig. Bert sees his rival Baker driving away to steal the story. Bert gives chase with the baby clinging to his neck with the girl, thinking the child is about to be kidnapped, running wildly after. The rival reporter escapes and Bert, too angry to explain to the girl, thrusts the baby in her arms and dashes back to whip the traitorous blacksmith. As they are about to fight, the girl comes up and learns what they are in search of. Thereupon she bursts into laughter, announces that she is the architect and that Baker will have his trip for nothing. Also, she tells Bert that she is not married.

Editors often spent time educating their cubs as to what is news and what is a good news story. In *Two News Items* (1916), the managing editor of *The Daily Bugle* was in his office with the cub reporter. “Hall,” he said, “you have no sense of news value. The story of an ordinary laborer may be told in three lines, but news about a very prominent person is worth front page headlines.” The reporter’s first item in the paper the following day was: “The body of a white woman found floating in the East River last night was later identified as that of Katie Fagan, 650-Barren alley. No reason was given for the suicide.” The cub reporter, however, missed the rest of the story, which he failed to write. Katie was a product of the tenements. Life held no joy for her and meant continual work. Her husband worked hard and drank a bit to make him forget his grim struggle for existence. One night while intoxicated, he almost hit her, until she told him they were to become parents. Then a strike was called because the men’s wages were reduced 25 percent. There was no money to pay the rent. The desperate husband made a frantic appeal to the factory owner at his mansion but was thrown out. He secured a janitorial position at the Children’s Outing Association only to be callously dismissed by the factory owner who was its major sponsor. After the husband is arrested for sneaking into the millionaire’s home to secure the money owed to him, Katie is evicted from their room. When he was arrested, Katie was wild with grief. Having lost the will to go on, Katie grabs the baby things she had saved and then throws herself into the river. *The Daily Bugle*’s front page headline contained the reporter’s other bit of real news: It reported that the factory owner —referred to as a “noted philanthropist” —had contributed to the Children’s Outing Assn. a check for $50,000. “Ten Thousand Children to be Made Happy by a Week in the Country.”

Occasionally an older reporter or writer would take advantage of the cub’s lack of experience. In *The Storm Woman*, a cub reporter is anxious to get a good story for the Sunday edition and seeing a mysterious Italian woman and her fortune-telling parakeets, he believes she would make a good topic. An elderly reporter promises to give the cub the story of her past. He makes up the entire tale, which the cub believes. Then the cub finds the older man laughing. He tells the cub he thought it a pretty good story for a cup of coffee and a plate of beans. In *The Empty Cab* (1918), Henry Egbert Xerxes is the son of the owner of the *Times* and has been ordered to work by his wealthy father so he gets a job as a cub reporter on the paper. The editor of the paper was not very enthusiastic about employing the proprietor’s son and finally gives him his first assignment, doing a story on a gang of counterfeiters. The city editor gave him his only clue: the rendezvous inn where the gang meets. At the inn, he finds a girl being held captive. After a series of adventures with the thugs, he and the girl escape and he rushes home to write up the story. He wakes up in the morning to find that not a line of “the biggest story of the year” is in print. Henry storms into the city room only to discover that the entire business was a hoax intended to test his reporter’s instincts and to break him into the newspaper business. The girl turns out to be the society editor and the men all members of the staff. His father had planned the little surprise for Henry with the aid of the editor. But Henry wins in the end. His father turns the newspaper over
to him. He fires the society editor and tells her he loves her and finds she loves him in return and all ends happily. 396

Sometimes when cub reporters miss the story, they will go to any lengths to keep their job—even if it means making up a story. 397 In *The Cub and the Daisy Chain* (1915), Cub Reporter Jimmy is assigned to get a story about a woman on the “one hundred and forty-sixth anniversary of her birth.” He can’t find the old lady, gives up the search and returns to the office with an interesting fake. “According to Jimmy, her birthday party is a delightful affair in which the venerable woman is bedecked with daisies and made the center of a merry festival, all the children of the neighborhood taking part. Unknown to Jimmy, the subject of his colorful story died on that very day and a death notice is phoned to the office. The young woman who receives the message saves Jimmy’s job by altering his story to include the woman’s death.” 398

Cub reporters, just as their experienced counterparts, were often minor characters who played an important role in the plot. In *Martin Eden* (1914), a cub reporter goes to a meeting hall where the sailor Eden gives an impromptu speech and the cub is so impressed he portrays Eden in the morning paper as Oakland’s leading socialist. This creates all kinds of problems for the hero. In *The Power of the Press* (1914 and reissued in 1916), a cub reporter from *The Herald*, who is not above sneaking into houses to get information, “by clever work discovers the truth. In his big story, through ‘the power of the press,’” a man falsely imprisoned is vindicated. 399 In *The Trunk Mystery* (1914), an enterprising cub reporter perpetrates a murder hoax—a murder was supposed to have been committed in a coal yard by a man in a flashy overcoat—that has repercussions for the major characters. In *Sammy, the Cub Reporter* (1915), the cub reporter for *The Globe* is very ambitious to become a journalist, and works as cub reporter in the evenings. In *Claudia* (1916), a cub reporter eventually helps a pair of lovers get married.

Sometimes two cubs are more fun than a single cub reporter. In *The Black Circle* (1919), a silent film periodical writer summed up the beginning of the film that takes place in a New York newspaper office, this way: “He was only a cub reporter and she was cubbess reporteress on a big city daily. When they traded assignments, she got in trouble about the story he wrote for her. City editors are just horrible things anyway and this ambitious young couple quit because they were discharged.” 400 The article *Cub Reporter Andrew (Andy) MacTavish Ferguson* wrote for *Cub Reporter Lucy Baird* criticized the political party backing the paper. The two go to her hometown, the small Southern mountain town of Bradford where her father, Daniel Baird, is about to run for sheriff and hires them to edit his newspaper. When they expose a gang of whiskey smugglers, a note with black circles drawn on the owner and male cub reporter symbolize death. Daniel Baird wins the election, then arrests the gang after they capture Andy. The two cubs then decide to stay and start housekeeping. Suggested Catch Lines: “Here’s where a ‘Cub’ puts the ‘Rep’ into ‘Reporter’ which wins him an editorship and troubles innumerable” and “‘Oh, for the life of a newspaperman,’ he cried—and he many times escaped losing his own life on the job.” 401

It was hard for audiences not to root for the cub reporter, who was always the picked-upon underdog, especially when he or she turned defeat into a solid victory. In *The Floor Below* (1918), Patricia O’Rourke is a good-natured prankster who works as a copy girl for the *Sentinel* who “trudges back and forth with the work of editors and typesetters. By turns she is a slave to duty and an ally to the spirit of mischief, adored by the men with whom she works when she is
not causing them to swear at her for her pranks.” She’s a sort of journalistic ne’er-do-well, whose sudden brilliant “beat” covers her paper and herself with glory. She is about to lose her job when the managing editor offers her one more chance if she will disguise herself as a derelict and mingle with crooks in order that she might get a line for the paper on the activities of a bunch of thieves. She ends up at a mission run by a millionaire and after a series of misadventures, gets the story and falls in love with the millionaire, who turns out to be innocent. A scene at the end of the film shows everyone in the newsroom congratulating Patsy while the star reporter puts paper into the typewriter and writes the story. The editor writes out a check for Patsy and tells her, “We are all proud of you!” The final shot is Patsy outside the newspaper building, smiling and watching the newsboys going by with her story on the front page. In *Roughing the Cub* (1913), a cub reporter is an aspiring poet who gets a job on *The World* covering the police beat. When the other reporters find out he is a poet, they “put up a game on him” and send him chasing from one fake story to another. By accident, he stumbles across a real scoop that could turn out to be the biggest story in the paper’s history.

Even when a cub didn’t get the story, he became someone the audience could root for. In *The Wrong Miss Wright* (1914), a female advocate of equal rights refuses to be interviewed by half dozen reporters and flees to her country home. A cub reporter is instructed to do whatever it takes to get a photo and an interview. He lays siege to the woman’s country home. On each of his attempts to enter he is forcibly ejected. Finally, the woman’s niece decides to take a walk and believing she is the agitator, the reporter forces an interview from her and takes her picture as she is escaping over the fence. The reporter writes up his exclusive story and it is ready for the press when a wire arrives from the agitator saying that the reporter interviewed the wrong woman, but that if he will call, he will be granted an interview and given a photograph of the real agitator. The cub again calls at the country home and “this time he interviews the niece knowing she is not the right party. And he just keeps on interviewing and interviewing and interviewing.”

A good deal of fiction and some silent films worried that once the cub reporter became an ace reporter, the newspaper he served for many years could end up being his cemetery. “Newspaper work offers a smattering of all kinds of knowledge and can be used as a stepping stone to something else. But the man who tries to make a career of it, who sticks to it, is doomed. The protagonist listens to the cynical talk of veteran reporters and editors and sees the ruinous effects that long, irregular hours, low pay and sordid prying into other people’s affairs have had on them. Suddenly afraid for his future, he seeks to escape into a more rewarding and respectable line of work,” such as being a novelist or a playwright, or a career in public relations or advertising.
The stereotypical metropolitan newspaper daily editor was in full bloom by the time the silent pictures were invented, a staple of 19th and early 20th century fiction. Most newspaper fiction published from 1890 to 1930 took place in the city “amid the foul tenements and grimy factories in which the mass-circulation daily was born, was the unruly child of urbanization, industrialization and immigration. The tens of thousands of people who flocked to the city to find jobs in the wake of the Industrial Revolution swelled the site of the reading public. They became the semiliterate patrons of the sensational press” and the enthusiastic audience for moving pictures. For an immigrant audience that could barely read and speak English, much of the information they had about the world in which they lived, aside from personal experience, came from the movies.

Most of the time the audience didn’t need a title card to tell them how angry the city editor was and what he was saying to his reporters who didn’t do the job he had told them to do. The urban newsroom, even in silent films, was a bustling, noisy place in which to work and when the camera cut to a close-up of an editor shouting out a reporter’s name, everyone knew something was up. The look of disgust on an editor’s face without a word said was enough for the audience to know this journalist was not happy and there would be consequences to pay. In The Tramp Reporter (1913), for example, the city editor gets violent when his reporters come in with the same stories every other newspaper in town has published. He demands something no one else has — a “scoop” in which the reporters solve the mystery of the day. In The Voice in the Night (1916), Richard Powell, a newspaper reporter, is taken to task by his editor for inattention to his duties in regard to the furnishing of interesting “copy,” and told that unless he can find better “stories” he will have to seek another position. In The Eternal Conflict (1912), the City Editor of the Daily Leader knew that the city’s government was not ruled on a very straight line. He assigned a few reporters to get the evidence of corruption and conspiracy, but after supreme and persevering effort, their only success was failure. The city editor swore when the reporters admitted their defeat — proving thereby his right to be city editor. He assigns a female reporter to the story and she comes true. Then the blow! The editor-in-chief destroyed the story, for the reason that only editors-in-chief and corrupt politicians know. The film also showed that no matter how powerful the city or managing editor, his superiors could overrule him whenever they wanted to.

Editors were more than journalists. They were the boss. In At Liberty — Good Press Agent (1912), an editor kicks a press agent out of his office for bothering him. In Politics (1910), an editor attacks a candidate for office throwing both families into turmoil because the editor’s son is in love with the candidate’s daughter. In Twist Love and Loyalty (1910), a managing editor, loyal to his newspaper, must decide whether to print a story that would have severe consequences to the people he cares most about. In Only a Sister (1911), the editor of a local paper starts a journalistic campaign against some gamblers who decide to get revenge by ruining his son. In Cynthia’s Agreement (1912), an editor publishes an article almost defaming a man’s character. The man’s girlfriend interviews the editor and in a businesslike way convinces him that the man is a person of honor and veracity. The next day, the newspaper publishes an article saying the man was falsely accused and apologizes for the mistake. In First Woman Jury in America (1912), a young California newspaper editor is arrested and chooses a female jury because he is sure his attractiveness will appeal to this jury.
Often the editor was as much of a journalist-hero as any reporter. Off the bad guys go after a member of the editor’s family. In *The Night Riders of Petersham* (1914), Burnay is editor of the local paper and has many enemies because he has waged a war against the city’s prominent residents who run an illicit still in the hills. The editor is warned to beware of the “night riders.” They capture the editor’s son who recognizes among them a well-known citizen. They bind him and set him adrift on a raft. He is rescued and brought to his father’s office. The “riders” have left a note threatening to burn the place if another edition of the paper is published. Burnay declares his intention of getting out the next edition in spite of their threats. In *Only a Sister* (1914), Falk is the editor of a local paper and publishes an article attacking a gambler and his followers who swear vengeance against the editor. His son is an alcoholic and the gang plan to strike at the editor by ruining his son. But his sister saves the day.

Editors, like reporters, became heroic dare-devils risking life and limb to fight the good fight. In the 16-chapter serial *The Crimson Stain Mystery* (1916), Harold Stanley, editor and owner of the biggest newspaper in the city, the *Examiner*, is the son of a crusading newspaper publisher who was murdered. He investigates a series of murders committed by mutant geniuses created by a mad doctor. In the process, Stanley also falls for Florence, the doctor’s daughter. The editor survives automobile chases, bomb explosions, kidnapping, and other adventures before he solves the mystery of the Crimson Stain. In another 16-episode serial, *Jimmy Dale, Alias The Grey Seal* (1917), editor Herman Carruthers, a meteoric leader in the newspaper world, went from reporter to managing editor of the morning *News Argus* within the short space of a few years. He matches wits with the Grey Seal in a cunning game of cat and mouse, all the while unaware that the thief is his close friend and Harvard classmate, Jimmie Dale, a wealthy young bachelor—playboy by day and the Grey Seal by night breaking into businesses or homes, cracking safes, leaving a diamond shaped “seal” and never taking anything, just doing it “for the sheer deviltry of it.” After a woman catches him, she blackmails him to wage war on crime. In *Jimmy Dale, Alias the Grey Seal: Episode Four: The Metzer Murder Mystery* (1917), Dale goes to a murder site as a cub reporter with Carruthers by his side. To prove the Grey Seal’s innocence, Jimmy shows Carruthers that a police captain has put the blame on the Grey Seal in order to get the reward offered for the fugitive. The captain is given the choice of leaving the city or being sent to prison for 20 years.

Sometimes the editor would go after crooked politicians. In *The Truth About Helen* (1915), a conscientious newspaper editor’s investigation helps clear a candidate falsely accused. In *The Kick Out* (1915), Mark Evans, the enthusiastic editor of *The Clarion*, an insignificant daily paper, champions the people’s cause. The political boss finds out *The Clarion* is going to print a confession from one of the boss’s men that will put him in jail. The boss orders the wrecking of the *Clarion* office, but the cunning printer hides the chases with the story. “The editor reaches the scene in his automobile, the press is intact, chases secured, the automobile backed up to the side of the office, and through a hole chopped in the wall ropes are attached and the automobile engine runs the press, bringing out the edition which is the means of the ‘kick out’ of the boss, the saving of the city, the restoration of the mayor to public confidence, and the happy culmination of the editor’s romance with the mayor’s daughter.” In *The Reprisal* (1915), the editor of the city’s leading newspaper refuses to support anything but “clean politics.” An unscrupulous politician tries to buy up the newspaper. Since the editor is engaged to a judge’s daughter, corrupt politicians put pressure on the judge to influence the policy of the newspaper and he tells his daughter he will never consent to the marriage unless the young man changes his
views. But nothing will change the editor’s view—even his sweetheart’s appeal. They try to put the editor in a compromising position with the judge’s maid, but the judge’s daughter overhears the conspirators and takes the servant’s place. In the meantime, the judge has telephoned the rival paper to send their best reporter to write a more favorable story. The maid shows up at the editor’s house and the politicians storm the front door. They demand to know where the editor hid the maid and taunt him with the prospective headlines in the morning papers. Just as he is about to capitulate, the maid appears, throws back her veil and informs everyone that she has been secretly married to Paul for several months. Her father is dumbfounded but is convinced by the wedding ring on her finger. In The White Terror (1915), Clifford Cole, the editor of the Clarion, crusades against the owner of a grinding corporation that employs child labor and disregards all laws of health and sanitation. The political machine then muzzles the paper. A reformer, Matthew Brand is appalled at what he has read in the newspaper and buys the paper retaining the editor to help him in his efforts to wipe out tuberculosis. They start at once on an article that drives the owner wild with rage when the paper comes off the press. Brand, the man who is so bitterly opposing him and printing the vitriolic stories is none other than the man who has been courting his daughter. It turns out his daughter is suffering from tuberculosis. In the meantime, an employee sets a bomb in the rear of The Clarion office and lights it, while on the inside, Brand and a helper are working over some copy. A premature explosion kills the employee while the falling bricks and masonry seriously injure Brand. The owner is told by the family physician there is no place to treat his daughter since his corporation has fought to keep out all sanitariums. His daughter’s illness prompts the money baron to listen to Brand and vows to help. His daughter survives and she and Brand are engaged to be married.

Often the editor risks his life to do the right thing. In The District Attorney (1915), General Ruggles is the editor of a reform newspaper who helps an imprisoned man expose a corrupt contractor’s forgery scheme. In Little Pal (1915), an editor of a little local paper in Kilisnoo, Alaska is mercilessly beaten up for his interference with some of a notorious gunman’s unscrupulous and unlawful actions. In The Argonauts of California, 1849 (1916), the editor of the San Francisco Bulletin is killed by outlaws and outraged citizens organize vigilante committees.

More often than not, an editor is involved in exposing corruption wherever he finds it. In The Clarion (1916), Harrington Surtaine originally buys the newspaper that is attacking his father whom it accuses of selling quack medicines. The civic-minded Harrington, however, wants to expose those responsible for the city’s problems. He opposes tenement owners and alienates his fiancee whose father is a city slumlord. When he writes an editorial against a wealthy girl guilty of reckless automobile driving, he is swamped with libel suits and a loss of advertisers, but he continues to fight the good fight even though his fiancee and one of the girl’s friends, tries in vain to keep the story out of the newspaper. Then he discovers his father does indeed earn his living through patent medicine so he continues the newspaper’s campaign against him. A former employee of the paper leads a group of anarchists who blow up The Clarion office by hurling a bomb wrecking the building and killing several people. The anarchist is chased through the town and run down. By then his fiancee and his father see the light—she returns to him and his father agrees to stop manufacturing his snake oil. In The Grand Passion (1918), New York newspaperman Jack Ripley is hired by his friend, the corrupt boss of a munitions town called Powderville, to start a newspaper called The Trumpet. The boss intends to use the sheet for his own purposes. Ripley envisions The Trumpet as an instrument of good and even though he is
drugged and robbed while on his first assignment, he uses the paper to reform the boss and the town. Both men fall in love with the same woman and rush to her rescue when she is abducted by a gunman and locked in a brothel. They rescue her after a thrilling fight and hide her in the print shop, but a mob storms the office. With the town on fire, the boss urges Jack to escape with the woman. He is mortally wounded, and the woman returns as the reformed boss dies in her arms. In His Own Home Town (1918), Editor David Landis of the Chronicle is dedicated to the eradication of corruption in his town. When he dies, he wills the newspaper to Jimmy, a struggling playwright who has made good. Jimmy uses the newspaper to expose the gangsters and rout them out of office getting slightly wounded in the process. Landis’ daughter, Carol, an actress, discovers Jimmy wrote the play that made her a star and she accepts his proposal of marriage. The Moving Picture World stated that the film was “a story showing the power of the press in destroying organized graft.” Another article pointed out that “every newspaper man from cub reporter to managing editor” will appreciate this film.

Often editors would come in conflict with their publishers resulting in a fight over who really had control over the newspaper. In A Deal in Real Estate (1914), Riley Leigh, the newly installed city editor of the Tribune, receives a warning from his publisher that the next libel suit brought against the paper will result in his dismissal. The editor is in love with a deacon’s daughter, but the deacon is threatening to sue the newspaper over a story about a haunted house. The editor investigates, discovers that the deacon himself turns out to be the mysterious ghost. The editor and a police officer grab the deacon who begs for mercy. He drops the libel suit and appeals to Leigh to save him from prison. Leigh tells the deacon that at present he has no reason to protect him, “but as your son-in-law, I would hide the family disgrace.” A reviewer adds, “The deacon bursts into anger, but finally cools down and with very bad grace calls in his daughter, who appears in charming negligee and hands her over to the young city editor.”

It wasn’t just the owner of a newspaper who could control an editor’s destiny. The public could be just as ruthless if the editor didn’t play fair. One reviewer wrote that The New Editor (1911) was “a good newspaper story, telling how a young man becomes first assistant editor, then editor of the Mayville Clarion.” The Clarion editor Silas P. Bunker is bribed to keep suffragette news out of the paper in a fight for municipal ownership of waterworks by the women of the town. Women storm the newspaper office and “when the editor is last seen, he is rapidly climbing a telegraph pole to escape the fury of the women.” The head of the suffragette group buys the paper and makes Reporter Dick, who has fallen in love with the woman’s daughter, the editor.

Editors who showed up in lawless Western towns often brought civilization to the growing community. In Truthful Tulliver (1917), the famous Western star William S. Hart plays the journeying newspaperman who arrives in a lawless town of Glory Hole and sets up a newspaper with the help of journeyman printer and compositor “Silver Lode” Thompson. Editor Tulliver takes on the local saloon owner after watching some girls being insulted by men hanging around the saloon and dance hall. He rushes to their assistance and the next day states in an editorial, under big headlines, that the saloon keeper Doyle must go. Truthful then rides his horse into the saloon, lassos Doyle and drags him behind his horse out of town. That night, the saloon keeper takes a shot at Truthful, but misses. The editor drives the owner and his partner out of town, then realizes that the partner is not at fault and is love with a girl whose sister Truthful cares about. He brings back the partner who marries the sister. The woman “turns toward him, with her thanks and relief, and sees him watching her with such eloquent eyes that hers fall for a moment. Then
she comes to him and with happy faces, hands clasped” they see her sister marry and “as the priest blesses them, Truthful clasps her close.” In *The Coming of the Law* (1919), Editor Kent Hollis (played by silent film western star, Tom Mix), a tenderfoot from the East, arrives in a western community to settle up lands inherited from his father. The town is run by an evil gang and Kent decides to run his father’s ranch and weekly newspaper, *The Kicker*, until law and order are brought into the community. He falls in love with a local gal who the villain also covets. Kent’s life is in danger all the time. He is beaten up by several thugs, but Kent’s coolness, courage and endurance keep him safe until Election Day when he has a big fight with the leader of the gang who is stuffing the ballot box, rescues his kidnapped girlfriend, and gets elected to sheriff, defeating the villain. The forces of law and order restored to the town, Kent claims Nellie as his wife.

Outside the office, editors suffered the same problems most fathers do —approving the man who wants to marry the daughter. In *The House That Jack Moved* (1915), an editor was trying to start an auto he had taken in trade and was so busy he left his daughter to run the local paper. She supported a reform candidate in the election and had accepted his proposal for marriage. The luckless “editor simply toiled on and finally came back to earth with a start when the young couple drove up, and offered to tow him home if he would give them his blessing. The editor philosophically blessed them, and was prosaically towed home. And as the car rolled along, he decided that an auto was a good investment, for had it not been for his ’40 horse power,’ his daughter might not have won the most desirable young man in town.

In *The Campaign Manageress* (1913), an editor of the town’s only newspaper, opposes the reform candidate for sheriff even though the candidate is engaged to the editor’s daughter. When the editor gets sick, his daughter acts as editor and prints an attack against the machine candidate. The candidate comes to the newspaper office to horsewhip the editor, but the girl disarms him, forces him into the street at the point of his own gun and denounces him to the crowd. He escapes, but his chances of winning the election are gone. As one reviewer put it, “Of course, the public will no longer vote for a man who is worsted by a woman, especially for the office of sheriff, and the way is cleared for the lovers, as the father has no more objection to” his future son-in-law “who is elected by a large majority.”

In *Wanted, a Burglar* (1913), an editor looked down on a printer of the *Corntown Clarion* because he did nothing except get out the paper. The trouble started when the printer fell in love with the editor’s daughter. The editor’s rage was terrible. But the printer and his daughter outwitted the editor in a scheme that got the editor to approve the marriage.

Editors were also susceptible to falling in love with women in and out of the office. In *Trapped by Wireless* (1912), the city editor is in love with the daughter of the reform candidate for mayor and when a reporter on the paper rigs a compromising photo to discredit the candidate, he refuses to run the picture and is fired by the managing editor who is deceived by the reporter, who is then made city editor. When the unscrupulous reporter’s conduct is exposed, the city editor is reinstated and happily reunited with the woman he loves. In *The Refugees* (1915), young Jimmie Hicks is editor of the town’s weekly paper in love with an aunt’s niece. When two tramps visit her aunt, the editor denounces them as hoodlums. His sweetheart is furious at him and breaks their engagement. Jimmy follows the two men and discovers they are engaged in a wild debauch. “Then he hastens to his office and gets out an extra. The next morning the villagers are shocked to read the scandalous news, but believe it is only a scheme on the part of the jilted Hicks to get even with his sweetheart. A crowd of them set off for the editor’s office,
fully determined to lynch the young man for his libelous attacks against the ‘refugees,’ but after some argument, young Hicks convinces them that he is telling the truth. They all march to the house where they find the two tramps quite dead to the world from the previous night’s celebration. The two of them are arrested by the town constable and the young editor makes it up with his sweetheart.” 

In *The Wild Girl* (1917), Editor Donald McDonald, a crusading young journalist, meets a gypsy girl dressed and reared as a boy and hires her as an errand runner for his local newspaper. She soon falls secretly in love with him. The gypsy chief’s son wants the woman back and shows up to claim her, but the editor, after a hard fight, rescues her and puts the son in jail. The girl sees Donald and his secretary together and is convinced that he does not love her so she leaves. The editor locates her and declares his undivided love for her.

Editors were an attractive catch for women of the time but when the female didn’t get the man she wanted, the repercussions could be deadly. In *Despair* (1915), a gang attempts to rob the house of Robert Spurier, editor of a newspaper, but Lois, a female member of the gang, is caught in the act by Spurier, who is so impressed with her beauty that he gives her a chance to live honestly. She becomes a member of his newspaper’s staff and falls in love with the editor. When the editor gets married, Lois contemplates suicide, but instead goes back to a life of crime. She robs Spurier’s house, is discovered and shot as a burglar, dying in the editor’s arms as he kisses her, much to the bride’s dismay.

Sometimes the editor’s image didn’t square with his private life. In *Fit for Burning* (1916), Dick Foraker, the editor of the reform paper, is the noble and unselfish champion of every cause that looks for moral betterment—or at least that is his public image. It is one that his girlfriend, Constance, cherishes because Foraker is her idol and her ideal. One night, Constance goes to a resort looking for a missing girl and finds her in the arms of Foraker with empty wine glasses on the table. He sees his Constance’s face in the window but in his drunken condition thinks it is a phantom. The manager of the resort and the men in the establishment come to Constance’s assistance and it goes hard with the editor. “The next day the editor is seated at his desk reading in his own paper an account of how he was pitched upon by ruffians and badly beaten while on a mission of uplift in the slums.” He thinks this will even make him more lovable to his Constance. But his complacent musings are interrupted by a boy who hands him a package with the ring he gave Constance accompanied with a brief note—“just a few words of molten grief, direct from her broken heart.” “It is enough to convince the editor that the face at the transom was not a figment of his brain, that those pure serene eyes had beheld him with his mask off, and nowhere in this wide world could he ever again hide his shame.”

In *The Single Code* (1917), Editor Hugh Carrington of the *Purist Magazine* delivers lectures on tolerance, understanding and a single code of morals. A woman, who was betrayed as a young girl, is inspired and volunteers to work in the editor’s rescue mission. They fall in love and are married. After they are married, the wife learns that her husband had a previous illicit relationship with a vamp but following her husband’s teachings, she forgives him. When Carrington discovers his wife’s transgressions, he lacks the courage to follow his own convictions and leaves her. Later, realizing his hypocrisy, he returns to be reconciled to his wife and to the “single code.”

In *A Hindu Hoodoo* (1917), a city editor of a newspaper by day assumes the role of a crystal gazer by night to fool his wife and the public.

As opposed to the image of the editor as a tyrant in the newsroom, some editors were depicted as sensitive human beings capable of being compassionate and capable of making mistakes and
errors in judgment. In The Girl and the Grafter (1913), the reviewer wrote about editors this way: “The city editor was really a human being, not one of those cold heartless machines which some writers like to talk about. His staff was enthusiastically loyal to him and every member of it sympathized when it seemed that his star was in danger of an eclipse. The editor had printed a story which met with the disapproval of the city’s political boss, who revenged himself by giving news ‘beats’ to the rival sheets. The managing editor realized what the trouble was, and decided it was necessary to sacrifice his hard working city editor. He gave the editor one week’s grace, but made it clear that at the end of the time if he was still on the outs with the boss he must seek another job.” In The Final Judgment (1913), The night city editor Frank McCormack has a past — when he was in the Klondike, he was wounded in a pistol fight by a friend he was trying to rescue from drink and ruin. The man, believing he had killed his friend, escaped to New York with his child. His wife followed in the hoping of finding both of them. Fifteen years later, McCormack discovers his old friend in his home who drops dead thinking he has seen a ghost. He finds his son at a military academy and gets him a job as a reporter on his paper. He is about to advise the cub that he’s not very good and should look for other work, when a reporter calls the desk to say he needs help to cover a factory fire story where hundreds of women are in danger. The cub is assigned and at the scene of the conflagration, he forgets his duty as a reporter and hurries to rescue a woman who has fainted on the fire escape. They are both rescued and rushed to a hospital. When McCormack comes to see them, he realizes that the woman the boy rescued is his long-lost mother. The story ends with the editor apprising the two of their relationship.

Journalists often took on extra jobs that would be frowned upon today but were perfectly acceptable in real-life journalism of the early 20th century. In The Rajah’s Vacation (1914), rival sports editors Hennessy and Morris are mutual victims of bad luck — they are broke and up against it. The advance agent of the circus asks them to handle the newspaper notices and bill posting and they will receive $50,000 for their work. Joyfully they carry out his instructions, but the proprietor won’t pay. So the advance agent advises them to attach “Rajah,” the elephant, if the showman will not pay them. The sheriff attaches the elephant and the elephant eats all the hay in town before being used by a department store for advertising. The sporting editors get enough money to pay their bills and the circus gets the elephant back.

Sometimes the editor was as corrupt as journalists could be — ignoring the public trust and using the press for personal, financial or political gain. In The Man Who Called After Dark (1916), an editor turns out to be the killer everyone is searching for. In The Day of Judgment (1913), an editor of a sensational newspaper hears about an illegitimate business plan. But he agrees to keep the news from becoming public if the president of the bank involved pays him large sums of hush money at stated intervals. Then the crash comes and the banker, getting tired of always being obliged to pay, refuses, and forthwith the blackmailing editor prints the facts resulting in the banker killing himself. In The Black Envelope (1914-1915), Estan DeBussy, the editor-inchief of the leading daily newspaper, loses his fiancee to another man, who is accused of not repaying a debt to a woman he once had an affair with. The man is running for mayor and the editor uses that information to blackmail him. The honeymooning couple search for the receipt proving he has repaid his debt, which had been placed in a black envelope, but the receipt has been stolen. DeBussy meets with the faithful wife and tells her that he has the receipt and that he will give it to her if she comes to his house that night. To save her husband’s honor she goes to the editor and obtains the receipt. After a struggle, she kills DeBussy, then kills herself. In Half a
Rogue (1916), editors of political papers will do anything to support their party. The editor of the local Democratic paper, controlled by the boss of the local Democrats, is forced by the boss to publish a false and malicious scandal about the Republican candidate in the election day issue. The voters ignore the newspaper story and overwhelmingly elect the Republican candidate. The Republican paper’s editor plays a smaller role in the film. In A Roadside Impressario (1917), Editor John Slade owns a roadhouse and attempts to ruin the reform candidate for mayor by having the butler’s girlfriend photographed in a compromising position with the young candidate. An opposition paper implicates Slade in the plot and the editor is driven out of town.438

Other times, the editor repents just in time to do the right thing.439 In Dolly’s Scoop (1916), James Fairfax is the editor of The Morning Argus, a scandal sheet that will publish any juicy story no matter who it hurts. He glories in scandals. To him anything that is news is property no matter whom it hurts. He impresses this on the members of his staff who secretly resent his underhanded methods, especially Dolly Clare, one of his reporters. But she does the job she is asked to do and comes upon a juicy story about a veiled woman leaving a drunken man’s lodgings. She goes into the apartment and finds a photograph the woman has overlooked in her flight. The woman turns out to be the editor’s wife and when she finds out about the picture, begs the reporter to save her reputation by concealing her identity. Dolly tries in vain to have Fairfax pull the photo—he hadn’t seen it yet. Instead, Fairfax orders the photo to be printed on the front page with big headlines. Dan, a reporter enters disgusted because his evening’s work has resulted only in a story of an unknown suicide. Although he has her picture, he knows there will be no room in The Argus for it. He tosses it away. Dolly sees the photo and has a brilliant idea. The editor’s wife confesses all to her husband who, convinced of her honesty, orders the paper stopped. But the papers are coming off the press and Fairfax discovers that Dolly has switched his wife’s photo with a photo of a suicide victim. The editor then changes the policy of the paper to cover only honest news, making a clean sheet of it. Dolly and Dan have been attracted to each other for some time and are now happily united.440

An editor might also print false or distorted stories to help a friend, a wealthy benefactor or an advertiser. In The Wife (1914), an editor publishes an article for a friend saying that his rival cruelly abandoned a woman in New Orleans. In Merely Players (1915), the editor of the village gazette, short for news, teams up with a manager of a dramatic group to write up a sham hold-up and attempted abduction of the leading lady in a thrilling, sensational style. When the hold-up results in an actor not in on the scam getting an awful pummelling, the editor decides to print the story as it occurred including the young actor’s blunder. He then suggests the actor be played up as the actress’s real lover and when they get married he would print a story that would pack the little theatre. The marriage takes place and after several complications, the couple lives happily ever afterwards.441 In The Mystic Jewel (1915), a physician calls his friend, the editor of the newspaper, to print a story that the doctor has in his possession a valuable jewel so he can prepare a trap for a criminal who is planning to steal the gem. The editor publishes the story with scare headlines. In Bonds of Deception (1916), a father, whose son has proved a disgrace to the family and is now in prison for committing a crime out west, persuades the managing editor of a city newspaper to add the man’s name to those killed in a railroad wreck. The wife of the young man is thereby spared the knowledge of the disgrace brought on the family by her husband. But the editor falls in love with the woman knowing her husband is still alive. The actual convict’s death resolves the situation.
Sometimes editors were part of the problem, not the solution. In *Patsy in a Seminary* (1915), Patsy is hired to drill young ladies in physical culture and calisthenics. The idea is young women should be trained as young men are and put through the same variety of exercises. The editor of a yellow newspaper draws attention to the fact that manual calisthenics are hardly proper for the daughters of refined families. The newspaper rallies families to make a vigorous protest. The girls are heartbroken when Patsy is fired. In *The Starring of Flora Finchur* (1915), a reporter covers a charitable event and gives a woman’s recitation an awful roast, but the editor makes him change it to a highly commendatory write-up, in the name of Sweet Charity. The woman believes the newspaper and embarrasses herself on the stage. In *Grip of Evil: Episode Seven: The Butterflies* (1916), a blackmailer arranges his affairs so that should he die, copies of a sensational story about a man who is with another woman other than his invalid wife will be placed in the hands of editors of the papers. He is killed by an auto and the woman’s fiance prevents its being published—until a blundering night editor finds the copy and the following morning sees it in print causing dire results.

Often, an editor played a small part in the film simply reminding audiences that the newspaper is often the last resort for anyone seeking justice and fair play. In *Criminals* (1913), a woman, instead of going to the police, takes evidence of wrongdoing to an editor of a daily paper. In *Where is Coletti?* (1914), the editor of the *Continental Daily Mail* publishes an article in which he chides a detective for mismanagement of the case, claiming the criminal remained in Berlin after the robbery and if the detective had published and broadcast a description of the criminal some one of the millions of inhabitants of Berlin would have captured him. In an open letter to the editor, the detective defended himself offering a reward for the criminal’s capture. In *The Marble Heart* (1915), the Greek philosopher Diogenes is transformed into Volage, an editor, who offers sage advice in both an ancient dream and a modern story. In *On the Wrong Track* (1915), the daughter of an editor of the *Sentinel*, becomes friends with a man interested in “Safety First.” The two fall in love and the editor not only gives his consent, but promises his full support through his paper of the safety first campaign that the young man has been carrying on so successfully. In *The Upheaval* (1916), the editor of the *New American* asks a female writer who is interested in providing better conditions among tenement dwellers to write a series of articles exposing local conditions. In *Vengeance is Mine* (1916), the city editor is part of the newspaper coverage that reports that the governor pardoned his brother, then relinquished his office and disappeared with his family. In *The Girl God Made for Jones* (1917), a man is in a railroad wreck pinned beneath the cars with a girl whose voice and bravery causes him to fall in love with her. They were rescued but separated and when released from the hospital, the man began a search for her. He obtained the aid of a magazine editor who suggested he write the story of the wreck. He sent his secretary to the man to take dictation of the story. “Lo and behold the secretary was the girl God had thus made for Jones.” In *Mothers of Men* (1917), a newspaper editor who fiercely opposes the suffragette movement is killed at the hands of bomb-throwing Italian anarchists.

Female editors showed guts and bravery under pressure, becoming true journalism heroes in the process. In *The Editor* (1912), the publisher of the paper is Editor Alice Fisher’s father and the newspaper has taken on a gambler politician writing about him in scathing terms. The gambler decides to call on the editor and meets “the charming young woman, Alice Fisher, who tells him she is the editor and responsible for the utterances of the paper.” The politician falls in love with the editor. “The fair editress is in the fight to a finish.” When the gambler “is importuned by the
crooked politicians to use every means in his power” to stop the editor, he is “confronted with a dilemma. There stands his sweetheart and all that is uplifting and ennobling on one hand, the dive-keeper and brothel-house proprietor on the other, and in the balance hangs his own fate—for good or evil. The pure love of a sweet woman redeems him, and he severs his connection with the undesirable element. Of course, he marries the girl and is thus rewarded.” Another film, *The New Editor* (1912), also features a female journalist who replaces the old male editor of the Tough Notch *Daily Observer* and tries to bring law and order by writing editorials attacking a group of rowdy cowboys. A sign in the office reads: “Don’t shoot the Editor, he’s doing his best.” The cowboy gang decides to shoot the editor, but when they discover she is a woman, they end up buying subscriptions to the paper instead. In *Mary Jane’s Pa* (1917), Editor Portia Perkins is running a small town newspaper to support two daughters after her husband (Mary Jane’s Pa) leaves to wander the world for 15 years. With pity in her heart, she allows her returning husband to stay in the house providing he doesn’t disclose his identity. Mrs. Perkins is crusading against a crooked politician’s re-election and when she learns the politician has mistreated an old woman she is determined to expose his actions. The politician requests that the editor not publish the story, but she refuses so he disables the press. With her husband’s help, she prints the story and the politician is defeated. In revenge, his men burn the press and the presence of the unknown man about the home causes the town gossip’s tongues to wag and they demand that the husband be tarred and feathered. At this moment, the editor acknowledges that the man is her husband and all is forgiven as the Perkins family is reunited.

Often the female editor inherits the job from her father. In *The Terrible Outlaw* (1913), Laura Canton, a “very pretty” Eastern girl, inherits a newspaper plant in Oklahoma and decides to edit the newspaper herself. She discovers that the Pawnee *Times-Democrat* is badly disorganized, its staff being composed of one “compo man” and a printer’s devil. She begins to show Pawnee how a real paper should be run. She runs out of news items and ideas when an outlaw runs off after a knifing and a big reward is posted for his capture. Laura makes sensational copy out of this in her paper. Then, to test the bravery of her admirers —constituting the entire male population of Pawnee —Laura announces an “Extry!” that whoever captures the terrible outlaw by sundown, may have the editor’s heart and hand. It works. In *A Political Kidnapping* (1912), the owner of the town newspaper supports the reform candidate in spite of the fact that the corrupt boss of the opposition party has bought up the mortgages on his paper and home and threatens to ruin him. The news causes the journalist to have a heart attack and he is found dead in his office. His daughter, Mary, takes over determined more than ever to secure the election of the reform candidate. She tells the political boss that the edition of the following afternoon will completely expose him. This villainous boss has an inside man among the paper’s printing force. In order to keep back the edition that will ruin him, he has the other printers kidnapped and locked up in an empty freight car. The girl has to run off the edition by herself. A printer’s devil escapes and releases the printers bringing them to the office in time to complete the work Mary has started. The next day the political boss awakens to the fact that he is a ruined man and the election of the reform candidate is assured. In *Powers That Prey* (aka *Extra! Extra!*), a clever and pretty girl with her father’s newspaper instinct takes over her father’s paper and destroys the crooked politicians who had hounded him. One reviewer suggested the headline: “The Power of the Press in a Woman’s Hands.” Editor Burton Grant of *The Daily News* is run out of town after he exposes a crooked political boss in the pages of his newspaper. He asks his daughter, Sylvia, who is editress of the school paper where she attends, to turn the paper over to his dynamic young city editor, Frank Summers. But Sylvia, having inherited her father’s journalistic
talents, fires Frank who treats her as a joke, and takes charge of the paper herself decorating the city room with bows and printing several rather silly “scoops.” In the meantime, the city editor, who decides to stay by the ship and help Sylvia all he can, learns that the politician and the president of the railroad have become involved in a dishonest scheme concerning the city franchise. Sylvia publishes an extra stating that the politician should be tarred and feathered. Her father arrives just in time to prevent the angry townspeople from carrying out her suggestion and then compels the politician to leave town and ordering his feisty daughter to go back to school. She decides, however, that the city editor is not such a bad sort after all and agrees to not only let him run the paper without her interference, but also to become Mrs. Frank Summers as well.

In a series of films in 1915-1916 under the overall title, *The Chronicles of Bloom Center*, Editor Margaret Tate was the “editress of The Bloom Center Weekly Bugle,” a continuing character in the 10 to 12 comedies. Other journalists who appear include Reporter Johnny West, a rural journalist who is correspondent for the County Seat newspaper, and a printer’s devil. Each installment is a separate story with these characters part of the fabric of the community.

By contrast to the rough-and-tumble urban editor, the country editor was usually a folksy, down-to-earth, soft-spoken journalist who worked in a small-town rural society that was the antithesis of a fast-moving, angry urban daily. In 1907, Charles Moreau Harger explained in the *Atlantic Monthly* that “the city journal is the paper of the masses; the country weekly or small daily is the paper of the neighborhood. One is general and impersonal; the other, direct and intimate. One is the marketplace; the other is the home.” The urban journalist was slowly being destroyed by metropolitan stories involving horrendous crime and violence, sex and tragedy whereas it was believed that country journalism would lead to a well-ripened personality. “The country newspaper of fiction and portrayed in silent film is “tolerant, personal, leisurely, and democratic” and embodied “qualities that were passing irretrievably out of journalism in the last quarter of the 19th century…Metropolitan dailies pander to their readers, country journals care for theirs.” Historian Good adds, “The warm golden glow that surrounded the country newspaper office in fiction finally began to fade after World War I. No place seemed immune anymore from the contagion of the twentieth century.”

One of the first films featuring such a journalist was called *Horsewhipping an Editor* (1900) showing a cowboy coming into the editor’s office to beat him up for something he printed in the paper. But the office boy with a sling-shot and the scrub lady with her mop chase him from the premises. It didn’t get much better for an editor in *A Poet’s Revenge* (1902) when a poet hurled a stick of dynamite into the editor’s stove triumphing over the battered editor. In *Hypnotized* (1912), a country town editor has a variety of exciting and ludicrous experiences after being hypnotized by a traveling exponent of this wonderful art. In *The Cowboy Editor* (1913), a man wins possession of the *Rawhide Weekly Rattler* and as editor shakes up a western town before giving the paper back to its former editor and fleeing the town. *The Totville Eye* (1912) offers two editors — a stodgy editor who refuses to make any changes and his assistant Scotty who having spent time on a metropolitan daily favors modern journalism. When the editor is called away by a family illness, Scotty takes over, puts the printer’s devil Sammy to work as a cub reporter and changes the newspaper substantially. The editor returns and is furious until he sees that his subscribers are happy with the results. In *String Beans* (1918), Editor Zachary Bartrum of the *Sawbert Weekly Clarion* decides to block a scheme to start a fake cannery to can string beans with the help of the crooked mayor. The editor falls ill and Tob Watkins, a poet who
serves as a subscription solicitor (a bill collector) for the paper takes over, fights the crooks and wins the mayor’s daughter.

*In Our People* (1916), the trials of the small-town editor are in full bloom. Ed Bryce, editor of the *Ninevah Free Press*, is a regular small-town Horace Greeley who believes the citizens of the little town to be his people and labors to establish his ideals. “His people” becomes “our people” when the daughter of the town banker becomes his chief assistant and only reporter. The banker is not happy about the selection of an occupation by his daughter, but she likes to meet people and ask them questions so she wins his consent to continue. But when the editor and the girl fall in love, the banker objects strenuously. He forces her to quit work and Ed is barred from the home. The disillusioned editor takes up cards and the result is a series of midnight sessions in his office. The constable hears of this and arrests him and the other players. A resourceful aunt brings the two lovers together. Because of a miser’s withdrawal of his funds, the bank is in danger of collapse, but the aunt comes to the rescue on the condition the banker give his consent to the marriage. The only way to announce that the rich woman will pay the frightened depositors is through Ed’s paper. He rushes out the town’s only extra in record time. His word is sufficient to frustrate the run on the bank and Mr. and Mrs. Ed Bryce continue to edit *The Free Press* for “our people.”

The country editor sometimes appeared timid, but when the chips were down, he became heroic. In *Todd of the Times* (1919), City Editor Theobald Todd is known for having “the keenest nose for news” on *The Springfield Evening Times*, but he lacks the assertiveness to realize his dream of becoming the managing editor when the position opens. He is married to a domineering former widow who runs a boardinghouse and dotes on her overgrown, lazy son who she henchpecks Todd into getting a job on the paper. The owner puts Todd in charge when he goes away for a few days and the editor and his star reporter expose a gambling ring whose members operate under the guise of stock brokers in defiance of the newly passed anti-betting law. The paper’s “extra” impresses the owner who awards Todd by making him managing editor. At home, Todd is a new man—he smashes the parlor furniture and proves he is “the managing editor of his own establishment,” thus ending his wife’s reign of terror. As one reviewer put it, “Then a big story breaks when Todd is temporarily in charge of the office. He ‘plays it across the page’ on his own responsibility, and not only gets the managing editorship, but he uses the blue pencil freely upon the now respectful Mrs. Todd.” Another added, “Todd gets out a special edition of the paper and startles the whole village. When the owner of the *Times* returns he is so pleased that he immediately makes Todd managing editor, and his success at the office gives him the courage to a degree never before dreamed of. Todd returns home and straightaway dons the trousers so long worn by his wife.”

Many country editors faced the wrath of the town because they couldn’t pay their bills and were in constant debt. In *Please Remit* (1912), a country newspaper editor and his newspaper are unpopular resulting in many unpaid bills and no money. The bankrupt editor became known as “a desperate man” and when people saw him walking down the street with a shotgun, which he was planning to sell, evasive debtors decided to pay their bills and the newspaper was saved. In *The Tin Can Rattle* (1912), the editor of *The Rattle*, the only paper in town, cannot collect his bills but is forced to pay his own debts at the point of a gun. A stranded actress blows into his office, applies for a position and is promptly hired. Among other innovations, she proposes a voting contest to decide who is the most popular man in Tin Can. The Cowpunchers buy the
papers by the cart load, but in the end, the editor wins the contest and the actress. In *Slim Becomes an Editor* (1914), the editor of the *Bungleville Bugle* posts a sign on the door informing the citizens that he is going to a better town. On his way he meets Slim and gets him to “trade his horse for the newspaper. On hearing that the editor has left town without paying his debts, the wrath of the citizens is aroused and they vow to hang the next editor that hits the town.” Slim takes possession and is confronted by the creditors who agree to give him 30 days in which to pay the debts of the former editor. He hires Molly as the society editor who comes up with an idea of printing coupons in the paper and the cowboy who has the most coupons can take her as his bride. Business begins to boom. She leaves a note that she is waiting at the church but when the boys arrive, they discover that Molly met a traveling salesman, fell in love and is now his wife. *The New Editor* (1915) takes over a paper that the old editor of *The Gazette* sold because he was having trouble collecting money from his advertisers. The new editor encounters a bully who runs into the editor’s office for safety. The bully, exhausted from a fight and a fugitive from the police, is in a helpless condition and the editor takes advantage of the situation by walking all over him. “The report is circulated that the new editor has conquered the notorious bully and the delinquents hustle into the office to settle their debts. The bully gets out on bail and also settles his bill, leaving the new editor in dumb surprise at his sudden prosperity.”

In a small town, the editor was more than a journalist, he was a member of the community who knew practically all of his readers. In *Naughty, Naughty* (1918), Matthew Sampson, the editor of a small-town paper in Kansas with a strict, straight-laced code of conduct, looks disapprovingly on his old sweetheart who left the town as a quaint youngster to go to wicked New York and returns as a smartly gowned, city-wise young person. When the woman convinces the editor’s sister to appear with her in a near to nature dance at the church parlor, the editor and townspeople are scandalized. Later, the woman catches the deacon drinking liquor in a nearby town and threatens to expose him unless he agrees to publicly sanction church dances. In the end, the woman wins over the townspeople and impresses the editor of the paper who ends up marrying her. In *The Goat* (1914), Uriah Wright is the editor of *The Weekly Balloon* and “his criticism of the rural population occasions vehement protests from some of his irate victims who visit his office in a belligerent spirit. To sidestep physical injury, Uriah substitutes Simp, his printer’s devil, as the author of the obnoxious items.” “The consequences to Simp are painful, but he takes it all as part of his journalistic duty until Uriah criticizes his best girl, when ‘the goat’ turns and shows his horns by severely chastising his employer.”

Sometimes a journalist who fails to make it in the city finds the country more amenable to his ambitions. They believed they could make a difference in a small community. In *The Good for Nothing* (1912), a failure in the city (“a good-for-nothing”) buys the Pocono *Citizen*, the entire printing and newspaper plant, for $500. The editor now becomes the biggest man in town. He attacks everyone including the postmaster whose daughter is interested in the editor romantically. The editor’s father is a candidate for Congress, but the son comes out for a rival. The town goes crazy and the two fathers want to kill their offsprings. The editor continues the bombardment and the circulation goes up like a rocket. By the end of the film, the editor makes peace with everyone and marries the now placated postmaster’s daughter. In *Foiling Father’s Foes* (1915), a country editor was a reformer and felt impelled to write cutting things about a couple of grafters, one the nominee for sheriff, the other for city treasurer. The editor’s daughter went to a university where she took a course in architecture and graduated with high honors. The girl returned home and found her father in far from a blithesome mood. “They both called to
horsecap me just before you arrived,” the editor sadly explained to his daughter. “The whipping was bad enough but the way they acted was worse. Each insisted that the other glut his vengeance first, and finally they matched for it.” The daughter’s eyes filled with tears. “I am only a poor weak girl, father,” she said, “but I will avenge you. Cheer up. Take a week off and leave me in charge. After you return these vulgar men will never annoy you again…I myself will run for both sheriff and city treasurer and defeat them.” The editor went home for a rest and while he was gone, the girl, who was an energetic architect, created an office that was on war footing when her father returned. His enemies learned that the editor was back and promptly called on him. This time Fate was against them. Awaiting them were numerous devices of punishment. She made short work of the politicians, showering them with a hose. Then there were pitfalls on the stairs, boards flew out and hit them, and finally the pair were precipitated through a trap door and sent whizzing down an incline to land into the water beneath. They were picked up by the girl who demanded they retire from the political race in her favor and dunked them until they agreed. “So the ‘gangsters’ were defeated, the girl elected to two offices, and the editor wrote thing things about her in the paper, and got more advertising than he had ever had before.”

Activist editors would be found in America as well the rest of the world. In *The World Aflame* (1919), a millionaire manufacturer finds his domestic life disrupted, a result of his servants reading a Bolshevik newspaper called *The Red Messenger*. He decides to run for mayor to improve the labor situation. The newspaper editor organizes the streetcar drivers to begin a general strike. The mayor breaks up the strike with armed guards. Anarchists kidnap his son, but the mayor will not back down in his attempts to put down the Red Bolshevik uprising. Editors of foreign publications were usually involved in revolutions, especially if they worked on non-government papers in Russia. In *From Tyranny to Liberty* (1910), the editor is betrayed in an anonymous letter sent to the authorities by his assistant. His wife is whipped and his child threatened in order to force the woman to get her husband to come home. When the traitorous assistant enters, the woman convinces the Russian officer he is her husband, the editor. The assistant is taken away and the editor’s family flees to America.

Real-life Editors occasionally appeared in newsreels. In *Selig-Tribune No. 52* (1916), Editor Joseph Medill Patterson of the Chicago Tribune takes as good care of his horse as he does his newspaper. In another article, Editor Jack Wheeler was shown seated in the front with the chauffeur in promoting the Selig-Tribune Auto Service. A staff cameraman is in the rear seat ready for action.

**Publishers, Owners and Media Barons**

One of the most common villains in films about journalists is the publisher or owner of the news organizations. Sinister publishers and newspaper monopolies were prime targets of 19th century fiction and early silent films. “As concentration of ownership increased, so did anxiety that a few ruthless publishers would use their exclusive power over the national mind to rule, or, rather, misrule, the country,” writes Historian Howard Good. Greedy, hypocritical, amoral publishers grabbed onto sensationalism and tabloid journalism and rode it to bigger and bigger profits pushing their editors and reporters to new heights of exploitation. When something went wrong on a newspaper and the people’s right to know was abused, silent film audiences knew who to blame: not the reporter, not the editor, but almost always the publisher who used the precious
commodity of the public interest for his own personal, economic or political gain. In *The Burning Rivet* (1913), a political boss controls an important newspaper, the *Transcript*, and warns the mayor that if he doesn’t do what he says, he’ll expose him in the press since he has evidence of the Mayor’s first misstep in office. The publisher-owner of the *Transcript* calls up the city editor and orders him to send a reporter to write a story exposing the mayor. The star reporter is a friend of the mayor’s son and tries to dissuade the publisher, but he gets abusive and tells the reporter to do his job. The reporter decides to do what he can to avert the story’s publication. But the editor, scenting a big story, refuses. The publisher opens his office window for air and a red hot rivet thrown by riveters misses its mark, hits a structural beam and falls through the man’s open window starting a fire, consuming the damaging papers that the publisher has against the mayor. The publisher is killed in the fire. The reporter refuses to write the article and is fired. The publisher’s daughter, who now owns the paper, tells the reporter she will make him editor if he finds evidence to clear the mayor’s son, who is accused of killing the publisher. He does and the new editor’s first copy is the marriage notice of the mayor’s son and the publisher’s daughter. In *The Social Pirates*, Chapter 11: *The Fangs of the Tattler* (1916), the wealthy blackmailing owner-editor of *The Tattler*, a scandalous society weekly, is exposed in this chapter of a popular serial. One reviewer pointed out, “Society journals that derive their chief income from practicing the gentle art of blackmail have been the subject to considerable dramatic literature this season. *(The Tattler)* is one of the publications that thrive by threatening to uncover the skeleton that is popularly supposed to be hidden in nearly every family closet. The editor of this particular disreputable sheet is a prominent society man, and his victims are members of his own set.” The owner-editor gets his information through threats and bribery. He pays a maid to steal a package of compromising letters from her mistress who cannot pay the sum demanded as hush-money. Two girlfriends come to her aid by exposing the owner and forcing his disappearance from the city followed by the suspension of *The Tattler*. In *The Silence Sellers* (1917), the editor of the *Tattle Tale* threatens a woman with a scandal after she is forced to spend the night with a rich foreigner during a rainstorm. He agrees to suppress the story if the woman arranges for one of his employees to meet the foreigner and a society girl rumored to be involved with him. To keep her name out of the gossip newspaper, she agrees to do what the editor says. An employee of the *Tattle Tale* is invited to go along. It turns out the employee is a secret service man trying to expose the foreigner and he captures the foreigner and wins the girl as well.

