"Slumming in Whitechapel" with Lillie Harris (1863–1921): Disembodiment, Power, and the Female Investigative Journalist

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> You who are reading this article, though you are now sharing my thoughts, do not know me as an embodied human being any more than I can possibly know you. (In fact, as I write this, you do not yet exist.)[1]

All periodical research has a point of entry—a specific question or find that triggers a journey into the archives. In her recent essay "The Body in the Archive: Reading the Working Woman's Reading," Margaret Beetham recounts how a 1947 novel about an illegitimate working-class girl prompted her to visit the National Co-operative Archive in Manchester to find out what periodicals nineteenth-century working-class women read and how they read them.[2] Similarly, what led us to write this essay in honour of Margaret's eightieth birthday was a biographical sketch of a woman named Lillie Harris in the September 10, 1891, issue of *Hearth and Home* (1891–1914). We discovered the sketch through a full-text search for "lady editor" in the Gale Cengage Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals database as part of a project on female editorship, but the article also revealed something we were not looking for. Harris had worked as an investigative journalist and visited Whitechapel at the height of the Jack the Ripper case:

> At the end of 1888, when the atrocious Jack the Ripper murders in Whitechapel were the engrossing theme of conversation, it occurred to Miss Harris, who was then on a visit to London, that a series of articles describing the scenes of the murders would prove of interest to the public. Accordingly, accompanied only by a detective, she visited the slums of Whitechapel at midnight, her startling experiences being recorded in a very sensational

> series of articles published in the *Sheffield Telegraph*. These were so eagerly sought after that the entire editions of the papers were at once sold out.[3]

Thanks to a digitised version of the Sheffield-based *Weekly Telegraph* (1887–1951) in the British Newspaper Archive, we soon found a series of four articles entitled "Slumming in Whitechapel," published between October 27 and November 17, 1888. The first two were signed "A Protected Female," and the final two "An Amateur Detective."

What if we had come across the anonymous articles in the *Weekly Telegraph* first and wondered about their authorship? Would the quest for who was hiding behind the signatures ever have led us to Lillie Harris? In the absence of a named author, the title of the series would have been our most important clue. On the odd chance of finding an attribution, we would no doubt have run a full-text search for the phrase "Slumming in Whitechapel" in various digitised periodical databases. Our hopes would soon have been dashed. The *Hearth and Home* sketch identifying Harris as the author would not have turned up among the search results, simply because it does not mention that the series was called "Slumming in Whitechapel"; it only mentions the *Sheffield Telegraph* (rather than the *Weekly Telegraph*) as the newspaper in which it appeared. The search, in fact, yields no relevant results at all in the Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals database, nor do similar searches in ProQuest's British Periodicals and Google Books. This little thought experiment not only touches on current methodological issues of digitisation, serendipity, and the limits of digital search methods, but it is also relevant from a historical point of view, as contemporary readers would have had similar points of entry into the periodical press. Readers of the Sheffield *Weekly Telegraph* had access to the full "Slumming in Whitechapel" series, but Harris's name remained undisclosed to them. Conversely, readers of the London *Hearth and Home* learned about the night-time visit to Whitechapel in the larger context of Lillie Harris's life and career, without necessarily having read the articles themselves.

Whose experience, then, should we focus on in this essay? Should we adhere to the chronology of publication by first discussing "Slumming in Whitechapel" from the perspective of readers in 1888 who were unaware of Harris's authorship and then addressing the attribution in the 1891 *Hearth and Home* sketch? (What is the likelihood that a contemporary reader would have read both?) Or should we respect the chronology of research, acknowledging that there never was a time that we, as twenty-first-century periodical scholars, did not know that the series was written by a female journalist named Lillie Harris? And what about the members of the group "doubly silenced, by class as well as by gender," that Beetham's essay draws attention to: the working-class women of Whitechapel, who would have been physically, financially, and socially excluded from reading what Harris wrote about them?[4] Every decision to structure an argument this way or that entails a loss of some kind.

