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Mary Lynn Stewart, *Gender, Generation, and Journalism in France, 1910-1940*. (Montreal, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018). x + 288 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$44.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0773553231.

Review by Kathryne Adair Corbin, Haverford College.

From her start with nearly a dozen boxes of poorly organized press clippings at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Mary Lynn Stewart presents the culmination of eight years of study in her well-researched and methodically-presented work, *Gender, Generation, and Journalism in France, 1910-1940*. In order to fill the scholarly void of the lives and work of interwar women journalists, Stewart takes the cases of ten such Frenchwomen who had bylines for at least five consecutive years in nine national daily newspapers between 1910 and 1940. This period marks the first time women were able to exercise the profession of newspaper journalist in the way it was intended. The final paragraph of Stewart's introduction reminds readers why these women are so deserving of our attention: they were exceptions in a male-dominated workplace, contended with unwelcoming colleagues, and faced editors and readers "who viewed them through gendered lenses that limited their possibilities, but [these women journalists] devised mechanisms to cope with, and in some cases, excel in the press" (p. 17). Indeed, presenting integrity, learning on site, and rising to the challenge despite conventional ideas were critical characteristics of interwar newspaper women.

Stewart's study examines women writing in the newspaper during the golden age of professional news reporting, when newspapers were the main source of news information, and also when most women were denied a place in the "hard news" columns. This is a welcome resource because it furthers understanding of women journalists of the interwar daily press, presenting a comprehensive vision of their lives and work in the field, considering at once shifting gender norms and also the generational evolution of women journalists.

In her introduction, Stewart explains that the "main storyline" of her work is in fact how these women overcame challenges and even flourished in the (often gender-segregated) newspaper industry. This work joins recent scholarship that explores the lives and work of newspaper women in American literary culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which has shed light on how women's writing in American journalism shaped their writing of fiction and also provided insight into the place of women in the creation of mass culture.[1] This study engages with scholarship by Rachel Mesch and Mary Louise Roberts who examine gender roles in the press in Belle Époque and *fin-de-siècle* France,[2] and connects with the work undertaken by the pluridisciplinary RIRRA-21 research group, under the direction of Marie-Ève Thérénty, and the Médias 19 platform, under the co-direction of Guillaume Pinson and Thérénty, which have focused on "culture médiatique" since the nineteenth century. Few works, however, on French journalism or journalists have been published in English; *Gender, Generation, and Journalism* thus opens the subject of French newspaperwomen to an English-speaking audience.

Rather than offer linear narratives about the lives of these exceptional women, *Gender, Generation, and*

Journalism “uses the women’s stories as material for an analysis of how gender, generation, and mentoring affected their careers and written work” (p. 5). To do so, Stewart is attentive and clear in her definitions of these three concepts in the introduction, and also offers a brief contextual history of the newspaper industry in modern France. The concept of generation as a marker for discussing new groups in a profession is an interesting one, and it certainly proves successful here in that it allows readers to understand how women worked together, advanced their careers, and helped the industry to evolve. In this way, “generation” offers readers a conceptual framework from which to understand the women during the period in which they worked when compared to those before or after them, when the profession was drastically different—because it did change drastically in just a few decades, with many changes from woman to woman.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly in the introduction, in order to avoid simplified generalizations about content and style, Stewart carefully explains her methodologies for constructing lateral comparisons of women reporters and analyzing gender by making comparisons between men and women in similar positions. Stewart cites four scholars who influenced her approach to style and tone,^[3] and she applies a combination of these methods to forge different types of analyses on different works. For example, using Forsdick’s method of comparing male and female travel writers based on their same itinerary, combined with the content and style analysis of Hall or Borroff, Stewart is able to offer a thorough comparison of the reports filed and *grand reportage* volumes published by colleagues at *Le Petit Parisien*, Andrée Viollis and Albert Londres.

