

Nellie Bly and Stunt Journalism: Undercover Exploration to Discover the Truth

Aparna Paul

Senior Division

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*“I determined then and there that I would try by every means to make my mission of benefit to my suffering sisters.”*¹

“[On] the 22d of September I was asked by the *World* if I could have myself committed to one of the asylums for the insane in New York...[to write a] narrative of the treatment of the patients therein and the methods of management?” This was the proposal presented to Nellie Bly in 1887 as she worked at the *New York World* under Joseph Pulitzer.² Bly, a reporter who never shied away from a challenge, accepted one of the first cases of stunt journalism in American media. With her revolutionary articles, Nellie Bly pioneered stunt journalism as a way to expose social injustice. Although she encountered criticism and sexism within her career and in her undercover explorations, Bly’s tactics influenced her contemporaries and inspired future stunt reporters to expose social issues in their own time.

In the 1880s, many women journalists occupied a specific role: society reporter. Society reporting was content aimed at women and gossip-mongers; it was the “daily fare spiced with gossip about the rich and famous.”³ Female journalists were so restricted to this role that “many newspapers had only one woman on staff,”⁴ and the women were rarely allowed to explore other journalistic styles, instead “restricted to [pages]...designed to capitalize on department store advertising aimed at housewives.”⁵ Society reporting, also known as the women’s section, was considered little more than a gossip column, and “[there] was a sense that any self-respecting

¹ Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

² A journalist who incorporated innovative techniques in his newspaper.

³ Lorraine McMullen, ed., *Rediscovering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1 Jan. 1989) 81.

⁴ *Ibid.* 82

⁵ Maurine H. Beasley, and Sheila J. Gibbons. *Taking Their Place*. (Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1993) 111.

man was demeaned by association with the women's section,"⁶ leading men to regard the position, and the women who held it, with haughty contempt.

This was the unfortunate world of journalism Nellie Bly found herself exploring in the 1880s. Born Elizabeth Jane Cochran in 1864, Bly's journalism career began in 1885 with a scathing letter to the editor of *The Pittsburg Dispatch*. She criticized an earlier piece which described the women's sphere as "defined and located by a single word – home."⁷ Bly was hired for her boundless wit and honest writing, two traits that would aid her in stunt reporting. Her editor assigned her pieces well outside of the typical woman's sphere, and her first article, written when she was twenty, tackled "How the Average Employer Discriminates Against Petticoated Workers."⁸ In 1887, Bly left Pittsburgh for New York, unaware of the international phenomenon she would grow to be.

By 1887, New York's asylums were hopelessly overcrowded. This was partially because of the flippancy most doctors used when diagnosing patients and partially because the facilities were underfunded. Even before Bly's experiment, officials within the state government had campaigned for the asylum system. In 1878, the State Commissioner in Lunacy, John Ordranax, wrote: "The county of New York is now burthened [sic] with the support of a much larger number of lunatics than its combined asylum accommodation can either comfortably shelter or properly treat...[Curing the disease] is, therefore, seriously compromised by the inadequate means of isolation required at such times."⁹ The President of Public Charities and

⁶ Marjory Louise Lang, *Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada, 1880 - 1945*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 26 Aug. 1999) 146.

⁷ Brooke Kroeger, *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1 Mar. 1994) 35.

⁸ Nellie Bly, "The Girl Puzzle," *The Pittsburg Dispatch*, 25 Jan. 1885: 6-7.

⁹ New York (State), State Commissioner in Lunacy, *Annual Report of the State Commissioner in Lunacy* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuysen & Sons, 1879) 39.

Correction, Thomas Brennan, who oversaw and lobbied for nearly all transactions within the asylum system, wrote to Ordranax, “the several lunatic asylums belonging to the county of New York under our care have long been over-crowded.”¹⁰ The inadequacies in the asylum system were also recognized by the public, and in 1883, one reporter wrote, “There is no doubt that American asylums are sometimes...given up to costly arrangements for the convenience of administration at the expense of the patients’ welfare.”¹¹ However, until Bly’s exposé, the public had acknowledged the problem, but had only acted out in opinion columns. When Bly rallied a grand jury investigation of Blackwell’s Island Lunatic Asylum, the injustices had grown, and she incited change within the asylum system.