This essay explores these various perspectives by engaging with Beetham's ideas about embodiment, disembodiment, and power in relation to print. Taking as a starting point our own experiences as bodies in the archive, we first outline Harris's life and career trajectory as it emerged from the scattered archival sources that we were able to locate, including census records, contemporary newspapers, and her 1915 application to the Royal Literary Fund. We then discuss the "Slumming in Whitechapel" series. We argue that within the textual space of these four articles, Lillie Harris embodies the rising figure of the late nineteenth-century female investigative journalist in an almost literal sense: giving her a body that sees, feels, hears, and smells, moves in time and space, and responds emotionally to her surroundings. This process, however, comes at a double cost. First, it disembodies Lillie Harris as an individual. Second, Harris's empowerment as a female journalist reduces the embodied working-class subjects of Whitechapel to bodily objects.

Lillie Harris (1863–1921)

Piecing together Harris's biography was a joint effort. We are in different stages of our careers: one a professor and the other, at the time of writing, an MA student of English literature at Ghent University, Belgium. Our bodies move through the archives differently. For Marianne, searching for Lillie Harris in digital and physical archives (such as Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals, the British Newspaper Archive, Ancestry.com, and the British Library Manuscripts Department) felt like rummaging through the attic of a beloved family home. For Fien, the whole experience of crossing the threshold and developing a sense of the layout and dimensions of the rooms was new. What we shared was a curiosity and determination to piece together a narrative from the small fragments of Harris's life and career that surfaced, often unexpectedly, on our various treasure hunts through the house.

The *Hearth and Home* sketch mentions two crucial biographical details that gave us a head start: a date of birth and location. These soon enabled us to identify Elizabeth Rebecca Sarah Harris, born on October 19, 1863, near Ventnor, a fashionable seaside resort on the Isle of Wight, as the only child of Jewish carver and gilder Samuel Harris and his wife Caroline, née Goldsmid.[5] Familiarly called Lillie, Harris started writing at a young age, "partly upon the promptings of her native talent, and partly—chiefly, in fact—to assist her father, whose income had been reduced by the circumstances of trade."[6] Publishing her first book, *Mama's Fairy Tales* (1878), at the age of thirteen, she listed her occupation as "authoress" in the census of 1881.[7] She also contributed to *Little Folks* and, following a move to the north of England, wrote columns and short stories for the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, including a series of satirical social sketches entitled "Our Young Ladies" (1886). In addition, as reports in contemporary newspapers revealed, she started building a reputation as a public speaker, giving lectures on topics as diverse as animal treatment and the future of women.[8] In 1888, she ventured into investigative journalism with her "Slumming in Whitechapel" series in the *Weekly Telegraph*, joining the newspaper's

literary staff and soon acquiring the position of "Lady Editor."[9] She managed the Ladies' Page and Children's Column and contributed short stories, travel reports, and articles on social issues. In connection with the *Weekly Telegraph*, she also founded a children's society called the Kind Hearted Brigade.

In 1890, Harris married accountant John Charles Cozens Williams.[10] Our searches for her and her husband in digitised newspapers, however, revealed a number of tragic twists. In October 1891, several newspapers in the north of England reported that Cozens Williams had died "under shocking circumstances" in a railway accident.[11] An announcement of the birth of a son less than three months later suggests that Harris was around six months pregnant at the time.[12] Her name subsequently surfaces in the press in relation to debt recovery proceedings. "Lillie Harris in the Bankruptcy Court," the headline in one newspaper read. According to the article, she explained in court that although "most of her debts were contracted before her husband's death, everything was debited to her."[13] Harris in all likelihood spent the next few years dealing with creditors while struggling to provide for herself and her son.

By 1896, she had moved to London and taken up a position as editor of the newly established *Woman's Life* (1895–1934), published by George Newnes. Her connection with the magazine was short-lived, and we may never have known about it if not for a brief reference to "Miss Lillie Harris, of *Woman's Life*" in a digitised local newspaper, in an article reprinted from the (as yet undigitised) *Queen*.[14] Less than two years later, she moved to South Africa with every intention, it seems, to start a new life with her soon-to-be second husband, William Eugene Chapman. Chapman, a freemason, had previously worked as an editor and "contributor to many leading journals" in London, where he was somewhat of a society figure, frequent visitor of the Savage Club, and co-founder of the Savage Club Lodge.[15] He emigrated to Kimberley in 1896 to become general manager of Otto's Kopje diamond mine, and Harris and her son joined him in