Publishers often demonstrated immoral behavior. In *The Price of Folly: The Phantom Fame* (1918), Conrad K. Arnold, newspaper editor and magazine owner, makes it a practice to seduce young women who work for him. Kate Denton, a woman who goes to the city to pursue a literary career, is given a job on Arnold’s paper. She is sent to cover a dinner given by her employer and not until then does she see the trap he set for her. Her husband arrives just in time to save his wife from an unwelcome entanglement with the editor, who has already ruined the daughter of a laboring man and is “altogether much more villainous than the worst of editors are presumed to be.” In *Diamond Cut Diamond* (1913), Publisher Paul Atwood, an unscrupulous newspaper owner, and a young engineer are in love with the same woman. So the publisher schemes to get the engineer in a gambling den, have the place raided, and prints it all in his newspaper. The scheme works and the engineer is disgraced. He finds Atwood and thrashes him. Atwood accuses him of attempted murder and has him put into prison. The woman’s sister, who has always been in love with the engineer, figures out an elaborate plan to free the engineer and to have the newspaper owner arrested, and her plan works. In *Mongrel and Master* (1914), newspaper owner
Big Bill Denton of the *Blade* attacks the mayor when the mayor’s daughter rejects him and the mayor refuses to help him court his daughter. When the newspaper attacks threaten her father’s impeachment, the daughter goes to Denton and promises to marry him if he stops attacking her father. Denton is elated. “His newspaper bows and begs the mayor’s pardon.” Another man who loves the mayor’s daughter finds evidence to put Denton and his gang away. The newspaper owner is arrested and the mayor’s daughter marries the man she loves. In *The Rummy* (1916), Dan O’Sullivan, the publisher of the newspaper and a political boss, is found with a reporter’s wife. The reporter met his wife while covering night court for a newspaper when she was arrested on a prostitution charge. Soon after they are married, he catches her with O’Sullivan and although he always believed his wife innocent of the prostitution charge, now refuses to accept that she was lured to O’Sullivan’s room under false pretenses and fought desperately against the publisher’s advances. As a result, the reporter leaves his wife, becomes an alcoholic and loses his job. Then he gets a lead on a graft story involving the publisher and ultimately discredits him, the publisher dying of apoplexy when the reporter is about to strike him for abusing his wife. While working on the story, he finds proof that his wife had told him the truth. He reconcile with her, gives up drinking and gets an even better newspaper job than the one he had before.

Publishers often got involved in politics using the power of the press to gain influence and money. In *The Power of the Press* (1914), a reviewer wrote: the “pen is mightier than the sword” is proven again in this stirring story of newspaperdom and politics. It is the story of two publishers. Publisher Cartwright, the owner of *The Times*, one of the two leading newspapers of the city, is supporting a candidate in the election. He falls in love with the candidate’s daughter and hopes to win her any way he can, even through blackmail. Publisher J.C. Whitney is owner of the other leading newspaper of the city, *The Star*. His son, Bob Whitney, returns home from college in disgrace. To prove himself, he gets a job as a reporter on Cartwright’s paper and soon becomes the star reporter. Cartwright, trying to frighten the candidate’s daughter into marrying him, plans an expose of gambling among society at the girl’s club and sends Bob to dig up the facts. Bob falls in love with her. His father finds out Bob has made a success in journalism and offers him the position of city editor and Bob at once accepts. He resigns from *The Times*, stops his investigation of society gambling, and plans to marry the girl. Cartwright, in a rage at the news determines to destroy the candidate, but Bob, with his fiancee beside him, tells Cartwright to do his worst as the support of his father’s paper will be sufficient to make up for the defection. In *The Woman in Politics* (1916), the owner of the newspaper is a corrupt mayor who will not print any story that hurts his administration including one on a tenement house where the law has continuously been violated. A medical woman appointed to the city health commission disregards a warning about denouncing as unsafe and unsanitary a tenement which the mayor owns and is promptly fired. She unsuccessfully tries to quarantine a building housing smallpox, then is lured to a sanitarium and imprisoned. A man saves her revealing that he is the governor’s private secretary and he assembles evidence to hold the mayor accountable and the governor sends the grafting publisher-mayor and his accomplices to the penitentiary.

Another obstacle to heroic journalism came in the second decade of the 20th century when soaring costs of newsprint, machinery and labor made it impossible for a newspaper to make money on circulation alone. Advertising could make a newspaper profitable. Because of this the business department started to exert more influence over the editorial department. Money considerations overruled editorial considerations. As Good puts it, “It seemed by the twenties that the economics of journalism had reduced the reporter to a chattel. He was only as honest as
his employers and his employers, the advertisers, permitted. When a publisher is in financial trouble, a wealthy friend bales him out but not without strings attached. He wants to marry the newspaperman’s daughter (The Rose of May, 1913). In Too Bad, Eddie (1916), publisher Eddie Tor owns a small-town newspaper, The Morning Scare, but spends most of his time dodging creditors. His general assistant, printer, proofreader, secretary, janitor, etc. is Tad Pole who had grown thin in his service waiting for his salary. Eddie pretends to be engaged to the daughter of the rich of the town, but when his ruse was discovered —the printer issued a paper stating the alliance was off —Eddie was awakened by a large party of creditors including the banker. He announced the paper was dead and departed the town in haste. In It May Be You (1915), Jack Kenwood, the owner-editor of the Clarion, is hanging on to life by a few threads —the advertisements have become fewer and fewer. Even the advertising manager is discouraged. The editor plans to make the rounds of the offices in town. The first business he visits, the senior member of the firm happens to be in a compromising position with his stenographer and isn’t interested in buying an ad in the newspaper. The same thing happens again and again. A dejected Kenwood admits to himself that his sweetheart who advised him to quit a losing game, was right. When he goes to her office, he catches her in a position which to him is indicative of undue familiarity with her employer. He goes back to the office chagrined and resentful. Based on his observations in her office, the editor writes a squib to the effect that The Clarion regards lovemaking between employers and stenographers morally degrading and that an instance of this condition of affairs has come to the personal attention of the editor of The Clarion. He threatens to expose the guilty employer. The article appears the next morning and the various employers who had been paying more attention to their stenographers than to their work cannot get to The Clarion office soon enough. Each wants his advertisement to run for a solid year and contracts are promptly signed. Bankers, merchants and professional men flock to the office, each thinking the article was directed at them. The result is a new lease of life for The Clarion. The editor’s sweetheart explains she dropped a pencil and her employer was picking it up for her when Jack entered the office. As they are embracing, one of the guilty employers enters, but exits quickly, leaving Kenwood in a quandary as to why the former looked so surprised. In The Weaker Vessel (1919), Matthew Hopkins is a small-town newspaper owner who arranges for the eldest of his five daughters to marry the richest man in the village to save his financially strapped newspaper. In Over the Hill (1917), Amos Winthrop is owner of the Winthrop newspaper syndicate of “yellow” journals. A minister’s daughter, Esther Neal, gets a job as a society reporter on the town newspaper owned by Winthrop. Amos sends his pampered son, Roy, to Columbia to work as a reporter on the staff of The Daily Pioneer. Jim Barnes is the editor and he delights in applying big-town methods to a small-town paper. He prints sensational stories and is supported by the publisher’s son. The business manager, however, asserts that scandal about people kills advertising prospects such as Columbia’s largest department store, which does not advertise in the paper and is the only hope for the paper’s survival. Roy prepares a story dealing with the purported elopement of the department store owner’s daughter and sets the story in type. Esther, considering it a “spite story” burns the entire edition of the newspaper preventing the story from being read. In so doing, she earns the gratitude of the department store owner who gives the paper his advertising patronage. Amos Winthrop, summoned to Columbia, appreciates the foolishness of his son and orders him to return home where he can keep an eye on him. The business manager not only wins control of the paper, but also Esther for his bride.

Some publishers don’t see much value in owning a newspaper unless it makes a profit. In The American Girl Series (1917), Newspaper Publisher Roger King is a millionaire land owner
and cattle baron who performs deeds of daring and thrilling action. His carefree daughter, Madge King, gets involved in one adventure after another. King is always worried about his daughter’s adventures and sometimes follows her fearing for her safety. The pair always outwit the villains and bring them to justice as they investigate bandits, loan sharks, murderers, cattle rustlers and a series of crooked schemes and other crimes. In Episode 14, *The Pot o’ Gold*, King is concerned that the one unprofitable investment is *The Herald*, the only daily paper in the little western city of San Remo. He says it’s time to sell the newspaper, but his daughter insists that she has a plan to double the circulation of the paper in two weeks. She buries an iron pot with $1,000 in gold coins giving daily clues to its whereabouts in the paper. It works and the publisher decides to hold on to the newspaper.

Publishers had as many problems as other journalists when it came to their love life. In *Paying for Silence* (1913), an influential newspaper owner is smitten with a frivolous girl. She bets her brother she can make the publisher propose. He does, then overhears that the woman had claimed a bet. When the brother is involved in a card scandal and the publisher is about to publish the story, the woman pleads to have the story suppressed. The publisher proposes and is accepted. One reviewer pointed out that “The scenes in the editorial room were dramatic, but scarcely true to conditions in the average newspaper office.”

In *Just Like a Woman* (1915), Louis Dutton, a male publisher, buys *The Record*, the local newspaper in Centerville and immediately fires Phyllis Darel, the bright female assistant editor, simply because of his dislike for employing women. Her boyfriend who owns the local department store threatens to withdraw his advertising support unless the publisher reinstates the woman. This makes Dutton furious and he orders the man from the shop. Wanting revenge, the businessman backs Phyllis in starting her own paper. Dutton’s establishment catches fire and he faces bankruptcy, but Phyllis comes to the rescue with charming forgiveness and they consolidate the two newspapers as well as their domestic affairs. An advertisement for the film suggests that Phyllis “heaps coals of fire on his head by coming to his rescue when his plant is destroyed by fire. They combine their efforts to attain happiness.”

In *Heart’s Hunger* (1915), a young publisher discovers the true meaning of love after he rejects an unsuitable article from a magazine writer of the old school. Each goes home—the writer walking so he could save money to buy a flower for his wife with his carfare, and the publisher in his motor car who plunges into work, oblivious of his wife, who lies sick in her sumptuous bedroom. The physician shows the publisher the only possible cure for his sick wife. He takes him to the home of the writer where the publisher’s eyes are open to the full meaning of love. He returns home, determined to satisfy his wife’s hungering heart. In *The Heart of Virginia Keep* (1916), Arnold Dempster Trude, a young millionaire who owns *The Publicist*, shows up at the managing editor’s office—the managing editor has never seen him before—and tells him that he is bored by his idleness and wants to go to work as a reporter, keeping his identity a secret. He is interested in a man accused of murder who he thinks is innocent and orders the managing editor to inaugurate a campaign to defend him. But the man is convicted and his daughter, Virginia Keep, asks for a position on the paper. Trude puts her on as a reporter at an unusual salary and when she learns that Trude, who has asked her to marry him, is responsible for her large salary, she disappears. She goes into the slums disguised as a messenger boy to find evidence to establish her father’s innocence. She ends up back at *The Publicist* office to give Trude the information she has found, but in the meantime the governor has pardoned her father. She is exhausted, and falls into his arms.
Some newspaper owners tried to use the power of the press to help the community. In *The Gentleman From Indiana* (1915), Publisher John Harkless buys *The Plainville Herald* in Indiana and uses it to expose mobsters and corrupt officials including a crooked politician who is running for Congress. He earns the respect of the town by opposing the crooks. When he is attacked and badly beaten by a gang associated with the crooked politician, the town rallies to oust the crooks. The publisher’s girlfriend takes over the paper while he is hospitalized and cleverly concocts a way for the publisher to win the congressional election. In *The New Reporter* (1914), the publisher is a candidate for mayor and defies the political boss who tries to bully him into giving up his fight for a clean city. The mayor’s daughter, the editor’s sweetheart, volunteers to cover the assignment when the paper runs short of reporters, bringing victory to the paper and defeat for the political boss. In *The Truth Wagon* (1914), a wealthy young man, John Ross, is a notorious practical joke and after a girl reporter Helen Dean criticizes him for being unambitious, he surprises everyone by purchasing a dying newspaper, *The Truth*, which is owned by her father. John uses the newspaper to fight a political machine that supports his father’s campaign for governor, waging war against crooked politicians including his own estranged father and supporting Dean’s father instead. “The Machine” forces John to trade a compromising story about Helen for an article which he plans to use against them. Thugs attempt to wreck *The Truth* office, but John, aided by some prizefighting friends, throws them out. Dean’s father wins the gubernatorial election and John and Helen marry. “There’s quite a newspaper story with Ross winning the hands of Dean’s daughter, proposing to her by dictating his offer of marriage to her on the typewriter in the form of a society personal,” wrote one reviewer.

In *The Girl From Frisco: Episode Nineteen: Stain of Chuckawalla* (1916), Barbara Brent shows up in a Western “bad town” wanting to “clean-up the town” and starts by buying the local paper and making herself editor. Her first campaign is for prohibition and despite fierce opposition she finally makes the town dry. But before that happens, this serial is filled with action: fist fighting, gun play, and an explosion that destroys the newspaper plant. In the end, she is successful in removing “the stain of Chuckawalla.”

Publishers often crusaded against corrupt politicians and businessmen, sometimes risking their lives in the process. In *Baree, Son of Kazan* (1918), newspaper owner Henry Carvel is killed by the local political boss for exposing a theft ring. An intimidated jury frees the slayer. The publisher’s son, Jim Carvel, shoots his father’s murderer and escapes to Canada where he has a series of adventures that have nothing to do with journalism. In *The Torch Bearer* (1916), Publisher John Huntley-Knox Jr., the millionaire owner of the *Boston Star* fights political corruption with the help of a reform district attorney. They are opposing the corrupt ring befouling the city government. When the gang threatens to get him, John laughs. To protect his interests, he has the district attorney swear in his reportorial staff as special police. At a political meeting where a husky attempts to disturb the proceedings, the publisher, a clever boxer, puts his opponent away. One day he is notified that Janet, the daughter of a man who saved his father’s life in the early frontier days, is coming to see him. A misguided letter is read by the girl referring to her as an uncouth Westerner. Although a sophisticated college graduate, she decides to fool the publisher and play the part. Even so, John falls in love with her and she returns the feeling. The opposition papers stand ready to publish the details of John’s father’s unsavory past including a murder he committed. John trembles when he contemplates the effect of the disclosure on his mother and sister. In going over Janet’s papers, he discovers that someone else had confessed to the murder and that Janet is heiress to a Wyoming fortune in land and livestock. The gang attempts to kidnap John’s sister, but grabs Janet instead and holds her captive until...
John presses his reporters and newsboys into service to locate her. Terror and anxiety draw John and Janet closer together and they confess their mutual love. In *The Reward of Chivalry* (1916), publisher Horace Brighton is a power in newspaper circles and is conducting a crusade against graft in the northern city where he lives. His newspaper is making things so hot for the gang of crooked politicians that the political boss orders a confederate to frame up something against him. Meanwhile, Brighton hires Stanton Ware as a reporter who stops the scheme to discredit Brighton and wins the woman he loves. In *The Fringe of Society*, Martin Drake is the publisher of an influential paper *The Record* who supports Prohibition because of his own secret battle with alcohol. A powerful politician who secretly represents the liquor interests and is Drake’s friend is in love with his wife and when the publisher enters a room where the politician is seizing his wife in his arms, he mistakenly believes that she is being unfaithful to him and goes on a drinking spree. One of the politician’s henchmen kidnapes Drake to prevent him from publishing information that would implicate him in a plot to destroy the publisher. A reporter on the paper rescues Drake and writes up the story Drake’s wife explains everything to him and all ends well. In *The Man From Manhattan* (1916), Willoughby Whipple is disowned by his businessman father so he leaves Manhattan and buys a rundown small town newspaper, *The Homeville Bugle*. He hires Virginia Winters, a local poet, as associate editor and Daddy Eggleston, a tramp printer. With their help, the paper runs smoothly until Willoughby refuses to endorse the unscrupulous candidate running for mayor. For revenge, the candidate, who owns the newspaper building, evicts Willoughby and then, after burning it down, claims that Willoughby is an arsonist. The angry townspeople are preparing to lynch the publisher when a hastily scribbled note from the printer, who died in the blaze, blames the candidate who owns the building. Instead of killing the publisher, they decide to make him mayor, after which he and Virginia are married, and Willoughby’s now-proud father constructs a new building for the paper as a wedding present.

Sometimes publishers take stands that result in angry subscribers to the newspaper. In *The Magnificent Meddler* (1917), Publisher-Editor Montague (Monty) Emerson, using his aunt’s inheritance, and Cartoonist Bob Gill buy the *Sentinel*, the only newspaper in the wild western town of Horizon. The first issue by the new newspaper owner gets the town’s citizens to sit up and take notice. Before the end of the week the young publisher discovers that telling the truth as he sees it, is dangerous business in this locality. But he sticks to his guns. Monty starts to reform the town urging its citizens to annex Horizon to the town of Lewiston. This angers the town boss. When Monty falls in love with the boss’s daughter, he is met with opposition from her father. His disapproval is short-lived when the owner of the notorious dance hall and saloon, kidnaps the girl while the town boss and his compatriots are torching the *Sentinel* offices. Monty rescues the girl winning the gratitude of her father who then promises to swing the corrupt votes for the consolidation of the two towns.

Once in a while, a publisher was the object of satire. In *Mr. Opp* (1917), Publisher Daniel Webster Opp, an egotistical and vain man who is the epitome of cheerfulness and optimism, is a perpetually cheerful fellow who has ventured into many careers and has made a failure of all of them. He takes some inheritance and establishes a newspaper called the *Opp Eagle* and remains optimistic no matter what happens. He uses the newspaper to promote the town and he is praised for his schemes to make the town famous and prosperous, even though they fail and he loses the woman he loves to another. He is eventually elected mayor and takes care of his half-witted
sister. In *Enemies Within* (1919), a pro-German newspaper owner is made up to look like William Randolph Hearst and because of this the film was suppressed and censored.

Occasionally a newspaper or magazine publisher was a minor character who simply did the job of a publisher without any ulterior positive for profit or power. In *The War Correspondents* (1913), a publisher appears occasionally “each time puffing at a cigar as though it were a life or death job, and bobbing up and down all over the editorial sanctum and composing room in a St. Vitus Tango.” In *Badgered* (1916), a newspaper owner’s daughter is implicated in a political scheme but all ends well. In *The Scarlet Car* (1917), Samuel Winthrop, owner of the *Bolton Argus* in New England, is a familiar type of small town editor. His carefree son finally realizes what a useless sort of a fellow he is, gets busy and cleans up a supposed murder mystery. In *The Belle of the Season* (1919), the son of a newspaper owner gets involved with striking workers and the wealthy daughter of a mill owner. In *One Law for Both* (1917), a publisher and owner of an influential paper tries to help his sister and her husband reconcile. He then finds out his wife has been unfaithful and involved in a murder and casts her out of his heart and home. His sister convinces him that her sin was the result of passion and that he ought to forgive her. He does, giving up his appointment to a state cabinet position so they can “live in the safety of private life.”

Occasionally a real-life publisher would show up in newsreels and other non-fiction silent films. In *Animated Weekly No. 78* (1917), newspaper publisher-journalist Lord Northcliffe, head of the British war Mission in America, comes to New York. He is described in a title: “Northcliffe, a British newspaper and publishing magnate is owner of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* and a pioneer of tabloid journalism who exercised vast influence over British popular opinion.” In *Universal Animated Weekly No. 22* (1918), the newspaper publishers’ convention is covered with the latest linotype machines exhibited at the American Newspaper Publishers Association. In *The Broken Coin* (1915), a 22-chapter series, a surprise stunt casting finds that the publisher of a great newspaper is played by no less than the president of the Universal film company, Carl Laemmle. He sends his star reporter Kitty Grey, to the Kingdom of Gretzhoffen in search of a big story.

**Critics**

One of the first silent films to feature a critic was *Cofounding the Art Critic* in 1900, but the image of the critic as a mean-spirited scoundrel occurred as early as 1912 in *The Critic*, which showcases an unprincipled journalist who uses his influence to pursue an actress while condemning the poet she loves. He’s later exposed as a plagiarist. In *The Critic* (1913), Henry Roberts, a theatrical critic on *The Daily Record*, one of the largest and most influential newspapers in the country, is wholly without principle. He uses the power of his position to further his own interests. He wasn’t above using his position to seduce actresses who were powerless to combat his influence and who endured his attention because he could ruin their careers if he wanted to. In *The Genius* (1914), corrupt art critic Percival Clutterback, a well-known art connoisseur, gives a rave review to a fraud calling the fake artist a “genius.” In *As a Man Thinks* (1919), Benjamin De Lota, an art critic on a New York magazine, introduces the wealthy publisher of the magazine, Frank Clayton, to an artist’s model in Paris and the two have an affair. While walking in the park with the model, Clayton meets his wife and child. He explains the situation by introducing the model as a newly engaged contributor to his magazine.
When the Claytons leave Paris, the publisher puts the model out of his mind, but in New York, Clayton’s wife finds out about the affair and flirts with De Lota who was once her sweetheart rejected by her father because he is Jewish. Clayton now questions his wife’s fidelity and the paternity of his son. Piqued, the wife visits De Lota’s apartment where Clayton sees him attempt to embrace her. After a struggle between the publisher and the art critic, Clayton thinks about killing De Lota, but instead initiates divorce proceedings. It turns out the art critic was imprisoned for two years prior to the son’s birth and Clayton, now assured of his wife’s fidelity, reconciles with her. The common love for their son proves too strong to resist and husband and wife stay together.  

A favorite plot device was to dramatically convince a critic that the play he hated because he wrote that the events would never happen in real life, really could happen. In Apartment 29 (1917), Dramatic Critic Stanley Ormsby runs afoul of an author and dramatic company who have just put on a new play, which he announces as “rotten” and improbable. He believes that no rational human being would possibly act in real life as did the hero of the play. The critic is then caught up in a whirlpool of happenings that cause him to act just as he said no rational man would, and in addition to disproving his own assertions, the critic gets a bump on the head that wasn’t in the plot and also becomes engaged to one of the plotters. The playwright admits he framed the critic to convince him that the actions in his play were realistic. Proven wrong, Ormsby rewrites his criticism and ends up marrying the girl. In Merely Players (1918), Rodney Gale, a dramatic critic on a New York daily, writes a scathing review of a young actress who, after reading the review, attempts suicide. The young woman, a seamstress’ daughter, is the protégé of a wealthy society widow interested in amateur theatricals who is involved with Gale. Because of his review, they become estranged and the widow is determined to make the critic repent and revise his opinions. She invites a cohort to her darkened private theatre built in her home where she tearfully confesses she has lost all her money but still wishes to elope with him. He angrily rejects her and she seizes a gun to kill herself. The critic rushes on stage to prevent the suicide as the curtain opens up to a wildly applauding audience. Gale is forced to admit that the woman can act. The result: “How an Actress Made a Critic Revise His Printed Opinion.”

Critic Edward Weitzel, reviewing the film, pointed out that it “throws more or less light on the professional dramatic critic and the consequences of telling the truth about an aspiring young woman’s first attempt at acting. In this case the debut is an absolute failure and the notices in the morning papers drive the disappointed young girl to turn on the gas and try to escape from her heartache by the suicide route. The tragedy is averted just in time, and the critic is given an object lesson in the danger of not side-stepping when reviewing the efforts of well-meaning, but misguided attempts to act. In spite of the warning, dramatic critics and screen reviewers will probably keep on in their heartless but necessary task of telling the truth — as they understand it.” In A Sporting Chance (1919), a bizarre scenario involving a man wanting to commit suicide who witnesses a shooting, a corpse, a valuable emerald, blackmail, a strange poison and antidote, and a dead man who amazingly comes to life, all of which turns out to be a ruse to prove to a critic that this kind of plot could actually happen. Critics had roasted the play saying it wasn’t true to life and this was the cast’s proof that the situations really could happen. The girl involved retires from acting when the man who was contemplating suicide proposes to her. The same is true for a critic reviewing a novelist’s new book. In The Danger Game (1918), Critic Jimmy Gilpin unmercifully roasts a wealthy female novelist’s new book in which a society girl commits a burglary. He is not alone. Other critics also harshly criticize her first book. Gilpin
writes that the story is completely implausible. The society girl who wrote the novel decides to prove him wrong by faking a robbery, but is caught by a policeman who mistakes her for a local robber. Gilpin, who also covers the crime beat for his newspaper, sees her in jail and posing as a safe cracker arranges to break her out and take her on a robbing spree. He takes her home and then shows up as Gilpin, the critic. The novelist is surprised but forgives the deception and agrees to marry him. The Variety critic added, a crowd of “Bohemians” were at the girl’s home “the night before the book reviews came out. They wanted to wait up to read them, but father drove them out.” The next night at the girl’s home were gathered the family’s friends...who listened with much appreciation to a crisp pan extended to “The Danger Game” by Gilpin. “Father read the notice and the girl, “heart-broken, merely asked who Gilpin was, to be informed he was a recognized book critic.” The girl “was highly offended by that section of the review which mentioned she didn’t know what she was writing about. It referred to a society girl committing a burglary.”

Most of the time the critic just shows up doing his job, playing a minor character in the drama. Other films show critics in a gentler light. In The Critic (1906), a critic writes an honest opinion about a vaudeville act and the performers want to attack him for it. In The Trufflers (1917), Book Reviewer-Critic Henry Bates, known as “The Worm” wins the love of a girl who is disillusioned by the hypocrisy of the people who surround her. She gives up a career and bohemian life style to be with Bates who is an honest, decent man. Bates finally decides to throw books overboard and “engage in real work as a newspaper man.” In When My Ship Comes In (1919), a drama critic notifies his friend, a mining engineer who has written a play, that an unscrupulous theatrical producer has stolen a copy after telling the playwright that his play is worthless and that rehearsals are underway. The engineer arrives in New York and claims the play’s success as well as the leading actress’s love. In The Bachelor’s Romance (1915), Literary Critic David Holmes is a recluse and a misogynist who struggles to avoid women callers. Then he becomes the guardian of a ten-year-old girl when her father dies. Unable to cope with a child, he sends her to the country to live with her aunt. At the age of 21, the girl comes to visit and Holmes, overwhelmed by her beauty, agrees to accompany her to social functions he once detested and he suddenly finds himself in love with her. As he is preparing to judge a literary contest, he discovers that the girl’s suitor plans to marry her if he wins the $10,000 prize money. Holmes judges “The Bachelor’s Romance” the best story. The author then asks Holmes for permission to marry the girl. Holmes reluctantly consents. Meanwhile David has fallen deeply in love with the girl, who plans a cleverly conceived coup to reach his arms and make him understand it is Bachelor David she really loves. In Find the Woman (1918), Maurice Dumars, a dramatic critic on “L’Abeille,” a New Orleans daily, is in love with an opera singer who shares his love. In The Sea Wolf (1913), literary critic Humphrey Van Weyden is rescued by the crew of a schooner called the Ghost after his ferry collides with another vessel in San Francisco Bay. His voyage scars him for life.

**Cartoonists and Illustrators**

The silent film was made for cartoonists since the illustrations needed no sound at all. Often they were used for humor and sometimes the humor was vicious. In The Female Politician, Mrs. Bell, Is Nominated for Mayor (1908), a female politician is drawn as a “masculinely inclined female” with her hat on the side of her head while her husband is pictured as a puny little fellow doing housework and minding the baby, forcing her resignation. In The Politician’s Love Story...
(1909), a female cartoonist vilely caricatures a politician who goes to the newspaper office to seek revenge but instead falls deeply in love with her and all is forgiven. In *Conquered Hate* (1913), a cartoonist depicts a beautiful operatic star, sitting on a tombstone in a cemetery with the caption: “Another monument to Gina’s beauty.” The cartoon refers to an admirer who committed suicide after the actress told him to return to his wife. When the cartoon appears in the newspaper, a storm of unjust condemnation greets the singer. She is hissed when she tries to perform and is carried fainting from the stage. She decides to get revenge against the newspaper cartoonist. She pretends to be a model, is unrecognized and hired by him and later, when he goes to a performance, he recognizes her and, dumbfounded, prevents a hostile demonstration from taking place. She wins the audience’s admiration by her performance and the cartoonist, now repentant, becomes her tender lover. In *Orator, Knight and Cow Charmer* (1912), an editor of an opposition paper decides to go after a congressman seeking re-election. He enlists “the aid of his star cartoonist, in appearance a modest, neat little girl, but one who was gifted with fiendish ability with the pencil.” It turns out her cleverness with a sketch pencil caused the whole rumpus essential to the film’s plot. The pretty cartoonist checked out the congressman who rescued her from an angry cow who was coming to bite her. The girl artist, having a sense of humor, drew a funny picture of herself, the cow and the congressman and had it printed in her paper. The congressman, who had no idea of the identity of the artist, was determined to be revenged. “He took a large horsewhip and went to the newspaper office, intending to get satisfaction. It took him some time to get into the art room, as he was obliged to thrash several inoffensive reporters en route. Then he found the artist, a trembling, frightened little girl. It was ridiculous to expect that he could horsewhip her. He didn’t have the heart even to scold her. For the first time in his life, the dignified statesman had a sense of humor, and shaking his finger at the girl, he said, “Young woman, the next time I find a cow chasing you I’ll let you stay up the tree for the rest of your life.”

Like other journalists, a cartoonist-illustrator often put love ahead of professional obligations. In *Fate’s Alibi*, Ruth Hope is a cartoonist on the staff of *The Times* with a penchant for making sketches from real life. On a street car one day, she sketches a down-and-outer. She sees in him excellent material for a heart interest cartoon. Ruth leaves forgetting her purse. The man picks it up and takes the money using it to rehabilitate himself. Helen realizes her purse is gone and makes a sketch of the man turning it over to the police. The man, now a success, writes Helen a note explaining the situation and what he did with her money, and now is able to pay her back. The police pick up the man and call upon Helen to identify him. She shows police the man’s letter and the charges are dismissed. The man then has the pleasure of escorting Miss Hope to her home. In *The Dancing Girl of Butte* (1910), an illustrator falls in love with the woman of his dreams, finds out she’s a dancing girl, is ridiculed by his friends for loving her, but finally ignores them all to find his happy ending. In *Pickles, Art and Sauerkraut* (1914), a poor artist takes one of his sketches to a magazine editor who does not publish it. Tired of art, the artist marries a loving woman who owns a delicatessen store and puts up with all of his shenanigans. In *The Little Terror* (1917), a young cartoonist finds a woman he had known in the circus who discovered she is a millionaire’s grand-daughter, renewes his love for her and they elope. He is accused of going after her fortune, but he proves his ability as a cartoonist and earns $1,000 a week to earn everyone’s admiration. In *The Enchanted Profile* (1918), a young newspaper artist falls in love with a public stenographer as she sits for a portrait. In *Flooe and Axel* (1915), cartoonist “Vic” Forsythe, the well-known cartoonist whose work has appeared in the New York *World* and other newspapers, portrays a cartoonist on the *Daily Blizzard* who stands no chance in
winning the woman he loves. “Dropping into the newspaper office, much discouraged, Vic gets another jolt when the editor tells him that his cartoons are punk, and fires him.” He goes to bed with the blues and his cartoon characters, Flooey and Axel, come to life and show him how to bluff the editor into giving him his job back. They also teach him the methods of a bold lover so he can win the hand of his girlfriend and they instruct him in a few tricks of boxing so he can beat up his husky rival. When he wakes up, Vic resolves to take the hints suggested by Flooey and Axel in his dream. He is greatly disappointed, however, and gets a bad beating from both the editor and the pugilistic lover.515

Sometimes journalism was a path back to redemption. In *The Comeback* (1915), an illustrator, wanted for murder, secures a position on the *Wellington Argus* under an assumed name and with the help of City Editor Carr proves his innocence.

Some newspaper cartoonists went to war to document the action. In *Siege of Liege* (1914), Harry Palmer, a well-known war correspondent and newspaper cartoonist is sent posthaste to Belgium to make a series of sketches of the Siege of Liege. He flies to the scene of action as bombs burst around him until the aeroplane finally lands safely on a hilltop overlooking the battlefield. “There, Palmer sets up his easel and starts to sketch, but the wear and excitement of the journey have tired him out and he falls asleep at his work. A weird dream occurs to him, and the fanciful and ludicrous things he sees are all set forth in the screamingly funny cartoon picture which follows. The artist is finally awakened by a vigorous slap which he administers to a mosquito which is seen fattening upon his head.”516

Some films simply documented the cartoonist’s art as in *Hy Mayer* (1913), a film about the political cartoonist for the New York Times and then chief cartoonist of Puck. From 1909 to 1917, he contributed artwork to early films as this tribute film demonstrates. In *Old Doc Yak* (1913), Sidney Smith, the artist, incurs the displeasure of the Sunday Editor by his oft-repeated failure to report at the art room on time. A moving picture producer gets permission from the newspaper to reproduce in animated form one of Smith’s comic supplement characters. The Sunday Editor, peeved at Smith’s seeming indifference to newspaper office discipline, informs him that he must complete a thousand drawings inside an hour. Smith offers to bet $50 that he can accomplish the task. The Editor bets him that he can’t and the stakes are placed in the hands of another artist. The audience watches Smith at work as his cartoons become animated. Needless to say Smith wins his bet and the art room takes a vacation for the afternoon while the money is spent. *Dr. Yak’s Moving Picture Artist* (1914) shows how Sidney Smith gets inspiration and how a cartoon materializes in his busy brain. In *Arty, the Artist* (1914), Archibald (Arty) Atkinson, played by real-life newspaper artist Vic Forsy, popularly known as “Vic” to New York *Evening World* readers, is a caricature artist who has a fatal gift—he is a skillful artist but loses several positions because he cannot help being funny. The film opens with Arty asleep at his desk in a newspaper office and the editor comes in and fires him. His adventures include losing various jobs because of his caricatures of the people in charge and falling in love with a girl who is his art student.517 *Dreamy Dud in the African War Zone* (1916) features cartoonist Carlson who puts his cartoon characters on film, with one coming right through a newspaper in which a cannibal chieftain is reading the latest movie news. In a series of films in 1916 called *Vernon Howe Bailey’s Sketchbook*, the newspaper artist produces drawings of each city he visits including Berlin, Boston, Chicago, London, New Orleans, Paris, Petrograd, Philadelphia, Rome, San Francisco, St. Louis and Washington. In *The Adventures of Kitty Cobb* (1914), illustrator
James Montgomery Flagg (himself) of *The New York World*, draws the character of Kitty Cobb, which starts the films action and in *Universal Screen Magazine No. 95* (1918), illustrator Flagg is seen making his famous poster, “Tell That to the Marines,” which features newspaper headlines and groups of paragraphs from different newspapers appearing under the heading, “Flowers for the Kaiser’s Grave.”

### Photojournalists and Newsreel Shooters

Photojournalists or photographers as they were usually called in silent films often are just as adventurous as reporters and often get into just as much trouble. In *Jimmy's Finish* (1913), Jimmy, much like a cub reporter, gets a job as photographer on a newspaper and stumbles on what he believes to be a blackmailing case. He calls the police but the blackmailer turns out to be a union man collecting monthly dues, and Jimmy gets a beating for his pains. He is next sent to take a photograph of a banquet. Taking a flashlight, Jimmy causes an explosion that wrecks the building. He is chased by the banquet patrons and is saved by the police. He lands in jail, the newspaper bails him out, he gets another beating and is fired. In *The Flash Light* (1915), a newspaper photographer in India is asked by a prince to come to his palace and take flashlight photographs of the ladies in his harem. He discovers that after he takes the photos, he will be executed. The photojournalist rescues an English girl the prince had abducted, and after a sensational chase by elephants, the two escape. In 1917, another film called *The Flash Light*, a young nature photographer experimenting with a new flashlight process is suspected of murder, but acquitted. In *A Busy Day* (1914), famed comedy director Mack Sennett is a newsreel film director with a newsreel cameraman filming a military parade disrupted by comic Charlie Chaplin dressed as a jealous woman.

Occasionally, a photojournalist would either fake or stage or doctor photographs for personal gain or so he wouldn’t lose his job. In *Pardners* (1917), R. Alonzo Struthers, a Sunday Supplement photographer representing a syndicate of American newspapers, snapped a celebration in which a score or more of miners and dance hall women in Alaska were displayed drinking at tables, dancing and carousing. The photographer was impressed with the splendid action of the photographs that resulted from his flashlight activities. He sent them to a man who wants to clean out the gambling houses in Alaska. But the man recognized that the photojournalist had staged the more picturesque of the dance hall scenes, participating in them himself and permitting another man to operate the flash. Alonzo has also fallen in love with a civil engineer’s wife. He doctors the photographs by substituting the head of the civil engineer on the dance hall pictures of himself taken in various familiar poses with dance hall women and sends them to the engineer’s wife. The woman believed that the camera could not lie. A miner partner of the engineer found Struthers and dragged him to the family confessional with a gun muzzle in his ear to tell the engineer’s wife the truth, saving his marriage.

Newsreel cameramen were an important part of the silent film industry. Sometimes photojournalists simply documented the world around them. For example, cameras follow Colonel Theodore Roosevelt for an entire day in *Theodore Roosevelt* (1912); Hearst-Selig Photographer Wallace secures remarkable photographs of the German cavalry charging the Russians (*Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 29*, 1915); Photojournalist Donald Thompson, who is responsible for several of the best war films shown in this country, presents some of the most vivid war scenes yet exhibited in “blood-stained” Russia in *The German Curse in Russia*.
In *Universal Current Events No. 36* (1918), a spectacular fire at a Pacific Coast resort is covered by the Universal cameraman —“Johnny-on-the-spot.” In *Universal Current Events No. 42* (1918), a daring cameraman risked his life to film the smoking crater of an erupting volcano showing the crater before and during eruption in New Zealand.

Newsreel cameramen not only documented the world in which we live, but also were featured as characters in feature films. In *Facing the Gatling Guns* (1914), a news cameraman’s film footage absolves a man of being involved in shooting live ammunition instead of blanks into a mob of rioters and helps convict the real culprit. In *A Reckless Romeo* (1917), a newsreel cameraman takes film of a husband flirting with a girl in the park. Later, the husband takes his wife and mother-in-law to the movies only to see his flirtation on the screen captured by the anonymous newsreel cameraman.

**Printers and Other News Employees**

Traveling printers were key journalists appearing in silent films that featured country, small town or western newspapers, and they were mostly portrayed as heroes. Will Harrison is one such printer featured in *Manhood’s Reward* (1909). He not only saves a man’s life, but also quits his job when the editor abuses a printer’s devil. In *The Iconoclast* (1910), a lazy, drink-sotted printer attacks his employer and is fired. Drunk-mad and armed with a pistol he goes to the publisher’s home finding his former employer in the depths of despair because his son will never walk again. The printer realizes the error of his ways and the publisher decides to give him another chance. In *The Vagabond* (1911), a typesetter is fired for making a mistake and is recruited by night riders to avenge himself by killing the editor. The printer slips away from the gang, runs off undetected and informs the editor of the coming attack on his home. He begs the editor to flee, and taking his cap and coat, sits in the editor’s chair waiting for the desperadoes to arrive. They circle the house and fire at him thinking they have killed the newspaper editor. The next morning the household find the body of the faithful vagabond riddled with bullets holding in his hand the list of names of the night riders.

Sometimes a novice printer would inadvertently make a mistake that had wide repercussions. In *John Brown’s Heir* (1911), a printer’s devil mixes up headlines on two news stories causing dramatic repercussions in the life of a gold prospector. The error is compounded because other newspapers pick up the erroneous story and spread the false news throughout the land.

Printers also showed up as minor characters in many films featuring other journalists. Sometimes they were minor characters even in films in which they were the only representatives of the press. Occasionally, a news employee was simply mentioned as a “representative of a newspaper.” In *Southern Justice* (1917), a printer is one of three old men who take care of a young boy who the printer makes a printer’s devil in his newspaper office.

The image of the printer was forever changed in 1910 when Printer John McNamara was implicated in the bombing of the printing plant of the virulently anti-union *Los Angeles Times*. That incident was documented in the labor-financed propaganda film, *A Martyr to His Cause* (1911) in which McNamara was depicted as a loving family man who “through his industry and sobriety…is promoted to the position of foreman” and is later elected secretary of his union. But soon after, the McNamara brothers plead guilty and received lengthy prison terms.
Early telegraph news services made exciting venues for silent films. In *His Last Word* (1915), an old telegraph operator for a news service is let go when new management takes over, but the other staff members cannot bring themselves to tell him. They take up a collection and make him think he is getting a weekly pension for his years of service. When he decides to thank the owner personally, he finds out the truth and dies of a broken heart. The men find him seated at the instrument with a smile on his face. He had sent his last “Thirty.”

Poverty, Honesty and Morality: Newsboys and Office Boys

An overwhelming number of silent films reflected the bad economic times of the early 20th century emphasizing the treatment of the poor, especially children, and dealing with issues of homelessness, starvation, poor health care and death in poverty. They reflected the enormous changes going on in the United States involving a new urban population filled with immigrants and natives struggling to make a living in what was often a heartless city without a social conscience and with little help from the government or society.

Many of these films showed a sign of conscience and concern for those less fortunate than others. Poor people, as opposed to the wealthy, were more often shown to be honest, to help others in need, to be concerned about society’s neglect of the sick and indigent. These films were concerned with morality and the importance of true love. They frowned on the accepted custom of marrying off a daughter to a wealthy man to help the family survive. Often, this meant that the girl would have to give up the boy she truly loved to sacrifice herself for others. But filmmakers, striving for unrealistic happy endings that would send their usually poor audiences home with a smile, championed true love and many a young girl would fight the odds to end up marrying a poor, but honest young man. While those in the audience applauded this turn of events, in real life the choice between true love and survival was never that simple.

In these films, luck or a lack of luck was more likely to play a role in the plot showing the arbitrary nature of life in the cities at that time. The newsboy and his family were often at the center of these realistic little dramas. A typical film, *Honesty is the Best Policy* (1908) is subtitled, “A Pathetic Story of Life in the Slums” and shows how a newsboy and a rich gentleman help a poor, sick mother and her two children survive.

Those making silent films found in the newsboy the perfect silent film character—a poor child with a good heart who worked hard to help his sick mother, his sister, and even his dog try to survive. In film after film, you could see the tiny tot hawking his newspapers, trying to get enough money to light a fire, buy some food, get some medication, or keep his family safe from harm. Who could resist these irresistible tykes? And the silent film’s ability to show a huge face on the screen with tears in the child’s eyes hoping for some miracle, captured audiences immediately. They showed up in many films for a scene or two, or simply to set the stage for things to come.

The newsboy hero grew out of 19th century-early 20th century fiction famously created by Horatio Alger, Jr. and others including popular journalist Richard Harding Davis. A typical film was *An Honest Newboy’s Reward* (1908) in which the newsboy finds and returns a rich man’s wallet, impresses him with his honesty and fortitude and eventually becomes a partner in the man’s company. In *At the Stroke of Twelve* (1911), a newsboy saves the five-year-old daughter of a wealthy contractor and is rewarded by being given a job in the man’s office. In *Jimmy*
(1914), the newsboy is the sole support of his mother and crippled sister. They read about a noted European surgeon and his offer to treat a number of patients at a free clinic—it’s a chance of a lifetime to have the little girl cured. While standing in line, the surgeon announces he has to leave to catch a steamship to return to Paris. Jimmy pleads with the surgeon. The surgeon asks the steamship officials to hold the boat for half an hour. After the operation, the doctor rushes to the pier in time to see the boat steaming down the bay, but the captain of a tugboat loads the party into his boat and overtakes the steamship. In *The Passing of J.B. Randall & Company* (1912), a newsboy stops a broker who has been ruined in the stock market from killing himself. In *Her Newsboy Friend* (1908), a newsboy is befriended by a factory girl and repays her kindness by saving her from a villain. In *At the Altar — The Interception of a Rejected Suitor’s Vengeance* (1909), a newsboy saves the day by warning a couple about a man with a gun. In *The Little Father: or, The Dressmaker’s Loyal Son* (1909), newspaper boy Bobby saves his mother from jail and ends up the proud and happy owner of a prosperous newsstand taking care of his little brother and sister. In *The Child Benefactor* (1910), a newsboy rescues a would-be suicide, and is given a comfortable life for saving him from ruin. In *A Child’s Stratagem* (1910), newsboy Jimmy takes care of a missing child. In *Somebody’s Mother* (1911), Jimmy, another little newsboy, saves an aged woman from a crowd of boys and later finds her son who has made a fortune. A reconciliation takes place, the son buys a little cottage for his mother and Jimmy is welcomed as one of the household. In *Nobody’s Boy* (1913), little “Bobby,” a ragged but good-hearted newsboy, is left an orphan when his mother dies. A rich woman loses her boy at about the same time. One day at a cemetery she meets Bobby who is crying over the grave of his mother. She adopts him and he becomes a model child. One day he soils his new clothes and is reprimanded. Bobby decides to run away. He goes to the cemetery and sees his adopted mother placing flowers on her grave. Unseen by her, the child hurries home and “resolves to be the bestest boy in all the world thereafter.” In *Giovanni’s Gratitude* (1913), a crowd of boys attacks a young Italian newsboy and he is rescued by a superintendent of a large factory and his wife who take him to a restaurant and give him some money. A year later, the newsboy’s grandmother dies. The newsboy goes to the man’s factory and gets employment. He overhears two Italian workmen in a plot to blow up the superintendent’s home. The two men attack the boy, but he escapes and returns just in time to enter the man’s cellar, grab the bomb and throw it out of the window just as the two villains rush up to restrain him. The bomb explodes and kills both of them. The boy is cleared and received into the superintendent’s home.

From the 1905 *The Newsboy* to the 1918 *Fair Enough*, the plots were basically the same: poor newsboy eventually sells a newspaper to a rich family who rescues the newsboy and his clan, especially his dog, from a life of poverty. Audiences never seemed to tire of this kind of sentimentality and took the newsboy and the occasional newsgirl to their hearts. In a review of *Her Romance* (1910) about a newsboy hit by a car while he is selling his papers, the writer points out, “Such stories are popular, and even though they are plentiful seem never to pall upon the taste of an audience.” True to form, the car was driven by the boy’s estranged grandmother resulting in a happy reunion between daughter and grandson. Automobiles proved to be the greatest menace to the little newsboy selling newspapers on a street corner. In *Jimmy’s Misfortune* (1912), Jimmy is working hard to buy his crippled little sister a wheel chair. While getting change for a ten-dollar bill, he gets run over by an automobile and fails to come back with the change. The wealthy couple involved look him up at the police station and discover he has been taken to the hospital, become interested in him and his sister, and make them both “wonderfully happy.” In *Freckles* (1914), a crippled newsboy tries to keep his brother out of a
tough gang, but in the process, gets run down by an automobile and is taken to the hospital. The brother has a change-of-heart and with their grief-stricken mother go to the hospital and are overjoyed to learn he is not seriously injured. In *A Newsboy’s Luck* (1911), newsboy Joe sees a moving picture company rehearsing a scene that requires a newsboy and he gets the part. On his way home, he is run over by an automobile. During the six months it takes him to recover, his father dies and his mother gets a job as a governess in a wealthy family. When he gets out of the hospital, he can’t find his mother, but the kind director who gave him the part in the movie gives him a job and while they are filming at a mansion, Joe finds his mother and they are happily reunited. In *Keeping His Word* (1910), a newsboy supports himself and his little brother by never allowing anyone to pass him without buying a paper. When a wealthy man says he only has a dollar bill, the newsboy pleads with him, “I’ll bring you back your change, Mister. I give you my word I will.” When the newsboy fails to return, the wealthy man feels betrayed. But the boy had been run down by a car. His little brother found the change in his tightly clenched hand, returned the money to the rich man who, learning “the pitiful cause of the delay,” telephoned a physician to take charge of the case. The wealthy man, his wife and the physician went to the boy’s bedside where the stricken newsboy, raising himself in bed and smiling bravely at the gentleman and his wife whispered weakly: “Mister, I kept my word!” and fell back dead. The rich man then gave his little brother a fine new home. In *Daybreak* (1918), a successful businessman who drinks too much pushes a newsboy under an automobile causing the boy severe injuries. His pregnant wife reads about her husband’s crime in a newspaper and tells him she is leaving him and will only return to him when he has stopped drinking permanently. In *Fair Enough* (1918), a woman’s auto knocks over a newsboy who is not seriously hurt. She takes him and his friends on a picnic to the beach.

The crippled newsboy became a favorite character of silent film audiences. In *A Newsboy Hero* (1911), a crippled newsboy helped an abused wife and her child. In *The Craving* (1916), a crippled newsboy, Crooky, is a keen, philosophic little soul. He takes up with a former college football player who was expelled for drinking and conspiring to fix a football game. In a series of misadventures, the newsboy rescues the man from a burning cabin, finds out he is the only heir to his uncle’s fortune, finds new evidence clearing him of any wrongdoing during his college years, proves that his wife was married before she inveigled him to marry her, and sets up the possibility that the man’s former love might welcome him back when he returns home. In *Nina, the Flower Girl* (1917), Jimmie, a crippled newsboy, watches over Nina, a little blind flower girl who sells her artificial bouquets. In *Another Chance* (1914), Curly, a crippled newsboy, is badly beaten up by a tramp who is trying to steal the boy’s secret hoard. An ex-convict brings him home and the newsboy repays him by keeping him out of jail by substituting his coins for some stolen coins. The man resolves to be honest. Curly gets his revenge by tempting the tramp to steal the bad coins and then notifying the police. In *The Drunkard’s Child* (1909), a crippled newsboys sells papers on the corner while his drunken father takes the pennies he earns and his mother lies on her death bed.

A newsboys’ best friend in silent film after film was a stray puppy or abused dog. Against all odds, the poverty-stricken newsboy keeps his pet. In *Buddy and His Dog* (1912), Buddy finds a stray pup and takes action when dog-catchers are shooting dogs without licenses and in *Don’t Pinch My Pup* (1912), Tim the little newsboy issues an ultimatum to the police department when he learns they will “pinch” his pup under the new dog license laws. In *Why Rags Left Home* (1913), Rocco, a little Italian newsboy, who can’t afford a license for his dog Rags, is trying to
keep his dog from going the way of all stray dogs. He gets the money, but now finds that a little newsgirl’s mother is sick and needs assistance. He gives her all his money and scurries away to begin saving again for the imprisoned “Rags.” A councilman and city officials heard the ragged newboy’s plea, passed the hat, and the capless boy rushed to the pound realizing there was enough money to save all the dogs including Rags who Rocco now hugged tightly to his breast. In *A Dog in a Coiner’s Den* (1911), newsboy Louis and his pet dog Tray save the day after a gang ties Louis to a table, places a keg of gunpowder by his side, lights the fuse and leaves. Tray removes the burning fuse and the two escape as the powder explodes. Louis receives a big reward for giving police the necessary information to arrest the crooks. In *Jack and Jingles* (1912), Newsboy Jack Logan (played by a female actor, Maude Potter) manfully attempts to aid his silver-haired grandmother in a fight to keep the wolf from the door by selling newspapers. He also rescues a stray dog, “Jingles” and the two become inseparable companions. In *The Adventures of Billy* (1910), the newsboy is saved from a beating by a clever bulldog who brings help.

Some films showed the hard life of a newsboy orphan taken advantage of by adults. *Christmas in Paradise Alley* (1908) shows the boy’s humpbacked uncle, who lives off the newsboy’s earnings, beating him with a cane when he finds out the newsboy Jimmy has sold no papers that day. In *The Land Beyond the Sunset* (1912), newsboy Joe lives in the tenements with his drunken and abusive grandmother. In *A Man and His Money* (1915), a woman’s fiance mistreats a newsboy showing a woman a phase of his nature that she doesn’t like. In *The Little Orphans* (1915), a crooked pawnbroker takes in a boy and girl when their mothers dies and forces the orphan boy Donald to sell papers for a living and rents him to a gang of jewel thieves. Donald is forced to break into a man’s house to open the door for the crooks when the man recognizes the newsboy and wins from him his story He phones the police and the thieves are captured. The man and his wife then adopt the homeless brother and sister.\(^{534}\)

The path of true love often was not a smooth one for most newsboys. In *Little Mr. Fixer* (1915), Billy is a typical newsboy of the streets and a favorite of a struggling young female artist. When a man forces his attentions on her, Billy kicks him and then is knocked down and badly injured. The woman takes him home with her to recuperate. The man is overcome with remorse, but Billy rejects his presents. Billy, now convalescent, plays craps with lumps of sugar to while the time away. Billy realizes the woman is love with the man who hurt him. He tells her he thinks he will die and that he wants her to get the “gink” who knocked him down so as to forgive him. The girl calls for both the doctor and the man. Billy tells them the deception and his “cleverness wins the day and the lovers are once more reunited with a better understanding of each other, while Billy has made a permanent place for himself in the hearts of each.”\(^{535}\) In *The Ingratitude of Liz Taylor* (1915), Jimmie O’Meara is an orphan newsboy of ten who has an abiding love for Liz Taylor, a pretty girl of twenty, who is kind to him. Jimmie hides in an office and sees the foreman forcing his attentions on Liz, and “with a hammer he fells” the man to the floor. From that time on the foreman makes Liz the prey of his hatred. Liz contacts pneumonia and Jimmie is instrumental in helping to save her life. The foreman is fired and the man Liz loves is made foreman in the factory. Meanwhile, Jimmie proposes to Liz and she and the new foreman convulse with laughter and look upon the little fellow with love and compassion. Liz kisses his cheek and tells Jimmie that when she and the foreman are married, he will live with them. “Stunned with his great love, and the thought of all that he has already done for Liz, Jimmie cannot see it nor understand. Slowly, he and his poet dog, Sport, go out. Down stairs on the doorstep he sits down to think it
over. Still there is only one thought in his mind. With his arm thrown around faithful Sport, Jimmie exclaims: ‘Ain’t that the ingratitude of a woman!’”

Newsboys often get beaten up by other newsboys, thugs, and others. In *The Flower Girl* (1908), an older newsboy and his girlfriend fight off some villains who have tried to compromise the girl and end up happily together. In *Corinne in Dollyland* (1911), a girl gives a newsboy money after a crowd of urchins have stolen his papers and his money. In *Rowdy and His New Pal* (1912), a young boy, Rowdy, wanders off and is abused by several newsboys until he is rescued by Pietro, another newsboy. When Pietro gets sick, Rowdy steals some bread and milk for him. The neighbors follow Rowdy, and an ambulance is called for Pietro. When Rowdy’s family come to the hospital, there is a happy reunion and they offer to take Pietro home with them.

