Chapter 3

Through the Looking Glass World:
How Newspapers make “News”
What a wonder, what a marvel it is that here for one or two cents you buy a history of the entire globe of the day before! It is something that is miraculous, really, when you consider it.

—Charles A. Dana, *The Art of Newspaper Making* (1897)

The newspaper kiosks, tiny temples in which the publications of the entire world get together for a rendezvous. Foes in real life, they lie here in printed form side by side: the harmony could not be greater.

—Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament* (1926)
A newspaper derives its primary function (and its existence) from its ability to provide “news” and tell what has happened in the world: what events of human importance have occurred, and what social occurrences merit our attention, ranging from the political, the cultural and the scientific to the inanely entertaining and the thoroughly nonsensical. The “news” is found systematically arranged fitting across pages and column-spaces according to the nature of their importance, while mysterious and oracular voices foretell their “news” and prophesy war, weather and the traffic, offer job opportunities, insurance policies, tips for the stock market, list television and radio programmes, provide shopping guides, and offer prizes for solving crossword puzzles. The processes of making “news” for a newspaper appear disorderly and confusing, whether seen from the outside or from within the walls that mark the boundaries of a newspaper’s offices or its print-shops. It can be tempting to construe that the newsmakers manufacturing “news” in their workplaces are disorderly and confused, more like politicians caught in the middle of their hurried public addresses, fumbling what to speak next on the loudspeakers, than conscientious people who choose to measure words carefully across paper.¹

¹ This reference is in fact drawn from Antonio Gramsci’s observation that a newspaper is very close to oratory and conversation: “Newspaper articles are usually written in a hurry, improvised, and are almost always like speeches made at public meetings because of the rapidity with which they are conceived and constructed. Few newspapers have specialist editors; when they do, their work is largely improvised” [Antonio Gramsci, “Oratory, Conversation, Culture,” in Antonio Gramsci, The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935, edited by David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 375]. This taken-for-granted similarity between mediated discourse and orality is carried forward in all analyses of newspapers (and “mass media”) that focus only on the formation of media discourses, or their reception. In this case, we also refer to the exclusive insistence on discourse analysis by Stuart Hall where he insists that we devote primary attention to the discursive forms of the
If all routine practices contain large segments of uncertainty that determine their pursuits, journalists in particular insist that in a way the making of “news” involves more than those: for the “news” that acquires final shape after a day or days of hard labour is never known \textit{a priori} and the processes of its making rules out procrastination of any sort. This can be taken as a proper apology, or, it may prompt us to look for better reasons behind this visible display of confusion which in times also acts as the best tool the “mass media” use in their self-defence. Whenever they are accused of distortion, propaganda, and slander, newspapers and other “mass media” frequently refer to this element of uncertainty in “news” that overwhelms their routine practices. How can they account for bias when the immediate task of making “news” under deadline pressure rules out every other consideration? So runs the usual argument. The best reason usually offered and considered self-explanatory—given the fact that a newspaper that is actually made in most cases “comes out” everyday—is that whatever the processes that lead to the making of it, the “news” that is contained somewhere inside the physical shape of the newspaper is a very effective, if not perpetually valid, means for understanding reality.

As a complex concept that is also a product, “news” contained in the contemporary newspaper has as its ideal an aspiration, and a simultaneous

disposition to truthfulness and accuracy: “Because if it isn’t accurate, it isn’t news. It’s fiction.”2 The ideal necessarily dwells, as Jackie Harrison points out, within the entire range of optimistic and pessimistic attempts that vindicate, debate and analyse the value and nature of “news”.3 What I explore in this chapter is whether this ideal—to which the chasers and makers of “news” attach more than a fair degree of confidence—is ever realizable.

1. Issues of universal inclusion, historicism, and the “decline of standards” argument

Hypothetically, someone reading an entire newspaper has an all-inclusive view of all the events of the preceding day, if not a panoramic one. (This refers more to the practitioners’ views of “news”—here I am referring to an older, but still prevalent, journalistic understanding of “news” as “everything that occurs, everything which is of human interest, and which is of sufficient importance to arrest and absorb the attention of the public or of any considerable part of it.”4)

As we have seen in the previous chapter, this inclusivity is impossible in conceptual terms. In terms of practice, it is impossible on three counts: it is socially impossible to record, survey and collect potential “news” information concerning every human activity going on around the globe at any given day; it is technologically impossible to process and transmit all that information in paper, through an electronic portal, or through communication channels maintained by media technologies of the present and the conceivable future; it is humanly impossible for a single reader-consumer, or any great number of them, to go through that massive amount of information and process them for comprehension. Yet this is what a daily newspaper attempts each day—its capacity to include all aspires to an unobtrusive kind of universalism that is both circumspect and inconceivable either in terms of theory or practice.

The universalizing way of aspiring to and producing “news” in a newspaper is unidirectional for it does not take into account the temporally and spatially limited (socio-culturally rooted and therefore restricted) scanning capacities of its reader-consumer; by way of its initially seizing the opportunity and privilege to provide “news”, it proceeds from the initial understanding that as a provider it remains independent of the varied patterns of reading, and the decoding speed and capabilities of the reader-consumer to whom it ultimately addresses its product. This remains valid even if an existing newspaper conducts readership journalism could be printed in any publication, because it is, in every sense of the word, universal.”


surveys from time to time, or when an incipient or old newspaper hires professionals to carry out regular market-researches or analyze consumption trends: these statistical queries are self-serving—in every situation, it is the significance attached to the newspaper’s circulation statistics, and to the newspaper itself as a standardized unit of measurement, that is considered the basis for analysis. Moreover, they draw on the initial privilege claimed by a newspaper over its reader-consumer as a provider of “news”: what Raymond Williams elsewhere calls “an arrogant preoccupation with transmission, which rests on the assumption that the common answers have been found and need only to be applied.”

The connection of “news” to “fresh information” also becomes less important as it becomes more of a curiosity assumed on the basis of a certain kind of interest that prompts newspapers in the first place to look for “news”. Coupled with a claim to “news” as a form of knowledge where it attaches greater importance to the version of reality claimed as true (or “newsworthy”), the newspaper—like other “mass media” and historically the first of them—assigns a greater weight to its

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6 In an article that questions the statistical fallacy usually employed to show that television viewing in England had displaced the newspaper reading, James Curran observes: “Much of the research on audience motivations so-called is rooted in rationalistic assumptions about the functions performed by the press and the television media, assumptions which are then fed into the questionnaire design itself—only to emerge, as empirical ‘findings’ derived from large, carefully constructed, and indubitably representative samples. The findings are the assumptions and vice versa. An attempt to evaluate attitudinal evidence in the light of ‘proven’ motivations for newspaper reading is liable to lead to false conclusions.” James Curran, “The Impact of Television on the Audience for National Newspapers, 1945-68,” in The History of the Book in the West: 1914-2000, volume 5, edited by Alexis Weedon (Farnham, England and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 109-110.

7 Williams, Culture and Society, 334.

8 We have already seen in the previous chapter how Walter Benjamin’s critique of the newspaper rests on this very fact.
professional and institutional ability to provide contemporary and “objective” accounts that are popularly referred to as the “first rough drafts of history”. (The reference to journalism as the “first rough draft of history” is of twentieth century origin; as we will see, it is founded on an increased stress on the truth claim of the newspaper after the inherently-problematic criteria of journalistic “objectivity” had been established.)

A naïve historicism is at work here: a historicism fuelled by the old hope in facilities of technological replication to grant legitimacy and immortality to everything recorded through print. We have already seen in our discussion of Benjamin’s views concerning technological replication, this view does not hold in practice, and if accepted, it creates more problems than it solves. Moreover, newspapers do not readily admit to directional change based on time and chronology, externality, structure and agency on which historiography generally—or even when it tries to explore compartmentalized trajectories like “cultural history”, “social history”, and so on—bases its assumptions on the past. A fondness for historicism relates more, as I have identified in the first chapter, to what I refer to as a newspaper’s self-image (the image a modern newspaper likes to construct of itself in a social space—for itself, and for its advertisers) than its desire to create “news” that is factual and accurate.

There is another unsettling debate—lurking less in the newspaper’s claim in history than in the historical treatments of the newspaper in the North—that I choose to avoid. Historically, in the newspaper that grew out of pamphlet culture
in the North, and heavily relied on oratorial conventions and procedural strategies to pursue the role of the public rhetor, the detailed reporting of news was concomitant with strong interpretation and passionate political advocacy. Steven Roger Fischer, for example, insists on an enormous gulf separating old newspapers from those that we witness today:

Newspapers and weeklies had not been designed to be read quickly. Indeed, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers had more time to devote to such ephemera. There were no large, bold headlines to “grab” the reader’s attention: the attention was already there. Articles could therefore be argued in detail with a wealth of supporting evidence, and claimed several columns, even pages. Journalists appealed to reason, not emotion, and in return the average reader deliberately and slowly thought through what she or he was reading. Just as in learned journals, many of the newspaper and weekly articles were even signed by their author at the end.

In England, for example, the entwining and juxtaposition of heterogeneous “news” items and subjective viewpoints in the textual spaces of the early newspapers followed the long-established conventions of the corantos and the newsbooks: these early newspapers were, according to Joad Raymond,

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9 See Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641-1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 185-221. Despite “taxes on knowledge”, libel laws, prohibition and licensing of publications, and the penalty of death for “seditious libel”, “news” was considered inseparable from the right to use print to champion truth in whatever form it was conceived by its interpreter. For example, Milton’s famous assertion in the *Areopagitica* (“Truth will always prevail over Falshood”) that refers to a divine impulse prompting humans to use the liberty of conscience to come out in open debate, and Cato’s later championing of “Freedom of Speech” as inseparable from the covenant of “Public Liberty” that decried the government’s control of opinions through taxes and stamp duties—both assumed the righteousness of open discussion and the exchange of subjective ideas in the society through the use of the printed word. See David A. Copeland, *The Idea of a Free Press: The Enlightenment and Its Unruly Legacy* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 75-102.

“intrinsically unlikely to impose upon and coerce their readers into acceptance of a single, simple perspective on the news”; they granted recognition to and synthesized a diversity of views as they prioritized the wishes of their readers above commercial interests. But a too-strict adoption of this view of early newspapers is problematic; especially for a study of select twentieth century newspapers, for it might lead us astray to conceptualize—though neither Raymond nor Fischer suggest it at any point—if not a prelapsarian state of innocence for newspapers and a “natural” order, then a unstable reference point for collating and abnegating newspaper behaviour of the present with reference to its past.

Here we can also refer to Habermas’s reference to a “refeudalization of the public sphere” in the nineteenth century. Habermas takes as given the historical status of the press as a non-instrumental forum of rational-critical debate before the arrival of the bourgeois constitutional state and the “legalization of a political public sphere” after which, he insists, the press turned into a “public service” and

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12 Ibid.
13 Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, translated by Thomas Burger (1962; Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), 195. Habermas defines the “public sphere” as “a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer or public opinion, accords with the principle of the public sphere—that principle of public information which once had to be fought for against the arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities.” Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964),” New German Critique, no. 3 (1974): 50.
“itself became manipulable to the extent that it became commercialized”. ¹⁴ However, Habermas’s account runs contrary to explorations carried out by print historians in different countries. For example in England, the earliest newspapers—which stuck more to the conventions established by the coranto, the heavily opinionated pre-civil war “newsletter”, and the vitriolic “newsbook”—functioned as mouthpieces of the competing regimes fighting the English Civil War; the first newspaper in England, the London Gazette, issued from Oxford in 1665 when the English court had fled the plague, was a direct instrument of the state than a forum for a “public”: it was published by the English government as the political mouthpiece of the regime, alongside measures to suppress or tighten control on the circulation of other printed news, and similar “licentious discourse”. ¹⁵ According to Joad Raymond, a careful historical study of early English newsbooks of the seventeenth century—prior to the appearance of the newspaper and the historical markers Habermas sets for the differentiation—is more suggestive of the newsbooks’ coercive and instrumental need to manipulate their readers’ opinions through and through, than of a model of a “public sphere”

¹⁴ Habermas, Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 184-188. As Habermas insists: “Only with the establishment of the bourgeois constitutional state and the legalization of a political public sphere was the press as a forum of rational-critical debate released from the pressure to take sides ideologically; now it could abandon its polemical stance and concentrate on the profit opportunities for a commercial business.” Ibid., 184.

intrinsically non-instrumental and guided by the unproblematized principle of disinterested reason.\textsuperscript{16}

Therefore, a desire to locate the exact historical origins of the newspaper as corresponding to the “degeneration of the public sphere”, the search for a historical pivot point to fix the blame for the present, can be a tricky one. As Raymond Williams argues in another context, in most cases the “decline of standards” argument points to the “delusion” of a literate observer that makes him ignore certain other facts of history, and concentrate on familiarities that are not part of living for most people inhabiting social-historical spaces:

There is an evident danger of delusion, to the highly literate person, if he supposes that he can judge the quality of general living by primary reference to the reading artifacts. He will, in particular, be driven to this delusion if he retains, even in its most benevolent form, the concept of the majority of other people as 'masses', whom he observes as a kind of block... A number of tastes which would formerly have been gratified in pre-literate and therefore largely unrecorded ways are now catered for and even fostered in print. Or, to put it in another way, the historical counterpart of a modern popular newspaper, in its informing function, is not an earlier minority newspaper, but that complex of rumour and travellers’ tales which then served the majority with news of a kind.\textsuperscript{17}

In the absence of stable markers and anchor points, then, not only does the point of comparison evade the search, we might also be prompted to overlook the incongruity of a suggested solution to its universal validity across societies and

\textsuperscript{17} Williams,\textit{ Culture and Society}, 328.
cultures, especially when we later intend to speak of newspapers not strictly forming part of the Northern traditions of newsmaking. Moreover, we have already seen that “news” in whatever form it is adopted—whatever be the qualitative markers for its separation of “facts” from the real, whatever be its historical point of occurrence—always follows from an initial (and unaccidental) privileging of certain facts and conditions of being, and this is necessarily linked to a desire to accumulate symbolic or material profit having specific rather than universal cultural legitimacy.