1897.[16] The couple did not sever their ties with the London press altogether. Chapman worked as a war correspondent for the *Daily Chronicle* during the Boer War, and Harris wrote about her life as an Englishwoman in South Africa in the *Lady's Pictorial*, paying particular attention to the "prospects of womankind in that vast country."[17]

If this new marriage brought Harris some financial stability, it was not for long. Chapman died in 1905 after a long period of illness, and Harris returned to London with her son.[18] Ironically, the most significant traces that we could find of her in the archives were related to the financial distress that followed. The archive of the Royal Literary Fund at the British Library holds her petition for support in a series of letters written between October 14, 1914, and February 2, 1915. In handwriting at times barely decipherable, she explained to the fund's secretary, A. Llewelyn Roberts, that she was a widow, that her husband had left her "but badly provided for," and that her own health was now deteriorating; she had recently finished a novel, but "no publisher [would] look at it till after the war & it [was] impossible to get literary work."[19] Asking for discretion, she concluded, "Poverty is always terrible, but to a sick woman who has known such different days, it is most awful."[20] Knowing, perhaps, that as a journalist Harris was unlikely to receive support from the fund, Llewelyn Roberts advised her to write to the Institute of Women Journalists first. On January 12, 1915, she reported back to him that they had given her five pounds in addition to a weekly allowance of one pound until Christmas, but this had hardly been enough to cover her rent arrears, let alone her other debts.[21] Her son worked in the reading room of the *Morning Post*, his salary "quite sufficient to keep himself, but totally inadequate to provide in the needs of a sick woman."[22]

The letter was accompanied by a formal petition to the fund, including a modest list of published works on the official application. Llewelyn Roberts's subsequent request for copies revealed two important truths about Harris's career. First, in addition to the loss of her second

husband, her South African years had had a devastating impact on her professional life, including her own private archive. "I have not got them all," she replied, "as during the siege of Kimberley my house was looted and my manuscripts, scrap books etc were destroyed."[23] Second, the bulk of Harris's work appeared on the ephemeral pages of newspapers and periodicals only. When Llewelyn Roberts asked her about the format in which the works on her list had been published, she all but admitted that they were periodical contributions, only a few of which had made it into book form.[24] The reviewers to whom Llewelyn Roberts sent the two works of which Harris had managed to provide copies also picked up on this. The novelist Alfred Edward Woodley Mason described *Women and Men of the Day* (1887), first serialised in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, as a "series of trite little articles," suggesting that he did not think it worthy of the book volume in which it was later collected.[25] Similarly, the historian George Walter Prothero noted that "A Tardy Repentance," a serial published in the *Weekly Telegraph*, did "not seem to have got beyond the magazine in which it was first published."[26] The application was rejected the following month on grounds of insufficient literary merit.

The final years of Lillie Harris's life remain murky to us. We could not find any evidence that the novel completed during the war was ever published or that she published anything else. Harris died on March 26, 1921, aged fifty-seven, of cerebral embolism and cardiovascular disease. The place of death on the death certificate gave us some insight into her situation at the end of her life. The address is not her home but 164 St John's Hill, where the Wandsworth and Clapham Union Infirmary was located.[27] This suggests that after the failed petition to the Royal Literary Fund, Harris continued to struggle financially as her health deteriorated further.

The "Disembodied" Author

None of this information was available to the readers of the *Weekly Telegraph* when it published four articles under the heading "Slumming in Whitechapel" between October 27 and November

17, 1888. The series appeared anonymously, possibly because Harris was still employed on the *Newcastle Chronicle* and had reached a pivotal point in her career where she was considering other employment opportunities. A few months earlier, she had become the first woman to be admitted as a member to the National Association of Journalists.[28] In December, the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* announced that it had been "fortunate in securing the services of Miss Lillie Harris as lady editor to the *Weekly Telegraph*."[29] In the brief period between the first instalment of "Slumming in Whitechapel" and the announcement that she had joined the staff, Harris's unacknowledged presence on the pages of the *Weekly Telegraph* was very much that of a disembodied author in Beetham's most acute sense of the word.

