

Who Said What: Discovering the Authors of *The Young Idea*

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Abstract

The newspaper “The Young Idea” was a handwritten newspaper that circulated on the H.M.S. “Chesapeake” from the years 1857 to 1859. This newspaper was not formally published, meaning it was written by men who worked in the British Navy as their profession. It was written by certain men aboard the ship and originated as a way to have fun and record their time aboard the H.M.S. “Chesapeake.” The way the newspaper was written was interesting, and it raised the question on how literate the men contributing to “The Young Idea” were. The researchers read the newspaper, transcribed, and coded so that the question on how literate the contributors were could be answered. One way this research was conducted was to look at the slang and jargon used by the shipmen to speculate on what class they were from, and to therefore determine the level of literacy the contributors possessed.

Introduction

The H.M.S. “Chesapeake” was a ship that sailed during the height of the British Empire. The H.M.S. “Chesapeake” was launched in 1855 and sailed for the British Navy until 1867, when it was broken up and sold. It traveled to several different countries, including India, China, and what is now known as Saudi Arabia (Isbell n.p.). One of the ways this is known is because of a handwritten newspaper called “The Young Idea”. This newspaper had many personal anecdotes as well as professional reports that discussed the men’s time abroad. It was an insider’s look to what was happening to the men in this war.

“The Young Idea” was all hand written and circulated around to the crew of the ship. Unfortunately, there are no surviving primary documents of “The Young Idea.” There are, however, two surviving witnesses of this handwritten newspaper. One is in the Chaplain’s JWL Bampffield’s personal journal, the other is a published book, *The Young Idea: A Naval Journal Edited on Board the H.M.S. Chesapeake in 1857, 1858 & 1859*. These were the two sources used in efforts to answer the question: What was the average education level of the average sailor who contributed to the newspaper and is it possible to determine it through analyzing and transcribing these two witnesses?

Through time, though, the question changed. It was apparent that discovering the average education level of the sailors aboard the ship would be too broad of a question to answer. It became evident the more “The Young Idea” was read that only the same few men were contributing to the newspaper. This was shown by the fact that only a few initials appeared in Bampffield’s journal. The only records of the contributors are the initials he would write at the end of each article. Because of the limited amount of contributors, it would not be possible to determine the education levels for all of the men aboard the ship. The question then morphed into figuring out the class level of the contributors of the newspaper and then that information would be used to determine the literacy of the contributors. The answer to this question was sought out by looking at and tagging for the slang and jargon used in the text once it had been transcribed and coded.

Material and Methods

Materials used in this research were the witnesses to “The Young Idea,” as well as the XML coding program Oxygen, and the correlation program Juxta.

“The Young Idea” was published by Alexander D. McArthur, who acted as editor for the newspaper (Isbell n.p.). This newspaper depicted the daily lives of men living aboard the ship. It had sections dedicated to cricket games, letters to the editor, jokes, daily news aboard the ship, and more. This newspaper had documented reports on battles that took place in India and descriptions of landscapes, people, and parties (Bampffield n.p.). Because the newspaper itself is no longer in existence, the two witnesses were used in its stead. Something notable about the witnesses is that some of the articles change. In Bampffield’s journal, there are more graphic descriptions of things the men saw, such as corpses in the Hooghly River or an entire edition on a battle that was fought (Bampffield n.p.). Both of these were missing from *The Young Idea: A Naval Journal Edited on Board the H.M.S. Chesapeake in 1857, 1858 & 1859*. Another discrepancy noticed between the two witnesses was that the order of that the articles appeared in was changed. Some articles would appear earlier in *The Young Idea: A Naval Journal Edited on Board the H.M.S. Chesapeake in 1857, 1858 & 1859* than in Bampffield’s journal. This was the same with the editions of the newspaper as well.

The second material used was the XML coding program Oxygen. It is a program used to code in the XML format. It helped create a schema and specialized tags while still being easy to use for those not well versed in programming languages.

Finally, the third tool was the correlation program Juxta. Juxta is an online program that lines up documents and checks them against each other for discrepancies.

Methods used to obtain the raw data were transcribing, coding, and correlation. There were photos of both of the witnesses that were then read and transcribed. This was done by typing everything seen on the page. When a word was unable to be read, it was marked with brackets and the word illegible instead of the word written on the

witness to act as a placeholder for the indeterminable word. Issues 2-13 were transcribed from JWL Bampffield's journal while issues Prologue-6 were transcribed from *The Young Idea: A Naval Journal Edited on Board the H.M.S. Chesapeake in 1857, 1858 & 1859*.

After all the issues stated above were transcribed, they were then coded using the program Oxygen. This required learning and understanding the markup language of XML. Once this knowledge was learned, each of the issues were coded together to create a digital edition of "The Young Idea." Each of the separate witnesses were coded in separate XML files on Oxygen. Each file was checked for errors and basic tags were included, such as tags for superscripts and underlined words.