Mindful of the above, I choose to stay away from the unyielding search for the unstable historical point that separates the newspaper from its “public” (if at all it is historically identifiable and fixable) in a given social context. Instead, as a way of showing unease and demanding no final solutions, I try to consider in brief as what constitutes journalistic “objectivity”\textsuperscript{18} in the twentieth century newsmaking business by suggesting references to the broad historical contexts in which the concept emerged in the North, and from where it spread to the rest of the world. This in turn highlights my attempt to understand as whether the increased preoccupation with “objectivity” as a professional norm relates to an understanding of the self-image of a modern newspaper when it is locating and making “news”.

\textsuperscript{18} That is, I will not try to note its similarities or dissimilarities with the reflexive epistemological questioning of the “real” in the realm of philosophy that establishes the existence of the real outside the self.
2. Of “objectivity” and other expedients

Words are lonesome witnesses that often offer the best comprehension. They prefigure, transfix and recreate meanings in documents, newspapers and books, and even in ethereal worlds where nothing seems to be possible except the ceaseless oozing of information from nowhere. Newer words like “objectivity” fight for meaning to feather their wings; older words like “journalism”, and “newspaper”, that appear to have their wings clipped, retain the memory of their uncertain leaps into the open sky of history, and their break with what Benjamin has identified as “homogenous and empty time”.19

I start with the recognition that the French word “journalism” found meaning together with the words “ideology”, “statistics”, “industry”, “nationality”, “crisis”, “liberal”, “factory”, “middle class”, “proletariat”, “pauperism”, “capitalism” and “socialism” in the boiling cauldron of West European history, between the troubled years of 1789 and 1848.20 And so after the French Revolution, one never went to the tree of Cracow (the large, leafy chestnut tree of the gardens of the Palais-Royal in Paris where the newsmongers gathered) to find out what was really going on as under the Old Regime;21 people tried making sense of what they read in the journals and the newspapers. The technique of “objectivity”

20 Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848, 1975 (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995), 1. We can also refer to Raymond Williams’s insistence that the idea of “culture”, along with the institutions and practices grouped under culture and society (in the context of the British society), took shape after the Industrial Revolution in the North. Williams, Culture and Society, v.
called for in the newspaper (and to be proper, the thing referred to now as the “newspaper”) was something that appeared only after the Industrial Revolution had sunk deep roots in the North.

Before “objectivity” gained currency in the newspapers, there were important developments in the newspaper business in the wake of the Industrial Revolution as the nineteenth century (and later, the twentieth century) unsuccessfully tried to tackle one of the important and unruly legacies of the European Enlightenment; namely, the idea of a free press.22 Riding on newer technological improvements—the introduction of wood pulp instead of linen rags by a German bookbinder to the making of paper in 184423 (that in the space of thirty years fell enough coniferous forests to feed the giant machines spewing wood pulp and do away with the centuries-old crisis in paper);24 the use of the rotary press from 1814 (that introduced the machine era to printing and caused an exponential increase in printing speed that had remained more-or-less constant in the 360 years after

22 In fact, the idea of the “free press” existing (and/or granted by God) as a natural right spans centuries, even though it never achieved universal consensus. It goes back well beyond the extension of the heresy of the radicals of the continent in the English-speaking world in the reign of Henry VIII and Martin Luther’s description of printing as “God’s highest and extremest act of grace” in 1520. See Copeland, Idea Of A Free Press, 21-52.

23 Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, The Coming of the Book (1958; Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006), 34. Like the legend of Newton’s apple, there is a similarly potent legend attributed to this German bookbinder Gottlieb Koepler who supposedly sprung to idea after observing the formation of a paper-like substance mixed with fine wood fibres at a deserted wasp’s nest. Douglas, Golden Age of the Newspaper, 14.

24 There was a tremendous crisis all over the North to secure and recycle every bit and scrap of old rag in order to make paper. The extent of this crisis can be judged by the fact that in early nineteenth century the British did not spare their dead to wear cotton garments to their coffins: a law that was passed permitted only wool to be used for burial garments: a legislation that freed 125 ton of cotton rags a year for English papermaking. John H. Lienhard, How Invention Begins: Echoes of Old Voices in the Rise of New Machines (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 207.
Gutenberg’s ingenuous modification of a wine-press)—newsmaking business in the nineteenth century underwent a profound shift, what Maria Adamowicz-Hariasz calls the transformation from “opinion” to “information” in the context of the French press. (Distinct from the pamphleteering traditions of the French Revolution, the first of the modern newspapers appeared in France in 1836—Emile Girardin’s lesser politically charged, inexpensive, and more accessible newspaper La Presse—which targeted advertisement revenue and appealed to its readers through “gossip, serial novels, and various other stunts.” It was followed by the even less expensive Le Petit Journal, “the ‘true’ beginning of the mass press,” which in turn tried to draw on the popularity of the roman-feuilleton, the serial novel.)

The early uses of “objectivity” in newspapers correspond to the founding of the “penny press” in the first half of the nineteenth century in America, particularly

25 Gutenberg’s printing press was a modified flat wine-press made of wood that was run by hand. In 1813, Friedrich Koenig invented a rotary metal press and in 1814 ran it with one of the marvels of the age: steam. The standard speed of printing before Koenig’s machine was 600 impressions a day. In 1814, the Times of London used Koenig’s press to procure 1,100 impressions an hour. Bagdikian, Information Machines, 9. By the 1860s, bigger British and American newspapers using the web rotary presses could print 10,000 complete eight-page newspapers in an hour. Philip Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography, 1972 (New Castle, Delaware and Winchester: Oak Knoll Press and St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1995), 263.


after the 1830s; especially when the “penny press” opted for greater circulations over the prestige sought earlier by newspapers. The “penny press” were the first newspapers in history to send out reporters on the beat in active search for “news”; as James Carey observes, “objectivity” began with the “gastronomy of the eye” filling the pages of the “penny papers” as their need to serve an audience (rather than a “public”) made them pursue and attempt to include in print everything about the strange, the exotic, and the commonplace that happened in the cities.

An initially romantic search for “everything” that could fit to print was soon overwhelmed by a pressing technological need to address an increasing superfluity of occurrences, acquired through newer communication technologies, which needed to be selected, interpreted, and explained within strictly defined limits of the printed “news” page. This also necessitated that the earlier popular method of building up rhetorical suspense in print was quickly done away with; a pursuit of

30 We can refer a description of the American newspaper scenario in the 1830s before the coming of the “penny press”: “Newspapers were not for the commoner. They sold for $10 a year, a price he or she could not afford. They were obtainable only over the publishing house counters, from carriers delivering them to homes, or in the coffeehouses where they were read and passed on from patron to patron. Most of the publishers would not extend themselves to gain new subscribers; that was beneath their dignity. One editor proudly claimed that his paper’s circulation of two thousand was unsolicited.” Hy B. Turner, *When Giants Ruled: The Story of Park Row, New York’s Great Newspaper Street* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), xvi.
32 It remained popular though in signed newspaper columns by diverse figures like Karl Marx, T.B. Macaulay, Victor Hugo, and Emile Zola in the nineteenth century, and by people like V.I. Lenin, Joseph Goebbels, G.B.Shaw, Ernest Hemingway, and Walter Lippmann, and also by pioneers of nationalism in the colonies who played the informed haruspex. With the rise of the electronic media—
the older prose technique of the equitone popularised by Addison and Steele in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which tried to maintain the “distance” of the newspaper language from the variety and pitch of the spoken word, gained popularity as respectable newspapers pursuing “everything” in “news” tried to distance themselves from newspapers having more esoteric and strange pursuits.

“Objectivity” in “news” is clearly discernible only after the usage of the “lightning lines” of the telegraph gained popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century in the North, and with the laying of the inter-oceanic cables. As a carrier of information and “news”, not only did the telegraph replace the carrier pigeons, the stagecoach, the railroad, the steamboat, and the clipper sailing ships that carried mail across the Atlantic; what it really accomplished was to bring about an unprecedented and irrevocable separation between communication and transportation. Earlier, the speed of information was dependent on the speed of its messenger, and the limits of transportation determined the extent of the propagation of printed “news”: “(t)he rest of the globe was a matter of

which forced all the older gods of communication to indulge in interpretations of events from the confines of their news desks—newspapers throughout the world feebly attempted to resuscitate in print the old connection their words once had with spoken language.

33 On 24 May 1844, the American artist and daguerrotypist Samuel Finley Breese Morse inaugurated the world’s first telegraph line by transmitting the question “What hath God wrought?” as a series of electromagnetic impulses carried over by wires. In the space of eight years, the United States of America had been overlaid twenty-three thousand miles of telegraph lines. After the coming of the telegraph, as Daniel Czitrom points out, there was the ascendancy of “news” over opinion, and “(t)he old style of personal journalism, in which a single man’s personality had thoroughly defined what a paper stood for, had disappeared.” Daniel J. Czitrom, Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 19.
government agents and rumour.” The telegraph brought a sense of near-simultaneity to “news” for the first time: it made the modern newspaper capable of procuring on paper a heterogeneous variety of “news” telegraphed on a daily basis from around the world. This reduced the power in the status of the printer who would earlier gloss over whatever “news” he could from the officially-approved channels to hurriedly collate them in print, and enhanced the need for an editor, “an individualistic interpreter with access to his own information”. A real network of telegraph cables extending across diverse cultural geographies—when coupled with the use of postal services and police departments that spread the “news” while addressing the need to control populations, especially in the colonial world, imparted a false sense of cohesive simultaneity to events as never before. They enforced and propagated the imperial viewpoint of things in the colonies, and with the compression of time and distance, effected an increasing separation of events in the world scale from their “local”, “national” and

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34 Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*, 10. Carrier pigeons, in case the weather was not inclement, travelled at a maximum of sixty miles an hour. They could only be taught one route with a maximum range of 200 miles, and despite all myths, few of them would ever return down the same route, to the same sender. Few of the despatches sent by horseback could exceed the travel speed of a good horse, which is fifteen miles an hour; in 1834, the fastest transport across land was the stage-coach in which the Tsar of Russia travelled from St Petersburg to Berlin in four days to set a record. As for water transport, “news” dispatched was intermittent: for example, in 1820 the mail from London was made up for Holland twice a week, for Sweden and Portugal once a week, and for North America once a month. Later in the nineteenth century, the arrival of the smoke-plumed railway locomotive inaugurated a new era in transportation and a new resoluteness and fascination for speed. Steam boats, and later, steam turbines followed; in 1894, the 100-foot, turbine-driven American steamship *Turbinia* could travel over water at a speed of 33 knots or 39 mph. But even after the coming of high-speed railways and steamships in the nineteenth century, the increased speed in transportation was no match for the almost-instantaneous way in which the telegraph could relay information. See Bagdikian, *Information Machines*, 4-14; Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*, 9-10, 170-71; Lienhard, *How Invention Begins*, 98-115.