In her 2006 essay "Periodicals and the New Media: Women and Imagined Communities," Beetham argues that print enables a "disembodied" form of communication.[30] For communication to take place in print, there is no need for the author to be physically present or even alive. Printed text preserves words in a standardised format, stripped of the physicality and individuality of the writer. This disconnection has revolutionary consequences, extending access to the written word to growing numbers of people both as readers and as authors. Beetham singles out the development of the mass press in late nineteenth-century Britain as such a moment of revolution, when technological innovations and rising literacy rates shifted power to previously excluded groups as never before. Women in particular became increasingly visible both as a target readership and as professional writers.

"Slumming in Whitechapel" constitutes a fraction of this revolutionary moment. The series paved the way for Harris to carve out a space for female journalism in the *Weekly Telegraph*, enabling her to step forward soon afterward as editor of two new features, the Ladies' Corner and the Children's Column. As such, it presents a case in point of what Beetham describes as the "high visibility of the figure of the woman journalist" in the late nineteenth-

century mass press.[31] Indeed, while Harris herself remained invisible, she capitalised on the gap between embodied and textual identity by exploring the space it opened up for performance. Signing "A Protected Female" in the first two instalments and "An Amateur Detective" in the final two, she brought to life on the newspaper page the figure of the woman journalist and, more particularly, the female investigative journalist.

Embodying the Female Investigative Journalist

The title "Slumming in Whitechapel" and the by-lines printed directly underneath it, "By a Protected Female" and "By an Amateur Detective," gave readers two important pieces of information about the author's identity. First, they inscribed the author in the relatively young tradition of slum journalism. Seth Koven defines "slumming" as "activities undertaken by people of wealth, social standing, or education in social spaces inhabited by the poor."[32] In the late nineteenth century, men and women went slumming for a variety of reasons, including charitable purposes, Christian missions of helping those in need, social work, or simple curiosity.[33] Others, like Lillie Harris, pursued careers in investigative journalism. To them, the apparent presence of a serial killer in London's poor East End presented a professional opportunity to visit the slums and document the social conditions that might be conducive to crime. Alluding to the violent murders of four women that had taken place in Whitechapel between August 31 and September 30, the first instalment of the series began, "Perhaps there is no locality in the United Kingdom which at the present time is so notorious as Whitechapel. The horrible tragedies so recently enacted there in such rapid succession have sent a thrill of indignant fear throughout England."[34] It continued, "What sort of a neighbourhood can this Whitechapel be, where such hideous vices can flourish darkly, but apparently unheeded," before announcing with determination, "this is the query that I am about to answer."[35]

Second, the by-line "A Protected Female" revealed that the author was the same sex as the murder victims. She was, in other words, a body at risk that could not safely venture into Whitechapel without being accompanied by another, preferably male body. According to the first instalment, such a protective body soon presented itself to her in the form of "Mr. B—," a police officer whom Harris, using adjectives connoting physical strength and dependability, described as "tall," "muscular," "rather handsome," and "looking very big and stalwart in his civilian dress."[36] She, by contrast, was "clad in the darkest and least conspicuous of clothes" so as to draw as little attention to herself as possible.[37] It is only through Mr. B—'s trained gaze that readers get a glimpse of her physical appearance. "Will you know me again?" she asks after he agrees to escort her the following night: "He glanced at me sharply from a very keen pair of blue eyes. 'Yes,' he answered, 'I shall know you.' I felt that mentally he was taking my photograph, and how correct my prescience was I found out afterwards, when he accurately described a ring that I wear, and also a peculiar but trifling mannerism that I am unconsciously guilty of."[38] Whether or not these details match a description of Harris herself is ultimately irrelevant. In the context of the "Slumming in Whitechapel" series, the "ring" and "peculiar but trifling mannerism" serve as small building blocks made out of text with which readers can start creating their own image of the nameless "Protected Female" who was about to visit the site of the recent murders.

The decision to dress inconspicuously was not simply a matter of safety but also a journalistic strategy. As S. Brooke Cameron argues, for the slum journalist in particular, being a woman was an "asset rather than hindrance to her professional and social ambitions."[39] In contrast to her male colleagues venturing into Whitechapel on their own, a woman journalist was unlikely to raise suspicion on grounds of her sex only. On the contrary, since her presence would not be considered a direct threat to the women of Whitechapel, she had a higher chance of gaining access to their daily lives. The plain, dark dress, then, was the female investigative

journalist's professional attire. It allowed her to take up the role of amateur detective and enabled her body to move around the neighbourhood freely, becoming an active participant only if and when she chose to do so.