In the media, Bly was tentatively exploring a new medium of media – stunt journalism. Her first undercover adventure, encouraged by her editors, Joseph Pulitzer and John Cockerill of the *New York World*, was at Blackwell’s Island Insane Asylum. Cockerill asked if Bly could “assume the characteristics of insanity to such a degree that [she] could pass the doctors, [and] live for a week among the insane.”¹² Bly, however, was not the first to write of Blackwell’s conditions. In 1842, Charles Dickens explained the atmosphere as “everything [having] a lounging, listless, madhouse air,”¹³ and three years later, author Margaret Fuller commented on how “twice as many are inmates here as can be properly [accommodated].”¹⁴ Where these writers criticized from an outsider’s vantage point, Bly explored Blackwell’s from the perspective of a patient. This type of complete immersion was a novel idea at the time, and would grow into

¹⁰ New York (State), State Commissioner in Lunacy, *Annual Report of the State Commissioner in Lunacy* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuysen & Sons, 1879) 38.

¹¹ “Care of the City Insane,” *New-York Tribune*, Aug. 19 1883: 6.

¹² Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

¹³ Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913) 67-81.

¹⁴ Margaret Fuller, “Our City Charities,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, March 19 1845: 1.

Bly's trademark stunt journalism. When Bly's editor asked her to undertake this project, Bly prepared to contend with "women who were mistreated, doctors who were dismissive, [and] nurses who were abusive,"¹⁵ but squared her shoulders and swearing to deliver nothing but the truth.

Nellie Bly explored the relatively unknown world of stunt journalism and utilized its immersive style to expose social injustices in the world. Such injustices were in great abundance in Blackwell's Island, a joint facility that housed the New York Lunatic Asylum, Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, and Blackwell's Penitentiary. Bly was committed to the Lunatic Asylum by simply feigning amnesia, such as forgetting who and where she was.¹⁶ This ruse was so convincing that the *New York Sun* ran the article "Who Is This Insane Girl?" and cited doctors calling her "the most peculiar case" in the hospital.¹⁷ Once inside Blackwell's, Bly discovered starving patients because of food which was "impossible for [her] to eat."¹⁸ The freezing environment, where "[the] patients looked blue with cold," established a climate where disease could easily spread.¹⁹ If a patient tried to protest these conditions, "a shove and a push were administered, and often a slap on the ears," and more distressed patients were abused by the nurses: "the poor creature [cried]...more, and so they choked her. Yes, actually choked her...they dragged her out to the closet, and...her terrified cries [hushed] into smothered ones."²⁰ These conditions created an atmosphere where patients were afraid to speak out against maltreatment and instead suffered in frightened silence. Bly found the mentally ill were treated

¹⁵ Jean Marie Lutes, "Extra! Read All About It: "Girl Stunt Reporter" Turns 150," *Morning Edition*, 5 May 2014.

¹⁶ Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

¹⁷ "Who is this Insane Girl?" *New York Sun*, 25 Sept. 1887: 1.

¹⁸ Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

so poorly that they barely had a chance to recuperate, asking “What, excepting torture, would produce insanity quicker than this treatment?”²¹ As Bly discovered Blackwell’s cruel methods, she recorded every inhumane infraction to publish in the *New York World* upon her release.

