

Putting Women in the Boat in *The Idler* (1892-1898) and *TO-DAY* (1893-1897)¹

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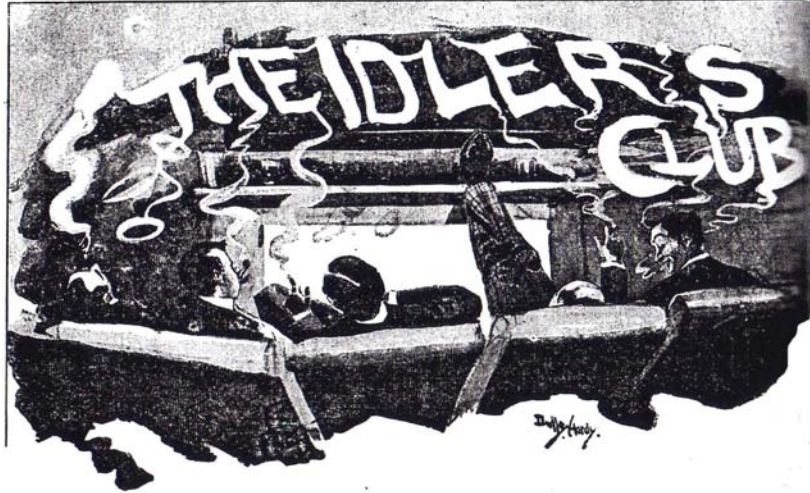


Figure 1. “The Idler’s Club,” *Idler*, Vol 1 (February 1892)

Picture the scene – a group of men gathered around the fire with a good supply of punch and cigarettes. They have nothing in particular to do but talk and enjoy themselves. They put a high premium on witty remarks and in their desultory conversations there is a great deal of laughter over subjects that range from the theatre to fashion and food, from gentlemanly sports to the foibles of women [Figure 1].

This was the gendered structure of a popular nineteenth-century monthly journal, *The Idler*, during the six years it was edited by Jerome K. Jerome, who is remembered today almost exclusively as the author of *Three Men in a Boat – to Say Nothing of the Dog* (1889) though he had a four decades-long career as journalist, playwright, and novelist, publishing some eight volumes of essays (almost all originally published in various periodicals), six novels, over sixteen plays, and an autobiography.

This masculinist approach continued in Jerome’s weekly ‘newspaper magazine’ *TO-DAY*, founded in the wake of the financial success of the *Idler*. However, the insistent male club atmosphere of both journals was constructed in the midst of a raft of contributions by women

and an insistent use of illustrations of women figures as well as an advertising section devoted to women readers as consumers. This essay thus will analyse how the male agenda is infiltrated by women as writers, images, and consumers resulting in ‘gender conversations’ that create a kind of interdisciplinarity in terms of gendered topics, voices, and issues.

The *Idler* (1892-1898), a six-penny and then a shilling monthly, was originally the idea of Robert Barr, who had made considerable money as editor of the English edition of the *Detroit Free Press*. He provided the initial funding and was for the first three years (1892-1895) co-editor.² He had considered Rudyard Kipling for the editorship but finally chose Jerome, whose *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* (1886), a collection of essays originally published in *Home Chimes*, provided the title and the format for the new magazine.

Barr and Jerome’s targeted audience for the magazine was the young male “suburban” world of upwardly mobile clerks and other wage-earners (like Jerome himself at the time he wrote *Three Men in a Boat*). What Barr and Jerome intended for this market was what one critic has called “an adult version of extremely successful English juvenile publications such as *Boy’s Own Paper*.”³ The *Idler* was instantly successful: its “liberal, irreverent, and sentimental” tone and the quality, number, and nature of its illustrations were all praised. After seven volumes and three years, Barr sold the *Idler* to Jerome who became sole editor, marking the change with an expanded size and even more lavish use of illustrations.

A magazine of an average of 120 to 150 pages, the *Idler* is a good example of the multidisciplinary nature of Victorian periodicals in both content and form. It is as much a gallery of various types of illustration from high art to crude cartoons as a miscellany. The letterpress uses the whole range of possible topics making little distinction in importance. Fiction of course was prominent, but there were also articles on the theatre, books, and exhibitions. There were interviews with celebrities of various sorts, and educational essays on natural history, foreign countries and alien cultural practices as well as tours of historical buildings. The fiction from the beginning included detective and adventure stories, but also a good number of more or less sentimental stories of love and romance. The journal provided illustrations of both the texts and as stand-alone cartoons and fine art reproductions. The mode of illustration ranged from fully

finished engravings to small line drawings. There were also photographs.

The financial success Jerome achieved with the *Idler* encouraged him to fulfill a dream he had long had, according to his autobiography:⁴ he started a weekly two-column tabloid with an average of 32 pages each issue in which he hoped to combine some of the successful magazine elements of the *Idler* with those of a newspaper. Jerome named this new two-penny weekly journal *TO-DAY*, calling attention to it as “an up-to-date, plain-speaking weekly newspaper”⁵ as he said in his advertisements, de-emphasizing (not to say ignoring) the magazine qualities of the journal. The magazine part of *TO-DAY* consisted mainly of the introduction of fiction, frequently serialized,⁶ and its use of illustrations, similar to those of the *Idler* though less frequent and lacking any “high art” reproductions.

TO-DAY is even more exemplary of the multidisciplinary of nineteenth-century periodicals.⁷ In some ways a fore-runner of the news magazine of the late twentieth century, Jerome’s ‘newspaper magazine’ integrated news clips and analysis with the topics of a miscellany like the *Idler*. The most distinctive element that separates *TO-DAY* from a twentieth-century news magazine was its most multidisciplinary feature – the inclusion of fiction along with the news, usually leading off each issue.

The first page marks it as a newspaper, however. Half of the front page is the masthead and half is advertising with no images [Figure 2]. The “news” itself was in the form at the beginning of a “Topic of the Week”⁸ which was soon dropped in favor of a series of one-paragraph “Topics of TO-Day.” These short paragraph items took up, after early issues, two to three pages, and included a miscellany of subjects from the Employers Liability Law to fortune-telling to Italy and the triple alliance to mistreatment of cab horses (a favorite issue for Jerome). These pieces are always written in the first person⁹ and are usually mildly ironic. The opening page of this news department evolved toward the look of a newspaper leader page.

