

Can Hunter S. Thompson's
journalism/formulas create a solution for
the crisis of today's media?

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Thesis: Can Hunter S. Thompson's journalism/formulas create a solution for the crisis of today's media?**Word Count: 28180****Introduction: Can the formulas of Thompson help the media?**

“Whenever the campaign went, local reporters would come up looking for Hunter, wanting to see what he looked like and to congratulate him. After the revolution, we’ll all write like Hunter, a local TV man in Los Angeles confided to me. We’ll stop writing all this Mickey Mouse shit.”¹

Hunter S. Thompson was one of the best journalists of his time. Thompson's coverage from Nixon to fishing culture was a satirical and yet informative experience in itself. However, Thompson can be called as one of the pioneers for Fake News; his writing was sometimes made up. Such as the infamous Muskie/Ibogaine story during the 1972 presidential primary campaign. The irony is that Thompson's made up stories were never his real focus. He was looking for the truth, the Gonzo formula that he made was an honest first-person view and digging. While the predecessor formula of Gonzo Journalism, New Journalism used novelistic devices and hard news.

Still, Gonzo journalism had made up stories, only to entertain the reader(and the author). In this thesis, the goal is to go deeper into Thompson's writing and find out if his writing was a curse or a key to the best formula form of writing journalism, both New Journalism and Gonzo Journalism. The interesting question is, is his writing a possible solution towards today's journalism? Was Gonzo Journalism a curse from the start for journalism (was the “revolution” fake news?)? Has journalism and mainstream news changed at all since the sixties and seventies? These questions, including others, will give us a better look at journalism and Thompson's formulas. Also, the crisis of mainstream media today has made most of the press unreliable, which begs the question of what formula can solve it? The setup of the thesis will look like this: First, terminology that is necessary to explain complex issues will be defined and discussed to create a base and vocabulary for an understanding of the

¹ Crouse, the *Boys on the Bus*. p.314

things I will cover. Including the crisis, the media faced over forty years ago and the most popular formulas. Then the chapters will go towards the different formulas of Thompson's journalism, such as New Journalism, Gonzo, and the last chapter of Fake News and today's media. Ending it with a conclusion.

The quote above mentioned a "revolution," reporters believed that Thompson did find the next formula that will fix the press. Not the regular uncritical/objective writing, but an honest and more connectable writing towards people. People could see or at least imagine how Thompson was honest, who wrote what he wanted, without being censored or edited. However, the term will focus instead on a solution and not a revolution.

Chapter one: The Crisis of Mainstream News

“The real horror, to me, lies in the fact that there is absolutely no vehicle in American journalism for the kind of “sensitive” and “intellectual” and essentially moral/merciless reporting that we all understand is necessary-not only for the survival of good journalism in this country, but also for the dying idea that you can walk up to a newsstand and find something that will tell you what really happened.”²

In this chapter, the focus is on explaining how mainstream journalism was in the sixties and seventies. In order to provide terminology for comparison to the other journalistic formulas such as Gonzo Journalism and Fake News. Including the crisis of the press at that time. The chapter will start with the media's role, issues and ideas that existed in journalism over forty years ago, and how journalism should have been. Before moving on how the press was controlled and manipulated by politicians. Then all the journalistic formulas will be explained one by one. With all the formulas explained and how the media functioned, it will lead to an understanding of how it was. Also, this will give a better view of the other formulas that will be covered, both formulas of today and the past. The quote illustrates the problem of journalism in the sixties and seventies.

Moreover, what journalism is supposed to be, for instance, telling people what happened at a specific event. Thompson knew this, and coincidentally this quote is from a letter from Thompson to Tom Wicker. The latter shared a similar viewpoint on the decline of their profession. The two journalists in focus will be Wicker and Timothy Crouse. Both were journalists who saw the flaws of the media, the suppression of honesty and truth in reporting. Wicker had an overall view and experience in media. Crouse, on the other hand, was not that experienced in the early seventies. However, he had a fresh eye, and he learned how reporters and politicians used media similar to Wicker’s viewpoint. The knowledge from both Crouse and Wicker is needed to evaluate the formulas.

² Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in America*. p.412

The power/role of the Press

This section of the chapter is essential for the whole thesis, which will lead to an understanding of what ideal purpose the press should have. Including if the formulas follow the right rules, which would give the media a better reputation, honesty and skill. With that in mind, what responsibility did the press have? What kind of power did the media have? If there were any rules, would there even be a need for a revolution in the first place? The role of the press is to provide the people with information, which provides the press with much power. Wicker mentioned an editor named Tom Bethell, who suggested that the press: “*very largely control public opinion with the same channels of communication that they use to present the news*” and a fight “*between government secrecy and the people’s right to know.*” Politicians tried to use and control the press, from giving out any “secret” information. There was also the struggle of reporters who got censored and the risk of getting fired. However, reporters did try to be the first out with a story.³ The media had a massive power on the population through information; the question was, who could keep the media in check? A possible answer was themselves, from guidelines and rules.

Hence, Wicker discussed the element of responsibility and irresponsibility of the press. A responsible reporter or paper would find the truth and have some specific guidelines and rules. The irresponsible press would create misinformation. The problem of responsibility created the question of “*who defines responsibility?*” One thing was sure: several powers were holding a leash on the fourth estate (the media), such as politicians.⁴

Wicker found a solution, the three Laws of Journalism; this is key for the thesis. Because a formula that respects these Laws can be a working formula for journalism as a whole. Moreover, it might spark or give a revolution within the media. The First Law was that a newspaper reflected on its “local” community. In other words, if a paper were located in New York, the news would reflect on the city, and there would be a more significant focus on Wall Street. Or in Los Angeles, more news on Hollywood. While a national newspaper in the whole country. The Second Law was that a journalist and his/her press should print what they know. Such as, if there was specific information that could help people like a massive fire in California, the media could warn people to stay away from specific areas. Instead of withholding it, which will give the people a disservice. Moreover, the Third Law, “*be neither*

³ Wicker, *On Press*. p.183-185

⁴ Wicker, *On Press*. p.254-255

in or out.” That a reporter should never take sides, from their bias or sympathy, at the same time, having enough strings with people to be at certain events or interviews. The Second Law alludes to the responsibility “problem” (writing about the truth) above. While the last Law was challenging to hold, reporters can become friendly (like Wicker with John F. Kennedy) with their sources and believe everything they say. The best way was to be in the middle, not too much out from the sources and the news (then there would be no content), and not too far in (as Wicker was with Kennedy).⁵ These Laws provide a reporter with the basics to have responsibility for their stories, less control from leash-holders, and also a possible solution. If reporters held these Laws, would there even be a crisis? Probably not. Therefore if these rules were applied by all journalists, in all of the formulas, most journalists would be “ideal.”

However, these rules are not practised by all journalists. An example of some journalists will give a picture of how it was in the seventies. Crouse saw the breaking of the Laws first hand. The irresponsibility of the press and both the Second and the Third Law was in question. The reporters who were in question of breaking the “rules” were Dick Stout, Bruce Morton and Jim Naughton. The trio was covering Ed Muskie’s primary presidential campaign, and Crouse described them like this after the Florida primary: “*They were exuding gloom like three guys who had just dropped their life savings at the track.*” The trio gambled on Muskie, and if Muskie won, their careers might have been better. Crouse mentioned that if a reporter is lucky enough to cover a candidate in an election, the higher result of the candidate will create more job opportunities for the reporter. Furthermore, if a journalist was in the winner’s bus, then he or she was among the best of the best reporters: a lot to gain, both experience and jobs. However, if a candidate were on their way to a failure, then the whole mood and tension of the people on the bus would be a working hell. The trio did look like they were in hell, losing their bet on the Muskie horse.⁶

Crouse wanted to test out a theory of the Muskie’s bus with a question. How loyal the trio was to Muskie. The theory was perfect for the analysis of the second and third Laws on the three reporters. Crouse mentioned the problem with the reporting of the trio, they have spent over four months with Muskie, and risked being “in” (third Law) with the man from Maine. The question Crouse asked was: “*I think that you’re going kind of easy on Muskie.*” The result was that the trio denied this, Naughton said that they were too “*hard on him.*” Crouse

⁵ Wicker, *On Press*. p. 22, 122, 136

⁶ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.55-60

was surprised by their answer, and he kept pushing: “*He’s a whore like Humphrey....He’ll sell out to anybody who will give him the Job.*” The trio responded by defending Muskie, Naughton said this: “*I’m a pragmatist, and I think Muskie may be the best we can get.*” Crouse saw that the trio believed in Muskie, they thought Muskie could learn and become a better candidate. Including the trio showed denial, loyalty and defensive attitudes towards Muskie's failure and lack of vision.⁷

Hours later, Naughton admitted that when he reported in Cleveland, he was in a similar position. Naughton wrote about a politician he endorsed, Carl Stokes, for what he stood for. It turns out Stokes was a “*bastard,*” who did not do anything. Naughton said this after the learning experience: “*And that convinced me you should never place your trust in a politician. And I think that was a very valuable object lesson.*” Naughton should have applied this on Muskie. When Crouse met Naughton weeks later, he admitted that he was wrong. The reason Naughton defended himself was not for wrong reasons; it was because he was a part of the Muskie team. In a way, Naughton had a part by showing the people the story of Muskie’s campaign. Naughton hoped and wanted the best for everyone, but was blinded by his own bias. So Naughton (and the rest of the trio) were irresponsible, instead of focusing on what Muskie was doing. He focused instead on Muskie’s potential. Naughton should have done both; instead, he was way too close to Muskie. Hence he did break both the second and the third Laws of Journalism.⁸ Journalists can have the best intentions and yet break the Laws of Journalism. The Laws of Journalism was not enough to bring a solution. However, it was (and is) a necessary ingredient for the right solution (the basics). However, there was (and is) some leash-holders over the press. The next segment will focus on this.

⁷ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.60-61

⁸ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.62

The leash-holders of the Press

“Every President, when he first enters the White House promises an “open Administration.” He swears he likes reporters, will cooperate with them, will treat them as first-class citizens. The charade goes on for a few weeks or months, or even a couple of years. All the while, the President is struggling to suppress an overwhelming conviction that the press is trying to undermine his Administration, if not the Republic.”⁹

There were (and are) several leash-holders in the press. Edward Herman and Noah Chomsky argued that the leash-holders were politicians, corporations/think tanks, and advertisers to mention a few. As the media grew as a business, the more leash-holders there were.¹⁰ However, the one group that will be focused on, politicians. The reason for the use of politicians is because the examples are great, and they are part of both the stories and limitations of the press. Also, this will provide an understanding of the weakness of the press.

Politicians employ different strategies when it comes to the press, mostly to have control. Wicker, for instance, saw a particular transformation of the relationship between the press and politicians in the sixties and the seventies, especially from the Presidents. During the period of John F. Kennedy, the press was very friendly towards him. Within the White House correspondents, during Kennedy's time, the reporters were generalists with easy stories to sell to the public. However, the main objective for the reporters was to be loyal to the President with no criticism. In other words, the press was controlled by politicians, including Wicker in Kennedy's time. Wicker admitted to this and criticized himself and others for that. Wicker was part of the journalist group called “friends” of Kennedy. These friends did have the privilege of getting Kennedy's views and opinions; however, his friends could not quote him.¹¹ Such working conditions would be misleading and dishonest.

During Lyndon B. Johnson's era, the melody was different. At first, Johnson tried Kennedy's approach to the press as “friends.” However, he did not have the skill as Kennedy, so Johnson had fewer conferences with the media. The relationship between President Johnson and the press became ill as the Vietnam War escalated more and more. Johnson and his administration denied that they were losing the War. Both journalists and the people of

⁹ Crouse, the *Boys on the Bus*. p.179

¹⁰ Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*. p.1-2

¹¹ Wicker, *On Press*. p.72-82

the U.S started to question Johnson when new information revealed that the U.S was losing against Vietnam. Especially when reporters who had been in Vietnam (like Wicker), came back and started to report what happened.¹²

After Johnson's term, Richard Nixon's strategy as president took another direction. Nixon, like Johnson, began and ended his terms with even fewer news conferences. Because of Nixon's experience with the press. Already in 1960 after the defeat to Kennedy, Nixon said this about the press: “*stuff the bastards*” and in 1962 he said “*You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore*” Nixon believed he was attacked by the press and there was some truth to it. With this experience, Nixon learned what not to do in his campaigns. So, he utilized a new strategy, letting his opponents (such as Romney and McGovern) get most of the attention. Only when necessary did Nixon appear for the press, he avoided questions of Vietnam. He had the press under control with his charade. The charade was that he was hiding his agenda or plans for the U.S, like the invasion of Cambodia or Watergate and his hatred for the press.¹³

When Nixon was in the White House, he was mostly unavailable, which resulted in Ron Ziegler (former White House press secretary) conducting almost all the conferences. It was a new strategy, to make Nixon look good, a reverse Kennedy approach to the media. Ziegler used dirty tricks, setups, misinformation and lack of information as tools to control what the press wrote about Nixon's administration. So the “mouthpiece”/Ziegler gave the press flackspeak, and the press did not do much against it. There were minimal challenges towards the administration except for Watergate. Ziegler had the White House correspondents under his finger. The reporters could rebel, but in the end, Ziegler had them under control as a “teacher.” Ziegler's strategy was: Divide-and-rule, freeze-outs, sheer balls tactics and tax scares. The Caesar tactic divide and the rule were fundamental, set up a fight between the straight reporters and the wire servicemen. At the same time, the freeze-out would get reporters to get kicked out from any press conferences or travel with Nixon (similar tactics to the Soviet Union at that time). The third sheer balls tactic was to use lies so insane that a reporter could not come with any response back. The last one, tax scare, was to send the IRS towards the reporters, check if they paid their taxes and intimidate them. As mentioned above, Nixon used the tactics of unavailability for the press; this tactic managed to get him reelected. When Crouse went to cover some of Nixon's campaign, he described it as

¹² Wicker, *On Press*. p.123, 127, 154,

¹³ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.181-183, 186

“*uneventful*.” The Nixon administration/Ziegler kept the press away from Nixon under his campaign just as in the White House. It was like a regular proceeding when Nixon did show his face during his campaign: “*Nixon was making his standard speech, embellished with little winks, gestures, and turns of phrase (“Now, in very personal terms, may I tell you...”)* that implied that he understood that a very special bond existed between him and the fat-cat audience.” The result was that the reporters who joined Nixon, could not ask questions, they could only note down what Nixon was saying. The result was that every information that came from Nixon and Ziegler became guesswork. Hence, Nixon won the election against George McGovern because he did not give the press anything, so all the attention went to McGovern. Nixon’s strategy was one of the smartest yet deceitful if not authoritarian methods towards the press.¹⁴

McGovern fell into the same trap as Nixon’s former enemies in 1972. Furthermore, McGovern employed the tactic of being friends with the press while using them as a tool. McGovern was amiable, and the result was that the press wrote more about him, but could easily criticize him as well. The Eagleton affair showed McGovern’s true colours (more detail on this story in chapter three). What happened was that Thomas Eagleton, McGovern’s former running mate for Vice-Presidency, had a history of electroshock therapy. McGovern faced a dilemma, to kick Eagleton out or keep him on the ticket. However, McGovern chose a different way to deal with Eagleton, to give a hint to resign through the media. McGovern invited the press to a restaurant, and after the meal, he talked to journalists Bill Greider and Bill Eaton. Instead of the journalists bringing up the Eagleton affair, McGovern did it himself. He gave the statement/hint that it was up to Eagleton to give up the ticket. Greider felt: “*That we were the ones who were being used.*” McGovern used them, and he did the same thing to other journalists like Dick Stout. The result of this tactic made McGovern lose the election.¹⁵

The last tactic that will be mentioned is the national security trick. As one of the oldest tricks in the book, it was used very often. Sometimes to get away from a question or not to answer honestly. The press was being told that the information they claimed, could harm individuals or the county of the U.S.A. The national security “scam” was used mostly to either cover-up or ignore investigation/questions on specific information. Wicker argued that a few times, it could risk people’s lives, but he did not believe that this happened all the time,

¹⁴ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.200-203, 216-225, 248, 252, 259

¹⁵ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.326, 329, 330-333

as if the government “*knows best.*”¹⁶ With these tactics, a leash-holder like politicians can use the press to their means. Next up is the formulas, and we will see, with their different abilities if they can manage both politicians' leashes and the three Laws of Journalism, including their positives and negatives. It will lead to an understanding of the formulas, and usage for analysis between formulas in other chapters.