Nellie Bly was quick to discover that opposition lurked around every corner, whether it took the form of sexism within the newspaper industry or prejudice against those she strove to liberate from the corrupt asylums. However, Bly did not shy away, but met these challenges head on in her quest to uncover the truth. In Blackwell’s Asylum, she saw stigmas reflected in the nurses and doctors who treated her. The doctors administered poor tests of health, and “[a]ll the patients were asked if they saw faces on the wall, heard voices, and what they said,” and while “each patient denied any such peculiar freaks of sight and hearing,”²² each was sentenced to Blackwell’s. The doctor’s examinations, rather than actually empathizing with the patient, stuck to stereotypes of how “crazy” people acted. All the doctors refused to listen to the patients’ justified protesting, and one patient complained that “all the doctors, as Dr. Field, refuse to listen to me or give me a chance to prove my sanity.”²³ The nurses and maids viewed themselves working from pure altruism, saying of Blackwell’s, ““This is charity, and you should be thankful for what you get,”” and “you don’t need to expect any kindness here, for you won’t get it.”²⁴ However, far from charity, Blackwell’s was actually one of the well-funded public asylums in New York. In 1878, less than a decade before Bly’s articles, Blackwell’s Lunatic Asylum was receiving the most government funds: \$109,314 in comparison to the \$84,485 that the

²¹ Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

next-highest institution was collecting.²⁵ These funds were not enough to sustain the overcrowded asylum system. In 1878, facilities capable of handling only 1,420 persons total were instead housing 2,433 (980 men and 1,453 women).²⁶ By 1883, the number had grown to 3,584, and “crowding the acute chronic and noisy patients...[and] all classes together, [was] decidedly wrong from the humane aspect alone.”²⁷ Certain stigmas were perhaps leading to such high numbers, however. With such a lackluster system of admissions, it was hardly surprising that asylums were overcrowded.

Accusations from medical professionals served only to sustain the problem. In one interview, Dr. Theodore Dimon was asked “Do you find that insane people are immoral and have bad habits?” and he responded “Yes,” adding to the stigma surrounding the mentally ill.²⁸ Other medical professionals were equally guilty, such as Dr. Foster Pratt, who charged that “a portion of the increase of insanity among native Americans...[was due] to the admixture of foreign blood,” blaming immigrants for the onset of insanity in America.²⁹ If doctors themselves were eyeing certain people as the cause of lunacy, then would they more readily accept them into their asylums? Would any immigrant be subject to accusations of insanity for simply being non-native? With allegations as direct as “[the] unnatural increase [of insane persons] in New-York and Brooklyn is due to immigration – nearly all the patients being foreigners or the

²⁵ New York (State), State Commissioner in Lunacy, *Annual Report of the State Commissioner in Lunacy* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen & Sons, 1879) 38.

²⁶ New York (State), Senate, *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York*, Vol. 1, (Albany: Van Benthuyzen Printing House, 1879) 38.

²⁷ “The Flatbush Insane Asylum,” *New-York Tribune*, 16 May 1884: 8.

²⁸ “The Trial Dragging Slowly,” *New-York Tribune*, 23 Dec. 1881: 1-2.

²⁹ “Importing Insanity,” *New-York Tribune*, 27 Dec. 1883: 4.

issue of foreign-born parents,” did immigrants and doctors alike fall prey to easily-accepted stereotypes?³⁰

Bly’s experiences in journalism were riddled with encounters of another stereotype – sexism. Stigmas had already casted shadows over Bly’s bright career before her asylum exposé. Her first job in journalism at the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* in 1885 had ended in resignation when her editor tried to assign her a society piece on the theater.³¹ Refusing to accept these limits, Bly journeyed to Mexico to become a correspondent there for six months.³² With this impressive addition to her resumé, she moved to New York City, where she would work under Joseph Pulitzer at his paper, *The New York World*. Initially, chief editors of New York papers tried to “show to [Bly] how utterly impossible it was for a woman to succeed...except when she wrote about fashions.”³³ After *Ten Days*, Bly proposed the idea of travelling around the world for investigative purposes, and Pulitzer’s “terrible verdict” was “It is impossible for you to do it...You are a woman and would need a protector... no one but a man can do this.”³⁴ Bly was so outraged at his flippant dismissal that she replied, “Start the man, and I’ll start the same day for some other newspaper and beat him,” and Pulitzer relented.³⁵ From the outset of her career, Bly was “too impatient to work along at the usual duties assigned women on newspapers,”³⁶ and strove to escape the restrictive stereotypes that confined women in journalism.