A critical and insightful result of this intersectional study is the discussion of how factors other than the two main components—gender and generation—shaped women’s work. Stewart notes class background, political persuasion, and education as factors altering one’s perception of events and style. Because—as best as the author can ascertain—all journalists profiled in her study are white, this trait could also distinguish them as a group, but, as Stewart notes, their race—if such a construct exists—“does not account for differences between them” (p. 14). During the period under study, journalists routinely expressed racial ideas; Stewart’s research into the ways newspaperwomen perceived social others, notably in regards to France’s governing of its colonial empires, offers readers important primary sources on the ways women (and, for comparison, some men) who traveled internationally, engaged politically, and reported in the daily press contemplated racial issues in Third Republic France.

Part one, “Generation, Mentors, and Mothers,” first exposes the foundational role of first-generation journalists and then takes the case of three pairs of women journalists and one family of journalists to show how elder generations offered guidance toward future generations. In chapter one, “Pioneers and Mentors: Séverine and Durand, 1880s-1909,” Stewart profiles Séverine and Marguerite Durand, pioneering newspaperwomen who “believed in seeking out the facts, not just commenting upon them” in what Séverine called a “stand-up” rather than a “sit-down” style of journalism (p. 23). Stewart notes that Séverine began her career as secretary to Jules Vallès, yet does not mention the important generational guidance in this close relationship in which Séverine considered Vallès her *père spirituel*. Stewart argues that these two women directly encouraged future generations of women journalists through mentoring, financing projects, or, in Durand’s case, hiring only women writers for her daily, *La Fronde* (p. 36). Here, Stewart poses key questions that offer the foundation for her book’s argument: “What explains the poor record of occupational organization among journalists?” (p. 31), “Why were there so few women reporters?” (p. 32), and “Why didn’t Frenchwomen sustain a women’s press club?” (p. 35). These questions are answered in part in this chapter, but in more depth throughout the book.

In chapters two, three, and four, Stewart presents case studies of unique mentoring relationships between women of different generations: first, Séverine and Marcelle Cappy; then, Colette and Germaine Beaumont; and finally, Gustave Téry and Andrée Viollis and their daughter Simone Téry. Stewart argues that aspiring women reporters welcomed help from established women in the field because the newsroom was viewed as a masculine space not always welcoming to women (p. 38). These chapters highlight the

important work by early-generation women writing in the daily press, notably areas that are overlooked by scholars, such as Marcelle Cappy's detailed accounts of women in the paid labor force during the Great War. Cappy was one of few women who reported on women's working conditions and strikes, and she also published a (highly-censored) pacifist tract in which she showed compassion for all the victims of the war (p. 41, p. 46). Cappy's empathetic style was not respected at the time, but without this important work, what would the historical record reflect?

In the case of Colette and Germaine Beaumont, Stewart uses their intimate relationship, and their careers as columnists for *Le Matin* and as novelists of subject matter related to women to observe and compare their trajectories. Ultimately, Stewart finds, exceptional female writers like Colette "could transcend the condescension of literary and journalistic cognoscenti with little concession to mainstream criticism," when handling "feminine" subject matter and positioning, while Beaumont's novels were mostly shelved (p. 70).

For Andrée Viollis and her daughter Simone Téry, both reporters whose political engagement grew in the 1930s, Stewart notes key differences in the ways they express their identity and incorporate empathy into their work. For Andrée, women reporters should "do their work exactly like men," often working even harder (which, Stewart argues, explains the lack of women's press clubs), while Simone and her contemporaries were more positive about the special qualities and sympathies women could bring to the newsroom (p. 92). Ultimately, these first four chapters show how generations of newswomen support each other yet remain independent thinkers in their work (p. 93).