Harris's account of the night of the visit starts when she meets Mr. B— by the Law Courts on the Strand. This location is more than a convenient meeting point. It is where Harris sets the ground for the main narrative technique of the series: contrast mediated through embodied experience. If the "ardent desire to . . . see for [herself]" led her to travel to London, sight soon gives way to a multitude of sensory impulses amid the Strand's characteristic noisy cafés, fashionably dressed theatre-goers, shouting newsboys, and comings and goings of carriages and busses.[40] To her readers in Sheffield, Harris presents this slice of metropolitan life as explicitly filtered through her journalistic persona's senses: "I looked with pleasure at the lively, gay, and bright scene; I listened to the ripple of careless laughter, the soft, sweet, modulated voices, and the flow, flow of silken robes, I inhaled the fresh cold air, the perfume that was wafted momentarily to me, from the delicate flowers that nestled on the white bosom of some lady as she past me to enter a theatre, or the scent that arose from her handkerchief."[41] She then uses these impressions to introduce contrast, even before she has taken a single step inside Whitechapel: "And as I looked and listened I thought with a cold chill of that other neighbourhood, so near, and yet so distant, where innocent joy or pure amusements are not known."[42] At this point, establishing opposition is still a purely mental process ("I thought . . . of that other neighbourhood") yet one that triggers immediate bodily reaction ("I thought with a cold chill"), prefiguring the physical journey that she is about to make from the architectural and judicial grandeur embodied by the Law Courts and the "brilliantly illuminated theatres" on the Strand to the slums of Whitechapel, "where the moral sewerage flows till they become hideous cesspools of vice and crime."[43]

Harris's mental picture begins to materialise soon afterwards, following a short bus ride to Leadenhall Street. She and her escort reach Mitre Square, where the fourth victim, Catherine Eddowes, was found murdered less than four weeks earlier in the early hours of September 30. From there, they proceed to Berner Street, the location of the murder of Elizabeth Stride that same night; Buck's Row, where Mary Ann Nichols's body was discovered on August 31; and finally, Hanbury Street, the location of the first murder, that of Annie Chapman, on September 8. The account in the *Weekly Telegraph* is, in every sense, a journey into the dark. It exemplifies what Koven describes as the "spatial dynamics of slumming with its sanctioned immersion in an otherwise forbidden world" while borrowing from gothic and sensation fiction the tendency to explore the more sinister sides of the human psyche by mapping them onto particular dimly lit, abandoned, or otherwise unsettling physical spaces.[44] In stark contrast to the "lively, gay, and bright scene" on the Strand, Mitre Square "seems enveloped in gloom," the actual murder site concealed in its "darkest corner," the silence "oppressive."[45] In Berner Street, the lamps are "few and far between and show a flickering, sickly, yellow light," the Commercial Road adjacent to it "deserted" and "so quiet that our footsteps ring out startlingly distinct on the still night air."[46] In Harris's report, these locations are not just crime scenes. They are themselves capable of criminal behaviour. Berner Street is a "beastly locality," and Mitre Square, with its "murderous shade," is an accomplice to the crime committed there.[47]

The Bodies of Whitechapel

Harris also establishes a contrast between bodies. Describing the "flow, flow of silken robes" and the "sables and sealskins" draped on the female bodies walking down the Strand, she suggests a standard of living utterly out of reach to the generations of bodies living and breathing just two miles east: babies, "dirty, unkempt, with hardly sufficient rags on to cover their nakedness"; boys and girls, "few with boots and stockings, . . . few decently clad, none with their heads covered";

men and women sprawled on their doorsteps "in various stages of *dishabille*."[48] A woman begging for shelter at a lodging house "has boots and stockings on and an old silk skirt, with a torn velvet bodice showing the flesh through the rents."[49] These figures contrast not only with the well-dressed theatre-goers of the West End but also with the journalist herself, the woman who dressed in her "darkest and least conspicuous of clothes" so that she could see without being seen and report back to her readers.[50]