³⁰ “The Flatbush Insane Asylum,” *New-York Tribune*, 16 May 1884: 8.

³¹ Brooke Kroeger, *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* (New York City: Times Books/Random House, 1 Mar. 1994) 75.

³² Nellie Bly, *Six Months in Mexico*, (New York City: American Publishers Corporation, 1888).

³³ Joe Howard, “Women in Journalism,” *The Iola Register*, 30 Dec. 1887: 3.

³⁴ Nellie Bly, *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days*, (New York City: The Pictorial Weeklies Company, 1890).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Nellie Bly, *Six Months in Mexico*, (New York: American Publishers Corporation, 1888).

Nellie Bly's work at the paper proved successful: *Ten Days in a Madhouse* called for asylum reform, and Bly's own career called for media reform. Her reports from Blackwell's exposed the conditions and forced a grand jury investigation of the facility. By the time Bly returned the next month with the jury, Blackwell's had already begun to overhaul their facility. One of Bly's fellow patients commented, "[Ever] since Miss Brown³⁷ has been taken away everything is different. The nurses are very kind and we are given plenty to wear. The doctors come to see us often and the food is greatly improved." Bly was beginning to see the positive effects of her work on the broken system. Although many of Bly's concerns had been remedied, with "the institution...on exhibition, and no fault [to be] found,"³⁸ the jury still exercised care in examining the asylum's operations. They concluded that the "present medical staff is inadequate...the food...is not sufficiently good in quality...the accommodation for bathing patients...is not adequate," and that "the law be changed" so as to separate the actual insane from criminals.³⁹ Where many nurses had complained about low salaries and infrequent funding, the grand jury investigation concluded by awarding Blackwell's island one million dollars in addition to their annual funds, "for the benefit of the insane."⁴⁰ Bly's articles won national recognition, and 2,000 miles away, the *Salt Lake Herald* was crowning her "the courageous lady who shed light upon [Blackwell's] misdoings."⁴¹

³⁷ "Nellie Brown" was the pseudonym Bly went by while undercover during this exposé.

³⁸ Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

³⁹ New York (State), State Board of Charities, *Annual Report of the State Board of Charities of the State of New York* (New York City: Troy, Printers, 1888) 210-212.

⁴⁰ Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

⁴¹ *The Salt Lake Herald*, 9 Dec. 1887: 4.

If Bly was asking for liberation in Blackwell's for the patients from the inhumane treatment, then she was asking for liberation in journalism for the women from the media's sexist ideals.

Nellie Bly's work influenced journalists in her time and beyond: her articles inspired women to move outside of society reporting and explore new fields, and future journalists were quick to use Bly's tactics of stunt journalism in their own work to expose social injustices. In the 1880s, "[stunt] girls, with Bly as the genre's leader, formed the human chute down which the next generation of women reporters plunged into journalism's mainstream," as stunt journalism gave editors a way to send women on daring escapades where they would not risk men.⁴² *The Journalist*, a magazine that frequently derided Bly admitted that she was "easily at the head of the press women today."⁴³ Ida Tarbell claimed that these press women should have great "ability, willingness, and adaptability," and stunt reporting allowed women to strengthen these traits.⁴⁴ Despite her editor's opposition, Bly went on to her next landmark stunt, which required quick-thinking on a global scale: traveling around the world in 72 days, and publishing adventures with the *New York World*.⁴⁵ In this way, Bly reported personal experiences rather events, allowing her readers to immerse themselves in new situations. Bly's contemporaries took note of her determination to expose social injustices, and following Bly telling "how it feels to be a white slave,"⁴⁶ fellow stunt reporter Nell Nelson printed her "City Slave Girls"⁴⁷ series. This

⁴² Brooke Kroeger, *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* (New York City: Times Books/Random House, 1 Mar. 1994) 127.