The “newspaper magazine” also included many of the standard newspaper departments – books, theatre, men and women’s columns, though with magazine titles, i.e. “Club Chatter” for the men’s column. These departments were either unsigned or signed pseudonymously; Jerome said in the initial number of November 1893 that everything unsigned was written by him (which

To-Day

Price Twopence.

A Weekly Magazine-Journal

Edited by JEROME K. JEROME.

No. 190. [REGISTERED AT G.P.O.] AS A NEWSPAPER.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1897.

TWOPENCE.

Note: None Genuine unless bearing the Trade Mark—
"ACARIC."

Of all Hosiers and Stores everywhere, or sent post free on receipt of P.O. for 4s. to T. D. Dept., 6, PHILIP LANE, LONDON, E.C.



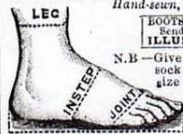
£10 REWARD

Buyers demanding ACARIC and having other Braces not bearing the Trade Mark offered as ACARICs are requested to communicate with 6, Philip Lane, London, E.C.

Wholesale of—
WELCH MARETSON & CO.
15, 16, 17,
Cheapside, London,
E.C.
And all Hosiers and Drapery Houses.

"BESPOKE BOOT MAKERS' CALF" MADE TO MEASURE. 10/6

Calf Skins, specially selected and dressed for our Bespoke Boot Trade. Most tenacious in wear, but beautifully soft; takes high polish; calf-skin lined; broad or pointed toes; wide welts. Also in NICE NUT-COLOURED "B.B.M. TAN CALF," Guaranteed style, fit, and wear of every pair.



Hand-sewn, on Customers' own Lasts, 13/6
BOOTS in 4 days Carr. Paid.
Send Post Card for new ILLUS. CATALOGUE.

N.B.—Give measurements over sock in inches and usual size worn.



"FIT FOR TO-DAY."

Send P.O. Address—
BESPOKE BOOT FACTORY.
RUSHDEN, NORTHAMPTON.

UNEQUALLED FOR ALL DECORATIVE PURPOSES.
FREE FROM DEADLY WHITE LEAD. ALL COLOURS EXQUISITE BRILLIANT GLOSS.

Beware of Cheap and



Colour Card Post Free from Aspinall's Enamel, Ltd.

Sub-Num Cycles

... WITH JOINTLESS FRAMES, ARE THE ...
ONLY Practical Aluminium Cycles.

No Brazing! No Danger!!

"The Silver Wheel."

No Corrosion!!! No Tarnishing!!!

The *Sub-Num* Mfg. Co., Ltd.,

29, VICTORIA BUILDINGS, MANCHESTER.

75, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, E.C. 6, RUE LE PELETIER, PARIS.



Cadbury's
cocoa

"The standard of highest purity."—LANCET.

PURE COCOA is a perfect food—the addition of drugs
is inadvisable. The public should be wary of mixtures.

Figure 2. Cover of *TO-DAY* (June 26 1897)

is one of the reasons the journal did not survive his being forced to sell it). It also had, later in its life, a growing amount of material about sports, mainly cycling and football and eventually an extensive “Answers to Correspondents.”¹⁰ In the beginning each department had its own pictorial logo. After three years, the department logos disappear, and Jerome inserts display advertisements, appropriate to the department (boot blacking for men, cocoa for women) onto the same page.

Jerome was committed from the beginning to introducing as much high-quality illustration into both his journals as he could.¹¹ He actually sued his printer after the first issue of *TO-DAY* for the poor quality of reproduction of the illustrated material, and in issue number 8 altered the form of the journal “to enable half the paper to be printed on what is technically called ‘the flat.’ By this means sketches can be produced more easily” (Dec. 30, 1893, p. 19). *TO-DAY* was advertised by a famous poster of a fashionably dressed young woman designed by the well-known illustrator Dudley Hardy, which Jerome called “the yellow girl” poster. The illustrations in *TO-DAY* are by what Jerome called “the leading black-and-white men of the day.” Occasionally there are full-page cartoons, sometimes political. There were no illustrations on the pages of “Topics of the Day” other than an evolving logo of a fashionably dressed woman, a version of the yellow girl poster.

The *Idler*, however, was lavishly illustrated. When Jerome took over as sole owner and editor in 1895 he said that “much greater attention will be paid to the Art Department... The size of the magazine has been increased, we having found it impossible to give our artists fair representation within the former limited size of our pages... We are making arrangements with artists, both English and foreign, and with engraving firms, that will enable us eventually to render every illustration a work of art in itself” (VIII, August 1895:98-99).

Though Jerome said he wished “to make [the *Idler*] a magazine that will be almost a need to thinking men and women” (August 1895, p. 98), both it and *TO-DAY* were, if not strictly men’s magazines, nonetheless masculinist in their interests, their tone, and many of their subjects. *TO-DAY* was the more unabashed in its appeal to male readers, for except for a regular women’s department, nearly all the writers and illustrators were men, and readers of Topics of

Today were clearly gendered male. Jerome did tell a correspondent “Don’t run away with the idea that TO-DAY is intended to be a man’s paper only” (1 February 1896, p. 403), but his view of women nonetheless excluded them from “the news”: “I have, perhaps, an exaggerated respect for woman, in her proper place, which I take to be the home circle; but I have always felt that, as a class, she could never be broad-minded enough to look at questions of public policy from an impersonal standpoint, and that, therefore, her interference with them was necessarily harmful.”¹²

In the *Idler*, the very concept of the magazine was male. Jerome’s notion of idling, which constructs the journal, is different from Walter Benjamin’s *flâneur*, that iconic figure of modernist voyeurism. Jerome’s Idler is implicitly positioned against a life of “working,” that is, he is not so much a man who has the leisure to roam the modern city streets observing the flow of human lives and activities, but rather a figure momentarily freed from work for a day or weekend who chooses to sit in front of a fire with his male friends talking about a desultory range of general topics, eschewing seriousness and treating all subjects lightly and humorously. The logo (the *Idler* refers to these images as “headpieces”) reproduced as Figure 1 represents this concept exactly.