When compared to Harris's earlier descriptions of the "white bosom of some lady" about to enter a theatre on the Strand and the "peculiar but trifling mannerism" that distinguishes her own unremarkable appearance, these later instalments bring into sharp relief the grotesque ways in which the bodies of Whitechapel are suffering, starving, scarred, or otherwise damaged.[51] A crippled man "looks wolfish and starved" as "with the aid of his rough crutch he hobbles towards" a piece of bread in the gutter, "his poor maimed leg working with excitement."[52] Another man, "unshaven, and unspeakably brutal looking, emerges from one of the houses. He is short and thickset, one eye is blackened, and a strip of filthy plaster adorns his left cheek."[53] One woman has a "face that is so battered and bruised that there is very little expression left in it."[54] When the woman at the lodging house is denied access, she "tears at her dress and falls to beating her bare breasts," then "strikes her head against the wall and drags out her lank hair by handfuls."[55] There are "puckered-up," "old wizened," "gaunt and grimy" faces everywhere, "matted," "uncombed" hair, "dirty skins," "furtive eyes"—an overpopulation of marred bodies that Harris captures using the vocabulary of infestation: the "small" and "squalid" houses are "teeming with life," the "filthy, ramshackle cottages . . . swarming with human beings," men and women "[herding] indiscriminately together like animals."[56]

These grim tableaux vivants of overcrowded Whitechapel are carefully punctuated with references to the female victims, one in each of the four instalments. Nameless and bodiless, the

victims feature as absence throughout the series. The only trace of Catherine Eddowes in the text is the "blood, all congealed," which according to a passer-by in Mitre Square "can still be seen down the area, where it dripped down from the iron bars."[57] All that is left of Elizabeth Stride is a fourteen-year-old girl's memory of how her disfigured body was found in an alley off Berner Street: "Her 'ead was on that short stone post, and 'er legs was just over the iron railings, and the blood and gore was all down there."[58] The description disintegrates the victim even further than the crime itself, reducing her to a few scattered body parts, blood, and gore. Mary Ann Nichols is the "barbarously mutilated body" now removed from where it was discovered in Buck's Row "between the lamp by the gate, lying in the road itself."[59] Annie Chapman is the empty spot "behind this door" in Hanbury Street where she was found "huddled up."[60]

None of the Whitechapel bodies, living or deceased, function as vessels of subjectivity in the series. Rather, they are objects of investigation onto which misery and poverty are inscribed and which, in turn, evoke emotive bodily responses in the investigative journalist herself: the "unnerving" realisation of "how comfortably a person could be murdered" in the darkness of Mitre Square; the "horror distended eyes" with which she walks through the neighbourhood around Hanbury Street; the "shrinking back," "shuddering," and finally, the "thrill of disgust" she feels on the way back to her hotel "at the many horrible things I have seen and heard during my night's slumming in Whitechapel."[61]

Power and Disembodiment

The driving force behind these various processes of embodiment and disembodiment is a power imbalance between those with access to print and those with little or none. As Beetham points out, access to print in the late nineteenth century was determined not only by literacy but also by money, the availability of time and space to read, and the extent to which individuals granted themselves permission to "indulge" in reading.[62] Increased access also created "new exclusions,"

as Beetham notes that "growth in literacy dis-empowered those who could not read."[63] Moreover, new career opportunities arising from the development of the mass press were "only open to those with an education beyond the elementary, something denied to most of the population."[64] As Beetham argues, the one social group "constantly marginalized in all of these developments" regarding both the consumption and production of print was working-class women.[65] Many of the inhabitants of Whitechapel, including all of the victims of the Jack the Ripper murders, belonged to this category. While the mass press of the 1880s and 1890s offered some women unprecedented opportunities to act as authors and co-authors of their own public identities, working-class women were usually written about, having no voice in how they were represented in print as individuals or as a group. Harris's empowerment as a female investigative journalist, in other words, disempowered working-class women as embodied subjects.

The full ramifications of this power imbalance are perhaps most evident in the third instalment of "Slumming in Whitechapel," when the amateur detective and her escort Mr. B— pass a number of women in Hanbury Street "[going] about their frightful trade."[66] There is "no need to be told of their shameful calling," Harris writes, "it is branded on them."[67] Harris's decision not to explicitly identify the women as prostitutes is more than a matter of middle-class propriety. Using language typically associated with criminal punishment to argue that their work is marked indelibly on their bodies, Harris pre-empts the need and even the right of these women to speak for themselves. Her narration never delves deeper than the surface of their skins: "How can they be described? The ragged, filthy finery, the pinched or bloated faces, daubed hideously over with white and red paint; the red blearing eyes; the matted hair, with the thick fringe growing right over their eyebrows; the close, sickly smell that clings round them; the eager watchful glances that they cast round."[68] At this point, it becomes clear that the social contrasts so carefully laid out across the series all turn on the question of integrity, both in the sense of