⁴³ qtd. in Brooke Kroeger, *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* (New York City: Times Books/Random House, 1 Mar. 1994) 225.

⁴⁴ Ida M. Tarbell, "Women in Journalism," *The Chautauquan* Vol. 7 (1887): 393-395.

⁴⁵ Nellie Bly, *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days*, (New York City: The Pictorial Weeklies Company, 1890).

⁴⁶ Nellie Bly, "The Girls Who Make Boxes," *The New York World*, 27 Nov. 1887: 10.

⁴⁷ Nell Nelson, "City Slave Girls," *Chicago Times*, 30 Jul. 1888: 1-2.

type of rivalry reflected editors pitting journalists against each other; however, this tactic forced more and more newspapers to hire women as stunt journalists to keep up with competitors. In 1880, “less than 3 percent of all working journalists”⁴⁸ were women. After Bly’s major stunt reports, in 1900, there were a “reported 2,193 women journalists - 7 percent of the journalistic workforce”⁴⁹ and while Bly was not the sole factor, she inspired women worldwide to report. Modern journalists like Brooke Kroeger have sourced Bly as their main inspiration for pursuing journalism.⁵⁰

A rags-to-riches story of a woman journalist who worked from within to expose corruption, Bly was also a hard-working individual who set a precedent for all women who followed in her footsteps. In 1887, she knew that “[unless] there is a change, there will some day be a tale of horror never equaled,”⁵¹ and she set out to report the injustices she saw. Nellie Bly is the ideal American hero: a determined woman who fought tirelessly for the disadvantaged, and reported nothing but the “plain and unvarnished facts”⁵² to effect positive change in her world.

⁴⁸ Christopher Moseley, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*, (New York City: Routledge, 24 Oct. 2007) 591.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth V. Burt, *Women’s Press Organizations, 1881-1999*, (Westport: Greenwood, 2000) xxii.

⁵⁰ Jayne Garrison, "Nellie Bly, Girl Reporter : Daredevil Journalist. Shameless Promoter.," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 Mar. 1994.

⁵¹ Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, (New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887).

⁵² *Ibid.*

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bly, Nellie. *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days*. New York City: The Pictorial Weeklies Company, 1890. *Digital Library Project*. Web. 10 Nov. 2015.

This was an account of Bly's own travel around the world - one of her landmark achievements in stunt journalism. Beginning with her editor trying to dissuade her for undertaking what should have been, in his mind, a man's project, this work is a whirlwind of adventure and a truly feminist masterpiece.

Bly, Nellie. "Inside the Madhouse." *New York World* 16 Oct. 1887: 25-26. Microform.

This was the original publication that Bly wrote after her experience at Blackwell's Asylum. While it only covers her stunt between reaching the Insane Asylum and leaving it, it still caused quite a stir when it was published. Bly later compiled this article with other writings about trying to enter the Madhouse and published them as a book. This source allowed me to see verbatim what Nellie Bly first published upon leaving Blackwell's: all her immediate impressions and thoughts after her ten days there.

Bly, Nellie. "The Girl Puzzle." *The Pittsburg Dispatch* 25 Jan. 1885: 6-7. *Library of Congress*. Web. 18 Dec. 2015.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024546/1885-01-25/ed-1/seq-6/>>.

Bly's first article, published when she was only twenty, was already setting a precedent for her future career: honest, scathing, and asking for better treatment of women. It was interesting to see how her early writing gave way to stronger, but still thematically similar pieces.

Bly, Nellie. "The Girls Who Make Boxes." *New York World* 27 Nov. 1887: 10. *NYU Digital Library*. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.

Bly's article about the "white slaves" of New York City touched on the plight of working girls. These factory workers were exploited by their employers and often had to endure dangerous working conditions. Bly's use of stunt journalism exposed such injustice to the public.