“international” places of origin which the increasing severance of “news” events from “news” production. (Of other things, the spread of the telegraph across the world also prompted a mammoth growth of the power and prestige of news-agencies. For example, Reuters—the European news-agency which had used carrier pigeons in 1850 to carry “news” across Europe—was judiciously using the “wires” in the space of ten years to gather “news” from the farthest reaches of the British Empire; it consecutively set up offices in Alexandria in 1865, in Bombay in 1866, in Valparaiso in 1874, and in Cape Town in 1876 as the Empire promoted telegraphy for its own military interests. From the days of its introduction, the telegraph was a highly commercial technology: though many argued for government control over its wires, the technology belonged to companies who found high profit in its usage and tried to monopolize “news”

37 The best negative literary allusion to this is found in an 1872 novel by Jules Verne, The Extraordinary Journeys: Around the World in Eighty Days, translated by William Butcher (1872; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). As Verne’s protagonists Phileas Fogg and his assistant Passepartout circumnavigate the world on an elephant, stagecoaches, a trans-American train, steamships, sail boats, and a hot-air balloon, they achieve an average speed of around ten miles per hour. Yet they almost outrun the machinations of the Scotland Yard detective Fix, who wires the Scotland Yard from Suez to immediately send a warrant for Fogg’s arrest to Bombay, and then uses the telegraph repeatedly to report his failure to the Scotland Yard, till he catches Fogg at Ireland. Before Fogg stakes his claim at the end of the novel, the confusion of friends is most apparent when they discuss his eccentricity, and also his disappearance from the known world connected by telegraphic cables (“You will notice too, I may add,” said John Sullivan, “that we have had no news at all of our colleague, and yet there was no shortage of telegraphic wires along this route.” ibid., 198). Fogg makes use of transportation facilities both new and old, but he is careful to avoid telegraphic communication altogether—the final narrative twist (hinging around differences in time zones) that catches Fogg and his friends alike is not at all possible if Fogg did choose to telegraph his activities to his friends in London on a regular basis. Rather, Verne prefers to make Fogg arrive with his “news” and his confusion; with the arrival of the telegraph, the old connection between communication and transportation could only exist in a fictional world that chose not to telegraph its intentions.

38 Brian Mooney and Barry Simpson, Breaking News: How the Wheel Came Off at Reuters (Chichester, West Sussex: Capstone Publishing Ltd, 2003), 5-6.
that passed through the cables. 39 We have the prominent example of Associated Press, one of the earliest American news-agencies who, in partnership with the Western Union Telegraph Company of the United States, had secured monopolistic control over the country’s telegraph lines and all the “franchised news” reaching newspapers in North America in the latter half of the nineteenth century. 40 By the beginning of the twentieth century, Reuters held virtual-monopoly on the “news” telegraphed throughout the British Empire and greater parts of Asia, while the Associated Press, the French-owned Agence Havas, and the German-owned Wolff decided what was “news” for the rest of the world. 41

“Objectivity” became the choicest mode of bulk “news” expression of fin de siècle journalism as the use of the typewriter, the linotype, the high-speed rotary press, the half-tone photographic block, and cheap newsprint 42 by the newspaper industry—all greatly facilitating the technological replication of “news”—

40 See Czitrom, Media and the American Mind, 21-29.
41 Headrick, “A Double-Edged Sword: Communications and Imperial Control in British India,” 57.
42 As I have noted earlier, the increased mechanization of the processes of papermaking, and the use of wood to replace rags, caused an exponential increase in paper production in the second half of the nineteenth century, and a steep decline in price. As Harold Innis points out of the British paper industry: “Total production of paper in the United Kingdom increased from about 11,000 tons of hand-made paper in 1800, to 100,000 tons in 1861, of which 96,000 tons were machine-made, and to 652,000 tons, of which 648,000 tons were machine-made in 1900. Prices declined, roughly from 1s. 6d. a pound in 1800 to 10d. in 1836, 6-1/2d. in 1859, and less than 1d. a pound in 1900” [Innis, Empire and Communications, 159]. While paper got cheaper, newsprint (made pulpwood from spruce forests to which it had abundant supply) became the largest single output of the North American paper industry. In the United States, the domestic production of newsprint rose from 100,000 ton a year in 1869 to over one million ton a year in 1914 [Trevor J. O. Dick, “Canadian Newsprint, 1913-1930: National Policies and the North American Economy,” Journal of Economic History 42, no. 3 (1982): 660-1]. At the same time, the price of newsprint fell sharply from the steep prices of the Civil War—in 1872, a pound of newsprint cost twelve cents in the United States, in 1897 it was one and 4/5 cent per pound [Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 11].
coincided with the use of the telegraph, the transatlantic cable, the telephone, and later, wireless transmission. (Rather than identify the telegraph as *prima causa* for all these changes, the above references point to its congruence with the historical patterns, as Harold Innis has observed, of increasing mechanization and an increasing monopolization in the development of the newspaper and its component technologies.) This congruence prompted newspapers to look for greater profits in technology, circulation, advertisement, and the prospects of consistently and profitably reaching a wider “mass” readership by offering detached but emotive social commitment bred on familiarity.\(^{43}\)

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was an increased dependence on advertisements that displaced a newspaper’s earlier search for profit through its circulation, and importantly, an increase in prestige. (It is worth noting here that the earliest advertising agents of the nineteenth century worked for newspapers rather than for advertisers, acting as brokers of newspaper spaces, and filling them with commercial purpose.\(^ {44}\)) Though the emphasis on the extent and nature of circulation figures continued to count as they attracted advertisers, commercial advertisement became the new determinant by which a newspaper measured its profit, status, and prestige as a provider of “news”. By the beginning of the

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twentieth century, big newspapers had learnt to survive on their advertisement columns, selling readership to advertisers than trying to survive through readership support.45

In time when the twentieth century was half over, the newspaper trade had become a big business vying for mass readership for its advertisers than aim to reap profit from circulation; it increasingly tried to integrate the visual appeal of consumerism and commercial advertising, also suited to other “mass media”, to the newspaper, and made the quantum jump from “opinion” to “objectivity”. According to Ben Bagdikian, this shifting of interest from circulations to advertisement revenue bears direct correlation to the retreat of explicit political statements (and opinion) from the “news” columns proper to the editorial pages of the newspaper: “news” carried by a newspaper needed to be “objective” in order to attract a wide variety of readers (who might be put down by strong political persuasion), and at the same time, it needed to be something not detrimental to the interests of the large advertisers (who disliked criticism of any kind).46

Consequently, a set of disciplining practices, under the rubric of “news ethics”, was woven around “objectivity” in the twentieth century which introduced five important changes to the making of “news”.

45 Hilaire Belloc, The Free Press (1918; Norfolk, VA: IHS Press, 2002), 33-34. As Belloc points out: “Long before the last third of the nineteenth century a newspaper, if it was of large circulation, was everywhere a venture or a property dependent wholly upon its advertisers. It had ceased to consider its public save as a bait for the advertiser. It lived (in this phase) entirely on its advertisement columns” (Belloc’s emphases). Ibid., 34.
Primarily, the pursuit of “objectivity” led to a slow waning of the old and grand ideal of the press as the “fourth estate”—that existed in natural right as the other three great estates: the aristocracy, the clergy, and the “common folk”—legitimizing itself as a social institution that linked a government to its constituents.47 A preference for “objectivity” meant a fundamental reformulation of the basis of the press’s legitimacy—it ceased to be justifiable in terms of the passionate social advocacy and partisanship it laid claim to in the nineteenth century.48

Once “objectivity” and facticity were established as the core principles of the newsmaking craft, the press abandoned its earlier clearly-pursued goal of explanation for its readers; the analysis of “news”—that had already become inexplicable through greater technological inclusion of events—was taken apart from its announcement as the press forced its readers to be in a constant vigil for “news” if they desired to understand anything.49 By the 1920s, the belief in “impartial” reporting had coincided with the ideal of “public interest” for most

47 Mark Hampton, “The Fourth Estate Ideal in Journalism History,” in The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism, edited by Stuart Allan (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 3-5. In the politically-charged atmosphere of the French Revolution, the term “Fourth Estate” was first used across the English Channel by Edmund Burke to refer to the “press’s ability to mediate between formal politics and the ‘mob’”. As Mark Hampton points out, the term strangely remains in currency in the twentieth century though the concept of the “Three Estates” has faded into insignificance. (ibid., 3).

48 Richard Kaplan, “The Origins of Objectivity in American Journalism,” in Routledge Companion to News and Journalism, 34. As Matthew Rubery observes of the British newspapers, the explicit political stance and partisan character of newspapers till the 1830s was partly because of the political and economic support they gained from the élites and the political parties; as advertising revenue poured in, the evasion of party control was possible. Matthew Rubery, The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction after the Invention of the News (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

Northern hemisphere newspapers: in England, this belief was left implicit for the time being; in America, it was formally acknowledged as one of the important professional “canons” of journalism. The role of the public rhetor was not abandoned in principle, though in practice, the rhetor gave way to the increased emphasis on the role played by an unbiased (“objective”) reporter, as newspapers toggled between the cautious pursuit of “objectivity” in the front page and the “news” columns, the search for advertisements, and the proud assertion of the liberal, unassailable, and spotless character of their editorial pages. (“We come here as news merchants,” exclaimed Roy W. Howard in 1921 after becoming the editor-owner of the Scripps-Howard press in America: “We are here to sell advertising and sell it at a rate profitable to those who buy it. But first we must produce a newspaper with news appeal that will result in a circulation and make that advertising effective.”)

In the twentieth century, “objectivity” became a defensive measure—“an attempt to secure by quasi-scientific means a method for recording the world independent of the political and social forces that were shaping it”—by which the press proclaimed its championing of an abstract truth and an equally abstract public interest by resorting to an unstable empiricism it also learnt in the nineteenth century. The press in its “new public impartiality”, as Richard Kaplan observes of

twentieth-century American newspapers in the particular, demonstrated less concern with openness to democracy’s public discussion than with its function as a “technocratic, professional mediator”—acting as a “channel” (rather than a “platform”) for a diversity of voices. The increased dependence on advertisers and a search for the broadest base of readership meant that a newspaper had to pretend to stay neutral: trying to distance itself from the state which threatened both its “independence” as a player and the “independence” of the “free market” that resided in the dreams of its owners and advertisers; at the same time, taking care as not to appear too adversarial to the state which still held the reins of its own business in terms of raw materials, newspaper technologies, and political control. (The adversarial position is too often and unduly over-emphasized; as we will see in the following chapter on the Indian newspaper scenario, it was less a case of newspapers resolutely and conscientiously standing up against a government’s tyranny than a convenient arrangement on part of the government that legitimized their “independence”, and the newspapers finding more scope for advertising revenue by posing as legitimate adversaries.)

Secondly, “objectivity” demanded that reporters had to do without their own values and subjectivities while filing in their stories, and the editorial staff had to clinically oversee—the more elitist a newspaper, more acute would be this diagnosis—whether all personal values had been weeded out sufficiently so that some piece of “news” vigorously pursued to the point of absurdity only the “news

A search for “the truth” also, and unwaveringly, included anxious considerations of the interests of the “concerned public” (people who are part of the “news”) and particularly of large advertisers who could be “hurt” if some opinion carried in the “news” caused some real or imagined adverse effects on their businesses. This coincided with the rapid growth of the rough magic of the “public relations” and the advertising industry, and a newspaper’s eagerness to set up its own business department with enhanced prestige for the advertisement manager and the circulation manager. With the growing importance of advertising for their survival, newspapers shunned their unease at leapfrogging between “public interest” and commercial interest; the earlier unease came to resemble “at worst a

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54 We can note that “news value” is a term of twentieth-century origin. It was introduced by Walter Lippmann to newsmaking in 1922 to denote the characteristics of an event or its newsworthiness—higher the “news value” of a piece of “news”, the higher its probability of being selected for publication. Encyclopedia of Political Communication, vol. 2, edited by Lynda Lee Kaid and Christina Holtz-Bacha, (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008), s.v. “News Selection Process,” 511.