Sometimes a poor newsboy turned out to be the son of wealthy parents who is reunited with his family and finds his proper station in life. In *The Unborn* (1916), Dick, an orphan newsboy, is adopted by a couple when the wife refuses to bear children. What they don’t realize is that Dick is the man’s natural son born out of wedlock to a young country girl who is seduced and abandoned by a wealthy boy from the city who leaves her to marry a socialite, now Dick’s adopted mother. The father becomes ill and Dick is somehow able to save his father’s life and then forgives him for his past transgressions. In *The Idol of the Stage* (1916), a mother disappears after a blackmailing society paper prints a false scandalous story about her. When her baby son is born, she does not communicate with her husband or family. Because of the story in the society paper, her husband, a drug addict in prison, thinks his wife has deserted him. Her son is now old enough to contribute to her support by selling newspapers. The husband, now in business in the city, is drawn to the little newsboy. When he meets the boy’s mother, he recognizes his wife and she assures him the son is his own and that she has been faithful to him. Because of his love for her and the boy, he quickly decides to remain with them both. In *The Waif* (1915), a small newsboy makes his bed in a barrel and earns a few pennies shining shoes and selling newspapers after being kidnapped from his family and abandoned by a discharged, drunken chauffeur. The waif auditions for a play, gets cast and becomes a success. He is invited to a country estate where the woman tells the story of her kidnapped son—who turns out to be the boy who is reunited with his family. In *Wanted: A Brother* (1918), Tom Wellsley runs away from his wealthy but stern father in search of adventure and becomes a newsboy. But the other “newsies,” resentful of the wealthy boy’s intrusion into their business, plant some stolen fruit in his pockets and he is sent to the House of Correction. A young girl who always wanted a brother and who had befriended Tom, tries to secure his release with no success. Tom escapes with a gang of tough boys who decide to rob his father’s house. Refusing to join them, he finds work on a farm. The girl goes to Tom’s house to find him and is forced by the boy crooks to break in. Once inside, she is bound and gagged. Tom’s father finds her and frightens the gang away and she finally succeeds in bringing about a reconciliation between father and son. In *The Beloved Liar* (1916), newsboy Jackie is adopted by an old violinist and soon the little boy and the violinist’s daughter become close friends. When the violinist loses his job, the children are adopted by a wealthy married couple. They grow up, the girl becoming an opera singer and Jack her manager. The violinist, who has become a wanderer, had written an opera and a music dealer finds it and sells it to the girl. The violinist returns and is united with the pair. He receives a substantial sum of money for his opera and Mary makes a big “hit” in the opera. In *Uncle John* (1915), Jimmy Moore is an eight-year-old newsboy who earns enough money by selling newspapers to feed him and his two siblings in the tenement. They help an old man who sprains his ankle by using their
meager funds to buy liniment. He admired their generosity and was astonished to find out they had spent all their pennies and had nothing left for supper. He asks if he can stay if he pays for his board and keep and they agree. But it turns out he is a prominent man too big to drop out of sight for a week unnoticed. A fire erupts and the children are saved by “Uncle John” who brings the children back to his mansion for a happy ending.

Charitable adults were often responsible for the newsboy’s favorable future. Sometimes the adult didn’t have to be wealthy to make a difference. In *The Sleeping Lion* (1919), Italian newsboy Little Tony is adopted by a kind-hearted Italian potter who strikes out for the West to realize his dream of owning a ranch. They have a series of adventures ending with the boy’s eating his first birthday cake and waiting for his birthday present when the villain shoots at him thinking he is the father. The child is stunned but not injured, soon recovers and the father gets his revenge and the woman he loves, giving the little newsboy a loving family. In *The Right To Live* (1915), Piccino, a hustling little “newsie,” takes a half-starved waif home with him to his tenement room. An old, blind lawyer across the hall is invited to share their food. The next day Piccino finds that Jo, the bully, has stolen his corner where he sells his papers. Wandering disconsolate, he sees an automobile strike down the girl who is peddling papers to help out. The injured child is carried to the tenement. In desperation, Piccino steals a loaf of bread and is captured by a policeman and taken before the Juvenile Court. The rich employer of the chauffeur who ran her down is present. The old lawyer pleads the newsboy’s case. Piccino is vindicated and the wealthy man sends him, the waif and the lawyer to a pleasant home of their own in the country. In *House of Cards* (1917), a little African-American newsboy, one of the few African-American actors to turn up in mainstream silent films, runs away with an ignored daughter of a professional couple who feels neglected, unloved and unhappy. The girl is believed drowned and the man deserts his wife who suffers a nervous breakdown. It is only when the child is found and restored to her does she recover. Husband and wife are reconciled and both determine to pay more attention to their little girl in the future.

Newsboys proved to be indispensable helpers and enablers to adults down on their luck. In *Bobby and Company* (1917), Newsboy Bobby befriends a poverty-stricken old poet and his little granddaughter. He borrows money for rent and food from a customer who buys plays and has lots of money. The newsboy then discovers an old manuscript written by the poet, hurries back to the customer’s office and his friend asks one of the actors in the office to read the script. They recognize that it is a great play. The old poet is paid a handsome sum for its rights and he moves into a comfortable home taking Bobby along as his adopted son who won’t have to sell newspapers or sleep in cellarways any more.

In *Man for A’That* (1916), a wealthy man tires of society, leaves his fiancee and goes to live with a little newsboy. The newsboy takes in the man who says he is out of work and starving, but who is really the wealthy clubman dressed in shabby attire so he can live among the poor and obtain their point of view.

Occasionally, a newsboy will outwit people who want to use him for nefarious means. In *Her Pet* (1911), a husband bribes a newsboy to steal his wife’s obnoxious “poodle-dog pet” and “do away with the obnoxious canine.” When the wife advertises for her lost pet, the newsboy returns the dog and is well paid for his honesty. Other times, the newsboy is an amateur detective or gets involved in the social issues of the day. In *The Great Python Robbery* (1914), Billy, a newsboy friend of a detective, climbs up a waterspout and enters a house where a crook is holding the
detective hostage with a giant python, Billy holds up the crook with his own revolver, frees the detective from the python’s deadly coils, and they escape. The detective is warmly congratulated for the clever way in which he has outwitted the thieves and Billy is made the detective’s assistant. In *The Red Viper* (1919), David Belkov, a newsboy born of foreign parents lives in “New York’s crucible,” the lower East Side, the foreign section of the city. When he sees a poor family being evicted, he then joins an anarchist group in which his sweetheart is a member and a fervent radicalist. The group plans to assassinate a judge who earlier condemned one of their comrades to the electric chair. After he witnesses the bravery of a 12-year-old girl who sings patriotic ditties to drown out the soap box orations of the anarchists, he changes his opinion and prints leaflets to combat the anarchist views that stir the lower classes of the city to revolt. The little girl is killed trying to thwart the anarchists’ plot and David is caught and badly beaten. After government agents break up the gang, David arrives just in time to stop his girlfriend from bombing the judge’s home. He is shot by the anarchist leader, but the girl he loves, realizing the error of her ways, nurses him back to health.543

Some films depict a newsboy from hopeless beginnings to prosperous or responsible adulthood. In *The Newsboy* (1905), a poor boy starts out as a newsboy and eventually becomes a Supreme Court judge. In *The Heart of a ‘Boss’* (1912), the rise and fall of a newsboy is chronicled — a banker sees a little newsboy knocked down in the street. He helps him, gets him a job, and as the years roll by Hugh Johnson, former newsboy becomes a political boss, suffers defeat and then redemption by working at the bank and falling in love with the banker’s daughter. In *After Years* (1912), a newsboy finds a lost child and when she grows up, he falls in love with her. He is an industrious fellow, works hard and finally succeeds in saving sufficient money to open a news stand, eventually becoming a pharmacist and marrying the girl. In *Just a Shabby Doll* (1913), a friendless newsboy rescues a little rich girl from peril, and gives her a doll, which she always treasured. The years passed and the ragged newsboy grew up to be a fine man, but the girl’s father pointed out the young man did not have sufficient funds to support the girl in the station of life to which she was accustomed. The former newsboy went out and made a fortune, but the girl had disappeared after her father lost all of his money. Eventually the doll brings them together and they get married. *The Life of Big Tim Sullivan; or, From Newsboy to Senator* (1914) documents the career of a man who sprang from poverty to great wealth and power, from a barefooted newsboy to becoming “The Bowery Senator.” In *The Girl and the Game* (1915), Storm, an orphan newsboy, loves trains and has dreams of operating a real locomotive when he grows up. A rich little girl is chasing after a stray dog when a miniature train pulls out with a load of passengers. The pup runs in front of the train and falling in love with the banker’s daughter. Storm has become a fireman and the train he is on becomes a runaway. The crew cut off the caboose and escape, but Storm doggedly insists on sticking to the engine. A grown-up Helen learns of the danger, rushes out, jumps on her pony, and rides to try to stop the collision of the runaway train with another train. She galleys to a switch, breaks the lock with a stone and seizing the lever, she throws the switch as the passenger train tears by. The runaway is headed to hit three box cars. Storm, still at his post, sees the impending collision and jumps to safety. Helen rushes forward and picks up the gallant fireman. She has repaid her debt to her newsboy hero.544 In *Ginger* (1919), Newsboy Tim Mooney protects 12-year-old Ginger Carson against other children and a father, a small-time
crook, who beats her regularly. He forces her to rob a house and she is arrested. But a sympathetic judge adopts her and sends her father to prison. Ginger grows up to be a beautiful woman and Tim and the judge’s son both fall in love with her. War is declared and both boys go to war and Ginger joins the Red Cross. Risking his life, the other boy carries wounded Tim to a hospital where he dies in Ginger’s arms. She and the other boy then marry. One reviewer said, “Some observers would have perhaps preferred her to marry Tim, her newsboy friend, but the conclusion is satisfying as it is.” In *A Jewel in Pawn* (1917), Newsboy Jimmy has always been a young woman’s defender and when he is falsely accused of theft, the judge paroles him in the woman’s care. They both go to live with a pawnbroker. During Jimmy’s day in court, reporter Bob Hendricks senses his opportunity and prints a “heart interest” narrative about “the jewel in the pawn.” The story is read by a wealthy old widower who is the woman’s grandfather and he shows up to claim his relative. Three years later, Jimmy confesses his love for the woman who “is quick to prove that she reciprocates.” They run off and are united in a marriage ceremony for life. In *A Boy and the Law* (1914), newsboy William (“Willie”) Eckstein escapes from Czarist Russia because he is a persecuted Jew and starts his new life in America as a newsboy.

Newsboy names were meant to endear the character to a silent film audience and none did that better than “Swipesy, the newsboy” who appeared in a series of films called *The Boy Detective* (1908). She is played by an unknown female actor. “Newsboys” were often acted by women. In *Prince Charming* (1912), little Billy is played by Edna Foster. In *The Newsy and the Tramp* (1911), Marie Eline plays the newsboy, Ragsy, and she also is an abused newsboy in *The Protectory’s Oldest Boy* (1913). In *Jack and Jingles* (1912), the newsboy is played by Maude Potter. In *The Newsboy Tenor* (1914), Little Jimmy the singing newsboy is played by Baby Lillian Wade.

Sometimes the newsboy was a newsgirl as in *The Higher Impulse* (1914), when newsgirl Little Clara Brent sold newspapers to help her homeless mother after her father walks out on them. In *The Inspector’s Story* (1914), newsgirl Nellie conducts a newspaper route to help support the family after her father receives a life sentence for killing a man. The little girl wants to know how pardons are secured. A police inspector points to a lady in a carriage and tells Nellie that that lady is the governor’s wife. The child’s story interests the lady and a pardon for her father is secured and with the inspector’s aid, the father and child are installed as owners of a profitable newsstand. In *$1,000 Reward* (1915), a crippled newsgirl and the daughter of a wealthy man become friends. She convinces her father to pay for the operation on the newsgirl’s hip, and she recuperates in their beautiful home. When a burglar breaks into the mansion, the little newsgirl stops him, and the rich family insist the newsgirl, her mother and twin sister come to live with them. In *The Girl Who Won Out* (1917), a girl runs away, cuts her hair and makes a living as a newsboy and messenger about town until she can be reunited with her baby sister. In *The Fortunes of Mariana* (1915), newsgirl Mariana, an orphan, sells newspapers for a living and one evening accidentally encounters a prominent attorney and they become friends. The attorney hires her to be a maid in his sister’s home. Her happiness is destroyed when her brother, a pickpocket, swoops down upon her and with threats and blows forces her to let him enter the home and rob it. The hurt and embarrassed newsgirl leaves the home. Six months later, her brother is hired to steal some papers from the attorney. The girl overhears the plot, goes to the police who break into the attorney’s house just in time to stop the gang who has bound and gagged the attorney. The little newsgirl sets him free. In *Miss Mischief Maker* (1918), Little Sallie O’Brien sells newspapers on the city streets. When her mother dies, she is adopted by a
keeper of a boarding house who treats her cruelly. A wealthy man befriends the newsgirl and takes her into his home where the girl takes a hand in the man’s daughter’s love affairs. In *The Tide of Fortune* (1910), a little girl selling newspapers accosts a man who doesn’t want a paper but pities her. When he looks down at her face he realizes it’s his own sister. In *The Law That Divides* (1918), Newsgirl Kathleen Preston’s vocation is selling newspapers but her avocation is picking pockets. In *The Penny Philanthropist* (1917), a newsgirl sells newspapers on the streets of Chicago saving her money until she can afford to open a small newsstand called “the Newsroom Emporium.” In *Bit O’Heaven* (1915), newsgirl Faith sells newspapers and when her mother dies, she takes her little sister by her hand and together they stood at the corner selling papers. In *The Italian Barber* (1911), newsgirl Alice runs a stand on a neighboring corner and a barber falls in love with her.

In the early years of the 20th century, it was unseemly for a girl to sell newspapers on the corner. So more often than not, they dressed up as boys to avoid the stigma of being a working female. In *A Bit of Kindling* (1917), Sticks is a typical little newsboy in rags and tatters — but she’s really a girl who is forced to wear boy’s clothing in order to stand an equal chance with the opposition “newsies.” She holds down a metropolitan corner and fights for her rights against a lot of tough lads. Her favorite customer is a wealthy young man and Sticks witnesses an attack upon him by a gang of thugs and tries to interfere. They are both knocked out and then placed in a baggage car while unconscious. They wake up in a small town and decide to stay there, finding work on a railroad gang. Together they start a new life until she discovers the man isn’t going back to his life of comfort because he cares for her, so she leaves and the man returns to his old way of life. Sleeping on a hay stack, Sticks is discovered by a wealthy author, there to purchase drugs. He takes the newsgirl to his mansion for literary inspiration, learns that Mike is a girl and resolves to educate her. Years later, the wealthy man chances to visit her adopted father’s house on business and finds Sticks. A wedding follows. In *A Fighting Colleen* (1919), newsgirl Alannah “Shrimpy” Malone is played by Bessie Love as an Irish immigrant living in a tenement who sells newspapers to support her widowed mother and her family. Another newscie, Jimmy Meehan, invades her territory but Shrimpy takes care of him in good fashion by mercilessly whipping him. Thereafter he becomes her ardent champion. She also discovers the woman in charge of the tenement house where she lives is a graft collector for the crooked mayor, so she helps the honest district attorney secure proof that the mayor is collecting bribes. As a reward, she and Jimmy, who is now her boyfriend, are both put in charge of the new “municipal eating house.” Catch Line: “She was a fightin’, tearin’ colleen and aggressively demonstrates woman’s rights — to sell newspapers undisturbed.” In *The Microbe* (1919), Newsboy Happy O’Brien, played by Viuola Dana, is “The Microbe” or “Mike,” a female street urchin who lives in the slums and sells newspaper dressed as a boy to avoid harassment. She is saved from arrest for fighting other newsboys in Chinatown by a wealthy author, there to purchase drugs. He takes the newsgirl to his mansion for literary inspiration, learns that Mike is a girl and resolves to educate her. He falls in love with her but a woman who wants to marry him tells Mike that the author’s writing is suffering because of her. She leaves and writes the author daily letters signing them “Bianca,” which inspires him to write a best-selling novel. When he finds out who penned the letters, he marries her. In *The Blue Bonnet* (1919), a girl named Ruth Drake was left as an infant by her heartless ex-burlesque queen mother after being stolen from a loving father. She is brought up by a crooked pawn broker and then faces the dangers of a big city when she becomes a newscie. After a series of misadventures, Ruth and her father are finally reunited. In *The Little Brother* (1917), Jerry Ross is a girl who dresses up as a boy to sell newspapers on a street corner. She recognized that in a rough and tumble struggle for life, skirts are a handicap, so she trims her
curls and sallies forth in the discarded vest and pants of a boy. At first she is chased form the street corners by jealous competitors. In a free-for-all fight with other newsies, a window is smashed and Jerry is hauled up before children’s court. She is paroled in charge of a big brother who promises he will help the promising lad. He takes her to his country house and proceeds “to make a man of her.” He sends her to boarding school where she confesses to the headmaster that she is a girl. After her schooling is over, she joins her benefactor and for the first time reveals herself to him as a girl. What follows for Jerry is a series of adventures including the discovery of a long lost formula, fighting off a burglar and a matrimonial adventuress, and finally repaying a debt of gratitude by entering into a life partnership with the man who rescued her. In The Trouble Buster (1917), an orphan newsboy, “Blackie” Moyle, befriends Michelnla Libelt, offers her the protection of his own piano box home, and teaches her how to be a “newsie.” She dresses as a boy, changes her name to Mike and becomes a newsboy. Blackie’s dog Spunk is a witness to it all. A young crook discovers Mike is a girl and lures her into a room where Blackie finds them. In the fight that follows, Blackie is hit on the head with a bottle and loses the sight of both eyes. While he is in the hospital, Mike goes to an art exhibit and exhibits two little statuettes that she and Blackie have made. An art dealer likes “The Trouble Buster” and sees the same commercial possibilities of popular success as the “Billiken” or “Kewpie.” Mike credits Blackie who becomes a “social pet” and a fortune assured for the statue proves to be extremely popular. He is taken to a famous hospital in France where his sight is restored. Meanwhile, the crook has found Mike, who now dresses as a girl, and threatens to tell the world that Blackie is not the real sculptor unless she gives him money. Blackie shows up and tells the world the true identity of the statuette’s author himself destroying the blackmailer’s plan. He then tells Michelna how much he loves her.

Newsgirls worked as hard as newsboys to improve their lives. In His I.O.U. (1915), the little newsgirl Nan worked hard with her mother to provide food and shelter for themselves and the girl’s little baby brother after her father was killed in an accident. Karl, a small boy in an orphan asylum runs away because no one cared about him and he wanted to seek his fortune in the big world. Nan discovered Karl and invested fifty cents of her well-earned money in newspapers for the waif. Under her guidance, he started his career as a full-fledged seller of the daily news. But an uncle who learned of the death of the boy’s parents took the youngster away to a handsome home. All the little girl had to remember her young friend by was an I.O.U. in boyish handwriting for the fifty cents she had advanced him. Both kids grew to adulthood and the girl now conducted a newsstand on a busy corner. A political hanger-on induced the mayor to give him the newsstand privilege instead and she had no friend to turn to. In a newspaper, she read an account of the rise to power of a young state senator, now a power in politics, and recognized that it was Karl. She presented the tattered I.O.U. to him and he called the mayor and angrily ordered him to restore the newsstand privilege to the girl. So the childhood friendship of a man and girl was renewed and in time it ripened into love. The senator and his wife are often asked by their children the meaning of the I.O.U. but only tender smiles have rewarded their earnest questions. In Unhand Me, Villain! (1916), Alice, a poor, hard-working newsgirl, has one weakness and that is her admiration for a handsome actor. One day she is abused by a competing newsboy. To escape from him, she enters the theater and hides in the leading lady’s dressing room. While hiding there, she finds that the actor is in love with the leading lady and that both are planning to rob the manager and make their getaway. Alice tells the manager of their scheme and he is so grateful that he says he will grant her any wish. Alice’s wish is to be a leading lady and her wish is granted. On the night of her debut one of the stage hands drops a burning match
in the snow on the stage which starts a fire and ends her debut. In *Little Miss Optimist* (1917), Mazie-Rosie Carden is a newsgirl who pays her board by selling newspapers on the street. One scene shows the delivery door of a big morning newspaper with the heroine struggling with real newsboys for her share of papers. Mazie saves the life of a starving musician by giving him her cherished “lucky dime.” After her brother is accused of a crime, Mazie hunts down the real culprit solving a murder in the process. In *Lost and Won* (1917), a wealthy man bets a bank director and four friends that he can make a little newsgirl named Cinders into a lady so attractive that they will all want to marry her. A year later, Cinders returns from boarding school an attractive young woman, but leaves her comfortable home when she learns that her benefactor has lost his money, been demoted to bank teller and been accused of stealing $50,000. Cinders is determined to find a job and goes to her friend, a reporter, who helps her get a job on a newspaper. While investigating the story of the bank theft, she uncovers evidence that proves the bank director stole the money to buy a necklace for his mistress and then pinned the crime on her benefactor. In the process, she gets tied up, manages to call the reporter who arrives with her benefactor and a policeman to apprehend the guilty man just as he is about to escape. Acquitted of all criminal charges, he then proposes marriage to his protégée.

Newsboys, trapped in a world of poverty and disease, would often try to escape reality by dreaming about a better world. In *Clownland* (1912), poor, little newsboy Teddy can’t afford a ticket to the circus, but he dreams he is the “king” of the circus. A kind-hearted stranger realizing how much such an event meant to him in his boyhood days, hands Teddy the price of a ticket. In *Prince Charming* (1912), Little Billy the newsboy dreams he is Prince Charming in love with a princess. In *Beyond His Fondest Hopes* (1915), Newsboy Tony falls asleep on a pile of newspapers and dreams of a little girl before waking up to the harsh realities of his life. In *Bobby’s Medal* (1915), newsboy Bobby reads of the expected arrival of a prince and princess from Italy, falls asleep and dreams about how he saved them from the Black Hand gang. In *Otherwise Billy Harrison* (1915), Newsboy Billy sells papers to his favorite customer, a little girl who lives in a big brick mansion. He sees in the newspaper that the government has offered a big reward for the apprehension of a ring of dope merchants and starts to day dream that he is Bill Harrison, a government detective, sent out to catch a ring of crooks that are selling drugs and the girl is a reporter on a big metropolitan newspaper. The city editor sends her out to get evidence against the crooks and she is captured by them. But Harrison rescues her and later is taken prisoner himself. This time the girl rescues him. Both capture the crooks red-handed after a long chase. Bill kisses the girl and wakes to find he is really kissing the little lady who buys his paper. She runs away and he goes along on his route. In *A Chip Off the Old Block* (1916), a ragged little newsboy at his stand in front of a moving picture theater stands gazing sadly at a life-size poster of Charlie Chaplin, when a pretty little girl and her brother happen by. The little girl, out of pity, gives him a generous tip thereby installing herself in the very middle of the newsboy’s heart. He lies down and falls asleep only to dream about his pretty benefactor. In his dream, he becomes a facsimile of “the divine Charlie” in appearance, in word and most of all in deed. In his wonderful dream, he woos and wins the beautiful maiden, is pursued by a villain who steals away his lady love and awakens to find the theater manager shaking him. He rubs his eyes, realizes it was all a dream and runs off. In *Chip’s Elopement* (1916), newsboy Chip, while sleeping in a newsboys’ home, dreams that he is a real grown up moving picture actor. He drives an auto to the home of Little Nell and induces her to elope with him. Chip’s rival, dressed as a villain, places a bomb in his auto. As they drive off, they are chased by the villain, Nell’s father and some cops. They get to the church escorted by Cupid and arriving at Chip’s new home, a
show of confetti falls in and around the auto. Chip wakes up to find that the confetti is really feathers flying about his bed. He realizes that he is in the midst of a pillow fight, forgets his dream and jumps into the fight. The matron of the home catches Chip in the act of throwing a pillow, grasps him and spanks him as the film ends. Sometimes the dreams turned into nightmares. In *Rosie O’Grady* (1917), a little newsy of the East side dreams of murder and retribution before she wakes up.

The newsboy became such a familiar character in silent films that they often were thrown into the plot to give some information, to help support the family, to illustrate a social problem, to witness a crime or to aid in the plot. In *Love’s Crossed Trail* (1916), a young girl adopts the disguise of a ragged newsboy to escape detection. In *Sammy’s Semi-Suicide* (1916), a newsboy yells forth the news of a man’s suicide after being paid off by jokesters to shout out the false news to stop this man from always proclaiming when things go awry that he will commit suicide. In *The Innocent Sinner* (1917), a newsboy helps save a woman’s life by telling a doctor of her whereabouts. In *A Macaroni Sleuth* (1917), a newsboy selling papers is yelling, “All About the Smithson murder — murderer still at large!” and the story resonates with a correspondence school detective fresh from the country. In *The Marriage Market* (1917), a newsboy calling “Extra” headlines makes a woman rush to court to save an innocent. In *Amarilly of Clothes-Line Alley* (1918), a little scrub girl lives in a tenement home with her Irish washerwoman mother and a family of brothers who are messengers and newsboys. In *Little Miss No-Account* (1918), a runaway girl goes to live with a newsboy. In *Chimmie Fadden* (1915), a good-natured Bowery boy who lives in the New York slums gets into a fight defending a small newsboy from a “tough” and is arrested. In *John Barleycorn* (1914), a young Jack London is a newsboy on the streets of San Francisco and already battling alcoholism.

Newsboys became such a popular staple that they became ripe for satire. In *Mutt and Jeff and the Newsboys* (1911), the adult Mutt dresses as a newsboy to sell papers, but gets arrested when he tries to buy a drink. In *Happy Holligan April-Fooled* (1901), two newsboys attempt to sell a newspaper to a popular comic strip character illustrating the common perception of the day that newsboys were annoying street characters to most well-to-do gentlemen. Newsboys showed up in newsreels and shorts as likeable characters that everyone wanted to help. In ‘*Universal Boy* as the Newsboy’s Friend’ (1914), Matty, the Universal Boy is led to the Newsboy’s Home Club by a little newsie whom he has just treated to some ice cream. “Pitying the poor little boys who have so few pleasures in life,” Matty gets approval to take some newsies to Coney Island for a good time. They meet a real-life philanthropist, an editor, a cartoonist and a comedian during their adventures. In *Pathe News, No. 18* (1916), Anna Held the world-wide famous actress, dresses up as a newsboy to aid Belgian war sufferers. In *Selig-Tribune No. 8* (1916), New York “newsies” present the mayor with resolutions thanking him for his assistance in helping to raise $500,000 for the Newsboys’ Clubs. In *Mutual Weekly No. 112*, western newsboys in Glendora, California send 100,000 oranges to the newsboys of the East on Orange Day.

Although newsboys occasionally went beyond the sales department into the editorial rooms to eventually become reporters, most of the films have little to do with the journalism profession. By 1920, however, the movie audience grew more sophisticated and cynical and soon this popular genre faded away.
Occasionally a newspaper vendor was featured. In *Honor Thy Father* (1915), old Maggie, a newspaper vendor saves a mother from starvation when her husband loses everything. The woman learns her husband was tried on the charge of stealing bread when she was selling papers outside the jail. In *The Crooked Road* (1916), an invalid confined to her wheelchair sells newspapers to make a living. In *Hidden Fires* (1918), a woman who is in charge of the newsstand at a hotel bears a remarkable likeness to a woman who is missing after her ship is torpedoed. She assumes the woman’s identity. At first the masquerade is successful, but then the girl falls in love and slips away quietly. She marries the man and on their honeymoon cruise, the couple is surprised to encounter her look-alike who has also just been married. In *Out of the Mist* (1916), an aged wreck of a woman is selling newspapers in a storm and a man is inspired to paint her, calling the picture “Out of the Mist.” He gives the woman money to pose for him. A rich man shows up and seizes his latest infatuation. The aged woman who sold newspapers then confronts him and tells him that he once made love to her when she was young and beautiful. “The girl you just held in your arms and whose downfall you were planning is your own child and I am her mother,” she tells him. The shocked man staggers from the building and is killed by a former lover. The daughter is reunited with the man she loves and plans to care for the aged woman who she now knows is her mother.

In *The Reapers* (1916), news vendor Albert Jordan is forced to sell newspapers after he is paralyzed from the waist down and has to give up a publisher career. In *The Innocence of Lizette* (1916), newsgirl Lizzie, an orphan, works at the newsstand run by news vendor Paul. Granny takes care of the newsstand when Paul is doing deliveries. Lizzie attracts the attention of a millionaire who adopts her.

Office boys also figured in films about the news. In *Tapped Wires* (1913), two office boys work for rival news service corporations and hate each other. Mike Taylor who works for the Affiliated Press is a live wire, nervous, high strung and resourceful and brave to recklessness. Sammie Burns who works for Coast Service is slow moving and prone to sleep on the job. The manager and staff of the Affiliated Press discover that every important scoop they made was, somehow or other, received in the rival Coast Service Office. They knew there was a leak somewhere, but were unable to discover it. In breakneck speed, Mike discovers the leak, covers the news of a railroad express wreck in which his sister may have been killed, and ends up being friends with the rival office-boy.

**Pack Journalists**

Pack journalists are groups of reporters, photojournalists, war correspondents, freelance writers, even newsboys who follow a story or a specific incident together in a group, trying to get the story at all costs.

Sometimes they act like a pack of jackals who will do anything to get a picture or a story. *The Fight of Reporters (Bagarre entre journalistes)* in *The Dreyfus Affair* (1899) shows reporters of opposed opinions fighting in the courtroom before the start of the Dreyfus trial. The reviewer feels as if he/she is in the middle of the pack journalists’ fight as they rush close to the camera before exiting the scene. The fight starts when two major journalists start an argument and other journalists jump in triggering a battle that only ends when the police arrive and the angry reporters are expelled. In *Bridal Couple Dodging Cameras* (1908), male and female journalists and photographers create a news media circus as they chase after a beautiful American heiress and her titled husband. When the newlyweds try to leave the church through a back entrance, the reporters and “camera fiends” chase them through the streets causing the husband to fall into an
excavation. The bride, her robe torn and soiled, is followed by reporters of every description including some women society reporters. In *Business Buccaneer* (1915), newspaper men learn about a secret formula for the manufacture of rubber and try to get a story from the man who brought the formula back from South America. “Failing in this, they concoct one of their own.” In *Saved by a Skirt* (1915), a married couple are sighted by reporters who recognize the man whose father has told him if he doesn’t marry the next day, his fortune will revert to another heir. The reporters make him give them an interview regarding the wedding. The next day the papers are full of the wedding of the wealthy lumberman’s son and the bride’s father sees the news. At school, the girl’s chums read the news and begin teasing her. The principal sends her home because married women are not allowed in the school. It turns out the marriage was a sham, but at the end of the film they prepare for a real wedding. In *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* (1916), reporters who have gone to a boat to meet a famous opera singer fear that if a band is present at the arrival of the boat, it will interfere with their interview. So they bribe the band master not to play. In *Daughter of Kings* (1915), reporters buttonhole a man who lives abroad and comes back to America on business and put him down as one who finds American women “loud” and quote his declaration that he will marry no one except a “titled gentlewoman.” The story entertains a woman who pretends to be a princess and seduces the young man, who when he finds out he’s been duped, flees back to Europe. In *A Woman’s Way* (1916), the newspapers report on a pending divorce hinting at a mysterious unknown “other” woman. Later, reporters break into the house and threaten to publish news that the unknown woman was the woman in the automobile accident, but another woman saves the situation by feigning an affectionate relationship with her and this sends the reporters away satisfied. In *Jack Spurlock, Prodigal* (1918), pack journalists cover the onion workers’ strike and one musical theme for the film is entitled, “Hold those reporters off.” In *Fifty-Fifty* (1916), newspaper reporters and a photographer report a woman in a compromising position by shooting a flashlight photograph. The husband divorces her using as evidence the stories of the witnesses at the raid and the flashlight photograph. But the whole thing is a setup created by a crooked detective and a jealous woman.

Most of the time, however, Pack Journalists are benign just covering a story as a unit, doing their jobs as efficiently as possible. In *Atlantis* (1914), on a steamship pier, rescued passengers of a sinking ship are “besieged by newspaper reporters anxious to learn the particulars of the sinking” of the ship. Newspaper reporters in need of a story loved *The Gilded Kidd* (1914) because his over-indulgent father kept helping him out of scrapes of all sorts. Thanks to the newspaper notoriety he had received, the Kidd’s face was well known about town. In *Uncle Bill* (1914), a riotous crowd of newspaper reporters are misrepresented. In *Chimmie Fadden Out West* (1915), the newspapers print a report of a supposed gold strike making Chimmie the idol of the hour. When the strike turns out to be a fake, Chimmie meets with reporters to give them the news and to return any of his ill-gotten gains. In *A Bum Steer* (1916), inquisitive reporters cover a train wreck and a burglar’s identity is concealed from them. In *Paste and Politics* (1916), a man explains a plot to ruin the reform candidate to police and newspaper reporters. The boss resigns from the election, the reformer and his friends are victorious. In *A Soul at Stake* (1916) a worried woman consults with one of the newspaper reporters and finds that another girl has been reported missing. In *Transgression* (1917), a woman threatening to expose the mayor calls in reporters so she can tell her story. In *Dodging a Million* (1918), reporters flock to interview a woman who is supposed to be an heiress who just inherited a fortune. In *Old Wives for New* (1918), a variety of anonymous journalists play a role in the plot—one of the characters calls up
an editor asking him to reveal an unknown woman’s name, another reporter covers a shooting, other reporters rush to interview a man and his mistress on a ship and discover a mistake has been made — another woman was reported to be the man’s mistress. Two reporters find that woman and apologize for their newspaper’s mistake: “There’s been a grave mistake in identity, Miss Raeburn. We want to apologize and assure you that we will do all we can to square this in our papers.”

Pack Journalists were also featured in newsreels and other real-life scenarios. A crowd of reporters follow Henry Ford and Secretary Daniels as they plan a gasoline driven submarine (Pathe News No. 77, 1915). Reporters in Washington interview political personalities (Hearst International News Pictorial No. 48, 1916).

The Importance of the Newspapers in Silent Film and the Unidentified News Staff

We decided to include films in which a newspaper or magazine plays a strategic part in the plot showing the influence of the news media of its time on its readers. One film, The Sage, the Cherub and the Widow (1910) points out that “When you see it in the newspapers, you know it is so.” Most silent film characters agreed. These films do not feature specific reporters or journalists, but instead are stories, news items and notices printed in the newspaper or magazine without any specifics of who wrote the story or why resulting in the designation “Unidentified News Staff.”

Newspapers were an integral part of most households. Readers believed what the newspaper printed and rarely questioned the information. If they were affected personally, they acted without hesitation, even if it led to tragic consequences, irrational acts and even criminal action. Silent films added to the image of the trustworthiness of newspapers. Newspaper and magazine articles were used as prime motivators in the plots of films across all genres.

Newspapers were regularly seen in silent films to establish character and social mores beginning with this 1897 film, The Bad Boy and Poor Old Grandpa. The man usually got the newspaper first and cherished reading it without any interruptions so The Bad Boy and Poor Old Grandpa (1897) made audiences laugh as it showed grandpa peacefully reading his newspaper when a bad little boy creeps up behind and sets the paper on fire.

Many films use newspaper articles to change the course of the film. They contain revealing information that creates the basis for the entire film or a major turning point in the plot. Sometimes a newspaper article prints information no one was aware of before and this causes major problems or relief for the characters in the film.

Often the article causes the reader to take immediate action. Sometimes the story involves criminal activity. Sometimes an article inspires criminals or would-be criminals to take action. Sometimes an article inspires detectives or police to take action. Sometimes the story involves prisons, fugitives from the law, ex-convicts and the accused. In Tragic Love (1909), a man accused of murder who escapes reads that the real murderer has been found enabling him to return home to claim his true love. In London by Night (1913), an article alerts a man that he is wanted by the police so he becomes a fugitive. In Her Convict Brother (1912), a newspaper article about a man’s escape from prison causes his sister all kinds of problems. In Almost a Man (1912), an innocent man convicted of murder escapes prison, then reads a
newspaper article revealing that the real murderer confessed enabling him to return to the city and marry the woman he loves. In *How Shorty Kept His Word* (1912), news of a murder trial causes the real culprit to confess. In *In Friendship's Name* (1912), a newspaper article confirms that a woman is a forger and her exposure has deadly ramifications. In *The Man Within* (1912), a newspaper article reveals that a badly wounded man is an outlaw. In *Charity Rewarded* (1909), women read in a local newspaper that the town is besieged by a band of thieves and accuse an innocent poor beggar of being a crook and refuse to feed him. In *The Two Fugitives* (1911), a London embezzler who has come to America and reformed, reads that he has been located by Scotland Yard. In *The Mysterious Lodger* (1914), an article reveals a man suspected of murder is wanted by the authorities prompting the man to stay in hiding. In *The Wharf Rats* (1914), the dying wish of a man’s mother to see her son who disgraced her is printed in the newspaper. The son manages to evade arrest and arrives at his mother’s bedside before she dies. Sometimes newspaper articles reveal that the reader is an heir to a fortune. Other articles inspire get-rich schemes. Newspaper stories inspire poor men to follow the latest gold discovery hoping to make their own fortunes. In *Three Thanksgivings* (1909), the discovery of gold in the west convinces a young man to go to the gold fields where he hits pay dirt. In *A Dream of Wealth* (1909), a husband reads about the discovery of gold in California and goes there with his wife and child to find their fortune only to find horrific tragedy instead. In *A Much Wanted Baby* (1913), a report on the discovery of gold gives a man who has been disinherited an idea on how to get rich again. In *The Power of Prayer* (1915), when a middle class farmer reads that gold is being found out west, he decides to mortgage his farm and try his luck at gold digging. In *Her Inspiration* (1915), the story of a man and the fortunes he made in Nevada prompted those reading the article to follow his example. In *The Shielding Shadow: Episode Four: The Earthquake* (1916), an article says a man has struck gold out West and has become a millionaire. A man decides to journey to that remote mining town where the man has found his fortune. In *Brown’s New Monetary Standard* (1913), a Sunday Supplement story on extracting gold from sea water gives one man an idea on how to get rich.

Silent films in which newspaper articles play a major role in the plot usually involve love and romance. The newspaper often reveals that a missing person is someone the readers know and love and now have a chance to reclaim. Many times, the story involves an heiress that gives a young man ideas on how to become rich. Sometimes the story exposes an imposter who deceives the woman who loves him. Once in a while, a man will see a story or a picture in the newspapers and instantly fall in love with the image vowing to win the woman over in real life. And often a story about love and romance can result in thoughts about revenge and retribution. But more often than not, the silent film plot involves courtship and marriage and all of the foibles and complications that this often fragile state of the union involves. In *A Vitagraph Romance* (1912), a newspaper article informs a father that his daughter has married against his wishes. In *Faith of a Girl* (1913), a newspaper article about a newly married man accused of a crime embarrasses the bride when she visits her parents. In *The Broken Heart* (1913), a story revealing that the man a woman loves has deceived her and is marrying another has serious repercussions. In *A Lesson from the Past* (1913), an article reveals to a woman that her long-lost lover is marrying someone else. In *Her Inspiration* (1911), a woman in love with another man is married to a man who deserts her. When she reads of his death in the newspaper, she rushes back home to the man she loves. In *The Counterfeit* (1914), a story about an approaching wedding enables a man to come to his senses and prevent the wedding. In *The Master Force* (1914), an article about the engagement of a magnate’s daughter devastates the
woman because the man had promised to marry her. In *His Romany Wife* (1915), an article reveals that a woman has been stabbed to death by a jealous lover freeing a man to marry the woman he loves. In *The Winning Number* (1916), an article on the strange provisions of a man’s will brings many suitors to the man’s surviving daughter. In *Widow Jenkin’s Admirers* (1912), the newspaper publishes a story on Widow Jenkins stating that all of her husband’s property has been left to her. The item closes with this sentence: “Here is a good chance for Snakesville’s many bachelors.” In *Love Disguised* (1914), a newspaper announces the arrival of a wealthy count causing all marriageable women to flock to the hotel where he is staying. In *Tangled Paths* (1915), a man reads about the engagement of a girl he loved and this prompts him to take action. In *The Young Man Who Figgered* (1915), an article reveals that a young man rejected as a suitor by a girl’s father won the $50,000 lottery prize giving that father second thoughts. The *Moral Fabric* (1916), a man tells the newspapers that he is giving up his wife to another man and the publicity that follows practically forces them to wed. In *The Man Hunter* (1919), a man suffering from the “morning after” reads in the newspaper that he has proposed marriage to one of the ladies at the party and was accepted. Resolved to prove that he is no quitter, the man presents himself at the lady’s home, learns that the newspaper account is true and accepts the situation. In *Upside Down* (1919), a newspaper article reports on a man’s elopement making his wife want him more than ever.

Sometimes a newspaper article motivates characters in a film to take action. Sometimes a story involves irrational actions on the part of the reader. Some stories give women an idea on how to take advantage of a confusing situation. And sometimes a story can dramatically change a person’s life. In *The Changing of Silas Warner* (1911), a newspaper account of a father’s troubles changes his son’s life. In *The Strange Story of Elsie Mason* (1912), a newspaper story about the strange disappearance of a little girl has long-range implications. In *Her Only Son* (1913), a young man becomes “a hero overnight through the medium of the newspaper” and this changes his life. In *For Her Father’s Sins*, a newspaper reveals that a medical operation is to take place giving a father the chance to make amends to those he has deeply injured. In *The Idler* (1914), a story about a poor mother of five children who offers the youngest for adoption prompts a wealthy couple to take action. In *Mother’s Choice* (1914), an article reveals that a woman’s son, given away when he was a baby, is now wealthy and visiting the city, and the mother vows to go see him. In *A Mother’s Heart* (1914), a man being sentenced to death prompts his mother to go to the city in an effort to save him from the death chair. In *Pawns of Destiny* (1914), an article about an eye specialist restoring the sight of a man gives another man whose sight was lost in much the same way new hope. In *The Reform Candidate* (1915), a newspaper story about a long-lost baby leads to learning the truth about who that baby grew up to be. In *When Empty Hearts Are Filled* (1915), a couple who found a child five years ago read in the newspaper that parents lost a child in a ship wreck and they worry they might lose the child to his original parents. In *The Hidden Law*, a writer reads in a newspaper a story about a genius whose book has set the world aflame and the royalties of which await the author, but no one knows where he is. The writer allows himself to be persuaded to go back in the world he has deserted. In *The Great Unwashed* (1913), a newspaper article tells the story of a millionaire who disguised himself as a beggar, and this changes the life of a local widow. In *The Salvation Army Lass* (1909), a newspaper article on a man’s death brings notoriety to a woman who is then hounded by misfortune, evicted from her boarding place, and fired from the factory in which she works.
Sometimes a story prompts the reader to dream of a different way to live. Sometimes a story brings tragedy to those who read it. In *The Tribunal of Conscience* (1914), an article informs a son that his father has committed suicide, left nothing but debts and that his home is now in the hands of the creditors. In *Two Memories* (1909), a former lover reads in the newspaper that the woman he loved is returning from Europe, but he dies just before meeting her. In *A Regiment of Two* (1913), a story about the Thirteenth regiment being wiped out has major repercussions for two men who have lied about being members of that regiment. In *The River Goddess* (1916), a man reads about the woman he loves eloping with her chauffeur and contemplates suicide. In *The Honor of the Family* (1912), an article about a pending marriage to the man she loves causes the abandoned woman to attempt suicide. In *Me and Bill* (1912), a newspaper prints a report about a great battle listing the dead including the fiance of a bride who is so broken-hearted that she commits suicide. In *Out of the Depths* (1912), a woman seeing a newspaper article that reveals her son is going to prison has a heart attack and dies. In *The Wrong Label* (1915), a woman reading an article on what happened to a man who swallowed some mercury decides to use the same method to commit suicide. In *Her Great Chance* (1918), a millionaire reads a newspaper report on his son trying to drown himself in the hotel fountain urging his friends and the proprietor to join him, and decides to disown him. Later, another newspaper article reports on the father’s death. In *A Woman Without a Soul* (1915), an article on a man’s frustrated attempt at suicide does not move a woman without a soul. In *The Discard* (1916), a newspaper reports on the death of a woman, but her daughter doesn’t know her mother’s name so the article has no meaning for her. In *The Human Vulture* (1913), a newspaper article about a disaster in a mine has repercussions for all involved.

Often a newspaper will print a story that contains misleading or wrong information and that changes the course of the film’s plot completely. The most common plot twist involves a major accident in which everyone is reported killed, but a loved one(s) somehow survives or was never on the ship or train in the first place.

The reporting of misinformation involving the death of a loved one is a key element in silent film plots. In *Her First Husband’s Return* (1910), a newspaper story reveals that a woman’s husband, believed dead, turns out to be alive turning her into a bigamist. In *The Joke on the Joker* (1912), a husband is reported to have met with a fatal accident. The wife, believing herself a widow, is about to marry again when the husband reappears. In *Cards* (1913), a husband is wounded and believed dead, so his wife, thinking herself free, promises to marry another. When the husband, who survived, reads in the newspaper about their impending marriage, he figures blackmail is in the cards. In *The Hand of Providence* (1913), a story about a dead convict creates problems for his apparent widow. In *The Helping Hand* (1913), an article reveals a daughter’s death, but the story turns out to be wrong having tragic repercussions. In *Was She to Blame?* (1913), an article reports the death of a woman’s husband, but he turns out to be alive. In *Forgetting* (1914), an article about the death of a man in an automobile accident means a second chance for a man in love. In *Lights and Shadows* (1915), a story convinces a woman that the wife of the man she loves has been dead for some time and realizes that his intentions are honorable. In *The Stain* (1914), an article reports the wife of a fugitive dead and this changes everything for a judge, but the report is wrong and consequences develop. In *The Tragedy of Room 17* (1914), a woman goes on a quest to find her child after a newspaper report about an asylum being destroyed by fire and all the children killed except for one. In *The Unplanned Elopement* (1914), a newspaper reports that a man was killed after being injured by a woman’s fiancé. She refuses
to marry him until his name is cleared, but the article is wrong and corrected in a future edition. In *Is Marriage Sacred?* (1916), newspapers report that a crook is killed and this enables his wife to marry the man she truly loves. But the story is wrong—the crook is still alive. He is shot to death by a pal and all ends well for married couple. In *Golden Lotus* (1917), an account of a massacre of an expedition by a hostile tribe in Africa reports no survivors and sets the stage for some shocking news when a man believed dead shows up alive. In *The Fair Pretender* (1918), newspapers announce the return of a man supposedly dead disturbing the plans of a woman pretending to be his widow.

Newspaper reports of the sinking of a ship with all aboard lost is a key plot element in many silent films. A woman loses her mind when she believes her loved one is dead after reading about an explosion on ship with no survivors (*The Song That Reached Her Heart*, 1909); a newspaper reports that all are lost in a ship wreck, but unknown to the woman who loves him, the man is still alive (*The Light in the Window*, 1910); a steamer has sunk in mid-ocean, the same steamer a man told his wife he was taking to recover from his seemingly bad health—except he wasn’t on the ship (*His Doctor’s Orders*, 1914); the wife was on the steamboat and saved, but the husband didn’t know it so he leaves the village and eventually the wife reads in a newspaper that the supposed widower is to be married again (*Whom God Hath Joined*, 1912). In *On Her Wedding Day* (1913), a shipwrecked woman reads that her husband, who believes she is dead, is going to marry someone else. In *Phantom Island* (1916), the newspaper reports on the wreck of a boat in which all passengers are lost including a daughter and her fiancé, but they are later found alive. In *Whose Wife?* (1917), newspapers report a shipwreck and the death of a wealthy man. But he is not dead, he is rescued. He doesn’t let his wife know and marries a South American heiress, steals her money and leaves her, coming back to New York where he confronts his wife who is planning to remarry. In *Perils of the Atlantic* (1912), news about a ship hitting an iceberg has repercussions for the major characters.

The reporting of railroad accidents killing all aboard also is a key element in silent film plots. A newspaper “extra” reports that a railroad express has been wrecked and everyone aboard killed causing a woman to believe she is a widow (*A Wreath in Time*, 1909); a woman sees a newspaper story that corrects an earlier report about her first husband, who years ago had been reported killed in a railroad accident, reporting he is still alive (*Her First Husband’s Return*, 1910). In *Susanna’s New Suit* (1914) and *Black Eyes* (1915), a newspaper posts a story about a train crash killing everyone aboard, but the story turns out to be wrong, and in both cases, the loved one is alive and well. In *The Quickening Flame* (1919), a man reads a newspaper account of his wife’s death in a railroad accident and marries another woman and sires a son. The death report proves to be false resulting in a tragic situation. In *The Cabaret Singer* (1915), “The flaring headlines, telling of a frightful railroad wreck” revealing the death of a man’s wife making it possible for him to marry another woman.

Other printed misinformation also has serious repercussions. In *Hearts Entangled* (1913), an article has the wrong woman marrying the right man creating all kinds of problems for the couples involved. In *Little Jack* (1913), a newspaper article has the wrong man as the murderer. In *The Sure Tip* (1913), a humble clerk gets the wrong stock information from the newspaper causing a financial mishap. In *Behind the Footlights* (1914), a news story on a musical comedy performer’s rescue from a fire credits the wrong man as being the hero who rescued her. In *A Typographical Error* (1914), the word “devoted” is printed as “divorced” causing a man to
believe he is a bigamist. In *The Right to Happiness* (1915), a man reads that his wife has filed a divorce suit and thinks the decree has been granted so he immediately marries the woman he loves. In *Coney Island* (1916), a newspaper report of one woman’s marriage is false. In *A Social Outcast* (1916), newspapers give prominence to an alleged affair. By the time the matter is cleared up, it is too late to salvage the man’s reputation. In *The Saint’s Adventure* (1917), a handsome rector reads a home-town newspaper report of his own death while on vacation. In *Breakers Ahead* (1918), a newspapers makes an error causing a man to desert his sweetheart. In *Broadway Bill* (1918), a man who struggles with alcohol reads an article that erroneously states that his girlfriend is engaged to another man and this causes him to drink again. In *Bud’s Recruit* (1918), a newspaper has the wrong brother enlisting in the army causing him to reconsider what he is doing. In *Eternal Love* (1917), a reporter covering an accident has the injured man’s name wrong when the story is published in the papers. The mistake leads a woman to believe that the man she loves has been seriously injured and she journeys all the way to Paris only to discover him alive and well and in the embrace of the most beautiful model in France.

Often newspaper stories in silent films confuse the reader by reporting cases of mistaken identity or someone posing as someone else. In *The Professor’s Trip to the Country or, A Case of Mistaken Identity* (1908), the newspaper reports that a famous fighter is arriving in town resulting in a case of mistaken identity. In *The Black Prince* (1912), a woman reads about a “Hindoo Prince, a multi-millionaire,” arriving in town and confuses him with a local man who works for a fortune teller. In *Driftwood* (1912), a woman looks exactly like a missing wealthy woman and tries to palm herself off as the missing heiress. In *The Regenerating Love* (1915), a man reads in the newspaper about a search for an heir to a fortune giving him an idea to impersonate him. In *The Secret Kingdom: Chapter 13: The Tragic Mosque* (1917), a newspaper in New York contains a story of a romantic love affair between a princess and a man fighting to regain the throne. A crook reading the story discovers he resembles the man and this gives him an idea. In *Grease Paint Indians* (1913), a story warns of Indians on the warpath resulting in a case of mistaken identity. In *His Highness, the Janitor* (1916), newspapers announce the expected arrival of a foreign nobleman, but when he fails to show up, a janitor takes over the role. In *Life’s Harmony* (1916), a newspaper article on a man resembling an embezzler turns out to be his brother. In *A Stranger in New York* (1916), the metropolitan press is interested in the spectacular adventures of a speculator who turns out to be an impersonator. A man hurries to New York to expose the faker and cash in. In *Leave It to Susan* (1919), a newspaper picture of a highwayman looks suspiciously like a young man a woman meets on a train and she is convinced he is the robber. In *The Black Spot* (1915), a story about a grand duke coming to England incognito prompts revolutionaries in London to decree his death. In *Polly Put the Kettle On* (1917), a newspaper article tells of the mystery surrounding the identity of the author of a new play, “Polly Put the Kettle On.” In *Comrades* (1911), a society news article that a member of Parliament is expected to be a guest in a local man’s house gives the main character an idea—he decides to impersonate the M.P. In one bizarre film, *A Burnt Cork* (1912), an actor late in his rent is evicted and gets revenge by covering faces of a white husband and wife with burnt cork to make them look black. Their misadventures include all of the racism of the day —police ignore them, a minister chases the wife from the church, a crowd chases them thinking they are a convict and a maniac. The couple has no idea why this is happening until they look into a mirror and realize why their world was turned upside down. Sometimes newspapers and magazines print photographs that have repercussions in the lives of the people involved. In *Her Sister* (1917), a newspaper prints the wrong woman’s picture in its
coverage of a divorce trial and to protect her sister, the woman goes along with the error. In *A Rich Man’s Darling* (1918), a young model sees a picture of a millionaire in the paper and immediately falls in love with him. In *Bab’s Matinee Idol* (1917), a woman worships an actor whose photograph she cut out of the paper. In *Wrath: Episode 6: The Seven Deadly Sins* (1917), a newspaper prints a photograph of the son of a Russian Grand Duke revealing to his American wife that her husband is still alive and giving her courage to search for him and her daughter, who had been left in an orphanage years before. In *Plain Jane* (1916), a New York newspaper offers a prize for the most beautiful photograph of a college girl prompting a town photographer to take action. In *The Curse of the Scarabée Ruby* (1914), a journalist takes a flash-light photograph of a woman’s wounded neck. The next morning, a full report of a raid on a notorious gang appears in the newspapers accompanied by the woman’s photograph. In *The Girl in the Frame* (1917), a photograph in the newspaper of a woman in tights causes problems for a happily married couple. In *Lone Larry* (1917), photographs of a bandit (Lone Larry) and a young millionaire are mixed up in a newspaper. An editor sends an office boy to get two photographs and the sporting editor notices the photographs have been switched. The mail edition has been sent so there is nothing to do but to correct the mistake in the city issues. A sheriff sees the mail edition and decides to take action the result being the millionaire is nearly lynched as a result of this blunder.

Sometimes the newspaper simply gets the story wrong for lack of information or accurate information. Other times, the newspaper gets into trouble for printing premature information. Sometimes unscrupulous or overzealous people use the newspaper to plant false stories to defeat a rival or an opponent. Newspapers of the early 20th century were susceptible to planted information from press agents. Sometimes a story involves a hoax or misinformation that has serious ramifications for those who believe the story. In *Fatty’s New Role* (1915), an article about a bum blowing up inhospitable saloons gives some patrons of a bar an idea—they will play a prank by writing a threatening note from a hobo played by one of the top silent comedians, Fatty Arbuckle. The bar owner thinks Fatty is the mad bomber and treats him accordingly. In *Max Joins the Giants* (1913), a newspaper article about a machine that lengthens people gives a man of small stature hope. In *Foolish Fat Flora* (1915), a woman reads in the Sunday newspaper that the way to “lose your fat and gain a figure” is to “dress on the floor, work on the floor, and eat and sleep on the floor.” She tries it suffering horrible consequences. In *The Slim Princess* (1915), an American millionaire shows a princess pictures in a magazine to prove to her that in his country slim persons are considered the most beautiful.

Often a newspaper will print information that results in criminals being arrested, an innocent being released or political malfeasance discovered. In *Detective Kelly* (1914), a report of the theft of a pearl necklace and a reward for its return results in criminals being brought to justice. In *A Fugitive From Justice* (1914), an article on a death-bed confession gives his brother a new lease on life. In *The Nurse and the Counterfeiter* (1914), an article alerts a nurse and physician that one of their patients is a notorious counterfeiter and that there is a reward offered for his capture. So they try to capture the criminal. In *On the Minute* (1914), a newspaper article states that the Mayor is determined to veto a gas franchise bill forcing his opponents to take action. In *Weights and Measures* (1914), the mayor, a political boss, reads an account warning of what is to happen at the next session of the grand jury. The mayor wants to know if the story is true and when told it is, tries to stop the investigation first by bribery and then by threats, but the city attorney refuses all offers and kicks the mayor out of his office. *The Magnate of Paradise*
Journalist in Silent Film

(1915), an article about a bribe sends a woman on a mission to clear the man involved. In *Thou Shalt Not Kill* (1915), a newspaper reveals that a man a judge has sentenced to death is found to be innocent when the real murderer makes a death-bed confession. In *The Villainous Vegetable Vendor* (1915), newspapers report that police are looking for the son of a millionaire’s wife who has disappeared. In *A Voice From the Sea* (1915), an article about a robbery reveals the truth to the man who rescued the robbers from a supposed shipwreck. In *The Life Mask* (1918), an article states that a woman is suspected of having killed her husband and that an investigation is underway. Another woman uses the information to alert the authorities about her whereabouts. Occasionally, a “fake” newspaper will be printed for the greater good. In *The $5,000,000 Counterfeiting Plot* (1914), a “fake” newspaper is printed, blazing in its headlines that New York counterfeiters have been captured and have confessed. Their confederate in jail, mislead by the fake newspaper, confesses his part in the transaction and the information leads to the real arrest of the other counterfeiters.