The place in the *Idler* where the masculinist idling mentality is most clearly articulated was in its most popular department, usually the last feature – a collection of random short signed musings on a set topic, grouped together under the title “The Idler’s Club.” In the beginning The Idler’s Club has as its logo the five rather formally dressed but leisurely young men around a fireplace encased in cigarette smoke [Figure 1]. Gradually other logos appear, charting a lessening gendered image, though the five-men logo never disappears and remains the defining image for The Idler’s Club.¹³ After six months and just before the entry of women into the male bastion of The Idler’s Club in April 1892, the logo changes for the first time to a pub sign. After another six months, this logo was replaced by a table and high-backed empty chairs. Another change introduces a design with pitcher, a Japanese fan, and a vase with stylized flowers combined with Chinese clay pipes and what seems to be a tobacco canister. This image, like others I’ll mention later, emblemizes a complex relationship between male and female images

in the journal. The feminized design and the flowers rest easily against the male pipes and tobacco. Beginning with the September 1894 number, which has as a topic “How to Court the New Woman,” The Idler’s Club begins an alternate tradition of introducing targeted logos, the one for this number being an Aubrey Beardsley drawing of a bare-headed woman contemplating her hat [Figure 3].

*How to Court the “Advanced
Woman.”*

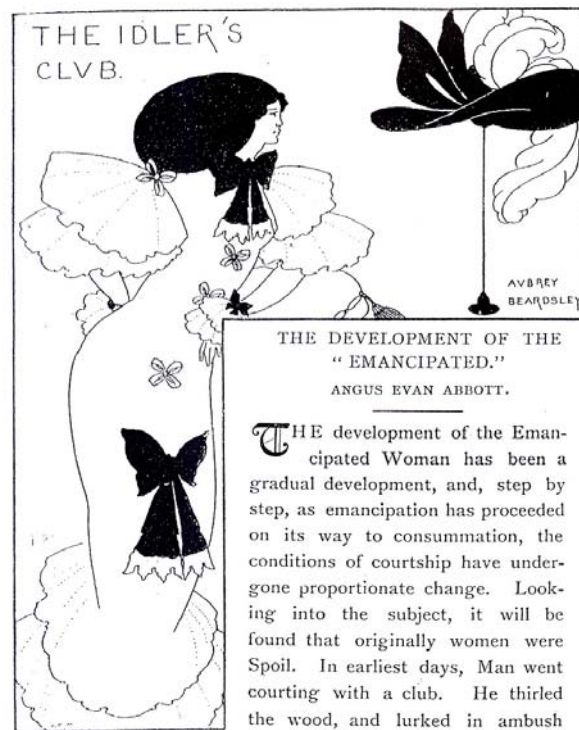


Figure 3. “How to Court the ‘Advanced Woman’”, *Idler* Vol. 6 (September 1894)

Jerome repeatedly called on his friends and their friends for contributions to both his journals, resulting in what one commentator has called “clique journalism.”¹⁴ The contributors were for the most part men, and, in fact, a reason for the initial success of the *Idler* was the group of well-known male writers Jerome and Barr managed to get as contributors (many of them also contributed to *TO-DAY*): Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, George Bernard Shaw, Andrew

Lang, Barry Pain, James Payn, Israel Zangwill, Rider Haggard, Hall Caine, George R. Sims, R.M. Ballantyne, Richard Le Gallienne, Bret Harte, H.G. Wells, R.L. Stevenson as well as Jerome himself. While some of these writers are clustered in the early numbers, Jerome managed to attract known names to his publications throughout the life of the magazine.

But women were, nonetheless, a significant presence in the *Idler* and to a lesser extent *TO-DAY*, though their influence was indirect. Though many of the illustrations were *of* women (more about that later), there were few illustrations *by* women.¹⁵ More importantly as the months go on, women writers begin to appear (women never contributed much to *TO-DAY*). In the fifth number of the *Idler* (May 1892) the first woman writer appeared, Mabel E. Wotton, whom Margaret Stetz positions in opposition to George Gissing.¹⁶ Wotton contributes a story about a father who gives up his life to save his son's silly wife from eloping with a married man ("Suicide.")¹⁷

Ironically, the greatest number of contributions by women to the journal is to the most insistently masculine section, The Idler's Club. Israel Zangwill, a frequent contributor to both of Jerome's journals and a close friend of his, in an Idler's Club contribution on "Most Awkward Predicaments" complained ironically about this:

The intrusion of the ladies [into The Idler's Club] has spoilt everything. Once we sat with our feet on the mantelpiece smoking... Now we never smoke – Angelina [the first woman contributor to the Idler's Club] won't permit it. Tea replaces the whiskey of yore,¹⁸ and the horizon is bounded by thin bread and butter. We are expected to stick to one predetermined subject – doubtless for fear we might wander off into the improper – and we are almost encouraged to bring our sewing. No more we enjoy those delightful excursions to everywhere – interrupting one another...and capping an appreciation of Wagner with an anecdote about a mad turtle... I think someone ought to tell the editors that they are simply ruining the club. I shudder to think what will become of it in five years' time, when nobody will belong to it but ladies and parsons. (Vol 3 April 1893, p. 358.)

Though this typically light humored piece involves conventional complaints against women, it also expresses perfectly the male ambiance the journal strove for.

The female contributors to The Idler's Club included women writers who in other contexts represented a range of perspectives. The largest number of contributions came from Eliza Lynn Linton with nine, followed closely by Evelyn Sharp with seven. While Lynn Linton's

generally conservative position about women makes her perhaps a likely candidate for the masculinist agenda of the Club, Evelyn Sharp, who was attached to the Yellow Book crowd, a member of the Anti-Sweating League, and active in the suffrage movement, is another matter. Other “feminist” contributors included Ella Hepworth Dixon, author of *The Story of a Modern Woman*, with three “Idler’s Club” items; Nora Vynne, who wrote an important tract *Women; Under the Factory Act* in 1903, with five; and Mabel Beardsley, the sister of Aubrey, with two. On the one hand these names indicate that Jerome was as diligent in getting the best women writers for his enterprise as he was the men.¹⁹ On the other hand, these women pull their potential feminist punches when they write for this journal. At best, when they don’t support the overt agenda, they adopt an ironic stance towards it but do not directly challenge it.