¹⁶ Wicker, *On Press*. p.194-195

Pack Journalism

“A group of reporters were assigned to follow a single candidate for weeks or months at a time, like a pack of hounds sicked on a fox. Trapped on the same bus or plane they ate, drank, gambled, and compared notes with the same bunch of colleagues week after week.”¹⁷

Crouse’s writing about Pack Journalism, also known as Herd Journalism was a good description of how most mainstream journalism/news works. As the political reporters on the campaign trail wrote and worked almost entirely the same. When a group of reporters is pushed together for almost a year (if the candidate they covered won or a reporter had to change a bus/candidate) the mentality is accessible as a group. Little individuality remained with the reporters when everyone was isolated. They *“began to believe the same rumors, subscribe to the same theories, and write the same stories.”* The result was that the articles that came from these reporters were similar. The irony was that the reporters did not like Pack Journalism, because reporters who had some dignity wanted to be different. Hence, Pack Journalism was the big bad wolf every year there was a presidential election. The main problem was fatigue, many of these reporters would instead write in their way or their formula. However, because of fatigue, and the long campaign, for instance, many reporters would start writing as a pack.¹⁸

Another factor was that scoop journalism (which is old school, where the first paper with the story got the most revenue and prestige) was “bad” in 1972. Most editors wanted other newspapers to write about the same story to make it safe (or that the story is real). Editors, in general, did not like “troublemakers” or “callbacks.” Individual writing was treated with contempt but admired at the same time (mostly by reporters). Also, journalists were afraid of going out of the pack since their editor could cut them, or they risked their jobs.¹⁹ One last piece of information, the dominant formula of the time (including today) is Pack Journalism.

As an example of Pack Journalism in practice, the White House correspondents were one of the most significant pack journalists at their time in the seventies. Crouse reported that the White House reporters were a mixed bunch of *“professional witnesses, decree-promulgators, cheerleaders, hard-diggers, goldbricks and gadflies.”* However, the job was *“a slow death.”*

¹⁷ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.7

¹⁸ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.7-8, 309

¹⁹ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.10, 14-15, 22

Furthermore, the reporters who were there referred themselves as part of the White House press instead of their paper company. Indeed a pack mentality at that time, and it did not help that very few of the reporters from there became great reporters or legends.²⁰

When the Nixon administration, through Ron Ziegler, released whatever they wanted to the press, the correspondents usually asked stupid and probed questions according to Crouse. Crouse also mentioned that “*the striking thing was the high school atmosphere,*” where the reporters did not like Ziegler as the “*teacher.*” Even though there was a small rebellion in “class” against the Ziegler and his mistreatment of the information that he was giving out, they: “*Simply walked back to their cubicles and filed something about Henry Kissinger, a quick and easy story.*” So most pack journalists, except for a few, ended up taking the safe road in order to keep their job, and from fear.²¹

In the end, Crouse wrote this of the political journalists in the White House: “*But the curious thing about political journalists is that they often work as a herd when they should act as individuals, and they claim their right to perform as individuals when they should close ranks and act as a group. The most sheeplike her in Washington-the Pentagon press corps-boasted the loudest of its individuality.*” The pack did not have the guts to be individuals nor to write the truth about what happened in the White House.²² Hence, most mainstream media/pack reporters were in a crisis, as they did not follow the Laws of Journalism nor had any individuality. The irony was that Pack Journalism was barely a formula at all; it was just the formula that most mainstream used at this time. The next section is the formula that Pack Journalism used the most in the sixties and seventies, Objective Journalism.

²⁰ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.194-195

²¹ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.200-212

²² Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.230-231

Objective Journalism

What are the methods of Objective Journalism? Is it only an objective view? What does it lack? With the questions at hand, Brit Hume, a journalist, said reporters should not be objective but honest instead. Hume felt that objectivity was a “*guise for superficiality.*” That reporters reported what one candidate said and then the next (what one side said and then the other). There were no challenges nor research on what was truth or manipulation. The procedure from the objective report went like this: “*had to make some neat point.... had to start with hard news.... had to begin with the five w’s; had to impose some meaning, however superficial or spurious.*” The five W’s (Who, What, Where, When and Why) are the formal proceeding for most objective reporters mixed with covering both sides. Jim Doyle said that this was inevitable for most journalists. Doyle argued that when reporters tried to write every day, they would become fatigued. Moreover, the only answer when fatigued was going back to the formula (Objective Journalism). Crouse answered this, if reporters started to eschew this formula, there would be individuality and less Pack Journalism because Objective Journalism was Pack Journalism in the sixties and the seventies.²³ The methods above were (and are) the most standard methods of Objective Journalism. Let us look at more features and examples of Objective Journalism.

In 1964, Wicker was at the Republican National Convention where General/former President Dwight D. Eisenhower spoke to unite the party and that a change was needed (including criticism of the press). Wicker criticized the approach of the press because they wrote about what was said or what happened, but there were no comments on “the real story.” The story was that unity was already gone before Eisenhower made his speech. It was Objective Journalism, telling the story with no comment on what happened. In other words, a subjective reporter would have elaborated on the moment of Eisenhower's speech, rather than present the bare minimum reporting from an objective journalist.²⁴

When the Vietnam War was in full scale, journalists managed to get some knowledge, if not all knowledge of what happened in Vietnam. Wicker experienced this first hand while “touring” with former Vice-President Hubert Humphrey in Asia. Wicker met Daniel Ellsberg (ex-marine/Washington Papers) who helped Wicker see that the war was unwinnable. Washington/the politicians gave information to the press that victory of the war was

²³ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.305, 308-309

²⁴ Wicker, *On Press*. p.1-3

unavoidable and that is how it continued for some time. Reporters who presented contrary views were branded as “*too emotional*” or “*lacking in objectivity*.” Objective Journalism was used as a tool by Washington to avoid bad publicity and criticism in order to exert more control.²⁵ The most vital position that Objective Journalism had was the idea of being unbiased. That every story can be looked upon with objective eyes; however, this idea was impossible according to Wicker, because humans judge subjectively.²⁶

Another flawed attribute from Objective Journalism, according to Wicker, was that objective reporters were terrible at explaining how politicians play their game. Such as Lyndon B. Johnson, who promised not to go to war in an Asian War, and the following year doing exactly that. On this premise, objective journalists could not be so critical as expected towards the former President Johnson. The stance of the press changed after a year, because of Vietnam, when criticism rained over the President for starting an unnecessary war.²⁷

When Wicker wrote about the democratic election in 1972, he noticed much Objective Journalism in practice. Like the story of Ed Muskie who made two good speeches that made him the favourite to win the election for the Democrats. Meanwhile, other facts were ignored, such as McGovern’s rise, and his potential “juggernaut.” McGovern was the heir after Robert Kennedy but was still very low on the polls. Still, after the second spot for McGovern in New Hampshire, Wicker believed that McGovern, with some luck, could win. Other colleagues of Wicker did not have that view. Wicker said that Objective Journalism gave reporters a “limit” of making any risky or bold statements which could come true. It continued until McGovern got the nomination, McGovern was portrayed as an underdog almost the whole democratic election, where at any moment he could lose it.²⁸

Crouse also mentioned of the blindness of Objective Journalism: “*If a reporter has been trained in the traditional, “objective” school of journalism, this ideological and social closeness to the candidate and staff makes him feel guilty; he begins to compensate; the more he likes and agrees with the candidate personally, the harder he judges him professionally.*”²⁹

Both Wicker and Crouse agreed that Objective Journalism had created limitations and restrictions for reporters, and at the same time being hypocritical by being “objective.” With this information, it is safe to argue that the Objective Journalism formula alone cannot stick

²⁵ Wicker, *On Press*. p.8-9

²⁶ Wicker, *On Press*. p.85

²⁷ Wicker, *On Press*. p.5

²⁸ Wicker, *On Press*. p.54-59

²⁹ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*.p.335

right to the Laws of Journalism, at least the second Law, of being honest. Hence, being a part of the mainstream media crisis.

Investigative and Column Journalism

Crouse and Wicker were very supportive of Investigative Journalism, because this formula was much more subjective, compared to the mainstream media in the sixties and seventies. The objective is to find out if Investigative Journalism is a potential solution for the crisis in mainstream media?

The Watergate story was one of the most crucial investigative works, and Crouse had the luxury of talking with the “heroes” Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. Watergate was at the beginning, just a crime story. The reporters did much hard work, investigated and found information from many sources. Almost like Sherlock Holmes, putting bits and pieces together, Bernstein and Woodward took their time to unveil the story to the public as new information came up. Eventually, it became a White House crime story, a plot to sabotage the Democratic party. However, the Washington Post, which the reporters worked for, was at first the only newspaper that covered the Watergate story, which was a result of fear of call-backs and not enough papers supporting the story.³⁰

Like Crouse, Wicker supported investigative reporters. Where people saw them as American heroes such as Bernstein and Woodward, their story managed to make Nixon retire and get pardoned. Investigative Journalism became much more attractive (but not dominant in the mainstream news), rather than Objective Journalism as an example.³¹

Wicker used an excellent example of how Investigative Journalism works. He used Wallace Turner’s story of Native American land that was sold unfairly and illegally. The land was supposed to be worth a lot more than what it was sold. Turner found out through some good old digging: finding papers, finding people relevant to the case, in a word, investigating. Turner managed to find out that a group of people who knew each other were behind it and used a “quantum leap” from the knowledge he had. To unravel (similar to Sherlock Holmes) the puzzle and dig up from the guilty party. The result of the investigation was that a federal investigator took up Turner’s case. The guilty parties involved in the buying of Native land were apprehended and put behind bars. Wicker believed that a reporter who investigates needs the “*prosecutorial zeal, an urge to seek out the wrongdoer,*” and with the ambition of justice or fame, would develop a “*bulldog approach,*” consequently creating one of the best journalists and journalism in the world. As Wicker wrote: “*Determination to get the story, to*

³⁰ Crouse, *the Boys on the Bus*. p.290-299

³¹ Wicker, *On Press*. p.15-17

keep searching until the links at last fall into place, and the patience to surmount disappointment and frustration are nevertheless the investigator's greatest strengths." On the opposite side, this formula might create wrongdoings and mistakes, where determination can be a blind spot for logic/facts.³² The Laws of Journalism were used within the formula of Investigative Journalism (unless a reporter failed to be honest). Finding the truth is the goal of an investigative reporter. Furthermore, an investigative reporter did not take sides unless a party was innocent.

The only "*rival*" for Investigative Journalism was Column Journalism, according to Wicker. As a columnist in the New York Times, Wicker discovered that he had much freedom. No one told Wicker what to and what not to write, or not to repeat on a piece that needed updating or more information. There were no limits for the columnist, an objective reporter could write about the five W's (Who, What, Where, When, Why). In contrast, a columnist could go much deeper into ideas and not just facts. So an idea from a columnist could be an opinion, speculation, and intellectual thought or all of them. The weakness of a columnist was ironically just the same as with the investigative reporters when they might write wrong about something. Also, Column Journalism rarely included for a reporter to be at events or do digging; it was more of a desk job. However, the columnist had the ability to update the story and "*set the record straight*" (such as Wicker confessed that he did). If a reporter did not confess wrongdoing, he or she would break one of the Laws. Hence, with the power of Column Journalism, there was (and is) a big responsibility that crossed together with the Laws of Journalism.³³

As demonstrated above, journalism already had limits, issues and opportunities. Some reporters could only be aware of one type of formula, and some knew which formula was better or not. However, mainstream media faced a crisis. Pack/Objective Journalism created an issue of ethics and trustworthiness of the press. The crisis was not as big as recent history. However, reporters such as Crouse, Wicker and Thompson were fighting it, almost like a "journalistic civil war," subjective vs objective. Furthermore, with the information discussed, the next chapter will focus on New Journalism and Thompson, as a possible solution to the crisis of mainstream media.

³² Wicker, *On Press*. p.139-145

³³ Wicker, *On Press*. p.146-150, 158

Chapter two: New Journalism

*“I have a feeling I did that once, in a book called *Hell’s Angels*. The Angels....were physical....menacing...and so hostile....that few reporters ever tried to confront them as human beings....And mine on the Angels, I suppose, was part of what is called “New Journalism” of the 60’s.”³⁴*

The formula New Journalism had its origins from the sixties and has spawned several good reporters like Truman Capote and John Sack. This chapter will focus on the formula of New Journalism alongside Thompson’s work/formula and compare it with the formula(s) from chapter one. Thompson was a big part of New Journalism, most notably with his work on *Hell’s Angels*. Before analysing *Hell’s Angels*, it is necessary, to begin with, a discussion of the essence of New Journalism, and then consider an article Thompson wrote on Nixon. The objective here is to compare Thompson’s style to New Journalism and other journalistic formulas. The chapter concludes with the question of whether New Journalism can qualify as a solution for journalism.

³⁴ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in America*. p.218

Feature writing, New Journalism origin and term

Before New Journalism took its place in the sixties, “*scoop competition*” or Scoop Journalism in conjunction with objective journalism (as mentioned above) was the formula that most reporters utilized. The faster and the bigger the stories were, the better. Also, there was another type of reporters (who were columnists), who were called “feature writers.” They aimed to write for a newspaper (using journalism, literature, satire and realism), and then write the novel (which Thompson wanted). The novel was the main goal; they wanted to attract attention and gain enough reputation in the press while learning to write right, both fictional and non-fictional materials.³⁵

Wolfe mentioned Jimmy Breslin (a columnist), who “*made a revolutionary discovery.*” When Breslin worked for the Herald Tribune in 1963, he went and did his research. This research was “*genuine legwork.*” Breslin asked his editor for a story, got out of the office, and did his research while finding the people he needed for the story (which suggests a combination of a columnist and an investigative reporter). The way Breslin got the story was to be at an event before everyone else, similar to a “cop.” Breslin worked with his stories as a feature writer. It was creative work and an easier read than a regular article for the reader.³⁶

While Breslin defined parts of New Journalism, Tom Wolfe went a step further. Like Breslin, Wolfe went out to get the story instead of sitting behind a desk. However, he also put himself inside the story, like a character or narrator. The idea was that the readers and Wolfe could judge the characters from the stories themselves. Wolfe wrote in a third-person narrative/ point-of-view. The purpose was not to be objective or subjective (at least journalistically), but for the story itself to be entertaining. Wolfe also used different point-of-view from different characters, a “*chameleon,*” to get different attitudes, opinions, emotions and thoughts.³⁷

The purpose of New Journalism was to give a “*full objective description*” and “*the subjective or emotional life of the characters*” in a story/novel. It worked when the reporter was part of the story and had the “four devices” which were novelistic. The first one was where the story was constructed from scene to scene. While the second device was full dialogue, this was essential for the realism of a story, giving a complete description of what

³⁵ Wolfe, *The New Journalism*. p.17-22

³⁶ Wolfe, *The New Journalism*. p.24-28

³⁷ Wolfe, *The New Journalism*. p.30-33

people said, looked like and the event with no self-censorship (in other words, being honest). Hence, the readers were much more immersed when using a similar writing style to Dickens's. The next device has already been mentioned, the third person point-of-view. The last device was the recording of peoples habits, lifestyle, behaviour, clothing, anything related to people's views, beliefs and dreams.³⁸ At first, New Journalism had a few writers who used some of these methods and included their own, as Thompson did in his work on *Hell's Angels*.

³⁸ Wolfe, *The New Journalism*. p.35, 46-47

Thompson, his New Journalism and *Hell's Angels*

*“To my mind, the Hell’s Angels are a very natural product of our society. Just like SNCC or the Peace Corps or the permanent unemployed. But different people. That’s what I’d like to find out: who are they? What kind of man becomes a Hell’s Angel? And why? And how? The mechanics.”*³⁹

Hunter S. Thompson gained a reputation by working as a freelancer for many years.⁴⁰ However, he acquired the skill of writing from rewriting pages from books such as *The Great Gatsby*. Thompson wanted to become the new F. Scott Fitzgerald, and with the skill of prose learned from authors like Fitzgerald; he became a skilled feature writer.⁴¹

As Thompson’s reputation grew, he managed to get a job writing and experiencing the Hell’s Angels from Carey McWilliams at *The Nation*. Which gave Thompson the ability to write the book *Hell’s Angels*.⁴² Thompson’s approach on the story of the Angels had several unique New Journalism methods. It is critical to understand, compare and contrast the methods as Thompson’s New Journalism formula will be analyzed with the formulas from the other chapters. One important note, this section will only give the methods and not the story of the Angels. While the analysis of Thompson’s New Journalism vs the formulas from chapter one will give a chronological telling of the story.