Occasionally, a newspaper will print an expose, an investigative story or an editorial in the public interest. In *By Man’s Law* (1913), a local paper publishes an editorial rebuking a wealthy capitalist when the suffering of the strikers becomes acute: “Are the days of despotism over, when one hypocritical money god can so sway the wheels of destiny that thousands of helpless men, women and children may be thrown defenseless upon the world?” The editorial fails to make any changes. The magnate turns public opinion by his philanthropy while continuing to satisfy his own lusts at the expense of other lives. In *Spite of the Evidence* (1914), newspapers denounce the governor as a traitor when he vetoes a bill to prohibit child labor causing people to demand his resignation. In *In the Stretch* (1914), newspapers criticize crooked pool rooms causing the district attorney to take action. In *The Bridge of Sighs* (1915), a newspaper extra reveals that a newly completed bridge has collapsed killing 20 people and that the contractor is at fault. The news story comes out on the contractor’s wedding night. He reads it and commits suicide. In *Eye for an Eye* (1915), a woman sends letters to a newspaper that will incriminate a wealthy city man before telephoning the police to come and arrest him. In *With the Help of the Ladies* (1915), newspapers attack the chief of police because he can’t capture the purse snatchers invading his town. In *The Invisible Enemy* (1916), a newspaper expose about conditions in slum tenements causes a public outcry forcing the governor to take action. In *The Sign of the Spade* (1916), newspapers report that the man who first gave the name of a crime ring leader has been found stabbed to death with a card, the ace of spades, pinned to his coat as a warning to all who might testify against the gang in the future. In *Four Months* (1916), a newspaper expose reveals that a doctor who told patients they had an incurable disease and only had four months to live has been found insane. This is good news for one millionaire. In *The Lightbreaker* (1916), newspapers champion a young minister who cleans up a slum district with his fists when all other methods fail. In *Betty, Be Good* (1917), a newspaper report on food riots at city hall prompts a rich young girl to bake bread for the hungering multitude. But her skill set isn’t up to the job. In *The Girl and the Judge* (1918), a newspaper expose of a mother’s shoplifting results in a well-publicized scandal that ruins her husband’s business. In *The House of Correction* (1914), a newspaper reports on a scandal in a reformatory and the story has many repercussions.

Newspapers in silent films also kept the citizenry up to date on foreign and domestic developments. Newspapers play a key role in elections and their aftermath. Newspapers could be the court of last resort or a disappointment to those who thought newspapers could be of
help to them. In *Milady’s Boudoir* (1915), a man gives himself up to the authorities sure that the newspapers would believe his story and vindicate him. But the newspapers scoff at his fantastic tale and he has to stand trial. In *The Running Fight* (1915), newspapers report that a man who has disappeared is a suicide, but the district attorney doesn’t believe it and orders a search to find and capture the man. In *Face in the Mirror* (1916), a woman hears an accomplice threatening her husband with exposure if he does not pay him more money for his share of a bank robbery. The woman then holds the two men at bay compelling the accomplice to telephone a confession to the newspapers. Police free an innocent man convicted of the crime. In *Traffic of Souls* (1913), newspapers cover the story of white slavers abducting women. The final shot is a newspaper in a trash can with a story on a suicide relating to the story.

Sometimes a story involves serious public health problems. A newspaper story that a deadly microbe which spreads influenza is loose in the air causes a terror-stricken old man to panic (*Afraid of Microbes*, 1908); a man reads a newspaper account of a new disease caused by excessive use of tobacco, has frightening nightmares and resolves to quit smoking (*Tobacco Mania*, 1909); the newspaper reports on a new and rare disease and a woman who reads the story suddenly has all of the symptoms (*When the Worm Turned*, 1913); a wealthy man’s son reads a story that reveals that a crank has been sending people germs to scare them in order to get money and it gives him an idea (*Germs and Microbes*, 1916); a newspaper article about how the town’s female population is being overcome by a new disease prompts a husband to try to save his wife (*A Western Kimono*, 1912); a story about some Brazilian extract that imparts strange feelings to people creates havoc in a young woman’s life (*Betty in the Lions’ Den*, 1913). In *The Skylight Room* (1917), a newspaper tells the story of a girl who succumbs to hunger and is taken to the hospital. In *A Mad Dog* (1910), an article warns everyone to be aware of mad dogs.

Sometimes a story involves business and legal problems. In *Hard Cash* (1910), news of a firm’s failure could mean disaster for the man in charge of a bank. In *Through Fire to Fortune* (1914), an article reveals that a law firm has failed and that the younger namesake is criminally involved. In *The Bridge of Shadows* (1913), a banker campaigns against what he considers an exaggerated press report about insurance companies and natural disasters. In *The Cashier’s Ordeal* (1912), a morning newspaper reports about the death of a vice-president and his confession of crimes and of embezzlement and the story exonerates the hero. In *The Secret of Eve* (1917), newspapers denounce a woman’s husband who treats his workers poorly and this humiliates her and causes her to take action. In *He Wouldn’t Support His Wife* (1915), husbands aren’t happy when they read a news report that a law has been passed by which lazy husbands will be forced to work and their wages paid to their wives. In *It’s Cheaper to be Married* (1917), a newspaper warns the bachelors of New York that a heavy bachelor tax has been levied so no man wants to get married. In *Face to Face* (1914), an article on legislation that would restrict all state contracts to residents of the state alarms four men who are not residents but who manage a court house contract that they now may have to give up. So they take action. In *Chiefly Concerning Males* (1915), a family reads that a business deal is a fraud and decides to take action. In *The Country Girl* (1915), the protagonist reads that her father’s house is to be foreclosed and is devastated by the news. In *A Poor Relation* (1915), a newspaper story about a strike sparks an inventor to send a letter to a capitalist about his new “labor saving machine.” In *As the Candle Burned* (1916), a father is very sad when he reads about his son’s drunken escapade and arrest for embezzling funds from the bank in which he is employed. The mother
dies of a broken heart and the father uses up all of his savings to make good the shortage before dying himself.  

Sometimes a story plays on the prejudices of the population. In *The Foreign Invasion* (1912), a newspaper story dealing with alien immigration statistics gives one man nightmares, but he awakes to the stern realities of life including a wife who admonishes him against excessive drinking and idle newspaper reading. In *Andy Plays Cupid* (1914), an article on a foreigner marrying a beautiful American woman infuriates a man who hates foreigners. In *A Tragedy of the Orient* (1914), a man incites the populace to attack the first American they see after he reads a newspaper report that California has passed the Japanese alien law. Sometimes a newspaper article will ridicule people, especially rich people who seldom appreciate the humor.  

Other serious articles elicit laughter in all the wrong places. Newspaper articles played a key role in the *Our Mutual Girl* series of 1914, in which the Mutual Girl outwitted villains, saw the sights of New York, met with theatrical and political celebrities (who frequently helped her out of trouble) and tried on fashionable outfits in chic stores. In *Our Mutual Girl* No. 3, an article gives an account of a theft of a famous necklace, which has impact on her life; in *Our Mutual Girl* No. 6, newspapers in New York cover a fist fight between a cab driver and a country boy who rushes to her rescue; in *Our Mutual Girl* No. 20, the newspapers cover the girl’s disappearance, which inspire a gang of thugs on the East Side to create a blackmail scheme; in *Our Mutual Girl* No. 22, an article announces the arrival of the greatest of all detective story writers who is visiting New York inspiring a call for help; in *Our Mutual Girl* No. 29, newspapers in New York are filled with stories of a flight across the Atlantic in a huge hydro-aeroplane in the early winter.  

Newspaper headlines are often used in silent films to sum up major events of the time. Often newspaper extracts and headlines were put on the screen to advance or clarify the plot. In *I’m Glad My Boys Grew Up to Be a Soldier* (1915), the headlines announce that war is declared. In *Is Christmas a Bore?* (1915), the headlines are all about Christmas making one man very unhappy. In *Wiffles at the Front* (1915), the newspaper reports that war has been declared throws a wrench into Wiffles’ plans to impress a loved one. In *The White Mask* (1915), headlines announce the identity of “The White Mask” and from that day on, the woman behind the mask never appeared in public again and disappeared. In *Caught in the Act* (1917), headlines proclaiming a man a desperate criminal guilty of triple murder is part of an imagined scenario in a susceptible man’s head. In *Such a War* (1915), two men on opposite sides send each other newspapers containing vivid accounts of the victories won by their respective countries. In *Tell It to the Marines* (1918), a poster featuring the newspaper headline, “Huns Kill Women and Children” is read by a young American in citizen’s clothes yanking his coat off in the spirit of fight. The poster is the name of the film, “Tell It to the Marines.”  

Scandal or poisonous and dangerous gossip, malicious innuendos, false tales can be found in the newspapers of the early 20th century day after day. The silent film reflected this phenomenon. In an extraordinary film made in 1915, *Scandal*, the gloating image of Gossip fills the screen time and again. We see how gossip spreads and how the happiness of a score of people is destroyed by a network of flimsy circumstantial evidence that is magnified into a case against those who have committed no offense. “The gossips drop a spark and the resulting fire starts in a small way, then gradually spreads and becomes a veritable conflagration that cannot be checked
until it has run its course.” The story opens with the male gossips inside the club gazing from the window and making comments on the passers-by. Word-of-mouth gossip is more malignant than the gossip that finds its way into newspapers. Yet newspapers in the first quarter of the 20th century sometimes failed to distinguish between fact and rumor, innuendo and fact, gossip or scandal and the full story.

“Soon it became evident that the best stories were those that people didn’t want out in the open. (Here we return to our earlier definition of gossip as something someone doesn’t want known.) The hottest subjects for gossip were those who were most vulnerable—those, that is, with the most to hide,” wrote Joseph Epstein in his book Gossip: The Untrivial Pursuit, who said the hunger for such news—the bad behavior of their betters—grew in the late 17th century in England. “America, however, did not have an aristocracy through whose peepholes gossip columnists might profitably gaze. But it did have an ever-replenishing plutocracy, whose children were notable for marrying badly, drinking incontinently, acting stupidly generally. A rising celebrity class, created by newspapers to begin with, came into being. This class increased vastly when, with the aid of newspapers, there was less and less connection between achievement and fame; a celebrity became, in Daniel J. Boorstin’s formulation, someone known for his well-knownness. Newspapers, even serious ones, understood that if they were to stay in business they must not only inform but entertain. And not many things were thought more entertaining than gossip about the rich, the well-born, and the celebrated.” In Public Opinion (1916), sensational newspaper reports prejudice the public against a trained nurse on trial for murder. She is absolutely innocent, but her future is jeopardized when she is tried in the press, the yellow journalism of the day. The nurse is condemned before her trial even begins. The photoplay was said to be “unlike any that has heretofore been produced.” Pack journalists stop at nothing to convict the nurse in the court of public opinion. In Saving the Family Name (1916), newspapers, delighting in all the details of the affair, cover a man’s suicide because his family disapproved of his romance with a chorus girl. The barrage of newspaper coverage makes the chorus girl a national celebrity. In Redemption (1917), newspaper publicity is scandalous and results in the death of a woman’s husband and his mistress. In Scandal (1917), newspapers cover the indiscreet visits of a young heiress to an artist’s loft. In order to avoid even the breath of a scandal, she fakes a marriage to extricate herself, but the marriage announcement is published in the newspaper and the couple is compelled to continue their deception. In A Broadway Scandal (1918), newspapers go after a Broadway scandal causing parents to disown their daughter. In Sylvia on a Spree (1918), scandals emanating from a “wicked inn” are played up in the newspapers and are read by a woman who desires excitement and wants to take a close look at this evil place. In The Forbidden Room (1919), spies sent by a police inspector and a crooked contractor photograph the district attorney and his girlfriend in a compromising position and send the photograph and a story to the newspapers. They are published with a trumped-up “white slavery” scandal. In The Profiteers (1919), plotters lure a reformer’s wife to a road house and into a compromising position where they photograph the scene and threaten to publish it with a story in the newspapers unless she silences her husband. In The Third Kiss (1919), scandal-mongering newspapers sling mud on the reputation of a settlement worker.
Often the newspaper story in silent films used scandal and gossip as a major turning point in the plot. In *A Wireless Romance* (1910), a newspaper article creates a scandal by mentioning a woman’s name associated with a wager made in a drinking brawl at a public café. In *On Suspicion* (1914), an article over a controversy reminds the participants to behave better. In *The Midnight Trail* (1918), newspapers sensationalize the story of a young millionaire who drives the winning car in an automobile race, but all he wants to be recognized for is his detective work. In *The Kingdom of Hope*, newspapers find out the children of pacifists are planning to enlist, one as a soldier, the other as a Red Cross nurse. Their actions are given notoriety in the news columns. This arouses the anger of their parents and friends, but at the end of the picture the children have convinced both parents and friends and those who had so loudly clamored for peace to become soldiers and Red Cross nurses.

The influence and power of the newspaper dominated communication in silent films. Getting your name or picture in the newspaper meant instant celebrity and success. One film, *His Picture in the Papers* (1916), spoke to the point. A young man can only get the woman he loves if he becomes famous and manages to get his picture in the New York newspapers. A title card at the beginning of the film states: “Publicity at any price has become the predominant passion of the American people.” In *Lord Loveland Discovers America* (1916), Tony Kidd, an enterprising New York reporter writes an article about an English Lord who works as a waiter in an American restaurant giving him instant celebrity. In *The Pacifist* (1916), “Voice of the People” columns in the newspapers were very popular and one man, whose sweet nature makes him a source of contempt by his wife and son, delights in writing letters pleading for peace. The hen-pecked husband comes to the rescue of his son, vanquishes a bully, kicks out a dancer who is sympathizing with his wife on her possession of a weak-willed spouse, and now is feared by everyone except his son who is proud of his fighting father.

The influence of the newspaper shows up in a variety of different ways in silent films. If a newspaper was used in a film, the advertising department made note of it to increase circulation. In *Sunnyside* (1919), the comic Charlie Chaplin used a copy of the *Daily Forward*, a Jewish newspaper in Chicago, in one of the movie’s scenes. The newspaper editors immediately made a reproduction of the scene and printed thousands of cards with the cut appearing on one side and “In Reel Life as in Real Life, the *Forward*, a Jewish newspaper, takes part in Charlie Chaplin’s latest hit, ‘Sunnyside.’” It not only brought attention to the newspaper, but also was added business in the theatres. One of the more creative attempts to visualize newspapers, was the picturization of a story hoboes are reading. It concerns a bunch of tramps who are reading a continued story being visualized that breaks off in the middle of the story and ends the film (*The Long Green Trail*, 1917).

The influence of newspapers was a constant theme used for humor and for serious purposes. In *Don’t Change Your Husband* (1919), one of annoying habits a husband displays besides eating onions and dropping cigar ashes on the floor is reading the newspaper at the breakfast table. In *My Own United States* (1918), Philip Nolan tells the court, “Damn the United States. I wish I might never hear of the United States again.” He is sentenced to banishment following his expressed wish and is forbidden to hear or read anything concerning his native land becoming known as “the man without a country.” Any mention of the United States is carefully deleted from all newspapers and books. He never reads about America again until he is on his death bed and the doctor tells him what has happened to the United States since his sentencing. In *The Imp
Abroad (1914), newspapers offer the latest earth news of wars, scandals, divorce and white slave traffic causing a bored imp from Hades to come to Earth looking for some excitement.

**Depiction of Image of the Journalist and Newsrooms in Silent Films**

Many journalists took a mostly dim view of the way silent movies treated their profession. They were annoyed at the way the newspaper world was portrayed on the screen. One example was the 1910 version of Richard Harding Davis’s story of *Gallegher*. C.H. Claudy summed up the feelings most newspapermen had in 1911 when he wrote, *In Gallegher*, “there are reporters and a white mustached newspaper editor, who gesticulate, grab phones as if they were long lost brothers, smite fists into palms at the thought of a ‘story,’ tear their hair and otherwise comport themselves as if newspaper work was a whirl of excitement. Present Scribe owns having been in the business for a good many years, to have inhabited more than one city room, and been all kinds of a reporter except a good one, but he has never yet seen a newspaper staff get excited before the paper was out, show any emotion over anything except a poker game, and has met but few newspaper men but what made it a point of pride not to be surprised, not to show great interest or excitement, and not to lose control of themselves. In *Gallegher* we looked at make-believe newspapermen and make-believe newspaper work.”

Sometimes critics would offer faint praise when describing how a reporter was portrayed. Reviewing The Woman Under Cover (1919), the critic wrote, “While Miss Burnette’s interpretation of the part of the woman reporter may not satisfy a cynical audience of newspaper men, it is far more faithful than the usual screen interpretation. She makes a favorable impression and has been surrounded by a strong cast.”

Many reviewers, especially those writing for *Variety*, often took issue with the way the city room and its occupants were portrayed. In one review, the critic wrote, “Newspaper reporters have oftentimes got things rather mixed and caused endless trouble and worry because of their erroneous statements and misconceptions of acts, and the present series of views serves to illustrate very vividly how a bit of information in the hands of an over-zealous reporter caused a flurry in the financial world. Happily, subsequent information reaching the reporter enables him to remedy matters” (*The Ambassador’s Despatch Case*, 1909). In reviewing *The Great Scoop* (1910), one critic wrote, “The scream of the film, however, is that newspaper office. It looks more like the ante-room of a dentist’s establishment and the editorial staff shows the same degree of frenzied activity as a group of New York messenger boys.” Another reviewer wrote, “Two big scenes in a modern newspaper office will prove particularly popular, although the chaos precipitated in the news room by the telephonic arrival of ‘her big scoop’ is likely to draw a smile from ‘those in the know.’”

In reviewing *How Molly Malone Made Good* (1915), Mae Tinee, editor of the feature page, “Right Off the Reel” in the Chicago Tribune, wrote: “There is plenty of action in the play, no doubt of that, and if it isn’t always good action the producer must be blamed. If he never worked on a newspaper he is not so much to be censured. If he did he should be ashamed of himself. It is to be regretted exceedingly, however, that he has not the opportunity of meeting real newspaper women. The way Miss Hilton acts, just isn’t done, you know.” The *Variety* reviewer commented that the scenes in the metropolitan newspaper office in the film *The Black Circle* (1919), “where the story opens are well depicted in some respects, especially the lay-out of the
‘city room.’ Even the mischievous office boy is brought in to pull a prank or two. But the character portrayal of the city and managing editors are not real and a bit too harsh. A reviewer was not impressed with a film’s portrayal of a villainous editor of a large magazine. “His waistcoat suggests a gambler and his manners bear out the suggestion. Magazine editors may be villainous, but not in just that way.”

But more often than expected, the movies got it right. Reviewing The Big Scoop (1910), the writer wrote, “The scenes here are realistic, those representing the interior of the newspaper office being made from life…Newspaper stories are, as a rule, distorted, but in this instance the story seems to have been worked out with care and with attention to details. While not all newspaper offices are alike, there is a certain similarity in them all. And the views showing the interior of one here may serve as indicative of all daily offices. The life will, therefore, be interesting to those who are unfamiliar with it and will afford an insight into the way a daily paper is put together.”

Another reviewer praised the authenticity in ‘Twixt Love and Loyalty (1910): “A magnificent newspaper drama. The scenario was written by a newspaper man who knows the game from printer’s devil to managing editor.” Another film, The Vagabond, impressed a reviewer because it shows “an old style hand press” and “the usual interesting characters who were sure to be found in such offices.”

An entertainment reporter wrote that a moving picture company was “anxious to catch the bustle and confusion of a large metropolitan newspaper as part of a photoplay it is about to produce. As it is a known fact among newspaper men” that the newsroom of The Eagle with a Brooklyn Daily News Staff “is one of the best equipped in the city, the motion picture concern asked permission to take a film of the office at the time of its greatest activity, just before The Eagle went to press.” The footage was used in The Blood Stain (1912), a film portraying the adventures of a young reporter working on a murder mystery. “The scene in The Eagle newsroom showed the climax of the photoplay as the young reporter rushed into the office with the last thread of evidence necessary to write a great story. Apart from the presence of one real actor, the members of the regular news staff of The Eagle were taken in the midst of their work. It is believed that this is the first time that a newspaper office has been taken in actual operation.”

The reviewer was pleasantly surprised with the newspaper offices In Fate’s Alibi (1915): “Most newspaper offices in moving picture stories are very prim, precise affairs with neat rows of desks and spotless floors. One would hardly know them from a bank or big insurance business office. In Fate’s Alibi, however, the producer, Frank Lloyd evidently has paid a visit to one of the Los Angeles newspaper offices, for, true to tradition, the newspaper office set is a smear from end to end. Glue, ink, waste paper, stacks of coarse copy paper and forty-eleven editions of all the papers in town litter the floor. All the newspaper boys in the picture are handsome, disreputable looking cusses who walk about as if their dark pasts and the world’s crime were bearing them down to an early grave.”

A writer pointed out that “the story opens in a New York newspaper office and one of the most elaborate sets ever built at the Ince Studio was constructed for this.”
Reviewing *Todd of the Times* (1919), the *Variety* critic was impressed, writing, “The whole picture is very realistic, even down to the ‘copy boys.’ Care has apparently been taken in getting the correct types. The whole picture must have been taken in the editorial rooms of some newspaper office.”

The reviewer points out that in *The Fourth Estate* (1916), the original action is seen “through a series of decidedly interesting scenes, foremost of which is the interior of the Chicago *Herald* plant, where the unfolding of the yarn necessitates a view of the actual workings of a newspaper office, detailing in successive action the course of a story from the reporter’s desk to the rotary press…the greater part of the action is shown in Chicago, the Keeley newspaper plant being pictured in all its departments with the reportorial department both realistic and true to life. There is a fine bit of human interest running through the story, but the mechanical production eclipses this, for in addition to its interest it carries an educational wallop that lingers.”

Reviewer George Blaisdell also commented on the authenticity of the newspaper plant locations: “Many of the interiors are staged in the plant of one of the Chicago dailies. The scenes in the mechanical department are good. The workmen attend strictly to business and see not the camera. The atmosphere in the news room is far from convincing. We are given to understand that a big story is being prepared, but we see nothing of the lively routine that enters into the making.”

In a review of *The Kid* (1916), it was noted, “Another interesting feature of ‘The Kid’ is the insight it affords into one of New York’s daily newspaper plants and shows the workings of the various departments employed in the turning out of a great daily.” A reviewer pointed out that *The Rummy* (1916) is “particularly noteworthy for its faithful representation of conditions that actually exist in a newspaper office. Unlike most attempts at dramatic representation of newspaper life, it rings true throughout. Not a little credit for this realistic touch must go to Wilfred Lucas (the actor portraying ‘The Rummy’) and Paul Powell, who directed the taking of the picture. Both in former years were active newspaper men, and their early training guided them in this effort.”

Several reviewers praised the authenticity of the newsroom in the film, *The Night Workers* (1917). “The base of the plot is laid on a metropolitan morning newspaper office, and unfolds many interesting details in the making of a great public journal,” one wrote, then credited the authenticity to J. Bradley Smolle, for years a newspaperman in New York and Chicago and the author of the screenplay. *Motion Picture News* pointed out that many of the scenes for the dramatization of the serious side of night life in a metropolitan city “actually were filmed in the editorial and press rooms of a big Chicago morning newspaper, adding to the production many interesting details in the mechanism of real journalistic work.” In *Powers That Prey* (which was also known as *Extra! Extra!*, 1918), one reviewer noted, “The interior of a newspaper office will recall pleasant memories to every newspaper man who sees the picture. It is a faithful replica of the hurry and bustle, down to the busy copy boy, of nine out of ten newspaper offices. One feels almost like sitting down to a desk there and pounding out a good news story.” In *The Mysterious Mr. Browning* (1919), the newspaper office scenes are populated for authenticity by editors and reporters of *The News*. One writer, reviewing *Lost and Won* (1917), pointed out that “The story strains the credulity at times, as when, for instance, it asks us to believe a girl with a year’s training in school is sufficiently equipped to take a job as a newspaper reporter. Still, at that, [the girl] might have been able to do as good a piece of work as we find in the samples of news story writing we see flashed on the screen. Art directors will scour a big city to
find an inconsequential bit of furniture of a period of a century ago, but take it for granted anything will get by as an opening paragraph of a newspaper yarn, or as a spread head, either.”

An annoyed “old newspaperman” wrote in a letter to the editor of The Moving Picture World that there is great fidelity and true to life as possible efforts to detail homes, dresses, shipwrecks, railroad collisions and other locales, but when it comes to extracts from newspapers, there is still room for improvement. “I assume that the producers are not and never have been journalists, for if they had had the slightest experience in regular routine newspaper work they would pay more attention to this detail than they do. I have seen many photo-dramas where these items from newspapers have been thrown on the screen, and all of them…have been crude, amateurish as to the English used, and so far from what any well-regulated newspaper would be expected to print.” He points out every newspaper has a style of its own in the presenting of news. “To see a page or part of a page from a paper like The New York Herald used and then to throw on the screen the assumed extract from this paper written in anything but journalistic terms, is amateurish, incongruous, and sometimes laughable. If The Herald is used why not throw on the screen a news item written as it would be written in The Herald, with the same type for headlines and body matter as if it were an actual reproduction of something that had appeared in that paper? Most of the news items used, so far as I have been able to see, would be a disgrace to the most slip-shod country weekly in the country, known to inner circles as the Podunk News.” He concludes, “‘Movie’ newspaper extracts will fail to be convincing to me until they look and read like the real thing.” As an example of this, a Variety reviewer was annoyed with the carelessness of one production: “The Wall Street Edition is flashed on the screen and in comes the boy with a morning Sun. Poor stuff. Worse than that, for every person in the audience is sure to catch the error.”

Journalists and the New Motion Picture Industry

Journalists were involved with the new motion picture industry from the start as part of the publicity apparatus. Some were paid by the fledgling industry to write stories, reporters and editors legitimately covered the film industry in the news columns, some journalists became film reviewers and columnists (some were paid by the newspapers, others paid by the industry) and many became photoplay writers of many early motion pictures. In the early years of the 20th century, it was a thin line between being a publicist, a reporter, an editor, and a screenwriter with some playing at all the roles simultaneously.

The new silent film industry and the hungry-for-circulation press became conspiring partners. In Chicago, the site of a bitter circulation war among the city’s papers, seven newspapers fought for readership. They would do anything to increase their circulation. But it was the Chicago Tribune who came up with the concept of a motion picture and newspaper serial to run synchronously on the printed page and the screen. The result was The Adventures of Kathlyn, a “stronger, more closely knit evolution of What Happened to Mary? —a genuine serial story translated into a motion picture scenario. The Tribune had appealed to the stagnant upper class audience and now it wanted the new immigrant, working class, nickelodeon audience that was growing by leaps and bounds. The Adventures of Kathlyn was promoted through the Tribune columns and newspapers to which the Tribune syndicated the story at the same time it appeared
on motion picture screens. It was an enormous success. The *Tribune* picked up 50,000 readers and held 35,000 permanently. That represented nearly ten percent of the paper’s total circulation. Among Chicago newspapers, “the serial idea began to break out like smallpox in an Indian village in midwinter,” wrote Historian Terry Ramsaye. A new war was underway.\(^648\)

It inspired one of the great film agent hoaxes. A man went into a police station and said that a millionaire’s daughter had disappeared and he suspected foul play. Everything he told police was a neatly typed synopsis of the opening of a new *Chicago American* serial-editorial, *The Million Dollar Mystery*. The names given the police were the same as the fictional characters in the serial. It took less than an hour to reach newspaper’s Park Row in New York City and ten minutes more to get all over the United States. Since it was a dull night for news, “the story flowed freely over the leased wires” and was reprinted all over the country. When other newspapers found out about the publicity ploy, they were furious. But *The Million Dollar Mystery* serial swept through the motion picture theatres with unprecedented success. The 23 chapters played in about seven thousand motion picture theatres (there were only about eighteen thousand theatres at the time). Production costs were about $125,000. Gross receipts were nearly $1.5 million.\(^649\)

The silent motion picture attained a new status of recognition by the press of the day at the same time the screen theatre arrived in 1914. Those circulation-serial promotions had made the press aware of the large public following films had developed. The result was that the newspapers started taking the films seriously and capitalizing on their popularity. *The Tribune* established a motion picture review column. The *Chicago Herald* quickly followed *The Tribune* by creating a photoplay department with Louella O. Parsons as editor and critic (Parsons would become a powerful and world-wide famous gossip columnist. She started the column for the *Herald* in 1914). “The new race of motion picture reviewers grew rapidly and in 1925 the list of newspaper film critics totaled four hundred.”\(^650\) From the beginning of film, the news media and the entertainment industry became dubious partners trying to get as much out of each other as possible. The newspapers coveted the new medium’s mass audience and the advertising dollars and the silent film industry loved the publicity, free and paid, the newspapers could give it. Together, they supplied the new working class American more information and entertainment than had ever been thought possible.

**Conclusion**

Journalists and the silent film were made for each other. Drawing on the public’s perception of journalists honed in 19th century novels, the fledging silent film industry used the journalist to give its films a sense of realism, to provide quick exposition by having the journalist ask the questions the audience wanted answered, and to give the film an energy of professionals trying to get a story in which the public was interested. In the process, the films brought to life one stereotype after another from the confident, cocky male reporter to the sob sister eager to beat him at his own game to the editors running the newspapers with a firm hand to the publishers eager to make a profit out of the newspaper that was fast becoming the principal means of communication in the 20th century.

Immigrant populations who couldn’t read the actual newspapers flooded the silent movie theaters
getting most of the information about the world in which they lived from the movies including the idea that journalists were their best hope in righting wrongs and fighting the establishment. On the silent movie screen, audiences saw tragedies greater than own and comedies that for a brief time could make them laugh away their own troubles before they left the theater and wandered into the harsh reality that awaited them. They could hear the newsboys shouting out the news of the day, and now felt as if they had some idea of how that news got into a newspaper for all to read. It was even an incentive for them to learn how to read so they too could join the crowds that were learning that the newspaper was their best source of information to navigate through the growing, crowded, poverty-stricken urban jungle that was the new, unfamiliar home to millions of rural and immigrant Americans.

Two key characters became audience favorites — the cub reporter who was learning the newspaper business and acted as a surrogate for the audience who rooted for the cub to make good, and the newsboy, a lovable character who against all odds beat poverty to grow up to be a success, beating poverty that most of the people in the audience knew too well.

As the 1920s began, the movies became more popular than ever, and the journalist in those movies became more and more familiar until their popularity exploded with the coming of sound. The images at first didn’t speak, but all of the Jekyll-and-Hyde stereotypes of the newspaper men and woman were there in the pages of melodramatic fiction and in the silent films often based on that fiction. People who read newspapers didn’t have the slightest idea how the news came to them until they read about it in novels or saw it on the silent screen. Right from the beginning of film, the world of the newspaper was an easily accessible and recognizable background. Historian Richard R. Ness writes, “If the silent era did not produce any one film that can be identified as a classic of the genre, the sheer number of films released during the period featuring reporters and the press indicates that the character type was established long before it found a voice. Certainly, the rapid-fire speech patterns and wisecracking banter that became as much a part of the persona as the press hat and rumpled suit could not so easily be reproduced in title cards or mouthed responses, but an examination of those works that have survived from the period demonstrates that the frenetic atmosphere of the newsroom was often displayed, even without the aid of aural reinforcement.”

When the movies began to talk, the noise and crackling atmosphere of the newspaper office, the fast-speaking reporters and editors, turned these silent film heroes and villains into real flesh-and-blood people. The audiences loved them and hated them even more and that confusing love-hate relationship would last into the next century.

Endnotes


3 Ibid., p. 52.
4 Ibid., p. 14

5 Ibid., p. 87. Good writes, “Newspaper fiction obsessively charged the emotional costs of a journalism career: disillusionment, drunkenness, decay and death. Nowhere outside of its pages can one find so comprehensive and consistent a record of the inner turmoil of journalists.” p. 90. He adds, “Newspaper fiction is part autobiography and part wish-fulfillment fantasy…It shows how the first generation of modern journalists felt about their work and how the public felt about these modern journalists…journalists turned novelists were recalling the terrors of newspaper life and echoing public worries about the sensational, profit-hungry press,” p. 96 and 98.

6 Ibid., p. 90-91. When 18-year-old H.L. Mencken applied for a position on the Baltimore Morning Herald at the turn of the century, the “almost innumerable texts on journalism that now serve aspirants were…unwritten.” By default, he turned to newspaper fiction for guidance. Quoted by Good from Mencken’s Choice of Days, p. 142.


8 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 6. As Good puts it, “Newspaper fiction arose partly in response to public curiosity about the big-city newspaperman.”


10 Good, Outcasts: The Image of the Journalist in Contemporary Film, p. 9.


12 Good, Acquainted With the Night, pp. 95-96.

13 Good, Acquainted With the Night, pp. 56-57.


15 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 8.


17 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 89. He adds, “From 1890-1930, the newspaper grew into a mass medium, and the techniques by which it achieved its spectacular growth were amusing and thrilling to some, baffling and shocking to others,” p. 94. Also, “The popular press both recorded and encouraged the metamorphosis of the United States from a nation of farms and small towns to one of factories and swarming cities. Yellow journalists were a product of, and a participant in the mechanization, urbanization, centralization, democratization and vulgarization of culture. The cheap, mass-circulation dailies would have been unimaginable without factory girls and new immigrants to buy their sensational fare, or without such inventions as the telephone, typewriter and Linotype to speed up production,” pp. 23-24.


19 Kevin Brownlow, Behind the Mask of Innocence, Sex, Violence, Prejudice, Crime, p. xvi.

20 Richard R. Ness, professor at Western Illinois University, is the chief film consultant-researcher and associate director of the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture, a project of the Norman Lear Center, USC Annenberg. He
is currently working on an updated edition of his classic filmography and has been instrumental in sharing new information received on films from 1890 to 1929.

21 Available on the Internet: Media History Digital Library: Online Access to the Histories of Cinema, Broadcasting and Sound offers a complete digital edition of the first 12 years of The Moving Picture World, “the key motion picture trade publication that covered the film business during the transformation of the viewing experience from the nickelodeon to the movie palace.” Scanned from the original color magazines, the MHDL’s collection of The Moving Picture World begins in 1907 and extends through June 1919, a collection of 70,000 pages, searchable and free. The Moving Picture World, 1907-1926 is now available. http://mediahistoryproject.org/2012/08/06/the-complete-moving-picture-world-1907-1919/.

22 Motion Picture News (1913-1929), available from Media History Project.

23 Exhibitor’s Herald (1917-1927), available from Media History Project.

24 Motography (1911-1918), available from Media History Project.

25 Wid’s Daily (1918-1921), then became Film Daily (1922-1929), available from Media History Project.


28 Billboard (1894-1921), available from the Media History Project.

29 New York Clipper (1855-1923), available from Media History Project.

30 Picture-Play Magazine (1915-1929), available from Media History Project.


33 Thanhouser Company Film Preservation, Inc. Thanhouser Company was founded in 1909 and by 1917 had released more than 1,000 silent films. Internet site: http://www.thanhouser.org/index.html.

34 Reel Life, 1913-1915, available from Media History Project.

35 Especially valuable were reviews and commentaries in The Moving Picture World, Motion Picture News, Exhibitors Herald, The Film Daily (Wid’s Daily) and Variety, which were used extensively throughout this project.

36 The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) is an online database of information related to films, television programs and video games, including cast, production crew, fictional characters, biographies, plot summaries, trivia, and reviews. By June 2016, IMDb had approximately 3.7 million titles in its database.

37 The AFI Catalog of Feature films is the most authoritative filmographic database on the web. It includes entries on nearly 60,000 American feature-length films and 17,000 short films produced from 1893-2011. Director Martin Scorsese wrote, “No other source of information is as complete and accurate, and no other source is produced with the scrupulous level of attention to scholarship and research as the AFI catalog.” The AFI catalog “is a unique filmographic resource providing an unmatched level of comprehensiveness and detail on every feature-length film produced in America or financed by American production companies. Detailed information on cast, crew, plot
summarizes, subjects, genres and historical notes are included for each film.” No page numbers are referenced since the catalog can easily be referenced by searching a specific title.

38 The Online IJPC Database includes more than 89,000 entries (2016) including 20,330 film titles. In addition, various online databases and Web sites, including the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), and Richard R. Ness’s definitive journalism filmography (From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography) were searched for verification and new possibilities.

39 Among the silent film sites of some value is Silent Hall of Fame (silent-hall-of-fame.org), which offers movie reviews and silent film videos.


41 The IJPC Database was much more liberal in listing films with any kind of journalism than we were. For example, in The Bad Boy and Poor Grandpa (1890), a little boy sneaks up behind Grandpa and sets the newspaper he is reading on fire. In The Astro Tramp (1899), a tramp takes a newspaper away from a small boy. We didn’t include films that simply have a copy of a newspaper in the plot.


43 A September 2013 report by the United States Library of Congress reported that a total of 70 percent of American silent feature films are believed to be lost. (Library Reports on America’s Endangered Silent Film Heritage, Library of Congress, December 4, 2013). There is no single number for existing American silent era feature films, as the surviving copies vary in format and completeness. Some are originals, others are foreign release versions, and some are incomplete. The remaining 70 percent are believed to be lost.

44 An early variation of this template was first used in a paper “Fact or Fiction: Hollywood Looks at the News” by Loren Ghiglion and Joe Saltzman, curators of “Hollywood Looks at the News: The Image of the Journalist in Film and Television” exhibit at the Newseum, Washington DC, 2005 and in “Analyzing the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture: A Unique Method of Studying the Public’s Perception of Its Journalists and the News Media,” by Saltzman in a series of papers delivered at the “Media History and History in the Media” conference at the University of Wales, 2005, and at the Association for Education for Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC) in San Antonio, Texas, 2005. It has continually been redefined and improved for various IJPC studies, including this one.

45 The 1910 to 1919 table data was compiled by Anita Gao, IJPC Researcher (USC ’18). The 1890 to 1908 table data was compiled by Sarah Saltzman, IJPC Researcher (Yale ’21).

46 Many genre designations could include multiple designations. The first genre listed in the American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films and the Internet Movie Database is usually used for continuity purposes. When the IMDb fails to offer a genre, other sources were used to form a consensus.

Silent films featuring the male reporter from 1890 to 1919 include the following: 413 (Four Thirteen) (1914); Above Par (1915); The Accusing Voice (aka O'Hagan's Scoop) (1916); The Active Life of Dolly of the Dailies (1914); Added Fuel (1915); The Adventures of a Girl Reporter (1914); The Adventure of an Heiress (1913); All Aboard (1915); All for a Girl (1912); Allah 3311 (1914); An Amateur Widow (1919); The Ambassador's Dispatch Case (aka The Ambassador's Despatch Case, La valise diplomatique) (1909); At Liberty – Good Press Agent (1912); At the Foot of the Ladder (1912); At the Risk of Her Life (1913); The Avenger (1916); The Aviator (1911) (aka The Aviator and the Journalist's Wife); Back to Broadway (1914); Back to the Woods (1918); Bad News (1918); The Battle of Chile Con Carne (1916); The Beat of the Year (1914); Beatrice Fairfax (1916); The Beauty (1914); The Bullshevicks (aka The Bullshiviks) (1919); The Burning Rivet (1913); By Unseen Hand (1914); The Caillaux Case (1918); The Calendar Girl (1917); The Call of the City (1915); Canned Harmony (1912); The Carter Case (1919); A Case at Law (1917); Caught (1915); Caught in the Act (1918); The Chechako (1914); A Child's Characterization of the Devil's Signature (1914); Diamond Cut Diamond (1913); A Divorce Scandal (1913); Dolly's Scoop (1916); Dora Brandes (1916); Dr. Goudron’s System (1914); Double-Crossing the Dean (1916); The Double Room Mystery (1917); The Dragon (1916); Dust (1916); The Easiest Way (1917); The Echo of Youth (1919); The Eternal Conflict (1912); Eternal Love (1917); The Eugenic Girl (1914); The Exploits of Elaine (1914-1915); The Exposure (1915); The Failure (1915); False News (1913); Fantomas: In the Shadow of the Guillotine (1913); Fantomas II (aka Jave contre Fantomas) (1913); Fantomas III (aka The Murderous Corpse; Le mort qui tue) (1913); Fantomas: The Crook Detective (1914); Fantomas: The False Magistrate (aka Le faux magistrat) (1914); Fantomas: The Man in Black (1914); Fantomas: The Mysterious Finger Print (1914); Fantomas: The Phantom Crook (1914); Fantomas vs. Fantomas (1914); Fantomas: Episode One: The Phantom Crook (1916); Fantomas: The Man in Black, Second in the Series (1916); Fantomas: The Mysterious Finger Print, Third in the Series (1916); Fantomas: The Crook Detective, Fourth in the Series (1916); Fantomas: The False Magistrate – Fifth in the Series (1916); Fast Company (1918); The Fatal Ring (1917); Fedora (1914); The Fight of Reporters – The Dreyfus Affair (1899); The Final

48 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 106.
49 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 25.
50 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 42.
51 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 26.
54 Radiotelegraphy (wireless telegraph) transmitted news from many international press agencies, generally in under 24 hours.

55 Silent films featuring the male reporter from 1890 to 1919 include the following: 413 (Four Thirteen) (1914); Above Par (1915); The Accusing Voice (aka O'Hagan's Scoop) (1916); The Active Life of Dolly of the Dailies (1914); Added Fuel (1915); The Adventures of a Girl Reporter (1914); The Adventure of an Heiress (1913); All Aboard (1915); All for a Girl (1912); Allah 3311 (1914); An Amateur Widow (1919); The Ambassador's Dispatch Case (aka The Ambassador's Despatch Case, La valise diplomatique) (1909); At Liberty – Good Press Agent (1912); At the Foot of the Ladder (1912); At the Risk of Her Life (1913); The Avenger (1916); The Aviator (1911) (aka The Aviator and the Journalist's Wife); Back to Broadway (1914); Back to the Woods (1918); Bad News (1918); The Battle of Chile Con Carne (1916); The Beat of the Year (1914); Beatrice Fairfax (1916); The Beauty (1914); The Bullshevicks (aka The Bullshiviks) (1919); The Burning Rivet (1913); By Unseen Hand (1914); The Caillaux Case (1918); The Calendar Girl (1917); The Call of the City (1915); Canned Harmony (1912); The Carter Case (1919); A Case at Law (1917); Caught (1915); Caught in the Act (1918); The Chechako (1914); A Child's Characterization of the Devil's Signature (1914); Diamond Cut Diamond (1913); A Divorce Scandal (1913); Dolly's Scoop (1916); Dora Brandes (1916); Dr. Goudron’s System (1914); Double-Crossing the Dean (1916); The Double Room Mystery (1917); The Dragon (1916); Dust (1916); The Easiest Way (1917); The Echo of Youth (1919); The Eternal Conflict (1912); Eternal Love (1917); The Eugenic Girl (1914); The Exploits of Elaine (1914-1915); The Exposure (1915); The Failure (1915); False News (1913); Fantomas: In the Shadow of the Guillotine (1913); Fantomas II (aka Jave contre Fantomas) (1913); Fantomas III (aka The Murderous Corpse; Le mort qui tue) (1913); Fantomas: The Crook Detective (1914); Fantomas: The False Magistrate (aka Le faux magistrat) (1914); Fantomas: The Man in Black (1914); Fantomas: The Mysterious Finger Print (1914); Fantomas: The Phantom Crook (1914); Fantomas vs. Fantomas (1914); Fantomas: Episode One: The Phantom Crook (1916); Fantomas: The Man in Black, Second in the Series (1916); Fantomas: The Mysterious Finger Print, Third in the Series (1916); Fantomas: The Crook Detective, Fourth in the Series (1916); Fantomas: The False Magistrate – Fifth in the Series (1916); Fast Company (1918); The Fatal Ring (1917); Fedora (1914); The Fight of Reporters – The Dreyfus Affair (1899); The Final
Close-Up (1919); The Finish (1917); Fire and Sword (1914); Flirting With Death (1917); The Floating Call (1914); The Flower of Doom (1917); Foolshad, Chief of the Reporters (1910); For Lack of Evidence (1917); For the Governor's Chair (1916); For the Last Edition (1914); The Forbidden Game (aka The Forbidding Game (1917); The Forbidden Way (1913); The Fourth Estate (1916); The Frame Up (1913); Framing Framers (1918); Freddie Foils the Floaters (1916); The Fringe of Society (1917); From the Beyond (1913); A Gale of Verse (1917); Gallegger (1910); Gatans barn (aka Street Children (1914); A Gentleman From Mississippi (1914); The Girl and the Reporter (1915); The Girl From Frisco: Episode Seven: The Gun Runners (1916); The Girl of the Sea (1915); The Girl Reporter (1910); The Girl Reporter's Scoop (1917); God's Man (1917); The Gold Brick (1913); Draft (1915-1916); Grant, Police Reporter (1916-1917); The Great Adventure (1915); The Great Scoop (1910); The Grim Game (1919); The Gypsy Trail (1918); The Gypsy's Love (1912); The Hanging Judge (1918); Hasmimura Togo (1917); The Hater of Men (1917); The Haunted Bedroom (1919); He Wrote Poetry (1916); The Heart of Virginia Keep (1916); Her Father's Gold (1916); Her Luckless Scheme (1916); Her Sister (1918); The Hero of Submarine D-2 (1916); The Hidden Light (1912); The Hieroglyphic (1912); His Highness, the Prince (1914); His First Case (1914); His Hour of Triumph (1913); His Last Chance (1914); His Little Story (1916); His Sob Story (1914); The Honor of Kenneth Mcgrath (1915); The Hooedooed Story (1917); How Molly Malone Made Good (1913); How to Make a Reputation (1912); The Human Octopus (1915); Hunted to the End (1909); Husks of Love (1916); I Will Repay (1917); I'll Get Him Yet (1919); The Idol of the Stage (1916); Ill Starred Babbie (1915); In Again, Out Again (1917); In Diplomatic Circles (1913); In Quest of a Story (1914); In the Nick of Time (1910); In Time for Press (1911); An Inside Trip (1915); The Island of Desire (1917); A Jewel in Pawn (1917); Jilted in Jail (1917); John Brown's Heir (1911); John D. and the Reporter (1907); The Judge's Vindication (1913); Kicked Out (1917); The Kid (1916); A King in Khaki (1918); The Last Battle (aka L'ultima battaglia) (1914); The Letter That Never Came Out (1914); Light After Darkness (1912); The Little Liar (1916); The Little White Savage (1919); Local Color (1917); Locked Out (1912); Lord Loveland Discovers America (1916); Lost and Won (1917); The Lost Home (1915); Lost in Babylon (1916); The Lost Princess (1919); The Lottery Man (1916); The Lottery Man (1919); Love and Journalism (aka Karlek och journalistik) (1916); The Love of Princess Olga (1917); Mabel at the Wheel (1914); The Main Spring (aka The Mainspring) (1916); Making a Living (1914); The Making of a Modern Newspaper (1907); The Man in the Attic (1915); A Man of Honor (1919); Man Proposes (1917); The Man Trap (1917); The Man Who Made Good (1912); The Man Who Saved the Day (1917); McBride's Bride (1914); The Mermaid (1910); A Midnight Mystery (1917); The Million (1914); Million Dollar Mystery (1914-1915); The Million Dollar Mystery (edited into one film) (1918); The Millionaire Barber (1911); The Mills of the Gods (1909); Mlle. Paulette (1918); Mr. Burtles (1915); Mr. Pringle and Success (1917); Mrs. Balfame (1916); The Misleading Lady (1916); A Modern Free-Lance (1914); A Modern Musketeer (1918); The Money Mill (1917); The Moral Deadline (1919); Much Obliged (1917); Mutual Monograph No. 1 – “With Julian Street and Wallace Morgan” (1915); Mysteries of the Grand Hotel: The Man in Irons (1915); The Mystery of Number 47 (1917); The Mystery of the Yellow Room (1919); The Mystery of Room 13 (1915); The Mystery of Room 643 (1914); The Mystery Ship (1917); Mutt and Jeff as Reporters (1911); The Mystery of the Yellow Room (1913); Nabbed (1915); The New Arrival (1913); The New Exploits of Elaine (1915); The New Reporter (1914); A Newspaper Error (1917); A Night Out (1916); The Night Workers (1917); No Children Wanted (1918); No Story (1917); Officer Murray (1912); The Old Doctor (1915); The Old Letter (1914); The Old Reporter (1912); The Old Shoemaker (1915); Old Wives for New (1918); On the Dawn Road (1915); On the Jump (1918); On Moonshine Mountain (1914); On the Quiet (1918); On the Private Wire (1915); On the Table Top (1915); Once to Every Man (1918); One More American (1918); One Way to Win (1911); One Wonderful Night (1914); The Other Girl (1915); The Other Half (1919); The Other Man (1915); Otherwise Billy Harrison (1915); Otto the Reporter (1916); Our Mutual Girl: Mutual Monograph No. 1: With Julian Street and Wallace Morgan (1915); Our Wives (1913); Out of the Shadow (1919); Outwitting a Rival (1913); Over the Hill (1917); Paid Back (1911); The Painter's Ruse (1913); Partners in Crime (1913); Pathe News No. 75 (1915); Pathe News Weekly Man (1916); Patterson of the News (1916); Perils of Our Girl Reporters (1916-1917); The Phantom Shotgun (1917); Piccadilly Jim (1919); The Plot Against Bertie (1911); Proving His Love; or The Ruse of a Beautiful Woman (1911); The Protest (1915); Puppy Love (1919); The Queen of Spades (1912); The Perfume of the Lady in Black (aka La Parfum de la Dame en Noir) (1914); The Phoenix (1910); The Plot (1914); Plotters and Paper (1916); Potts Bungles Again (1916); The Power of Print (1914); The Primitive Woman (1918); The Princess of Park Row (1917); Professor Jeremy’s Experiment (1916); The Ranger (aka The Texas Ranger, My Flag) (1918); The Real Imposter (1913); Reclaimed: The Struggle for a Soul Between Love and Hair (1919); The Reporter (1911); The Reporter’s Courage (1912); The Reporter's Scoop (1913); The Reprisal (1915); Retribution (1915); The Reward (1915); The Reward of Chivalry (1916); The Rise and Fall of Officer 13 (1915); The Romance of Elaine (1915);
Roughing the Cub (1913); The Rummy (1916); Sauce for the Goose (1918); Saw Wood (1913); Say! Young Fellow (1918); The Scarlet Road (1918); The Scarlet Runner: Episode No. 6: The Mysterious Motor Car (1916); The Scoop at Belleville (aka Bellville) (1915); Scooped by Cupid (1914); The Seven Pearls: Chapter Three: The Air Peril (1917); The Seventh Commandment (1915); A Sister to Cain (1916); The Sixteenth Wife (1917); The Sketch with the Thumb Print (1912); The Social Pirates: Chapter 14: The Music Swindlers (1916); The Social Pirates: Chapter 15: Black Magic (1916); The Social Secretary (1916); A Society Sensation (1918); Society’s Driftwood (1917); Sold at Auction (1917); Something to a Door (aka Something to Adore) (1914); Sophia’s Imaginary Visitors (1914); A Soul at Stake (1916); The Spirit of the Conqueror: Or, the Napoleon of Labor (1914); Stanley in Darkest Africa (1915); The Star Gazer (1914); The Star Reporter (1912); The Starring of Flora Finchurch (1915); Stella Maris (1918); Steve O’Grady’s Chance (1914); The Stolen Actress (1917); The Stolen Triumph (1916); The Storm Woman (1917); The Story of a Wallet (1912); The Strange Case of Mary Page (1916); The Stranger (1913); A Studio Escapade (1915); Stung (1915); The Substitute (1912); Sue (1915); Suppressed News (1914); Tangled Lives (1910); Tapped Wires (1913); A Terrible Tragedy (1916); The Test (1915); That Poor Damp Cow (1915); The Theft of the Mona Lisa (1911); Theodore Roosevelt (1912); The Third Kiss (1919); Thirty (1915); Thou Shalt Not Steal (1917); The Tie That Binds (1910); The Touch of the Key (1916); The Tramp Reporter (1913); Trapped by Wireless (1912); The Treasure of Heaven (1916); The Truth Wagon (1914); The Turn of the Wheel (1918); An Unexpected Scoop (1916); The Unwritten Law (1916); The Vampire’s Trail (1914); Les Vampires (1915-1916); The Van Warren Rubies (1913); The Vanity Poll (1918); The Voice in the Night (1915); The Voice in the Night (1916); The Volcano (1919); Waifs (1918); Wasted Lives (1915); The Way Out (1918); What Doris Did (1916); What Love Can Do? (1916); What Will People Say? (1915); When Cupid Caught a Thief (1915); When False Tongues Speak (1917); When a Man’s Married His Trouble Begins (1911); When the Wires Crossed (1915); Where Love Leads (1916); Who Violates the Law (1915); The Win(k)some Widow (1914); Winner Takes All (1918); Winning of Helen (1912); With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia (1919); Within Three Hundred Pages (1914); Without Hope (1914); The Wolf of the City (1913); The Woman He Feared (1916); The Woman in 47 (1916); The Woman of Lies (1919); A Woman Scorched (1914); The Woman Under Oath (1919); The Woman’s Law (1916); Would You Forgive Her? (1916); The Yellow Passport (1916); The Yellow Ticket (1918); You Can’t Always Tell (1915); Zudora (1914-1915).

56 Good, Outcasts, p. 9.


58 Good, Outcasts, p. 11.


60 A good example is The Clean-Up (1915). Many of the greatest crusaders in silent film movies involve an editor (see Editor section).

61 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 50.


64 Ness, From Headline Hunter to Superman, p. 12.


66 In Graft: Episode Four: The Power of the People, Editor Nash of the Independent teams up with former District Attorney Bruce Larnigan to continue his attacks on the criminal trusts through the press. His latest target: the combine of grain interests and the subsequent raising of the price of bread by dumping grain overboard to create a shortage and give the trust an excuse for boosting prices. Bruce is badly wounded, but gets enough evidence to help stop the combine. By Graft: Episode Ten: The Harbor Transportation Trust, Bruce Larnigan and Jack Stevens are editing the Independent, the newspaper that Publisher Ben Travers had bought to assist in the fight against the trusts.
The usual violent misadventures take place with Bruce getting badly injured again. In *Graft: Episode Eleven: The Illegal Bucket Shops*, Larnigan tells Stevens, the city editor, “Of all the forms of graft...the ones I detest the most are the gambling hells for women, under the guise of stock exchanges, known as bucket shops.” Bruce is frustrated because he cannot locate the man at the head of the organization. During this episode, Bruce is held for murder as the result of a shooting which occurred while he was searching for evidence against the gambling trust, is judged innocent and ends up in a private sanitarium because of a blow on the head and severe mental strain, his mind snaps. In *Graft: Episode Twelve: The Milk Battle*, Robert Harding becomes interested in Bruce’s fight. He is the publisher of *The Independent* and begins a bitter attack on the milk trust through the columns of the newspaper. Jack Stevens covers the underhand methods of the Milk Trust causing a teamsters’ strike and riot. Both journalists get involved in the strike trying to rouse the drivers to action so the milk wagons can proceed in safety. When the head of the Milk Trust is murdered when the assassin misses Harding and kills him, the trust is dissolved and Harding can add another name to the list of men who must be defeated. In *Graft: Episode Thirteen: The Powder Trust and the War*, Harding and Stevens continue their investigations, this time dealing with the munition smugglers on the Mexican frontier. Assassins try once again to try to kill Harding, but he narrowly escapes an explosion and adds another name to his list. He then breaks up the iron trust (*Graft, Episode Fourteen: The Iron Ring*), and goes after the Patent Medicine Trust and the makers of fake drugs in *Episode 13*. In the process, Harding is committed to an insane asylum by his enemies and makes a sensational escape, jumping from the roof of an institution to the stream below. In *Episode 16*, Harding has a clash with political grafters and financial magnates. He goes after the head of the Mighty Money Trust, which is preparing to create a panic in the money market. The head of the Graft Trust, who has wanted Harding dead throughout the serial, wants to discredit and crush Harding. By *Episode 17*, Harding has become mayor and political gangsters are trying to kill him, has a clash with opium smugglers (*Episode 18*) and by the final installment (*Episode 20*), Harding is triumphant with the last of the conspirators dying and the roundup of the gas house gang, as well as his “final conquest,” that of marrying a woman who has helped him round up the trust conspirators throughout the serial.