There doesn’t seem to have been any obvious pattern to the introduction of women contributors to The Idler’s Club. Some apparently male-gendered topics like “Duels and Duelling” (March 1894) or “Are Clever Women or Stupid the More Attractive?” (August 1895) seem to justify all male contributors. However, there doesn’t seem to be any obvious reason why women couldn’t contribute to “January” (January 1894) or “Animal Anecdotes” (August 1894) or even “Who is the Greatest Living English Actress – and Why?” (November 1895). It would certainly have been interesting to have a woman’s contribution to “Are Honeymoons a Success?” (September 1893), or “Advantages and Disadvantages of Being Good Looking” (August 1898). But by the same token there is no particular reason why five out of ten of the contributors to “The Artistic Temperament” (May 1893) or six out of nine contributions to “How I Bring up My Parents” (October 1895) should be women.²⁰ Without knowing how the solicitations and assignments for contributions to The Idler’s Club were made, however, it is impossible to ascribe intent to any of these configurations.

The subject of the New Woman provides an example of the way in which women writers seem to understand their role in the male bastion of The Idler’s Club. The *Idler’s* interest in the subject of the New Woman is almost exclusively one of ridicule. The one extended and direct approach to the topic is by an all-woman panel of respondents in The Idler’s Club to the question of “How to Court the Advanced Woman” (September 1894). Evidence that the fix is in comes

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when we see that this very same number contains a poem “To an ‘Advanced Woman’” written and illustrated by F. Mabelle Pearse which seems to praise the subject but in fact says that woman’s advancement is a “pastime” while Woman’s great task is to “To proclaim to Man salvation,/ Through Woman’s mediation” (pp. 140-141).

Furthermore the opening contribution to The Idler’s Club discussion is a “history” of “The Development of the ‘Emancipated’” by Angus Evan Abbott, which concludes that though “advanced women” are the inevitable product of history “they are women for whom Man will not risk his life, whom Man will not buy, whom Man will not take as a gift, nor Man be bribed to receive” (194). And as if that were not enough, following The Idler’s Club discussion of the Advanced woman, there is a full page illustration [Figure 4], one of a satiric series called “People I Have Never Met,” this one entitled “The Man of the Future” who is being pummeled by *The Yellow Aster*, *The Heavenly Twins*, *The Superfluous Woman* and a volume by George Egerton. The infantilized man promises “I will be good! Oh, I will be good.”²¹

That the *Idler* should address the “woman question” and “the marriage question” by an Idler’s Club on how to court the Advanced Woman is indicative of the masculinist agenda of the magazine. However, the eight women who contribute to the Idler’s Club on “Courting the Advanced Woman” are among the best-known women writers of the period and the magazine gives a photograph of each contributor along with a photograph of her most famous work. So we have George Egerton and *Keynotes*; Mrs. Mannington Caffyn “Iota” and *A Yellow Aster*; John Oliver Hobbes and *A Study in Temptation*; Lady Greville and *That Hated Saxon*; Sarah Grand and *The Heavenly Twins*; Mary L. Pendered and *Dust and Laurel: A Study in 19th Century Womahood*; Ella Hepworth Dixon and *The Story of a Modern Woman*; and Dr. Arabella Kenealy²² and *Dr. Janet of Harley Street*.

The inclusion of these women and the celebration of them and their works by illustrations certainly proclaims both their importance and that of the subject of the Advanced Woman. But the contributors for the most part refuse to take up that challenge. They deny that they are advanced women, though Dr. Arabella Kenealy says it is about time she appeared. For the rest of them, they either ignore or berate the “advanced woman” and none more vitriolically than

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Sarah Grand. But “Iota” looks forward to the new girl who will not need to be so strident and

People I Have Never Met.

BY SCOTT RANKIN.

THE MAN OF THE FUTURE.



The Man of the future—*Log.* :—“I will be good! Oh, I will be good!”

Figure 4. “The Man of the Future”, *Idler* Vol. 6 (September 1894)

John Oliver Hobbes argues that women need men’s superior strength. Lady Greville is confused but is sure the Advanced Woman is not a good thing. Mary L. Pendered thinks “deferential domination” is what men should use. Sarah Grand is incensed: “The cry of the miscalled ‘Advanced Woman’ is, in most cases, dictated by intense selfishness, egotism, and vanity; the

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really ‘Advanced Woman’ is the one who says little, and is constantly, yet unobtrusively ameliorating the condition of her fellow mortals, be they men or women” (204).

There is, however, an indirect subversion of this seemingly universal denial of the Advanced Woman. This comment is emblematic of the subtle intervention of women’s issues into the masculinist agenda. Ella Hepworth Dixon in her contribution ironically remarks that “As an average – a very average – woman, I am filled with amazement that the editors of *The Idler* should concern themselves with so fantastic, so remote, a possibility as that which is at the moment disturbing the masculine serenity of the Club” (207). And George Egerton says similarly, “Surely the fact of my having written a little book, for the love of writing it, not with a view to usher in a revolt, or preach a propaganda, merely to strike a few notes on phases of female character I know to exist, hardly qualifies me to have an opinion, or present it to the average young man” though she continues by asserting that “The divinest fibre of her nature is her maternal instinct” (194). Finally, Dr. Arabella Kenealy remarks that “it is time indeed that the Advanced Woman came.” (205)²³

As the journal evolves, woman’s voices become stronger though the masculinist agenda never disappears. Another all-woman *Idler*’s Club three years after “How to Court the Advanced Woman” is on a much more significant topic: titled “Should Women Vote?” (March 1897). This *Idler*’s Club has a more affirmative feminist voice, though the main device is still irony as opposed to affirmative statement. Lynn Linton and Florence Hayward are virulently opposed to women voting, but the rest of the seven entries are variously supportive. Mrs. Robert Leighton argues for women’s stake in the nation while Nora Vynne thinks women will vote on the same bases as men, for better or worse. Mrs. Oscar Beringer thinks women ought to represent women, and as usual Dr Arabella Kenealy takes pleasure in eviscerating all arguments against women’s suffrage.