Bly, Nellie. *Six Months in Mexico*. New York City: American, 1888. *Digital Library Project*. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

Six Months in Mexico was Bly's first account of stunt journalism, where she went undercover to discover the plight of impoverished Mexicans and convicted journalists, all under dictator Porfirio Díaz's iron rule.

Bly, Nellie. *Ten Days in a Mad-House*. New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887. *Digital Library Project*. Web. 4 Oct. 2015.

This was the complete account of Bly's expedition within Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum. Although originally published as separate articles, Bly was able to compile them into one report, each chapter an article that had been published before. She added information that had been omitted from the articles, like how she prepared for the role and how she went about being committed. This source provided direct access to Bly's opinions on her conditions within Blackwell's.

"Care of the City Insane." *New-York Tribune* 19 Aug. 1883: 6. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1883-08-19/ed-1/seq-6/>>.

Provided a perspective from before Bly's ten-day excursion into Blackwell. In fact, this article was a social and economic critique on how New York City's public asylums were run and how they were damaging to the city and their patients. From this article, I found that Bly's discoveries were not exactly uncommon knowledge; many recognized the problem, but Bly was the first to actively do something about it.

Dickens, Charles. "Chapter VI: New York." *American Notes for General Circulation*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1842. N. pag. *Project Gutenberg*. Web. 9 Jan. 2016.

Charles Dickens' account of Blackwell's Island and its facilities provided insight as to how other writers felt about the topic. Although he stayed at the asylum for a day, he was thoroughly saddened and disgusted by the conditions he found.

"The Flatbush Insane Asylum." *New-York Tribune* 16 May 1884: 8. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 28 Dec. 2015.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1884-05-16/ed-1/seq-8/>>.

This article attempts to further justify a connection between immigration and insanity rates. It also touches upon the monetary assets given to New York asylums in recent years. I was interested by how it used common stereotypes to brand the insane.

Fuller, Margaret. "Our City Charities." *New-York Daily Tribune* 19 Mar. 1845: 1. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 9 Jan. 2016.

Margaret Fuller's account of Blackwell's Island is similar to that of Dickens'. She denounces the deplorable conditions and comments on how the insane are often used as political bargaining tools for politicians to use in their campaigns.

Howard, Joe. "Women in Journalism." *The Iola Register* 30 Dec. 1887: 3. *Library of Congress*. Web. 23 Dec. 2015.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83040340/1887-12-30/ed-1/seq-3/>>.

Joe Howard writes about women in journalism moving to bigger and more exciting topics, but especially the career of Nellie Bly, who has dared to explore the most dangerous terrain and experiences.

"Importing Insanity." *New-York Tribune* 27 Dec. 1883: 4. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 23 Dec. 2015.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1883-12-27/ed-1/seq-4/>>.

This article is supposed to serve as justification on how immigration is causing a steady increase in insanity in America, presenting different statistics, surveys, and opinions from respected medical officials. It was interesting to see how some Americans stereotyped the insane.

"Is Insanity Rapidly Increasing?" *The Sun* [New York City] 6 Aug. 1880: 2. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 11 Jan. 2016.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1880-08-06/ed-1/>>.

This article actually offered the opposing view of most: rather than insinuating that the insane were an unfortunate plague on society, the author concluded that growing insanity numbers were proportional to growing population numbers, and that was fine. It was simply a result of people being more comfortable turning themselves in, or their family committing them.

"More Room for the Insane." *The Sun* [New York City] 1 June 1884: 7. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 11 Jan. 2016.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1884-06-01/ed-1/seq-7/>>.

This article focused on the statistics and economics of the asylum systems across the country. It brought certain economic drawbacks to light, while also highlighting a dramatic increase in the insane population.

Nelson, Nell. "City Slave Girls." *Chicago Times* 30 July 1888: 1-2. *NYU Digital Library*. Web. 23 Mar. 2016.