As Breslin did “genuine legwork” with his stories, Thompson captured the essence of the Angels by being with the group. However, Thompson did not use all of Wolfe’s four novelistic devices the way Wolfe did. The first novelistic device, the story moving from scene to scene, was not applied from Thompson. The story in *Hell’s Angels* was constructed as the main scene or story could take a pause. At the same time, relevant events or information would be included together with the main scene. Thompson gained more freedom to write the way he wanted and give the reader critical information.⁴³

The second device, on the other hand, Thompson was on a level with New Journalism. The full dialogue was one of the favourite skills of Thompson; he used this in most of the chapters of *Hell’s Angels*. However, it was not overused, as Thompson used full dialogue

³⁹ Thompson, *The Proud Highway*. p.497

⁴⁰ Thompson, *Hell’s Angels*.

⁴¹ Thompson, *The Proud Highway*. p.xxiii

⁴² Thompson, *Hell’s Angels*. p.ix-x

⁴³ Thompson, *Hell’s Angels*. p.6-18

whenever needed in an event between people or someone, to describe something or someone, both about himself and others. This is illustrated in Thompson's example of when Sonny Barger (the leader of the Angels) said about Thompson: "*He's a writer....God only knows what he's writing, but he's good people.*" And when Terry spoke of Allen Ginsberg "*That goddamn Ginsberg is gonna fuck us all up....For a guy that ain't straight at all, he's about the straightest sonofabitch I've ever seen. Man you shoulda been there when he told Sonny he loved him...Sonny didn't know what the hell to say.*" Thompson also used conversations between people, but again, it was not used on every page.⁴⁴

The third person point-of-view was not used by Thompson, which was one of the crucial factors that contrasted his work from "normal" New Journalism. Thompson used a first-person POV and a subjective perspective as he had a part in the story. He wanted the reader to explore and judge for him/herself. However, his viewpoint also gave him more significant credibility from the reader. This formula of writing showed Thompson's honesty, by this about the Angels "*I came to know some of them well, and most of them well enough to relax with. But at first-due to numerous warnings-I was nervous about even drinking.*" Thompson, like others, was afraid of the Angels and cautious as he was "nervous." He was honest and did not hold back on his human emotions or thoughts. He became friends with them, even if the Angels were unpredictable and dangerous. On the other hand, Thompson also criticized honestly, especially describing some of the Angels as brutes after they beat him up "*The horror! The horror!...Exterminate all the brutes!*"⁴⁵

The final device, of which Thompson was a master of, concerned characterization and anything about people. While portraying the Angels, Thompson kept it simple, yet like a novel. Thompson did this very well with Terry the Tramp "*He is six feet two inches tall, 210 heavy, with massive arms, a full beard, shoulder-length black hair....in his twenty-seven years he has piled up a tall and ugly police record: a multitude of arrests, from petty theft and battery, to rape, narcotics offenses....all this without a single felony conviction.*" Thompson used basic expressions of a person, of how he looked, and of course, what he has done, which provided the reader with an image and a character. However, Thompson continued by showing what Terry thought of the rape allegations towards the Angels, and Terry said: "*that rap sheet's all bullshit.*" Terry admits that he was a "fuck-up" but not a criminal, and he thought that he would be arrested on some phoney charges and that he

⁴⁴ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.129, 230, 238

⁴⁵ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.43, 264-265

maybe should have travelled somewhere else. Thompson informed the reader of Terry's plans, worries and thoughts, and he also used the full dialogue device, so that Terry could describe himself.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.6-7

Thompson's New Journalism vs. other formulas in journalism

Thompson's New Journalism vs. Pack Journalism and Objective Journalism

Thompson spent approximately a year with the Angels. He started writing about the Angels when they became popular through the mainstream media in the mid-sixties. The Angels got attention nationwide for the so-called rape in Monterey, California. The allegations came from these newspapers that used Pack Journalism; *“New York Times, Newsweek, The Nation, Time, True, Esquire and the Saturday Evening Post.”* The Angels became infamous overnight, and the press used fear to sell this story, as Thompson wrote: *“Nothing grabs an editor’s eye like a good rape.... According to the newspapers, at least twenty of these dirty hopheads snatched two teen-age girls, aged fourteen and fifteen, away from their terrified dates, and carried them off to the sand dunes to be repeatedly assaulted.”*⁴⁷

Ironically, Thompson did what objective/pack reporters were supposed to do, get both sides of the story. As Thompson spent time with the Angel Terry the Tramp, he found out that Terry was there, using full dialogue: *“The cops were there, but only to keep people away. It was the same old story as every place we go.... All we want to do is have some fun and relax.... Hell, those broads didn't come out there for any sing-song.... I don't know for sure how it ended.... But me and my old lady went and crashed pretty early.”* The day after Terry and some other Angels were arrested as they were pinpointed by the two girls: *“When we got to the jail I said, Hey, I want to be checked. Let's see a doctor. I ain't had no intercourse in two days. But they wouldn't go for it.... They told us bail was only eleven hundred dollars. Then we knew they didn't have much of a case.”*⁴⁸ The whole ordeal of the Monterey rape was an opportunity for the media to create a new enemy of a group that was living more to the edge. Moreover, Thompson revealed it and criticized the media while being honest.

As the media created the Hell's Angel's phenomena, another group gained power from the fear of the Angels, politicians. Attorney General Thomas C. Lynch went on the job to: *“mount an investigation of sorts. He sent questionnaires to more than a hundred sheriffs, district attorneys and police chiefs, asking for information on the Hell's Angels.”* The result came after six months, in the so-called Lynch report. The Lynch report was fifteen pages long and had everything that the press wanted: *“The report was colorful, interesting, heavily*

⁴⁷ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.13

⁴⁸ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.14-17

biased and consistently alarming.” There were eighteen events that the Lynch report deemed alarming and dangerous. The press reported the Lynch report as real facts, but there were several flaws in the reports. Thompson wrote about these flaws: “*Time’s interpreters apparently skipped page one of the Lynch report, which clearly stated that further investigation raised questions as to whether forcible rape had been committed or if the identifications made by the victims were valid.*” Including what happened in Monterey: *Not quoted in the report were comments of a deputy district attorney for the county: A doctor examined the girls and found no evidence to support charges of forcible rape.*”⁴⁹

With Thompson’s digging and some of the novelistic devices, he found out that objective journalists did not do one of the most effective methods in their formula; get both sides of the story. Thompson’s formula gave him the freedom to write honestly, and one of these methods was to give both sides a perspective. Also, Thompson's subjective critique and investigation on the media was the complete opposite methods of Pack and Objective Journalism.

⁴⁹ Thompson, *Hell’s Angels*. p.22-24

Thompson's New Journalism vs. Investigative Journalism and Column Journalism

As the story progressed, Thompson kept digging and did some investigative work. Thompson's New Journalism was not pure Investigative Journalism. However, there were some elements to it, as seen in the section above (Lynch report and the Monterey rape). However, Thompson was not at the scene like Breslin was. An opportunity came when Thompson could be at the scene, the weekend in the Fourth of July in 1965. As an observer and a comrade in drinking with the Angels, Thompson joined them to Bass Lake for a weekend party. While the mainstream media prepared the population of California for a "riot" by the Angels, Thompson observed the whole spectacle.⁵⁰

Thompson found out that the Angels got drunk, and no-one was raped, the event was more or less peaceful. The only event that almost went out of hand was a beer run. As Thompson wrote about the weekend: "*The threat of violence was converted to dramatic tension. It put a definite zang in the air. The mood of the crowd was euphoric, even erotic. There were incidents, but not many... and when it was all over, the most serious offense of the weekend was laid to a photographer from Los Angeles.*"⁵¹

The biggest story that Thompson managed to find out was what the Angels were, a combination of: "*losers-dropouts, failures and malcontents.*" They represented an "*individualist*" way of life, who lived in their own set of rules. Sonny Barger himself said that the reason the Angels used the Nazi insignia and other offensive mark or words were to offend and shock people. So that everyone who saw an Angel, knew that they were individualists and an Angel. Including the warning of angering them would result in violence. Thompson understood that the Angels were outlaws, who wanted to be left alone, but they were not the smartest bunch either.⁵² Other than investigating/finding the truth and asking some questions, Thompson's formula did not have more in common with Investigative Journalism. Investigative Journalism did not use novelistic devices; hence, Thompson's New Journalism was a creamier formula.

Thompson's New Journalism did have one thing in common with Column Journalism, subjectivity. In *Hell's Angels*, Thompson regularly wrote what he felt and had opinions

⁵⁰ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.97-98

⁵¹ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.134-135, 198

⁵² Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. p.191-192, 246, 248-249

about; this was shown when he wrote about the first time he met the Angels. There was a hostile “air” around the Angels as Thompson had a drink with them. As time went, and Thompson included the Angels more into his life he felt he was being “*absorbed*” into their way of life.⁵³ However, Thompson also included his fears, as mentioned above. Drinking with the Angels could turn sideways into a brawl. The dangerous side from the Angels were confirmed as Thompson got beaten up, as explained above. As Thompson described being beaten up and his fears, he used a first-person point-of-view. Columnists used a similar way of expressing opinion pieces. Nevertheless, Column Journalism did not require a reporter to be at the event nor using the four novelistic devices.

⁵³ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*. 43-45

Thompson's role

Did Thompson follow the Laws of Journalism? Especially the second and the third? Yes, he did. Thompson wrote what he knew, and it was honest. Hence, the second Law was used. He gave a full overview of the Angels, and he also wrote about the lies that the media fed about the Angels. Thompson wanted the reader to know the truth about these outlaws, understanding that there were several layers to the Angels, not just a pack of rapists. He did not only critic the media, but the Angels too. Thompson provided a service and justice both for the Angels and the people, to gain the truth of how a motorbike gang operate, act, behave and think.

Did Thompson stay true to the last Law? Yes, he never joined the Angels, but he did admit that he was absorbed by them. He had his moments of excitement with the Angels. However, he did criticize them, and especially at the ending, calling for the Angels to be exterminated for beating him up. Thompson held to the Laws of Journalism; hence, this formula is not destructive.

The Richard Nixon Doll

Fortunately, Thompson did an excellent New Journalistic piece on politics about his “enemy” Richard Nixon. As mentioned above, Nixon had a specific strategy for the press; he used control and timing to be on top after his failure from Presidential and Governor elections. When Thompson got to write about Nixon in 1968 for Pageant, he went out to find out about “*the real Richard Nixon.*” Thompson started his article defining Nixon as a man with “*all these masks*” that had four different versions. The question for Thompson was whether Nixon even was a human at all if Nixon was just “*appeared to be - a plastic man in a plastic bag.*” Thompson went straight to the problem of Nixon and critiqued him (with Nixon being fake/different) to find the truth. The story continued with how Thompson even managed to get this article, and the reason was that Thompson was not a threat to the Nixon camp. Then, Thompson described the Nixon people before explaining his relationship with Nixon. Thompson was honest about his feelings and thoughts of Nixon, as responsible for “*corrupt the possibilities of the American Dream; he was a foul caricature of himself, a man with no soul, no inner convictions, with the integrity of a hyena and the style of a poison toad.*” Nixon was the worst of the worst to Thompson, and he did not hide it. The reason Nixon did not have a soul was that he appeared more like a machine with different masks, according to Thompson. After the tangent, the article was set on Nixon’s strategy and history. Thompson described Nixon looking like a much better solution than LBJ (because of Vietnam) and how Nixon avoided the Vietnam question (as mentioned in the first chapter). Thompson saw the brilliance of Nixon’s timing and strategy (as a man with “*nothing to lose at all*”), and how Nixon let Romney lose from ignoring and not stepping up to the challenge from Romney and the press. According to Thompson, the reason Nixon was such a smart politician was that he was “programmed” to say the right thing at the right time. Thompson went further on talking about how Nixon was in private, and the time Thompson was alone with him. The talk between the two men was pro football (because Thompson was not allowed to talk about anything else), at the same time Thompson almost killed himself and Nixon, because of a cigarette. In the end, Thompson wrote that Nixon (and his staff) had “*cynicism*” all over them. There was uncertainty with Nixon, and no one could put the finger on what they said if it were true or not. Thompson shared that he was not impressed by the new Nixon, but he was impressed by how Nixon and his staff played the election like a fiddle.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.197-204

There was nothing that held Thompson back from writing what Nixon was in 1968, he wrote truthfully of Nixon's fake personas, strategy and dishonesty (except for sports). The quest was to find out who Nixon was, and the result was a dangerous hyena. There was not any use of objective journalism; this was (if not still) the most subjective and critical piece on a politician. However biased the article was, it was on point with what Nixon eventually did in office.

A Solution?

Can Thompson's New Journalism be a refreshing solution for journalism writing and methods? Possibly. If we look back on the quote from the first chapter, there is a need to find out what "*Mickey Mouse shit*" was. The answer is simple; the Disney method is Objective and Pack Journalism. If any person thinks about Mickey Mouse or Disney, the thought would be cartoons, unchallenging and inoffensive content. Objective/Pack journalism was (and is) safe and mostly untruthful. However, Thompson's New Journalism with first point-of-view gave an honest and subjective method for journalism. In *Hell's Angels*, Thompson showed that the press employed Pack Journalism, giving the public a mass hysteria whenever the Angels were around.

An objective reporter might have included the voice from the Angels and the five W's. However, Thompson evaluated and gave an honest answer to what happened. Including both sides of the story. Thompson would give his perspective, which gave the reader a relationship with the author, almost like a writer/feature writer (which Thompson was). In the article about Nixon, a Mickey Mouse reporter could have only written what Nixon said after answering some questions that probably would not be challenging. Thompson did not ask hard questions, and he did not need to, he found out whom Nixon was even before meeting him (a man with no soul and a machine). Based on the comparisons towards the different formulas (both Mickey Mouse formulas and others). It can be inferred that Thompson exemplified the characteristics of New Journalism and making it more subjective. Thus, it depicts a solution could have already happened in the sixties, and possibly for recent times (more on that below). So the answer was that Thompson's New Journalism was a possible solution for journalism, especially for readers who wanted hard news and facts in the sixties (and today). However, Thompson did not continue writing with this formula because he wanted to be a writer of fiction. Hence, he developed a new formula in journalism that went towards a subjective and fiction like method instead of New Journalism, Gonzo Journalism. Naturally, the next chapter will be Gonzo Journalism, which Thompson mastered and created himself.

Chapter three: Gonzo Journalism

Gonzo

*“By 1979, Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary would include the word Gonzo, defining it as: adjective (origin unknown): bizarre, unrestrained, specifically designating a style of personal journalism so characterized.”*⁵⁵

Thompson’s formula of Gonzo Journalism developed from New Journalism, from which he had transformed his writing to be more entertaining and bizarre, often by inserting himself into the story. This chapter will focus on the Gonzo formula as it relates to Thompson’s work and compare/contrast it with the other formulas, including New Journalism. The book that will be analyzed the most is *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ’72*. At the start of the chapter, Gonzo’s function and methods will be explained. Subsequently, an analysis of the first Gonzo Journalism article ever written to show how Thompson used Gonzo Journalism. Further in the chapter, the content will consist of comparing Gonzo Journalism with the other formulas and Thompson’s role. The chapter concludes with a focus on the fictional part of Gonzo (the Darkside) furthermore, if Gonzo is a solution for journalism.

⁵⁵ Perry, *Fear and Loathing the Strange and Terrible Saga of Hunter S. Thompson*. p.143

Gonzo Journalism term and example

The origin of Gonzo Journalism arrived in 1970, in Thompson's article *The Kentucky Derby Is Decadent and Depraved*. As a consequence, Thompson received wide acclaim as a good journalist. However, Gonzo was (and still is) an ambiguous genre of journalism. Thompson might have described it succinctly as: "*what is Gonzo*" with "*Gonzo is what I do*."⁵⁶

Gonzo was a combination of truth, fiction, humour and skill as a writer. Including some novelistic devices from New Journalism like first-person point-of-view, full dialogue and characterizations (characterizations became much more bizarre and entertaining). Thompson would include ridiculous fiction which made articles entertaining, while at the same time bringing forward the truth in an event or a person. As an example: "*Hubert Humphrey was a treacherous, gutless old ward-heeler who should be put in a goddamn bottle and sent out with the Japanese current*." Satire and jokes were at the core of Gonzo, both the truth and fiction. Thompson mingled truth with fiction, and he had the liberty of writing to his audience with all the wildness and freedom he could muster because his readers wanted it.⁵⁷

William Kennedy, a friend of Thompson, said: "*In time he found a way to turn himself into this singular first-person itinerant journalist who was interesting no matter what he wrote about. He put himself into the picture and he became the story*."⁵⁸ More or less, Gonzo was wild, unpredictable and subjective. The subjectiveness as represented in New Journalism was much more advanced in Gonzo since Thompson was more active in the story if not the story itself (more on New Journalism compared to Gonzo below).