physical intactness and morality. “Slumming in Whitechapel” elides the difference between the two. The lady with the white bosom on the Strand may have never physically crossed paths with any of the four women whose bodies were found mangled and disfigured in Whitechapel. She may never set eyes on the chalk-faced, scarlet-lipped prostitutes or the destitute woman who bared her breasts in Hanbury Street. Yet when Harris juxtaposes these women in the textual space of “Slumming in Whitechapel,” the one’s physical integrity becomes a measure for the other’s lack of moral integrity. With access to print, therefore, comes the power to pass moral judgement in public on those excluded from it.

Conclusion

The biographical sketch of Lillie Harris published in *Hearth and Home* three years after “Slumming in Whitechapel” consists of two columns wrapped around a portrait of her positioned at the centre of the page (figure 1). The image shows a fair-skinned young woman wearing a choker necklace, her dark hair cut square across the forehead. The final paragraph of the sketch offers some further description before concluding with a few tidbits about her personality: “In appearance Miss Lillie Harris is of medium height and slender figure, and is most graceful and pleasing in style and manner. Her eyes are dark and full of expression. She has a very retentive memory, and is a brilliant conversationalist. She entertains a sincere admiration for the writings of Thackeray and Dickens.”[69] The interest in Harris as a private person is part of a larger trend in late nineteenth-century journalism to peek into the private lives of public individuals. At a time of explosive growth in print culture, journalistic genres such as the biographical sketch or the interview bridged the widening gap between authors and readers.

The *Hearth and Home* sketch of Harris thus, to some extent, reverses the process of disembodiment that Beetham considers essential to print, even if only by creating the illusion of doing so. The sketch not only identifies Harris as the author of the *Weekly Telegraph*’s

anonymous “Slumming in Whitechapel” series but also gives readers enough information to create a mental picture of her as an embodied individual. Yet the form of this picture, if it takes any form at all, depends on the willingness of each reader to engage in this activity. If cultural memory is an accumulation of such individual efforts through time, then Lillie Harris’s current absence from scholarship, including collective acts of commemoration such as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, results from a large-scale loss of individual willingness to remember her. This, too, is a form of reader empowerment: the power to remember or forget.

Ultimately, all reading—including research as a particular form of reading—is shaped by lived experience. We are, as Margaret Beetham reminds us, “embodied, historically contingent beings,” and processes of remembering and forgetting are historically contingent too.[70] They are shaped by wider cultural, ideological, and institutional dynamics as well as the technologies available to drive these processes in one direction or the other. The lived experience of stumbling upon “Slumming in Whitechapel” in the *Weekly Telegraph* at the dining room table of a Sheffield middle-class brick home on Saturday, October 27, 1888, is irretrievably lost to us, as is the lived experience of being Lillie Harris or a working-class woman living in Whitechapel at the time of the murders. Our own historical contingency, however, also creates opportunities. Print may disembody authors beyond recognition. Texts may sink into oblivion because they are no longer considered worthy of being read. Yet the digitisation of periodicals and archival records allows us to restore at least part of what was lost and, indeed, what may never have been found using only traditional search methods. We can read “Slumming in Whitechapel” as an example of late nineteenth-century women’s investigative journalism while also reflecting on its relation to Harris’s life and career and to the nameless women of Whitechapel who were unable to read what Harris wrote about them. We can include our own perspectives as researching bodies delving into

the archives to "revivify" this small "corpus of texts."[71] We can dip in and out of all these different perspectives, as we have done in this article drawing on Beetham's work, to consider not only the disembodied nature of print and the embodied nature of writing, reading, and researching, but also the power mechanisms they call into play.

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NOTES

[1] Beetham, "Periodicals and the New Media," 231. This work was supported by the European Research Council under the ERC Starting Grant agreement no. 639668.

[2] Beetham, "The Body in the Archive," 145–46.

[3] "A Popular Lady Journalist," 537.

[4] Beetham, "The Body in the Archive," 147.