After both files were complete and coded correctly, files contributed from the other member of the team and the research mentor were correlated against each other using the program Juxta. Files of the same witnesses were lined up side-by-side and the program found differences in each of the files. The files were then checked against the original photographs to find the most accurate transcription of the witness.

Challenges

This research proved to be extremely difficult to conduct. There was not much previous research done on "The Young Idea" to begin with. Dr. Isbell is one of the first people to start research, so she is the main source for outside sources on "The Young Idea" specifically. There was not much research done in the discipline of written slang and jargon from the mid-19th century British Empire.

One source could have been *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, if it had been more pertinent to the research. While this source was extremely useful in understanding the history of education in this time period, it proved to not be useful to the research conducted. It never expanded on how the different classes were educated, what the difference between private and public educations were, or what could have been learned as far as reading and literacy goes. If there had been a section describing the differences between public, private, and even tutored educations, then this source could have been useful. If it had contained that one section, conclusions could have been drawn about the types of vocabulary being learned, the types of phrasing that would have been used, or even the grammar that was most commonly taught. Because it did not have a section devoted to that, it was not useful.

Another source that was reviewed was *The Tom & Jerry Flash Dictionary*. It was a dictionary that had different types of slang used all over the British Empire during the mid 1800s. It would have been extremely helpful if there had been blatant uses of slang throughout "The Young Idea." Because there were not obvious examples of slang written in the newspaper, it was not particularly helpful. It did give some context as to what was being said, even if it wasn't written at the time. As far as "The Young Idea" goes, it was difficult to distinguish what could have potentially been slang versus an illegible word.

These were two of the only resources found that were useful in any way. Most searches on databases and library websites proved either to be inconclusive or produced sources that did not have any directly relevant information to the topic in question.

New Question

Because the research was difficult to pursue, it was put aside and another question that could be answered more easily was thought up. The new question explored why certain aspects of "The Young Idea" included in Bampffield's journal were not included in *The Young Idea: A Naval Journal Edited on Board the H.M.S. Chesapeake in 1857, 1858 & 1859* (from hereon referred to as the facsimile). The fact that certain parts of "The Young Idea" only appeared in one of the witnesses and the not the other raises a lot of questions, but the most prevalent is why were these specific stories not included in the facsimile?

The facsimile was edited and published after McArthur had returned to England (Isbell n.p.). He had already concluded his duties aboard the H.M.S. "Chesapeake" and "The Young Idea" had long since stopped being published. He created the facsimile for friends, similar to a Kickstarter project: depending on how much one donated, that person would receive a published version of "The Young Idea" (Isbell n.p.). Dr. Isbell has speculated on how this has been published. She believes that the newspaper was edited so that each edition would only be four pages long (Isbell n.p.). Because of this, a lot of information had to be edited out and moved around.

One conclusion as to why the more graphic scenes and descriptions were excluded could be to protect women. It was commonly believed that, during this time period, women were perceived to be gentler than men and that they needed protection from things that could emotionally upset them. Because "The Young Idea" is about was a war, there were a lot of moments that were darker and much more disgusting. Something that appeared in Bampffield's journal was an angry letter about natives attacking some of the gentry living in India at the time, but this article does not show up in the facsimile (Bampffield n.p.). This is a prime example of how McArthur could have gone about protecting the women from the more gruesome conversations war brings about. Some of the eliminated descriptions were of dead bodies floating in rivers, battles that caused many to die, and certain jokes that could be perceived as vulgar (Bampffield n.p.).

Researching the beliefs behind what women could and could not psychologically handle in the mid 1800s would be useful. The belief of the time period that women had less tolerance for violence than men would have to be initially proven. Then it would have to be proven that McArthur believed this by doing a close read of both Bampffield's journal and the facsimile. The close read would be to look for specific instances of violence and how many of those were deleted from the facsimile in comparison with whatever else was eliminated. A conclusion could then be drawn that, if more graphic imagery was deleted, McArthur

did it to protect the women who could have come in contact with his facsimile.

Results

To have a proper article to perform this research on, the facsimile and Bampfield's journal were both reread. There was an article that had been in Bampfield's journal that had not appeared in the facsimile. While there were other, smaller examples, this one seemed the best to look at because of how long it was and the fact that there were many components to it.

Initially, this research was going to focus on the authors of articles that looked specifically at the way women were treated in this time period. This approach would have helped prove that women were believed to be inferior because the source saying this is a reputable one. While this was a good idea, it was not the easiest way to conduct research. There were several authors who are all well established, but their specialties were not on specifically whether or not women were perceived to be weaker than men.

The second, and much more fruitful, way of conducting this research was to look for primary documents that commented on whether or not women were believed to be inferior. One such document was a book, titled *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character & Responsibilities* written by Sarah Stickney Ellis. This book depicted the proper ways women were to portray themselves in society. The book was published in London, England in 1842, less than 15 years before "The Young Idea" was initially published. A passage from the book stated, "As a woman, then, the first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men—inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength" (Ellis 8). This quote shows that it was expected for women to know that they were "lesser" than men, thus helping to prove that women were considered weaker than men.