55 As Hamilton Fyfe notes in the context of British newspapers: “Until the early years of this century the advertisement offices of newspapers were so far subordinate to the editorial departments that the latter scarcely deigned to notice their existence. They did not, indeed, do anything to make it known. The clerks sat and waited for advertisements to be brought in, just as the sub-editors sat and waited for news. Neither made efforts to get any.” Hamilton Fyfe, Press Parade: Behind the Scenes of the Newspaper Racket (London: C. A. Watts & Co. Limited, 1936), 30.
bargain, at best a division of labour”.56 As Hilaire Belloc pointed out early in the twentieth century, this had far-reaching implications for the “nature” of the “news” ultimately put out for exchange: advertisers were quick to find out that they could actually dictate policy and opinion and also cause the suppression of “news”.57

Thirdly, the close attention to facts demanded that each fact strengthening the “news value” of a certain piece of “news” compulsively needed to be substantiated (approved) by someone in authority.58 Earlier, a newspaper’s reputation was founded on its leading articles—unsigned statements of opinion from the editorial staff at the left hand columns of the centre page which a reader was supposed to open first, ignoring the advertisements; they were supplemented by the “news”, mostly unsigned, by various contributors who preferred or were granted the right to anonymity.59 That is, prior to the coming of “objectivity”, one could always find the “roving eye” of a spectator or a tatler, an idler or an adventurer, a connoisseur or an examiner, a guardian or an observer, or even a solitary lounguer before a mirror, content with exploring and dissecting the social worlds they inhabited through their newspaper columns. The arrival of

57 Belloc, Free Press, 36.
58 Bagdikian, Media Monopoly, 130.
59 Rubery, Novelty of Newspapers, 89. As Laurel Brake observes, the majority of newspapers and periodicals in the first half of the nineteenth century in England, stuck with anonymity. Newspaper bylines appeared late in the second half of the century; even then newspapers and periodicals preferred using “Our Own Correspondent” and pseudonyms and initials for signed columns than attribute direct authorship. Laurel Brake, Print in Transition, 1850–1910: Studies in Media and Book History (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 15.
“objectivity” denied them their individualized perspectives; even though the majority of modern newspapers continued to live with their borrowed names—names suggestive of communicative functions popular between 1600 and 1800 C. E.\textsuperscript{60}

“Objectivity” demanded the need for approval by authority; hence, the need for greater validation alongside the appearance of signed articles where contributors could be held accountable for their opinion, and the byline. In cases where the contributors were considered too insignificant to be acknowledged as contributors—reporters regurgitating “news” of lesser value to choke the columns that needed to filled daily as part of technological necessity—terms like “correspondent”, “special correspondent”, and “news bureau” granted legitimacy to the “news”. As a result, the newspaper’s front page was left open to “news”,\textsuperscript{61} and the rhetorical pursuits of pamphleteers and feuilletons were accommodated, with lessening importance, only within the limits of the editorial and op-ed pages, incompatible as they were with a parasitical dependence on other authoritarian voices (“sources”) who could be quoted verbatim in “news” within

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\textsuperscript{60} In his historical study of newspaper names, Jim Bernhard reminds us that a great majority of newspapers in the twentieth and the twenty-first century bear names (or part of them) designating purposes to which they were put in between 1600 and 1800 C. E.: News, Times, Herald, Journal, Tribune, Press, Gazette, Record, Courier, Independent, Leader, Post, Review, Chronicle, Observer, Register, Standard, Dispatch, Ledger, Messenger, Express, Mail, et cetera. Bernhard, Porcupine, Picayune, & Post, 3.

\textsuperscript{61} As Harold Innis observes, it was the search for greater advertisements, which lead to the appearance of “news” on page one. By 1896, “news” existing alongside advertisements on the front pages of morning newspapers had become a powerful convention. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 13.
double-quotiation marks—or “allegedly”\textsuperscript{62} authenticated by the same authoritarian voices—to inspire “objectivity”. This also explains to an extent the pathological fear of fiction creeping in through “news” that is one of the worst nightmares of modern élite newspapers: it is because the admission of creative narrative in “news” upsets the good-spirited confidence in the factual accuracy of “news” that is supposed to exist in perennial disharmony with fiction, literary or otherwise.

(As Jeremy Iggers observes, this fear of fictional reporting falls less under the violation of the “objective” “ethic of truth-telling” than a pointer to journalism ethics as a “self-interested discourse” prompted by institutional priorities and the interests of participants: something that is subject to agreements, partial acknowledgements, incoherencies, conflicts, and moments of ominous silence at juncture points where these priorities and interests conflict.\textsuperscript{63})

Fourthly, “objectivity” effected a technological separation of “news” from its collectors and makers—those occupying privileged positions on the news-desks determining the nature and content of “news”, and those indulged in the “menial” acts of preserving, indenting, and justifying words, lines, and matrices in “hot

\textsuperscript{62} The widespread use of word “allegedly” by twentieth century newspapers can be a case in point: it is still used aplenty to defuse the risk of libels in statements that run greater risks of validity. While the word’s use is exactly contrastive to the purpose it is supposed to serve—the conciseness of an authentication—the absence of quotation marks while it stresses its genuineness brings the “news” to further doubt on the same criteria of authenticity. Its usage also reminds us of the mutual sharing of terms and premises by the “mass media”. British newspapers borrowed this word from British television reporting: from David Frost’s popularizing of this word in 1962-64 during his satirical show on “news” (\textit{That Was The Week That Was}) on the BBC TV. \textit{Cassell’s Dictionary of Catchphrases}, Nigel Rees (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), s.v. “allegedly”, 15-16. How it specifically caught the attention of English newspapers throughout the world—and especially that of English-language newspapers in India—is something that still remains to be explored.

—weaving “news” with typographical and other material necessities of the newspaper, and performing the actual tasks of fixing “news” to the newspaper before it went to print. (With the coming of computerized typesetting, much of these “menial” pursuits were conferred on the editors and sub-editors as the crowning feathers of what they mistook for enhanced authority—conceivably resulting in a new alignment of newspaper hierarchy. But I choose to ignore this here.)

The separation had important consequences for the making of “news” as the limits of the newsroom became the main protective walls of privilege for those who lived behind them—as they sought to interpret and implement “objectivity” in ways favourable to their own purposes. As Gaye Tuchman observes of the twentieth-century newsroom, “objectivity” became a “strategic ritual” of gathering and structuring “news” in a disconnected and impersonal manner through which newsmakers assumed they could survive the outside world: by meeting deadlines and steering clear away from libels.64 The technological separation of newsmaking meant journalists, and particularly editors, had an additional element of worry: they had to supervise the making of “news” by people mostly oblivious to the nature of it—compositors, typesetters, photo-engravers, stereotypers and pressmen (printers)—ready and willing to take advantage of the editors’ errors

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and false steps to turn the clock back to re-establish and strengthen their positions of privilege with the newspaper’s ownership and management.

Fifthly, as the “objectivity” a newspaper inculcated in its “news” became the new measure of its popularity with its advertisers and readers in the twentieth century, it also became a projection of its own social esteem and symbolic pride as a privileged provider of “news”, analysis, and commentary.

Journalistic professionalism became the new catch-word with which a newspaper tried to dissociate itself from the practices of the old, distance itself from explicit partisan causes, argue for and insist on journalism as an ethical and specialized profession founded on occupational knowledge rather than a business. We can find one of the earliest instances of this assertion in Joseph Pulitzer’s famous polemic in the *North America Review* in 1904 for setting up specialized higher education institutes in America for aspiring journalists and editors. “What is a journalist?” Pulitzer, the then owner of the fast-selling liberal newspaper *New York World*, proclaims: “A journalist is the lookout on the bridge of the ship of state... not thinking of his wages, or of the profits of his owners... there to watch over the safety and the welfare of the people who trust him.”

We can see that Pulitzer takes particular pain to explain that a reporter, a correspondent, an editor, or editorial writers are “not in business” but professionals: “Ill or well, they

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represent authorship, and authorship is a profession.”66 Apart from the irony of reading a newspaper proprietor who excitedly sought advertisements for his newspaper in ways unknown to his predecessors and at the same time exhorted salaried newsmakers to practise selfless dedication to the profession and pursue what is now known as sensationalism,67 there is a fundamental absurdity inherent in Pulitzer’s fondness for the scrupulousness of journalistic professionalism. The acceptance of any kind of “authorship” sanctifies and grants legitimacy to the subjectivity of the author of a piece of “news”—in fact, to a multitude of subjectivities that point more to a social process at work in the making of “news”—but it does so by forcefully denying them, at the point of forsaking intelligence, their very status either as individual subjectivities or a socialized subjectivity in the “objective” portrayal of “news”. As Fred Inglis significantly observes, an unresolved paradox is instinctic to this severe denial of subjectivity:

Journalism must be written, everyone agrees, out of the immediacy and bewilderment of lived experience. That is what it is to report on life. This being so, the value allegiances and human sympathies of the journalist can only be excluded at the price of making him or her stupid.68

Journalistic “objectivity”, then, is founded on the peculiar acceptance of a professionalism that functions as a denial of the human, and yet with its own

66 Ibid., 194.
67 In his historical study of the lives and practices of powerful editors and owners who ruled the American newspaper scene of the nineteenth century, Hy B. Turner credits Joseph Pulitzer for the invention of sensationalism. See Turner, When Giants Ruled, 106-118.
characteristic angle of vision—one that is negative, detached, technical, and official.\textsuperscript{69} Time and again, this professionalism is implored to by people to make journalism aware of the greater social realities than those residing in its workplace;\textsuperscript{70} though it is more manifest in every newspaper’s justification of the validity of “objectivity”: by offering two competing truth claims in a “news” item, and in its alternatively stupid and arrogant attempts to reconcile contradictions and divergent interests through a reductive and deceptively dichotomized offering of “balance” and “fair” coverage.\textsuperscript{71}

Similar are the other professional efforts to reconcile other textbook components of “objectivity”—detachment and nonpartisanship, the inverted pyramid structure of “news” reporting that supposedly communicates the “most important facts” in the lead paragraph of the “news” item, and naïve empiricism, the absolute reliance on the assembly of “facts” that can exist without human intervention or intention.\textsuperscript{72}

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\textsuperscript{70} “Our desire and aspiration is that you,” Salvador Allende implored all left-wing journalists sympathetic to his government in Chile, “in addition to your place on the left, will also be recognized for your professional merit, for the action that you carry out, not just for the strength of your convictions, but also, I repeat, for your training.” Salvador Allende, “Speech to the First Conference of Left Journalists,” 1971, in \textit{Communication and Class Struggle}, vol. 2, edited by Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub (New York and Bagnolet, France.: International General and International Mass Media Research Center, 1983), 370.

\textsuperscript{71} David Mindich offers a good example of this from the history of American newspapers: he observes that in newspaper reports concerning lynching, the \textit{New York Times} and other major American newspapers “balanced” their coverage of these killings by commenting that lynching is evil, and at the same time, declaring that “Negroes are prone” to rape. Mindich, \textit{Just the Facts}, 14.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 7-8.
The spirit of “objective” professionalism is best captured in a newsmakers’ standard defence of “objectivity” in the twenty-first century:

Objectivity has persisted for some valid reasons, the most important being that nothing better has replaced it...It helps us make decisions quickly—we are disinterested observers after all—and it protects us from the consequences of what we write... And as we descend into this new age of partisanship, our readers need, more than ever, reliable reporting that tells them what is true when that is knowable, and pushes as close to truth as possible when it is not” (my emphases).73

Here one can only suggest in general terms, and mindful of the risks of generalization at the same time, that an aspiration to incorporate “objectivity” as the overriding professional norm in newsmaking, along with its irreconcilability to the older narrative and technological functions of storytelling still alluded to and insisted upon by newspapers, by and large characterized the “news” professionally made by Northern newspapers in the twentieth century. (For non-Northern newspapers, especially for those offering newspapers in the English language, “objectivity” was often an unproblematic ideal that could be located by constantly referring to Northern newspapers’ standards: in the newsrooms of papers like the Times of India, for example, “news” and editorial opinions were shaped according to the “Condemn/Condone” format learnt of Northern newspapers.74)

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74 As Jug Suraiya reminisces of his editorial meetings of the 1980s with Girilal Jain, the chief editor of Times of India: “Giri would decide which of the offerings he wanted. Then he’d ask the person
As Anthony Smith notes of the survival of this unusual concept in newspapers over the greater part of the twentieth century:

The concept was unaffected by the decline of empiricism in science, by the growth of relativisms in various guises in the rapidly expanding social sciences—not at first anyway—because this objectivity was a refuge, not the result of a quest.75

The pertinent point to remember in this context is that, if we have found journalistic “objectivity” as vague and indeterminate, and valid only in justifying the escapism of newsmakers, our findings are further problematized with all newsmakers’ lack of consensus on what constitutes “objectivity”—and what constitutes “news” itself—all the while every modern newspaper hopes to distinguish itself from its competitors (and other “mass media”) by imparting to its “news” a specific kind of “objectivity” for which it is, or is always wishing to be, identified.

3. The “sourcing” of “news”

An appropriate question to ask at this point is: how modern newspapers get the basic material for the “news” they provide? In a world of an unimaginable count of occurrences, how do they learn of the facts that go into the making of

who’d volunteered to write it, a single question: ‘Condemn or condone?’ Was the writer in favour of whatever it was—President’s rule, fiscal deficit—or was he against it? The writer would give his reply in the same ‘Condemn/Condone’ format and the edit page meeting would be over.” Suraiya, *JS & The Times of My Life*, 192-193.