Part two, "Gender and Front-Page Reporting," begins with a significant study of the highest-paid reporters from *Le Petit Parisien* during the interwar period: Albert Londres and Andrée Viollis. Chapter five, "Gender and Grand Reporting: Andrée Viollis and Albert Londres on Asia, 1930s," is the first to tackle the implications of gender by following these two reporters covering the same event. Recently, literary scholars such as Thérenty, Pinson, and Christine Planté have analyzed the work of certain women journalists as compared to conventional journalistic practices in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but without directly comparing two specific reporters in this way.^[4] In this chapter, Stewart demonstrates how gender differences led to different life experiences and socialization, the result of which manifests differently in their reporting. Londres, for example, often played the role of ignorant observer in sleazy bars to get the scoop, while a well-educated Viollis was able to use her class and gender to gain access to sources. Certainly, as Stewart notes, "gender expectations informed the reception of their performances in journalism" (p.104), but Viollis's reporting directly challenged gender role expectations (p.114). Stewart does offer a brief stylistic comparison (e.g. personal pronoun use, emotional and empathetic writing, exclamation points, and rhetorical questions), opening the field for scholars to continue exploring this initial work.

Chapter six, "Gender, Politics, and Racism in Colonial Reporting, 1930s," focuses again mostly on Viollis, positioning her work against that of her contemporaries in order to analyze colonialism and "the French imaginary." Stewart offers essential background information on colonial policy that helps to contextualize the work of the metropolitan press. Finally, Stewart presents her defense of Viollis against charges by Nicola Cooper that painted Viollis as upholding a patriarchal feminism in the colonies, by which women would be the moral tutors to "uncivilized natives and colonizers" (p.138). Stewart argues that Viollis was "a liberal and egalitarian feminist" who saw colonial women as complacent, but not more, and refutes Cooper's claims to the contrary for lack of real evidence. Viollis, Stewart argues, rejected racial hierarchies and was drawn to other cultures; while, like her contemporaries, she expected to find a stereotypical barbarian population, she instead found a "sensible and civilized people" (p. 141). This chapter highlights the ways Viollis practiced new forms of journalism for the popular press, and, by reporting corruption in the French colonies, "challenged orthodox colonial ideologies of association and assimilation alike" (p. 141).

Chapter seven, “Family and Diplomatic Reporting: Geneviève Tabouis, 1930s,” follows the career of a third-generation woman reporter and the only French woman diplomatic reporter in the interwar period. Tabouis relied heavily on familial contacts (her uncles were ambassadors) and was outspoken in her field from 1933 to 1944 (p. 160), drawing such ire from the Nazis that Hitler indicated her by name in speeches and the Nazi press referred to her as “the poisoner” (p. 157). While Tabouis disapproved of gender barriers, she did not report on the women’s cause until after she met with feminists in the United States during World War II (p. 160).

Part three, “Gender on Other Beats,” completes Stewart’s study of women journalists with two chapters: social reporting and women’s pages. In “Gender and Social Reporting: La Mazière, Clar, and Moran, 1922-1939,” Stewart assesses how women investigated living and working conditions, health, and housing of women and children of the poor and working classes. Because little research has been done on this type of reporting in interwar France, this is an important chapter that opens scholars to the work of these little-known reporters and their findings, especially given the critical time for reporting of this scope at the height of the Popular Front in 1936. Regarding investigations of children in the interwar judicial system, Stewart poses valid questions: “Why are the two women [Alice La Mazière and Simone Téry] (and possibly other women and men) elided from this and other histories of the press between the wars?” (p. 165), and “Why did [Louis] Roubaud’s investigation have far more impact than la Mazière’s?” (p. 167). To answer, Stewart points out that Roubaud was first to investigate the problem, so his work endured, but also that many of the important ideas that La Mazière raised were brushed aside because of her gender: the “feminist remedies decreased the impact of her series” (p. 168). In her discussion of the work of these journalists, Stewart presents readers with critical sources for further scholarship on poverty, antiracism, and social hygiene, concluding that “there may be more women—and men—whose social reporting deserves similar consideration” (p. 181).