[5] "A Popular Lady Journalist," 537; entry for female Harris in Isle of Wight BMD Indexes; 1861 census record for Samuel and Caroline Harris, RG9/657/36/1, National Archives, *Census Returns*.

[6] "Durham Assizes," 3. The newspaper article quoted here is about an 1886 libel case filed by Harris against the *Northumbrian* for ridiculing her.

[7] 1881 census record for Lillie Harris, RG11/5070/94/11, National Archives, *Census Returns*.

[8] See, for instance, "The Treatment of Dumb Animals" and "Miss Lillie Harris on the Future of Women."

[9] "Notice to Our Lady Readers," 4.

[10] Marriage of Elizabeth Rebecca S. Harris and John Charles C. Williams, January–March 1890, General Register Office, *England and Wales Civil Registration Indexes*.

[11] "Fatal Accident," 3.

[12] "Birth," 7.

[13] "Lillie Harris in the Bankruptcy Court," 3.

[14] "What Women Are Doing," 6.

[15] "At the Sign of the Perfect Ashlar," 264.

[16] Ibid.; National Archives, *UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960*. Harris is listed as "Mrs Cozens Williams," which suggests that the marriage took place in South Africa.

[17] W. E. Chapman in *Anglo-Boer War Records*; "The World of Women," 316.

[18] "At the Sign of the Perfect Ashlar," 264.

[19] Lillie Harris Chapman to Arthur Llewellyn Roberts, October 14, 1914, Royal Literary Fund.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Lillie Harris Chapman to Arthur Llewellyn Roberts, January 12, 1915, Royal Literary Fund.

[22] Lillie Harris Chapman to Arthur Llewellyn Roberts, January 30, 1915, Royal Literary Fund.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Arthur Llewellyn Roberts to Lillie Harris Chapman, January 29, 1915, Royal Literary Fund; Lillie Harris Chapman to Arthur Llewellyn Roberts, January 30, 1915, Royal Literary Fund.

[25] Alfred Edward Woodley Mason to Arthur Llewellyn Roberts, November 2, 1914, Royal Literary Fund.

[26] Report by George Walter Prothero [January 1915], Royal Literary Fund.

[27] Death certificate, Lillie Harris Chapman, District of Wandsworth, Deaths in the Sub-district of South West Battersea, County of London, volume 1d, no. 144, General Register Office, 1921, 534.

[28] "One by One," 5.

[29] "Notice," 4.

[30] Beetham, "Periodicals and the New Media," 234.

[31] Ibid., 236.

[32] Koven, *Slumming*, 9.

[33] Ibid.

[34] [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," October 27, 1888, 683. The final two parts of "Slumming in Whitechapel" were published after the fifth murder, that of Mary Jane Kelly on November 9, but make no mention of it. This suggests that Harris submitted the piece to the *Weekly Telegraph* in its entirety in October and that it may not have been her decision to publish it in four instalments.

[35] [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," October 27, 1888, 683.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Cameron, "Women's Slum Journalism," 245.

[40] [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," October 27, 1888, 683.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," October 27, 1888, 683; [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," November 17, 1888, 722.

[44] Koven, *Slumming*, 9.

[45] [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," October 27, 1888, 683.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.; [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," November 3, 1888, 690.

[49] [Harris], "Slumming in Whitechapel," November 17, 1888, 722.

[50] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” October 27, 1888, 683.

[51] Ibid.

[52] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 17, 1888, 722.

[53] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 3, 1888, 690.

[54] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 10, 1888, 706.

[55] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 17, 1888, 722.

[56] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” October 27, 1888, 683; [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 3, 1888, 690; [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 10, 1888, 706.

[57] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” October 27, 1888, 683.

[58] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 3, 1888, 690.

[59] Ibid.

[60] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 10, 1888, 706; [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 17, 1888, 722.

[61] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” October 27, 1888, 683; [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 10, 1888, 706; [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 17, 1888, 722.

[62] Beetham, “Periodicals and the New Media,” 237–38.

[63] Ibid., 232, 237.

[64] Ibid., 237.

[65] Ibid.

[66] [Harris], “Slumming in Whitechapel,” November 10, 1888, 706.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] "A Popular Lady Journalist," 537

[70] Beetham, "The Body in the Archive," 151.

[71] Ibid., 148.

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