“news”? In the social discourses influenced mostly by the convenient fictions journalists build around themselves, it is luck or chance coupled with a journalist’s doggedness in pursuing and seeking out the truth that makes them walk the thin line between fact and opinion to “news”, sometimes even before something more interesting turns up to grab the public imagination or rival journalists’ attention. However, this quasi-magical performative efficacy of what is called muckracking in journalistic slang serves more as one of the lasting and “most unkillable superstitions” of newsmaking than indicative of the reality that is part of the dreary, repetitive business of news manufacture.

There is nothing auratic about the “news”; as we have seen Walter Benjamin’s insistence on the fact that the recontextualisation of “aura” is possible not only in the historical contingency that leads to its occurrence in multiple historical and social spaces, but more importantly, in the shifting nature of transmission together with the processes that shaped it—something than wants us to extend beyond the fixation with an isolated cultural product such as a “news” article to recognise it together with the processes of its production. The so-called discovery of “news”, or the uncovering of it, is often a misattribution; we tend to overlook

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76 As John Allen Paulos points out, even in “news” stories impressed with author by-lines: “We’re clueless enough about how and by whom issues are decided without critical information about the reporter’s own role in the story being omitted as a matter of course.” John Allen Paulos, *A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper* (New York: Anchor Books, 1997), 119.

77 In the United States of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the appearance of muckracking—the supposed exposing of the powerful on behalf of the powerless by journalists—“provided the profession with one of its most unkillable superstitions: the honest, small-town reporter who, in simple pursuit of the facts, mortally wounds the enemies of the people, city bosses, robber barons, king gangsters and such” [Inglis, *People’s Witness*, 42]. As Fred Inglis notes, as a journalistic practice muckracking in its original form historically lasted only ten years, though it contributed to one of the greatest trade myths of news manufacture: journalism as heroic revelation [ibid., 42-43].
the set of routine practices that lead newsgatherers to “news”—practices that have long been recognized as part of, inseparable from, and clearly contained in what is referred to as “news sourcing”.

The “sourcing” of news can be little understood by an isolated focus on “news” content—a significant majority of the “news” articles carried in a day’s newspaper, when read carefully beyond the limits prescribed by the columns, can well illustrate that they have originated or been uncovered from “sources” in places where the newsgatherers have routinely visited or checked on their beat. Apart from its own staff reporters who reach out to the “sources”, a newspaper also gets its “news” from the news-agencies—these provide ready-made “franchised news” otherwise inaccessible to the newspaper and “sourced” according to the same professional criterion of “objectivity”. It is only that “news” that escapes the government offices, the industry gateways, and the “sources” that the newsgatherers find by chance; in most cases the newspaper’s “sources” also account for “news” that do not speak of political statements, visits and violence, business failures, product launches and advert-news, art and garment auctions, stocks, crime, arrests, misery, destruction, deaths by fire, water and air, accidents, sports and similar occurrences that get journalistic attention. The same holds for “society news” where the strange doings, blissful gatherings, scandals, and gossips concerning certain people “in society” are regularly and beatifically “sourced” for later veneration in the printed newspaper.
The “sources” constitute an important element of the newspaper journalists’ reading “public”, as Robert Darnton argues, the majority of journalists and editors have little or no contact with the general populace, which is well characterised by the near-absence of feedback. Nor are journalists interested in feedback: letters and phone calls to newsrooms by the general population are usually ignored, scoffed at, and at best these people so interested in giving feedback are seen as sources of perennial irritation or entertainment.

Apart from their advertisers, whom most newsmakers seldom meet, the “sources” are the people who matter the most to reporters and editors. (For example, it is often overlooked that it has been an important convention in the beat to rely on the police—apart from the paper’s salaried newsgatherers, the police have long been recognized as “the most efficient unsalaried reporters pressed into service” by the newspapers.) The “sources” are the intimates who provide the “information about information,” strategic to the making of “news”. Apart from the official

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78 Robert Darnton, “Writing News and Telling Stories,” Daedalus 104, no. 2 (1975): 184. Darnton observes: “The reporting of news runs in closed circuits: it is written for and about the same people, and it sometimes is written in a private code” (ibid.)

79 Ibid., 182.

80 The word “beat”, as we may observe, is borrowed straight from old policing vocabulary: referring to a spell of duty allocated to a police officer on a routine basis.

81 Given, Making a Newspaper, 69. A long-standing liberal American newspaper editor, Given, at the beginning of the twentieth century, attaches tremendous importance to the bulletins, status reports, and updates regularly put up in a police headquarter for routine police work: he notes that of these “there are very few that will not in a pinch furnish material for at least a couple of paragraphs” (ibid., 80). According to Given, the best advice that can always be given to a novice reporter by a city editor is: “When in doubt ask a policeman.” When a policeman is hard to find, “Look for another reporter” becomes the editor’s next important piece of advice (ibid., 155).

and privileged sources of information, journalists also “source” their “news” from other journalists who constitute their wider, occupational reference group.83

The pursuit of “objectivity” prompts the modern newspapers to look for “sources” who can provide observation and analysis that is comprehensible (and acceptable) to advertisers and readers—something that points once again to the newspaper’s view of itself as a privileged provider and of its reading “public” as ignoramuses incapable of understanding reality, while simultaneously reinforcing a vision of a status quo world where “news” is an arena reserved exclusively for experts and professionals representing the legitimated institutions of the official, the rich, and the powerful.

The insistence on reliable “sources” works well with the bureaucratic side of editorial judgment,84 and within the broader logic of technological reproduction: when the compulsion, to achieve a time-bound completion in all newsgathering ventures, prompts journalists to look for new updates where they are most readily and acceptably found. The status and recognition granted to their “sources” is conferred by the newspapers, and in most cases, this often relates less to the ability of these “sources” to demonstrate compendiousness of insight, accuracy, and “objectivity” in their views, statements, and explanations than the privilege

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84 As David Barrat observes: “Every bureaucracy has its own techniques for transforming the unpredictability of the real world into a set of routine processes. Schools turn education into subjects, timetables, and syllabuses. Hospitals turn sickness into diagnostic and treatment routines. News bureaucracies give structure to the chaos of real world events through news values.” David Barrat, Media Sociology (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1986), 95.
and prestige granted to them by the newspapers as legitimate voices embodying the attitudes of official authority and financial power.\(^85\) In most cases, even if their views of reality is second-hand, frozen, and one-dimensional, the opinions and set phrases of presidents, prime ministers, aristocrats, bankers, cinema actors, sportspeople and big business tycoons are recorded as “news”. This is for the reason that most journalists aspire to have them recorded—partly because they think they gain symbolic power and prestige by walking the “corridors of power” in loops with the famous, the powerful, and those who have fame and power thrust on them; partly because the newspapers they work for gauge their social and symbolic prestige by the status of the people they cover.\(^86\)

The recognition granted to the man-on-the-street is always accidental: his discreditable “voice” is incorporated only to substantiate as additional information the legitimation already founded by the “sources”. This also explains why “news” carried in a newspaper, in general terms, chooses to ignore events and day-to-day activities of unconventional social and political groups and individuals. When and where these groups and individuals are successful in staging “newsworthy” events to fit the bill of “news”—in events like protests, demonstrations, murders, and acts of violence to publicize their cause, or suicide and self-immolation out of desperation—these events and actions only add force to the newspaper’s self-assumed ability in discerning that these groups and individuals lack legitimacy as


conventional sources of “news” wisdom. As Pierre Bourdieu reminds us: “The simple report, the very fact of reporting, of putting on record as a reporter, always implies a social construction of reality that can mobilize (or demobilize) individuals and groups” (Bourdieu’s emphases).

Through the so-called tracking down of “news”, the “putting on record” leads to the creation of stereotypes as consensual realities insisted on by the newspapers. These stereotypes are considered revelatory and authoritative for certain events and occurrences, and in turn, reinforce other stereotypes, and their fideistic validity as “news”. There occurs a constant dialectic between the status granted to events as “news” and their interplay with “news value”—the intersubjective and tacit mental categories that grant “objective” significance to events in the minds of reporters and copy editors, and their advertisers and readers—where “stereotypes are the currency of negotiation”. (For example, we can refer to the Indian newspapers’ continual creation of distorted “imagined communities” through their consistent

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87 Soley, News Shapers, 24.
88 Bourdieu, On Television, 21.
90 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983; London and New York: Verso, 1991). While Anderson bases his hypothesis on the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the “fatal diversity” of human language to engender the possibility of a new form of imagined community (the nation) [ibid., 44-46], the Indian newspapers continue to distort its premises by granting legitimacy to these varied cultural geographies (through the negation of certain social movements claiming representation for these geographies), and, by taking recourse to stereotypes, denying these cultural spaces the unifying rites that fix their status as cultural communities bound by linguistic and cultural ethnicity. As we may observe, Benedict Anderson’s hypothesis does not sufficiently account for this distortion. This is because, as Partha Chatterjee suggests in another context, Anderson’s differentiation of nationalism and the politics of ethnicity is founded more on the premises of classical nationalism: it fails to identify that, after decolonialization, nationalism has been “incurably contaminated” by ethnic politics. Partha Chatterjee, “Anderson’s Utopia,” Diacritics 29, no. 4 (1999): 130.
usage of additive stereotypes like “Kashmiri separatist”, “Khalistani militant” and “Naga insurgent” during the 1970s and the 1980s to designate, typify, and blur the distinctions between social movements that were not in agreement with the Indian state and its restricted visions of the cultural geographies from which these movements emerged.)

Thus, the “sourcing” of “news” connects to the “objectivity” claimed by and aspired to by a newspaper in two important ways. On the one hand, the newspaper validates opinions, suggested ideas, and crude affirmations by its “sources” who operate in terms of social and political legitimacies dependent on power relations in the society. On the other, and more importantly, in and through the complex processes of validation, the newspaper grants legitimacy on itself and on what it presents as “news” through its “sources” who validate a version of events and occurrences with a detachment (in most cases, attributed) that matches the newspaper’s frantic search for “news”, which might otherwise invite a more searching analysis. Not only does the selection of “news, but its non-selection (of the “unmarked space” characterizing the rest of the world), invests the newspaper with its peculiar power of authority.91 This power is most visible in the newspaper’s self-assumed responsibility of integrating the reader with diurnal events favourable to those occupying positions of privilege and power, and the underlying task of anaestheticizing judgement in the favour of prevalent social norms and codes that it considers important.

4. Newsmaking as ritual practice

If “news” acquired from “sources” is by definition second-hand, one-dimensional, and twice removed from reality, the “news” that gets reshaped by the newspaper follows pre-established categorical notions and suggested ideas of what constitutes “news” that prompts the newspaper’s reporters to look for it in the first place. In fact, inside the news-house and outside, it is the doctrinally rigid preoccupation with this affective nature of “news” that dictates the reporter’s questions, shapes the management’s policies, and influences the editorial decisions to include objects of information as “news”. An easy short-circuit, often made at this point, straightaway links the newspaper’s privileging of “objectivity” to the commercial and political motives of the newspaper’s proprietors and its management through ideology-critique.

The primary accomplishment of the ideology-critical approach to the newspaper lies in its demolition of a newspaper’s pious insistence on its social function: it lays bare that the newspaper’s insistence on itself as an benevolent social institution (similar in this respect to the church, or the communist party) lies in its interests in making money, and not often to procure the bare necessities of living for those who serve it. In other words, it shows that a newspaper is not at all insensate to diverse kinds of manipulation in terms of its daily recreation of choicest and multiple informational items called “news” glued and juxtaposed in

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93 It is another matter that ideology-critiques tend to pay less attention to this institution.
print. However, an excessive insistence on the ideological orientations of a newspaper or its owners does not always sufficiently explain the choosing of a piece of “news” as an item of deliberate choice. Marshall McLuhan’s old claim, “(t)he owners of media always endeavour to give the public what it wants, because they sense that their power is in the medium and not in the message or the program” (McLuhan’s emphases),\(^94\) if viewed in absolute terms, is problematic in this respect, for it rules out the fact that the newspaper ownership often does effect control over “news” dissemination which runs contrary or is harmful to its (commercial or symbolic) interests. But similarly problematic is the exclusive focus—mostly influenced by classical Marxism’s analysis of the owners’ will-to-profit—on the motives of capitalist cupidity; and the blanket condemnation and insistence on the extra-institutional structures that relegate the reporter and the editor to the muted, inconsequential roles of prop-bearers on a previously designed stage and with a tightly-set ideological script to adhere to and perform without the exercise of volition.