Nell Nelson, one of Bly's contemporaries, wrote this piece nearly a year after Bly published her own report on slave girls in New York. This similar stunt reflected the competition that many newspapers encouraged, pitting journalists against each other by sharing stories. It was also interesting to see how one of Bly's peers used Bly's approach and wrote about the same topic in such a different fashion.

New York (State). Senate. *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York*. Vol. 1. Albany: Van Benthuysen Printing House, 1879. Print.

This compilation of New York Senate Documents from 1879 gave me a greater understanding of attempted legislation and other various reports on the state of the asylum systems.

New York (State). State Board of Charities. *Annual Report of the State Board of Charities*. New York City: Troy, Printers, 1888. Print.

This publication carries the full report from the grand jury investigation conducted at Blackwell's Island. Previously, I had only read Bly's perspective on the account, so reading the actual report written by the investigators gave new depth to the story.

New York (State). State Commissioner in Lunacy. *Annual Report of the State Commissioner in Lunacy*. By John Ordranax. Albany: Charles Van Benthuysen & Sons, 1879. Print.

This report conveys the depressing statistics and conditions of the New York Public Health system, and State Commissioner in Lunacy John Ordranax asks the state for more funds and more space, since the system is severely lacking both.

"Playing Mad Woman." *The Sun* [New York City] 14 Oct. 1887: 1-2. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 22 Dec. 2015.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1887-10-14/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

The *New York World's* greatest rival in media was *The Sun*, and they had been following the story of the "insane girl" since September, only to be humiliated when it was revealed to be no other than the *World's* own journalist. They attempted to salvage the story, interviewing Blackwell's doctors and nurses to find out if Bly was correct in her statements. It was interesting to see Bly's journey reflected in her opponent's words.

Tarbell, Ida M. "Women in Journalism." *The Chautauquan* 7.7 (1887): 393-95. Web. 10 Jan. 2016.

This was a piece written by Ida M. Tarbell, a journalist who pioneered investigative journalism as well. She wrote this piece to encourage women to be involved in the media, explaining the skills necessary.

The Salt Lake Herald 9 Dec. 1887: 4. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 11 Dec. 2015.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85058130/1887-12-09/ed-1/seq-4/>>.

This unnamed article was a piece written as a reaction to Nellie Bly's *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, and it offered a unique outside perspective to how the rest of America saw Bly's adventure.

"The Trial Dragging Slowly." *New-York Tribune* 23 Dec. 1881: 1-2. *Library of Congress, Chronicling America*. Web. 22 Dec. 2015.

<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1881-12-23/ed-1/seq-2/>>.

During the trial of Charles Guiteau, James Garfield's assassin, medical experts were contacted to offer their opinion on his possible insanity. It was interesting to see how many people in the late 1800s believed that mental illness could be the only explanation for killing, and how one doctor claimed that all insane patients were, inherently, violent and immoral.

"Who Is This Insane Girl?" *New York Sun* 25 Sept. 1887: 1. *NYU Digital Library*. Web. 11 Dec. 2015.

As Bly experienced the inner workings of Blackwell's, the public all questioned and feared this "insane girl" who wandered New York City streets. One reporter for the *New York Sun* published a short article relating how the girl had seemed crazy and confused, but meant no harm. This article showed how the general public treated the insane.

Secondary Sources

Beasley, Maurine H, and Sheila J Gibbons. *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*. Washington, D.C.: American University Publishing, 1993. Print.

This book reflected upon centuries of women journalists and their struggle in the male-dominated media sphere. Although there was a chapter on Nellie Bly and her particular exploration in stunt journalism, the rest of the book provided fresh light on her contemporaries and those who followed her.

Burt, Elizabeth V., ed. *Women's Press Organizations, 1881-1999*. Westport: Greenwood, 2000. Print.

This book offered data on women in journalism in the late 19th century. This was especially helpful as I could look at statistics for female journalists before Bly entered the field to after she had published her first articles with the *New York World*, and I could quantitatively measure the increase of women journalists.