Douglas Brinkley explained Gonzo as a "*pure literary art form*." That Gonzo did not need rewriting. Brinkley said: "*Stream-of-consciousness, article excerpts, transcribed interviews, telephone conversations-these are the elements of a piece of aggressively subjective Gonzo journalism*." Furthermore, Thompson used William Faulkner's idea that journalism is way less truthful than any fiction.⁵⁹ So with the use of fiction, honesty, imagination and oral methods (such as telephone conversations and much dialogue), Thompson did provide more truthful pieces than most journalists in his time (and today for that matter, more on that in the next chapter). Gonzo was also written as a surreal imagination, an insane reality sometimes. The goal was to create entertainment value for everyone (both the reader and the author).

⁵⁶ Perry, Fear and Loathing the Strange and Terrible Saga of Hunter S. Thompson. p.142-143

⁵⁷ Crouse, The Boys on The Bus. p.313-316

⁵⁸ Wenner & Seymour, Gonzo. p.127

⁵⁹ Thompson, Fear and Loathing in America. p.xvi

This entertainment can be called bizarre or bizarreness. Usually, the bizarre writing was fiction, but sometimes even honest recollections.

Gonzo comprises several different elements, and describing Gonzo as a set form (with rules, such as New Journalism) is almost impossible. Gonzo can go anywhere on the scale of veracity; it can be fiction; it can be the truth or a combination of both (which can question Thompson's narrative). However, there is a possibility to read between the lines in Gonzo Journalism, distinguishing between fiction or satire, or just the truth. Thompson managed to get away with the unpredictability with his skill as a writer, explaining the stories and characters at a higher level, like a novel.

As an example, let us use *The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved*. The "tell-tell" signs of fiction from Gonzo in the Derby piece are hard to grasp. Still, it is safe to argue and perceive what is right and what is not. At the beginning of the piece, Thompson started where he was, at the terminal. Thompson was there, here we have the truth, which was then followed by a bizarre explanation that the air was humid and hot, like "*wandering into a steam bath.*" Then, Thompson met a fellow called Jimbo, who probably was not real. The aspect of alcohol made Jimbo sound like an acquaintance of Thompson. Thompson made Jimbo look like a gullible fool. Thompson confused Jimbo with the fact that he was going to take pictures of a riot (from the Black Panthers) during the Derby: "*Well...maybe I shouldn't be telling you... I shrugged. But hell, everybody else seems to know. The cops and the National Guard have been getting ready for six weeks. They have 20,000 troops on alert at Fort Knox. They've warned us - all the press and photographers - to wear helmets and special vests like flak jackets. We were told to expect shooting...*" Jimbo's response was hilarious: "*No! he shouted; his hands flew up and hovered momentarily between us, as if to ward off the words he was hearing. Then he whacked his fist on the bar. Those sons of bitches! God Almighty! The Kentucky Derby!*" Thompson scared the hell out of Jimbo, and after Jimbo's reaction, he went further: "*It's not just the Panthers. The FBI say busloads of white crazies are coming all over the country - to mix with the crowd and attack all at once, from every direction. They'll be dressed like somebody else.*" Then Jimbo: "*sat for a moment, looking hurt and confused and not quite able to digest all this terrible news.*"⁶⁰

This start to the story was (and still is) brilliantly hilarious. The reason it was brilliant was how Thompson used characters to his advantage, as his skill from New Journalism was transferred to Gonzo. Furthermore, instead of always writing the truth or about real people,

⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.29-30

Thompson tended to include a fictional character or account when it suited the story. As mentioned above, Thompson often used made-up narratives inside the story, as illustrated by his comments to Jimbo about the “riots.” Jokes and satire were robust devices for Thompson, and it made for a great start to the piece.

What would a reader's response to the piece be? It was true that some readers took Thompson's Gonzo writing seriously (more on that later). However, Thompson did use satire often, and if a reader did misunderstand it, the reader could get confused. Thompson proved that there were no riots because he neither wrote that they happened nor were the riots mentioned anywhere, except that it was a “*fantasy*.” Furthermore, the only way to find out what was right and what was fiction was to continue reading the piece. Jimbo seemed like a made-up character. Thompson usually mentioned real people in a specific way, by presenting more detail about the person (like Ralph Steadman, more on that below). Jimbo was a simple tool, used to give a jocular opening to the story, while also questioning the narrator (Thompson). The subsequent page after the encounter with Jimbo, Thompson did admit to lying to Jimbo: “*I felt a little guilty about jangling the poor bugger's brains with that evil fantasy.*” Which made the story even more amusing, and demonstrates the good qualities of Thompson as a writer. As a result, the piece was more interesting; therefore, stimulating the reader's desire to finish the story.⁶¹

After Jimbo, Thompson continues by mentioning his tasks before the Derby and introducing Ralph Steadman. When Thompson first mentioned Steadman, he got more of the “*fear*.” Thompson was afraid that a “*heinous culture shock*” would scare Steadman (who is from Great Britain). Then, the story proceeds where Thompson tried to get access to the race. A desire for macing people just to get into the Derby. When Steadman was described by a lady at the motel desk, she said this of Steadman: “*You won't have any trouble finding him. You could pick that man out of any crowd.*” Where the lady also said that Steadman was “*the funniest looking thing I've seen in a long time,*” and that he had “*growth all over his face.*” Thompson's thoughts from the response were: “*Creeping Jesus, I thought.... I had a vision of some nerve-rattling geek all covered with matted hair and string-warts showing up in the press office and demanding Scanlan's press packet.*” The bizarreness, entertaining and creative writing of Thompson about Steadman was brilliant (as shown through the use of language), and Thompson's judgment or impression was offensive, yet funny. However, the reader is provoked to find out more because the description kept the reader hooked on the

⁶¹ Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.31

story. Furthermore, Thompson probably did assume that Steadman was a nerve-rattling geek. He did not concern himself too much with it, and he thought they “*could always load up on acid*” and have a good time. When Thompson met Steadman, there was nothing weird about him, but then he told Steadman of what the lady said and Steadman “*seemed puzzled.*”

Thompson used the same tactics on Steadman as he did with Jimbo after he told him about the lady: “*Don’t let it bother you, I said. Just keep in mind for the next few days that we’re in Louisville, Kentucky. Not London.... This is a weird place. You’re lucky that mental defective at the motel didn’t jerk a pistol out of the cash register and blow a big hole in you. I laughed, but he looked worried.*” Nevertheless, again, Thompson managed to be satirical and applying similar scare/trick ploys on another person.⁶²

With Jimbo, Thompson did not give a telltale sign that he was using Jimbo for a joke or a laugh. However, with Steadman, he was more explicit by his laughter such that Steadman could have taken the hint, but did not. Thompson continued the story by talking about the facilities at the Derby. While at the same time explaining possible scenarios at the Derby, such as the possibility of “*Macing the governor*”. Thompson used the possibility technique often; it would reflect on his unpredictability, as anything could happen around him. Thompson continued with his Gonzo/satire and scared Steadman by saying that when the “mob” lost more money, they would become much more aggressive, leading to explosive brawls. Still, despite Thompson going easy on Steadman this time, he got nervous. Thompson laughed and said: “*I’m just kidding.*”⁶³

After exploring the races on the day before the main event (the first time Thompson and Steadman met), Thompson invited Steadman to dinner with his brother. He confessed that the last normal conversation was before dinner. Everything after: “*the weekend became a vicious, drunken nightmare. We both went completely to pieces.*” Thompson was honest, the events afterwards were, in other words, hazy or cloudy. Some of what happened after and during the dinner might have been pure fiction, and some not. Moreover, Steadman went through “*shock after shock,*” after meeting Thompson’s friends and family. The Gonzo was in full force when the event at dinner was unclear. Steadman had drawn people who were sitting next to him, or acquaintances (which was normal for him). Thompson wrote in a dialogue with Steadman that Thompson’s brother was about “*to tear your (Steadmans) head off.*” Furthermore, because of the drawings, they had to leave. However, Steadman mentioned that

⁶² Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.32-34

⁶³ Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.35

it was really “*because of the Mace.*” Thompson was going to strike the mace at the waiter. However, he managed to spray so much mace that it covered the entire restaurant. Who was right? Thompson or Steadman? Who knows, probably both. They both agreed that they were to blame and decided on this: “*You won’t sketch them and I won’t Mace them.*”⁶⁴

In Gonzo, if something is pure fiction, Thompson would tell, like the evil fantasy he mentioned to Jimbo. Nevertheless, if it were unclear (maybe even to Thompson himself), he would at least acknowledge that the alcohol (or drug) intake would cloud the story. The same thing happened the day after on the primary day of the Derby. The last real conversation was to steal two spots at the event, before: “*the very moment we started out to the track - we lost all control of events and spent the rest of the weekend churning around in a sea of drunken horrors.*” Even though the weekend was blurry, Thompson did manage to create/remember what happened. At first, Steadman managed to get paranoid again, since there was a sincere chance that there could be a fire. Since there had been a “*Holocaust*” at the Derby before. Thompson portrayed the Derby as a Holocaust and “*blind in the smoke,*” which made Steadman almost “*crack.*” Thompson described the people and the police at the Derby. There was a “*mob*” that was ready to explode as the heat was turning up. They were all stuck together (almost like a herd of sheep). Thompson did then remember about Jimbo, who was probably as nervous and paranoid as Steadman. Both of them went through the crowds of “*sheep.*” and Thompson criticized them (and himself). Furthermore, if the herd of sheep managed to get alcohol, the danger of a riot would be more likely. The race (even the track) itself was impossible to watch for the duo because there were many people, and it was “*total chaos.*” The blurry weekend ended with Steadman almost getting into a fight with a friend of Thompson. The story ended when Steadman and Thompson had some dialogue about themselves and the drawings Steadman made. The drawings represented the duo: “*We came down here to see this teddible scene: people all pissed out of their minds and vomiting on themselves and all that... and now, you know what? It’s us...*” In the end, it was Thompson and Steadman, who was crazy and ready to riot. At least that is what Steadman suggested with his drawings. They were bizarre and crazy at the race. However, it was not entirely clear that there was any “*sheep*” or chaos in the story. The last paragraph in the article was pure Gonzo, a fantasy of Steadman being naked and using all of his clothing to wipe out the mace off the car Thompson drove. When Thompson arrived at a terminal, he kicked out at Steadman and said: “*Bug off, you worthless faggot! You twisted pigfucker! Mace is too*

⁶⁴ Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.36-37

good for you... We can do without your kind in Kentucky.” This didn't happen, like everything else in the story, it was blurry, but that he kicked him out of the terminal naked, that did not happen. Steadman was friends with Thompson until his death.⁶⁵

Gonzo was used to entertain the reader by utilizing both fiction and truth. It can be difficult to grasp it, as demonstrated above. However, at least it was (and is) possible to distinguish between what was more accurate or fiction in the story. Everything before the blurriness started, probably did happen, except for Jimbo. Which could be questioned (he might have been a friend of Thompson where he used a fake name, as an example). However, everything after Friday night, of the dinner with Thompson's brother, all were uncertain. Even the description of people who did what or why. The only thing for sure during the blurriness was that it was chaos as Thompson described it. In Gonzo, the reader has to trust the narrator until the narrator confirms the event was blurry/fiction or just a rumour. Alternatively, if something sounded too bizarre, even though he wrote much fiction, the truth gave the reader reliability towards the author. Thompson did admit if he pulled a fast one on the characters or the reader (at least eventually).

⁶⁵ Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.38-42

Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72

Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72 was considered a work of Gonzo Journalism (both fiction and truth). The combination of Gonzo Journalism and politics could be even more confusing. Thompson wrote about a solemn theme; at the same time, he used fictional figures or characters and events. Much that happened on the Campaign Trail '72 (CT72) was real. In the introduction of the book (40th-anniversary edition), Matt Taibbi mentioned how important the book was (and is). Taibbi argued that even though the book was Gonzo, it gave a fantastic “*documentary journalism about how American politics works.*”

Furthermore, describing how politics was behind the scene or “*off-camera.*” Taibbi said that those who understood Gonzo, understood that Thompson’s nonfiction writing was the best from Thompson: “*They connect with the deathly earnest, passionate, troubled person underneath.... A person who desperately tries to make sense of the world and is never quite able to.... And as a reader you’re right there with him, you desperately want him to find what he’s looking for.*” As with the Kentucky Derby, the reader wants to find out what will happen, to the story and Thompson. Behind the fiction, there was some truth, as illustrated by Faulkner’s quote above. The difference in writing with Gonzo style in politics in comparison to regular Gonzo articles was that in politics, there was already a lot of propaganda and half-truths.

Moreover, Thompson tried to find some honesty from what many consider as the most deceitful source/people on earth: politicians. So, if Thompson did more honesty, he mixed fiction with entertaining events and rumours (more on that below). However, the truth and fiction can be found and sorted in CT72, which made this book the best for evaluating Gonzo against other formulas.⁶⁶

The objective of the analysis will be to compare and contrast what methods that Gonzo Journalism has with the other formulas.

⁶⁶ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.xviii-xxiv

Gonzo Journalism vs. other formulas

Gonzo Journalism vs. Pack Journalism

As Pack Journalism held to the method of writing like most mainstream media, it is vital to look at how different Thompson's approach (and thoughts on the pack or "wizards") was to Ed Muskie's failed campaign. Due to Ed Muskie's pre-election status (gained through impressive speeches), everyone expected Muskie to win the democratic nomination. Few, however, few discussed (or dared to speculate) the possibility that George McGovern would even come close in the New Hampshire primary. Most journalists agreed, Muskie would win so much, ahead of McGovern or anyone else.⁶⁷

Few journalists dared to ask the question if McGovern had a shot at winning the Democratic nomination. Thompson was one of the few. The pack/mainstream media wrote of Muskie as the only one who could win over Nixon. A look at how Thompson wrote differently about the Muskie vs McGovern's battle will be useful. Thompson mentioned in January 72, that: "*Muskie can't afford anything but a thumping win over McGovern in that primary.*" Eugene McCarthy was "*skulking around*" that primary and McGovern could damage Muskie's campaign if McGovern could pick up more votes.

Muskie needed 50% in order to gain momentum. At the start, Thompson speculated but agreed that McGovern and the other candidates were doomed, excluding Muskie. The pack did not even speculate, hence Gonzo had the tools of imagination and the boldness to go against the mainstream media. The McGovern vs Muskie race continued, the Caucus in Worcester showed that McGovern had a massive lead. Still, the media and the other candidates ignored McGovern's political prospects. As Thompson wrote: "*The outcome of the Massachusetts Rad/Lib Caucus was a shock to almost everybody except the busloads of McGovern supporters who had come there to flex their muscle in public for the first time.*" Thompson said that McGovern could not win simply because of: "*The career polls and press wizards say he simply lacks charisma, but that's a cheap and simplistic idea that is more an insult to the electorate than to McGovern. The assholes who run politics in this country.... actually believe, now, that all it takes to become a.... President-is a nice set of teeth, a big wad of money, and a half-dozen Media Specialists. McGovern, they say, doesn't make it on this level. Which is probably true.*" The press and the politicians were all on the same

⁶⁷ Wicker, *On Press*. p.54-56

wavelength when they judged McGovern. Thompson however, did not think that McGovern was all hopeless.

With Gonzo, Thompson could include what the other media wrote about all the candidates. Gonzo Journalism was unrestrained, and it gave a better viewpoint on how the media covered the whole ordeal, as a pack. Thompson continued proving the point that Muskie would win according to the “wizards”: *Be warned. The word among wizards is that Muskie will have the Democratic nomination locked up when the votes are counted in Wisconsin.*” Did Thompson use some Gonzo to predict the irony of the press? To show how right he was, by just challenging views, and also including his views with a mix of fiction? Or did Thompson know what would happen? The answer was yes, Thompson did use his work to prove how right he was and open to possibilities compared to his colleagues. Thompson mentioned this about the wizards too: *“But then I began reading the press wizards who are plugged in, and it didn’t take long to figure out that most of them were just filling space because their contracts said they had to write a certain amount of words every week.”* Thompson started to question his writing, and when he read the work of other journalists, he gathered that they were just filling words compared to him. That was ironic because Gonzo was partly fiction; nevertheless, it was still more accurate than the articles from the press wizards. The result was “shocking” at least for most people, as Muskie won with 46 per cent while McGovern secured 37,5 per cent. Furthermore, Muskie even managed to collapse in Florida, much to the surprise of the media.⁶⁸

Thus, through Gonzo Journalism, Thompson could spot possibilities and things that Pack Journalism did set eyes on such as the McGovern rise to the democratic nomination. Pack Journalism was a formula that most reporters used and did not include speculation nor individual reporting (or skilful novelistic devices). Gonzo Journalism included whatever Thompson wanted, including speculation. Hence, Thompson’s formula was different (and nothing like the rest of the pack), including criticizing the pack as a blind force, that could not do much more than to fulfil the number of words they were obligated to write.