67 Reviews, *The Moving Picture World*, December 2, 1916, p. 1379. October 7, 1916, p. 89. The reporter shows up at the home and is mistaken as the man’s son, but when relatives realize he is not the son they hold him prisoner, fearing that he may be a reporter. The real son has been kidnapped by two brokers who want to ruin the stockbroker and the thousands of stockholders who have entrusted their investments to him. The relatives offer Ashmore a large sum on money if he will pose as the son and he agrees. He and the man’s niece become friends. The reporter is kidnapped, taken on a boat that sinks. Ashmore reaches shore more dead than alive. The relatives think the reporter has deserted them, but the reporter rushes to the stock exchange and turns the tide against the conspirators saving the stockbroker’s fortune. They try to shoot the reporter, but the stockholder’s son arrives just in time to save him. Ashmore is presented to the Wall Street wizard as the man who saved his fortune. The son sees that the reporter and the man’s niece are in love and offers him a position of manager of the old man’s interests, which Ashmore accepts. Soon after the woman accepts him as her life partner.


73 Examples include In *The Protest* (1915), two reporters are paid by gangsters to “cover” a story from a biased point of view. In *When the Wires Crossed* (1915), a reporter teams up with a boss leader of “Little Hell” to get the goods on a mayoral candidate, but the plot fails. In *The Vanity Pool* (1918), a newspaperman wants to damage the good name of a candidate for governor for political reasons.

Nellie Bly detailed the experiences by patients of the infamous mental institution on Blackwell’s Island in New York City by pretending to be a mental patient in order to be committed to the facility where she lived for 10 days. One of Bly's earliest assignments at the paper was to author a piece detailing the experiences endured by patients of the infamous mental institution on Blackwell's Island (now Roosevelt Island) in New York City. In an effort to most accurately expose the conditions at the asylum, she pretended to be a mental patient in order to be committed to the facility, where she lived for 10 days. The expose was published in the World and was a massive success ultimately spurring a large-scale investigation of the institution and much-needed improvements in health care. In 1887, the series was reprinted as a book, Ten Days in a Mad-House. (Various Sources.)

Insane asylums fascinated silent film makers. In Dr. Goudron's System (1914), a reporter and his wife show up at an asylum that unbeknownst to them has been taken over by the inmates. In The Lunatics (1914), a magazine and his wife visit an asylum on assignment not realizing the inmates have taken over. The journalist almost becomes a victim before the truth is discovered.

Other examples of reporters going to extraordinary means including disguises to get the story include The Girl and the Reporter (1915) and The Clever Reporter (1909).


Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films. Review, Exhibitors Herald, November 3, 1917, p. 29.


Other examples include In A Corner in Criminals (1911), a police reporter of the Morning Wheeze comes up with a plan to catch a convict by printing a false story in the newspaper saying the crook has been found innocent and a cash compensation will be given him when he is found. When all the bums in the city show up to be Slinky Sam, the reporter loses his job. Dejected, he is accosted by a bum and, being angry, beats him up. The bum’s shirt is torn and the reporter recognizing a tattoo mark that identifies Slinky Sam. The reporter captures him and is rehired by his newspaper. In Light After Darkness (1912), a reporter exposes his fiancée’s father as a swindler but wins her back after he loses his sight. In By Unseen Hand (1914), Jimmy Norton is a keen police reporter who refuses to believe a man is guilty. A man who is accused of killing another is declared innocent when Norton discovers by accident that the sun shining through a glass gold-fish bowl has focused on a cartridge in the belt that the man laid upon the table. The shell exploded killing the sleeping victim. The judge and the jury immediately cleared the young man whose sister is inspired by Norton’s reporting to give him the answer he has waited so patiently and long to hear. In On the Private Wire (1915), a reporter goes to interview a wealthy speculator to get a story He ends up capturing a crook. In On the Table Top (1915), a newspaper reporter loves a stenographer who works for a pair of get-rich-quick swindlers. The reporter has been trying for a long time to get something on them without success. The stenographer
disCOVERS what they are up to and they make her a prisoner. Dean rescues her, the crooks are captured and Dean gets a clean beat for his paper. In Out of the Shadow (1919), a woman is acquitted of murdering her husband for lack of evidence, but a newspaper has formed public opinion against her. A reporter sets the record straight by eventually exposing the real killer. In The Sketch With the Thumb Print (1912), a reporter solves a crime, gets the scoop which reinstates him in favor of the city editor and as one reviewer put it, “It shows us the newspaper man in wide awake need of a good story and making intelligent use of chance meetings and apparently insignificant happenings that help him eventually to uncover a criminal…The reporter proves himself a good newspaper man and at the same time wins a girl.” (Review, The Moving Picture World, August 3, 1912, p. 445.). In The Human Octopus (1915), a reporter is assigned to investigate graft conditions in the Tenderloin, goes disguised as a tramp and gives information to police that results in a raid. In Steve O’Grady’s Chance (1914), Reporter O’Grady loses his job on a New York paper and heads south for work. He ends up in a small town where he chases after a large reward offered for the capture of some bank robbers. He meets a girl who helps him capture the leader of the gang. They get the hidden money and O’Grady then sends the “scoop” to the city paper, is reinstated and marries the girl.

In One More American (1918), Reporter Sam Potts learns of an Italian immigrant forced to pay graft to a ward boss who prevents him from getting his naturalization papers and orders a doctor to classify his wife and daughter as unfit to enter the country. The reporter, who has been gunning for the ward-heeler, gets the goods on him by hiring a boxer to offer the ward boss a phony bribe in exchange for the immigrant’s papers. The ward boss accepts and the reporter exposes him publicly enabling the immigrant to welcome his wife and daughter as American citizens.88 Other examples include Buckshot John (1915), The Voice in the Night (1915), For the Governor’s Chair (1916), Freddie Foils the Floats (1916), For Lack of Evidence (1917), The Cub (1913), The Reporter on the Case (1914). The Van Warden Rubies (1913); The Flower of Doom (1917).


90 An example is The Stranger (1913) in which a reporter, sensing a scoop, rushes to his paper with a story about the mysterious disappearance of a millionaire.

91 Viewing Notes, Fantomas vs. Fantomas, 1914.

92 For details, see Appendices 5, 6, and 8. Fantomas or the Man in Black; Fantomas II and Fantomas III (1913); Fantomas Against Fantomas; The False Magistrate; The Mysterious Finger Print; The Crook Detective; The Man in Black, and The Phantom Crook (1914); The Phantom Crook; The Man in Black; The Mysterious Finger Print; The Crook Detective, and The False Magistrate (1916). Based on the French novels

93 Also based on a series of famous French novels. The locked-room mystery is a seemingly impossible crime usually involving a murder.

94 This 14-chapter serial tells the story of a young woman named Elaine who, with the help of Kennedy and Jameson, tries to find the man known only as “The Clutching Hand.” Jameson and Kennedy get into one scrape after another. In Episode 3, Elaine is bound and gagged and thrust into a large tank at the water’s edge. Jameson and Kennedy work madly to burn a hole in the tank to save her, which they do just time before the rising tide would kill her. In Episode 9, both Jameson and Kennedy are disguised as porters end up covered with guns by the criminals. Police arrive just in time to save them and Elaine from a horrible death by fire.

95 The 1915, 10-chapter sequel, The New Exploits of Elaine brought Reporter Jameson back to the big screen. In the first episode of the new series, Kennedy and Jameson are smothered with poisonous gas from a mysterious box. In episode eight, Jameson is involved in a fight and helps capture the Chinamen guarding the opium and loading the stuff into their boat. Jameson then follows one of the criminal’s confederates to her apartment and attempts to question her, but she touches a knob in the table carvings and an iron bar swings out form the wall behind Jameson and knocks him unconscious. He is rescued by Kennedy (Chapter 9). In the final episode, Jameson thinks Kennedy has been killed, but Elaine insists he is still alive. She turns out to be right. Also in 1915, another sequel, The Romance of Elaine in 12 chapters was released. Jameson was back again as Kennedy’s trusted assistant and first-rate journalist. Jameson is about to post damaging information to the government so some of the villain’s henchmen to get the communication. He is captured but Elaine sees evidences of Jameson’s struggle and tracks him to a cave rescuing him in a sensational manner. They are about to leave when a man shows up pointing a revolver at them
Grant prevents a woman anarchist from throwing a bomb into a police parade by jumping from an office. He leaps to the spot where the other belt discharges its cargo, catching the unconscious form of the girl just as she is being discharged at the motor boat. But skillful manipulation of the steering-gear just saves them (Episode 8). Elaine is being chased by the villain and his men and succeeds in escaping by jumping into a canoe and braving a swift current. Shots from shore breaks her paddle ruining her chances of escape. As she is swept down the stream toward the waterfalls and certain death, a mysterious naturalist and Jameson form a human chain and, swinging out over the stream, rescue her as the canoe goes sweeping on to the rocks below. Once he sees she is safe, the mysterious man vanishes leaving on the faces of Elaine and Jameson a look of wonder (Episode 9). Jameson sets up a flashlight to get the picture of whoever might tamper with his desk. The villain, masked, comes in and goes to Jameson’s desk to get the coveted plan. Then comes the blinding flash. Jameson hearing the explosion, chases the villain who gets away (Episode 10). Jameson is rendered powerless when he steps on an electric door-mat (Episode 11). In the final episode, “The Triumph of Elaine,” Jameson and a confederate mount a hydroaeroplane with a wireless torpedo attached beneath it and go soaring out over the water in search of the villain’s submarine. Its periscope betrays it. With lightning rapidity, Jameson drops the torpedo and guides it with their wireless apparatus to its target, the submarine. It strikes true and the submarine goes quickly to the bottom carrying with it the perfidious villain.

In subsequent episodes, Grant solves the kidnapping of a wealthy woman in an adventure that includes an aeroplane chase in which Grant leaps through the air in pursuit of a steamer on which the missing heiress is on (The Missing Heiress, Episode Two). Grant solves the case of a poison pencil, leaping from a first floor window of an office building into a speeding automobile (The Pencil Clue, Episode Three), investigates gambling houses while swinging from a broken telephone wire into the window of a burning building in a gambling house, later jumping from the fourth floor of the building into a life net (The Rogue’s Pawn, Episode 5), solves a baffling mysterious murder apprehending the killer in a fight on a fire escape that collapses leaving Grant swinging in the air, suspended on the fire escape ladder (The House of Three Deuces, Episode 6), pursues an anarchist masquerading as a mechanical chess player by swinging on a broken rope ladder high up in a ship’s rigging and plunging over the ship’s side into the sea (The Wizard’s Plot, Episode Seven). Grant solves another murder in which a father beats his daughter unconscious and places her on a belt that carries waste lumber to the top of a burning heap of waste – Grant jumps to a belt of the machine and is carried for about a hundred feet before jumping to a suspended rope and leaping to the spot where the other belt discharges its cargo catching the unconscious form of the girl just as she is about to be dashed onto the burning wood pile (The Trunk Mystery, Episode Eight). In The Menace, Episode Nine, Grant prevents a woman anarchist from throwing a bomb into a police parade by jumping from an office building window to a suspended rope up which he climbs to the roof and then leaps to a lower roof. In The Tiger’s Claws,
In The Girl From Frisco, Episode Seven: The Gun Runners (1916), Reporter Jimmy helps unravels the mystery of the heroine’s disappearance and helps in thwarting the schemes of gun runners.

In 1918, The Million Dollar Mystery was edited from 46 reels to one six-reel film and released to a new audience.

Reporter Norton does it all: capturing a conspirator, fighting off villains (Episode 2); setting a trap through subterfuge and capturing some gangsters (Episode 3); engaging in high speed chases in automobiles and on horses, discovering secret passages (Episode 6); falling in love with the heroine who has “confessed her love for the gallant young reporter,” rescuing her from a deserted cabin after a desperate battle with a bully followed by another high-speed chase, taking his revolver and puncturing one of the tires of a pursuing car just as it reaches the open drawbridge forcing the car into the water and then, in the last scene, slipping an engagement ring on the heroine’s finger before gathering her to him in his arms, Episode 7); Jim escapes his kidnapper during his pursuit and is forced to leap from the window the ground, reaches a bridge over the road in which the two parties are coming and as the auto speeds underneath he leaps through the air and by a matter of bare inches lands safely in the car, covering the spies with a revolver as he brings them to justice. That ends the episodes for 1916.

In 1917, the Water, grabs a kidnapper and a terrific struggle ensues as both men then tumble overboard. Jim regains control of the motor boat and they speed away to safety leaving the conspirators in the water (Episode 19). Jim is set upon by
the gang and knocked senseless before escaping (Episode 20). In the final chapter, Jim and the heroine learn the secret of “The Million Dollar Mystery” and get married.

In Episode 9, he has three thrilling escapes as he is accidentally tossed over a cliff in an automobile, thrown under a train while trying to “ride the bumpers,” and overcome by smoke. Jim makes a flying leap to get aboard a moving train, runs across the top of the intervening cars, climbs down and uncouples the caboose just before an explosion takes place saving Zudora and a child. In Episode 10, he is imprisoned, bound and strung up before he is rescued. In Episode 11, he climbs up a rope to the roof of a building so he can look in a window to see what is happening. By Episode 16, Jim recovered some missing jewels and, after a furious fight, falls off a bridge into the water. Later, Jim is engaged in a terrific struggle on top of a moving freight train, battling desperately as the train speeds along a high embankment as the two men strain perilously near the edge. Suddenly the fast-moving train leaves the track and crashes down the hillside, carrying the two swaying men with it. Somehow the reporter escapes without serious injury (Episode 17). Jim captures a secret code and ends up in a ferocious motor boat chase (Episode 18). He pursues the conspirators with the diamonds, is captured and then rescued Episode 19). In the final chapter, the reporter leads the chase to find a will proving Zudora is the missing heiress to a $20 million fortune and in the final scenes, Jim puts in Zudora’s hands the will establishing her fortune.

In Episode 2, the criminals kill a ballerina engaged to the reporter who is captured by the gang who wants to execute him at dawn. One of the vampires guarding him turns out to be his friend. They capture the Grand Inquisitor, but when the police raid their lair, the vampires escape but mistakenly execute their own Grand Inquisitor who turns out to be the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Philippe breaks a code and, discovering his house is under surveillance by the Vampires, he leaves his house in disguise, and escapes being poisoned (Episode 3). Philippo is knocked down while trying to capture the criminals (Episode 4), is kidnapped by the Vampires and locked inside a trunk attached to their getaway car, but escapes and is recaptured and threatened with execution (Episode 5), discovers a stash of stolen dollars (Episode 6), tracks down the Vampires’ base of operations, is paralyzed with a poisoned glove and survives a planted bomb in his apartment (Episode 8). Guerande arranges for his family to leave in secret to prevent further attacks on them from the Vampires (Episode 9), and in the final episode, Guerande and his bride are living in fear of revenge by the Vampires, with the reporter’s friend saving him from being gassed to death in his sleep, and a big finale in which a running gun battle with the remaining Vampires and the reporter and his bride safe from harm.

In Episode 3, the reporter regains his senses and staggering towards the lever, pulls it back stopping the walls from crushing them. The reporter is sent to cover ship news by his editor before saving Pearl from drowning. Each episode ends with a cliffhanger. In Episode 4, Tom and the villain are fighting to gain possession of a revolver while Pearl rushes off for help and falls into a deep cavern-like hole filled with water. Tom, in one adventure after another, saves Pearl from a blazing, boiling caldron and rescues an heiress (Episode 6), is almost killed before Pearl can save him (Episodes 7-8), is saved from a burning building and taken prisoner before being rescued by Pearl (Episode 11), saves Pearl as he races in his automobile to pull a train switch just in time to save the woman he loves who is lying prone across the train tracks (Episode 12), rescues Pearl from her dangerous situation on the paddle-wheel of a ferryboat (Episode 14), saves Pearl just as she is about to be hurled over a cliff in an auto (Episode 15), hanging head-down from the branch of a tree, Tom manages to grab Pearl’s hands and pull her out of the quick-sand (Episode 16), rescues Pearl as a descending elevator is about to crush her (Episode 17), and in the final episode, Tom and Pearl are planning their wedding and honeymoon as the last scene of this serial dissolves out.


Review, The Moving Picture World, July 8, 1916, pp. 292-293. Emile Scribbler is assigned the job of reporting the hiding place of some Nihilists. He accidentally runs down the Chief’s daughter with his auto and discovers the hideout, but is spotted and an effort is made to kill him. But the chief’s daughter, who has fallen in love with him, frees the reporter who is pursued, overpowered and placed in a huge box, which is nailed shut. A professor who collects mummies for a museum hears strange noises coming from the box, tears off the lid and releases the reporter. The two give chase. The chief Nihilist has a firing squad shoot into the box and the first round fills the box full of holes. The daughter, thinking her lover is in the box, rushes in just in time to receive a second volley and dies. The chief seeing his daughter fall rushes in and is hit by a third round and also dies. The reporter and the professor rush
in and get the fourth and fifth round. The gunners seeing their mistakes, turn the guns on themselves and all drop dead.


109 Alex Barris, who wrote one of the first books on the image of the journalist in film, put it this way: “Somewhere along the line, some newsmen have been known, while covering crime stories, to try to out-sleuth the police…More often than not, you’ll find framed blowups of front pages with evidence of such feats decorating the lobbies of newspaper buildings … It was probably inevitable, therefore, that screen writers with newspaper backgrounds should dredge up memories of such instances, experienced or witnessed, and use them as bases for newspaper movie scripts And since Hollywood ‘plots’ have a tendency to multiply about as prolifically as rabbits do, by the mid-1930s movie audiences were up to their craning necks in omniscient reporters who spent about two minutes at their typewriters for every thirty they devoted to outwitting patently retarded police forces … Newspaper films in which the leading men (or women) were up to their unremovable hats in trouble, chasing crooks, beating both the police and their own rivals to the scenes of crimes, and otherwise behaving unbelievably, have met with far more public favor. A hero, after all, must behave as a hero. … Moreover there was more glamour in the witty newsmen who told his editor off, proved the stupidity of the authorities, faced up fearlessly to hoodlums and occasionally got drunk, than in the nine-to-five humdrum existence the audience went to the movies to forget.” Alex Barris, Stop the Presses! The Newspaperman in American Films, A.S. Barnes and Company, South Brunswick and New York; London: Thomas Yoseloff LTD, 1976, p. 22.


111 Reporters and burglars often seem to be linked together. In The Reporter (1911, the first of two films released that year with the same title), Tom Penworth of the Gotham Gazette is involved with a woman whose father is a thief. He is accused of murder, but a fellow reporter finds evidence to save him. In the second film, The Reporter (1911), one reviewer thought the film “might pass for a reporter’s bad dream.” The star man on the paper is sent by his editor to write up how it feels to be a burglar. In Much Obliged (1917), a burglar in order to have free rein in robbing the apartment of a newspaper reporter, sends him an anonymous note directing him to be at a certain corner at midnight if he seeks adventure. While the reporter is waiting there, a series of adventures do occur including a desperate battle with a girl’s kidnappers. The reporter succeeds in rescuing her and registering not only a scoop for his paper, but her gratitude. This more than compensated the reporter for what the burglar got. (Review, The Moving Picture World, May 26, 1917, p. 1333.). In Partners in Crime (1913), Frank Dolby, a young newspaper reporter, becomes interested in a chain of burglaries and gets permission from his editor to run down the band of crooks. He’s captured by crooks but is rescued in the nick of time by his fiancee. Some of the crooks are caught and to Frank’s horror, his father is a leader among them. Frank tries to help him escape without revealing his identity, but is unsuccessful. Frank works to capture the rest of the band, is in danger of being shot when his fiancee’s father – who turns out to be Frank’s father’s old partner in crime and the other leader of the crooks – sacrifices his own life to rescue him. When Frank returns to his home he finds his own father dying. In When False Tongues Speak (1917), a reporter is arrested for murder, but a burglar who was hiding in the house testifies that the reporter is innocent of the crime.

112 Will Irwin, Making of a Reporter, p. 32. Quoted in Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 56.

113 Good, Acquainted With the Night, pp. 56-57.

114 Review, The Moving Picture World, April 5, 1913, p. 50.


Examples include In Hunted to the End (1909), a journalist accidentally touches a braggard who challenges him to a duel. The reporter is killed leaving a wife and family, but a friend of the family doesn’t rest until the murderer is behind bars. In His Hour of Triumph, a reporter earning a miserable existence as a hack reporter on the Planet, has an ill wife who is dying. In an effort to make enough money to help her, he sells a success play but his wife dies before learning about her husband’s triumph. In The Last Battle (1914), a ‘liberal’ newspaperman in Italy has a life filled with difficulties. His friend in college, the son of a bank, never agreed with him on politics and became bitter enemies. The banker’s son becomes a minister who “systematically opposes the journalist, who has seen that he is using his position to further his own purposes. But the newspaperman who has had a hard time keeping a place on account of the influence used against him, at length finds proof that the other man has been a briber and shows him up. The minister confronted by the evidence, commits suicide in the parliamentary chamber.” (Review in The Moving Picture World, August 15, 1914, p. 1102.) In On Moonshine Mountain (1914), an overworked reporter goes on vacation on Moonshine Mountain for a fishing trip, meets a woman and falls in love. Moonshiners threaten him when they see his “reporter’s badge” and think he’s an officer. Just as the reporter is about to be hung, a posse arrives and the reporter is released. He returns to the city and the woman he loves goes with him. In The Old Doctor (1915), a physician is a contributor to the leading medical journals writing under the pseudonym, “Old School.” In The Other Man (1915), a former newspaperman who has become an unkempt wreck of a man, is rescued from a breadline by a successful writer. In Retribution (1915), a reporter’s sweetheart is forced to marry the governor or her father, the senator will go to prison. The issue is resolved when the governor’s illegitimate son, a hunchback who paid assassins gunned down but did not kill, shows up at the wedding forcing the governor to slip away and kill himself. In The Seventh Commandment (1915), a young newspaperman saves a woman from a vengeance-seeking husband by investigating the man’s past and overpowering a killer who by this time is a raving maniac. Then the reporter tries to control the woman who he now loves. In The Country Boy (1915), a reporter saves a man from committing suicide and helps the country boy reunite with his true love. In The Little Liar (1916), Reporter Bobby tries to help a compulsive liar who has been falsely accused of shoplifting. She turns out to be a brilliant writer, is found innocent but when the reporter and the judge rush to her cell, they discover she has committed suicide. In another version, she is saved from death and she and the reporter work together to turn out “some masterpieces of fiction.” In His Little Story (1916), a reporter joins a tramp in a saloon hoping to get a good story out of him. It turns out the story the tramp tells him is suspect, especially when the tramp turns out to be a pick-pocket, leaves the bar with the reporter’s gold watch and money. In The Easiest Way (1917), a penniless reporter falls in love with a young actress and goes out West to seek a fortune in the gold mines. She insists she’ll wait for the reporter but finds the struggle of existence too difficult and accepts the assistance of a wealthy broker. The reporter discovers gold and rushes to New York to discover his girlfriend’s betrayal. Deserted by both men, the woman jumps in the river, but is rescued. The reporter is notified and learning of her struggle to remain true to him, rushes to her side and forgives her just as she dies in his arm. In I Will Repay (1917), Roger Kendall is not enthusiastic when the editor of his magazine sends him to Nashville to sign a “coming” female writer at two cents a word. The real tragedy in the woman’s life is unknown to Kendall – she is the wife of a man who abuses her taking by force every cent she can earn. Kendall and others eventually save the woman’s life. In A Midnight Mystery (1917), a reporter is involved in a mystery in which he is taken prisoner in a house full of antiques, hides in a mummy case, falls through a trap-door and helps solve the mystery by capturing two crooks trying to steal the priceless antiques. The police are paid a large sum to keep the affair quiet as does the reporter. In Sold at Auction (1917), a reporter helps a girl who was abandoned by her father and is sent to live with a woman who treats her like a slave. Her only happiness comes from her love for the reporter. Fearful of losing her servant, the woman tells the girl that there is mulatto blood in her veins. Crushed by the lie, the girl flees and ends up in a white slavery auction. One of the bidders turns out to be her father. Just as he outbids the other millionaires, the reporter arrives just in time to reveal the truth and claim his sweetheart. In The Stolen Actress (1917), Reporter Jimmy Walker of the News will do anything he can to help his friend get his play read and performed. He also does what he can to bring his friend and the woman he loves together. In The Hanging Judge (1918), a notorious judge’s disowned son becomes a reporter, marries a condemned man’s daughter and is put on trial for murder. His wife clears him when he is tried by his father. In A King in Khaki (1918, reissued in 1919 as A Man of Honor), a newspaper reporter takes charge of a plan to develop an island in the semi-tropics for a group of scheming promoters, outwits the band of crooks and in the end walks off with the
daughter of his employer. In *Stella Maris* (1918), John Risca, a prominent journalist visits Stella, an orphan who has been paralyzed for years and surrounded with every luxury wealth could possess. The journalist’s wife is an alcoholic who has brought him to despair. She has treated a deformed and ugly girl, Unity, she had taken from an orphanage badly, beating her with a red hot poker and for this extreme act of cruelty, she was sentenced to prison for three years. Risca adopted Unity to atone for his wife’s actions. An operation gives Stella the power to walk and her childish regard for the journalist has turned into love. Risca’s wife is released from prison and tries to destroy the love between her husband and Stella. To ensure the future happiness of the journalist, Unity kills his wife and herself so the journalist and Stella are free to marry. In *The Echo of Youth* (1919), A reporter falls in love with the daughter of a Supreme Court Justice but when the reporter’s mother claims the reporter is the judge’s son, the marriage is forbidden. The mother finally admits that the father is someone else and she lied to blackmail the justice. The two lovers are reunited and married. In *The Final Close-Up* (1919), a cub reporter who is the son of a millionaire is gathering material for a hot weather story when he sees a poor bargain basement clerk faint from the heat. He borrows money from his father and sends her an anonymous $200 check to take a vacation. She goes to a fashionable seaside hotel where Jimmie goes to pitch on the hotel baseball team after he is fired from the newspaper. After a series of misadventures, the girl and Jimmie embrace “the final close-up.” In *Love is Love* (1919), a young man wants to be a journalist but is forced into crime by a locksmith who employs him. He finally runs away and becomes a typewriter for a Western newspaper. Eventually he comes back, clears his name and marries a woman who believed him from the start. In *Reclaimed: The Struggle for a Soul Between Love and Hate* (1919), Frank Truman saves a woman from suicide who is being persecuted by the same man responsible for the Truman being pursued by the police. He stops a passing cab, places her inside after pleading for help from the occupants. He then is captured and sent to prison for two years. Truman, after serving his term, is now a newspaperman. The woman is being forced to marry the villain and she and Truman go to his house intending to kill him, but discover that he has already been stabbed by a cruelly treated servant. The woman’s clothes catch fire and Truman saves her life again. In the dead man’s effects, they find many papers proving Truman’s innocence.

120 In *A Newspaper Error* (1910), a stupid newspaper reporter mixes up the names of two sisters in an article causing all kinds of problems. In *The Millionaire Baby* (1911), a local newspaper reporter is told by a barber that he is a Denver millionaire, prints the story setting the plot into motion. In *One Way to Win* (1911), a reporter tries to help a friend, a poor barber, by printing a story stating that he possesses a large fortune resulting in the barber marrying the woman he loves. In *The Belle of the Beach* (1912) an editor is convinced by salesgirl to print an item that a rich heiress is coming to town. She then impersonates the heiress to have the time of her life. In *The New Arrival* (1913), a reporter on a radical newspaper writes a degrading article about candidate because he thinks his daughter is pregnant out of wedlock. If had checked his facts, he would have found out that the little one is a puppy not a child. In *The Calendar Girl* (1917), a reporter writes a story about a mysterious heiress at the beach, but she turns out to be a pretty model and the story creates unexpected repercussions.

121 In *The Hidden Light* (1912), a reporter “couldn’t put that snap into his writings that differentiates copy that is read from that that is not read. His efforts were sincere, and he worked more diligently than most of the other reporters on his paper, but somehow his stuff didn’t get over. The editor was just beginning to get tired of him. But the editor’s daughter was just beginning to become interested in him.” The girl goes over his copy, suggesting, correcting, revising and soon the reporter is a big literary success selling one short story after another. As he games the editor’s daughter was just beginning to become interested in him. "The moving Picture World, July 20, 1912, p. 78. In *The Reporter’s Courage* (1912), a reporter shows devotion to his sweetheart when he takes care of her after she is attacked by small pox. In *Dad’s Insanity* (1913), a reporter covering a story finds his childhood sweetheart and goes off to get married.

122 In *The Aviator* (1911), a journalist plots to kill an aviator with which his wife has become infatuated with surprising results. In *At the Foot of the Ladder* (1912), a reporter who is in love with a popular woman, gets rid of his competition by having a policeman pal arrested the other suitors as v suspects. In *Outwitting a Rival* (1913), a journalist in love with a girl, sets up an elaborate plan to discredit his rival by hiring an actor to impersonate him. The actor drinks all the liquor in sight, embraces the mother, overturns vases and otherwise makes a spectacle of himself. He is ejected by the young journalist who gets the family’s blessing for a future marriage with the girl he loves. In *The Old Letter* (1914), an insanely jealous reporter marries a woman and attacks an old beau, a detective, who comes to dinner. Later the detective proves the reporter’s innocence when he is charged with robbery.
whereupon the reporter forgets his jealous and comes to learn at last the truth that his wife loves him early and the detective is only a good friend. In *Mlle. Paulette* (1918), a fumbling reporter who has been offended, reports an erroneous announcement of an engagement of a couple having a love affair. In *The Little White Savage* (1919), a reporter is angry at being refused a good seat to see “The Savage,” a popular sideshow act in a circus. To pacify him, two circus men relate the bizarre white savage’s story. It is so bizarre that the reporter does some digging and discovers the tale is not true.

123 In *Something to a Door* (aka *Something to Adore*, 1914), a man borrows a new overcoat from his roommate, who is a reporter. Another man wears the coat just as police arrive to arrest him. The man who originally borrowed the coat confesses all to his reporter friend. After the ownership of the coat has been established, the reporter settles the situation by threatening to write the whole affair up for the newspapers.

124 Examples include *Shadows and Sunshine* (1910); *When a Man’s Married* (1911); *How to Make a Reputation* (1912); *The Story of a Wallet* (1912); *Locked Out* (1912); *A Gentleman From Mississippi* (1914); *The Great Adventure* (1915). In *The Adventures of an Heiress* (1913), an enterprising reporter writes an exclusive stating that a young heiress will wear a pearl necklace at her forthcoming debut. A society crook reads the item and steals the jewels. In *From the Beyond* (1913), a reporter skeptically investigates spiritualism. In *Diplomatic Circles* (1913) shows a reporter unraveling the mystery of a missing message from the Japanese Government in a clever manner. In *Saw Wood* (1913), a reporter learns about a scheme wherein a famous author pretends to be a tramp to get local color for his new book. In *Perils of Pauline, Seventh Episode* (1914), a reporter joins the search for Pauline, breaks down the door and rescues her just in the nick of time. The reporter has a big story and does it full justice in the paper the next day. In *Without Hope* (1914), the secret of the discovery of a noiseless gunpowder is closely guarded, but an indiscreet under-secretary lets slip a stray word to a reporter regarding the new discovery and the newspapers seize upon it and make it public. In *The Spirit or the Conqueror; Or the Napoleon of Labor* (1914), a messenger from Paradise serves the role of a reporter by returning from earth to report to the shades of great historical persons that all humanity is suffering because of the conflict between capital and labor. In *In Quest of a Story* (1914), a reporter seeking a Sunday feature gives money to a blind beggar, not realizing she is a girl writer in quest of experiences for a magazine article. In *The Frame Up* (1915), a newspaper reporter with a flashlight camera is concealed in an adjoining hall where a plot is being hatched to expose the governor. In *A Studio Escapade* (1915), a reporter sees an artist’s model in trouble and comes to her rescue. In *That Poor Damp Cow* (1915), a local reporter receives a tip that a new gem was to be added to a professor’s collection. The news was published and no one read it with more interest than two crooks who determine to steal the gem. In *What Will People Say?* (1915), a newspaper reporter finds out about an attempted murder by a man maddened by jealousy. In *A Sister of Cain* (1916), a reporter falls in love with a dancer and saves her and a friend from a Japanese villain. In *A Society Sensation* (1918), an enterprising San Francisco reporter sees a story for a Sunday feature in a poor girl in a little fishing village, photographs the family group and prints the story with the result that the article is seen by a rich woman who has been trying to pry her way into society and sees in the girl a chance to bring this about. In *The Turn of the Wheel* (1918), a reporter is part of the courtroom scene involving a man who has been accused of murdering his wife.


130 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, July 7, 1917, pp. 130-131. Chambers is a young space writer on the *Beacon* when he is approached by a seedy man named Tripp from the mechanical department of the paper who says he has knowledge of a big story worth $15 in space rates if the reporter will spend $4 to get it. The story is about a young runaway girl from the country. Tripp found her on the streets utterly bewildered and she said she had come to New York to find a lover who had gone to the city four years before promising to come back. Tripp took her under his
wing. Chalmers goes with him to the boarding house, pays the girl’s board bill and advances fare back home. The girl shows him a broken silver dime, the keepsake Brown had given her, the other half of which he had put on his watch chain. The reporter urges her to forget the man, doubtless a worthless fellow and marry the rich farmer. Tripp seconds the advice. Chalmers now has his story, but then he sees Tripp’s shabby coat fall back and discerns on his cheap silver watch chain the other half of the dime. Tripp is the missing lover. The reporter realizes that this is a drama of human souls too sacred to be profaned and brings into the office the report, “No story.”

131 Review, The Moving Picture World, March 17, 1917, p. 1827. Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films. Howard Duncan, managing editor of The Clarion, is engaged to his star reporter Ruby Sheldon, who has turned cynical by newspaper work. The two try to find dirt on a honest candidate for the U.S. senator. His own life is clean, so the two journalists try to learn something about his wife. By going back through the files, they discover that the woman has been accused of murder and they threaten the candidate with exposure. The wife begs to tell her story and holds them spellbound with the tragic story of her escape from a drunken brute whose life she had to take in order to save her own. The reporters are so moved that they decide to kill the story.


133 Reviews, The Moving Picture World, March 18, 1916, pp. 1885-1886. March 4, 1916, p. 1500. Another example is The Woman’s Law (1916), in which a reporter agrees to not publish a story involving a man impersonating a millionaire and the woman who loves him. In The Voice of the Night (1916), the reporter discovers that a man who committed murder was justified and realizes that only the innocent will suffer if he makes copy of the affair so his is paper loses a big “scoop.”

134 In the Nick of Time (1910), a friendly reporter writes a story giving false impressions regarding a failing bank’s financial standing. In Tangled Lives (1910), a young reporter interviews a woman about her husband’s bank shortage, falls in love with her and suppresses the story. In The Plot Against Bertie (1911), a newspaper reporter files a false story about a lady’s man having cholera and evading health authorities. In Canned Harmony (1912), a friendly newspaper reporter helps out a couple in love. In The Hardest Way (1912), a persistent reporter saves a young girl from ruin, stops a corrupt broker, makes a fortune and marries the girl. In Winning of Helen (1912), a newspaper friend of a millionaire puts a fake story in the paper that the rich clubman is engaged to a society leader so the woman he loves, an actress will reconsider. It works. The actress comes as fast as a taxi can come and the newspaperman brings a minister to join the group. In The Painter’s Ruse (1913), a journalist friend inserts in the newspapers a notice of the death of the artist. The value of his art works grow and the artist and the journalist, well hidden, enjoy excellent dinners, better drinks and make the best of the life the papers said he had lost. In The Conspiracy (1914), a reporter, in a hunt for a story, tries to help a woman he loves after she kills a man in self-defense. In His Sob Story (1914), a jobless man is trying to get a job on the paper. He helps a destitute, starving woman, writes a pathetic story about it and hands it to the managing editor. The woman turns out to be the editor’s lost wife and the man gets a first-class position on the paper. In The Woman in 47 (1916), a reporter witnesses a shooting in which a man decides to kill himself to implicate the woman who is marrying another. The woman grabs the revolver and is stopped from shooting herself by her fiance and a minister, who succeeds in inducing the reporter to not print the story so the woman and the man can marry in peace.


138 Examples include Would You Forgive Her? (the reporter still loves a woman even though she is a murderer, 1916); In Flirting With Death (a reporter risks his life to prove his love for a woman, 1917).


Clyde Manning escapes from an orphanage and after a few weeks of working in a country newspaper office, goes to the city where he takes a position as an office boy on a metropolitan morning paper. To survive the rigors of working long hours into the night, Clyde begins to drink and after ten years, in spite of this, he works his way to the position of star reporter. Ethel Carver comes to work on the paper and the two reporters fall in love. Ethel repeatedly saves Clyde from drunken debauches. One time he is saved from being fired when she covers his assignment while he is carousing with his companions. The famous reporter is credited with the scoop and wins promotion. Again he falls through the influence of the night workers and loses his position. At this critical time, Ethel learns that Clyde had worked as an office boy on her grandfather’s country paper. When the old man dies, Ethel inherits the paper and persuades Clyde to go with her as its editor. We see the brilliant city newspaperman sticking type for his own copy and feeding the paper to the printing press with his own hands, in the little country office, which serves as editorial room, reporter's room, printing room and all the others combined. But he is happy – in the country, removed from the rigors and temptations of night work, Clyde reforms and all ends happily as he settles down with Ethel.

Other examples include The Gold Brick (1913), in which a reporter attempts to get a story by selling a gold brick to farmers at a cheap price; Her Father’s Gold (1916), in which an editor tells his star reporter, “Beware of the water devil” as he sends Reporter Harris Gordon to Florida to investigate a man-eating alligator that has been terrorizing a lakeside town. Gordon isn’t worried. He knows that his assignment was taking him to where his sweetheart lived and where her father’s fortune in gold bullion has been stolen and buried by a gang of crooks. The reporter and his girlfriend locate the treasure and get married. In The Island of Desire (1917), a reporter chases after a fortune in pearls on a South Sea island, falls in love with the woman who has the pearls and after a fight with cannibals and two villains, and the sinking of the South Sea island from the effects of a volcanic eruption, the reporter and his sweetheart sail away to happiness.

Other examples of reporters acting in despicable ways include When the Wires Crossed (1915) in which a reporter teams up with a boss leader to get the goods on a mayoral candidate and The Vampire’s Trail (1914), in which a reporter on a yellow sheet gets a woman to elope as a means of getting a cheap publicity story.
than $100,000, 000 of war bonds, preventing a strike in a munitions plant and being involved in several bruising adventures, Jack discovers that the publisher is actually a German agent who has stolen a secret gasoline substitute formula from an inventor who is the father of Jack’s girlfriend. The agent imprisons the girl, but Jack rescues her and then swims out to the schooner on which the agent is making his escape to apprehend him. Jack then turns the ship’s guns on a German submarine and sinks it. In the end, it is revealed that Jack is really a secret service agent

Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films. The ranger-reporter falls in love with the editor’s daughter, Belle, who although opposed to her father’s activities informs him that Jim works for the U.S. government. Werner assigns Jim the job of interviewing a criminal who bears the editor a bitter grudge. The criminal learns that Jim is the son he left in the East years before and refrains from harming him. Werner, realizing that he is beaten, poisons himself. The criminal is accused of killing the editor, gives himself up to Jim because there is a large reward for his capture. Jim arrives at the jail too late to save him from the vigilante committee, but the criminal leaves a letter revealing their relationship and asks Jim to send his wife the reward. With all danger removed, Jim and Belle are united.


He is assigned to interview a lord from England who comes to America on a secret mission bearing important papers. In his hotel, his valet is murdered being mistaken for him. Just as Dick arrives at the hotel, he sees the lord stagger up from the table, his coffee having been poisoned. After Dick puts the Englishman safely in the hospital, he poses as the lord and in the process exposes a group of German spies who are after secret papers. Dick is invited to visit a distant relative who the spies kidnap demanding the papers in exchange for her return. Dick rescues the woman as the spies give chase and the police arrive in the nick of time leaving Dick and his new love free to pursue their new romance. Headline: “Story of a Murder Mystery Unraveled by a Star Newspaper Reporter.”

Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films. Review, The Moving Picture World, January 4, 1919, p. 115. Obliged to earn her own living, Gretchen is led into serving the Huns almost without realizing how she has been entrapped. She loves her husband but discovers he has found his real mate in a stenographer in his office. She quits her job rather than break-up the attorney’s marriage. The head of the German spy ring hires the woman at Gretchen’s bidding and tries to have her arrested as an agent. But she gives the authorities a list of the man’s accomplices not knowing Gretchen’s name is on the list. The attorney, torn between his wife and loyalty to his country, is helped out of his dilemma when Gretchen drinks poison freeing the attorney and the stenographer to find happiness together.


The Birth of Democracy (1918) features Tallien, a poor journalist, who becomes Robespierre’s right hand man and is sent to a part of France to quell royalist uprisings. In The Million (1914), a gentleman crook impersonates a reporter to secure a lottery ticket worth one million dollars.

Examples include His First Case (1914).

Examples include The Mystery of Room 643 (1914).

Examples include Le Grand’s Revenge (1915) in which a woman disguises herself as a reporter to aid police in the capture of a jewel thief. In Stung (1915), two men pretend to be newspaper reporters to keep out of jail. In The Van Thornton Diamonds (1915), a woman pretends to be a reporter to get information. In The Mystery of Number 147 (1917), everyone is searching for a murderer including a reporter working with Scotland Yard in a plot so convoluted that the man himself is hired by a London newspaper under an assumed name as a reporter to find himself. It turns out the man is innocent. In The Seven Pearls: Chapter Three: The Tragic Masque (1917), a man and a woman pretend to be reporters to get information from a man whose brother was murdered.

Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 44.
An example of a journalist who cares more about political ambitions than journalism is *Dora Brandes* (1916). The film is more concerned with his wife who gives up the stage to help him and who sacrifices her life so he can win the election. In *Darkest Russia* (1917), a journalist is a writer “whose idealism is being slowly turned to revolutionism through the oppression of his people.” After joining the nihilists, the journalist begins writing articles in their pamphlet, *The Forward Cry*. In *The Primitive Woman* (1918), a journalist, who is a writer on prehistoric subjects, abhors modern women and leaves for the mountains to write a book on primitive woman as compared with women of today. A woman he has criticized decides to get even and convinces him that his misogyny is unfounded as he takes her into his arms. In *Sauce for the Goose* (1918), a journalist is writing a book on *Women’s Struggles*, when a scheming widow feigns interest in his work. This causes his wife to take action convincing her husband that she is the one he truly loves.

Examples include *A Child’s Impulse* (1910); *A Dainty Politician* (1910); *The Mermaid* (1910); *Our Wives* (1913); *413 (aka Four Thirteen*, 1914); *Allah 3311* (1914); *Back to Broadway* (1914); *A Cry in the Night* (1914); *McBride’s Bride* (1914); *Sophia’s Imaginary Visitors* (1914); *Mabel at the Wheel* (1914); *Caught* (1915); *The Test* (1915); *When Cupid Caught a Thief* (1915); *The Dragon* (1916); *The Misleading Lady* (1916); *A Night Our 1916*; *Mrs. Balfane* (1917); * Thou Shalt Not Steal* (1917); *On the Quiet* (1918).


*Mutt and Jeff Get Passes to the Ball Game* (1911) also features a journalist, a sporting editor.

Another example is *Man Proposes* (1917), in which a young newspaperman goes to Alaska to be an editor and get a wife.

*Review, The Moving Picture World*, May 13, 1916, p. 1215. Without getting any details, he writes a stiff article holding up the new policewoman to the ridicule of the public while roasting the police force for hiring a woman in the first place. When the woman reads the article she decides to give her boyfriend a much-needed lesson. Eddie’s paper sends him to cover a famous criminal who held up a train in a nearby town but he loses his identification cards with his pocketbook and is picked up as the criminal. He pleads with Betty to help him out of his scrape, but she tells him that until he apologizes for his article in the paper she will not help him. He agrees he was in the wrong and the next day there comes out a wonderful story of the bravery of the new policewoman capturing single-handed the...
notorious bandit. Eddie is forgiven and he and the policewoman find many opportunities to work together in the future.

172 Review, Motography, The Motion Picture Trade Journal, p. 674; p. 710.


174 Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films.

175 Examples include Mutual Monograph No. 1 “With Julian Street and Wallace Morgan, who do a series of write-ups about various cities and big towns in the country, Pathe News No. 75 features a subtitle in which a count finds that driving his own car is a polite way of getting rid of the persistent newspaperman. Pathe News Weekly Man (1916) is a profile of the Pathe News man – reporter, cameraman, booster, student and everything that a news weekly man must be to get the stuff for the film newspaper. In Selig-Tribune No. 7 (1916), newspapermen give a golden key to actress Lillian Russell, the only lady member of the San Francisco press club. In Is Any Girl Safe? (1916), William Randolph Hearst and members of the New York American newspaper are featured in the opening sequence to show the danger of modern “white slavery” in the world today.


177 Review, The Moving Picture World, March 11, 1916, p. 1666. Other examples include Hearst-Pathe News No. 31 (1917), in which reporters are told by former President Theodore Roosevelt of his plan to raise a volunteer army. In Universal Screen Magazine No. 14 (1917), journalist Horace Greeley’s “Go West Young Man” advice was happily ignored by young men who are not sorry they turned their broad backs to the call of the noted journalist and stayed in New York. The Screen Magazine’s cooking expert, Mrs. A. Louise Andrea, is also featured.

178 In Fire and Sword (1914), a New York reporter is dispatched to Tangier to rescue an abducted American woman. The reporter and his valet are captured by a gang of ruffians (set free when it is discovered that the reporter belongs to the same secret society as the leader of the gang), and is captured and hung up by his toes and tortured while trying to rescue the heroine. He eventually saves her and they return to America and become engaged. “A good deal of the film is taken up by action and chase scenes, with much of the desert footage actually shot on Coney Island.” (Ness, From Headline Hunter to Superman, p. 15).

179 Other examples include Our Mutual Girl No. 33 (1914) featuring Howard Dunbar who is asked by a great Metropolitan daily to go to Europe and cover the war as a correspondent.

180 Examples include The Return of John Boston (1916). In The Battle of Let’s Go (1917), a war correspondent writes his story as bursting shells fall around him.

181 Silent films featuring the war correspondent from 1890 to 1919 include the following: Across the Pacific (1914); Animated Weekly No. 11 (1916); Animated Weekly No. 18 (1916); The Battle of Let’s Go (1917); Blood-Stained Russia (1917); The Christian Slave (1912); The Crucial Test (1911); Every Inch a King (1914); The Galloper (1915); Grip of Evil: Episode Eleven: Mammon and Moloch (1916); Hearts of the World (1918); Her Double Life (1916); In Love and War (1913); Li Hung Chang (1901); The Man Who Saved the Day (1917); A Mexican Mine Fraud; or The Game That Failed (1914); The New Magdalen (1913); Nosey Ned (1916); Our Mutual Girl No. 33 (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 50 (1914); Paddy O’Hara (1917); The Ranger (aka The Texas Ranger, My Flag) (1918); The Return of John Boston (1916); The Romance of the Mexican Revolution (1914); The Russian Army in Manchuria (1904); Shell Forty-Three (aka Shell 43) (1916); The Siege of Liege (1914); A Soldier’s Oath (1915); Stanley in Darkest Africa (1915); The Stolen Wireless (1909); The War Correspondent (1913); The War Correspondent (1913) (Second Film with same title); War Correspondents (1898); The War Correspondents (1913); War Correspondents (1917); The War Dog (1914); Was She to Blame? (1913); When Eddie Went to the Front (1914); With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia (1919); With the Dardanelles Expedition (aka The Disastrous Dardanelles Expedition) (1916).
One of the first silent films featuring a war correspondent was *Li Hung Chang* (1901) in which “The Grand Old Man of the Orient” is interviewed by a war correspondent. In 1904, *The Russian Army in Manchuria*, a real-life war correspondent, George Rogers, went to Russia and came back with an array of exclusive film.


Examples include *The New Magdalen* (1913) in which the war correspondent is part of a plot concerning two girls whose identities have become exchanged on the field of battle. In *Across the Pacific* (1914), a war correspondent helps a young woman penetrate enemy lines and save the man she loves.


Review, *The Moving Picture World*, August 2, 1914, p. 1152. Accompanied by a telegraph operator, Fred boards a steamer for Key West, passes a battleship and gets some live news for his paper before he reaches the Mexican border. Fred builds a shack and runs a wire of his own to the nearest telegraph line. As Fred’s exclusive war dispatch is received and published in New York, the outlaws return and attack the shack wounding Fred as his girlfriend rides for assistance. The cub reporter and his girl make a dash for safety over the American line. After a wild chase, they escape. Fred persuades the girl to accompany him to New York and an enthusiastic welcome by his newspaper friends is quickly followed by his marriage to the beautiful young maiden, who is received with open arms by his mother and sister.


Review, *The Moving Picture World*, March 1, 1913, p. 914. Another film with the same title, *The War Correspondent* (1913), Tom Halsey, a star reporter for the *Daily Press*, is sent to the front for news. He is sandbagged by a couple of thugs hired by a reporter who is love with the same woman. They put the reporter in a box car, sidetracked near the battlefield. An order has been issued by the commander that no newspaper men shall be permitted to witness the battle, consequently all newspapermen are held in the guard house until the battle is decided one way or another. Tom is captured after he has seen most of the battle and put in the guard house with the other newspaper men. They beg Tom to give them details of the story but he refuses hoping to make a big scoop for his paper. A friendly telegraph operator at the front telegraphs the scoop to Tom’s paper. He returns after the battle to claim the woman’s affection.


Review, *The Moving Picture World*, January 27, 1917, p. 581. The two comics see a Mexican skulking through the woods clutching a jewel box. Their attention is attracted and they see visions of columns of thrilling news, so decide to follow the mysterious stranger. The stranger digs a hole and plants the box. The two war correspondents dig the box out when the stranger returns. They demand to know the contents of the box. The stranger tells his story
and the two journalists take down the main facts for publication. When he tells them that his wife and two pretty daughters are being held in captivity, Pokes and Jabbs volunteer to rescue his loved ones. Strange mishaps occur but all obstacles are surmounted and the two war correspondents are thanked for the return of “Mysterious Pedro, whose mania is hiding empty jewel boxes in the sand.”

Examples include a war correspondent being escorted to the French firing lines to report the war (Animated Weekly No. 11, 1916) and American newspapermen interviewing the military governor of Chihuahua (Animated Weekly No. 18, 1916). In Selig-Tribune No. 11 (1916), American newspaper correspondents in Greece interviewed the king who appeals to an American sense of fair play on behalf of Greece breaking all precedents in a democratic interview with reporters. In Selig-Tribune No. 68, newspaper correspondents and their wives attend the review of First Illinois troops in Brownville. In With the Dardanelles Expedition (aka The Disastrous Dardanelles Expedition, 1916), war correspondent Ashmead Barlett secures pictures of the dangerous war campaign at the Dardanelles while penetrating into the peninsula with the troops. In Blood-Stained Russia (1917), Donald C. Thompson, the famous staff war correspondent of Leslie’s Weekly, arranged in dramatic sequence photographs and thoughtfully worded subtitles knowledge he had gained from three visits to Russia in 1907, 1915 and 1916. One of the opening subtitles of the picture gives the cue to its predominating color: “Since March, 1917, the world believes that Russia treacherously forsook her allies, but records from my diary and camera will show that Russia’s anarchy was not willed by her people, but was caused by vile German intrigue working in the unthinking masses.” In Hearts of the World (1918), war correspondents greet director D.W. Griffith before the film officially begins.

“Lowell Thomas’ contributions to twentieth-century American journalism – on radio, in newsreels, on television – would be as significant as anyone’s... Thomas became one of the handful of individuals who might claim to have been the most creative and most successful American journalist of the twentieth century. For a decade or two of that century, he was the best-known American journalist – his voice as familiar as anyone’s through his nightly radio newscast, his face, with its neatly trimmed mustache, easily recognizable as that of the on-screen host and narrator of the most popular twice-weekly newsreels.” Mitchell Stephens, Lowell Thomas and the Invention of 20th-Century Journalism: The Voice of America,” St. Martin’s Press. New York, 2017, p. 3. He started in the silent film era by touring with his newsreels that he shot all over the world, narrating the silent films live to overflowing audiences.

In the first episode, Stanley is seized with fever, recovers and moves up the Congo River by boat. Jack is seized with fever and lies at death’s door. Ada is captured by natives and Stanley is attacked by natives but beats them off and sets their town on fire, escaping in the confusion. In Episode 2, Stanley takes two reporters, Jack Wilson and Tom Dixon with him to Africa to find the Hidden City. Stanley occupies the city, inhabited by cannibals, after a stirring fight, and rescues the white girl who has lived among them since her childhood. In Episode 3, Stanley and his party meet with numerous harassing escapades – they are mired in a swamp, encounter a cyclone, are nearly swamped by a rise of the Congo, engage in a fight with the natives, but finally outwit their pursuers. Stanley continues to explore Darkest Africa in Episode 4 struggling through the jungle with his dissatisfied native followers who desert whenever he isn’t watching them. Stanley surrounds a settlement and takes a slave trader captive (Episode 5), fights “Voo Doo Worshipers” and attacks a camp mounted on an elephant (Episode 6), and by the end of Episode 7, Stanley meets Dr. Livingston, the object of his search throughout the serial.