Does the onus of making “news” lie solely with the proprietor of the newspaper who runs it for profit? Or does it lie exclusively with the structural influence of the nature of ownership, coupled with other extra-institutional “filters” like advertising, the nature of news-sourcing, flak, and the logic of the market—that only leave behind a residue of “news”? Evidently, the above reference relates to

\(^94\) McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 216.
“media filters” proposed by the Herman-Chomsky “propaganda model” of media operations. Stressing the need for it as a model for understanding media behaviour and performance, and not media effects, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky argue for an enhanced applicability of their “propaganda model” hypothesis where five operative principles—ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak or negative responses to a media statement, and an ideological belief in the miracle of the “free market”—work as “filters” through which information must pass, and that individually and often in addictive fashion, greatly influence “mass media” choices.

95 As Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky declare while outlining their “propaganda model”: “The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns.” Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 2.

96 The fifth filter was anti-communist ideology in the 1988 framework of the “propaganda model” that acted as a “national religion and control” for the American corporate media (ibid.). Herman and Chomsky do not sufficiently explain this change of filter, except for pointing to the fall of the USSR and the rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s. Is “anti-communist ideology” freely interchangeable with a belief in the “miracle of the market”? For the “propaganda model” it appears so. Edward Herman, the principal architect of the “propaganda model”, straightaway uses the term “ideology” to identify the fifth filter which grants “residual importance” to anti-communism and strengthens the belief in the market’s omnipotence [See Edward Herman and David Ross, “Propaganda in the Free Press: An Interview With Edward Herman,” ZNet, May 3, 2003, http://www.zcommunications.org/propaganda-in-the-free-press-by-edward-herman (March 25, 2010)]. If the five filters of the “propaganda model”, act as operative principles with which the corporate concerns and political power compulsively influence “mass media” behaviour (in other words, when these filters in unison reflect a functional ideology at work), how can ideology (in the functional sense) become a sub-set of the same? Moreover, with the other “filters” appearing to remain constant, the model takes for granted an ideological framework for discourse analysis that sees communism as an antithesis to the “free market” [See Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman and Andrew Mullen, “The Propaganda Model after 20 Years: Interview with Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky,” Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture 6, no. 2 (2009): 15-16]. This leads to a problem of reduction: for example, it excludes considerations from another viewpoint that sees both communism and “free market” thought as ideologically operative systems of control, restrictive, and parasitically dependent on a manipulation of the state to propagate their respective ideologies.

While the Herman-Chomsky “propaganda model” is usually ignored in scholarly critiques of the “mass media”, it is indeed successful in making an institutional critique of the American corporate media and showing their nexus and interdependencies with the American state and corporate capitalism in shaping performative practices of the “mass media”. However, it too often reaches towards a general assumption of the existence of a unified (global capitalist) ruling class interest; which I find fuzzily logical and much close to the generalist principles earlier assumed by Marxist ideology critique. I am also uncomfortable with the fact that the conceptualization of the “media filters” in the “propaganda model” bears close resemblance to the generalistic assumptions of the “humanistic psychoanalysis” of Erich Fromm, who insists on the pervasive powers of three “social filters”—“natural” language, collectivistic logic (“which directs the thinking of people in a given culture”), and social taboo (that “does not permit certain feelings to reach consciousness and tends to expel them from this realm if they have reached it”—enforcing a “pathology of normalcy” in all individual

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98 For an overview of the meagre scholarly treatment devoted to this model of “mass media” criticism, see Jeffery Klaehn and Andrew Mullen, “The Propaganda Model and Sociology: Understanding the Media and Society,” *Synaesthesia* 1, no. 1 (2010): 10-23.


100 This similarity is not discussed by Herman and Chomsky, but emphasized by David Edwards and David Cromwell in their book *Guardians of Power* that applies the “propaganda model” to the British context. They demonstrate that the corporate “mass media” in the United Kingdom distorts and remains silent to important issues such as genocide and corporate crimes outside the liberal limits dreamed of in Northern societies. See David Edwards and David Cromwell, *Guardians of Power: The Myth of the Liberal Media* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).


102 Ibid., 119.

103 Ibid., 121. Fromm’s emphasis.
psychological experiences of the social. Fromm’s “social filters” hinge on a conception of the individual’s “essential nature” in relation to the “social unconscious”—which allows for, despite its insistences on the contrary, a negligible volition and variability on part of an individual, since the individual in a social space can operate only within the bounds of these filters. If the “propaganda model” is silent on psychoanalytical assumptions, I find that the concept of “media filters” constantly refers to a psychologically found assumption of journalistic (if not human) “nature” absolutely surrendering itself to the political task of unconsciously integrating and “promoting the goals of a fundamentally psychopathic corporate system”.

Moreover, I am at further unease with this model’s insistence on analyzing “paired examples” of “news” of political events, and its methodological procedure of fixing empirical data, found through careful and painstaking analysis of content by exclusively counting column inches of “news” devoted to a particular topic, in order to understand “mass media” bias, self-censorship, and propaganda. I find this makes the “propaganda model” pay more attention to the politics of “news” in exclusion, and at the cost of looking closer at the

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107 Politics is, after all, to recall Karl Mannheim’s old consideration of the term, a tearing off of disguises and the laying bare of the adversary’s *Weltanschauung* (world view): “the unmasking of those unconscious motives which bind the group existence to its cultural aspirations and its theoretical arguments” [Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, 201-02].
institutional structures and social nexuses emphasized by it and chosen as its foundational premises. Herman and Chomsky’s honest efforts to measure column inches of “news”—to demonstrate that media discourses devote preferential attention to what are similar kind of “news” according to the “objectivity” criterion—can be a case in point. This serious search for empirical verification shows an inattention to the actual processes of newsmaking in modern newspapers where in terms of page layout the advertisements appear first, and it is only later newsmakers get a chance to fit the “news” they have at hand. The “news” are preferentially treated of course, but they are structured according to the empty space available for the day only after the advertisements have been allocated to a page: the quantity of the day’s advertisements for a given page primarily determines the space devoted to “news” contained in that page. Unless one sequentially pays close attention to the textual state in which a certain newspaper’s “news” co-exists in a page with other non-“news” components—advertisements, the proportion of images used for “news” as well as for advertisements, typographic elements, the size of the newspaper and the number of pages of the given edition, the nature of paper used, et cetera—the exclusive counting of column inches of “news” to determine the extent of newspaper bias becomes a commendable but pointless exercise. Besides, like most Marxism-

translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (1929; New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954), 34-35.] As Mannheim observes, not only does political discussion insist on the absolute nature of its truth claim as opposed to its adversary, it also attempts to demolish the foundations of its adversary’s social and intellectual existence by laying claim to a “dynamic intellectual mediation” founded on political-historical knowledge that is also an element in the total situation it attempts to describe [ibid., 166-168].
influenced critiques of the “mass media”, the “propaganda model” pays only a passing reference to the role of media technologies in the making of “news”.

Can we so easily choose to do away with role played by the reporters and editors in making “news”—their lofty ideals, and their practical ways of getting these high ideals to work while they select, fetch, cut, and assign “news” inside the corporeal pages of the newspaper using typewriters, blue pencils, scissors and glue, and later networked computers—once we have identified them solely in terms of the ideological function that they serve? Can we rule out the nature of their subjective constraints and aspirations, and importantly, the media technologies used for newsmaking, along their dependencies, particular insistences, and regulatory frameworks, while we consider the making of “news”? I think not.

(In this context, we can make a brief passing reference to a compulsion at work for lower-level Soviet reporters, for whom explicit ideological support to the state’s policies was held as an important requirement for their survival as “professionals”. If these Soviet reporters stuck to the officialese and clichés used by their official “sources” in their “news”, it was founded less on their ideological acquiescence to the state’s policies. It was because their incomes were tied to their productivity according to the line quota: as per rule, these reporters had to turn in a minimum of 100 to 200 lines per issue, or 2,500 to 3,500 lines per month. 108

The overworked reporters, who had to write on every plausible and also safe topic under the sun, and under constant pressure to turn out sufficient quantities of copy for the state-run media machines that needed to be fed on a daily basis, looked where they could find quick ideas and information less likely to land them in jail: from the officials who held both the “news” and the good will necessary for future promotions. In other words, this was as much ideological compulsion as technological compulsion at work.)

It is not the sole prerogative of the editorial occupations, as is commonly assumed, to subjectively decide what “news” is and discard what are not, performing what was earlier referred to as the task of “gatekeeping”. Quite often the lines straightening out the functions of the reporters and the editors are fairly blurred—the proper scheduling and even arrangement of newsmaking tasks in a modern newspaper is possible only through regular interaction, in most cases, a symbiosis between the editorial departments and the reporters out on the prowl among the “sources”, and importantly, when there is a consensus on the affective nature of the “news” to be gathered. For example, in editorial conferences that finally get to decide what goes on the front page of the newspaper, it is the task of

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109 Ibid., 494-495.

110 A psychologist’s term to denote wives and mothers who acted as decision-makers for their families’ meals, the word “gatekeeping” was first applied to journalism in 1950 by David Manning White to denote the many subjective factors that helped an editor to choose and discard “news” [Encyclopedia of Journalism, s.v. “Gatekeeping,” 660]. The word is avoided in modern communication research with the wider acceptance of the understanding of the biases of journalism arising “not from the partisanship of its practitioners but the detachment of its professional culture, a culture with a suspicion of all ideology but a fascination with the mechanics of conflict and the exercise of power”. D. Charles Whitney and James S. Ettema, “Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, Institutions,” in A Companion to Media Studies, 160.
departmental editors to advocate the “newsworthiness” of reporters’ stories before a managing editor who does not often have access to or knowledge of individual “news” stories;\textsuperscript{111} these editors act according to a normative view of “newsworthiness”, but also in terms of competing professional allegiances to their own reporters and to other editors, while a consensus is sought for the day’s “news”.\textsuperscript{112}

If the consensus on the affective nature of “news” is influenced by competing ideologies of power, it is also fuelled by the urgent need to fulfil the technological necessity of “going to press”. The making of “news” demands a consensual agreement of newsmakers on the creation of the “daily miracle”—where individual animosities are forgotten and the individual tasks are choreographed to a mechanized synchronic motion, but at the same time, each of these tasks requiring individuality, expertise, and creativity different from that of the preceding day.\textsuperscript{113} As Ben Bagdikian observes:

The daily miracle requires a traditional decorum in the newsroom. It is what produces much of journalism’s occupational humor and the surface of mutual respect between superiors and subordinates. Though pressure and inner tensions are constant, whatever disagreements and explosions occur along the way, the same deadlines must be met again among the same people, edition after edition, day after day. The quiet, lubricated synchronization of diverse tasks by diverse personalities can be repeated

\textsuperscript{111} That is, if we choose to ignore for the time being the managing editor’s thoughts on the structural determinants that are situated outside the newshouse.


\textsuperscript{113} Bagdikian, \textit{Double Vision}, 193-194.
without fail only if arguments appear to be forgotten after each deadline.\footnote{Ibid., 194.}

It is important to recognize here that the “sourcing” of “news”, and the making and fixing of “news” according to “objective” professionalism in a newspaper—all while a “news” story transferred to typescript is copy-edited, and typographically squeezed in a live press copy that oozes ink until it goes into rigor mortis in print—forms part of time-bound ritual practices prescribed, routinized, and adhered to inside the news-house where institutional and workplace norms play decisive roles in the shaping of the newspaper as a group confessional form.\footnote{Here I use the term “ritual” only with respect to the newshouse, and without stressing any broader social signification of the word, that in certain attempts try to understand the complexity of the “ritual” impact of “mass media” on social space through analysis of patterned actions such an audience’s reaction in the presence of a celebrity, the way of organization of a television studio as a site for “media pilgrimage”, and so on. See Nick Couldry, \textit{Media Rituals} (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).}

These ritual practices are less characterised by their ideological functions (purposive transmission of biases, conscious calculation, and imposing information as “news”) than their insistence on a ritualistic representation of shared beliefs: one that like in certain kinds of religion, as James Carey observes, “downplays the role of the sermon, the instruction and admonition, in order to highlight the role of the prayer, the chant, and the ceremony.”\footnote{James W. Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” in Carey, \textit{Communication as Culture}, 15.}

Newsmaking as a set of ritual practices conforms more to what Bourdieu calls “symbolic domination” than to the daily diktats and direct supervision of managerial and corporate controllers. On the one hand, it grants legitimacy to an
understanding of “news” as common sense and founded on a explicit consensus,\(^{117}\) and on the other, it presupposes on the part of those participating in the newsmaking processes, “a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to the values.”\(^{118}\)

The constant categorization of certain information as “news” forms part of an incessant process in which newsmakers participate in a symbolic struggle to impose a legitimate meaning of their social world,\(^{119}\) in order to “conserve or transform the social world by conserving and transforming the categories through which it is perceived”.\(^{120}\) This process forms part of a collective action, and in cases, the actions of an individual acting on its behalf, attempting to re-present, display, and bring into prominence particular realities insisted on by the newspaper. For example, this is found in the emphatic use of the collective “we” in unsigned editorials, and an in-house insistence on “paper policy”. (A newspaper’s “policy” is always implicit: it is through experience and approximation that a newsmaker learns to make sense of its patterns and

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\(^{117}\) According to Bourdieu, the very capacity to create collectively existing categories of perception about the social world beyond the realm of the individual corresponds to a formidable social power: “the power to make groups by making the common sense, the explicit consensus” (Bourdieu’s emphases). Pierre Bourdieu, “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,” Theory and Society 14, no. 6 (1985): 729.


