

# LH & 13 ODW

SAT. 18 JAN. 2020

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### Scrolls and Trolls

The first time I saw a newspaper *ironed* the absurd act was performed by the butler in a screen adaption of some 19th century novel. Even by the standards of the British aristocracy this seemed preposterously decadent. Why would one need one's morning paper extra flat? Would it make the big loose sheets easier to handle? Is it an ASMR thing? Or is some kind of petty sadism; exercising power over a servant just for the sake of it? Later in my cinematic explorations I saw post-war morning routines in which wives ironed newspapers for their husbands. In my memory this scene is American rather than British. It didn't take place in the drawing room of a country house, but in the fitted kitchen of a suburban bungalow with a white picket fence. But anyways, just another example of the backwardness of patriarchal structures and tyranny I supposed.

Much later still—recently in fact—I learned that newspapers really had been ironed, but that this was done not to flatten the sheets, but to fix the printer's ink to the paper. While my convictions about past (and present) inequalities for women and the lower classes remain, I have to admit that this information revealed a new dimension of the action in question. Ironing the newspaper prevented the reader from getting the ink onto \*his\* finger tips. As ink was poisonous this was a precautionary measure. Wetting your finger to turn the page could be fatal — ironing the paper made the consumption of the news safer. A safer read.

A simple thermal process stopped the news getting under your skin, literally.

JR