Thus, though the journal constructs its reader as male, and though the women writers do seem to cut their suits to fit the cloth of the journal’s masculinist agenda, their presence in the journal does in fact change the tone of the magazine and the expectations of the readers no matter what the women writers in fact say in their contributions. For example, G.B. Burgin, a

regular contributor to the *Idler*, follows his article “How Writers Work” (the original discussed only male writers) a few months later with “How Women Writers Work,” claiming (in the usual *Idler* style of light irony about women) that he was forced to write this piece because he was berated by an “old lady in the country” who asked “Weren’t [the ladies] Authors?” (September 1896, 204) Thus, Jerome in the *Idler*, by overtly recognizing the abilities of women writers and the desirability of presenting their voices if not always their concerns, actually creates a magazine for the most part written by and for men which somewhat surprisingly finds the best voice is the male voice inflected by the female.

Moreover when one turns to the illustrative material of Jerome’s journals, as opposed to the letterpress, one finds additional infiltration of women with further qualification of the gender expectations set up overtly in the *Idler* and emblemized by the five “idling” young men. For despite the insistence of this logo, a good deal of the rest of the illustrations and especially the covers, the volume title pages, and the opening pages of the individual numbers are of women.

Consider as an example the opening pages of the May 1892 number. The lead fiction in this number is “Novel Notes,” a serialized story by Jerome, constructed of a series of humorous stories about the bad results that can come from taking the advice of friends. The story itself is not really gendered in its events, but its lead illustrations are [Figures 5 and 6]. The subject of the images is not the central concern of the story – taking advice from friends – but the opening scene in which the narrator tells his wife he is going to write a novel in collaboration with his friends. On the verso side of the opening of the number is a version of the five young men – this time four – “My Three Collaborators” lounging in front of the fireplace, one leaning on the mantel. On the recto is the young man’s wife seated alone with her feet resting on the fireplace fender and a book in her hand. The caption under this illustration is “I’m sure you could write one” – that line being her supportive response until she learns he is going to collaborate with his friends during one of their “pipe nights” after which she cools to the project. These facing illustrations of two differently gendered figures in front of a similar setting (the fireplace) create a contrast of masculine homosocial conviviality and feminine solitary seriousness. The insistent male “idling” agenda on the left thus is juxtaposed to a gendered but gentle critique of the self-

proclaimed ambiance of the journal.



"MY THREE COLLABORATORS"



"I'M SURE YOU COULD WRITE ONE."

Figures 5 and 6. Illustrations to "Novel Notes", *Idler* (May 1892)

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This same juxtaposition appears in a later number in a stand-alone full-page drawing of a single woman with an umbrella sitting on a rock reading a book. The caption is “An Idler” [Figure 7.] This image through its caption invokes the magazine’s five idling young men in front of the fire and juxtaposes it to an alternate feminized image of a reading woman.



Figure 7. Hounsum Byles, “An Idler,” *Idler* Vol. 10 (August 1896)

The covers and title pages of *The Idler* do similar work.²⁴ I don’t know what the cover of the first eight volumes of looked like. But beginning with volume 9, the cover is salmon-coloured with a small drawing of a woman (taken from full-page illustrations of the months,

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always women, by Max Cowper) on the left. The woman's image changes each issue (in volume February 1897 the image becomes a larger headshot) but the design stays the same. Thus as the journal develops, it not only brings in women writers but identifies itself on its cover with a woman in what seems a deliberate contrast to the iconic five young men logo. A similar move towards the insertion of beautifully designed images of women into the masculine space is found in *TO-DAY*. Its first page logo was originally only type graphics, but became in its third volume a version of its famous poster of the "yellow girl" this one leaning on a banner with the title of the journal inscribed within. This logo changes towards the end of 1897 to another drawing of a beautifully dressed woman.

Similarly, at the start of the *Idler*, its bound volume title page contains no illustration. But after ten volumes, in 1897, a beautifully designed title page of a young woman in formal attire replaces the unillustrated original [Figure 8]. This image is followed by another fine illustration for the opening page of the number. These title page illustrations had featured since July 1896 and are almost exclusively of women [Figure 9] and are themselves faced by additional full-page illustrations of a text inside the number, usually also of a woman. Sometimes these larger illustrations are high art cheesecake images such as the bare-breasted Bathsheba who forms part of a series on "Women of the Bible" (May 1886).²⁵

What does this repeated introduction of idealized images of women do? They could be construed as the exploitative fulfillment of a male fantasy. But I would argue that the sheer number of these images in their impact if not their intent creates an alternate female space that both complements and reinforces the space carved out by women writers using irony in the letterpress. It is not a matter of the masculinist agenda being feminized. These journals are not an example of blurred gender. The spheres remain determinedly separate, as emblemized by the men's and women's departments of *TO-DAY* or the previously discussed facing pages of "Novel Notes." Male readers can stay on the male side, take in the illustrations as enticements to slightly eroticized daydreams and enjoy the exclusively masculine "idling" of the letterpress with its ironic condescension to women and class elevating gossip and information about culture. Women can stay on the female side with the idealized images of female beauty and fashion