Silent films featuring the female journalist as the principal protagonist from 1890 to 1919 include the following: The Accusing Voice (aka O’Hagan’s Scoop) (1916); The Active Life of Dolly of the Dailies (1914); Added Fuel (1915); The Adventures of a Girl Reporter (1914); The Bachelor’s Burglar (1915); Bondage (1917); The Boob Detective (aka The Sherlock Boob) (1914); The Breaks of the Game (1915); The Broken Coin (1915); Buddy and His Dog (1912); The Burning Rivet (1913); The Cabaret Girl (1919); The Celestial Code (1915); The Chinese Lottery (1915); The Co-respondent (1917); A Columbus Day Conspiracy (1912); The Conflict’s End (1912); The Daring of Diana (1916); The Day She Paid (1919); The Diamond Path (1912); A Dog-Gone Baron (1913); Dolly’s Scoop (1916); Dot on the Day Line Boat (1915); Draft 258 (1917); The Eternal Conflict (1912); The Exposure (1915); False News (1913); The Fatal Fortune (1919); A Female Reporter (1909); The Fight of Reporters – The Dreyfus Affair (1899); The Food Gamblers (1917); For the Last Edition (1914); The Forged Testament (1915); A Gale of Verse (1917); Getting Father’s Goat (1915); Getting the Evidence (1913); The Girl Reporter (1910); The Girl Reporter’s Big Scoop (1912); The Girl and the Grafter (1913); The Girl and the Reporter (1915); The Girl Reporter (1913); The Girl Reporter’s Scoop (1917); The Glow Worm (1913); Grip of Evil: Episode Eleven: Mammon and Moloch (1916); The Guilty Ones (1916); Hands Up! (1918); The Happier Man (1915);
The Hater of Men (1917); He Wrote Poetry (1916); The Head of the House (1916); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 10 (1915); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 26 (1915); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 30 (1913); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 34 (1915); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 36 (1915); The Heart of Virginia Keep (1916); Her Big Scoop (1914); Her Big Story (1913); Her Buried Past (1915); Her First Assignment (1912); Her Great Scoop (1914); Her Greatest Story (1916); Her Vocation (1915); The Hieroglyphic (1912); His Parisian Wife (1919); Hon fick platsen (aka She Got the Place, 1911); The Hop Smugglers (1914); The House of Tears (1915); How Cissy Made Good (1915); How Molly Malone Made Good (1915); Husks of Love (1916); I Will Repay (1917); In Again, Out Again (1917); Jerry’s Uncle’s Namesake (1914); The Jester (1916); The King of the Wire (1915); A Leap-Year Proposal (1912); LeGrand’s Revenge (1915); The Lion and the Mouse (1919); The Lion Man (1919); Lost and Won (1917); Love and Journalism (aka Karlek och journalistic) (1916); The Lucky Transfer (1915); The Lunatics (1914); The Magnate of Paradise (1915); The Man Who Never Was Caught (1915); A Man’s World (1918); The Master Crook (1918); Mayor’s Manicure (1914); The Melburn Confession (1913); The Midnight Burglar (1918); The Midnight Man (1919); Miss Jerry (1894); The Missing Woman (1913); The Motor Boat Bandits (1915); Mumps (1915); My Husband’s Other Wife (1919); Nach dem Gesetz (aka According to Law) (1919); The New Reporter (1910); A Newspaper Nemesis (1915); The Night Workers (1917); Nobody Would Believe (1915); One Fight Up (1915); The Other Half (1919); Our People (1916); Out of the Wreck (1917); Over the Hill (1917); Over the Shading Edge (1911); The Phantom Extra (1915); Perils of Our Girl Reporters (1916-1917); Perils of Pauline (1914); The Power of Publicity (1915); The Price of Folly (1918); The Recoil (1915); The Reform Candidate (1911); The Reporter’s Romance (1911); The Rummy (1916); The Scar (1914); The Scoop (1912); The Scoop at Belleville (aka Belleville) (1915); Scooped by Cupid (1914); Selina of the Weeklies (1915); Seven Keys to Baldpate (1917); The Seven Pearls: Chapter Three: The Air Peril (1917); Shadows (1914); Should a Wife Forgive? (1915); The Sob Sister (1914); Some Steamer Scooping (1914); A Square Deal (1917); The Star Reporter (1911); The Terrible Alternative (1914); Todd of the Times (1919); The Touch of the Key (1916); The Tramp Reporter (1913); Trapped in the Great (1914); The Truth Wagon (1914); The Unchastened Woman (1918); Under Suspicion (1918); Universal Screen Magazine No. 67: Ida Tarbell (1918); The Upheaval (1916); The Van Thornton Diamonds (1915); The Vanishing Cinderella (1915); Via the Fire Escape (1914); Votes for Men (1914); Wanted, a Wife (1912); The Wedding Write-Up (1913); When the Press Speaks (1913); The White Light of Publicity (1915); Wife or Country (1918); The Winning Loser (1915); The Woman Under Cover (1919); Woman, Woman! (1919); Women Who Win (1919).


203 Ness, From Headline Hunter to Superman, p. 7.

204 Cahoon, Harry Holt, “Women in Gutter Journalism,” The Arena, Boston, Vol. XVII, Dec. 1896-June 1897, p. 568. Holt paints a realistic picture of the young woman entering the editor’s office with “a brave attempt to overcome shyness, for her heart beats very loudly.” He is looking for new women who have courage, enthusiasm and talent. He will break her in gently with some trifling assignments to see what she can do with her pen, but that is of secondary consideration. The editor writes out a list of questions and sends her to interview a prizefighter and writes a charming interview that appears over “her signature. This speedy flight to the pinnacle of fame is far beyond her wildest and most ambitious imaginings. The result intoxicates her; the whole office is talking about her; and the men ask for an introduction. They shake hands with her and congratulate her; already she is a co-worker.” The next year she covers the brutal police court and the filthy slums (“Hers is a regular heroine now, – a thoroughbred. Through her the newspaper poses as a great moral reformer.” She commits herself to a charity hospital and pretends to have an incurable disease. She “has a magnificent story this time, with her name signed to it, and fame actually staring her in the face. She was paid $10 a day for her work, and the newspaper had a big ‘beat.’ She sold what is rarely offered at $10 per day: her word, her honor, and her self-respect. She sold them pretty cheap ... Ambition lashes her heels, and she labors under the misapprehension that she is working at legitimate journalism....Whatever work her editor
lays out for her, that she stands ready to do, whether it is figuring in a balloon ascension or a fire-escape descent, posing as an artist’s model, camping all night on a millionaire’s grave, trotting round the globe in eighty days, or, in short, doing any of the things that are beneath the notice of any man on the staff, or, to put it more mildly, ‘outside of a man’s province.’” She now enjoys the “zenith of her newspaper glory. Her name is featured about town on posters and bill-boards, and she creates an enormous sale for the newspaper.” But “her usefulness as a tool of gutter journalism is waning.... Disregard for the truth has by this time crowded out the results of her early training...Where now is the hopeful, credulous, enthusiastic, ambitious girl who came to the city about four years before, or less?” She now suffers from “ill health from exposure, self-neglect, late hours.” Her “ambition begins to wane,” she has no more ideas, and the newspaper has no further use for her. “Her place is soon filled by others who offer themselves a willing sacrifice upon the altar of sensational journalism....She has lost all the capital she had when she began – youth, health, credulity, her ideals, her self-respect, her enthusiasm, and her ambition.” She realizes that her fame was “only vulgar notoriety, and that it was unworthy of her.” She learned to adapt to the society of men, “almost sees through their eyes, and, if such a thing were possible, her ideas would become as perverted as theirs.” Cahoon laments the woman “who sacrifices herself upon the altar of gutter journalism, who makes herself valuable to a newspaper by relinquishing her individuality and her womanhood, who sells her honor for a column of newspaper matter, because it is expected of her,” pp. 568-574.

205 Born, Donna, “The Image of the Woman Journalist in American Popular Fiction, 1890 to the Present,” A Paper presented to the Committee on the Status of Women of the Association of Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Michigan State University, East Lansing, August, 1981, p. 6. Born references Lois W. Banner’s Women in Modern America – A Brief History (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, Inc., 1974, p. 20). Banner also points out that “Among all professions, that of journalism offers perhaps the most impressive example of women’s intrepid persistence in the face of professional hostility. Since mid-century, women have been employed on newspapers as gossip columnists, as editors of women’s pages and sometimes as roving correspondents. But only rarely had a woman been hired as a regular reporter on general news stories. It took a succession of determined women to overcome this barrier.” p. 36.


208 Donna Born, p. 6

209 Donna Born, p. 6

210 James G. Harrison, American Newspaper Journalism as Described in American Novels of the Nineteenth Century, a thesis (Ph.D) submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1945, p. 283

211 Donna Born, p. 7

212 McClure, H.H., “The Newspaper Novel,” from “Inside Views of Fiction,” The Bookman, Vol. XXXI, March-August, 1910, pp. 60. McClure adds that “the novelist very often gets himself into a fearful tangle when he tries to unite an on-the-scene love interest with his newspaper novel machinery. The woman literally is dragged into such narratives and her presence rarely succeeds, in fact, possibly cannot succeed, in convincing the reader that it is natural and conjoint with the evolution of the story in question.” McClure says many recent novels and short stories, however, prove to him that “the writer of the newspaper novel, if he sticks to things that he knows happen in the newspaper world, will have nothing to fear from the man whose more or less trained eye allows him to peep back of the scenes.”

Even in silent films, women found a curious independence in newspaper movies. In *A Female Reporter* (1909), the society editor of the *Daily Knocker* robs a house to show how inefficient the police force is. *The Reform Candidate* (1911) features a feisty female reporter who exposes corruption in government and is praised by a contemporary critic as the kind of “up-to-date heroine that American audiences admire more than the clinging vine variety.” *Her Big Story* (1913) has a female journalist uncovering the real power behind the mayor — the owner of the newspaper she works for. *The Sob Sister* (1914) is a reporter, the daughter of the managing editor of the *Times*, who helps a runaway girl. *How Molly Malone Made Good* (aka *How Molly Made Good*, 1915) tells the story of a young Irish girl who is given an assignment to see if she can make it as a reporter. She pursues the story by car, bus, and airplane, is involved in a train wreck, subdues a pickpocket, eludes a vicious dog, and gets drenched in a rain shower. She finally gets the story and her reward is fifty dollars, a job, and the love of a handsome young associate editor. In *Perils of Our Girl Reporters* (1916), female journalists expose crooks and capture counterfeiters.

Reporters were so popular that they showed up many films in minor parts as “the girl reporter.” Examples include *The Glow Worm* (1913), *The Scar* (1914).


*The 12 episodes of The Active Life of Dolly of the Dailies are Chapter One: The Perfect Truth; Chapter Two: The Ghost of Mother Eve; Chapter Three: An Affair of Dress; Chapter Four: Putting One Over; Chapter Five: The Chinese Fan; Chapter Six: On the Heights; Chapter Seven: The End of the Umbrella; Chapter Eight: The Tight Squeeze; Chapter Nine: Dolly Plays Detective; Chapter Ten: Dolly at the Helm; Chapter Eleven: Dolly at the Helm. Chapter Twelve: The Last Assignment.*

All of the material for this summary can be found in Appendix 6 (1914) in detail.


Review, *The Moving Picture World*, November 27, 1915, p. 1721. Other episodes show the daredevil reporter escaping one trap after another. In Episode 8, Kitty makes her escape from the place by flirting with guards and nearly everyone else with whom she comes in contact and stealing an automobile. In Episode 11, Kitty summons military aid for vivid battle scenes and ends up fainting in the torture chambers of the palace. In Episode 14, she and the count are in a dirigible and drop a rope ladder to a sinking yacht just in time to rescue one of their colleagues. In Episode 15, Kitty is hiding in a tree when soldiers discover her and draw their guns to start to take her down from her hiding place. Once again, she escapes (Episode 16), and in Episode 17 finds herself a captive on a ship, then an explosion and the ship starts to sink. She and her colleagues hold onto a piece of wreckage as the ill-fated boat goes down. Kitty disappears among the drowning passengers. She loses consciousness and “awakens to find herself not in mid-ocean but on the beach of a strange island. Kitty is about to get up when she sees rising from behind the palm trees wild-looking natives raising their spears. They crawl toward her as the episode ends.” Kitty goes through some painful experiences (including almost being thrown into a pit) on the desert island at the hands of cannibal natives (Episode 18). She and the count, surrounded by blood-thirsty natives, manage to escape to a passing vessel after numerous fights with the natives. On the rescue yacht, Kitty is attacked by the owner and rescued by the count (Episodes 19-21).

Information can be found in Appendix 11 (1919) on which this material is based. Gentleman Jim Corbett, the boxing champion, is the star of the serial. In Episode One, Nell captures the mysterious burglar known as “The Midnight Man,” but he escapes before the police arrive. In Episode 8, a stunned, bleeding and disheveled Nell and the Midnight Man climb painfully out of the wreck of a shack and made their way to a car. “Little girls should be at home and in bed at this time of night,” the Midnight Man tells Nell as he puts her into the car. Nell, disguised as a boy, shows up in a hang-out suspecting the Midnight Man might be there, but a gang of villains are not fooled and in spite of her kicks and screams, cart her up to the gangster’s room on the upper floor. In Episode 13, Nell gets an
envelope which contains the Midnight Man’s card on the back of which is written, “I can prove that I am innocent of the crimes of which the papers accuse me.” He then asks Nell to go to a specific address that night. Nell decides to keep the appointment, but the villain dressed up as the Midnight Man shows up, and she mistakes the villain as the Midnight Man. When she realizes her mistake, she screams and climbs to an upper window where she is saved by the Midnight Man. Nell holds off the gang with her revolver but is seized by the crooks. The Midnight Man escapes to the roof but is forced to let go his hold and falls. Episode 14 resolves the cliff-hanger because Nell drives her car into a fence and the Midnight Man lands in the car instead of the steel pikes below. A furious car chase takes place, but there are too many of them and both are captured. While the Midnight Man is set upon by the gang, Nell escapes. Episode 15 has Nell saving the Midnight Man from the gang. In Episode 17, the Midnight Man is wounded and thrown in the sea, but Nell with the help of the lighthouse-keeper, pulls him to safety. She discovers the Midnight Man’s true identity and follows him to save him from his death. She is seized and bound, but frees herself and saves the Midnight Man (Jim Stevens). They are imprisoned in a cave and find themselves trapped in the burning cabin, which collapses and buries them in debris. In the final episode, Jim and Nell escape just as the structure collapses. The gang is captured and a newspaper society item reveals that Nell Morgan is going to marry Jim Stevens, a clubman.

Delane is sent to the southwest to collect material for an article on a band of Incas occupying a mission. While entering upon this mission, she is captured by the Indians (Episode 1), narrowly escapes death at the hands of the sunworshippers (Episode 2), is captured by a band of renegade Indians and then border bandits (Episode 4), escapes by swinging to a bride and riding away on horseback, but is then recaptured (Episode 5). The fearless newspaperwoman throws Incas warriors right and left from a box car of a rapidly moving train. She then takes a stupendous dive as they cross a bridge, is captured and taken to an Inca castle where they start to burn Echo as a sacrifice to the Sun God. But cowboys arrive just in time to save her (Episode 6). The reporter is thrown from a high embankment into the waters of a giant flume many feet below and then is in a runaway stage coach, which is wrecked in crossing a mountain stream (Episode 7). She narrowly escapes death after being tied to her horse (Episode 8), is rescued from a den of lions, again captured by the Incas and taken to the temple (Episode 14), and in the final chapter, is free from danger after a bolt from heaven sets fire to the temple and destroys it.

Information in Appendix 11 (1919). A wealthy trader is engaged in a commercial war with a South Sea’s trading syndicate and a price is set on his head causing him to flee. With his fortune safely buried, he leaves for San Francisco, meets a gang of hired gunmen who scheme to steal the map leading to the location of the treasure. A gunfight takes place and he is wounded. Helen sees the tragedy and learns the man is her father. He reveals to his daughter Helen his secret and she sets out to gain possession of the fortune.

Information in Appendix 11 (1919). While performing, Stella overhears a plot against the millionaire who just made a will disinheriting his nephew. The millionaire disappears during a fire in his home and is thought to be dead. A young mining man from Arizona who came to see him on business, quarrels with him and the result is that the mining man is falsely suspected of the crime. He joins forces with Stella and they meet many perils and are assisted at crucial moments by a strange being known as the Lion Man. For the rest story, viewers had to wait until 1920 arrived. And so do we.

Information in Appendix 9 (1917). She is struggling in her brave battle against discouragement and poverty as article after article is returned unaccepted. She makes the acquaintance of a successful lawyer, the husband of a neglected wife, and is given a chance to assist him in writing a series of twelve articles for a well-known magazine on domestic relations. He falls in love with her and rescues her when she is involved in an incline railway accident (Episode 1). Margaret is constantly repulsing the lawyer’s advances reminding him to remember his wife. They receive anonymous notes threatening exposure if their relationship continues. (Episodes 2). A magazine editor, Frank Norwood, has accepted for publication an article by Margaret, “His Wife and the Other Woman.” She gets involved in a shooting episode and the lawyer secures her release. Meanwhile, the lawyer’s wife discovers her husband is having an affair (Episode 4). Margaret and the lawyer confess their love for each other. The two women end up on a houseboat that the villain sets adrift and explodes. The lawyer swims to their rescue. (Episode 5), and both women escape with Margaret risking her life to save the lawyer’s wife. During a fit of delirium, the lawyer confesses to his wife that he only thinks of Margaret (Episode 6). Margaret works feverishly on stories for Norwood’s magazine. He confesses his love for her but she tells them they can only be friends. An attempt to kill Editor Norwood by a bomb is foiled. (Episode 7). Norwood discovers the lawyer is the other man (Episode 8).
Margaret is being held as an insane person and Norwood affects the release of Margaret and the lawyer’s wife who had gone to her aid (Episode 10). A thief steals letters sent to Margaret by her lover who is now nominated for congress. Norwood confronts the villain and demands that he return the letters. They fight over a gun that over off. A fire starts and Norwood is struck on the head and left unconscious as Margaret runs for assistance (Episode 11). The lawyer’s wife leaves him, Margaret refuses to marry Norwood because she still loves the lawyer (Episode 14). In the final episode, the editor and Margaret get married although she still longs for the lawyer who is grimly working to regain his self-respect and the love of his wife.


229 Article, The Moving Picture World, January 6, 1917, p. 64. Each film features an individual female journalist. In the first film, The Jade Necklace (1916), Dorothy Desmond’s father, an editor, has been shot at his desk by a political opponent and her mother died of shock. Penniless, she gets a job on a New York newspaper. She is assigned to investigate conditions in Chinatown with a man assigned to escort, but she misses him and tackles the job alone, gets involved in a tong war and is imprisoned by one of the most notorious men in Chinatown before being rescued by the female star reporter of the newspaper. In Chapter 2, The Black Door (1917), Isabel Ralston, a young newspaper reporter, is sent by the order of the managing editor into the middle of a murder mystery. Helen Greene who plays the reporter was praised by one reviewer for faithfully portraying a newspaper reporter “who adopts none of the old time stage devices to signify that she is a newspaper woman.” In Chapter 3, Ace High (1917), Reporter Jessie Forsythe (also portrayed by Greene) is instructed to visit dance halls on the East Side of New York to get color for a series of stories. What the girl reporter dug up was the story of the year in metropolitan journalism – the actual inside facts with regard to a conspiracy that had long baffled the political editors of the paper. In Chapter 4, The White Trail, the reviewer wrote that once again the reporter was “played by the clever young actress Helen Greene...The young woman has studied newspaper methods and the behavior of newspaper women to excellent effect and in her representation of the girl reporter she is convincing.” Reporter Rhea Fernel is assigned to secure by any means in her power the secret key to a Mexican revolutionary code through the medium of which ammunition and supplies are being sent into Mexico for the use of certain revolutionary bands. Greene portrays various female reporters in Chapter 5 (Miss “Jerry” Conklin, a New York newspaper girl in Many a Slip); Chapter 6 (Hope Brandon, a New York reporter in A Long Lane); Chapter 7 (Helen Girard in The Smite of Conscience, who seeks employment on a big city newspaper to escape the insults of her drunkard husband and his ribald friends); Chapter 8 (Claire Bristow who becomes a companion to an eccentric and very wealthy widow and unearths two foreign crooks in Birds of Prey); Chapter 9 (Grace Calvert, a newspaper reporter loved by the editor and keenly desired by the sporting editor, neither of them knowing she is married to an artist in Misjudged); Chapter 10 (Virginia Randolph, a Southern girl who gets work on one of the big New York papers and exposes the harpies who prey on young girls at the railway stations and she not only captures a gang of criminals but her skillful handling of the big story also wins her a husband in Taking Chances); In Chapter 11, (The Meeting), Reporter Jane Aboin is played by Zena Keefe, who as one reviewer put it, is also qualified to portray the role of a reporter “because she has had actual newspaper experience and is thoroughly familiar with the newspaper editorial departments. She also frequently contributes special feature articles to newspapers.” The reporter’s husband, a burglar, is declared dead and so Aboin marries the editor of the paper. It turns out the husband is still alive and when they meet, a struggle takes place, the man is killed. Chapter 12 (Beth Alden covers a story of an heir who must marry to get his inheritance and ends up marrying the man herself in Outwitted). Chapter 13 (Reporter Palmer will do anything to get an interview with a reform politician in The Schemers), and in the final episode Zena Keefe is back as a girl reporter concluding the 15-story arc.


231 Review, The Moving Picture World, July 29, 1916, p. 848. John’s father, Jason Briscoe, owns the newspaper, but when his wife dies in childbirth, he flees the country leaving his infant son and his business interests to the care of others. Now he is prepared to return, but an agent for a political cartell who wants to buy the newspaper, drugs Briscoe, imprisons him in a cellar under cruel restraint and hurries away to America to impersonate Briscoe. Diana who is on the man’s trail because of an article she is writing about graft and corruption, follows the villain to his house where he shoots his mistress before she is able to tell Diana about his illegal activities. He then locks Diana in the cellar, but she escapes and tells her editor everything arriving in time to prevent the illegal sale. Seeing that all is
known, the villain makes a frantic attempt to escape and is shot to death in the struggle. Jason is released and “in the office of the Argus he is introduced to his future daughter-in-law, Diana Pearson, reporter.”


234 Review, The Moving Picture World, July 10, 1915, p. 392. Dot procures revenge upon a man who threw another reporter, the man she loves, out of his office. It all started when a famous financier whose employees cringed before him, created a tradition among newspaper row that no writer had ever obtained an interview with him. Reporters were sent to interview him to learn what the Great Man meant to do in a certain financial emergency. One male reporter reached his august presence pretending that he came with a secret message from another financier. He saw him, confessed that he had gained admission by a trick, begged for a few crumbs of news, but the financier simply glared at him, pressed a button, which summoned a large, very strong man to bounce the reporter. In the outer office, other reporters trembled when the unhappy reporter was dragged out of the office. But a pretty young girl, who was engaged to the reporter who had been evicted, swore vengeance. She trailed the financier, pretended to be a lonely school girl returning to boarding school, attracted his attention, took a picture together and thanked him for his kindness in trying to help her forget her loneliness. “The Great Man was very happy until the next day when he got the New York papers and saw the interview that ‘Dorothy Dimples’ had landed with him. The ‘innocent school girl’ did not know anything about financial affairs – Oh; no! her story created a sensation on Wall street. It was a blow to the financier and now he hates reporters more than ever. ‘Dorothy Dimples,’ however, does not care; she landed ‘a scoop’ which always bring joy to a good newspaper man or woman, and incidentally she avenged the man she loved.”

235 Review, The Moving Picture World, May 20, 1916, p. 1395. Jane works for the Herald and learns a valuable tool: telegraphy from her fiancé, a telegraph operator. Reporter Phil Norton of the Times is assigned to the same financial story as Jane. Norton gets advance information and decides to tell his paper he has been unable to get story because by delaying the news he can play the stock market on the strength of his advance information. Then both he and Jane hasten to the village telegraph station to write in their reports, but the station is closed. Norton forces his way in and Jane is surprised to hear him wire his paper that he has failed to get the story. Norton sends a message from Jane says there is no story, then keeps Jane away for a sufficient length of time to allow the Herald’s last edition to go to press. Her boyfriend realizes through the touch on the key that it is not Jane sending and suspects something is wrong. “He convinces the editor to hold the edition up. As a result when Jane at last gets him on the wire again she is able to get her story in time to catch the paper. Norton loses out both ways: his paper has been scooped and the story in the Herald prevents him from using his knowledge to successfully play the stock market.”

236 Review, The Moving Picture World, August 25, 1917, pp. 1268-1269. The food gamblers are headed by a food commissioner who reads Justice’s story in the Globe on price manipulation and calls up the newspaper saying he has a statement to make and wants the Globe to send the reporter who wrote the food story up to his office. The city editor sends June and when the food gambler head sees her it is love at first sight. One of the gamblers tries to bribe June to slant her story. She tells them she will expose their whole rotten system and after she leaves one of the men tells the food commissioner the girl must be silenced. The head of the ring is captured by an Italian whose baby has died and locks him in a room for four days without food. With their leader out of the way, members of the food ring have June arrested on a phony charge of selling dope. She goes to jail but the city editor bails her out. He realizes that the whole thing is the result of the food ring’s fear of June and tells her so. June finds the head food gambler in the hospital. He tells her he has reformed and locks him in a room for four days without food. The gambler and now he hates reporters more than ever. ‘Dorothy Dimples,’ however, does not care; she landed ‘a scoop’ which always bring joy to a good newspaper man or woman, and incidentally she avenged the man she loved.”

237 Review, Exhibitors Herald and Photography, September 21, 1918, p. 34. An actor in a play is accidentally hit on the head with a brick and his subconscious mind leads him to assume the criminal role he is playing in the theatre enabling him to commit some daring robberies. The reporter and the detective wound and capture the actor and the wound restores his mind.
Meet at Summer Resorts.’ The bachelors were stunned. They remembered the cute little snap shots the girl had really a well picture of the fair enchantress, who, it seemed, has been stopping at the hote farewell, but she assured them that they would hear from her soon. They did! For the evening’s newspaper contained are 

244 Examples include One Flight Up, in which Reporter Alice Reed of The Herald hurts her finger in her typewriter and goes to see a doctor. Once in his office, she is the unseen witness of the doctor’s abduction. She follows the blindfolded doctor and his abductor in a taxi to a nearby tenement house and into a miserable room where lies a wounded man. She then is discovered by the crooks and made a prisoner. The woman gets her hands on a prescription for the wounded man and scrawls on the back an appeal for help. She also changes the formula so that the victim shall be drugged into insensibility. The clerk in the pharmacy rushes help to the reporter, the crooks are captured and the girl lands a big story for her paper. In The Lion and the Mouse (1919), a writer who is the daughter of a judge who is an enemy of the railroad industry magnates, has made a reputation for short stories and comes home when she learns that her father may be impeached. The man responsible is considered the richest man in the world asks the daughter, who now writes under an assumed name, to write his biography. She gets enough information to publicly ridicule the multi-millionaire, she makes him wire his cohorts to call off the impeachment proceedings, and with the father’s blessing, marries his son. Right triumphs over Might and the Mouse brought the 

245 Review, The Moving Picture World, February 15, 1913, pp 714, 716. The guests “meet a real ‘charmer’ there and are – charmed!” One reviewer wrote: “The day came when the belle had to leave. The three bachelors sadly bade farewell, but she assured them that they would hear from her soon. They did! For the evening’s newspaper contained a picture of the fair enchantress, who, it seemed, has been stopping at the hotel under an assumed name. She was really a well-known writer, who had been collecting data and photographs for a magazine article on ‘Fools One Meets at Summer Resorts.’ The bachelors were stunned. They remembered the cute little snap shots the girl had
taken of them, and realized that they would look ‘funny’ (as the girl expressed), in a magazine article. They had been very sentimental and foolish, they all realized, and there was no doubt that they had furnished such material to the young authoress.”

246 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, October 3, 1914, p. 97. She learns the “fastidious Mayor desires a manicurist to come to his office. Gail, realizing her opportunity, seizes it and, by trickery, succeeds and gets the scoop for her paper.” When the Mayor reads in the extra the a list of streets to be paved, he “declares that he will thrash the man who turned traitor and gave out the information. Repairing to the office of the *Journal* he meets ‘the manicurist’ of a few hours before and realizes what he himself has done. He finds out, however, that the manicurist has other accomplishments than “filing nails.”

247 Information from Appendix 6 (1914). The reporter becomes “Madame Dufrene” and infiltrates the office of the leader of the ring securing a meeting with the “Man Behind” who turns out to be the philanthropic lecturer she had interviewed for her newspaper the week before. The office manager beats up the reporter before leading the police across a row of rooftops until finally shot and killed. Overwhelmed by the excitement, the “Man Behind” dies of apoplexy in his home.


250 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, November, 20, 1912, p. 906. Getting the scoop is a big victory for her. She secures the interview for her paper, a “Scoop.” The son calls on her at her home and she finally realizes when she sees his card who he is. He proposes, she accepts, and he makes a “scoop” for himself.

251 Other examples include In *A Leap-Year Proposal* (1912), a “young lady reporter” is assigned to verify a tip that the son of the owner of a large department store is engaged to one of his father’s employees. And since she is “being very pretty in face and figure,” she does so by getting a job at the store as model. In *The Man Who Never Was Caught* (1915), a girl reporter is assigned by her city editor to investigate dance halls for a Sunday feature story. In a low dive, she meets a crook and tells him she will admit him to the house where she is employed as a maid. The trap is laid in the newspaper owner’s home and the crook is captured. But on the way to the station, the burglar-hero “effects a daring escape.” In *The White Light of Publicity* (1915), Reporter Grace Reeves tries to get an interview with the man she believes drove an actress to attempt suicide. She becomes acquainted with him at an inn and he tells her he had nothing to do with the woman’s death. She then tells him she is a newspaperwoman assigned to secure an exclusive interview with him. A hotel clerk mistakes their relationship and asks her to leave. The reporter decides to resign from the newspaper refusing to use the man’s interview. She also confesses to the man that the actress’ threat of suicide was but a sham, that she needed publicity and the whole scheme had been invented by the press agent. The acquaintanceship of the man and the reporter promises to ripen into love. (Review, *The Moving Picture World*, November 6, 1915, p. 1189.)


253 Information from Appendix 6 (1914). The publisher thinks his daughter has disappeared and the morning newspaper tells the daughter that a search is underway for her. To conceal her identity from the explorer, she tears the story out of the paper. But he gets another copy and learns the maid’s secret. When the girl has a chance to steal the explorer’s manuscript, she doesn’t do it because of her love for him. The explorer asks the girl to marry him and she consents upon condition that he give the rights of his story to her father. He agrees and a minister marries them over the telephone.


255 Information from Appendix 8 (1916). In spite of all his attempts to keep his arrival secret, the news has spread widely and all the city newspapers would give anything for an interview with the famous man. But the explorer has been avoiding reporters who miss him at the railway station. The only reporter who gets to his home is fended off. The journalist discovers the explorer’s mother is looking for a maid so she gets the position. Her identity is
discovered when she tries to steal photographs and a portrait to support her article. Since she has fallen in love with the explorer, she begins to feel guilty and tears up her article.


257 Review, The Moving Picture World, August 14, 1915, p. 1203. Patricia Beverly asks a friend to try to get her a job in New York and he secures for her a position on a city newspaper. “She throws her whole energy into making good in the newspaper game.” A reporter fails to get a much desired interview with a senator, so Patricia applies for the assignment and gets it. He also denies her the interview so “she dresses as a little girl and meets the senator’s two daughters who are playing near the house. She ingeniously manages to get them to take her inside the house and while there, the senator not suspecting that she is anything but what she appears, she gets a lot of facts that are just what she needs for her write-up.” Then two crooks enter with a revolver and tell the senator he must withdraw his Child Labor bill or suffer the consequences. Patricia and the children enter the room and are held up by the two men, but Patricia breaks away and runs to an upper room, giving the alarm by telephone. An old boyfriend is visiting her, followed her and sees her at the window. He climbs a nearby pole, “walks a wire to the window and carries Patricia back with him to the pole, down which they both climb.” After the police arrest the crooks, the senator meets Patricia in her proper person and is instrumental in getting her boyfriend to propose and so end both their waiting and longing for each other.

258 Review, The Moving Picture World, December 4, 1915, pp. 1888-1889. Edna Morris is left penniless when her banker father dies so she takes a job as assistant to the editor of the women’s pages on the News working under Velma Tolliver, the editor of the woman’s page whose brother is owner and editor of the paper.

259 Review, The Moving Picture World, May 15, 1915, p. 1312. An advertisement: “a clever female reporter is assigned to make a true story of the White Slave traffic and goes thru terrible experiences. The Editor refuses the article on the ground that he wanted facts not fiction; she is, however, compensated by a love match.” Advertisement, The Moving Picture World, May 29, 1915, p. 1396.


261 Review, The Moving Picture World, February 17, 1917, p. 1044. The reporter discovers that the supposed robber closely resembles a chap with whom she had carried on a flirtation at the seashore. She convinces him she is also a thief and joins the gang. When the crooks plan a new job, Helen calls the police and they are taken into custody just after they have opened the safe and started away with the loot. We are left to assume that gets a husband in the bargain, the reporter who joined her on the assignment.


263 The reporter surreptitiously gains entrance into the bachelor apartment of a wealthy clubman when she is discovered. By using her wits, she convinces the police that the clubman is robbing his own flat. After he is released, he doesn’t discover the identity of the fair marauder until he reads her entertaining newspaper story in the following morning’s paper.


265 When her new husband proves to only be interested in her money, she writes a will leaving everything she owns to her daughter. Just before she dies, she takes the will and puts it in a secret compartment of a locket she is wearing. The husband grabs her jewels, but thinking that the locket is of little value, tosses it over to her daughter. Pressed for money and fearing that the missing will might be found, he tries to get the girl to marry him. Failing in this, he contrives to have her lured to a lonely roadhouse coming just in time to save her reputation if she will promise to marry him. She indignantly refuses and is marched to jail by police who have raided the inn. The husband wires the Evening Statesman the details of her arrest. The city editor assigns Manning to the story and the daughter confides everything to the young reporter. While they are talking, the locket drops from her neck and the will is disclosed. A few days later, when the husband tries to put over a forged will, the daughter produces the authentic document. The


268 Summary comes from Alex Barris, p. 139.


276 Summary, *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films*


278 One reviewer keeps referring to the female reporter as “the little sob sister.” (*Motion Picture News*, September 13, 1919, p. 2293.

279 *Motion Picture News*, September 13, 1919, p. 2293. Alma has resisted Mac’s proposals because she promised her dying mother she would look after her brother. Her brother, a dissipated young chorus man, sees a dancer hide the gun she used to kill her husband, a popular Broadway star. She agrees to return his passion and marry him to keep him quiet. When the dancer encourages a wealthy suitor, Alma’s brother tells his story to the newspaper without telling his sister. Mac, being pressed to bring out a sensation of some kind by the new owner, sends Alma to get a confession from the dancer. She gets the confession and the front-page story but then learns of her brother’s involvement. In the end, Alma’s newspaper instinct triumphs, and she resolves the situation by telephoning her scoop to the paper. Much to her surprise, her brother’s exposure doesn’t discourage Mac’s love for her. She decides to leave the paper to marry him as they together vow to help her wayward brother. “The final denouncement comes after a series of anti-climaxes and the newspaper gets its exclusive story, the woman is taken away and wrote one reviewer. Exploitation Phrases: “Girl Reporter Suppresses Sensational Story When She Finds Her Own Brother is Smirched.”“A Thrilling story of the Stage and the Newspaper Offices.” (*The Moving Picture World*, September 13, 1919, pp. 1705-1706.)


281 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, July 4, 1914, pp. 114, 116. While interviewing the mayor, Hazel sees that he is agitated when he receives a note from the chief of detectives. She steals the note and realizes the mayor and the chief are the principals in the graft case. She follows the two into a café, secures a place near the booth where the grafters are dividing their money. She sneezes and is discovered. The Boob wanders by accident to the same café to
get some food, sees what is happening and after a struggle. He drags the two criminals to the police station. He gets the reward and “the ignorant country boy divides the money with the smiling girl reporter.”


283 Loren Ghiglione, pp. 123. Examples include *The Missing Woman* (1913), in which the female journalist has a evil twin sister. The journalist has written a novel which has won great success.


285 Most women cannot reconcile these seemingly contradictory forces, and in most cases in these early stories, they leave the profession,” writes Born. Donna Born, p. 10.

286 Review. *The Moving Picture World*, May 11, 1912, p. 564. The City Editor of the Daily Leader knew that the city’s government was not ruled on a very straight line. He assigned a few reporters to get the evidence of corruption and conspiracy, but after supreme and persevering effort, their only success was failure. The city editor swore when the reporters admitted their defeat – proving thereby his right to be city editor – and assigned the girl reporter, Miss Leonard, to the task. Before very long, she got a clue – an invitation to a meeting with a thumb-print the only signature. The idea was to discover whose particular thumb-print it was. “Small thing, when you have the detective genius every trained reporter possesses,” wrote the reviewer. After describing how she got each of the suspects to impress his thumb-print until she found the boss and discovered his house-number, the reviewer went on to describe the reporter’s process in solving the crime: “How she obtained access to the house, how she pretended to the butler that she was a book-agent, how she suddenly became faint and asked for a glass of water, and how she dashed into the clothes closet when the butler went to get it: how he returns dumb-founded at her absence, how she obtained the story of the illegal plot of the politicians, and attained her triumph, all succeed each other in rapid and thrilling sequence. Then the blow! The editor-in-chief destroyed the story, for the reason that only editors-in-chief and corrupt politicians know, and a little of her faith in truth and right. The girl’s heart broke a little, and ever after the word ‘man’ lost a great deal of importance.”


288 No less than one of the most prominent journalists of his time, William Allen White, had his reservations about women in the newsroom. In “Society Editor,” from *In Our Town* (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1904, pp. 36-39), he demeans their dress, their laziness, and cattiness. The issue is, as Donna Born summarizes, “How does the woman reconcile the demands of her profession with the demands of the cultural stereotype? In other words, for a woman to succeed professionally, she must possess certain character traits, traits that are assigned to the cultural stereotype of the male, but possession of these traits (or at times possession of them to a greater degree than is acceptable – a subtle and arbitrary degree not always easily understood by the woman) can deny to the woman the happiness that she is supposed to find only in marriage.” (Donna Born, p. 8). This creates the dichotomy most women in fiction at the turn of the century had problems dealing with – maintaining their compassionate, feminine nature as defined by the times while still obtaining the so-called masculine traits of journalism – aggressiveness, curiosity, toughness, ambition, cynicism, cockiness – essential for a successful reporter or editor.

289 Sometimes female reporters made the same mistakes as any reporter – filing false information based on something they saw. In *Jerry’s Uncle Namesake* (1914), a female reporter sees a man buying presents for a baby and files an erroneous report that the man’s uncle reads. He tells the man he might want to give the new “father” a big check. So the man frantically tries to find a baby and ends up with four borrowed babies. The uncle is not fooled and leaves the dejected man who now jumps at the sound of anything that reminds him of babies.


291 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, October 23 1915, p. 678. The city editor tells the girl reporter to interview a young man who inherited $10 million and who is spending it very rapidly. She interviews him and learns he has settled down into a life of complacent laziness and felt vague pity for those who were compelled to earn their own
living. She secured other good material and wrote an excellent story. The next morning, the young millionaire got the surprise of his life when he read in his favorite paper an article criticizing him in a semi-humorous manner, and remarking that while he pitied the poor, he himself could not earn a dollar a day if thrown upon his own resources. He was angry but then admitted to himself the girl reporter was right. He resolved to prove her wrong. A year passed and there was no word of the missing millionaire. “Then the search for a missing embezzler absorbed the attention of various newspapers.” A report that the fugitive was seen in a small country town caused the girl reporter to be dispatched there to locate him. She arrived along with a reporter of a rival paper, but they made common cause, went to the jail where the embezzler was confined and gained a confession from the prisoner. “But the rival reporter managed to slip away and reached the telegraph office before the girl. He told her that he intended to keep the telegrapher busy until after the newspapers went to press, so that his paper should secure “the scoop” and the girl’s paper be beaten.” A recent storm had destroyed telephone communication, so the plucky female hired an automobile and went out at full speed for the neighboring town. An accident left her on a lonely road several miles from town. She spotted a telegraph lineman descending a pole. She rushed to him and when he turned around she recognized the missing millionaire. He took out “his pocket kit and cut into the wire and telegraphed the girl’s story to her newspaper while the rival reporter fumed and fretted, wondering why communication was cut off. When the final word had been sent and a ‘scoop’ assured, the millionaire lineman turned to his fair companion and told her, he said he would work for a year and his time was up tomorrow. Then he asked her to marry him and she says yes.

292 In 1914, there were two films entitled Her Big Scoop although one was often referred to as Her Great Scoop.

293 Review, The Moving Picture World, April 25, 1914, p. 394. Fanny Stone is a society reporter who works for The Eagle. She is treated badly at a society party. She teams up with Bert Bailey who just started a new paper called The New Era and publishes a picture of the rich man spooning with a long-haired poet with Fanny’s account of the ball. The woman is furious at the sensation caused and demands Fanny’s dismissal. The editor has no choice: she is fired. “While lying on her bed that night, crying, she overhears two men who occupy the room next to her, planning a robbery. She ‘shadows’ them and assured a big ‘scoop,’ offers to sell it to several of the big newspapers, but they are skeptical and finally she takes it to Bert. He is delighted when Fanny puts her proposition to him and agrees to take her ‘scoop.’ He offers her a share of the profits and a position on the paper, provided the ‘scoop’ turns out well.” Fanny and Bert find the criminals and after a struggle, Fanny saves Bert’s life. “Next morning, The New Era is out with extras telling of the capture of the robbers, the circulation trebles in a single day. The editors of the Guardian and the Eagle, the two large newspapers, find out too late what a mistake they made.” As for Fanny and Bert, “they decide to become partners in the newspaper and partners for life as well.”


300 Review, The Moving Picture World, January 25, 1913, p. 386

301 Review, The Moving Picture World, February 20, 1915, p. 1046. May gets a job on a paper through the friendly help of the wild son of a newspaper owner. She is sent to locate a shop where a lottery scheme is taking place. She notifies the police but makes them promise not to raid it until the following night so that she may have time to get the story for her paper. She then discovers the owner of the shop is the newspaper owner’s son. She has no way of heading off the police though she resolves to “throw” her paper for the boy’s sake. She hurriedly runs out, takes down the laundry sign and puts it upon a shack two doors away. The police raid an innocent place and May returns to the office and is fired for failing to get the story. The next day the son learns of this, confesses to his father and May is restored to her job.
Another example is *A Square Deal* (1917), in which Doris Golden, a reporter for the *Evening Star*, is in love with a writer who leaves her after he becomes a literary success. He falls for a society woman at a party Golden is covering for the paper. He marries the woman. The woman turns out to be a gold-digger and makes the writer’s life miserable. A struggling artist who is in love with Golden has another reporter friend run a fake story saying he is now a millionaire attracting the attention of the writer’s wife. The ruse works. The woman leaves the writer who goes back to Golden realizing what a fool he has been.


The district attorney has one of the fighters jailed and Edna is sent to interview him and they become good friends. She saves him from being sent to prison. The former boxer works in a saloon where lottery tickets are being sold. He is arrested and out on bail. He complains to Edna that the rich can gamble, but the poor can’t. The reporter comes up with a plan to change things. By reason of her newspaper connection she is admitted to a society card-playing event and secures the names of all the guests. She signals a policewoman who enters and places every one under arrest. Edna gives the new district attorney the choice of alternatives: Withdrawing the prosecution against the former boxer or being placed in a position where he will be forced to prosecute his own daughter as a common gambler. The former boxer is released and Edna secures a position in the press room of her newspaper for him so he can make a new start in life.


Other examples include *The Midnight Burglar* (1918); *My Husband’s Other Wife* (1919).


Silent films featuring the columnist as the principal protagonist from 1890 to 1919 include the following: *Beatrice Fairfax* (1916); *The Clever Mrs. Carfax* (1917); *Cupid’s Column* (1915); *Grass Country Goes Dry* (1914); *The Lost Princess* (1919); *The Question and Answer Man* (1914); *Perils of Our Girl Reporters* (1916-1917); *Plot and Counterplot* (1915); *The Real Miss Loveleigh* (1914); *Universal Screen Magazine No. 68: Dorothy Dix* (1918); *The Woman Who Did Not Care* (1916).

Female journalists were also portrayed as health and beauty and gossip columnists. An example is, *Grass County Goes Dry* (1914), in which Aunt Jane’s “Beauty Column” offers a remedy for hair loss. In *In The Woman Who Did Not Care* (1916), Edna Boyd, prominent in society circles, is secretly the author of “Madame Gossip’s” column in a prominent newspaper. How she finally realizes the evil of unsavory gossip and reunites a young man and a young woman is the subject of this film. Mrs. Boyd overhears that a young woman newly engaged is an adopted daughter and the man’s parents, upon reading the gossip, demand that the engagement be broken. The girl’s grief causes Mrs. Boyd to confess that she is Madame Gossip and she explains how she became so and how gossip had ruined her life. Eighteen years ago an adventuress enticed her husband away and the courts granted the man a divorce and custody of the child. Mrs. Boyd sacrificed her reputation by swearing that her former husband was not the child’s father. The ordeal unbalanced Mrs. Boyd’s mind and she was taken to an asylum while her child was adopted by strangers. After ten years, she was released but unable to locate her loved one. It turns out Rose is that daughter and Mrs. Boyd tries to convince the man’s parents to renew the engagement. She said the paper lied and admits she is Rose’s mother. The engagement is renewed and Rose goes to her mother’s arms and receives her blessing. Review, *The Moving Picture World*, April 29, 1916, p. 850.

Beatrice and Jimmy, acting as the agents of an outraged Cupid, bring about the marriage of a wealthy lawyer to the country girl he betrayed thereby legitimatizing a baby for whom the mother sought a name (Episode 7). They dress up and attend a costume ball at a mansion to try and catch jewel thieves and end up in a crazy car chase (Episode 8). The editor of *The Vampire*, a scandal weekly is blackmauling a woman over some indecent letters she wrote and terrified, she writes to Beatrice Fairfax for advice (Episode 9). The kidnapping of the star pitcher of the
New York Giants features prominent baseball stars of the day (Episode 10). Beatrice and Jimmy deal with an “infernal machine” that is loaded with poison gas (Episode 11), reveal that a husband with secrets is really a secret service chief (Episode 12), and solve the case of a famous race horse stolen from his stable and entered in another race as a ringer (Episode 13). A letter to Beatrice Fairfax as usual is the means by which the adventure begins. Jimmy gets an assignment to cover the mysterious death of a broker and Beatrice shows him a letter she has received from a girl—the dead man was one of the girl’s legal guardians. By clever detective work and daring resources, the reporter and Beatrice solve the case (Episode 14). In the final episode, Beatrice and Jimmy unite two lovers and unearth a gang of smugglers.


313 Leed, Variety, October 31, 1919, p. 61. Another example is Plot and Counterplot (1915), in which advice in an “Advice to Lovelorn” column gives the wife of a devoted book-worm and writer an idea and then gives the husband the same idea. After some misadventures, they kiss and make-up


316 Review, The Moving Picture World, August 1, 1914, p. 672.


319 Some examples include The Hieroglyph (1912); Lost in Babylon (1916); Puppy Love (1919); The Filibusters (1912), in which a young reporter is in love with a tug’s captain’s daughter. After an encounter with a Spanish spy, he saves the tug, blows up the boat carrying arms and ammunition for Cuban insurrectos, and saves the day. The story that he turns over to the editor brings him the enviable position of “star reporter” and the captain finally accepts him as a suitor for his daughter’s hand. All Aboard (1915), in which a woman who has plenty of money and a guardian meet a reporter on board a steamship with whom she falls in love. The guardian’s son, who desires her hand, becomes seasick and gives up the chase. The woman ends up with the journalist. In The Girl of the Sea (1915), a young reporter, vacationing at a seashore village, meets a girl and falls in love. In The Call of the City (1915), a young newspaperman is hard at work writing when he hears a shot and rushes downstairs to see a young woman and a man lying at her feet dead. He grabs her hand, pulls her into the building and locks the door before the police arrive. He offers to let her sleep in his room and she agrees, trusting him instinctively. When police knock on his door, he tells her to pretend to be his wife. Later Jim tells the woman who posed as his wife, that he wishes she would make it come true. And she does. (Review, The Moving Picture World, September 18, 1915, pp. 2047-2048.). In The Treasure of Heaven (1916), a reporter’s romance is helped by a disillusioned millionaire who poses as a tramp in England. In Caught in the Act (1918), Reporter Langdon Trevor visits a mending shop and mistakes the daughter of a man he has exposed as a food profiteer for a seamstress. He asks her to call on him to do his mending. On one such visit, a photographer hired by the father to frame Trevor in his rooms with a woman, shows up and snaps the young man ill in bed with the girl, who is nursing him back to health. The two escape through a window and are married. In Puppy Love (1919), Louis Reeves Harrison wrote, “Through rivalry, through parental objections, through the struggles of James Gordon Oliver as a reporter, and through the attempted repression of (the girl) by some maiden aunts, Puppy Love does not ‘run smooth,’ but it finds its way, not to marriage, but to a finer understanding between the boy and girl as well as between their parents.” (The Moving Picture World, March 22, 1919, p. 1703.) In You Can’t Always Tell (1915), a young reporter, Harrington Spencer, is an experienced feature story writer who finds times are quiet and starts out at 3 o’clock in the morning to seek an inspiration. As he walks to an all-night lunch room, he sees a young girl leaping from a taxicab and followed by a middle-aged gentleman who the reporter stops when the young woman implores him for help. He accompanies her home and by the time they reach the house, a mutual attraction has come to them. The next day, Spencer reads a story in the paper relating how a charming young girl stole a diamond ring and a lot of money from a wealthy broker while they were riding in a taxicab. His editor tells him to cover the incident. He meets with the girl who gives him several diamonds for
safekeeping. Her charm makes him forget his suspicions. He eventually finds out the jewels belonged to the girl’s mother who died. They later get married. *In the Line of Duty* (1915), the society editor of a newspaper is engaged to marry a man who, in secret, is a clever jewel thief. She was assigned to “write up” a social function for her newspaper when the thief’s confederate collides with her dropping his pocketbook. When later she examines it, pawn tickets lead her to trace the owner and she finds her fiance and his cohort in a guilty conference. The editor’s conscience dominates her love for the man and she exposes him to the police.


324 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, June 5, 1915, p. 1680. She gets the mumps and both are quarantined in her house. After various complications including a burglar, a revolver and police, the man delivers Helen’s finished manuscript to the newspaper, sneaks back into the house, kisses the sick woman, phones the minister who performs the ceremony, kisses the bride and ends up with the mumps. The burglar goes to jail also afflicted as is the police officer watching the house. And Helen and her new love cannot find room to even kiss because their faces are so swollen.

325 They were fulfilled one day for his son-in-law-to-be became, as he regarded it, notorious. The young man endeavored to interview one of the city’s financial lights, was arrested for attempting to take the great man’s portrait, and rival reporters wrote it up as a great joke. Although the reporter was immediately set free, the prim old man still considered him a jail bird and that there was absolutely no excuse for any person to fall into the hands of the police. Then the father, in a mix-up, is arrested as a pickpocket. “Fortunately for him, the reporter dropped into the police station and curiosity lead him to request an interview with ‘the daring pickpocket.’ The meeting was a shock to both of them, but the prisoner speedily found the advantage of having a newspaper man in his family. His explanations were listened to, the real criminal was speedily captured and the respectable citizen set at liberty with profuse apologies. He had learned his lesson, however, and withdrew all opposition to his daughter’s marriage, telling the young couple that he now knew that even the most innocent man may be a victim of circumstances.” Review, *The Moving Picture World*, June 7, 1913, pp. 1068, 1070. In *Mr. Pringle and Success* (1917), a reporter is in love with the daughter of a businessman, but her father squelches the budding romance because he doesn’t think the reporter is “efficient.” The two lovers tell the old man that they intend to elope unless he gives his consent. The reporter catches an employee in the act of robbing the safe, a man the father hired to replace an aged office manager because he wanted to be more efficient. The man turned out to be a notorious safe-cracker. The father consents to the marriage and rehires his old manage. Review, *The Moving Picture World*, June 23, 1917, p. 1986


330 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, December 11, 1915, p. 2078. The lovers agree to meet in an out-of-the-way place. The girl nimbly outruns the guard and is whisked away by Billie in an auto. The guard gives chase on a motorcycle and arrives at the minister’s in time to tear the bride-to-be from the waiting arms of her “almost” husband. She is “taken home and locked up in a garret where she discovers a number of compromising photographs, dealing with father’s day as a gay young blade.”
When she refuses, he imprisons her in his harem where her presence ignites a mutiny among the other 15 wives. She escapes by jumping from a window and returns to America where she meets up with Jimmy, who comes to interview her about her reported engagement to the wealthy Turk, which has been used for publicity purposes by her manager. During many adventures, the girl and Jimmy fall in love and conspire to get rid of the Turk. When the Turk follows, they create an elaborate wild goose chase. The woman boards an ocean liner to Europe and as soon as the ship leaves the harbor with the Turk aboard, she slips away with the pilot boat and returns to New York where she marries Jimmy.

Reviewed by Lynde Denig in *The Moving Picture World*, February 19, 1916, p. 1141. Many types of marriageable women want to win him. As one reviewer put it, “There are spinsters of long standing, stout cooks, even colored servants,” and all the while Jack and his friends are trying to corner the lottery market so he can wed the girl of his choice. At the drawing, the reporter is not to be found. It turns out a cook displays the winning ticket but her heart belongs to the butler and she splits the $100,000 grand prize with the reporter making it possible for him to marry the girl he loves. In the 1919 version, newspaper owner Foxhall Peyton reluctantly lends his usually broke college friend, Jack Wright, who is a reporter on his paper, five hundred dollars on the condition that he write a story to increase circulation. The reporter suggests the lottery after he loses the money in the stock market.

Michael Slade Schull, *Radicalism in American Silent Films*, 1909-1929, p. 205. The millionaire’s son gets into a disgraceful brawl and the papers “naturally play up the story big – especially those controlled by the steel trust, which it was trying to force the father to sell out. The city editor of one of these papers tells Jane Whitman, the girl star reporter to “Go out and get him good,” She grabs him from the men reporters and makes him look ridiculous enough. Her story stings him into going to work. He starts at the bottom of the ladder in his father’s steel works and she is assigned to the story. She returns and writes a story praising the boy instead of writing a satire on the gilded youth in overalls and is fired when she refuses to turn in the kind of story desired. But she wins the love of the wealthy young man, who has discovered a conspiracy against his father’s company, which is in financial trouble because of worker discontent exacerbated by an agitator planted in the shop by a competing steel trust. The man settles the labor unrest by beating up the militant and stopping the trust from harrassing his father.


Review, The *Moving Picture World*, May 1, 1915, p. 778. During the film, a dissipated son of a millionaire who has a lot of newspaper influence, learns that the girl has entered the contest and tries to make her give up the project. He is arrested in a gambling raid and released through the reporter’s influence.


Several reviews and summaries refer to the railroad as a “trolley” company.

Review, *The Moving Picture World*, May 31, 1919, p. 1381. One publication wrote as a “catch line:” “In the olden days it was considered unmaidenly for a girl to pursue a man. But, dear me, we are very modern in 1919. If Susie had lived and thrived a few hundred years ago, she would have all the bands of ostracism thrust down on her for she insisted on pursuing and pursuing and pursuing – a man.” (*Motion Picture News*, May 31, 1919, p. 3660.


Summary, *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films*. Reviews, *Exhibitors Herald*, February 4, 1918, p. 26; *The Moving Picture World*, February 9, 1918, pp. 874-875. She begins to fall in love with Simpson when she has reason to believe that he is responsible for a number of jewel robberies that have occurred at fashionable society functions. Virginia is determined to solve the crime. She notices that Simpson’s coat is missing a button identical to the one she discovered was torn from the robber’s coat by a pet monkey. Believing Simpson to be the thief, Blake searches his apartment and finds the jewels. At that moment Simpson’s valet enters and attacks her. Simpson rescues the reporter, his valet is imprisoned and he wins his girl’s heart. Then Simpson buys the paper and promises Blake that he will be a hard-working editor. The reporter promises to marry him even though he is rich. Headline: “Girl reporter makes working man of idle millionaire.”


Sports Journalists can be found in many of the other categories including Romance in the Newsroom, Male Journalists, Female Journalists and Editors. Some other examples include *Once to Every Man* (1918) when Charles Chub Morehouse, a sporting writer of a New York daily helps a young fighter make it in the big city. A young country lad is battered in the ring after being kicked in the stomach earlier by a horse. He starts for the city and at the local railroad station meets the sporting writer of a New York daily. The newspaperman asks him why he is so pale and he tells how he had been kicked the night before. The writer is astounded he is still alive and says that anybody who can stand such a kick ought to be a good fighter. The lad comes to New York and hunts up the writer who chaperons him and the kid ends up winning a championship (*Variety*, December 4, 1918, p. 41). In *Oh, Bill Behave* (1919), Sports Editor Bill has a series of adventures who after a tiff with his wife. (*The Moving Picture World*, September 27, 1919, p. 1968).


368 Some newsmen received salaries, “but the majority of reporters were paid by a space-rate system, which paid fixed rates per column inch of printed copy. Reporters who returned from an assignment without a story would not be paid,” *Writers’ Rights: Freelance Journalism in a Digital Age*, by Nicole S. Cohen, Chapter 3, 2016.