\(^{119}\) That is, they participate only after they have consciously and tacitly agreed to their membership of this social world. The very fact of their participation “implies the acceptance of a set of presuppositions and postulates which, being the incontestable condition of discussions, are by definition sheltered from debate”. Pierre Bourdieu, The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field, (1992; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 167.

\(^{120}\) Bourdieu, “Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,” 729.
inclination, even though the “policy” may be undergoing a shift in the meantime. A “policy” is hardly ever spelled out inside newspapers, certainly not in clearly-defined manifestoes of purposive interest meant to be circulated inside the newsroom: its existence is taken for granted as a body of “transmitted recipe knowledge”\(^{121}\) supplying the appropriate rules of conduct.) Nevertheless, this symbolic struggle is also operational on the individual level when a particular reporter or sub-editor does not know of her newspaper’s “policy” on a certain piece of “news”, and yet chooses to work on it, according to her own appraisal of the situation; and when in another situation, some other reporter or editor, to avoid a senior editor’s or the management’s ire, finds refuge in all “strategies of presentation of self” that seek to preserve and manipulate her position according to her own conceptualisation of the newspaper’s self-image, and re-negotiate her position inside the structured (but constantly shifting) dimensions of the paper’s newsroom hierarchy.\(^ {122}\)

\(^{121}\) Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966; London: Penguin, 1991), 83. According to Berger and Luckmann, this is a form of knowledge existing in the pre-theoretical level in an institutional order which “constitutes the motivating dynamics of institutionalized conduct”—defining, constructing, controlling, and predicting institutionalized areas of conduct, and designating all situations falling within them—“(s)ince this knowledge is socially objectivated as knowledge, that is, as a body of generally valid truths about reality, any radical deviance from the institutional order appears as a departure from reality” (ibid.).

\(^{122}\) In other words, this is suggestive of her *habitus*, which “implies ‘a sense of one’s place’ but also a ‘sense of the place of the others’”. Here I particularize Bourdieu’s general reference to two different forms of symbolic struggles in the social world to the more specific context of newsroom work. See Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” 1986; in Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, translated by Matthew Adamson (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 131-134.
The ritual aspect of newsmaking grants a kind of autonomy to the reporter and the editor inside the newsroom. This autonomy in turn has its degrees, as Bourdieu proposes, it relates to the degree of autonomy that she can lay claim to within the newspaper’s chain of command, and to the degree of autonomy of the newspaper that she works for has in relation to the state and the market.

The indices of a newspaper’s autonomy, as Bourdieu also suggests, can be found when we consider the proportion of its income that comes from the state, and from advertisers and other sources.

Unlike the Marxist political economy approach, Bourdieu does not ask us to make this our exclusive focus. Nor does he imply a hegemonic dominance, as the “propaganda model” predicts, where the internalization of the “media filters” by editors and reporters makes them psychiatric zombies effecting self-censorship every time they are engaged in the performances of making “news”. Rather, Bourdieu insists that institutional regulation and control is achieved through symbolic domination where the persistent fear of out-stepping bounds, transgression, and the fear of exclusion reflected in particular responses to particular moments achieve more workable wonders in inducing conformity than

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123 We can refer to the usual hierarchies working in the newsrooms of a same newspaper: the editorial department assumes airs of superiority over the “front page” people, who in turn look down on the people working on “city”, and the “sports” section which gets the least recognition, at least according to the editorial and reporting hierarchies. The newsmakers as a whole consider themselves superior to the non-journalist newpersons such as compositors and printers.

124 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” 1995; in Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field, edited by Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu(Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 43. The indices of a newspaper’s autonomy, Bourdieu suggests, can be found in the proportion of its income that comes from the state, and from advertisers and other sources.

125 Ibid., 43-44.
their actual application. These “news” wonders are not uniform—since they are
made by different individuals working within different conceptual and practical
levels of ritual participation whose ways of acquiescence varies. However, the
heterogeneity and mutual irreconcilability of these “news” products adds to the
false credence to the newspaper’s imaginary belief in itself as an “objective”
provider of “news”.

The ritual inclusion offered to a reporter or an editor in a newspaper is, like all
social institutional inclusions, an act of social magic: it makes one feel obliged to
play in accordance with the implicitly suggested, but authoritatively informed,
status of one’s function. Therefore, the negotiation of one’s roles is often
limited to explicit and implicit expressions of assent.

Another point that needs stressing is that journalistic autonomy survives only in conformity with its
ritualistically invested significations. Divested of these significations a powerful,
leonine editor and a writer of blood-and-thunder editorials, whose power inside a
newshouse lies in his department’s apparent superiority and distinction over other

The proficiency achieved in the course of the play builds “symbolic capital” for the player inside the
playing world of newsmaking: a reporter’s proficiency in filing highly accurate press copies in time, a
copy-editor’s proficiency in lexicon and grammar, a managing editor’s privileging of his job over his
private life, et cetera. As Johan Huizinga earlier made note of, and in more general terms, once
someone decides to participate, a degree of ethical commitment becomes an imperative for the player:
“Though play as such is outside the range of good and bad, the element of tension imparts to it a
certain ethical value in so far as it means a testing of the player’s prowess: his courage, tenacity,
resources and, last but not least, his spiritual powers—his ‘fairness’; because, despite his ardent desire
to win, he must still stick to the rules of the game.” Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-

127 We can refer to the characteristic expressions of Mr. Salter, the always anxious editor in Scoop,
Evelyn Waugh’s 1938 novel on the British press. When conversing with the eccentric proprietor of his
newspaper, Mr. Salter’s expressions are limited to “Definitely, Lord Copper” when he thinks that the
man is right, and “Up to a point” when his boss tells him something about which he disagrees, or does
“news” departments of the same newspaper, when thrown out on the street with no job and no newspaper name to cling to, knows that he can lay no claim to the marks of authorization and privilege that once distinguished him from among his peers. Nor does a newspaper survive, if it happens to fall in the direct line of fire of the state or big business.

[The theoretical emphasis of the “media field” model, as conceptualized by certain followers of Pierre Bourdieu, and to an extent by Bourdieu himself, focuses on the detailed diagnosis of the autonomy of the “media field” in relation to the “economic field”, the “political field”, the “cultural field”, et cetera. These are in turn located within the broader field of power. I agree with the “media field” model to the extent that it distances itself from ideological critiques of the “mass media”, those that see ideology structuring and predetermining newsmaking in a totalizing fashion and psychologising pattern. This approach is important in stressing that “journalists—as a corporate body, not as individuals—also play a semi-autonomous role in shaping the news,”128 along with its renewed emphasis on “the constraining power of culture as it manifests itself in professional practices, traditions, and codes” of journalists and the traditions of workplace history in which they are situated.129 However, the model of a “media field” also stresses on the idea of structural homology and alliance between the “media field” and other fields like the “political field” and the “economic field”.

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This has some functionalist implications that despite Bourdieu’s rejection of functionalist theory are left unclarified. Further, when the concern of “media field” theory becomes an avowal to address via empirical investigations “which form of capital—economic, bureaucratic, etc.—exerts the dominant outside power within the field”, it diverts attention from Bourdieu’s insistence that despite a high degree of heteronomy characterizing the “journalistic field”, “(p)art of what is produced in the world of journalism cannot be understood unless one conceptualizes this microcosm as such and endeavors to understand the effects that the people engaged in this microcosm exert on one another.”

While the strength of “media field” theory lies in its ability to show the connection of symbolic domination to the making of “news” inside a newshouse, its weakness lies in the fact that it preoccupies itself with a counting exercise, which Bourdieu had always chosen to avoid, of conceptual markers that are not all quantifiable. (For instance, how does one quantify journalistic “symbolic capital”, or rate it against editorial “bureaucratic capital”?) “Media field” theory

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130 As David Swartz observes, Bourdieu’s idea of structural homology overlooks that there remain many different groups occupying homologous field positions that do not form alliances. It leaves as unaddressed the important question: “What are the processes as well as resources that help us understand why some groups but not others form strategic linkages?” David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 135-136.

131 Benson, “Field Theory in Comparative Context,” 483. Benson’s emphasis.

132 Bourdieu, “The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field,” 33.

133 In fact, some “media field” theorists do insist that the nature of symbolic capital within the “journalistic field” can be statistically fixed by taking of stock of certain particulars: the age of journalists (the greater the age, the more accumulation), a newspaper’s attractiveness to prestigious journalism schools and specialized higher education institutes, a newspaper’s use of guest editorials by famous authors extraneous to it, and its faithfulness to the “political/literary” journalistic tradition in the political position it assumes (the use or disuse of signed front page editorials) [See Julien Deval, “Economic Journalism in France,” 2000; in *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*, edited by Benson and]
also discounts the role of media technologies which, as we have seen earlier, play indispensable roles in the making of “news”. In seeking to isolate “fields” of journalistic production, “media field” theory runs the danger of double determination that Bourdieu had warned against: one of having recourse to the older models of ideology-critique to identify its increasing coincidence with the “political field”, the other of participating in a fixed universe of signs, expressions, and discursive “empirical” markers drawn from Bourdieuan vocabulary, and constituting a doxa in itself.]

5. A strategic preoccupation with time

Newsmaking as a process devotes a heightened significance to the nearness of the “news” in chronological time, which is tied to the strict production routine and speedy completion of the technological nature of the work. For the television and the radio, this nearness adumbrates the “hardness” of the “news” as information; “news” that are older than a day, unless of great importance, are usually rejected

Neveu, 152-153]. This is what Karl Mannheim earlier called a carrying over of the methods of the natural sciences to the social: “Instead of attempting to discover what is most significant with the highest degree of precision possible under the existing circumstances, one tends to be content to attribute importance to what is measurable merely because it happens to be countable” [Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, 46]. However, with his constant guardedness against “the obvious pictures we derive from our common-sense experience or our familiarity with a scientific tradition”[ Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” 139], Bourdieu approaches the term “symbolic capital” with more care. “Symbolic capital,” Bourdieu explains, “is any property (any form of capital whether physical, economic, cultural, or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and recognize it, to give it value” [Pierre Bourdieu, “Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field,” Sociological Theory 12, no. 1 (1994):8]. At the same time, he holds that symbolic capital is a power granted on recognition (certainly not quantifiable) to individuals within a group to the extent that they impose this recognition as the basis of their authority; as a performative power, its efficacy depends on shifting allegiances of cognition and recognition, and finally its acceptance within the group [Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” 138] than on narrow exactitudes found through externally measurable data.
for going stale as “news”. For newspapers functioning after the transmission of
“news” by other media began, that is, for all newspapers belonging to the greater
part of the twentieth century, the technological nature of their work forces them
to strategically stick to “news” that are in most cases older by a day to their final
appearance in the following morning, all while they adhere to the problematic
categories referred to in earlier times when newspapers held the monopoly of
“news” transmission through a rapidity of extension through print: trying to sort
out “news” stories as “hard” (“objective” and immediate), “soft” (the “feature” or
“human interest” stories, unconstrained by the factor of immediacy in time),
“spot” (“news” of an unexpected event for which little or no information is
available), “developing” (“news” that are emergent or are being gathered), and
“continuing” (“news” on a set of events occurring over a period of time).134 As
Gaye Tuchman suggests in his study of newsmakers, these are not simple
operational categories; rather, they stand as taken-for-granted realities inside the
newsroom—to differentiate varieties of “news” content or the subject of events—as-“news”—so much that newsmakers consider them self-evident to the extent
that they consistently fail to define them beyond prototypes.135 Even when the
technologies of the newer “mass media” spirit away their emphatic prioritization
of immediacy and make much of these categories historical redundancies,
newsmakers inside a newspaper’s newsroom continue to religiously adhere to

134 Gaye Tuchman, “Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected,” American Journal
135 Ibid., 113.
these categories to control the “almost now” in time and space, along with what can be termed defeatist, reconciliatory, and impossible attempts to get the last-minute “news” in print. Hence, the constant bemoaning of the halcyon times and grand old days of “hard news” reporting by retired newspaper journalists and editors who watch “talk shows” and “news” bulletins on television with equal, if not less, interest in printed newspapers.