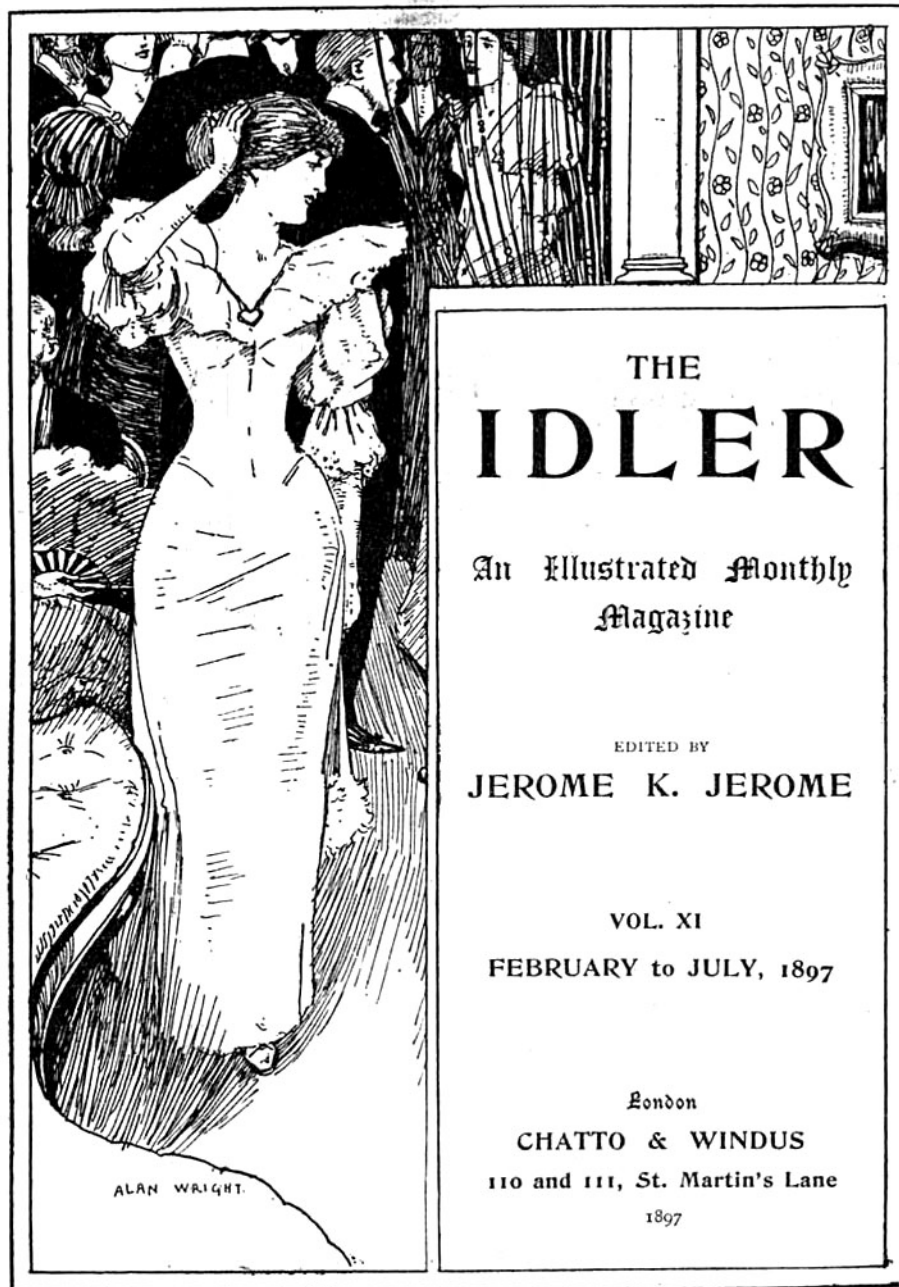


Figure 8. Volume Title Page, *Idler* Vol. 11 (February-July 1897)

reinforcing their own internalized sense of beauty (even as today's fashion magazines work for their women readers), and enjoy the romantic and sentimental fiction, and the woman's department in *TO-DAY* with its advice on issues of domestic management. They can also peruse

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THE IDLER.

VOL. IX.

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SUMMER.

FROM THE WATER-COLOUR DRAWING BY HAL HURST, R.B.A.

Figure 9. Title page, *Idler* Vol. 9 (July 1896)

the one insistently feminized space in the *Idler*, the shopping column by “Laura” which is embedded in the back of the number among the display ads.²⁶

Thus, the spheres meet and converse in the journal even as the women contributors to The Idler’s Club “converse” with the men about male-inflected topics. As a female correspondent quoted by Jerome in “Answers to Correspondents” said, *TO-DAY* is “a man’s

Anne Humpherys, “Putting Women in the Boat in The Idler (1892-1898) and TO-DAY (1893-1897)” *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 1 (2005) www.19.bbk.ac.uk

paper, and... therefore it is a paper for women, because it enables them better to understand man, and she thinks TO-DAY may widen their thinking” (21 Dec. 1895, p.211). The ambiguity of the referent to “their” in this sentence – widen men’s thinking or women’s? – expresses that tension exactly.

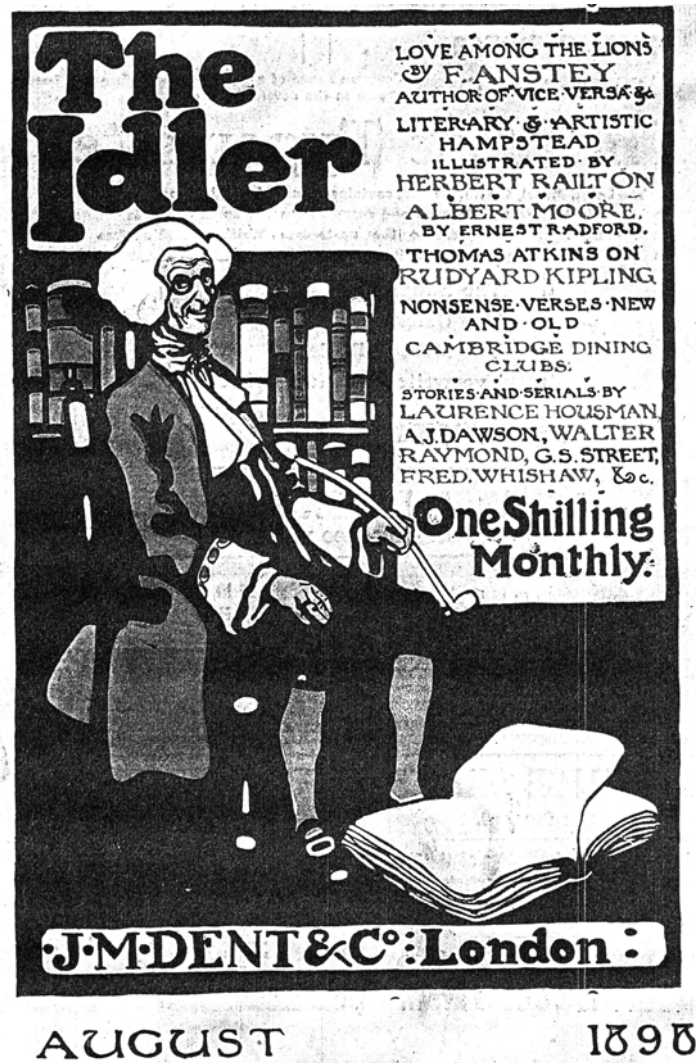


Figure 10. Cover after sale to J.M. Dent, *Idler* (August 1898)