⁶⁸ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.37-38, 40, 51, 56-57, 100-101

Gonzo Journalism vs. Objective Journalism

*“So much for Objective Journalism. Don’t bother to look for it here-not under any byline of mine; or anyone else I can think of. With the possible exception of things like box scores, race results, and stock market tabulations, there is no such thing as Objective Journalism. The phrase itself is a pompous contradiction in terms.”*⁶⁹

The above quote from Thompson was about his articles for *Rolling Stone* (later *Campaign Trail 72*); that there would be no Objective Journalism except for a few exceptions. So the *CT72* was a subjective piece similar to *Hell’s Angels*. Thompson's subjectiveness was very intense, and he held both his viewpoint, but also went beyond that to write the five W’s or two sides of the story. Thompson’s subjectivity can be seen in how he describes the two men (through his judgement) who ran for President in 1972: Richard Nixon and George McGovern. Thompson compared the two candidates: *“There is almost a Yin/Yang clarity in the difference between the two men, a contrast so stark that it would be hard to find any two better politics arena for the legendary duality.”*⁷⁰

Nixon was portrayed by Thompson as a hyena and had several different Nixon’s (Old Nixon, New Nixon, The Real Nixon) as in Thompson’s New Journalism article *The Richard Nixon Doll*. Thompson frequently used in-depth novelistic characterization (such as calling Nixon a hyena both in *The Richard Nixon Doll* and *Campaign Trail 72*) in order to show how foul Nixon was, which gave the reader both entertainment and crucial facts. Thompson continued, as Nixon had sold out the Republican Party from 1976, in order to win the 1972 election: *“Nixon....has been a professional pol all his life, through many ups and downs. He understands that politics is a rotten, frequently degrading business that corrupts everybody who steps in it, but this knowledge no longer bothers him. Some say it never did, in fact- but that was the Old Nixon. We have seen many models since then, but now we are on the brink of coming to grips with The Real Nixon.”* Thompson mentioned that Nixon would do everything in his power to regain the position as the President, even if it meant selling out his Party. Thompson also admired Nixon’s raw intelligence of how politics worked, while at the

⁶⁹ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ‘72*. p.33

⁷⁰ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ‘72*. p.391

same time having full control over the press (avoiding questions such as Amnesty and Vietnam) and the elections in 68 and 72.⁷¹

Thompson's view was still very resentful towards Nixon: "*it is Nixon himself who represents that dark, venal, and incurably violent side of the American character almost every other country in the world has learned to fear and despise. Our Barbie doll President, with his Barbie doll wife and his box-full of Barbie doll children is also America's answer to the monstrous Mr. Hyde. He speaks for the Werewolf in us; the bully.*" Then Thompson wrote a full Gonzo fiction on how Nixon transforms into a Werewolf. Thompson held this view because of Nixon's fake persona, and how Nixon escalated the war in Southeast Asia by attacking Cambodia and Laos. Furthermore, how Nixon escaped from the press and any responsibility, shaped Thompson's honest subjective opinion.⁷²

McGovern, on the other hand, was the complete opposite, as mentioned above. Thompson wrote this about McGovern: "*What depressed me, I think, was that McGovern was the only alternative available this time around, and I was sorry I couldn't get up for it. I agreed with everything he said, but I wished he would say a lot more-or maybe something different. Ideas? Specifics? Programs? Etc.?*" Thompson appreciated what McGovern represented, and stood by it. However, the way he presented McGovern damaged his run, according to Thompson. McGovern advocated for Amnesty for the soldiers who deserted the Vietnam War and including ending the war. Thompson naturally agreed.⁷³

Also, Thompson liked McGovern: "*which still surprises me, because politicians, like journalists, are pretty hard people to like.*" Thompson wrote this about McGovern because he considered politicians to be fake. Thompson saw most of them as power-hungry people, like Nixon. Furthermore, journalists were a pack, similar to politicians who just wanted more power. Nevertheless, Thompson saw McGovern as an antidote or a possible alternative to the typical politician.⁷⁴

Gonzo Journalism did not have room for objectivity except for facts. Thompson's subjective writing demonstrated that he wrote the truth and used Gonzo novelistic devices. Instead of the usual the objective formula of the five W's and both sides of the story.

⁷¹ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.323-331

⁷² Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.61, 391-392

⁷³ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.60, 62, 65

⁷⁴ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.68

Gonzo Journalism vs. Investigative Journalism

Just like in New Journalism, Thompson was both at the event and was a part of the story when he wrote with Gonzo Journalism. On the CT72, Thompson followed the candidates and was most of the time in Washington. As mentioned above in chapter one, Investigative Journalism similarly requires being at the spot of the event, digging and questioning the right people. With Gonzo, Thompson managed to replicate a similar method. However, he was limited, such as him questioning Nixon (which no one could) or investigating too profoundly compared to Woodward or even Turner. Thompson did manage to investigate/question people from the McGovern (even McGovern himself) camp, and he received honest (at least somewhat) answers.⁷⁵

Thompson did try to do some real investigation (that might be fiction, or probably not). As McGovern's Vice President candidate Thomas Eagleton got busted for having mental issues. Through the use of shock therapy. Thompson got a lead on a story from McGovern's campaign director Frank Mankiewicz: *"I spent about ten days in late September, early October, in St. Louis trying to dig up Eagleton's medical record out of the Barnes Hospital, or.... Rennard Hospital.... Despite this, Mankiewicz denied knowing anything about it."* Thompson acted as a pure investigator, he tried to dig up the truth, and he found out that the source of this story was the husband of a woman who worked on Eagleton's shock treatment. Thompson found out that the real story was that Eagleton used the whole drama to gain more power. Thompson called him *"an opportunistic liar."* The McGovern crew could not leak the information that Eagleton promised to show the records, or admit that he was involved in any wrongdoing. It led to a negative perspective on McGovern by the people. If McGovern or any of his crew leaked this, the people would think McGovern was covering himself up. So the only reasonable way out was to get some journalist to uncover the truth. Thompson, in collaboration with Mankiewicz, tried to dig the truth out. However, the records did not become public at that time, so Eagleton lost his VP spot without having the records. So, on the Eagleton affair, Thompson found out that Eagleton was not that innocent.⁷⁶ Gonzo Journalism was partly investigative and had elements of potential to expand on this style of formula. Nevertheless, most of Thompson's reporting was not investigative.

⁷⁵ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.267-295

⁷⁶ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.305, 405-411

Thompson's role

“The prevailing attitude among journalists with enough status to work Presidential Campaigns is that all politicians are congenital thieves and liars. This is usually true. Or at least as valid as the consensus opinion among politicians that The Press is a gang of swine. Both sides will agree that the other might occasionally produce an exception to prove the rule, but the overall bias is rigid... and, having been on both sides of that ugly fence in my time, I tend to agree....”⁷⁷

Thompson was familiar with the distrust between the politicians and journalists, and he did not like either of them. He shared the same viewpoint with Wicker. As presented above, Thompson appeared to be more critical of Republican politicians (especially Nixon), which he was, but that raises questions about Thompson's subjectivity, loyalty and how much he was either in or out. The third Law of Journalism, according to Wicker, asserts that a reporter should be unbiased. Neither in nor out. Hence, it raised questions about Thompson's credibility. The second Law must also come into question if Thompson wrote honestly with no censorship. In order to ascertain Thompson's credibility, we need to delve deeper into the politician he “supported” the most, George McGovern.

Thompson criticized McGovern's plans, as mentioned above, Thompson questioned the plans of McGovern. Still, Thompson agreed with McGovern, and the only thing McGovern lacked was more showmanship and ideas. Thompson did also argue that McGovern was: *“still a Party Man.”* In the end, McGovern would cooperate with the Party. Instead of holding on to his values and politics, McGovern would give in to the Party's demands and agenda, according to Thompson.⁷⁸ All that was mentioned in this paragraph happened in February and March 1972, Thompson was still very critical of McGovern. Moreover, as time went by, Thompson's view on McGovern changed by the end of March: *“George McGovern is also a Democrat, and I suppose I have sympathized in some guilt-stricken way with whatever demented obsession makes him think he can somehow cause this herd of venal pigs to see the light and make him their heir.... Crowds seem to turn him off, instead of on. He lacks that sense of drama.... He is probably the most honest big-time politician in America; Robert Kennedy, several years before he was murdered, called George McGovern the most decent*

⁷⁷ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.84

⁷⁸ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.69

man in the Senate. Which is not quite the same thing as being the best candidate for President of the United States.” Thompson was still questioning if McGovern was the right man. How could an honest politician become a President? Thompson wanted to believe that it was possible. However, the lack of McGovern’s showman quality and playing by the “rules” of “doublespeak” as Nixon did, would make McGovern just like the rest of the politicians. The pickle was that McGovern seemed too innocent in this game of “venal pigs” according to Thompson. McGovern was almost portrayed as a Christ-like figure, that he was doomed to lose.⁷⁹

As McGovern managed to gain more victories during the primary, Thompson who had concerns of the Democratic Party wrote this in June: *“I began to see that George McGovern has scrambled my own carefully laid plans along with all the others, except his own.... I might have to drag myself into a voting booth this November and actually pull the lever for the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party.”* Thompson supported McGovern now, even though he had all the reasons not to (from experience). Still, Thompson did continue to talk about the issues McGovern: *“was confronted for the first time with the politics of the rabbit-punch and the groin shot.... Dirty politics confused him. He was not ready for it-and especially not from his old friend and neighbor, Hubert Humphrey.”* McGovern had trouble with raw politics, where anything he said could be used against him, and Thompson spotted this. Every statement and viewpoint could be used against him by his colleague in order to win the election. As mentioned above, Thompson revealed that Nixon did anything in his power to gain power and control. McGovern had values and morals, and they made him look weak, in the game of politics.⁸⁰

Then it turned for the worse for McGovern at the end of July (and onwards). Thompson expressed that he *“was not enthusiastic”* about McGovern’s choice of Eagleton as the Vice President considering that Eagleton was just a Party Man. As mentioned above, the Eagleton story damaged McGovern’s chances, but Thompson did not criticize McGovern’s choice too much. He showed more compassion and tactical understanding for the selection of Eagleton: *“The clear implication, which made fine sense at the time, was that McGovern was merely tossing a few bones to the demoralized party bosses who knew they were about to get steam-rolled.”* So instead of writing about how wrong McGovern was, Thompson’s writing mainly criticized Eagleton dubbing him a *“bum”* or a *“hack.”* Did Thompson's bias conflict with his

⁷⁹ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.xvii, 109-111

⁸⁰ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.208, 227

writing on McGovern and his ideas? Quite possibly, as evidenced in the August chapter of *CT72*, with the attacks directed more towards Eagleton than McGovern. In September, Thompson observed that McGovern's policies were always anti-political or more people-based. Still, McGovern needed the other Party men in order to defeat Nixon. The consequence of gaining support from those men meant that McGovern would lose his core voters. Thompson agreed on that, and commented on his view on McGovern: "*My own rude estimate is that McGovern will steadily close the gap between now and November 7th, but not enough.... He has crippled himself with a series of almost unbelievable blunders.... His behavior since Miami has made a piecemeal mockery of everything he seemed to stand for during the primaries. Possibly I'm wrong about this. It is still conceivable-to me at least-that McGovern might actually win.*" One of these blunders was Eagleton. If Thompson was "in bed" with McGovern, wouldn't he ignore the mistakes/blunders completely? Or did Thompson merely write the truth? As Thompson wrote honestly, with some bias, he did not break the Laws of journalism. There was some compassion for McGovern, and compared to Nixon (as mentioned above), McGovern was a saint.⁸¹

After the election in November, Thompson provided some reflection on the election. As mentioned about the investigation on Eagleton, the knowledge of Eagleton being a trickster, ruining McGovern's campaign instead of telling the truth (or showing the evidence). Gave evidence why Thompson wrote much more favourably for McGovern. However, Thompson admits that McGovern's indecisiveness cost him the election, McGovern did hesitate to boot Eagleton off of the VP ticket. Eventually, McGovern did, but at first, he supported him after the news of the shock treatments. Thompson also argued why he could have voted for McGovern: "*It was essentially an anti-Nixon vote. McGovern, I don't think, would have been a bad President. He's a better Senator.*" In the end, Thompson voted for McGovern because of Nixon, which he had always disliked. Even though he was sympathetic with McGovern (more during the campaign than at the start), he did not go to bed with McGovern (with criticism). Also, Thompson was honest, both of his bias and McGovern. So Thompson did not break the Laws of journalism, but he was close to doing it.⁸²

⁸¹ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.299, 343-344, 382, 386-387, 389

⁸² Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.405-408, 415-417, 463-464

Gonzo Journalism vs. New Journalism

Though New Journalism differs quite significantly from Gonzo, it shares similar novelistic traits such as the first-person point-of-view and its approach of describing people and characters. As shown above, Thompson used Gonzo so that the reader could see the story through his eyes (feelings and views). However, Thompson used himself as the main character, even more in Gonzo; he had much more contribution to the story in Gonzo Journalism compared to New Journalism as a character. In New Journalism, Thompson was more passive but shared his view. In Gonzo Journalism, Thompson's activity did affect a candidate's performance and outcome.

One striking example is Ed Muskie's "Sunshine Special" in Florida (in March '72) which was affected by Thompson's action: "*where Yippie activist Jerry Rubin and another man heckled and interrupted him repeatedly.... Muskie ultimately wound up scolding Rubin and fellow heckler Peter Sheridan, who had boarded the train in West Palm Beach with press credentials apparently obtained from Rolling Stone's Washington correspondent, Dr. Hunter S. Thompson.*" The whole situation "*haunted*" Thompson after the event, and he got blamed for it. The Boohoo (Peter Sheridan) terrorized the Muskie train and succeeded in making Muskie look weak (usually Muskie liked hecklers because he was good with comebacks). However, Muskie was different that day (more on that below). Thompson gave Boohoo the press credentials. The simple reason was that Thompson was sick of the Muskie train, where the atmosphere was tense. Also, he agreed with the Boohoo after some convincing to join the train. After the event, Thompson got accused of letting Boohoo on the train, in order to sabotage Muskie's campaign. Did he? It remains unknown. However, the whole ordeal affected the primary in Florida.⁸³

The description of the characters was similar to New Journalism, where the Boohoo was a bizarre individual. Thompson described him as: "*this geek we met in the lobby of the Ramada Inn and who scared the shit out of everybody when he got on Muskie's train the next day for the run from Palm Beach to Miami, was in fact an excellent person, with a rare sense of humor.*" While the Boohoo was hanging out with Thompson, the Boohoo was funny, had some critical views on politicians and journalists and got Thompson's attention.⁸⁴

⁸³ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.88-98

⁸⁴ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.92-94

Thompson's use of story narration was also similar compared to New Journalism. New Journalism story developed partly chronologically, with a few stops on side stories that were similar or were useful for the context of the main story. Gonzo had a similar structure, as the *CT72* chapters started from December 1971 and ended in December 1972. The last device, full dialogue, was even more used in Gonzo. Gonzo, as mentioned above, used a lot of oral devices, the familiar dialogues were present just as in New Journalism, albeit, much more frequently used. In chapters July, November and December, Thompson either posed the questions, answered questions or both. One or more person/s was included with Thompson in the interviews and telephone conversations.⁸⁵

Except for four novelistic devices identified, there are other similarities between New Journalism and Gonzo. The similarities are novelistic methods such as metaphors and in-depth characterization. These techniques/methods can be seen when Thompson described Nixon. In *The Richard Nixon Doll* and *The Campaign Trail*, Thompson used the same metaphors for Nixon such as hyena, doll, plastic man or the corrupted American Dream. The metaphors were used to show how terrible Nixon was. Furthermore, the execution was even better, with Thompson's superb writing skill, using the metaphors to create an in-depth characterization of Nixon. As mentioned in the second chapter, Nixon: "*corrupt the possibilities of the American Dream; he was a foul caricature of himself, a man with no soul, no inner convictions, with the integrity of a hyena and the style of a poison toad.*"⁸⁶

These methods were transferred from New Journalism to Gonzo Journalism. However, instead of using the same metaphors all the time, Thompson used them a few times separately. However, he used similar metaphors, while he described Nixon in-depth: "*it is Nixon himself who represents that dark, venal, and incurably violent side of the American character almost every other country in the world has learned to fear and despise. Our Barbie doll President, with his Barbie doll wife and his box-full of Barbie doll children is also America's answer to the monstrous Mr. Hyde. He speaks for the Werewolf in us; the bully.*" If we compare the similar metaphors; hyena is a werewolf, the man with no soul/poison toad as Mr Hyde, Barbie doll with a foul caricature/ a man with no soul and the American character with the American Dream.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p. 267-295, 397-433, 444-474

⁸⁶ Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt*. p.197

⁸⁷ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.