Silent films featuring the cub reporter from 1890 to 1919 include the following: *Acquitted* (1916); *The Beat of the Year* (1914); *The Black Circle* (1919); *Bunny As A Reporter* (1913); *The Chinese Lottery* (1915); *Claudio* (1916); *The Conspiracy* (1914); *The Cub* (1913); *The Cub and the Daisy Chain* (1915); *The Cub Reporter* (1909); *The Cub Reporter’s Assignment* (1914); *The Cub Reporter’s Big Scoop* (1912); *The Cub Reporter’s Temptation* (1913); *The Curse of the Scarabee Ruby* (aka *Le scarabee rouge*, 1914); *The Cycle of Adversity* (1914); *A Dangerous Double* (1917); *The Empty Cab* (1918); *The Filibusters* (1912); *The Final Judgment* (1913); *The First Man* (1911); *The Floating Call* (1914); *The Floor Below* (1918); *For the Sunday Edition* (1910); *Gallegher* (1910); *Gallegher* (1917); *The Gang’s New Member* (1915); *A Girl, a Guard and a Garret* (1915); *The Girl and the Reporter* (1915); *The Grafters* (1913); *The Great Scoop* (1910); *The Hardest Way* (1912); *The Heart Breakers* (1916); *Her Whole Duty* (1912); *The Hieroglyphic* (1912); *His Crazy Job* (1913); *His Sob Story* (1914); *How Molly Malone Made Good* (1915); *I Will Repay* (1917); *In Time for Press* (1911); *The Inner Chamber* (1915); *The Kidnapped Stockbroker* (1915); *Leap to Fame* (1918); *Lulu’s Anarchist* (1912); *Martin Eden* (1914); *Mayor’s Manicure* (1914); *Mum’s the Word* (1913); *The Mystery of the Double Cross* (1917); *The Mystery Ship* (1917-1918); *The Neglected Wife* (1917); *Perils of Our Girl Reporters* (1916-1917); *The Power of the Press* (1914); *The Power of the Press* (1916); *The Prince of India* (1914); *The Pursuing Vengeance* (1916); *Roughing the Cub* (1913); *Sammy, the Cub Reporter* (1915); *Say! Young Fellow* (1918); *Shadows and Sunshine* (1910); *The Sketch with the Thumb Print* (1912); *The Storm Woman* (1917); *A Strenuous Scoop* (1914); *The Substitute* (1912); *That Lovely Widow* (aka *That Lonely Widow*) (1916); *The Totville Eye* (1912); *The Trunk Mystery* (1914); Two
Billy's cuff without his knowledge and drops out again while he is sleepwalking. One of the crooks knocks the

376 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 26.

377 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 20.

378 Good, Acquainted With the Night, p. 6. Good explains, “With the publication of “Gallegher” in 1890, the
handsome, courtly Davis was dubbed the “American Kipling” and became the idol of newspapermen drudging on
routine assignments and dreaming of better things…The tale of a plucky copy boy who takes part in the capture of a
notorious killer at a world-championship boxing match and then helps his Philadelphia paper scoop the competition
with the news” showed the “potentially wide appeal of the genre.” He adds, “Newspaper fiction arose partly in
response to public curiosity about the big-city newspaperman who, supplied with a wad of copy paper, a stubby
pencil and a nose for news, had become by the 1890s an unmistakable figure on the American scene.”


380 Examples include A Strenuous Scoop (1914), in which Cub Reporter Bobbie, after considerable effort, gets a job
on a big daily newspaper and waits patiently for an assignment. The city editor learns that a famous opera singer is
traveling incognito and assigns the tremulous Bobbie to see her instructing him that under no circumstances must he
come back without the interview. A wanted man thought he had a good get-away using the singer’s dress. The
industrious Bobbie finds the opera singer’s room number and fearing a turndown by telephone, boldly goes up,
knocks and then waits patiently for an answer – until the crook emerges disguised in the opera singer’s clothes. The
crook runs and Bobbie immediately gives chase, notebook in hand, down the fire escape and through the town, right
past two detectives and into a park. The crook climbs a tree to hide in the foliage, but he cannot escape the eagle eye
of Bobbie who climbs the next tree, gets out his notebook and prepares to have the desired interview. Both are
arrested and at the station, the crook tries to beat up Bobbie and the policeman holding him back, pulls off the wig
and exposes the criminal. Bobbie not only gets an interview for a “scare head” on the front page of his paper, but
likewise, a thousand-dollar reward for the capture of the noted criminal. (Review, The Moving Picture World,
February 7, 1914, p. 704.) In The Inner Chamber (1915), a cub reporter loses his sweetheart to a ne’er do well. On
their wedding day, he saves a desperate woman who is approaching motherhood and has no funds from committing
suicide. He learns that she is the deserted wife of the man marrying the woman he loves. They arrive at the church
just in time to stop the wedding. The man is also wanted by police for swindling and is sentenced to prison. The
woman finds that old love is best, and is soon the reporter’s wife. The pregnant wife dies shortly after her child’s
birth and Guy and his wife promise to take care of her child. The husband, who acquired a drug habit in prison,
escapes and can think only of revenge. He steals the child who, after some nail-biting scenes, is returned to Guy and
his wife and never learns the truth about her drug-crazed father. (Review, The Moving Picture World, December 11,
1915, p. 2066.) In The Kid (1916), Joe Hazard, the star reporter of the New York Herald, raises “the kid” who was
born illegitimately. She’s now 19 and wants to become a reporter too. Hazard gives her an assignment to test her
abilities. She does so well he shows her work to the city editor and she gets hired. The new cub reporter wants to
reveal the truth about all of the city’s political scandals. When the price of meat shows an alarming rise, the cub is
assigned to unearth the cause. She goes after the beef trust involving meat price-fixing. She adopts the disguise of a
bootblack and gets information from a cattle rancher involved in the price-fixing scam. Sometime later, the Kid
manages to obtain a position in the cattle rancher’s office and secures evidence which connects him not only with
the manipulation of the meat market but also the murder of his wife. Hazard recognizes the cattle rancher as the
Kid’s real father. The rancher also learns that the Kid is his daughter and begs leniency. It turns out he did not
murder his wife. The Kid finally secures his freedom, but when he comes to claim a daughter’s love, she turns to
Hazard, who has been her “Daddy” for all these years. (Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Films.
Billy is given a first assignment covering the arrival of a rajah and his son, the prince, in a small town. He makes
friends with the prince who has been besieged by a pack of reporters. Billy is then assigned to interview a countess
who is actually a jewel thief. The countess charms the prince into showing her the rajah’s diamond, which falls into
Billy’s cuff without his knowledge and drops out again while he is sleepwalking. One of the crooks knocks the
prince out and escapes with the diamond and after a fight on a runaway trolley car, the diamond is returned to the prince.


383 Reviews, *The Moving Picture World*, January 30, 1915, p. 712. *Motography*, January 23, 1915, p. 146. In a saloon frequented by gangsters, he rescues a girl from the attentions of a thug and the girl helps him become a member of the gang. Their secrets soon begin to appear in the newspaper. The thug squares his grudge by treacherosely shooting the reporter. The girl nurses him back to health and finds a notebook in his coat pocket containing damning evidence of his duplicity. But she loves him and so she says nothing until he spurns her love. Then she denounces him to the gang and he is hurled into a basement while the gang debates what to do with him. The girl’s love triumphs and she sends for help, the police arriving in time to save the reporter and arrest the gangsters.

384 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, September 11, 1915, p. 1891. The cub had been assigned the story with orders to make good. The stockbroker’s daughter finds a clue that helps him solve the case, but he is nabbed by crooks and locked up. His loved one brings help, but the crooks escape. After a thrilling pursuit, the crooks are captured. Meanwhile, the house holding Alan is blazing furiously and his rescue “is effected with much difficulty.” But he has made good and the city editor doesn’t hesitate to tell him so. Alan takes the clever stockbroker’s daughter in his arms, while she whispers, “And I think you’ve made good.”

385 The Internet Movie Database and Wikipedia.org spell the reporter’s last name as “Annersley,” but other sources including *The Motion Picture World* spells it as “Annesley,” which seems more likely. The silent era.com website spells the last name, “Annessley.”

386 In Episode 7, he is confronted by the Masked Stranger who reveals himself him as a mysterious protector. In Episode 8, the reporter is in a “stiff fight,” captured by the villain’s henchmen, and ends up in jail, but then escapes, returning just in time to greet the prosecutor (Episode 9). Dick pursues the villain, sees the woman he loves go off with the villain and, heartbroken, decides to abandon the investigation (Episode 11). In Episode 12, Dick finds out the truth, discovers the plot of his loved one being forced to marry the villain and saves the day. The woman promises to marry Dick (Episode 13), and in the final episode the reporter solves the case and marries the woman he loves.

387 Fay is involved in an automobile chase to save the heroine (Episode 6, 1918), he makes a sensational jump from a building into the sea to escape a gang followed by another auto and motorcycle chase, crashes into a car throwing Jack into the water where he is rescued (Episode 7), is held prisoner with the heroine in a light-house (Episode 10), pursues the heroine’s kidnappers (Episode 11), joins a band of spies to learn their secrets (Episode 12), is tortured by the spies who want information about a secret formula (Episode 15), escapes from his captors after a hand-to-hand fight (Episode 16), and succeeds in staying alive to report another day in the final episode.

388 Examples include *The Cub Reporter’s Temptation* (1913). *The Star* reporter, who is brooding over his meager salary since he also supports his sister, is sitting at home when a package of money rolls to his feet (it was dropped down their chimney by a desperate crook running from the police). Meanwhile, the police can’t figure out what happened to the money. The *Star’s* City Editor wants a special article written on the subject and as his best reporters are out on assignments, there is no one to send but Bud Collins, the cub reporter. Bud’s sister convinces him to return the money so Bud accomplishes a “scoop” for his paper when the money is returned to the owner, who is so impressed with Bud’s honesty that he offers him a more promising position.


Sometimes cub reporters substituting for veterans failed miserably – even if they didn’t quite understand that they did fail. In The Substitute (1912), a reporter gets too sick to attend an official dinner in honor of the State secretary where a distinguished politician is expected to make a momentous speech. So the paper is forced to send a substitute. The cub reporter shows up but isn’t sophisticated enough to display proper etiquette or table manners. After creating considerable disturbance in his zealous endeavors to chronicle the event, the cub is unceremoniously thrown out. Returning home, he boasts of his journalistic ability, having managed to chronicle the State official’s big appetite, but he failed to secure a word of his speech.
Stanley tells Florence her father was killed in an automobile. No one knows the truth but Harold St...
Other examples include *The Political Boss* (1914), in which Tom Nash purchases the *Rayville Clarion* from a judge who is about to run for mayor. Tom promises him the newspaper’s support until he finds out that a political boss is behind his candidacy. So Tom hammers the judge’s party in the newspaper infuriating the candidate. Tom has fallen in love with the judge’s lovely daughter but the judge orders him from the house. Nonpareil Jones, a tramp printer Tom has befriended, sleeps in the office and is awakened by the political boss who is preparing to burn the plant down. The two fight. Jones is knocked unconscious and the political boss sets the building ablaze. News of the fire brings Tom to the scene and he rushes into the burning building to save the tramp printer who tells him who set the building afire. The boss attempts to flee, but is caught by Tom and locked up. When the judge finds out what happened, he begs Tom’s forgiveness. In *Politics and the Press* (1914), editor John Marsden takes over the *Press* in Griggsville opposing the town boss who ran the previous editor out of town. Marsden refuses to be bribed, falls in love with the boss’s niece and is almost lynched before being rescued. Through his paper, John exposes the bribery and corruption practiced by the boss in this small mining town. The boss is furious and makes threats of personal violence against the editor unless he leaves immediately. He’s attacked in his office by the boss and his men, overpowered and rescued from being lynched just in time by the woman he loves and the sheriff and his men. After a sharp fight, the gang is driven off and the boss arrested. The girl “throws herself from her horse, unbinds John’s arms and places them about her shoulders, while he holds her closely to his heart and kisses her.”

A chase is a heavy steel frame used to hold type in a letterpress.

Examples include *The Narrow Path* (1918), in which Dick Strong is the night city editor of a morning newspaper who is in love with a manicurist living in his boardinghouse. She is unimpressed with wealthy but dissipated men who frequent her shop preferring Strong. Dick’s sister, however, is intrigued by the wilder side of New York. She has an affair with a businessman who is married, realizes she is pregnant and turns to the manicurist for advice.
Outraged, the manicurist goes to see the businessman not realizing that his wife has hired detectives to follow him. The wife sues for divorce naming the manicurist as co-respondent. In order to protect Dick’s sister, the manicurist remains silent and Dick, believing her guilty, tells her he cannot marry her. Later, the wife shoots the businessman and kills him. Dick finds out the truth and the plucky manicurist and the city editor are reunited.

428 Review, The Moving Picture World, March 13, 1915, p.1666. In The Scarlet Road (1918), Magazine Editor John Rand’s wife won’t give him a divorce, but he is in love with a Bohemian woman who is pursued by the editor and a licentious stockbroker. When her brother steals money and loses it at the gambling tables, John writes a large check to clear the boy’s name leaving the editor penniless. Conscience-stricken the woman agrees to marry the stockbroker if he repays the editor and the two embark on an unhappy marriage. The stockbroker admits the check he gave to the editor is worthless and he has another wife. He then attacks her. In their struggle, he falls from the window and is killed freeing her to marry the editor whose wife has recently died. (Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films. Review, The Moving Picture World, June 6, 1918, pp. 1478-1479. Some conflicts in describing characters and plots.) In Ace of Hearts (1916), an editor gambles his life on a draw of cards with his wife’s lover.


430 Other films include Mother Love (1912), in which a city editor marries a widow with a boy of eight, but his new wife doesn’t like his mother who runs the household. The mother leaves only returning when she finds the boy in trouble and returns him to the family. In the Clutches of the Ku Klux Klan (1913), the daughter of a newspaper editor is captured and imprisoned by the Klan before her love rescues her. In Literature and Love (1913), an editor falls in love with one of her writers. In The Marble Heart (1913), an editor tries to warn his friend about a beautiful model who doesn’t care for him.


433 Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films

434 Examples include The Double Standard (1917), in which an editor supporting a reform platform backs his wife’s brother for election as city judge. He and the other brother, a bishop, cannot understand the young judge’s intense interest in the regulations affecting the dives and cabarets of the city. But they both agree to stand behind him. When the judge takes his seat on the bench for the first time, two young women taken in a raid at a local café of unsavory repute are brought before him for sentence. He demands to know the names of the men who were in the company of the girls at the time of their arrest. He is shocked to discover that one is the son of the editor while the other is the nephew of the bishop. The judge, realizing the root of evil had grown so close to his own home, gives the men suspended sentences pending good behavior and then helps the girls live better lives. (Review, The Moving Picture World, August 4, 1917, p. 846.) In The Hoodooed Story (1917), an editor rejects a story by a magazine writer by mistake. A series of mistakes by the editor keeps the young writer jumping around until he finds a mate in the editor’s stenographer. In The Mystic Well (1915), an editor, who is a rheumatic, hears about a cure from a mysterious well and “sends his small colored errand boy to follow the man that placed the order for the ad. The boy reports that he saw the well and it certainly rejuvenated a man that drank from it. The news quickly spreads and the old men go to the well.” They soon discover the whole thing is a fraud. (Review, The Moving Picture World, June 5, 1915, p. 1688.) In The Devil’s Prize (1916), a ruined woman marries an unsuspecting editor keeping a dark secret: their child is not his. He eventually learns about the affair and decides to kill the man who seduced her. But he discovers that the man died of fright after discovering he was wanted by the police. Still in a rage, the editor comes home and starts choking the daughter he had believed to be his own. Finally he comes to his senses, realizing how much he loves both his child and his wife. In Snapshots (1915), Henry Spear, the old editor of the town newspaper, is the only person in town to suspect the banker of complicity in the crime. With only suspicion for justification, yet feeling morally sure of his right, he conducted a series of attacks upon the banker until the rich man sent an emissary to the editor with pretended expressions of sympathy and a sum of money sufficient to keep the paper going for several months. In return, the editor signed a promissory note, which would enable the banker to seize the opponent’s plant at any time he might desire. When pictorial evidence showed the banker handing money to a
confederate in a park, it was sufficient evidence to punish the guilty man and save the old editor from losing his newspaper.


436 Less ominous examples include *The Manager of the B.& A.* (1916), in which Griffith Ryder, the editor of the *Antioch Herald*, is the leader of the Labor Party and under the constant agitation of Ryder, the workers declare a strike, which culminates in the cutting of the pipes leading to the water tanks, which results in the explosion of an over-heated engine boiler and a fire. The company man saves the day not only winning the hearts of his men, but that of a woman who chooses him now over the editor to become his partner for life. *The Klondike Bubble* (1914), an editor of “a yellow newspaper” viciously attacks two men involved in a mining stock scheme causing a crash in Klondike shares. One of the men goes to the editor for the purpose of giving him a thrashing, but is beaten to a pulp instead. He then asks his partner to fight a duel with the editor.

437 Review, *The Moving Picture World*, April 15, 1916, pp. 495-496. A youth badly in need of funds, goes to the city editor of a paper in a town where a man is found shot dead in one of the public parks and the identity of the murderer remains a mystery. He says he knows a way to keep the story alive – the paper’s reporters would be given clues to the identity of the murder. The plan is accepted and the boy plants the clues all pointing to himself as the culprit. The editor promises to come forth with the boy’s alibi when he is arrested for murder. The jury brings in a verdict of guilty and the editor deserts him by refusing to recognize him. It turns out the editor killed the murder victim because he was his wife’s sweetheart.


439 Examples include *The Man Who Woke Up* (1918), in which Colonel William Oglesby, owner and editor of the *Oglesburg Clarion*, is prejudiced against northerners as he strives to keep alive the spirit of the Old South despite the fact that fifty years had elapsed since the Civil War. Southern pride has embittered Oglesby to such a point that he has become morose. He is furious when the townspeople warmly welcome a New York businessman and philanthropist. He stubbornly resists the Northerner’s influence until his daughter falls in love with him and his wife becomes enthralled with his progressive ideas. Then the editor relents and accepts the new way of things.


442 Other examples include *The Laird of McGillicuddy* (1913); *The Daughters of Men* (1914); *The Fable of the Author and the Dear Public and the Plate of Mush* (1914); *In Mizzoura* (1914);


444 Other examples include *The Letter That Never Came Out* (1914); *The Nihilists* (1914); *When Sorrow Fades* (1914); *Truth and Justice* (1916); *The Wheel of Justice* (1916); *Pots and Poems* (1917); *The Sons of Satan* (1916); *The Lady of the Dug-Out* (1918).

445 Examples of female editors include *A Blissful Calamity* (1917), in which Annie Smith, the editor of a newspaper, became interested in a rich man’s son through the newspaper articles she has read about him. Since many women were after him for his money, he decided to say he was engaged before going to a party. He wired to Annie asking her to spend the week-end by playing the part of his fiancée. The host and guests insisted the two get married right away. The man wired a friend to send a fellow to impersonate a minister and Annie consented to take part in the fake marriage. The man realized he actually loved Annie. It turned out the minister was real and the marriage was no fake. He said he couldn’t say he was sorry and she responded, “Well, don’t expect me to be.” He was stunned and delighted. In *Everybody’s Business* (1919), Mildred Arden, the editor of the *Daily Record*, becomes friendly with two returning soldiers, Tom Oakes and his blind friend David. David quickly becomes skilled as a compositor, but Tom has more trouble adjusting to civilian life. Both men fall in love with her. A Bolshevik group targets a patriotic manufacturer with a lucrative government contract by planting a fake story in the newspaper insinuating that he is
not loyal to the government or his workers. Mildred learns of the conspiracy and threatens to publish an expose unless the group stops the slander. In the gang’s efforts to stop publication, David is killed. Soon after the culprits are arrested and Mildred and Tom look forward to a happy life together.


451 In the fifth film, *A Run on Percy*, a town character, Percy Pinkham, whose sweetheart is editor Tate, has invested all his money in the newspaper and has no funds left to pay bills. He cannot even pay his colored weatherwoman, who proceeds to beat up Percy and his news printer’s “devil.” Percy’s uncle is willing to lend him money on one condition: he must marry some Bloom Center girl within 24 hours. If he doesn’t marry within that time, he will be disinherited as well. West embodies Percy’s uncle’s proposition in a newspaper story and all the girls with matrimonial inclinations make a run on Percy. He asks Margaret to marry him at once and she agrees, but a moment later her mother enters with a newspaper containing the story of Percy’s order to marry, and Margaret, thinking Percy is mercenary, refuses to wed. When Percy tells her he is willing to sacrifice his inheritance for her, she realizes that he really loves her. In *The Manicure Girl*, Johnny West defends the manicure girl from her idle husband. West defends his mother when other women influence the judges and he becomes disgruntled because his mother loses the apple butter award. He tells the deacon about the miscarriage of justice (*Apple Butter*). In *Small Town Stuff*, both Percy Pinkham and Reporter Johnny West are in love with editor Tate. A jealous man plots vengeance on Pinkham by using an unknowing West.

452 One country editor lamented business was so bad he couldn’t afford to buy coal. So he devised a scheme where the office staff attacks a cola man passing by until he pelts them with lumps of coal. When the smoke clears, there’s enough coal on the ground to save the day (Mr. A. Jonah, 1910). In *The Lamb, the Woman, The Wolf* (1914), the editor (The Lamb) devotes his life to his invalid mother and in his spare moment edits a weekly paper. The citizens of a small western town deride the editor and his paper. But two persons have faith in him – his mother and the woman he loves. The Wolf, a husky mountaineer, returns to the town and marries the Woman. The Lamb’s mother dies and he wanders into the mountains in search for solitude. He gets involved with a band of outlaws and becomes a marked man, an outlaw. He and the Wolf go after the payroll money, but the Woman shoots the masked man and kills him. It is her husband, the Wolf. She then recognizes The Lamb and in the future a different, better life is in store for each. In *Artie, the Millionaire Kid* (1916), a college drop-out buys up a country newspaper from an editor who is “down and out.” Artie had discovered that his railroad millionaire magnate father is trying to gobble up a right-of-way for a branch of his road from another millionaire. Artie makes it his business to get that man and win the girl both of them are after. He creates a fake business enterprise involving one of his college chums to impersonate a widow that the man immediately falls for. She tells him to put his land in Artie’s hands and Artie buys the land his father wants. After a number of misadventures, he sells the land to his father for a million dollars and Artie, flush with cash, marries the woman he loves. In *Uneasy Money* (1917), Bill is the editor of the country paper, the Bingtown Bugle, and Suza is his assistant. A confidence man comes to town with his girl accomplice and sells the editor a phoney diamond ring. He gives the ring to Suza who shows it to everyone she meets. When the editor finds out that he has paid $200 for a fake, he is beside himself because the two cons have left the community. But Suza consoles Bill by telling him that it is worth $200 to her, and she places it on her engagement finger. Other films featuring country editors include *The Romance of a Dry Town* (1912); *Cousin Clara’s Cook Book* (1915);

Silent films featuring the publisher from 1890 to 1919 include the following: Adoring an Ad (1910); The American Girl Series: The Black Rider of Tasajara (1917); The American Girl Series: The Door in the Mountain (1917); The American Girl Series: The Fate of Juan Garcia (1917); The American Girl Series: The Ghost of the Desert (1917); The American Girl Series: The Golden Eagle Trail (1917); The American Girl Series: The Lost Legion of the Border (1917); The American Girl Series: The Man From Tia Juana (1917); The American Girl Series: The Man Hunt at San Remo (1917); The American Girl Series: The Phantom Mine (1917); The American Girl Series: The Pot o’ Gold (1917); The American Girl Series: Sagebrush Law (1917); The American Girl Series: The Secret of Los Valley (1917); The American Girl Series: The Skeleton Canyon Raid (1917); The American Girl Series: The Trapping of Two Bit Tuttle (1917); The American Girl Series: The Tyrant of Chiracahua (1917); The American Girl Series: The Vanished Line Rider (1917); The American Girl Series: The Vulture of Skull Mountain (1917); Animated Weekly No. 78 (1917); The Argonauts of California 1849 (1916); As a Man Thinks (1919); Bad News (1918); Badgered (1916); Baree, Son of Kazan (1918); The Belle of the Season (1919); The Black Circle (1919); A Blissful Calamity (1917); Bondage (1917); The Burning Rivet (1913); The Chinese Lottery (1915); The Clarion (1916); The Clever Mrs. Carfax (1917); The Country Boy (1915); The Crimson Stain Mystery (1916); The Cub (1913); The Daring of Diana (1916); A Deal in Real Estate (1914); Diamond Cut Diamond (1913); A Daughter of the Poor (1917); The Editor (1912); The Empty Cab (1918); Enemies Within (1919); The Fourth Estate (1916); Framing Framers (1918); The Fringe of Society (1917); Gather (1916); Grant, Police Reporter: In the Web of the Spider (1917); Heart’s Hunger (1915); Her Big Story (1913); His Crazy Job (1913); The Gentleman From Indiana (1915); The Girl and the Explorer (1914); The Girl From Frisco: Episode Nineteen: Stain of Chuckawalla (1916); The Grand Passion (aka Boss of Powderville) (1918); He Wrote Poetry (1916); Her Luckless Scheme (1916); The Iconoclast (1910); Just Like a Woman (1915); Looking for the Medal (1907); The Lottery Man (1916); The Lottery Man (1919); The Magnificent Meddler (1917); The Man From Manhattan (1916); The Man Who Never Was Caught (1915); A Man’s World (1918); Manhood’s Reward (1909); Mary Jane’s Pa (1917); Mongrel and Master (1914); Mother Love (1912); Mr. Opp (1917); The New Editor (1911); The New Reporter (1914); No Children Wanted (1918); The Old Reporter (1912); On the Jump (1918); One Law for Both (1917); The Other Sister (1915); Over the Hill (1917); Paying for Silence (1913); The Power of Print (1914); The Reward of Chivalry (1916); The Rose of May (1913); The Rummy (1916); The Social Pirates: Episode 11: The Fangs of the Tattler (1916); That Lovely Widow (aka That Lonely Widow) (1916); Thirty (1915); Todd of the Times (1919); The Torch Bearer (aka From the West) (1916); The Truth Wagon (1914); Truthful Tolliver (aka Truthful Tolliver, 1917); Twixt Loyalty and Love (1910); An Unexpected Fortune (1912); Universal Animated Weekly No. 22 (1918); The War Correspondents (1913); The Weaker Vessel (1919); What Love Can Do? (1916); The White Terror (1915); The Woman of Lies (1919); The Woman in Politics (1916); The Woman Under Cover (1919).


Good, *Acquainted With the Night*, p. 65.


“leave everything in your capable hands,” said Trude. “And in the hands of my lawyers too, of course.” After a thoughtful moment, he added: “I may offer a suggestion from time to time, but never except for the good of the paper.” Editor: “What salary do you wish to pay yourself.” “Whatever is customary. No more … give your office-boy my last cent….”

Other examples include The Fourth Estate (1916), in which Brand, a newspaper reporter, finds out that the leader of a city-wide strike, Noland, is being imprisoned on a trumped-up charge ordered by a corrupt judge, who promptly orders the newspaper editor to fire Brand while Noland, bailed out of jail, flees to Canada. Noland makes a fortune in Canada and returns with a plan to ruin the judge who had tried to seduce Noland’s wife for the last two years. The first step is to buy the newspaper. Then he hires Brand as his managing editor and the two men begin a crusade against the corrupt judge. From this point on, the action is swift and filled with exciting incidents – an attempt is made to murder Noland and the editor and publisher uncover a murder committed years ago and their expose puts the judge and the political boss who controls him behind bars.


Variety, February 7, 1919, p. 64.

Examples include Adoring an Ad, 1910; An Unexpected Fortune, 1912. In No Children Wanted (1918), a newspaper owner, Robert Chase, is caricatured and slandered in a man’s novel and he severely reproves the novelist. Later, the owner discovers that the novelist and a confederate are sending munitions into Mexico. The owner informs the authorities and two of the conspirators' henchmen are killed. The novelist engineered the scheme and the owner plans to expose him in his paper, but a change of heart overcomes the publisher when he sees a photograph of his daughter riding a hobby horse. It reminds him of his dead child and he orders the story killed. The novelist then attempts to kill the publisher but loses the fight. The child’s parents learn how she has been instrumental in saving them from disgrace and they return home determined to make up for all of the affection and love the girl has been missing.

Review, Variety, August 29, 1913.


Silent films featuring the critic from 1890 to 1919 include the following: Apartment 29 (1917); As a Man Thinks (1919); The Bachelor’s Romance (1915); The Beloved Adventuress (1917); Confounding the Art Critic (1900); The Critic (1906); The Critic (1913); The Danger Game (1918); Find the Woman (1918); Irene’s Infatuation (1912); The Kid (1916); Merely Players (1918); Our Mutual Girl No. 16 (1914); A Sporting Chance (1919); The Trufflers (1917); When My Ship Comes In (1919).
His adventures begin when he gets an assignment from his editor to go to a certain apartment house to interview an opera singer. Entering the place, a woman falls apparently dead at his feet before the door of Apartment 29. He carries her inside and discovers the dead body of her husband. The police arrive and accuse him of murders, and Ormsby flees. The playwright, who Ormsby gave a bad review to, turns out to live in the same building, offers refuge in a wardrobe trunk of a girl he calls his friends’ wife. He asks for a large sum of money that Ormsby is only too glad to give. Police arrive and search the place. The girl, unable to stand the strain of this farce, finally confesses that she is not a friend’s wife but a murderer. The two escape but are attacked by thugs and then captured by the police before the critic sees that he is involved with a hoax to prove his review was wrong.

In a subplot, the woman’s father, a treasurer of a missionary society and editor in chief of its leading publication, My Brother’s Keeper, embezzles church funds and when reporters are told the story by a playwright who the girl rejects, he is unable to bear the disgrace and kills himself.

The singer asks an old friend, an expert gold worker, to make her a paste pearl necklace for her performance in Faust. He does this and then is taken suddenly ill and dies. The man had been guarding $20,000 in gold coins for an innkeeper and when the money is discovered missing from his safe, gossips and scandalmongers soon convince everyone including the critic that the opera singer had an affair with the old man and stole the money in order to buy her marvelous pearls. Maurice learns the pearls are paste, then visits the innkeeper and learns that she has unwittingly used as wallpaper the stock certificates purchased with her gold coins. The mystery is cleared up, and the opera singer regains the affections of Maurice and her friends and she, in turn, forgives him for their lack of faith.

Silent films featuring the cartoonist or illustrator from 1890 to 1919 include the following: The Adventures of Kitty Cobb (1914); Arty the Artist (1914); Beatrice Fairfax (1916); The Comeback (1915); Conquered Hate (aka Plus fort que la haine) (1913); The Dancing Girl of Butte (1910); Doc Yak’s Moving Picture Artist (1914); The Enchanted Profile (1918); Fate’s Alibi (1915); The Female Politician, Mrs. Bell, Is Nominated for Mayor (1908); Flooey and Axel (1915); Getting a Hunch (1914); Mayer (1913); The Little Terror (1917); The Magnificent Meddler (1917); The Making of a Modern Newspaper (1907); Old Doc Yak (1913); Orator, Knight and Cow Charmer (1912); Our Mutual Girl No. 16 (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 50 (1914); Pickles, Art and Sauerkraut (1914); The Politician’s Love Story (1909) Sammy’s Semi-Suicide (1916); The Unborn (1916); Universal Boy as the Newsboy’s Friend (1914); Universal Screen Magazine No. 95 (1918); The Urchin (1915); Vernon Howe Bailey’s Sketchbook (1916); Vernon Howe Bailey’s Sketchbook of Berlin (1916); Vernon Howe Bailey’s Sketchbook of Boston (1916); Vernon Howe Bailey’s Sketchbook of Chicago (1916); Vernon Howe Bailey’s Sketchbook of London


517 Other examples include Getting a Hunch (1914) featuring Cartoonist George W. French. In Our Mutual Girl No. 16 (1914) the heroine meets real-life cartoonist Briggs of the New York Tribune who draws a picture of her while they are chatting. Humorist F.P.A. (Franklin P. Adams) also makes an appearance. In Our Mutual Girl 25 (1914), the magazine, Town and Country’s portrait artist Jean Parke asks the girl to sit for a portrait. In Our Mutual Girl 50 (1914), prolific artist May Wilson Preston confides to the girl the trying experiences she has with certain art editors. The latest episode is that a magazine art editor wants her illustrations to substitute for a special illustration from one of their war correspondents that hasn’t arrived.

518 Silent films featuring photojournalists from 1890 to 1919 include the following: Adoring an Ad (1910); A Busy Day (1914), The Calendar Girl (1917); Facing the Gatling Guns (1914); Fifty-Fifty (1916); The Flash Light (1915) and The Flash Light (1917); The German Curse in Russia (1918); The Girl Reporter’s Big Scoop (1912); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 29 (1915); How Molly Malone Made Good (1915); Jimmy’s Finish (1913); Our Mutual Girl: Mutual Monograph No. 1: With Julian Street and Wallace Morgan (1915); Our Mutual Girl No. 25 (1914); Pardners (1917); President McKinley’s Inspection of Camp Wikoff (1898); Reckless Romeo (1917); Theodore Roosevelt (1912); Universal Current Events No. 36 (1918); Universal Current Events No. 42 (1918).


520 One reviewer wrote, “Millions of words have been written and printed about the present Russian situation, but could these miles of newspaper columns be condensed into a single story they would fail to give the same vivid and understandable survey of the Russian situation as can be had from this five-part picture” (The Moving Picture World, January 26, 1918, p. 571).

521 Silent films featuring the printer and other news employees from 1890 to 1919 include the following: The Active Life of Dolly of the Dailies (1914); The American Girl Series: The Black Rider of Tasajara (1917); The American Girl Series: The Door in the Mountain (1917); The American Girl Series: The Fate of Juan Garcia (1917); The American Girl Series: The Ghost of the Desert (1917); The American Girl Series: The Golden Eagle Trail (1917); The American Girl Series: The Last Legion of the Border (1917); The American Girl Series: The Man From Tia Juana (1917); The American Girl Series: The Man Hunt at San Remo (1917); The American Girl Series: The Phantom Mine (1917); The American Girl Series: The Pot o’ Gold (1917); The American Girl Series: Sagebrush Law (1917); The American Girl Series: The Secret of Los Valley (1917); The American Girl Series: The Skeleton Canyon Raid (1917); The American Girl Series: The Trapping of Two Bit Tuttle (1917); The American Girl Series: The Tyrant of Chiracahua (1917); The American Girl Series: The Vanished Line Rider (1917); The American Girl Series: The Vulture of Skull Mountain (1917); The Burden of Proof (1918); The Chronicles of Bloom Center (1915-1916); The Clarion (1916); Confusion (1912) (aka Inconvieniti della quarta pagina); The Cowboy Editor (1913); The Crucial Test (1911); The Cub and the Daisy Chain (1915); The Cub Reporter (1912); The Cycle of Adversity (1914); The Dancing Girl of Butte (1910); Despair (1915); A Divorce Scandal (1913); Doc Yak’s Moving Picture Artist (1914); Dolly’s Scoop (1916); The Floor Below (1918); From Tyranny to Liberty (1910); The Gentleman From Indiana (1915); The Girl and the Explorer (1914); The Girl God Made for Jones (1917); The Girl Reporter (1910); The Goat (1914); The Gold Brick (1913); Grant, Police Reporter: The Sign of the Scarf (1917); Grant,
Police Reporter: The Trial of Graft (1917); His Last Chance (1914); His Last Word (1915); The Hoodooed Story (1917); Hypnotized (1912); The Iconoclast (1910); In Time for Press (1911); A Jewel in Pawn (1917); John Brown’s Heir (1911); The Kick Out (1915); Love Is Love (1919); The Making of a Modern Newspaper (1907); The Man From Manhattan (1916); Manhood’s Reward (1909); A Martyr to His Cause (1911); Mr. A. Jonah (1910); The Mystery of Number 47 (1917); A Newspaper in Making (1904); No Story (1917); The Poet’s Bid for Fame (1907); The Politician’s Love Story (1909); The Quinceville Raffle (1911); The Political Boss (1914); The Power of the Press (1914); The Recoil (1915); Roughing the Cub (1913); Sammy, the Cub Reporter (1915); The Siege of Liege (1914); The Silence Sellers (1917); Southern Justice (1917); The Star Reporter (1911); Tapped Wires (1913); The Terrible Outlaw (1913); The Tin Can Rattle (1912); Too Bad, Eddie (1916); The Touch of the Key (1916); Truthful Tulliver (aka Truthful Tolliver, 1917); Twixt Loyalty and Love (1910); An Unexpected Fortune (1912); Universal Screen Magazine No. 14 (1917); Universal Screen Magazine No. 62: The Making of a Newspaper, Part One (1918); Universal Screen Magazine No. 63: The Making of a Newspaper, Part Two (1918); Universal Screen Magazine No. 64: The Making of a Newspaper, Part Three (1918); Universal Screen Magazine No 65: The Making of a Newspaper, Part Four (1918); The Vagabond (1911); Wanted, A Burglar (1913); The War Correspondents (1913); The War Extra (1914); The Wild Girl (1917).

522 An example is The Scarlet Runner: Episode No. 6: The Mysterious Motor Car (1916).


524 Another film From Dusk to Dawn (aka Labor vs. Capital, 1913), journalists cover a trial similar to the printer McNamara’s case in the bombing of The Los Angeles Times building. Attorney Clarence Darrow is featured in the film.


526 Silent films featuring the newsboy-office boy from 1890 to 1919 include the following: $1,000 Reward (1915); The Accident (1911); The Adventures of Billy (1911); After Dark (1915); Amarilly of Clothes-Line Alley (1918); Another Chance (1914); The Arm of the Law (1910); At the Altar – The Interception of a Rejected Suitor’s Vengeance (1909); At the Stroke of Twelve (1911); The Beloved Liar (1916); Beyond His Fondest Hopes (1915); The Billionaire (1916); A Bit of Kindling (1917); Bit O’ Heaven (1915); The Blue Bonnett (1919); Bobby and Company (1917); Bobby’s Medal (1915); The Boy Detective or The Abductors Foiled (1908); The Boy and the Law (1914); The Brass Check (1918); Buddy and His Dog (1912); Business Rivalry (1903); Christmas in Paradise Alley (1908); The Child Benefactor (1910); A Child’s Stratagem (1910); Chinnie Fadden (1915); A Chip Off the Old Block (1916); Chip’s Eloquence (1916); Clownland (1912); Coals of Fire (1914); Corinne in Dollyland (1911); The Craving (1916); The Crooked Road (1916); Daybreak (1918); Delivering Newspapers (1903); Distributing a War Extra (1899); A Dog in a Coiner’s Dean (1911); Don’t Pinch My Pup (1912); The Dream Fairy (1913); The Drunkard’s Child (1909); The Election Bet (1916); Fair Enough (1918); The Fair Pretender (1918); Fantomas III (1913); A Fighting Colleen (1919); Final Payment (1916); The Flower Girl (1908); The Fortunes of Mariana (1915); Ginger (1919); Giovanni’s Gratitude (1913); The Girl and the Game (1916); The Girl Who Won Out (1917); The Great Python Robbery (1914); Happy Hooligan April-Fooloed (1901); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 34 (1915); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 36 (1915); The Heart of a “Boss” (1912); The Heart of Virginia Keep (1916). Her Newsboy Friend (1908); Her Pet (1911); Her Romance (1910); Hidden Fires (1918); The Higher Impulse (1914); His I.O.U. (1915); His Little Story (1916); His Sob Story (1914); Home (1911); An Honest Newsboy’s Reward (1908); Honesty is the Best Policy: A Pithy Story of Life in the Slums (1908); Honor Thy Father (1915); Horsewhipping an Editor (1900); House of Cards (1917); The Idol of the Stage (1916); In After Years (1912); The Ingratitude of Liz Taylor (1915); The Innocence of Lizette (1916); The Innocent Sinner (1917); The Inspector’s Story (1914); It May Be You (1915); The Italian Barber (1911); Jack and Jingles (1912); Jerry’s Mother-in-Law (1913); Jimmy (1914); Jimmy’s Misfortune (1912); John Barleycorn (1914); Just a Shabby Doll (1913); Keeping His Word (1910); Killed by Whom? (1916); The Land Beyond the Sunset (1912); The Law That Divides (1918); The Life of Big Tim Sullivan; or, from Newsboy to Senator (1914); The Little Bride of Heaven (1912); The Little Brother (1917); The Little Father; or The Dressmaker’s Loyal Son (1909); Little Miss No-Account (1918); Little Miss Optimist (1917); Little Mr. Fixer (1915); The Little Orphan (1916); The Little Orphans (1915); Looking for the Medal (1907); The Lottery Man (1916); Lottery Ticket (le billet de loterie) (1908); Love’s Crossed Trail (1916); A Man and His Money (1915); Man for A’ That (1914); Man for A’ That (1916); A Macaroni...
Sleuth (1917); The Marriage Market (1917); The Microbe (1919); Miss Mischief Maker (1918); Mrs. Van Alden’s Jewels (1915); Mutt and Jeff and the Newsboys (1911); Mutt and Jeff Get Passes to the Ball Game (1911); Mutual Weekly No. 112 (1917); The Newsboy (1905); A Newsboy Hero (1911); The Newsboy Tenor (1914); A Newsboy’s Luck (1911); A Newspaper in Making (1904); The Newsboy and the Tramp (1911); Nina, the Flower Girl (1917); Nobody’s Boy (1913); Otherwise Billy Harrison (1915); Out of the Mist (1916); The Passing of J.B. Randall & Company (1912); Pathe News No. 16 (1915); Pathe News No. 18 (1916); The Penny Philanthropist (1917); The Phantom Extra (1915); A Political Kidnapping (1912); Pretty Policeman (1915); Prince Charming (1912); The Protectory’s Oldest Boy (1913); The Reapers (1916); The Red Viper (1919); The Right to Live (1915); Rosie O’Grady (1917); Rowdy and His New Pal (1912); Selig-Tribune No. 8 (1916); The Sleeping Lion (1919); Somebody’s Mother (1911); The Star Reporter (1912); Three Suitors and a Dog (1913); Tom Tilling’s Baby (1912); The Trouble Buster (1917); Uncle John (1915); Unhand Me, Villain! (1916); Universal Boy as the Newsboy’s Friend (1914); The Voice in the Night (1916); The Waif (1915); Waifs (1914); Wanted: A Brother (1918); When the Circus Came to Town (1913); Why Rags Left Home (1913).

Behind the Mask of Innocence, Sex, Violence, Prejudice, Crime: Films of Social Conscience in the Silent Era by Kevin Brownlow (Alfred A. Knopf, NY, 1990) documents the social issues the silent films explored including crime, poverty, alcohol, drugs, racial and ethnic prejudice, epidemics and the controversies over birth control, abortion and the death penalty in addition to sexual mores, government and police corruption, prison conditions, immigration and strife between capital and labor.

One of the first films featuring a newsboy was Distributing a War Extra or Delivering Newspapers (1899) showing a crowd of newsboys running to meet the “World” newspaper delivery wagon featuring a mad scramble to get the newspapers including a fight between two of the newsboys. In 1903, Business Rivalry showed newsboys scrambling to get a man to buy a newspaper with newspapers flying all over the place. In Delivering Newspapers (1903), New York World newsboys fight for position to buy and then sell the newspaper.

Often newsboys showed up to do a good deed playing a small part in the film. In The Arm of the Law (1910), a newsboy sees a crime committed and gives the descriptions of the perpetrators to the police. In The Urchin (1915), an urchin lives in a poverty-stricken attic with his old grandfather, a musician. The boy loves the old man’s violin but is forced to sell it for bread since they are facing starvation. When he returns, he finds his grandfather dead. He manages to sell back the bread, buy back the violin and make a few pennies playing in the street. He falls asleep on a park bench, and a tramp steals the violin. Broken-hearted, he uses his few pennies to buy newspapers and starts to make a living. The tramp sells the violin to a little girl and later the girl’s auto runs down the urchin and he is taken to her home. The boy has lost his desire to live, but when he hears the violin, he recognizes it, crawls downstairs, picks up his beloved violin and starts playing. His story is told and a happy future opens before him.


The Motion Picture World, June 25, 1910, p. 1102.


Summary, American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films. The Moving Picture World, January 20, 1917, p. 358; February 3, 1917, p. 745. Nina lives in a tenement next to the hunchback newsboy who has some native ability to model clay figures. She is left dependent upon him by the death of her grandmother and the two become sweethearts. One day Jimmie has a fight with another newsboy, whom he thinks is hanging around Nina’s stand too much and the other boy is soon begging for mercy. A rich man takes the blind girl for an operation on her eyes. Jimmie watches her from the bleak outside world and misunderstanding the wealthy man’s attentions, attempts to shoot him. When the attempt fails, “the wretched little newsboy” then decides to commit suicide because he cannot bear to have Nina see him because she has imagined that he is handsome. That night in the general hospital, a physician is called upon to take care of a crippled boy who had tried to end his life by jumping in the river, but had been rescued. Jimmie’s back is straightened by the same physician who restored Nina’s sight. Jimmie, whose plaster images called “Beautykins” have brought him fame and fortune, returns to Nina who can now see and the two live happily ever after.
The man had seen the newsboy sharing his slender funds with a beggar and that gave him the idea. His grown sister falls in love with the man. One day the boy comes home excitedly displaying a paper with the man’s photograph and a woman announcing their engagement. He accuses the man of deceiving his sister. The man leaves, but is overtaken by the newsboy’s sister and they discover the fiancée has eloped with a count and the man is free to be with the woman he now loves.

There is some discrepancy in the name. The Internet Movie Database refers to her as “Mazie” as does the American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films and Variety. Some reviews refer to her as “Maizie” and others as “Maisie.”
Sometimes a newsboy figures in the dream of someone who wants to help him. In The Dream Fairy (1913), a rich crippled girl dreams that her fairy godmother offers her three wishes — her first is to be transported to her friend Tim, a lame newsboy’s wretched home. She then wishes that he be cured of his lameness and watches as the little newsboy throws away his crutches. Instead of using her third wish to get rid of her deformity, she wishes that Tim’s poverty be alleviated by giving his parents lots of money. The little girl wakes and tells her parents of her dream. The end of the films proves that there must be fairies for every one of her dreams comes true and the little girl is cured as well.

Circus tickets also play a big role in When the Circus Came to Town (1913), in which a newsboy and his sister are crazy to go to the circus. Jimmy finds two tickets but returns them to the lady who dropped them. “She is so moved by this frank honesty that she not only makes the little folks her guests, but they have a sufficient filling of popcorn and peanuts, and the privilege of the side-show to boot.” (Review in The Moving Picture World, May 27, 1913, p. 940).

Examples include Jerry’s Mother-in-Law (1913); Three Suitors and a Dog (1913); Coals of Fire (1914); Man for A ’That (1914); Waifs (1914); Mrs. Van Alden’s Jewels (1915). In Pretty Policeman (1915), a woman trips over a little newsboy in her flight from two thieves. She hauls the boy into court and is severely criticized for her pains. In The Billionaire (1916), a newsboy inherits a theater. In the Election Bet (1916), a newsboy picks up a walnut that a man is rolling along the ground because of a lost election bet. He starts to eat it and the man, to complete the bet, has to buy it back from him. In Final Payment (1916), a woman sends a newsboy with a stolen purse back to its rightful owner. In Killed by Whom? (1916), a man explains the blood on his coat sleeve by saying that he helped a newsboy who had fallen and injured himself. In The Little Orphan (1916), a “Little Nobody” girl is treated miserably until she finds a home with her newsboy chum, who takes her into partnership in his newspaper business.

Other examples include newsboys calling on a governor to ask that one of their own be selected judge of the juvenile court (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 34, 1915); a Newsboys Club hires a special boxing instructor (Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 36, 1915); old newsboys selling paper in Chicago for charity (Pathe News No. 16); A newspaper vendor operates a fixed newsstand.

Silent films featuring pack journalists from 1890 to 1919 include the following: At the Eleventh Hour (1910); Atlantis (1914); Badgered (1916); Billy’s Scoop (1915); Booming Trixie (1915); Bridal Couple Dodging the Cameras (aka The Bride Loses Her Duke) (1908); A Broadway Scandal (1918); The Burglars’ Picnic (1916); Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines (1916); The Centenarian (1910); Chimmie Fadden Out West (1915); The Conspiracy (1914); The Country Mouse (1914); Daughter of Kings (1915); Dodging a Million (1918); Does It Pay to Advertise? (aka Does Advertising Pay?) (1915); Dot on the Day Line Boat (1915); False News (1913); Fantomas: Episode One: The Phantom Crook (1916); The Female Politician, Mrs. Bell, Is Nominated for Mayor (1908); Fifty-Fifty (1916); The Fight of Reporters – The Dreyfus Affair (1899); From Dusk to Dawn (aka Labor vs. Capital, 1913); The Gilded Kidd (1914); The Girl and the Explorer (1914); The Great Adventure (1918); The Haunted Bedroom (1919); Hearst International News Pictorial No. 48 (1916); Hearst-Pathe News No. 31 (1917); Hearst-Selig News Pictorial No. 34 (1915); Hearts of the World (1918); Jack Spurlock, Prodigal (1918); The Jester...
(1916); Lovely Mary (1916); The Man Who Called After Dark (1916); The Melburn Confession (1913); Muchly Engaged (1913); N.Y. Journal Despatch Yacht “Buccaneer” (1898); Not in the News (1916); Orator, Knight and Cow Charmer (1912); Paste and Politics (1916); Pathe News No. 77 (1915); Perils of Our Girl Reporters (1916-1917); The Power of the Press (1916); Pres. Roosevelt’s Fourth of July Oration (1903); President Taft at Panama (Gaument’s Weekly No. 47); The Prince of India (1914); Public Opinion (1916); Railway Tragedy (1908); Red and White Roses, Part II (1913); Satan Junior (1919); Saved by a Skirt (1915); Selig-Tribune No. 7 (1916); Selig-Tribune No. 11 (1916); Selig-Tribune No. 68 (1916); Transgression (1917); The Turn of the Wheel (1918); The War Correspondent (1913) (Second Film with same title); The War Correspondents (1913); Uncle Bill (1914); Uncle’s Last Letter (1915); Who Owns the Baby! (1911); A Woman’s Way (1916).

568 Review, The Moving Picture World, July 24, 1915, p. 705. The newspaper story is read by an employee of a rival company who tries to bribe the man’s girlfriend in an effort to get the formula. She is furious and chases him away. That night they come upon the employee and his gang trying to force the safe. They are taken prisoners and police come just in time to capture the criminals and free the lovers.