The “newsday”, calculated in hours usually within the absolute temporal horizons of the routinized newsmakers’ day, is one of the most important forms of control operational inside a newspaper. As Benedict Anderson insists, the making of “news” in a newspaper rests on the fundamental logic of the “newsday” as control precisely because of the newspaper’s fictive insistence on the “calendrical coincidence” in time of the events, persons, and histories it includes and juxtaposes as “news” on its pages. But there is another side to it. I have noted at the beginning of this chapter that this subservience to time and technological routine is regularly referred to by newsmakers as so chaotic as to rule out predeterminations of any sort. This is referred to along with an insistence on their professionalism that clings to “objectivity” as a noumenal entity of journalistic intuition, devoid of all phenomenal attributes. However, what gets missed in this

136 As David Gelsanliter observes of “respectable” American broadsheet newspapers in the second half of the twentieth century: “Newspapers place such a premium on speed and accuracy that decisions get made for reasons not often articulated. Editors finish each others’ sentences. Reporters know without being told what their limits are. Taboos are understood, but seldom discussed.” David Gelsanliter, Fresh Ink: Behind the Scenes At a Major Metropolitan Newspaper (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 1995), 16.

137 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 33.
reference is that the subservience is not only a part of the necessity newsmakers read into their pursuits, the accomplishments found in the completion of the ritual tasks of newsmaking relate more to the newsmakers’ real and fictive attempts and abilities to control their own work through their projected professionalism: a desire lurking less in their role playing than in their professional aspirations as newsmakers to be in control of their tasks than to be victims to the pace at which these tasks have to be carried out.

Newsmakers, with the exception of the novices and new initiates, never choke on the disembodied information they access while they make “news”. When a zone of inescapability opens up in the suddenness of events happening in the social world, like in assassinations, wars, and natural catastrophes, newsmakers choose to be “objective” and strategic controllers rather than be victims of time, finding faith in their professional expertise as handlers, regulators, and ultimately makers of “news”. This points to a question of human choice; a deliberate one, which works alongside the dependencies on the technological nature of the medium for which “news” is made, and with conceptual approximations of the demand for “news” in the market in which it will circulate, to insist on definite, recurrent,  

138 That is, where individuals play their roles as newsmakers as other individuals play the roles of judges in law-courts while representing the institutional order at two levels: at one level, of acting not on behalf of one’s own volitions, but according to the role, and on another level, the role representing “an entire institutional nexus of conduct”. Berger and Luckmann, Social Construction of Reality, 92.  
140 Tuchman, “Making News by Doing Work.” 129.  
141 For example, we can refer to Ben Bagdikian’s reflection on his vocation as a newspaper editor, at a time when television “news” impacted heavily on the American newspapers: “By the early 1970s I was the first editor in charge of national news at the Washington Post who had to watch the three network
and ascertainable spatial controls every time a “news” item, fit for print, is thought fixable to some “proper” schematized position on the page. That is, when a newspaper tries to control time (through ritual functioning) and space (through fixing “news” within available column space), and through greater manipulation of its own credibility before advertisers as a privileged provider of “news” (and therefore, readers), the final test of reality always lies with the “operations’ opposition to the operations of the same system—and not by any representation of the world as it is”.142 So the making of “news” through the control of time ceases to be a distortion of reality by newsmakers; in newspapers, “news” is made by reconstructing social reality through routinized and sequential rhythms suited to the particular contexts in which newsmakers take in and characterize the world in their “news”.

There is an additional aspect to a newspaper’s fascination with time. Unlike historians working on contemporary history for whom the narratives of the contemporary may extend back to the eighteenth century, newsmakers determine the worth of a piece of “news” according to its nearness in time to their routinized “newsday”. That is, newsmaking insists on a redefinition of time through technological replication—by trying to do away with the unbridgeable temporal gap earlier existing between the newspaper as a cultural artefact and its readers-

Evening newscasts in order to see what the public would have already heard the night before our paper came out. The idea was not to duplicate the news or discover something we had missed (that was rare), but to see what would be on people’s minds before they ever saw our paper in the morning.” Bagdikian, Double Vision, 223.

142 Luhmann, The Reality of the Mass Media, 40.
as-contemplators\textsuperscript{143}—that shifts the emphasis from the a notion of the present (as already belonging to the past) to an understanding of the present as a social fabrication as much as the past, but “seen as independent of that past, even if it draws on that past through memory, and even if we acknowledge that it will, \textit{in the future}, become past, and hence a matter of history”\textsuperscript{144}. In the terms of newroom practice, this means that the reporters and editors’ repetitive consideration of the “objective” worth of “news” within the “newsday” makes them pay little attention to its historical worth, beyond their frequent visits to what was earlier called the newspaper’s morgue to drag out “news” corpses.\textsuperscript{145}

(The morgue is the newspaper’s own reductive version of a historical repository where all dead “news” clippings get stored—that is, predigested “news” cadavers that did and did not find their ways to print, but considered worth preserving all the same because of their re-sell value—and religiously looked over and updated by some editorial staff. The morgue is different from the newspaper’s library: the morgue contains meaty “news” corpses whose proximate body parts can be easily and vitally stitched to some existing “news” on the table, unlike the “news” of the yesteryears which sit as severe dried corpses in the library to serve the requirements of newer, curiouser attempts of journalistic cannibalism, or to be proper, necrophagia.)

\textsuperscript{143} See the section on Walter Benjamin in the previous chapter.
\textsuperscript{145} Before the coming of digital methods of preservation, reporters and editors referred through “news” clippings kept in tagged envelopes inside lettered drawers of a newsroom cabinet lovingly called the morgue. Given, \textit{Making a Newspaper}, 126.
Newsmaking involves lot less original thinking and commitment to historicity than reporters and editors do insist: along with the information got from “sources”, “news” contained in the library and the morgue, rather than being remotely suggestive of openness to alternative points of view residual or emergent in societies in which they make business, usually represent the closed walls within which newsmakers encounter history.

Instead of a reflexive attempt to understand history drawn over a considerable period of time by using separate human authentications, and a severance with the immediate commercial motive that can be detrimental to that attempt, the morgue presents the editors and the reporters with a ready-made mix of differently saleable, dehistoricized voices and concerns that, at their best, serve the purposes of crude, ahistorical verification. For example, when a newspaper finds a politician, an industrialist, or some other famous personality closer to death than other mortals, an obituary is written and readied for print with “news” from the morgue and the library, with correct typefaces and all, often before the actual death takes place. Newsmakers ransack these two repositories every time they need to construct “news” that needs references to past wars and crime waves,\(^{146}\) election results and polling predictions, and corroboration of statistic models of certain social trends they frequently consider as befitting their self-proclaimed professional criteria of good work.

\(^{146}\) As Harold Innis observes: “In a literal sense, wars are created, as crime waves are created, by the newspaper. Effective news organization makes catastrophes and catastrophes necessitate improvement of the news organization... The aggressive newspaper sponsors events which make news—polar expeditions and oceanic flights.” Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 20-21.
The morgue and the library compensate for the newsmakers’ lack of organic contact with the society in its diversity and incommensurability; the lack of organic contact is replaced by an operational, and often, restrictively mechanical contact with older themes and consistent traditions of newsmaking contained in the “news” stocked in these two places. The assumptions contained in these themes are the ones that most often provide the stable markers for the palimpsest histories (and not rupture points) that newsmakers like to construct for the future. In turn, these histories are not uniform, even if they do not refer to a culture of universal control mediated through pneumatic tubes, as George Orwell had insisted, where everything discordant goes down the memory hole to be incinerated forever.

To a great extent, the muddled histories contained in the morgue and the library are not that authoritative outside the newspaper establishment, unless the social and technological processes of their designation, predilection, classification, and later dissemination in a newly concocted forms as “news”, are not broken up or forgotten. Whatever “news” gets hoarded like dragon’s gold in the library and the morgue, after they have been selected for inclusion at some point in time, remain stored for a considerable time spreading across many days and years, if not the newspaper’s “eternity”. Like the mythic dragon’s gold, all the hoarded “news” contain ensorcelled curses that newsmakers cannot escape. Their stability balances the newsmakers’ almost fluid and neurotic compulsion to quickly find the new in “news” within the prescribed limits of the “newsday” where at the
intersection of operational memory and memory loss, newsmakers find nippy references to the past as new adds some extra gravitas to the “news” they make. This is found in the information significance attached by newspapers to comparatives between death counts in railway accidents and natural disasters of the recent past and the present, and the esotericism insisted in the comparison of past and present records of sportspersons.

As Bourdieu observes, the characteristic vision of history contained in this way of making “news” is “at once dehistoricized and dehistoricizing, fragmented and fragmenting”:

There is a patent lack of interest in subtle, nuanced changes, or in processes that, like the continental drift, remain unperceived and imperceptible in the moment, revealing their effects only in the long term. This inattention to nuance both repeats and reinforces the structural amnesia induced by day-to-day thinking and by the competition that equates what’s important with what’s new—the scoop. This means that journalists—the day laborers of everyday life—can show us the world only as a series of unrelated flash photos. Given the lack of time, and especially the lack of interest and information... they cannot do what would be necessary to make events... really understandable, that is, they cannot reinsert them in a network of relevant relationships.147

Thus, through the ritual acceptance of the norms and symbolic impositions of institutional and personal power and privilege, and through facility with technological completion of work, newspapers demonstrate a characteristic lack of cohesion in the “news” they make (that is, when that “news” goes beyond the

limits of immediate “newsday” memory); they represent and particularize the world “in terms of a philosophy that sees history as an absurd series of disasters which can be neither understood nor influenced”.\textsuperscript{148}

Subject to constant trial by the state and the market, and constrained and controlled by the newsmakers’ absolute recognition of the time-bound completion of newmaking by the “newsday”, which in other words is a recognition of technological authority, a newspaper continues to pay considerable attention to the versions of history it creates, and to the suggested ideas contained in those historical visions. It is because the newspaper, engrossed as it is in its dreams of uncomplicated technological replication, remains more interested in its reformulation (and not simple recital) of reality in a plethora of unconnected events that relate only to the way it sees itself as fit to cater “news”, and matches its expectations of profitability.

At this point, we can perhaps refer to the question implicit in the title of this chapter: How do newspapers make “news”?\textsuperscript{148}

In hypothetical terms, a newspaper’s ability to make “news” through technological replication is limitless. In practical terms, the limits are fixed by the material nature of it needs, and its vision of itself as an “objective” provider of “news” that lays claim to material (and symbolic) power in society through its regular, structured making of a commercial printed product. A newspaper makes “news”

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 8.
through its newsmakers’ ritual adherence to technological routine and their conceptualizations of themselves as “news” professionals, its attention to the material form of the newspaper, its access to material resources and component media technologies; it thinks of making “news” on the basis of the legitimacy and power it takes for granted in its self-assumed role of a privileged and supercilious provider of advertisement space (and “news”).

This suggests, of other things, that we can perhaps start to devote dual attention to newspapers’ making of conditions (as “news”) and objects (as newspapers), along with the social and historical circumstances in which these conditions and objects acquire their particular shapes.

Conclusion

In this chapter, with further reference to select twentieth-century scholarship on the “mass media”, I have tried to look at the newspaper’s self-referentiality as a commercial and symbolic producer who arrogantly lays claim to social legitimacy for its profit. I have tried to understand whether this self-reference relates to certain regulating patterns and structures of thought (the structured nature of the aspirations working in the production of “news”) operational within the newspaper establishment. While this is a further calling to doubt of a newspaper’s claim to professional “objectivity” and inclusiveness, my interest is not defined exclusively in terms of what it produces as “news”.
Rather, by focussing on the peculiarities and ritualized “strategic” practices that are part of everyday newsmaking—mostly with reference to the era of newspaper manufacture preceding the use of computational technologies—I have tried to draw attention to the materiality of the newspaper as a cultural and symbolic artefact and its unavoidable and peculiar dependence on print and techniques of printing and dissemination that are structured by the technological nature of the production of “news”.

This insistence, no doubt, makes me run the risk of being deterministic in certain areas of analysis, which are addressed more suitably by other modes of thought. However, I feel, it also makes me less prone to the risks of a blanket dismissal of all newspapers on grounds of ideological rejection, and the more serious danger of implying some faith in the constantly and consciously subversive, and in the quaintest of cases, empowering dimensions often attributed to “mass”-produced consumables such as newspapers.