The core value of New Journalism was that it was honest, Gonzo Journalism, however, was mixed with some fiction and truth, either as a character or some bizarre event. Thompson provided some clues where he mentioned that it was fiction (as with Nixon being a werewolf), New Journalism was pure, honest reporting. Fiction was regularly used in Thompson's work with Gonzo. Therefore, fiction can be described as the most significant factor feature from which Gonzo differed from New Journalism.

Gonzo Column Journalism vs. Column Journalism

When Thompson wrote Gonzo as a columnist, he spent most of his time in Colorado, rather than following the story or person as was the case *Campaign Trail 72*. Thompson's book from the late eighties *Generation of Swine* was a pure example of how a Gonzo reporter could report from afar, and still qualify as Gonzo Journalism. To clarify an important note: the book did contain pure Gonzo Journalism, where Thompson had travelled and made stories as in *CT72*. As mentioned above with the columnist, the reporters had a job to speculate and bring forward ideas with their articles. Full freedom to write about anything they wanted with the only limiting factor being the availability of space to write on.

Thompson's stories on the Reagan/Bush administration and their foreign affairs showed the best of Gonzo Column Journalism. In December 1986, Thompson got news about the Iran-Contra affair, which was a simple weapon sales matter. In order to send money and weapons to the Contras in Nicaragua (a right-wing group), the Reagan administration sold weapons to Iran. The purpose was to create a counter-revolution (so that the U.S could keep power in the area) in Nicaragua. Thompson wrote this about Reagan and his administration in the first article of the affair: "*Why were all these people-the President, the attorney general, the vice president, the President's national security adviser and his top aide, the whole ranking insider/elite administration Republicans-so desperately and totally committed to a cause called the contras in Central America that they would risk the whole reputation, credibility and the possibility of a humiliated Nixonlike place in history just to send just another \$30 million to a fat, inarticulate Latino yuppie named Adolfo Calero in Nicaragua? Was it worth another Watergate?*" Thompson continued speculating that "*it was a no-win situation*" for Reagan. Both for his legacy and the rest of his term, Reagan would have a hard time due to the Iran-Contra affair. However, Thompson speculated that one man would gain everything from this, and that was George Bush Sr. Thompson mentioned that Bush (Vice-President at the time) had few allies. However, Bush had enough experience from politics and the CIA to know what to do with the Iran-Contra affair and exploit it for his election in 1988.⁸⁸

Thompson continued in the next article on how this affair had affected the weapons industry and the estimated money financial value involved was between 12 million to 2 billion dollars. Thompson speculated that the statement from the "boys" (all the people

⁸⁸ Thompson, *Generation of Swine*. p.185-188

mentioned above in the quote: Reagan, Bush, attorney general) that they gained no money from this was a flat out lie. Watergate would “*look like a teen-age prank, and Richard Nixon will seem like just another small-time politician who got wiggy on greed and cheap gin*” in comparison to the Iran-Contra according to Thompson. Subsequently, in an article a few weeks later, Thompson wrote this on Bush: “*George Bush can’t even run, much less hide. He will be lucky to get off without doing time in a federal prison.*” So the “boys” who were guilty were doomed and were on borrowed time. However, Thompson was wrong (failed predictions, more on that later). He also speculated that Gary Hart would win the presidency, that Joe Kennedy would be President in 2001 and Mexico would cease to exist.⁸⁹

Thompson continued to speculate that Bush was going to lose in the 88 elections. When Bush got linked directly to the Iran-Contra affair, Thompson was very sure of his downfall: “*A felony crime, an George had signed his own name to the letter that would introduce Ollie to the evil Castejon. The shrewd and treacherous vice president was no longer clean.... He was doomed.*” Bush denied having anything to do with the affair.⁹⁰ Thompson’s speculations were not unreasonable, the case was obviously under investigation, and Thompson wrote this because he had valid reasons to suppose that the Reagan administration was corrupt.⁹¹ The fallout of all the speculation was that Bush gained the lead in the 88 elections and won (Gary Hart dropped out due to sex allegations, while Michael Dukakis failed). Thompson's response was writing a satirical letter to the President saying: “*I have been on your side from the start.*”⁹² Thus, the coverage from Thompson was honest; he had some ideas (more likely scenarios, like Mexico not being a country anymore) and mixed it with Gonzo. However, Thompson did not incorporate one of the essential rules from the columnist: setting the record straight. Thompson did not correct himself; however, he continued the story even if he was wrong. However, he was right about Bush, who pardoned almost everyone who had been involved with the Iran-Contra affair.⁹³

⁸⁹ Thompson, *Generation of Swine*. p.188-191, 196

⁹⁰ Thompson, *Generation of Swine*. p.205, 221-223, 226

⁹¹ <https://apnews.com/article/749f1b7d6c7b4e60be685f73f5781fe1>

⁹² Thompson, *Generation of Swine*. p.290, 306, 312-313

⁹³ <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/24/bush-pardons-iran-contra-felons-dec-24-1992-1072042>

The Dark Side of Gonzo

One of the essential parts of Gonzo was fiction, as mentioned above, it could be an anecdote or just an amusing character or event. However, this fiction could be mistaken for truth. Since Thompson wrote about the truth as well, it could become confusing. Thompson got himself a reputation for being honest, at least from New Journalism and from Gonzo writing. The result was that some people thought he was honest all the way, and believed all the crazy stuff he did was real. After all, Thompson did hang out with the Hell's Angels, did many drugs, was bizarre, unpredictable and so on.

There was one story Thompson wrote that was pure fiction than most, and that was the Ibogaine story. The story was covered in the April chapter of *CT72*. Thompson started with an explanation on the origin of Ibogaine from West Africa and the experiments carried out on people: *"Soon his nerves get tense in an extraordinary way; an epileptic-like madness comes over him, during which he becomes unconscious.... In the cat, for example, 2-10mg./kg. given intravenously caused....tremors leading to a picture of rage....In human studies, at a dose of 300 mg. given orally, the subject experiences visions, changes in perception of the environment and delusions or alterations of thinking.... Ibogaine produces a state of drowsiness in which the subject does not want to move, open his eyes.... Many are disturbed by lights or noises."*⁹⁴

After the details of the drug, Thompson goes further on how the *"Ibogaine Effect"* managed to be a *"factor"* on the Presidential Campaign. During the Wisconsin primary, the rumour leaked that *"a Brazilian doctor who was said to be treating the candidate with some kind of strange drug."* The candidate was Ed Muskie. Thompson wrote that there were several rumours for a long time that Muskie was in bed with some drug. What was the answer that Thompson found out that Muskie had taken Ibogaine? A Brazilian doctor that was with Muskie, according to Thompson. Then Thompson thought of Muskie's strange performances in public: *"I immediately recognized The Ibogaine Effect-from Muskie's tearful breakdown on the flatbed truck in New Hampshire, the delusions and altered thinking that characterized his campaign in Florida, and finally the condition of total rage that gripped him in Wisconsin."*⁹⁵ Thompson compared the effects of Ibogaine on a man and a cat to Muskie. The story was entertaining. However, Muskie did behave like Thompson described him, Crouse

⁹⁴ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.133

⁹⁵ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*.p.134

mentioned that Muskie “*went into a rage*” and treated his staff worse than he treated the press.⁹⁶ So Thompson’s logic was not unreasonable. The Man from Maine (Muskie) did have some personality changes. Thompson had “*no doubt about it*”, and the real exciting story for Thompson was when Muskie began to take Ibogaine. Thompson proved the point that Muskie had always had the power to use and crush hecklers before, so he mentioned the Boohoo story. In Florida, Muskie just “*went all to pieces.*” Besides, other reporters noticed that Muskie was different and not his usual self. Other remarks from Thompson was that Muskie: “*had developed a tendency to roll his eyes wildly during TV interviews, that his thought patterns had become strangely fragmented, and that not even his closest advisors could predict when he might suddenly spiral off into babbling rages, or neo-comatose funks.... It is entirely conceivable-given the known effects of Ibogaine-that Muskie’s brain was almost paralyzed by hallucinations at that time.*”⁹⁷

Thompson gave all the proof needed to convince the reader. Muskie seemed like a drug user affected by Ibogaine, that could become angry and comatose at any time. What made this piece extremely humorous was that it was only a rumour and also not true. Thompson gave a hint that this was not true: “*We can only speculate on this, because those in a position to know have flatly refused to comment on rumours concerning the Senator’s disastrous experiments with Ibogaine.*”⁹⁸ The hint was that the reader and Thompson could only speculate, and Thompson did call it rumours after all the logical description of Muskie. Except for the fact that Muskie was acting strange, the rest was fiction or satire. Crouse confirmed this and that people believed everything that Thompson wrote: “*he claimed to have discovered that Muskie was taking an obscure Brazilian drug called Ibogaine.... Many readers, including several journalists, believed this.*”⁹⁹ People believed it, and to get more context to this story (and entertainment), Thompson said this about the Ibogaine story: “*I never said that Muskie was taking Ibogaine.... I said there was a rumor.... I never said it was true. I said there was a rumor to that effect. I made up the rumor.... I didn’t realize until about halfway through the campaign that people believed this stuff.*”¹⁰⁰ That was Thompson’s

⁹⁶ Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus*. p.53

⁹⁷ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.134-135

⁹⁸ Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*. p.135

⁹⁹ Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus*. p.316

¹⁰⁰ McKeen, *Outlaw Journalist*. p.190-191

confession; he made it all up; it was fiction. The amusing aspect of the story, which made it ironic, was that Ibogaine was a drug intended to counteract drug addiction.¹⁰¹

Did the Ibogaine story hurt Thompson's credibility and the Laws of journalism? No, if Thompson never wrote or said that it was a rumour, then there would be pure misinformation. Since Thompson always had a hint or an explanation after a made-up story, he held to the Laws of journalism.

The Ibogaine story was pure satire, but it was taken as truth by many people. If this story came up today, it would be termed "Fake News." Thus, the pertinent question is if Gonzo was partly Fake News? Thompson did not think so, because if he did have an agenda, it was to feed "*some of the propaganda back to them,*" according to his former colleague David Felton. "Them" was the press, and the press took the bait (journalists kept asking Muskie if he took Ibogaine).¹⁰² So it was satire, as well as revenge on the press, but not to confuse the reader.

Furthermore, if it were Fake News, Thompson would write about Nixon instead, and damage Nixon's power. Thompson did use some fiction/Fake News on Nixon, like calling him a werewolf. However, Thompson did not need to (since Nixon did enough terrible things with attacking other countries and pretending to be a barbie doll). Still, Thompson can be looked upon as a pioneer of Fake News with satire (more on Fake News below).

¹⁰¹ www.vox.com/2015/9/14/9314315/ibogaine-treatment

¹⁰² Perry, Perry, Fear and Loathing the Strange and Terrible Saga of Hunter S. Thompson. p.179

The real solution?

Looking back on the quote from the introduction, was Thompson's Gonzo Journalism the revolution/solution that journalism needed? In some ways, yes. It went beyond the lack of Pack and Objective Journalism. Their formula restricted the mainstream pack and objective reporters. The Gonzo formula had a subjective yet honest reporting that could speculate and criticize anything. Hence, Gonzo Journalism was better. The same can be applied to Investigative and Column Journalism; they were better formulas than Pack and Objective Journalism. Still, they were not enough to create a revolution nor get out from their restrictions. When it came to Thompson's New Journalism and Gonzo Journalism, both were similar and had a freedom that the other formulas lacked. Including the use of novelistic devices gave both the formulas a considerable edge. However, Gonzo's flaw was its fiction with some confusion (at least for some people). Thompson did indeed use fiction to entertain the reader and himself, and yet, he still held to the Laws of Journalism. The difference here was that the combo of fiction and truth from Thompson was more trustworthy than was obtainable from reporters who were part of the pack, or who were too objective. Because of the fiction in Gonzo Journalism, Gonzo Journalism cannot be a complete solution for the media. If Gonzo Journalism was (or is) an answer, it could be a solution for soft news, compared to New Journalism for hard news. Gonzo Journalism would fit for people who do not want hard news. However, Gonzo Journalism could be misunderstood very quickly, and therein lies the challenge. Can Gonzo Journalism be enough? If we look back on the sixties and seventies, Gonzo Journalism was an alternative to the mainstream media (Pack and Objective Journalism). Nothing more than an alternative, not a solution. If we look at the recent history of the press, the melody is on a different tune. Today's media would gain from both New Journalism and Gonzo Journalism as a solution, with a distinct lack (if not more lack) of honest journalism.

Chapter four: Fake News

This chapter will focus on Fake News from the mainstream perspective and a journalistic perspective in Alternative Media from Tim Pool. The objective is to understand today's journalism and if the issues generated from most mainstream Fake News can be fixed or altered in the American press. Can a “solution” from a different formula fix the press current state? Or a combination with different formulas? These questions will be answered by explaining the Fake News formula, today's state of the media (with definitions from Matt Taibbi, Tim Pool, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky) and the Alternative Media formula from Tim Pool in recent history. With Ending the chapter with an analysis of the formulas together with the formulas from the former chapters, using one story: Russiagate.

Fake News term

In order to explain Fake News, we need to go into the definition of its precursor Propaganda and Fake News itself. The result will lead to an understanding of Fake News and give a good view of how today's journalism works since Fake News has a significant impact on mainstream media.

Fake News, by definition, is a complicated thing. The word itself implies that an article or a story was created out of nothing or some truth. Fake News used to be Propaganda, which is almost similar. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, Propaganda is defined as: *“The spreading of ideas, information, or rumour for the purpose for the helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person..... Ideas, facts or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause.”*¹⁰³ The purpose of Propaganda was simple, to support a group or an individual and destroy or weaken an opposition with fake stories. Fake News shares a similarity in this respect.

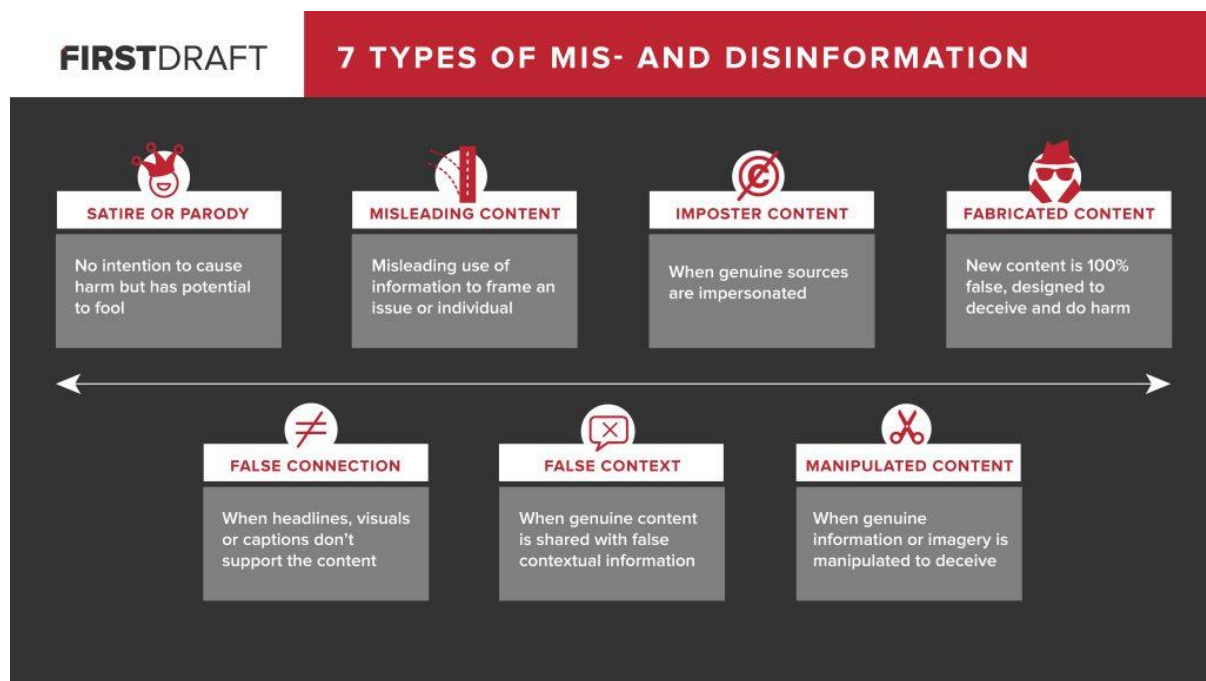


Figure 1.¹⁰⁴

As shown in Figure 1, Fake News can include up to seven types of mis/disinformation. Satire/ Jokes, to entertain and fool people. Misleading Content is to misuse the information in

¹⁰³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/propaganda>

¹⁰⁴ <https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/fake-news-complicated/>

order to attack or harm a person/group. Imposter Content, the sources of the story are not real. Fabricated Content is an entirely fake story created to injure. False Connection, is clickbait, a title that has no connection to the story in context. False Content, is about a true story but the information in the story or article is fake. Manipulated Content, is stories that have truthful information for the use of manipulating people. Such is the mainstream view on Fake News as a whole. According to FirstDraftNews, Propaganda is different from Fake News because Propaganda does not include Satire or False Connection. So Fake News is a broader term.¹⁰⁵ To make this simpler, Fake News are stories that are manipulated or false with the purpose to destroy or help individuals.