571 Motion Picture News, March 10, 1918, p. 1632.

572 Examples include Pres. Roosevelt’s Fourth of July Oration, 1903; Railroad Tragedy, 1908; At the Eleventh Hour, 1910; The Centenarian, 1910; Who Owns the Baby? (1911); Muchly Engaged (1913); President Taft at Panama – Gaument’s Weekly No. 47 (1913); The Country Mouse (1914); Satan Junior (1919);

573 Review, The Moving Picture World, June 20, 1914, p. 1744

574 Viewing notes.

575 Silent films featuring newspaper or magazine Unidentified News Staff playing a strategic part in the plot from 1890 to 1919 include the following: The $5,000,000 Counterfeiting Plot (1914); The Accident (1911); The Adventure of the Hasty Elopement (1914); The Adventure of the Stolen Papers (1914); The Adventure of the Yellow Curl Papers (aka The Mystery of the Yellow Curl Papers) (1915); The Aftermath (1914); An Adamless Eden (1912); Afraid of Microbes (1908); After the Matinee (1918); Almost a Man (1912); The Altar of Ambition (1915); An Amateur Orphan (1917); The Amazing Wife (1919); The Amber Vase (1915); Ambition (1915); Among Those Killed (1915); Andy Plays Cupid (1914); Animated Weekly No. 179 (1915); The Apple Tree Girl (1917); As the Candle Burned (1916); As Fate Willed (1914); Arthur Truman’s Ward (1914); As Fate Willed (1914); The Atonement (1916); Bab’s Matinee Idol (1917); The Bad Boy and Poor Old Grandpa (1897); The Beachwood Ghost (1910); The Beauty Doctor (1917); Behind the Footlights (1914); The Better Woman (1915); Betty Be Good (1917); Betty in the Lions’ Dean (1913); Big Bob Waits (1913); Billy Van Deusen’s Wedding Eve (1916); Billy’s War Brides (1916); A Bit of Jade (1918); The Black Box (1915); The Black Countess (1913); Black Eyes (1915); The Black Hand (1913); The Black Prince (1912); The Black Spot (1915); Black Thirteen (1914); The Blood Taint (1915); Bobby, the Coward (1911); The Bond of Fear (1917); Bradford Daily Argus Newspaper Offices (1897); Branding Broadway (1918); The Bridge of Shadows (1913); The Bridge of Sighs (1915); Breach of Promise (1909); Breakers Ahead (1918); Breaking the Shackles (1915); The Bridge of Shadows (1913); Broadway, Arizona (1917); Broadway Bill (1918); The Broken Bottle (1916); The Broken Heart (1913); Brown’s New Monetary Standard (1913); A Bucktown Romance (1912); Bud’s Recruit (1918); A Bum Steer (1916); The Burning Question (1919); A Burnt Cork (1912); Business Buccaneer (1915); By Parcel Post (1914); By Stork Delivery (1916); The Cabaret Singer (1915); Cards (1913); Catching the “Big Sneeze” (1913); Cats, Cash and a Cookbook (1915); Caught in the Act (1917); The Cave on Thunder Cloud (1915); The Chadford Diamonds (1915); The Changing of Silas Warner (1911); Charity Rewarded (1909); Cheating His Wife (1917); Chiefly Concerning Males (1915); The City (1911); The Claws of Greed (1914); The Clean-Up (1917); College Chums (1911); Comrades (1911); The Condemning Circumstances (1915); Coney Island (1916); The Conscience of John David (1916); A Corner in Crooks (1913); The Counterfeit (1914); The Country Girl (1915); The Converted Deacon (1910); The Crime of Thought (1915); Cupid Trims His Lordship (1916); Current News Items (1909); Darkfeather’s Sacrifice (1913); A Daughter of
Daring: The Railroad Smuggler (1917); A Daughter of Earth (1915); The Day of Days (1914); Daybreak (1918); Decoy (1915); The Delicious Little Devil (1919); The Destroyers (1916); Detective Kelly (1914); The Detective’s Dream (1910); The Devil, the Servant and the Man (1916); The Discard (1916); Doc Yak’s Moving Picture Artist (1914); Don’t Change Your Husband (1919); Does It End Right? (1915); Doorsteps (1916); The Double (1910); The Double Crossing of Slim (1915); The Dragnet (1916); A Dream of Wealth (1909); Dreamy Dud in the African War Zone (1916); The Drift (1914); Driftwood (1912); Dust (1916); The Earl’s Adventure (1915); East Lynne (1912); Ebb Tide (1915); The End of the Rainbow (1916); Ernest Maltravers (1914); The Evil Eye (1913); An Eye for an Eye (1915); Face in the Mirror (1916); Face to Face (1914); Face Value (1918); The Faith of a Girl (1913); Fate’s Aliibi (1915); Fate’s Protecting Arm (1915); Fathers Three (1915); Fatty’s New Role (1915); The Female Politician, Mrs. Bell, Is Nominated for Mayor (1908); The Fibbers (1917); Fifty-Fifty (1916); Finger Prints (1914); The Fisherman of Ballydavid (1911); The Flower of Faith (1914); Foolish Fat Flora (1915); Foolish Fat Flora (1916); For Her Father’s Sins (1914); For the Love of a Girl (1912); For the Love of a Man (1913); The Forbidden Room (1919); Forcing Dad’s Consent (1919); The Ford Weeklies (1919); The Foreign Invasion (1912); Forgetting (1914); A Fortune Hunter (1913); The Foundling (1912); Four Months (1916); Freckles (1912); A Friend in Need (1914); From the Submerged (1912); A Fugitive From Justice (1914); A Funeral That Flashed in the Pan (1912); The Game of Life (1914); Gaumont Graphic No. 63 (1919); Germs and Microbes (1916); Getting a Hunch (1914); The Ghost (1911); The Girl and the Judge (1918); The Girl Back East (1913); The Girl From Chicago (1916); The Girl in His House (1918); The Girl in the Frame (1917); The Girl in the Gingham Gown (1912); The Girl of the People (1914); The Girl Who Had a Soul (1915); Gloria’s Romance: No 8: The Mesh of Mystery (1916); Gloria’s Romance: No 9: The Shadow of Scandal (1916); The Gold Brick (1913); Golden Lotus (1917); Good News for Jones (1911); The Governor’s Double (1913); Grease Paint Indians (1913); The Great Bullion Robbery (1914); A Great Metropolitan Newspaper (1913); The Great Mistake (1914); The Great Unwashed (1913); The Greater Love (1914); Green Stockings (1916); The Hand at the Window (1918); The Hand of Providence (1913); Hard Cash (1910); Hattie, the Hair Heiress (1915); He Wouldn’t Support His Wife (1915); Hear No Evil (1914); Heart of Gold (1919); The Heart of a Vagabond (1915); The Heart Punch (1915); Hearts Entangled (1913); Held by the Enemy (1917); Hell Morgan’s Girl (1917); Help! Help! (1912); The Helping Hand (1913); Her Convict Brother (1912); Her First Husband’s Return (1910); Her Hour (1917); Her Inspiration (1911); Her Inspiration (1913); Her Official Fathers (1917); Her Only Son (1913); Her Prey (1915); Her Proper Place (1915); Her Sister (1918); Her Wedding Day (1916); Here Comes the Bride (1919); Hick Manhattan (1918); The Hidden Law (1916); The High Hand (1915); His Doctor’s Orders (1914); His Exoneration (1911); His Great Chance (1918); His Highness, the Janitor (1916); His Last Trick (1915); His Picture in the Papers (1916); His Return (1915); His Romany Wife (1915); His Sister (1917); The Home Cure (1915); The Honor of a Pugilist (1912); The Honor of the Family (1912); Hoodoo Ann (1916); The Horror of Sin (aka L’orrore del peccato) (1912); The House of Correction (aka Bagne d’enfants) (1914); How He Lost His Trouser’s (1914); How Shorty Kept His Word (1912); How Should You Keep It (1912); The Human Vulture (1913); The Hungarian Nabob (1915); I’m Glad my Boy Grew Up to Be a Soldier (1915); The Idler (1914); If I Were You (1914); Inma Simp’s Dream (1915); The Imp Abroad (1914); In Friendship’s Name (1912); In Spite of the Evidence (1914); In the Stretch (1914); The Infernal Machine (1909); The Invisible Enemy (1916); Is Christmas a Bore? (1915); Is Marriage Sacred? (1916); It Might Have Been (1913); It’s a Bear (1913); It’s Cheaper to be Married (1917); Jack Fat and Jim Slim at Coney Island (1910); The Jarr Family No. 1: The Jarr Family Discovers Harlem (1915); The Jewel of Allah (1914); The Jilt (1909); Jimmie’s Job (1911); Jimmy Kelley and the Kidnappers (1914); John Petticoats (1919); The Joke on Jane (1914); The Joke on the Joker (1912); Judge Not; Or the Woman of Mona Diggings (1915); The Juggernaut (1915); Just for a Kid (1916); The Kid’s Nap (1914); The Kingdom of Hope (1917); Kings in Exile (1912); Lady Audley’s Jewels (1913); Lady of the Snows (1915); Leave It to Susan (1919); The Leopard’s Bride (1916); A Lesson From the Past (1913); The Life Mask (1918); Life’s Harmony (1916); Life in the Window (1910); The Lighthouse (1916); Lights and Shadows (1914); Little Angels of Luck (1910); Little Jack (1913); Little Lord Fauntleroy (1914); The Little Music Teacher (1912); The Little Puritan (1915); London by Night (1913); The Long Arm of the Law (1914); Long-Green Trial (1917); The Lost Diamond (1913); Lost, Strayed or Stolen (1914); Love Disguised (1914); The Lover’s Signal (1911); Lucky Jim (1909); Lupin, the Gentleman Burglar (aka La redenzione di Raffles) (1914); The Mad Dog Scare (1910); Madam Satan (1913); Making a Great Newspaper (1915); Making a News Picture (1917); The Making of a Newspaper (1914); The Making of Bobby Burnit (1914); The Making of Maddalena (1916); A Man (1912); A Man For A’ That (1916); The Man Hunter (1919); The Man in Black (1914); The Man Who Vanished (1915); The Man Within (1912); A Man’s Making (1915); The Marathon Crazie (1909); The Marked Time-Table (1910); A Martyr to His Cause (1911); The Marvelous Marathoner (1915) The Master Crook (1914); The Master Force (aka La febbre gialla) (1914); The Master Rogues of Europe (1915); The Matchmakers (1915); The Matchmakers (1916); The Mating
(1915); Max Joins the Giants (aka Max Gets Stuck Up) (1913); The Mayor’s Crusade (1912); Me and Bill (1912); The Mechanical Man (1915); The Midnight Alarm (1914); The Midnight Marauder (1911); The Midnight Trail (1918); Milady’s Boudoir (1915); A Militant Suffragette (1914); A Millinery Bomb (1913); Millionaire Billie (1916); Millions for Defense (1914); Miss Innocence (1918); A Mixed Color Scheme (1917); A Modern Enoch Arden (1915); The Moral Fabric (1916); A Mother’s Heart (1914); Mother’s Choice (1914); Motherhood and Politics? (1914); Mr. Dolan of New York (1917); Mrs. Plum’s Pudding (1915); A Much Wanted Baby (1913); The Mummy and the Cowpunchers (1912); Mutual Weekly No. 141 (1917); Mutual Weekly No. 148 (1917); My Own United States (1918); The Mysterious Lodger (1914); The Mysterious Mr. Browning (1919); Mysterious Mr. Davey (1914); The Mystery of the Glass Cage (1914); The Mystery of Number 47 (1917); The Natural Son (1912); A New Item (1913); New Screen Magazine (1919); The Newly Rich (1915); A Paramount Pictographs, the magazine-on-the-screen presented A Newspaper in the Making (1916); The Newspaper World From Within (1909); The Nurse and the Counterfeiter (1914); The Occult (1913); The Old Folks’ Sacrifice (1911); Olive’s Opportunities: Greatest Opportunity (1915); On the Bread Line (1915); On Christmas Eve (1914); On Her Wedding Day (1913); On Suspicion (1914); On the Minute (1914); One Man’s Evil (1915); One of the Rabble (1913); The Ordeal of Rosetta (1918); Otto the Hero (1916); Our Mutual Girl (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 3 (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 6 (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 20 (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 22 (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 29 (1914); Our Mutual Girl No. 33 (1914); Out of the Depths (1912); Out of the Sea (1915); The Outlaw (1913); The Pacifist (1916); The Panther Woman (1918); Paramount Pictograph 35th Edition: Converting Wood into Paper (1916); Pardoned (1915); The Passing Shadow (1912); Pastures Green (1916); Patented by Ham (1916); Pawns of Destiny (1914); Peace at Any Price (1916); The Peachbasket Hat (1909); The Pearl of the Golden West (1913); Perils of the Atlantic (1912); The Perplexed Bridegroom (1914); Peter, the Hermit (1916); The Phantom Cracksmen (1914); Phantom Island (1916); Plain Jane (1916); Playing at Divorce (1910); Plot and Counterplot (1915); The Police Inspector (1913); Polly of the Pots and Pans (1915); Polly Put the Kettle On (1917); A Poor Relation (1915); Poor Schmaltz (1915); The Port of Doom (1913); The Power of Prayer (1915); A Price for Folly (1915); Princess Virtue (1917); The Print of the Nails (1915); Private Peat (1918); The Professor’s Peculiar Precautions (1916); The Professor’s Trip to the Country or, a Case of Mistaken Identity (1908); The Profiteers (1919); Providence and Mrs. Urmy (1915); The Quickening Flame (1919); The Race for the Millions (1913); The Ransom of Red Chief (1911); Redemption (1917); Reel Life: The Queerest Newspaper (1917); The Reform Candidate (1915); Reformed by Strategy (1912); The Regenerating Love (1915); A Regiment of Two (1913); The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary (1916); The Return of John Boston (1916); A Rich Man’s Darling (1918); The Right to Happiness (1915); The Rightful Heir (1914); The River Goddess (1916); The Road o’ Strife, Episode No. 13 (1915); Robbing the Fishes (1916); Romeo of the Coal Wagon (1916); The Rotogravure Section (1917); A Royal Survivor (1914); Ruggles of Red Gap (1918); The Running Fight (1915); The Sage, the Cherub and the Widow (1910); The Saint’s Adventure (1917); Sally in a Hurry (1917); The Salvation Army Lass (1909); Sammyn’s Semi-Suicide (1916); Sapville’s Stalwart Son (1916); Saving the Family Name (1916); Scandal (1917); The Scarlet Mark (1916); The Scarlet Trail (1918); The Scenario Writer (1913); Scotland’s Greatest Newspaper (1908); Sea Nymphs (1916); The Secret of Eve (1917); The Secret Kingdom: Chapter 13: The Tragic Masque (1917); The Service Star (1918); The Seven Pearls: Chapter Three: The Air Peril (1917); The Shadow of Fear (1915); The Sheriff of Plumas (1916); The Sheriff’s Honeymoon (1913); The Shielding Shadow: The Earthquake (1916); The Silent Peril (1914); The Sign of the Spade (1916); The Skylight Room (1917); The Slim Princess (1915); A Snake in His Bosom (1913); A Social Outcast (1916); The Soldier’s Return (1911); Soldiers of Fortune (1919); Some Nurse (1917); The Song That Reached Her Heart (1909); Soul Mates (1916); The Spell (1913); A Sporting Chance (1919; second film with same title); Spotlight Saddle (1919); The Stain (1914); The Stolen Ruby (1915); The Strange Story of Elsie Mason (1912); A Stranger in New York (1916); A Substitute Widow (1915); The Suburban (1915); Such a War (1913); Sunnyside (1919); The Supreme Impulse (1913); The Sure Tip (1913); Susanna’s New Suit (1914); Sylvia of the Secret Service (1917); Swede Larson (1914); Sweet Revenge (1909); Sylvia on a Spree (1918); The Symphony of Souls (1914); Tangled Paths (1915); Tell It to the Marines (1918); Their Cheap Vacation (1914); The Third Kiss (1919); Thou Shalt Not Kill (1915); Three Thanksgivings (1909); Through Fire to Fortune (1914); Through the Clouds (1910); Tillie’s Punctured Romance (1914); Tobacco Mania (1909); The Toll of Love (1914); The Toll of War (1913); Tom Blake’s Redemption (1913); Topics of the Day (1919); The Toy-Maker of Leyden (1915); Traffic in Souls (1913); The Tragedy of Room 17 (1914); The Tragedy of the Orient (1914); Tragic Love (1909); The Tribunal of Conscience (1914); A Trooper of Company K (1917); Troublemakers (aka Trouble Maker, 1917); The Two Fugitives (1911); Two and Two (1915); Two Memories (1909); Two Seats at the Opera (1916); Two Smiths and a Haff (1916); Two Women and One Hat (1915); A Typographical Error (1914); The Unafraid (1915); Under False Colors (1912); The Union Eternal (1913); United in Danger (1914); Universal Boy Solves the Chinese Mystery No. 4 (1914); Universal
Examples include A Bit of Jade (1918), in which a woman reads an article on a robbery and realizes the necklace she is wearing is stolen. In Olive’s Opportunities: Oliver’s Greatest Opportunity (1915) an article on the discovery of the body of a gypsy floating in the lake has ramifications for the major characters of the film. In Soul Mates (1916), a woman’s first knowledge of her husband’s ruin is through the newspapers and she also learned that their best friend and her child’s Godfather was the cause of it. In The Outlaw (1913), a newspaper reveals that there is a reward for a wanted man. In Big Bob Waits (1913) a news article results in the capture of a criminal. In The Black Box: Fifteenth Episode (1914), a newspaper prints a story about two crooks and this has an impact on the hero’s future. In The Black Box: Sixteenth Episode (1915), an article on a professor’s illness reveals he is really a master criminal with supernatural abilities. In Breaking the Shackles (1915), the newspaper reveals that a devoted wife has confessed to police how she stole an idol to make her husband give up cocaine. In The Ordeal of Rosetta (1918), a magazine poster shows the face of a missing daughter and a newspaper article reveals that a woman’s lover is engaged to another woman, a society girl. In The Game of Life (1914), newspapers tell a ship captain’s story of the destruction of an island by a volcano while newspaper clippings explain the true motives of some criminals. In The Jarr Family No. 1: The Jarr Family Discovers Harlem (1915), newspapers cover the Jarr’s house-warming party when police break in because of a disturbance. In The Destroyers (1916), a report of an assault shame the man wrongly accused. In Green Stockings (1916), the report of the death of a colonel causes repercussions. In Madam Satan (1913), a society column report reveals that a princess may be a very dangerous woman. In The Black Hand (1913), a newspaper article about the Black Hand escapades has unexpected consequences. In Fate’s Protecting Arm (1915), an article convinces a woman to give up a life of crime. In Catching the ‘Big Sneeze’ (1913), a newspaper report on purse snatchers, give two boys an idea on how to catch the man who stole their mother’s purse. In The Spell (1913), a newspaper story gives a doctor a clue as to the whereabouts of a woman under the influence of a traveling hypnotist. In Romeo of the Coal Wagon (1916), an article in the newspaper causes a woman to boastfully declare that burglars are not intelligent or they would not be caught and to prove her point she says she can rob a house and not get caught. In Lady Audley’s Jewels (1913), a Front Page story reports a five hundred thousand dollar jewel robbery that causes all kinds of confusion. In A Blacksmith’s Daughter (1909), a man reads about a villain’s arrest prompting him to go to New York to save the life of the woman he loves. In The Old Folks’ Sacrifice (1911),
a peddler and his wife read that their grandson has been arrested and rush to his aide. In The Wallace Jewels (1909), a woman reads about stolen jewels and a robber may be nearby and reacts accordingly. In It Might Have Been (1913), the newspaper report of a servant accusing of murdering an old man results in a startling conclusion. In A Militant Suffragette (1914), an article about a meeting prompts a woman to try to warn her lover about impending danger – an exploding bomb. In The Juggernaut (1915), two students read about a crook’s death and are frightened into cooperating with the man’s murderer. In As Fate Willed (1914), an engagement announcement results in a man robbing the fiance’s home. In The Phantom’s Secret (1917), a newspaper story about Paris’ greatest criminal, The Phantom, who is terrorizing the city with his bold robberies, fascinate and frighten two girls reading the story in the dormitory. In The Suburban (1915), an article reveals that a man’s father has staked his fortune on a race that the man knows is fixed so he decides to take action to help his father. In The Atonement (1916), newspapers reveal a search is underway for a missing heir who is thought to have murdered a man.

Examples include The Master Crook (1914), in which an article on pickpockets make a master crook smile because he knows he would never be classed among people of that low category. In The Rightful Heir (1914), an article reveals that a man in prison has inherited a title. In Her Hour (1917), an article reveals that a man has been sentenced to five years in state prison. In The Man in Black (1914), newspapers report robberies in the fashionable district by “the man in black.” A young woman shoplifts and a man follows her home – it’s the man in black and he wants her to become his partner. In Finger Prints (1914), an article on the purchase of a valuable scarab gives a crook an idea. In Just for a Kid (1916), the leading newspaper of the city is offering a prize for the most perfect baby so two crooks kidnap a baby and try for the $50,000 prize. In The Police Inspector (1913), an article reveals that a couple has purchased a quantity of precious stone and jewelry prompting a criminal to take action. In A Modern Enoch Arden (1915), an article informs a fugitive where a woman he wants to torment is living. In The Amber Vase (1915), two crooks read a story on an exceedingly valuable vase and force their sister to attempt to steal it. In The Great Bullion Robbery (1914), the newspaper article on the largest consignment of bullion ever made to a local bank gives a notorious criminal valuable information. In The Chadford Diamonds (1915), a society crook reads about the purchase of the famous Chadford diamond necklace and it gives him and his wife an idea. In Decoy (1915), a crook reads about a man who inherited a fortune and decides to take action. In The Double Crossing of Slim (1915), two crooks read about a man’s purchase of a valuable diamond and decide to rob him. In Her Prey (1915), an article about a rare black pearl gives a man and woman the idea to steal the pearl. In The Scarlet Mark (1916), two crooks read an article about a rich woman retiring from society because of her father’s death. They see the woman’s picture and realize she looks a lot like one of their female confederates prompting them to hatch a plot. In Sylvia of the Secret Service (1917), a newspaper story about a Western millionaire who wants to buy diamonds interests a member of a gang of thieves. In Two Seats at the Opera (1916), a reader sees an article about a diamond robbery in which the burglars got away with $100,000 and decides to become a burglar. In The Ransom of Red Chief (1911), a newspaper article gives two crooks an idea on how to make some easy money. In The Long Arm of the Law (1914), a report on famous jewels give crooks an idea of how to steal some precious stones. In The Broken Bottle (1914), a newspaper reports that the cashier of the bank has absconded and depositors reading the story rush to get their money providing two crooks with an opportunity to make a killing. In Cats, Cash and a Cookbook (1915), newsmen get hold of a rumor and announce that a woman will visit the city bringing with her a box of rare jewels. A crook reads the article and decides to take action. In The Ghost (1911), two different crooks read an account of ghosts in a house and each unknown to the other impersonate the ghosts long enough to rob the house. In A Mixed Color Scheme (1917) featuring white actors in blackface, a kidnapper tries to return the baby for a reward but racist complications ruin his scheme.

Examples include The Perplexed Bridegroom (1914), in which an article reveals a man’s father has sent a detective to bring back his son who he believes is eloping causing all kinds of repercussions. In Robbing the Fishes (1916), a story about a butler robbing a house of wedding presents prompts a father to hire a detective to guard the gifts that have arrived for his daughter. Sometimes it also forces the hero to take action as in Universal Boy Solves the Chinese Mystery No. 4 (1914), in which a newspaper account of the strange disappearance of a young woman Chinese missionary helps Universal Boy solve a mystery. The Adventure of the Stolen Slipper (aka The Adventure of the Stolen Papers, 1914) prompts an amateur detective to look into an unusual thief who steals the slippers from the feet of women ascending the stairs to the elevated trains and in The Adventure of the Hasty Elopement (1914), an amateur detective gets a tip from a newspaper article to look into auto thieves. In The Black Thirteen (1914), an article on a gang of counterfeiters sends a detective off on a chase to catch them. In Jimmy Kelley and the Kidnappers (1914), a detective ready to blow his brains out sees a newspaper story about a great reward offered for
rounding up a band of kidnappers and decides to go into the kidnapping business instead. In *Out of the Sea* (1915), a man recognizes a stranger in the newspaper as a detective looking for the man who just saved his life. In *The Phantom Cracksman* (1914), an article reports on a robbery by a notorious criminal giving new impetus to a policeman’s promise he will capture the crook. In *Trailing the Counterfeiter* (1911), two sleuths read about a mystery in the newspapers and set out to solve it.

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**Examples include** *Among Those Killed* (1915), in which a man eats poisoned meat because he can’t face an ex-convict who has threatened to kill him. As he lies dying, he sees the newspaper in which the meat was wrapped. Under the big headlines is an account of a train wreck, part of which reads: Among those killed was…the ex-convict who threatened his life. In *The Cave on Thunder Cloud* (1915), an article alerts a man that three women have been jailed and he goes to their rescue. In *A Sporting Chance* (1919), a woman recognizes a man from the newspaper description as “Harry the Duke, an escaped convict, but he is polite and helps her change a tire so she offers him a “sporting chance” by giving him a job as a chauffeur to help him escape from the prison guards. In *The Drift* (1914), a report of a bank theft prompts a woman to name the wrong man responsible. In *The Lost Diamond* (1913), a man’s furious fight with a leopard offers an opportunity for the man, who was accused of stealing, to return home and right a cruel injustice. In *Pastures Green* (1916), newspapers report on a police hunt for a missing man, then on the death of a dancer and the fact that the search for the man has been called off, thus freeing a reformed man to marry the woman of his choice.

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**Examples include** *The Passing Shadow* (1912), in which an article reveals that a man’s wealthy father has died and the lawyers are trying to locate him as the sole heir of the man’s fortune. He works his way back to the city and claims his fortune. In *A Fortune Hunter* (1915), a man reads in the newspaper that his uncle has died and that lawyers are trying to reach him because he is the sole heir of the uncle’s fortune. In *His Return* (1915), a report on a man’s death reveals that he left a fortune to his ward if his son fails to show up. The son reads the article and returns home, surprised by what he sees, and does the right thing.

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**Examples include** *The Jewel of Allah* (1914), in which an article about a magnificent jewel inspires a jeweler who has temporary possession of the jewel to steal it so he can own it permanently. In *Won by One* (1916), newspapers report on a big jewelry robbery in New York and this gives a woman an idea. In *Mrs. Plum’s Pudding* (1915), a Lord who is in financial trouble reads the story of a newly rich widow and decides to look her up. In *The Newly Rich* (1915), a newspaper story reveals that a lord is not really rich. In *Poor Schmalz* (1915), Schmalz, a poor wig maker and barber read a story about a wealthy German brewer who wants his daughter to marry a titled man and come up with an idea to impersonate a count so he can woo the man’s daughter and “enjoy the honors, privileges and possibilities of a wealthy alliance that falls to the bearer of the title.” In *Patented by Ham* (1916), an inventor goes into action after reading that a millionaire auto manufacturer is offering a $10,000 reward to the inventor of a substitute for gasoline. In *The Mummy and the Cowpuncher* (1912), an article on a mummy discovered by a scientist in Egypt inspires an actor to create a get-rich scheme. In *Corner in Crooks* (1913), a report that a reward is being offered for the arrest of two tramps, gives one of them an idea for making some easy money. In *Hell by the Enemy* (1917), a man reads that $100,000 is offered for the capture of Pancho Villa, dead or alive, so he starts out for the border to get the reward. In *The City, 1911*), after reading a newspaper interview with the manager of a big corporation, a young man goes to the city to find his fortune and realizes the article was a great exaggeration and his quest for wealth was fruitless. In *The Beauty Doctor* (1917), a newspaper article reports that watermelon seeds are a great fattener, so a man opens a beauty parlor for thin women and buys a larger supply of melons. It doesn’t work out as he planned. In *The Matchmakers* (1916), a report that a man has made fortune prompts others to take similar actions. In *The Wooing of Aunt Jemima* (1916), a lot of people read a newspaper article about Aunt Jemima inheriting a fortune and decide to woo the now-rich aunt. In *A Bucktown Romance* (1912), a man decides to woo awidow who has inherited a fortune.

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**Examples include** *The Union Eternal* (1913), in which a newspaper article brings together a naval officer and his lost love, an opera singer. In *The Beechwood Ghost* (1910), a newspaper article on a ghost helps a young man get a kiss and win a bet. In *Peter, the Hermit* (1916), a girl reads an article on a missing scientist’s book on ants that has created a sensation and realizes the author is the man for her. In *Millions for Defence* (1914), the newspaper affirms that a millionaire is a confirmed bachelor. In *Polly of the Pots and Pans* (1915), an article about a man’s engagement to an author reminds Polly of days gone by. In *The End of the Rainbow* (1916), an article reports on a woman who has deserted her children and husband. In *Sally in a Hurry* (1917), Sally cherishes a newspaper picture of an English
Lord and thinks his brother is the lord in the picture when he sees him in the diner where she works. In Playing at Divorce (1910), the children read about a parents’ divorce before the father and mother can tell them about it. In The Little Music Teacher (1912), an article exposes a music student as a professional musician who is only taking lessons from a piano teacher because he wants to be with her. In Judge Not; Or the Woman of Mona Diggings (1915), an article reveals the whereabouts of a woman a man has been looking for. In The Supreme Impulse (1915), a woman reads an article about the number of divorces questioning whether matrimony is a failure and wonders about her own relationship. In Sea Nymphs (1916), a man sees a picture in the newspaper of several girls in uncensored one-piece bathing suits, reads the caption that tells him where the beach is, and suggests to his wife that they go there for a trip. In Forcing Dad’s Consent (1914), an article on the liveliest cabaret in town ends up causing trouble for a married man. In When Paris Loves (1913), a story tells of a former lover’s success. In The Earl’s Adventure (1915), an article about an expensive necklace gives a girl an idea when a rich man asks her what she would want to get to know him better. In Ebb Tide (1915), the announcement of an engagement has repercussions on another woman’s life. In Troublemakers (1917), a local newspaper reports about a young widow’s return and the article is read with interest by an attorney who wants to romance her. In The Fibbers (1917), newspapers reveal to a husband that his wife has secretly authored a play that is a tremendous success. In The Blood Taint (1915), newspapers announce the engagement of a sick old man to a beautiful young woman horrifying the specialist taking care of the man. In A Daughter of Earth (1915), a family reads that the woman who left them for fame and fortune is going to sing and they decide to go to see her perform. In A Man’s Making (1915), when a story connects a millionaire’s son with a chorus girl, it results in the young man ending up penniless and on his own.

In It’s a Bear (1913), an article on a bear escaping from a zoo gives a man an idea on how to win the woman he loves who only wants to marry a hero. In The Girl in His House (1918), a newspaper article reveals that a man’s rival has died and that his former fiancee is a wealthy widow.

Examples include The Unwilling Bigamist (1912), in which a woman realizes that the picture in the newspaper of a victim of an accident who has memory problems is really her husband. In One of the Rabble (1913), an article reveals that a woman a man is in love with is the missing daughter of New York’s wealthiest man. In An Amateur Orphan (1917), newspapers reveal that a girl’s parents have returned and are looking for her. She comes up with a scheme to get her boyfriend the reward for her safe return.

Examples include Tillie’s Punctured Romance (1914), in which newspapers report on the hunt for a missing heiress. A man reads the article, figures out where the missing heiress is and marries her before she finds out she is a rich woman. In Some Nurse (1917), a newspaper article reports how a young heiress has just married a man after she injured him with an automobile, and the story gives a young man an idea. In The Unafraid (1915), a picture in the newspaper of a rich New York heiress gives an irresponsible young man an idea to marry her for her money.

Examples include Under False Colors, in which a fiancee discovers that the man she is going to marry is an imposter. In The Pearl of the Golden West (1913), an article reveals that a bicycle bandit has deserted his wife and fourteen children, but the woman in love with him doesn’t believe the story.

Examples include Soldiers of Fortune (1919), in which a civil engineer falls in love with a New York society girl after he reads about her in the newspapers. In Venus in the East (1919), a man is enchanted by newspaper photos of a New York society beauty and decides to marry her.

Other examples include The Greater Love (1914), in which a man discovers the woman he loves no longer loves him so he sends a notice of his death to his hometown newspapers. Later he reads that his former lover has been married to the man she now loves. In A Gypsy’s Love (1912), a newspaper story reveals the identity of a missing child born to a man who rejected a gypsy girl who loved him. The gypsy, vowing vengeance, keeps the girl and places her in a seminary. Eleven years later, the remorseful gypsy is persuaded to return the child to her parents. In For Love of a Man (1913), a woman who went to prison to protect the man she loves, reads in the newspaper that the man is getting married, making her lose faith in everything and turning her into a hard and callous individual. In A Girl of the People (1914), newspapers print pictures of a popular dancer resulting in an old enemy finding her. In The Woman Who Paid (1915), an article on a woman who split up a marriage almost destroys that woman’s new relationship. In The Woman Who Lied (1915), a woman reading about a man accused of murder is convinced that her fiance must have had an association with an actress. In The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary (1916), an article reveals that a man is being sued for breach of promise causing repercussions. In The Road o’Strife No. 13 (1915), a
seriously wounded man reads about a woman who has been pardoned and is to be released and it gives him some idea of what has happened since he was hurt. In The Jilt (1909), a man reads about a woman who betrayed him who is now going to marry his college chum and he rushes to his friend’s home to save him from the woman. In The Marvelous Marathoner (1915), a newspaper publishes a picture of a young businessman. A woman, who thinks the man has done her wrong, looks him up and demands satisfaction. In The Condemning Circumstances (1915), a woman is furious and vows revenge when she reads about an engagement of a man with whom she had a love affair. In Does It End Right? (1915), when a man reads in the newspaper about a dishonest woman’s marriage, he decides to take action. In Doorsteps (1916), a man just out of prison reads a newspaper report of a woman’s acting performance and plans revenge against her because she caused his imprisonment. In Sweet Revenge (1909), a young man jilts a sweetheart by leaving a newspaper article for her about his approaching marriage to another. In The Girl in the Gingham Gown (1912), a man and a woman have a love affair so a jealous rival shows the woman a newspaper announcement of her rumored engagement to the man, destroying their romance. In The Joke on Jane (1914), a newspaper story about a man who recovered his memory after being hit on the head inspires a wife to hire a gangster to assault her husband. In Cupid Trims His Lordship (1916), a man reads an announcement of a woman’s engagement to a Lordship and becomes infuriated because he loves her. In The Devil, the Servant and the Man (1916), an article about a surgeon going to the mountains to recover from overwork and drugs inspires a woman who wants revenge to follow him. In Gloria’s Romance: No. 8: The Mesh of Mystery (1916), the newspaper reports the discovery of a dead body in the bay and the heroine vengeances, and in Gloria’s Romance: No. 9: The Shadow of Scandal (1916), the newspapers verify that the heroine’s lover is dead. In The Leopard’s Bride (1916), a man reads about the engagement of the woman he loves and decides to take action. In Her Wedding Day (1916), a woman in a sanatorium reads an article on a woman’s engagement that causes her a good deal of distress and she takes action by killing the man who wronged her. In Two and Two (1915), an article gives two lazy husbands an idea of taking poison so their suffragette wives will feel sorry for abusing them. In Darkfeather’s Sacrifice (1913), a woman is filled with anger and jealousy when she reads about a lover’s marriage and decides to do something about it, but when she sees the couple, love conquers her jealousy and she leaves quietly.

Examples include In The Unwritten Law (1916), one of the characters overhears a reporter on the phone and misunderstands the message causing him to take drastic, unnecessary actions. In the same film, an alcoholic reads a newspaper article giving him a ray of hope because a prominent physician states that the drink habit may sometimes be cured by a sudden shock. In The Master Rogues of Europe (1915), two men read of a woman’s arrest and of a life sentence in Siberia and are determined to rescue her. In Pardoned (1915), a picture in a newspaper looks exactly like the man reading the newspaper and it gives him an idea that might just solve his problem. In Jack Fat and Jim Slim at Coney Island (1910), a story about Coney Island causes two husbands to secretly go there without letting their wives know anything about it. In A Funeral That Flashed in the Pan (1912), a newspaper article gives some college pranksters an idea for mischief. In Their Cheap Vacation (1914), an article describing an ideal automobile trip that costs only $12 prompts newlyweds to give it a try—with disastrous results. In Fathers Three (1915), an article convinces three bachelors to adopt a poor woman’s daughter. In The Toy-Maker of Leyden (1915), a man reads about a doctor who has cured consumption so he sets out to find the doctor for his sick grand-daughter. In The Home Cure (1915), an article on alcoholism gives a woman an idea on how to get her husband off booze. In The Mechanical Man (1915), a story on a mechanical life-sized doll causes a spoiled child to demand one of her own. In College Chums (1911), a man reads about an old-time chum who has hit hard times and vows to help him. The Natural Son (1912) involves a newspaper story that reveals to a prosperous man that his old homestead is in trouble and he decides to do something about it. In The Race for Millions (1913), the newspaper reports a girl has been found clinging to the bottom of an overturned boat and doesn’t know who she is. But those reading the article know exactly who she is and the chase is on to save the kidnapped victim. In A Price for Folly (1915), a father reads about his young son’s ruin and decides to take action. In By Stork Delivery (1916), newspaper reports about a mysterious kidnapper prompts a woman to search for her missing child. In Otto the Hero (1916), Otto reads an article about a band of highwaymen chased by a famous football star and this gives him an idea about how to be a hero. In Plain Jane (1916), a New York newspaper offers a prize for the most beautiful photograph of a college girl prompting a town photographer to take action. In The Woman Beneath (1917), newspaper reports on a millionaire who committed suicide when he lost his fortune and was deserted by his wife give another millionaire an idea. In Branding Broadway (1918), a man reads about a New York millionaire’s ungovernably wild son who gets drunk and beats up his guardians and decides the job of taming such a kid is a job he’d like to get. In Motherhood and Politics? (1914), an article prompts a mother to give her child up for adoption. In The Symphony of Souls (1914), an article states that there is a reward for information about a blind girl and her mother causing a musician to take
action. In *Zingo and the White Elephant* (1914), an article reports that the Royal Elephant of Siam has been stolen and a large reward will be paid to anyone who returns him so Zingo goes off to find the elephant and claim the reward. *The Apple Tree Girl* (1917) features several newspaper articles and one is on a champion woman golfer that inspires another girl to take up golf so she also can be famous. In *When Husbands Go to War* (1915), two men read about the number of Americans enlisting in the European war and decide to pretend to enlist so they can go to a burlesque show without their wives knowing. In *Lady of the Snows* (1915), a newspaper article reveals that a Canadian girl has been left a fortune but must marry a certain man to claim the inheritance. *The Man Who Vanished* (1915), in which a newspaper story alerts a reader that the wrong man has been removed to a sanitarium pending examination to his sanity. In *The Making of Maddalena* (1916), an estranged mother reads that her child has been stricken with a disease during an epidemic. In *Two Women and One Hat* (1915), an article about two wives whose hats were ruined in a series of mix-ups give their husbands a chance to make things right. In *The Toll of War* (1913), an article on President Lincoln’s plans to attend a performance at Ford’s Theatre prompts a woman to attend the fateful performance. In *Sapville’s Stalwart Son* (1916), the newspaper announces a celebration in Sapville for its sons and daughters to revisit the town for a week. In *The Marathon Craze* (1909), a household is affected by newspaper accounts of Marathon races. In *The Scenario Writer* (1913), an article on a burglar turned doctor gives a scenario writer an idea for a photoplay. In *The Violin* (1913), an article on a famous violinist prompts a pawnbroker to sell an old man’s treasured violin to the rich musician. In *When His Ship Comes In* (1914), the announcement of a sea captain’s death causes a woman to take action. In *Little Angels of Luck* (1910), a newspaper story alerts a wife about a disaster. Several stories involve the sport of boxing: In *Mr. Dolan of New York* (1917), a newspaper article about a prize fighter being champion of all Europe angers another prize fighter that challenges him to another battle and the fight is on. In *The Yellow Streak* (1914), newspapers laud a man’s boxing record and upcoming challenge to the champion, but the boxer promised his girl he wouldn’t box again and is branded a coward by his manager and accused of being yellow. In *The Honor of a Pugilist* (1912), an article reveals to a girl and her mother that the man the girl loves is a boxer and this horrifies them and in *The Heart Punch* (1915), a news report of the death of a pugilist forces a wife to confront her husband about prize-fighting. In *The Way He Won the Widow* (1915), an article about a boy’s boxing prowess scares his mother to death. In *Face Value* (1918), a female urchin reads an article on prize fights and this gives her an idea to make money by staging a prize fight between the leaders of two gangs.

Examples include *How He Lost His Trousers* (1914), in which an extra edition warns about lunatics who wander away from the insane asylum. The story emphasizes that should a lunatic enter anyone’s home, notify the authorities by waving some white object out of the window. One reader takes this very seriously. In *The Crime of Thought* (1915), a man reads about a recent hanging and it causes him to have a very realistic nightmare. In *The Peachbasket Hat* (1909), a man reading a newspaper story of a kidnapping by gypsies fills a man with horror. In *Reformed by Strategy* (1912), a report on the escape of a ferocious lion scares one reader into doing foolish things. In *A Millinery Bomb* (1913), a story about bombs being sent to peoples homes in hat boxes frightens a man who over-reacts. In *Help! Help!* (1912), Mrs. Suburbanite reads in the morning paper that burglars have been operating in the neighborhood and is thrown into a fearful panic. In *The Midnight Alarm* (1914), newspaper stories report that a crime wave is sweeping over the city, which panics one woman and creates problems for her and her husband. In *A Substitute Widow* (1915), a young woman reads about the latest exploit of diamond thieves and thinks she must be in danger. In *Watch Your Watch* (1913), an article on “footpads” (a robber operating on foot rather than on horseback) scares a citizen into committing a crime. In *The Infernal Machine* (1909), a banker reads in the morning paper about a dangerous crank who is carrying an infernal machine and a “what-to-do-with-the-bomb” scenario takes place. In *The Aftermath* (1914), newspapers attribute recent cases of housebreaking to the work of the hungry and desperate unemployed. The story results in a woman firing her gun when she thinks she is in danger. In *The Kid’s Nap* (1914), a newspaper story about kidnapping in the neighborhood prompts a father to think that his missing son has been kidnapped. It turns out the kid has crawled under the porch to take a nap. In *The Occult* (1913), a story denounces Hindoo teachings that a man’s wife believes in causing repercussions.

Examples include *The Service Star* (1918), in which newspapers print stories about an aviator at the war front prompting a girl in a small town who has never had a sweetheart to boast that she is secretly married to him. In *The Mating* (1915), an article and photograph of an All-American football player gives a girl a desperate plan – since nobody at her college knows the football player, she will make the girls think he is in love with her. In *Arthur Truman’s Ward* (1914), an article about an unidentified dead girl gives another woman an idea – she will take the dead girl’s place. In *The Delicious Little Devil* (1919), an Irish girl loves music and dancing and reads in the Sunday magazine of a newspaper about a duke’s romance with a dancer who has disappeared so she decides to pose as that
dancing girl. In *The Amazing Wife* (1919), a newspaper story on the death of the only son of a millionaire killed with the American army in France gives a woman contemplating suicide an opportunity to end all of her troubles by posing as his widow. Complications ensue when it turns out the officer reported killed returns home after only being wounded. In *Her Prey* (1915), a woman saves a senator’s life and then disappears. She returns home and makes up a story that she is engaged to a senator who is now a candidate for governor. She is feted and lionized. The newspapers print the story and the senator denies the story flatly. The woman is cornered. A reception is given and the senator out of curiosity goes to the town to see who the woman is who is playing the game. He meets her and realizes it is the woman who saved his life. She asks forgiveness and agrees to tell the newspapers the real conditions as a scandal will ruin his political career. Instead, he asks her whether she can try and care for him a bit, and the answer is affirmative.


Other examples include *Wandering Horde* (1916), in which a newspaper reveals that a new addition to the ranks of the hoboes is really a millionaire. In *Hell Morgan’s Girl* (1917), newspapers reveal that a drunken derelict on the streets of San Francisco has just inherited millions of dollars. In *Lupin, the Gentleman Burglar* (1914), the newspaper announces the release of the gentleman burglar, Lupin, prompting a woman to hire him to “catch a thief.” In *When Love is Love* (1915), the newspapers reveal a woman’s lottery ticket has won the top prize. In *A Royal Survivor* (1914), an article helps to restore a man’s memory causing severe consequences. In *The Claws of Greed* (1914), the newspaper reports that a marquis is offering a substantial reward for information leading to the recovery of his daughter stolen by a steward years before. In *Hoodoo Ann* (1916), a young woman mirrors her life on the pages of *Vogue* magazine.

Examples include *Where’s Oliver* (1915), in which a male reader sees an article about the adoption of the “kindness to prisoners” system in one prison and it impresses him so much that he dreams about it. In *Billy’s War Brides* (1916), a man who loves women reads that polygamy will be legalized after the war and the story gives him new hope, but it turns out it is all a dream. In *Peace at Any Price* (1916), a man has no faith in a newspaper article claiming the boys will be out of the trenches by Christmas and this sparks a bizarre dream.

Other examples include *The Double* (1910), in which a woman learns that a lover has died, realizes that she loves another and goes to him for consolation; in *The Soldier’s Return* (1911), a lover is reported killed in war.

Other similar films include *The Accident* (1911), *The Lover’s Signal* (1911), *East Lynne, Part Two* (1912).

Other examples include *The Conscience of John David* (1916), in which an article about a woman acquitted in a murder case results in the search for the man she now accuses of the crime. In *Hick Manhattan* (1918), newspapers cover a hoax and turn a young woman into a star attraction. In *Lucky Jim* (1909), a man reads that the woman he loves who is married to another man is now available because the man has died.

Examples include *In Not in the News* (1916), two brothers are both convicts, but only one decides to go straight. He marries a society girl and rapidly rises to become the president of the bank. His brother has continued a life of crime. He frightens his brother’s wife into paying him money for his silence as to her husband’s past. When she has exhausted her resources, the bad brother breaks into the home and is discovered by the elder brother who shoots him. He is exonerated when the police and reporters are told the intruder was a burglar. The newspapers back up this account since the reporters never learn the real story. In *The Sheriff of Plumas* (1916), an article in the Pumas newspaper gives a glowing tribute to a sheriff stating that he met his death in the performance of his duty. Only his son knows that the story is not true. In *Yankee Pluck* (1917), newspapers tell the story about a man wounded in an accident. But the woman who fired the revolver knows the real story. In *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1918), newspapers print front page stories about a “Colonel Marmaduke Ruggles from England,” a distinguished visitor who isn’t exactly who the newspapers think he is. In *Here Comes the Bride* (1919), a newspaper announcement of a wedding is premature, and this causes complications for the groom and the bride’s father. In *The Better Woman* (1915), an article mistakenly has a man marrying the wrong woman causing the man, now drunk, to marry another woman. In *The City* (1911), a newspaper reports that there is little employment in a man’s town so he goes off the city to look for work leaving his family behind, eventually discovering the newspaper article was an exaggeration. In *Millionaire Billie* (1916), the arrival of a millionaire tramp as promised in the newspaper accounts causes major repercussions in a small town including an imposter. In *Paying the Price* (1913), a story on a man accidentally killing himself leaves out the most pertinent details. In *If I Were Young Again* (1914), a newspaper article about the disappearance of a
museum curator amuses the man said to have disappeared, but another article about swindling operations of Mexican oil wells infuriates him changing his life in ways he hadn’t anticipated. In *The Mystery of the Glass Cage* (1914), a newspaper account of the mysterious death of a rich man amuses a baron’s valet who knows exactly how he died. In *Happiness* (1917), a magazine supplement story portrays a woman as the most snobbish girl in America, but it is a false impression. In *The Midnight Marauder* (1911), a newspaper account of the accidental capture of a burglar in the morning newspaper makes a man seem like a hero until the complete story is told.

In *His Last Trick* (1915) a newspaper account about a tragedy treats it as an unsolved mystery. *On the Bread Line* (1915) in which a story on the death of a tramp working as a taxicab caller doesn’t tell the whole story. In *Uncle’s Last Letter* (1915), reporters get the story of the death of a man based on identification in a collision, but it turns out to be the wrong man. In *The Dragnet* (1916), newspaper exploits a man’s confession in which he names a confederate who was not involved to protect one of his pals. In *The Stolen Triumph* (1916), a woman tells a reporter who calls for an interview that her husband is engaged in writing a great play. An item to this effect appears in the paper – even though her husband is only promising to try to write a play and nothing has been written. The news item prompts a young playwright to go to her husband to get some advice about his play. Instead, the husband copies the play in his own hand, changes the title, and passes it off as his own. In *The Wheat and the Chaff* (1916), newspapers print the news of the sudden death of a newly elected governor, and next to it the news of the acquittal of his brother. But that isn’t the whole story. In *The Bond of Fear* (1917), a judge, who killed his brother during a fight, flees from his crime. Then he reads in a newspaper article that his brother is alive. Then he discovers the newspaper was over a year old, printed before his brother was killed. In *A Bum Steer* (1916), newspapers report that a woman has stolen some diamonds leading to various comic implications. In *John Petticoats* (1919), newspapers blame a lumberjack for the death of a woman he saves from drowning, but the newspapers are wrong.

598 An example is *A Decision of the Court* (1915), in which newspaper extras printed a story based on an early draft of a judge’s decision that has a tremendous effect on the stock market. But the judge’s final decision, based on new evidence, is the opposite of the original causing major repercussions.

599 Examples include *In A New Item* (1913), a jealous lover inserts a fake item in a society paper about his rival for a woman’s affections. In *The Print of the Nails* (1915), a mayor’s enemies create a story about the mayor and a morally questionable woman to force the council to remove him. In *The Way of the World* (1916), a politician gets a newspaper to publish an article that while the governor has been away on a tour of the state to secure votes, his wife has been seen continually in the company of a certain man whom the paper does not identify. The article causes a scandal. In one film, *The Mysterious Mr. Davey* (1914), a married man creates a male friend, Mr. H.W. Davey, as a woman-hater to explain his absences when courting another woman. Because of complications too numerous to mention, the man decides to kill off Mr. Davey and goes to the local newspaper office with the story. The next morning the man’s wife reads in the paper of the death of “H.W. Davey, the well-known woman-hater,” and tries to soothe her husband in his grief. 599 In *Providence and Mrs. Urmy* (1915), a mother is so anxious to get her daughter married to a member of the nobility that she plants a story in a newspaper that an engagement is pending between her daughter and a Lord even though the two hadn’t even met. Also, *Through the Clouds, 1910; Through the Clouds, 1910; An Unselfish Love, 1910.*

600 A press agent was the public relations practitioner of the time. He is defined as “a person employed to organize advertising and publicity in the press on behalf of an organization or well-known person.” Examples include *In The Little Puritan* (1915), every newspaper in town prints details of an actress’s affair after her press agent gives them the full details for publicity purposes. In *Billy Van Deusen’s Wedding Eve* (1916), a press agent plants a fake engagement story in the newspaper. In *Broadway, Arizona* (1917), newspapers cover a fake scandal set up by a press agent involving a musical comedy star and a millionaire cattle rancher. In *The Clean-Up* (1917), newspapers are used to promote a traveling burlesque troupe’s newest show with stories provided by a press agent. In *Spotlight Sadie* (1919), a woman reads a story about a chorus girl who married a millionaire and wants to follow in her footsteps. A press agent plays up the bible-reading girl in the newspapers planting stories calling her “The Saintly Show Girl.” Newspapers waste no time picking up the story. Columns are printed about her. She soon becomes a celebrity. In *Does Advertising Pay?* (1915), a press agent creates a publicity stunt renting a baby and sending it to a publicity-needy actress with an anonymous note asking her to adopt it. Reporters, tipped off to the story, show up in droves and give the actress thousands of dollars of free publicity with the newspaper giving the story large space to the kind-hearted actress and her husband who had taken in the little waif. Review, *The Moving Picture World,* November 6, 1915, p. 1200.
Most examples of this type involve the newspapers as primary characters in the events they cover. Some examples include *The Hungarian Nabob* (1915), in which a newspaper publishes the facts about a cad who wants to steal his uncle’s fortune. In *One Man’s No. 141* (1917), an article on possible mob violence forces a sheriff to take action. In *The Silent Peril* (1914), a newspaper publishes a story on the merits of a “powerless boat” that is in the hands of a foreign government. In *A Daughter of Daring No. 8: The Railroad Smuggler* (1917), Helen is particularly interested in an article on Mexican bandits raiding one of the American border towns and killing several people. In *A Trooper of Company K* (1917), a newspaper reports on a man’s heroics as a member of the all-black Company K of the Tenth Cavalry during the battle of Carrizal against the Mexican troops. In *The Evil Eye* (1913), an article warns natives about superstition in early Mexico. In *Mutual Weekly No. 148* (1917), the newspapermen’s club stage an old-fashioned rodeo in San Francisco.

Examples include *The Mayor’s Crusade* (1912), in which opposition newspapers try to discredit a newly elected reform party mayor of a western town as he tries to institute reform measures. In *The Altar of Ambition* (1914), conspirators of a subsidized newspaper publish an account of a scandal created to discredit a candidate. In *The Foundling* (1912), a rival candidate is forced to admit he is not the son of a celebrated artist when his rival plants the story in a newspaper. In *Red and White Roses, Part II* (1913), a man tells newspaper reporters that a candidate has jilted his fiancée for an actress. The news spreads like wildfire and causes panic among the man’s supporters. He returns from a campaign tour, reads the news and unsuccessfully tries to prove that the newspaper scandal is false. The man who spread the lies is elated with the success of his dishonorable methods and rejoices in the candidate’s overwhelming defeat. In *The Woman* (1915), a telephone girl disconnects the wires when crooked politicians are trying to telephone a newspaper to release a story that would destroy a rival politician. In *The Winning of Silas Pegg* (1912), newspaper headlines reveal a winning candidate and a cheap man realizes he has won an election bet and goes out to celebrate.

Other examples include *The Matchmakers* (1915), in which the newspapers report that a man has made a fortune and divided it with a postmaster in the town. In *The Professor’s Peculiar Precautions* (1916), an article is printed about a man who while testing an apparatus turns in one false alarm after another turning his experiment into a joke. In *Her Official Fathers* (1917), newspapers point out that an heiress is indulging in mischievous escapades and the bank is afraid it will affect her fortune and their fortunes. In *For the Love of a Girl* (1912), a newspaper report of Supreme Court decision has major repercussions for the characters in the film. In *A Friend in Need* (1914), the newspaper reports that a fair may be postponed because it lacks attractions gives a young man an idea – he will furnish the entire program. In *On Christmas Eve* (1914), an article reveals a man’s son is ruined financially. In *Bobby, the Coward* (1911), Bobby scans the newspaper each day in search of employment. In *The Marked Time-Table* (1910), a newspaper headline, “Wild Prank of Spendthrift Youths. They wreck a tenderloin bar and then settle with proprietor, Tom Powers, the leader, causing a family to reprimand the son involved who has a history of unsavory incidents.
The Internet Movie Database refers to the film as He Couldn’t Support His Wife (1915). The Moving Picture World review lists the film as He Wouldn’t Support His Wife (1915).

Examples include United in Danger (1914); Two Smiths and a Haff (1916) in which newspapers publish glaring accounts of a farewell bachelor dinner that gets out of control. In Princess Virtue (1917), a newspaper in Boston informs the public about the sensation “Princess Virtue” is creating in Parisian society. The flippant references to her granddaughter bothers the grandmother who decides to do something about it. In Young Romance (1915), two people reading about a Maine summer resort desire to go there pretending to be rich.

In The Girl From Chicago (1916), an article about a reward asking for information to capture a criminal gang prompted laughter from gang members who felt they were above the law.

The film was re-released as Scandal Mongers in 1918.


Motion Picture News, August 26, 1919, p. 1426.


Exhibitors Herald, September 13, 1919, p. 62.

There were quite a few silent documentary films that showed how a newspaper was created, edited, printed and sold on the streets. Examples include A Newspaper in Making (1904); The Making of a Modern Newspaper (1907); Scotland’s Greatest Newspaper (1908); Current News Items (1909); The Newspaper World From Within (1909); A Great Metropolitan Newspaper (1913); The Making of a Newspaper (1914); Making a Great Newspaper (1915); Where Our Morning Paper Comes From (1915); Paramount Pictograph 35th edition: Converting Wood into Paper (1916); Making a News Picture (1917); Reel Life No. 53: The Queerest Newspaper (1917); The Rotogravure Section (1917); Universal Screen Magazine No. 62: The Making of a Newspaper, Part One (1918); Universal Screen Magazine No. 63: The Making of a Newspaper, Part Two (1918); Universal Screen Magazine No. 64: The Making of a Newspaper, Part Three (1918); Universal Screen Magazine No 65: The Making of a Newspaper, Part Four (1918); The Ford Weeklies (1919); Graumont Graphic No. 63 (1919); New Screen Magazine (1919); Topics of the Day (1919). When Black is Red (1919).


Variety, October 24, 1919, p. 60.

Another reviewer writing about *The Sage, the Cherub and the Widow* (1910) said: “When you see it in the newspapers you know it is so.”


*Variety*, January 24, 1919.


*Exhibitors Herald*, March 2, 1918, p. 38.


One reviewer in analyzing the film *Private Peat* (1918), pointed out that the newspaper inserts “are careless.” 
*(The Film Daily (Wid’s Daily)),* October 17, 1918, p. 599.


A typical advertisement in *The Moving Picture World* (August 28, 1915) shows how former newspapermen easily moved over to publicizing silent films as publicity men: “Livest, Keenest Sort of Publicity Man Seeks Something Leading Somewhere. National publicity for your products in newspapers. Magazines, trade press is the thing in which I deal. I have been editor and star reporter for more than ten years on New York daily newspapers. I have written for the magazines over my signature. I have had a motion picture and theatrical experience in publicity and advertising. Hence, I write my stories strictly from the point of view of the publication for which they are intended and they land. I am employed by one of the largest motion picture corporations, but I am willing to make a change under proper circumstances. My salary must be at least $75, with good prospects of more. Yours for results, JOHN STRONG. P.S. – That’s not my name, but it’s the name over which I will receive mail, care of the Moving Picture World. P.P.S. – I am still in my thirties – J.S.

Terry Ramsaye, *One Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture Through 1925*, Simon & Schuster, 1926. Ramsaye offers early examples of newspapermen who performed in front of the camera and behind it. Jimmy Blackston was working on space rates as a freelance reporter for the New York *World* in 1907. Because of his newspaper contacts, he became familiar with motion picture people. Blackston was an entertainer and a caricaturist
as well as a journalist. “He did a chalk-talk act. Thomas Edison, who was looking for subjects to film, took a liking to him. When Blackston swiftly drew the features of Edison himself, Edison was completely won over. Blackston did his chalk-act routine for the camera. Under the title of Blackston, the Evening World Cartoonist, the picture went out to the world of the newborn screen.” Pp. 274-275. Stanner Taylor, a rambling freelance newspaperman, worked on The Tribune when he was approached to write things for moving pictures. “Taylor listened to the story of Biograph and its requirements. Then he went home and dashed off a couple of picture ideas in tabloid form, three hundred words each. These picture ideas resulted in a check for $35. Now space rates for newspaper were about eight dollars a column. Six hundred words for thirty dollars opened Taylor’s eyes,” pp. 455-456. Ramsaye writes, “The demand for screen stories was growing with the industry and rumors of easy money “writing for pictures” went through the gossip channels…” He tells the story of Frank Woods who was on the staff of the Dramatic Mirror and was among “the first and most famous of the scenarios writers.” He became editor of a movie column primarily to help the newspaper’s advertising solicitors. He then “sold three ‘suggestions’ for pictures at $15 each…The whole Dramatic Mirror office went scenario mad when Woods’ success with “suggestions” became known…George Terwilliger, another member of the Mirror staff, also began a scenario writing career that led to a directorship,” pp. 512-513.

646 Willam Randolph Hearst’s Chicago Evening American, came up with the idea of doing a tie-in between its editorial feature and a motion picture released each month. “What Happened to Mary?” was produced in installments that were independent and complete and publicized in the print media. It turned out to be a successful promotion. Terry Ramsaye, One Million and One Nights, pp. 653-656.

647 Max Annenberg, the former circulation manager of the Chicago Evening American, who started off as a newsboy, and Walter Howey, a reporter-editor trained by the Chicago American, spoke the same language and are credited with coming up with the idea. Ramsaye, One Million and One Nights, pp. 656-658.

648 Ramsaye, One Million and One Nights, pp. 660-661.

649 The Chicago Tribune managing editor “sniffed. There was something slightly familiar about that story, but he could not place it. It had something of the odor of fish.” The Tribune did not carry the missing heiress story but nearly every other newspaper in the United States did. The “only photograph in existence of the missing heiress was released. It bore a striking similarity in the publicity stills of the actress who played in the Million Dollar Mystery. The Hearst pictorial news service got a scoop on the picture. Ibid, Ramsaye, One Million and One Nights, pp. 663-666.

650 The Tribune’s first critic was Jack Lawson, a rewrite man. He was killed in an accident at the Chicago Press Club and was succeeded as the Tribune’s “picture critic” by Miss Audrie Alspaugh who signed her column, “Kitty Kelly.” Because she was the first independent motion picture critic, she attained a remarkable power over pictures in the Midwest. “For the first time in the history of the business, the theatre men found a published judgment of the wares they bought, written by someone outside sycophancy of the trade press. Kitty Kelly could make or break a picture in the Middle West…Her judgments were excellent, but her taste was above that of the masses served by the screen. Her column was a large success and she became the best disliked name in the world of film makers.” Frances Smith, writing under the name of Mae Tinee, eventually became her replacement. James Oliver Spearing, who was the movie critic for the New York Times, became the first newspaper critic to become a motion picture director. Ramsaye, One Million Nights, pp. 680-681.

651 Ness, From Headline Hunter to Superman, p. 7. He goes on to say, “More important, the films released during (the silent film) period established nearly all of the themes and plots that would be prevalent in the genre, even up to the present day.”