Burton, Julie, et al. *The Status of Women in the U.S. Media 2015*. N.p.: Women's Media Center, June 2015. Web. 2 Jan. 2016.

This was a report illustrating the current state of women in the media. Although a somewhat disheartening read, it shed some light on how far women journalists have come since Nellie Bly.

Chambers, Deborah, Linda Steiner, and Carole Fleming. *Women and Journalism*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 29 Apr. 2004. Web. 23 Dec. 2015.

This book illustrates the dominance of men in journalism during the 1880s, and how women reporters struggled through such oppression to find their voice in the media.

“Elizabeth Jane Cochran, AKA “Nellie Bly” (1864-1922).” *National Women’s History Museum*. n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2015.

This was an enlightening article on Nellie Bly’s background. While providing a brief description of Bly’s accomplishment, the article was especially helpful in pointing the reader in the direction of additional reading material on the subject.

Garrison, Jayne. "Nellie Bly, Girl Reporter : Daredevil Journalist. Shameless Promoter." *Los Angeles Times* 28 Mar. 1994: n. pag. *Los Angeles Times*. Web. 1 Jan. 2016.

This is an article with Bly’s chief biographer, Brooke Kroeger. She describes her process of uncovering Bly’s story and telling it to the world. It was interesting because it led me to more references, and from those, new sources.

Gazzillo, Rosemary. “Nellie Bly 1864-1922.” *Women in New York City, 1890-1940*. 10 Dec. 1998. *College of Staten Island (CUNY)*. Web. 2 Dec. 2015.

This was a biographical piece on the life and times of Nellie Bly. It provided background insight on Nellie Bly and allowed me to build a base of knowledge from her early life and experiences.

Kroeger, Brooke. *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist*. New York: Times Books/Random House, 1 Mar. 1994. Print.

One of the most thorough biographies composed on Nellie Bly. Takes into account the paltry sources that exist about the elusive journalist and expounds upon them by entwining Bly’s own works and letters into the narrative. An utterly comprehensive text on the stunt reporter’s life, work, and legacy.

Lang, Marjory Louise. *Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada, 1880 - 1945*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 26 Aug. 1999. Web. 20 Dec. 2015.

This book described society reporting and men’s place in it - or rather, their reluctance to keep a place in it.

Lutes, Jean Marie. “Extra! Read All About It: “Girl Stunt Reporter” Turns 150.” *Morning Edition*. Dir. Barry Gordemer. National Public Radio. 5 May 2014. Radio.

An exclusive interview with Jean Marie Lutes, author of *Around the World in 72 Days and Other Writings*, an annotated collection of Nellie Bly’s published works. She imparts further wisdom in this installation of “Author Interviews,” commenting on how Bly’s legacy continues, 150 years later.

Lutes, Jean Marie. *Front Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930*. United States: Cornell University Press, 1 Nov. 2007. Web. 20 Dec. 2015.

This book provided insight on how Nellie Bly came about acquiring such a job and what Blackwell Island was like, but also offered an in-depth look at Bly's earlier careers in journalism.

McMullen, Lorraine, ed. *Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1 Jan. 1989. Web. 13 Dec. 2015.

This book described women in journalism in the 1880s and a detailed insight on how society reporting worked to diminish female writers. Although it was about Canadian writers, McMullen dedicated a section to American statistics to offer contrast.

Moseley, Christopher. *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*. Ed. Stephen L. Vaughn. New York: Routledge, 24 Oct. 2007. Web. 14 Dec. 2015.

This encyclopedia provided facts and statistics about women journalists in the 1880s. It also offered a comprehensive detailing of women statistics throughout history, which allowed me to understand the rise in women journalists.

Wihbey, John. "Gender disparities and journalism: Research perspectives - journalist's resource." *Gender. Journalist's Resource*, 5 June 2015. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

This study looked at the current statistics for women in journalism. It was interesting to compare this to Bly's own time period. The data presented took into account different factors that might affect women in journalism, and different factions women in journalism might occupy.