From a non-mainstream perspective, Tim Pool, an independent journalist (more on his journalism below) explained mainstream Fake News with several definitions. The most general Fake News was one that could be created from anywhere. Pool states that *“they can just write whatever they want as crazy as possible, because people are going to share it and they’re going to make money.... It targets a certain group of people.... Some of these people are making twenty dollars or more per month. Just making things up.* The above quote is the most common view of Fake News; easy work, no ethics, morals or rules. The only agenda is to spread misinformation and get clicks from a certain group (left or right). The second type of Fake News, according to Pool, is *“hyper partisan ignorant reporting.”* Journalists who believe they know what they are reporting about, who try to provide real content with good intentions. However, they think they know the *“whole picture,”* but they fail on reporting on what is going on. The third sort is *“faction hyper-partisan reporting,”* which chooses a side of the story. Faction hyper-partisan reporting usually emanates from wealthy news organizations. Such news organizations have good intentions too, but hire people from a specific ideological viewpoint, in order to report what the organization desires.¹⁰⁶

Pool mentioned a great example in Janesville, Wisconsin, where the three Fake News definitions fit together. An incident where a teenage girl and an older man had a physical confrontation in a Trump rally. The journalists and news organizations on the political left-leaning side wrote only that the girl was the victim. As the teenage girl was assaulted with a pepper-spray by an older man. In Time (newspaper), the article and the title suggested that the older man was the crook. The title of the story was: *“15-Year-Old Assaulted at Donald Trump Rally, Police Say.”* The article did not include what happened to the old man, only that

¹⁰⁵ <https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/fake-news-complicated/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYXeNfxFfs4&t=4s>

two teenage girls were pepper-sprayed and one of them “*sexually assaulted.*”¹⁰⁷ Two days later, CNN wrote there was no sexual assault, as police said there was “*no evidence*”¹⁰⁸ On the right side of the spectrum, Fox News had this title for their article: “*Investigators recommend charge for teen pepper-sprayed at Donald Trump rally.*” The article included that the older man got punched by the teenage girl.

Furthermore, the article was much less sympathetic to the girl while supporting the older man.¹⁰⁹ Pool used different sources, but had an answer to what happened, both of the scenarios occurred, the man got punched, and the girl got maced.¹¹⁰

Such tactics also worked on the Russiagate story, which was and is entirely misleading. In the article by The Atlantic, Franklin Foer explains that Russiagate is not a hoax. Foer argued that there was proof, though, not enough proof from the Mueller report: “*Rereading the Mueller report more than a year after its publication is an exercise in disappointment.*” The Mueller report was supposed to provide conclusive evidence that President Donald Trump was getting help from the Kremlin administration in Russia to win the 2016 election. Foer included several “evidence” both from the report and what was culled from mainstream media. However, nothing has been found as an illegal activity by the court in the U.S since February 2019. With no real evidence, except some talk of Russian agents, this is an article that tried to injure the Trump administration and misleads the reader. Also, the story from Foer included a lie, that Hilary Clinton's emails were released through Russian Intelligence¹¹¹; it was Wikileaks.¹¹² Of the seven elements that are used by the mainstream to identify Fake News, the article included five excluding Satire and Imposter Content.

The best and short explanation of Fake News is that it is Propaganda with much more faction-based (from a group of ideology, country, beliefs) leaning stories. Fake News discards parts of the truth if not all the truth, in order to mislead, destroy or help people/groups that the journalists/organization disagrees or agrees with respectively. However, the next question, is Fake News the formula for Pack Journalism today? In order to explain this, a look at today's journalism is needed.

¹⁰⁷ <https://time.com/4276221/donald-trump-wisconsin-protest-pepper-spray/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/31/politics/donald-trump-janesville-rally-teen-no-assault/index.html>

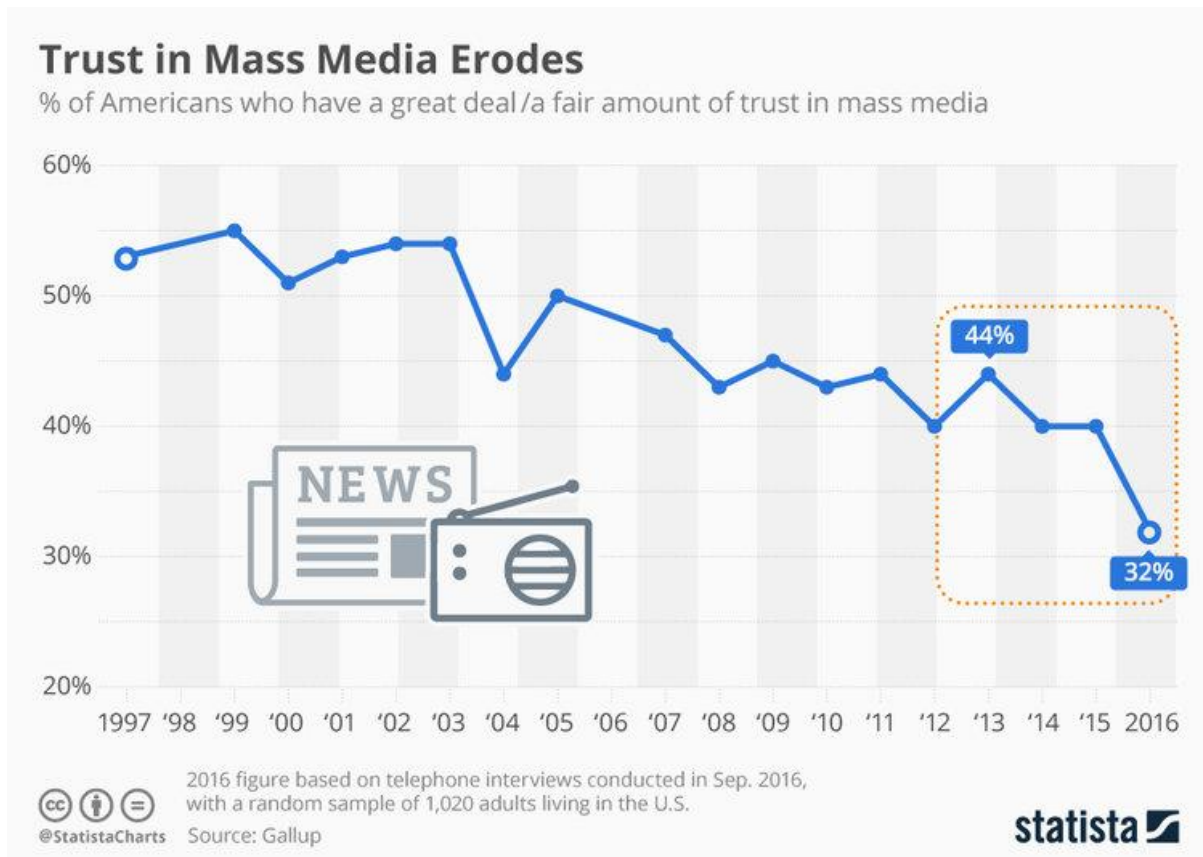
¹⁰⁹ <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/investigators-recommend-charge-for-teen-pepper-sprayed-at-donald-trump-rally>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYYeNfxFfs4&t=4s>

¹¹¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/08/russiagate-wasnt-a-hoax/615373/>

¹¹² <https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/>

Journalism Today

Figure 2.¹¹³

The current state of Journalism is not a pretty one. Since the nineties, the trust has more or less been eroded, as Figure 2 suggests. According to this graph, the record low was in 2016. The article from Publicitics argues that the reason for the drop is due to the millennial generation, who distrust the media.¹¹⁴ Millennials would be an easy answer, but the most significant factor for distrust is that the media has evolved towards an unreliable organization. Indeed, most news consumers do not criticize the mainstream press; however, with the crisis that the media experience, comes from an audience who have several reasons to be sceptical to the mainstream media. This section of the chapter will focus on today's media tactics and formulas of reporting.

One of the reporters who challenged and questioned today's press in the U.S is Matt Taibbi (from the Rolling Stone). He believed that the mainstream press had evolved into an untrustworthy machine. However, this did not happen within a day. Taibbi believed that the

¹¹³ <http://www.publicitics.com/news-insights/2016/12/20/trendlines-2017-trust-and-reputation>

¹¹⁴ <http://www.publicitics.com/news-insights/2016/12/20/trendlines-2017-trust-and-reputation>

roots could be connected to the media's ethics of what a story should be. Taibbi introduces the tactics of the press called *flak*, *worthy* and *unworthy*. These terms came from the book called *Manufacturing Consent* by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky. An understanding of Herman and Chomsky work on this subject will lead to a better appreciation of Taibbi's viewpoint and hence journalism today. Herman and Chomsky brought the five "filters" to light via a media propaganda model. The tactics and the terms are similar to today's methods from the press. It is essential to understand them because the grouping of factions in the press (whom they support or not) has changed compared to the eighties. The first was profit and ownership, a capital powerhouse that wants to grow. The second was advertising. The third was about where the sources originated. Herman and Chomsky brought forward evidence that the sources could be corrupted and in 1986 statistics showed that 54% of the sources were from former or current (at that time) government officials. The authors wrote: "*Because of their services, continuous contact on the beat, and mutual dependency, the powerful can use personal relationships, threats, and rewards to further influence and coerce the media. The media may feel obligated to carry extremely dubious stories and mute criticism in order not to offend their sources and disturb a close relationship.*" In other words, the politicians had way too much power over the press. Moreover, the press was afraid to challenge their sources.¹¹⁵

The fourth filter was "flak," action against the media, either from the powerful or the people. Flak had a function of watching over the media and controlling it through TV programs and other media. The last filter was using an ideology or a political "Party" as an evil counterpart that must be stopped; in other words, an enemy. Such as the communists in the eighties were considered as the enemy. Anything related to communism was criticized and attacked. If the Soviet Union did something terrible, the American press would sell the news of the common enemy like gold.¹¹⁶

Herman and Chomsky mentioned the definitions of *worthy* and *unworthy* news. Worthy news was news about foreign countries that were natural enemies or not client states of the U.S. These countries were either in a war directly or indirectly with the U.S. Such as the Iraq war in the early nineties, which got colossal coverage, or other countries that did wrongdoing. Whereas, countries that were allies or client states with the U.S who did scary things was unworthy news. Such as in Indonesia in 1999, that used violence against East Timor, who

¹¹⁵ Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*. p.2, 18-25

¹¹⁶ Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*. p.26-30

wanted independence from Indonesia.¹¹⁷ These tactics are used by the press today. The press reports more damaging content on people or groups that are against their beliefs. At the same time, they were ignoring bad stories on the people who support the ideology of the press. The mainstream news has become an internal battle for groups (more on that below). Taibbi agrees with this, and he has used some of Herman and Chomsky's definitions.

Hate Inc is one of the best books that elucidate the problems of the press today. This book from Taibbi provides a clear explanation of how the media changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union (the common enemy). Taibbi states that the media eventually changed into: “*Instead of targeting the broad mean, they were now narrowly hunting demographics We sold anger, and we did it mainly by feeding audiences what they wanted to hear. Mostly, this involved cranking out stories about people our viewers loved to hate.*” Most of the mainstream media became almost like a sport, divided into teams (mostly two teams). With the revolution of the Internet, almost anyone could get news about things they disliked. The Faction Press leaned either left or right, and gradually became more hostile than ever towards each other. Conflict sells; this is the new marketing device, including a lot of Fake News. Objectivity in the press has become non-existing, and now the people have to choose sides (in mainstream media) in order to get information.¹¹⁸ Hence, many people have lost trust in the media and hence the crisis.

Taibbi also pondered on the question many journalists ask: “*Why do they hate us?.... Everyone hates the media. Nobody in the media seems to understand why.*” Taibbi wrote that the fiasco of the press was a result of the failed attempts at introspection and the tactics that Herman and Chomsky mentioned. Primarily when the press used Donald Trump as the number one enemy, after he made the media the enemy first.¹¹⁹ Marking Trump as a common enemy (the fifth filter) worked, to an extent. He was the polar opposite approach compared to the two former Presidents in office. The press presented a candidate who liked beer so that the people could think they could have a cold one with the new President and sound down to earth (both George Bush and Barack Obama did this). Taibbi called this a beauty contest, and then Trump emerged like a bull and destroyed the setup the press has created. Trump's tactics were Nixon's and the media's dream, an all-out attack on the press. Calling out the press as “*the enemy of the people,*” Trump gained the support of people who did not trust the press. It

¹¹⁷ Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*. p.xix-xxiv

¹¹⁸ Taibbi, *Hate Inc*. p.14-21

¹¹⁹ Taibbi, *Hate Inc*. p.23-28

resulted in an opportunity for the press, with no hesitation they gained more attention and power, a common enemy and support from other politicians, using the five filters.¹²⁰

Furthermore, of course, Trump popularized the concept of Fake News. On one level, the press loved this, since it resulted in more clicks. At first, Trump was presented as a joker by the press, but by the time he won the Republican nomination, the tune had changed. Then, the press became apprehensive of what would happen if Trump won. The problem, according to Taibbi, was that the press rather than ridiculing and attacking Trump should have fact-checked him and given context to what he said instead. However, a hot-selling story sold more for journalists, and conflict was the key ingredient.¹²¹

Taibbi mentioned a New York Times reporter named Jim Rutenberg who regarded Trump as: “*throw out the textbook American journalism has been using for the better part of the past half-century and approach Trump in a way you've never approached anything in your career.*” A very radical change is needed according to Rutenberg, bolstered by a redefinition of “*fairness, fact and truth.*” In other words, take away objectivity completely, because Trump was evil in the journalist's eyes. Including the tactic of: bring him down by any means necessary. The irony was that the press already used Rutenberg's ideas towards Trump. Before Rutenberg presented his point of view in the late summer of 2016, the press itself did not have an answer for a change of approach. The left-leaning press treated the election in 2016 as a War; a War the press fought even after Trump's victory.¹²²

Before and beginning of the Presidency of Trump, Alternative Media got labelled as Fake News. Dave Lindorff was one of them. As a freelancer, he wrote about the fact that a passenger aeroplane was shot down with a missile by either Ukraine or Russia in 2016. Lindorff gave evidence that both countries had the same type of missiles. Furthermore, the investigations that were taken were not valid, because they assumed it was Russia's fault since the missile weapon Buk was created in Russia. However, with the rise of Trump, Trump labelled the mainstream media as Fake News and affected the viewpoint on all media.¹²³

The most crucial factor that news is untrustworthy today, according to Taibbi, is due to biased faction press. The same tactics formerly used against Trump are today used on

¹²⁰ Taibbi, *Hate Inc.* p.23-28

¹²¹ Taibbi, *Hate Inc.* p.23-28, 38

¹²² Taibbi, *Hate Inc.* p.29-31

¹²³ <https://www.salon.com/2017/11/06/the-attack-on-fake-news-is-really-an-attack-on-alternative-media/>

anything that disagrees with the demography or ideology, from the news organization that reports on an event, case or person. Today it is much more mass-produced. Hate and anger are always on the menu from the mainstream news (also partisan Alternative Media). One side blaming the other, calling each other names: left or right, democrats or republicans, nothing in between. Organizations are almost untouchables because they control much income. There are no rules on writing against the “enemy,” everything is allowed. Fake News is only a part of Pack Journalism today, which is Faction Press/corporate mainstream media. Taibbi wrote that even though that is how the media works, it is not that way they want to operate, because they are not allowed to write about the truth or to be factual. Being honest does not sell.¹²⁴

Taibbi was not alone on this view about the press. Tim Pool also held a similar opinion. Pool agreed that journalists do not want to report in a Fake News/Faction press manner. However, today's journalists are gaining employment in the press media because of their ideological viewpoints, rather than experience or quality of work. Why? Because the press wants to generate money. If a journalist was right-leaning, then Fox News could scoop him or her up. The division sold (and still does), and Pool agreed with Taibbi on that matter. If a reader were biased to the right side, the more likely that reader would click on a story made from the journalist Fox News hired. Also, Pool mentioned that on YouTube: “*Liberals don't tend to search for news topics that have to do with the economy, refugees or foreign policy. They tend to search for social issues.*” Different demographics, different issues. The same goes for age groups; young people are usually considered liberals. Hence, the papers hired young people for organizations leaning left. When a media organization recruits more people from particular demography, they get more advertisements and more money.¹²⁵

Pool, had experience in different news organizations such as Fusion, said that the purpose of working there was: “*we're here to make money, we're not here to actually tell the truth.*” Facts and hard news did not sell, and few would fact check the sources. Over 90 per cent of the news about Trump were (and is) hostile, as Taibbi affirms, it sells. Pool mentioned an article from John Solomon, working for The Hill.¹²⁶ The article was titled: “*The greatest threat to American journalism: the loss of neutral reporting.*” Solomon wrote: “*one I fear is being denigrated by journalists who substitute opinion for facts and emotion for*

¹²⁴ Taibbi, *Hate Inc.* p. 41-74

¹²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYXeNfxFfs4&t=744s>

¹²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmlPmzuyEKA>

dispassion.... We have become too full of our own opinions, too enthralled with our own celebrity, too emotionally offended by warranted and unwarranted criticism, and to astray from neutral, factual voice out teachers in journalism school insisted we practice.”¹²⁷

Solomon agreed that opinions are dominating journalism and the Faction press consisted of opinion reporting. When journalists deviate from facts and focus on what they consider harmful, the press has thus, failed to inform the readers. Pool agreed with Solomon. The readers do not get an answer or a possible solution for an event or problem from a journalist. Pool argues that there are two types of journalists in mainstream media. The first group consists of those that are entirely uninvolved press, who do not give a full view of a story because they have no information on what is going on. Furthermore, the second consists of those who think they are the heroes in their story, believe they are writing the truth, while at the same time lying. Reporters today do not sort out the truth from the information they receive. They do not apply reason and logic to explain what is happening.¹²⁸ Hence, there are plenty of issues that have created the crisis of the mainstream media, and why many people do not believe it anymore.