Another source was a lecture entitled "Of Queen and Gardens" in which the speaker, John Ruskin, discusses the natural roles of women and men in society. Ruskin comments that "...the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places" (Ruskin 147). This quote explains that, while men are stronger physically and can handle the gruesome realities of war and battle, women are much more suited for the home. Ruskin explains that women have a natural way of being gentler and nicer, which makes women perfect for running the home. This lecture was published in 1865, not long after "The Young Idea" was ended. This proves that the belief that women were unable to handle war was still firmly held as truth during the time "The Young Idea" was published.

There were other ways this research was conducted besides looking for primary sources. A famous review of *Jane Eyre* was examined to see why Elizabeth Rigby, the reviewer, did not find the famous novel appropriate. Rigby wrote, "The little Jane...is a being you neither could fondle

nor love. There is a hardness in her infantine earnestness, and a spiteful precocity in her reasoning, which repulses all our sympathy" (Rigby). The reasons for Rigby's harsh critique of the novel were because she did not like Jane and how Jane was portrayed. She believed that Jane was harsh and calloused, and too much like a man in her opinions. Because Jane was not a sweet, caring child who let go of her anger (Rigby), Rigby could not sympathize with the girl. These were traits commonly put upon women from childhood, meaning that, because Jane was not the normal little girl, she was unable to be like by the reader. This review was published in 1848, which helps perpetrate the belief that women were meant to have a certain mild mannerism that would not be able to handle the brutality of war.

The final article is a paper published in 2011 that looks at Catherine Morland, one of Jane Austin's protagonists. It discusses whether or not this one specific character is a feminist character. At one point in the article, the author argues that, "Presenting its norms as natural and women as less than men.... Because of this dominant and stereotypical view of women, the individual is again and again denied—whether through calculation, blindness, chance, or custom—'her turn to speak'" (Cardón). This quote discusses how it was normal to look at women as though they are less masculine, which makes them inferior and denied the right to speak.

Through all of these sources, it has been determined that women were considered less than men in England in the mid 19th century.

Discussion

The first thing that had to be proven for this question to have any standing would be that women in the 1800s were considered less able to handle traumatizing events. The above section shows that to be true due to the many sources. The quote from "Of Queen and Gardens" also implies that women need to be protected by men (Ruskin 147). Throughout the lecture, Ruskin comments on how women need men to fight battles for them because women were meant to be gentler and much sweeter than men. Because of this stereotype, McArthur could have wanted to continue protecting women from war, much as Ruskin implied was man's duty. This could easily be a reason as to why he edited his facsimile in the way he had, which was different from his original newspaper.

One specific article in Bampfield (issue 10 pages 1-2) discusses the pain one man is feeling in the aftermath of the Siege of Lucknow (Bampfield n.p.). This one article discusses how angry the author is at the native Indian people, mainly because of how they have treated the English gentry living in India at the time (Bampfield n.p.). The man who wrote it is also extremely upset about how the Indians have treated the Christian missionaries who have come to India and he professes that maybe the people would have behaved differently if the Indian religion had been more merciful (Bampfield n.p.). At one point, the author says, "We stormed our "Ruler," says the Tinior, 'as named in we could, the pair of revolting & horrible images;- we have us

objection that they shall know, that there are the most terrible details in the back-ground of outrage perpetrated upon English men, and English women” (Bampfild n.p.). This quote comments on there were horrible things done to innocent people in India whose crime was living there.

The whole article is very morbid and morose. It could easily be viewed as too upsetting for a woman to handle. Women, as Ellis has commented on them, are believed to be inferior in all ways to men (Ellis). Emotional inferiority must also be included in this statement. Because of the depressing content of the article, it is easy to assume that women would not be able to handle this one specific article. Also, because women from this time period are meant to be sweet and pitiable (Rigby), this article would make them far too emotional and unable to handle such a subject.

Conclusion

It is reasonable to suggest that McArthur edited the journal in the way he did to protect women from the vulgarities written in the original document. He wanted to make sure that, with the removal of graphic and morbid scenes, the women would not be harmed in any way. If he did not care, he would not have deleted an article that captured such emotion and frustration from the point of view of the soldier about a battle that was truly horrible.

While this research was much more answerable, the original question has not been forgotten in all of this. There are other, more complex ways to answer what the education levels of the men who contributed were. Transcribing and coding the Muster Logs for the ship could be one way to decipher this question. The Muster Logs were the logs of all the men who worked aboard the H.M.S. “Chesapeake.” From this, sailors who worked with McArthur could be determined and then their literacy level could be speculated on.

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Biography



My name is Katelyn Sahagian. I'm originally from Hamilton, Massachusetts. I am a junior at the University of New Haven studying English and Communications, with concentrations in writing and

journalism. I am a peer tutor in the tutoring program called Writer to Writer here on campus. I am also a member of the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honors society. I aspire to become a journalist for a newspaper once I graduate from University of New Haven. My dream job would be working internationally and covering stories around the world, but I would also love to work domestically, either for the New York Times or the Boston Globe.

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