Another way of expressing this is to ask, what would a totally male-gendered journal look like? Consider the cover which replaced Jerome’s female headshots when he had to sell *The Idler* and J.M. Dent took over publication from Chatto and Windus [Figure 10]. Not only is this

cover unabashedly male but it is archaically so. The design and the print are heavy and blunt. With its representation of an eighteenth-century male pedant as a logo, it refers back to a mythical time empty of women. Is it too much to claim that this shift to an archaically male reference under the joint editorship of a hack writer Arthur Lawrence and a suddenly wealthy caricaturist Sidney Sime was part of the reason for the journal's decline? Jerome, for all his conservatism, had in spite of himself recognized the desirability of putting women in the boat, and as a result his journals can be seen as prescient as well as conservative.

1. I wish to thank my research assistant at The Graduate Center, CUNY, Tanya Radford, for the research she contributed to this essay. I also wish to thank the Leverhulme Trust and Birkbeck College UCL for awarding me a Visiting Professorship January through June 2005. An earlier version of this essay was given at the annual Research Society for Victorian Periodicals in July 2004.

2. Jerome and Barr edited volumes 1-7 (February 1892-July 1895); Jerome edited volumes 8-14 (August 1895-January 1899). Volumes 15-21 (February 1899-January 1902) were edited by Arthur Lawrence and Sidney Sime. Volumes 22-38 (February 1902-March 1911) were edited once again by Barr. Jerome was forced to sell the *Idler* to Sime as the result of a lawsuit. In his "newspaper magazine" *TO-DAY*, Jerome had introduced a department, "In the City," in April 1894 in "an attempt... for the first time, to place before the general public a bald statement of the discreditable methods by which the majority of joint-stock companies are floated" (p. 17). This led to disaster when *TO-DAY* was sued for libel by one of the companies discussed. After a complicated legal case, which Jerome both won and lost, in order to pay his costs, he had to sell both the *Idler* and *TO-DAY* and sever his connection with them. Neither journal survived his departure in its original shape.

3. Alison Janice Minoff Cox, "Robert Barr" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 70, ed. Bernard Benstock and Thomas F. Staley (Detroit: Gale Research, 1988), p. 17.

4. "I had the plan in my mind of a new weekly paper that should be a combination of magazine and journal. I put my own money into it, and got together the rest."

5. The journal was published on Thursday and so available on Friday. Jerome wanted it to be a Saturday journal so he could have access to the full week of news for its "TO-DAY" section, but he did not achieve this, ironically and sadly, until just at the point (May 1897) at which he lost control of his publications. "I have, from the beginning," he wrote, "been of the opinion that *TO-DAY* was essentially a Saturday paper, but there are difficulties connected with publishing on a Saturday that it is almost impossible for a paper to overcome until it has established for itself a position. By these arrangements I hope to make the paper more closely up-to-date" (1 May 1897, p. 182).

6. Jerome bragged that “there is more original literary matter in *To-Day* than in any weekly paper published *at any price*” and that “no weekly journal issued *at any price* has ever paid such large sums for literary matter as *TO-DAY* is now paying to all the leading English writers for sole and exclusive rights” (6 Jan. 1894, p 23). Indeed, the contributors of fiction include George Gissing, Arthur Conan Doyle, Mary Braddon, R.L. Stevenson, Israel Zangwill, Morley Roberts, Barry Pain, Mary Pendered, Rudyard Kipling, Ambrose Bierce and Sarah Grand.
7. Of course the Victorians would not have used the term ‘multidisciplinary’ for periodicals. The term is a twentieth-century formulation made possible even essential by the creation and formalizing of the ‘disciplines’, an achievement of the late nineteenth century.
8. The first one was “The British Mission at Kabul” by Louis Tracy (11 November 1893) and three weeks later Edward Aveling contributed “How to Become an Anarchist” (9 December 1893).
9. For example “I have always taken pessimistic views of sanitary improvements... The only advantage that I can see in the modern rage for drains is that it affords occupation for two large, and generally speaking, deserving classes of the community – namely, plumbers and doctors” (2 December 1893, p. 19).
10. The departments underwent various name changes, but these are typical: “Club Chatter” (men’s affairs, mainly sports and fashionable dress); “The Diary of a Bookseller”; “Private View” (art galleries); “The Bauble Shop” (the week in Parliament); “Stageland” (interviews with theatre people). From the beginning there was a woman’s department, mainly about fashion, though including recipes and sewing tips; again later, issues of domestic economy were introduced.
11. “Our headings were designed by Mr. Edgar Wilson, an artist who is considered to be the very best man for this sort of work. You will see much of his work in *Pick-Me-Up*, *The Sketch*, and others.” *TO-DAY* (31 March 1894 p. 243).
12. *TO-DAY*, 2 December 1893, p. 17. To be fair, Jerome said about a year later, in one of the “Topics of *TO-DAY*” that “The time has come round again for woman as God meant her; man’s helpmeet, neither his slave nor his perpetual monitor,” 1 September 1894, p. 114. The woman’s department changed titles and formats over the years, and in February 1896 becomes “On Many Matters” by Mrs. Humphrey (who wrote as Madge for the Lebouchere weekly *Truth*): “The Editor has asked me to make this page as useful as possible to young and inexperienced wives who have to keep house on limited allowance and maintain an appearance suitable to their position in what may be called the upper middle classes” (16 February 1896, p. 119). The previous column “Feminine Affairs” disappears for a few weeks on the appearance of this new department. Sadly, during the last months of Jerome’s control over the journal, he prints what he claims was an unsolicited series of eleven letters from an anonymous source (“Paterfamilias”) entitled “Domestic Blunders of Women” which taken together constitute a vitriolic attack on women’s bad household management asserting that any man can do it better. Jerome had a jocular response to the series claiming that it was good business for the journal but bad for him personally since he was assaulted by women friends wherever he went. “Womankind does not take to criticism kindly” (26 December 1896, p.226).
13. Its last appearance under Jerome’s editorship is November 1896. For the most part when this logo is used, the topic is gendered masculine i.e. “A Substitute for Swearing” in July 1894; “Is Corrupt Government better than an Honest One?” in March 1895; “Who is the Handsomest Woman in England?” May 1896.
14. Charlotte C. Watkins on the *Idler*, in *British Literary Magazines. 1837-1913*, edited by Alvin Sullivan. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984, p. 416). Another take on this world, sometimes called in their own times the world of the “new humourists,” is that of Tom Stoppard in *The Invention of Love*. He is very tough on Jerome, who, sitting in a boat with George Chesterton and Frank Harris, declares that Oscar Wilde was not a gentleman, and furthermore “His work won’t last either. Decadence was a blind alley in English life and letters. Wholesome humour has always been our strength. Wholesome humour and rattling good yarn.” (Act II). Both the condescension toward the goals of the *Idler* and the valorizing of decadence as the key to modernism express neatly the position of a journal like the *Idler* in our sense of the culture of the 1890s. Jerome’s journals provide a counter view to the dominant critical narrative about modernism.
15. The woman illustrator with the most contributions was Gertrude Hammond, but her contributions essentially end with volume IV (the last six months of 1893). After Jerome takes over the sole responsibility of the *Idler*, women illustrators essentially disappear from the magazine though the number of women contributors slightly increases.