The final chapter, “Women’s Pages: Rosine, Magda, and Chandet, 1918-1940,” offers a partial survey of columns and women’s pages, which—at first—appears to be departure from the more politically-focused newspaperwomen presented in the eight preceding chapters. On further consideration, however, we learn that while the women’s pages did differ from the rest of the newspaper in content, style, and concept of time, these differences are not a result of women’s character as much as they are a result of imposed commercial imperatives relating to school, household schedules, and religious viewpoints (p. 198). The women’s pages focused on the private sphere, the “women’s realm” where women were hired to write about “the four Fs’: family, food, furniture, and fashion” (p. 182). This page was important: it created jobs for women in the workplace, and also increased readership among women, thereby increasing newspaper circulation and raising advertising revenues. On the other hand, women who began careers in “soft news” rarely (if ever) made the jump to reporting “hard news” and, as such, remained segregated within the newsroom and within the pages of the newspaper. While Rachel Mesch has studied women’s magazines in Belle Époque France,^[5] a gap remains in scholarship of the women’s pages of the newspaper in interwar France. Again, this chapter presents a fascinating study of the women’s pages in the newspaper industry and is worthy of our attention and continued exploration.

In her conclusion, Stewart summarizes the challenges these ten women faced because they were a minority in their field (p. 200), notes the differences (and lack thereof) between men’s and women’s interwar reporting (p. 201), notably in regards to showing empathy (p. 203), and reminds readers that there is no single feminine style (p. 202). Finally, Stewart draws readers’ attention to the need for research in five key areas: secondary subjects, regional women journalists, journalists on the political right, biographies of editors, and newsroom climate.

Aside from the core group of women discussed, Stewart also brings to light dozens of other mostly forgotten men and women who published in the daily press, transformed their *grands reportages* into monographs, and also wrote novels (and even a cookbook!). Although Stewart cites many of these works in her bibliography, an appendix of journalists and their works would be a most welcome resource for

scholars keen to explore issues of gender, interwar politics and international relations, and media studies from a literary or historical perspective. Finally, there are some typographical errors or errors in translation. Whereas a few errors are harmless, certain errors of proper name cast doubts on subsequent instances of proper names (e.g. the author notes the work of Denise de Girardin [p. 8] and Elsa Maillart [p. 97, p. 112] rather than Delphine and Ella; and cites both *La Voie de la paix* and *La Voix de la paix* [p. 51]--the former is correct).

In sum, *Gender, Generation and Journalism* is a rich and provocative, well-researched and clearly-presented study that demonstrates the significance of the work of these underexplored newspaperwomen during a crucial time of transition for women in the workforce and especially in the daily press.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, Joseph Dalton, *Washington's Golden Age: Hope Ridings Miller, the Society Beat, and the Rise of Women Journalists* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); Jean Lutes, *Front Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007); Brooke Kroger, *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist, 1864-1922* (New York: Times Books, 1994).

[2] See Mary Louis Roberts, *Disruptive Acts. The New Woman in Fin-de-siècle France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002); Rachel Mesch, *Having it All in the Belle Époque: How French Women's Magazines Invented the Modern Woman* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[3] For intertextuality, Dominique Maingueneau, *Initiation aux méthodes de l'analyse du discours. Problèmes et perspectives*. (Paris: Hachette, 1976); for content analysis, Stuart Hall, et al., eds. *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*. (London: Hutchinson, 1980) and Cynthia Carter et al., *News, Gender and Power*. (London: Routledge, 2007); for style analysis, Marie Borroff, *Language and the Poet: Verbal Artistry in Frost, Stevens, and Moore*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); for the comparison of male and female travel writers of the same itinerary, Charles Forsdick et al., *New Approaches to Twentieth-Century Travel Literature in French: Genre, History, Theory*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

[4] Guillaume Pinson, "La femme masculinisée dans la presse mondaine de la Belle Époque" *Clio* 30 (2009): 211-230; Christine Planté, *Masculin-féminin dans la presse du XIXe siècle* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2015); Marie-Ève Thérénty, "De La Fronde à la guerre (1897-1918): les premières femmes reporters" *Autour de Vallès* 40 (2010): 143-162 ; Marie-Ève Thérénty, "Femmes, journalisme et pensée sous la Monarchie de Juillet" *Lieux littéraires*; Marie-Ève Thérénty, "LA Chronique et LE reportage : du 'genre' (gender) des genres journalistiques," *Études littéraires* 40, 3 (2009): 115-125.

[5] Mesch, *Having it All in the Belle Époque*.

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