16. “*New Grub Street and the Woman Writer of the 1890s*” in *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s*, edited by Nikki Lee Manos and Meri-Jane Rochelson (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 21-45. Stetz discusses Wotton’s story “The Fifth Edition” on page 38.
17. The majority of women contributors of articles and fiction to the *Idler* appear only once. Those with the most contributions of either fiction or articles over the years of Jerome’s editorship are Marie Belloc, daughter of Elizabeth Rayner Parkes Belloc and sister of Hillaire, and Mrs. Humphrey with six each followed by Mary Pendered, a journalist and romantic novelist whose most well-known work at the time was *The Truth about Men, by a Spinster* (which was serialized in *Woman’s Realm*) with five. Two of the best-known women writers who appear several times are Marie Corelli and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, who contribute to the series “My First Book,” with accounts of their first writing experiences (February 1893 and October 1893).
18. Jerome and the *Idler* staff hosted convivial tea parties in the journal’s offices every Friday for contributors and friends.
19. One number (XIII, April 1898) bound in with the copy of the *Idler* which I was reading appears to be an informal ledger of the amount of money given for each illustration and each story or article. From this it appears that each contributor to “The Idler’s Club” was paid a guinea, and there is no difference in payment to men and women contributors. The articles seem to have been paid by the word (the text is counted off by slashes). The Baroness Von Zedlitz received three guineas for a five-page piece called “Only a Ball Dress” while the illustrator of that piece received seven guineas for three full-page illustrations.
20. There are five topics that have only women contributors: “How to Court the Advanced Woman?” (September 1894); “Men’s Pet Vanities” (July 1895); “The Man in Love”(February 1896); “At What Age is Man Most Attractive?” (August 1897) and “Should Women Vote” (March 1897). Three have a majority of women contributors: “How I Bring Up My Parents” (October 1895); “Is Society a Pleasure or a Bore?? (July 1896), and “Early Marriages—Should They be Encouraged—Or Abolished?” (October 1897).
21. This masculinist stance toward the New Woman continues for another year, when on the opening page in April 1895, another poem, this one by Spencer Jerome, (“The New Woman”), concludes that “woman’s subtle power is lost save when/ By comfort of her love, she rules o’er men” (p. 15)
22. Arabella Kenealy was the daughter of Edward Kenealy (1819-1880) junior counsel for the defense of William Palmer and more notoriously the counsel for the Tichborne claimant. He behaved badly, apparently, and was disbarred. His daughter wrote a memoir of him in 1908.
23. As with Ella Hepworth Dixon’s ironic comment above, consider how even Eliza Lynn Linton can use irony in a parenthetical comment responding to an *Idler*’s Club topic “Is Love a Practical Reality or a Passing Fiction?”: “There was one man I knew down in a village, and he fell in love with a pretty girl—they mostly do that—but she would have nothing to say to him” (February 1893, 112).
24. As anyone working with nineteenth-century periodicals knows, our access to covers and advertising of journals we now read in bound volume form is uncertain at best. The bound copy of the *Idler* which I own has no volume title pages, no covers, and no advertisements; the copy in Senate House Library UCL has volume title pages but no covers, and the British Library copy has volume title pages, but covers only after Jerome enlarged the size of the journal and enhanced the illustrations.
25. Inside the journal there are other versions of this use of female images to create a feminine space in the journal. An article on “Types of Italian Beauty” in 1896 seems to have no purpose except to provide an excuse for sexy pictures. Text is dispensed with completely in the series “Studies of Fair Women” (February and March 1897). Even the “newspaper magazine” *TO-DAY* occasionally used images of women in this way as with a piece on “The Eternal Feminine” which contains photographs of women (August 1, 1896).
26. The only run of the *Idler* that I have seen that contains the advertising column by Laura is the British Library copy. Jerome was quite innovative in the advertising pages of both his journals, at least as far as I can tell from what has survived in the copies I have seen. There are the usual display ads on the covers, but in the *Idler* maybe beginning in May 1897, Jerome institutes a “column” called “Anecdotes and Incidents” by “Laura.” This column, full of gossip, puffs, jokes, and short paragraphs of information, is integrated into display ads. Probably the reason the British Library bound these pages into their volumes of the *Idler* (though at the back, separated from their numbers) is because they couldn’t tell whether this section (numbered separately) was letterpress or advertising.