Since Fake News, Faction press and opinion reporting are all interlinked, using underhanded methods, they can be inferred as Fake News, which is the Pack Journalism of today. As an example, Russiagate illustrates how wrong the Fake News journalist operates. Taibbi found out that in the summer of 2016, nine media organizations were reporting the Russiagate case, with no proof. The primary source was Christopher Steele aka Steele dossier, a former British spy who was funded by the Democratic National Committee. Steele’s ridiculous claims were that lawyers and other people in the Trump administration had contact with Russian intelligence. The meetings were held in Prague, and that blackmail was used as a tool to keep Trump as a puppet of Vladimir Putin. What kind of blackmail did Steele claim? That Trump indulged watching Golden showers (urinating shows) on prostitutes (this sounds like fiction). Hence, with Trump as their puppet, Russian intelligence was afforded access to hack the U.S system and influence the election. However, the mainstream media did not report all the information; the only thing that was worth reporting was the blackmail (not the detail) and Russian interference. The result of this was that Russiagate became the predominant story for the last four years. Newspapers started to write about the details of Trump's urination “fetish.” Taibbi noticed in BuzzFeed’s writing that they

¹²⁷ <https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/417921-the-greatest-threat-to-american-journalism-the-loss-of-neutral-reporting>

¹²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmlPmzuyEKA>

wrote the story like a “*fourth-rate suspense fiction*.”¹²⁹ Pool argued that CNN and MSNBC still reported on Russiagate until 2019 like a show of fiction, with no proof. The problem with the whole story was the plethora of opinion pieces, fake sources and no evidence, which created a mass confusion of Russiagate. It was a scam according to Pool, and in 2020 the media admitted that there was no Russiagate.¹³⁰ On October 10 2020, The New York Post and other media reported that Russiagate was created by the Obama administration, to destroy Trump's election in 2016. Furthermore, Obama's team used this “scandal” to give the media fuel to go against Trump with no evidence, except for Steele as a source.¹³¹ The problems mentioned above are enough proof that there is a crisis within most mainstream media. Hence, this has led to an alternative media that is growing more and more, as a response to the crisis.

¹²⁹ Taibbi, *Hate Inc.* p.233-239

¹³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whIoWyWCYzE&list=WL&index=174>

¹³¹ <https://nypost.com/2020/10/10/latest-revelations-show-team-obama-invented-russiagate-scandal/>

Alternative media, the antidote on Fake News?

Alternative media have become more significant because of the emergence of new platforms on the Internet and less trust in mainstream media. Alternative media, by definition, is a press that is not mainstream, has different ethics and values for how journalism should be reported. Some alternative media are biased, just like most mainstream media, and some are unbiased.¹³²

Platforms like YouTube have given people like Steven Crowder and Ben Shapiro a place to report news or evaluate it. However, there is one independent journalist who reports and analyzes news continuously, Tim Pool. The reason he is chosen to be the primary example is not that other journalists or social/political commentators are bad in reporting or being logical. It is because of Pool's experience (Pool knows how the media works). Also, Pool can be the closest thing to an antidote for mainstream media/Fake News, and possibly the future of media formats. Pool became known in 2011, through the Occupy Wall Street protests. The protests were against economic inequality. When thousands of protesters turned up, Pool used his phone and drone to record the protests and other events. Pool was a Mobile Journalist, among the crowd of protesters. Pool filmed what he could, while also talking to his audience (who also helped him, with locations and places to record) and people at the events.¹³³ Eventually, Pool joined up with Vice and then Fusion where he recorded videos, travelling around the world to be at the events and get the best coverage possible.¹³⁴

In 2015 he became an independent journalist again, which he still is on YouTube, with his daily twenty-minute news brief, *Tim Pool*. This time, however, Pool did not do as much groundwork compared to before, where he had more political commentary and news analysis. The setup on YouTube is pretty simple. Pool records a video of himself and the story he is going to talk about, either it is a breaking story or a commentary on a story (like criticism on media or a politician). In his main channel *Tim Pool*, he tries to use reliable sources and double-checks them (remaining objective most of the time). In order to get the story out as honest and factual as possible. The channel has over one million subscribers.¹³⁵

Meanwhile, the second channel of Pool called *Timcast*, is more opinion-based. However, he tries to be logical and reasonable with the sources he has. Pool never tries to mix up

¹³² <https://www.definitions.net/definition/alternative+media>

¹³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkKd9wawhRU>

¹³⁴ <https://www.timcast.com/about>

¹³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/user/Timcasts>

opinions with facts, on both channels, compared to Fake News. Pool also includes political and social commentary.¹³⁶ This channel has over one million subscribers.¹³⁷ The third channel of Pool *Timcast IRL*, is a podcast with many news topics.¹³⁸

Let us use one video from *Tim Pool* to analyze Pool's reporting. Pool made a video on the most recent news on Russiagate (in September 2020) with the title: *FBI Agent "Trump Was Right," New Documents EXPOSE FBI FRAMING Trump and Flynn, Russiagate Was A HOAX*. Pool starts by showing a tweet from President Trump in January 2017, that the case of "Russian hacking" of the election was delayed to build a case from the FBI. Pool mentioned that everyone who hated Trump had a similar reaction: "That he was working for the Russians." Pool's start was to show how this story was three years ago, and how some people used the story to smear Trump. Furthermore, providing context to how wrong mainstream was, as new information has been given to the media. Pool reveals an article from Newsweek, which said texts prove that Trump was correct, that the FBI scrambled to assemble evidence. Pool admits that it was difficult to put all the knowledge about this case in a video for twenty to thirty minutes. Including a linked case with Russiagate, Obamagate, where Obama was a part of creating Russiagate (as mentioned above). Pool argues that this was shocking news, he said: "They had no case against Trump, yet we went through years of Russiagate nonsense." Pool continued by showing several news stories from Fox News, Just the News, Twitter. A tweet, from a journalist from CBS Catherine Herridge, brought evidence that the primary sub source of Russiagate (Christopher Steele) was a "possible national security threat." The FBI had this information at least since December 2016 before Russiagate became big news in January 2017. Pool said that the FBI knew they had wrong information, they had an agenda to get Trump: "They were pushing fringe conspiracy theories."¹³⁹

Furthermore, Pool pulls up the article from Just the News, where FBI analysts bought insurance, because of the inaccurate story of Russiagate. Pool said this was treason, as Trump also suggested. Pool went further with the question: "Where's the New York Times, where's the ground breaking shatter storm?" Valid questions for the mainstream media. The proof of Fake News was evident, but the press have not till this day taken any responsibility for their mistakes as Pool pointed out. Pool continued, speculating that Trump might obtain fraudulent

¹³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmlPmzuyEKA>

¹³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe02lGc0-ahAURWuxAJnjdA>

¹³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLwNTXWEjVd2qIHLcXxQWxA>

¹³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI8wsTLnIq0>

information about the Obama administration and reveal it, creating an “*October surprise.*”

¹⁴⁰The videos from Pool starts by bringing forward briefly the topics and articles to discuss. Also, he criticizes and comments on politicians or the media very briefly during the start of the videos, distinguishing if something is illogical or ridiculous. One important note, while the mainstream media has censored much of this information by omission, the investigation of Russiagate continues. Both Attorney General William Barr and Connecticut U.S. Attorney John Durham are on the case.¹⁴¹ So far the former FBI lawyer Kevin Clinesmith has pleaded guilty.¹⁴²

However, some information about the former administration had been revealed, where Pool comments that Obama and his top officials including Joe Biden, tried to frame Michael Flynn. Flynn, who was the National Security Advisor for Trump for briefly three weeks, and resigned because of the Russiagate story, because he had talks with the Russian ambassador in the United States. The media speculated and framed Flynn as one of the Russian connections for the interference of the 2016 election. On this, Pool said: “*We're in serious trouble as a country,*” at the same time he showed his concern and thoughts of the current state of America (political violence, the new mail-in ballots for the election, civil war and social media lying to people). Before hitting the five-minute mark on the recorded video, Pool said, a three-hour documentary of this story would be better. Within five minutes, Pool had mentioned a lot about the Russiagate story and showed some of his thoughts. Including that most mainstream media except for right-leaning do not report this story. Also, Pool showed an article from Politico that downplayed the new information as an example that showed the difference.¹⁴³

The next section of the video from Pool, was to go through some of the articles mentioned in-depth, and he started with the Newsweek article. The article consists of new revelations of what happened at the FBI before Russiagate became a big story, that the FBI tried as hard as possible to find and scramble evidence to hurt Trump's presidency. He made this comment: “*Some of these people wanted a Clinton administration, tell me how that's not a coup attempt.*” The Newsweek story consisted of the information that the FBI analysts bought insurance as mentioned above, and that according to the Obama administration, they did not

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI8wsTLnIq0>

¹⁴¹ <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-donald-trump-voting-fraud-and-irregularities-elections-archive-bb887a6d591b4532627e9a23a401d418>

¹⁴² <https://apnews.com/article/597c27d6642dcedae79838fa6cf5497a>

¹⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI8wsTLnIq0>

interfere with the FBI. Russiagate may have been a weapon created to stop Trump from firing certain FBI officials according to Pool. Furthermore, Flynn, who got a lot of the blame, said he was guilty because the FBI threatened his son. Besides, Pool mentioned that due to the connection between Flynn and the Russian ambassador, Flynn called the Russian ambassador not to escalate tensions between Russia and the U.S.¹⁴⁴ Pool then included his thoughts, fears and criticism, which was the Democrats and their power of the press (Fake News). However, Pool shows his logical and speculating mind, where he provides the viewer with an answer, why Russiagate is crucial for the media and why this video is essential (showing the viewer the truth).

The video continued, and from the thirteenth-minute, Pool discussed the “dirty” tactics (Fake News) from the democrats on the media with Russiagate. That even in recent months, democrats were still using the Russia card, and that there was a Russian “collusion” with Trump. Then, Pool continued with the “new” Fake News on Trump, that Trump was declaring that the troops (American soldiers) were terrible, that demographic was bad and so on. Pool argued: *“Trump is a lot of things, but they've turned him into a cartoon villain. You see the problem is they've started believing their own lies about him.”*¹⁴⁵

Pool concluded that the media would make more and more extreme news about Trump, to keep Trump relevant, and gaining more clicks and attention. Because the left-leaning mainstream media thought that Trump was the worst of the worst. Pool said that people would believe this news to be fake, similar to the troops' story. The video continued with Pool discussing the tweet from Herridge mentioned above, that the Steele dossier was both propaganda and Fake News, with the further confirmation. Then Pool asked essential questions: *“What are we supposed to do about this? How are we supposed to get this resolved? How are we supposed to challenge the lies? I can talk about it and I can't even scratch the surface on how deep this goes. But I don't know what a regular person can do.”* Pool furthermore, brought forward the Trump campaign statement on Russiagate, which states everything mentioned above. Pool continued his criticism of mainstream media: *“When I see this news it is a shock to my core. And then you want me to believe all of these mainstream media articles claiming Trump did that you know did this did that. Why should I believe you now? The Mueller probe fell apart, it was Fake News and you want me to believe*

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI8wsTLnIq0>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI8wsTLnIq0>

all the smears you put forward Trump? I'm not buying it."¹⁴⁶ This section of the video was mostly a criticism of the media, and how certain politicians (democrats) used the media. Pool continued how brutal justice and honesty can be shown to the people from the media and politicians tactics. In other words, social and political commentary.

The last section of the video, from the twentieth minute, Pool commented on a mail-in voting, current state politically and socially in the U.S and a summary of the whole video. The video from Pool showed facts about Russiagate and his perception of the story. He was not afraid of expressing his opinions nor arguing the context of the story. With the format in video, the viewer can observe Pool while talking about Russiagate; thus, his emotions, speaking genuinely or not. The video format on YouTube gives the viewer a much more reflecting way to see the reporter and the case compared to an article. A journalist can write and not show all of the emotions or tactics on paper. However, the limitations with Pool's reporting are that he no longer attends the events anymore, and sometimes he can be preachy with his subjective speculation and thoughts. With that in mind, is alternative media or more precisely Pool's reporting the journalistic solution that people need today? Perhaps, Pool's format has not existed too long for it to create a significant effect on the press yet. There is undoubtedly a need for a reform of journalism today, because of the current state of the media. In the sixties and seventies, the lousy wolf (Pack Journalism) of journalism was Objective Journalism. Today it is Fake News. A contrast and comparison of the different formulas of journalism from the past compared to today's journalism, including Thompsons, will possibly provide a resolution. However, before that, an evaluation of the role and power that Fake News and Alternative Media will be presented.

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI8wsTLnIq0>

Fake News and Alternative Media and their role/power

The role that the press has today is extraordinary and wrong in relation to the former ethics that the press exhibited. Most of the fourth estate and Fake News today do not follow the Laws that Tom Wicker wrote about (as mentioned in the first chapter). The First Law, which was that the press reflected on the local community. If so, the local communities around the U.S are barely honest with each other (hopefully this is wrong). The Second Law was that reporters had responsibility for creating guidelines for themselves and showing the truth of the story, in order not to create misinformation. The last Law was “*be neither in or out,*” where the main goal was not to be in bed with the sources, politicians or anyone else. So that a reporter would not be influenced by the people he covered, nor being so much out that they cannot even report a story. The Laws were created to keep mainstream news out of a crisis such as the one they are facing today, and until these Laws/basics are restored, there will be no solution.

Fake News, as defined by Taibbi, goes against all of the Laws, particularly on the second and the third Law. There are no guidelines in Fake News. Except that they cannot write harmful stories about the politicians, celebrities, CEOs, ideologists and people who support their narrative. The rest are fair game to break any rules that mainstream media have ever had, including an objective point of view. The result, as Wicker mentioned, is misinformation, which has created confusion and trust issues towards the press as a whole. Also, the Fake News reporters are in bed with the people they cannot criticize; they need them for their plot (just as Faction Press does). Moreover, for their support and examples as the “good” bunch. The result is that Fake News is ruining all journalism.

With Alternative Media, the variation can be different, as, with Pool, he has guidelines. As written above, he tries to be objective as possible; he is honest and tries to be reasonable and logical. Pool never tries to give misinformation, even if he dislikes the politician that he covers. Hence, the growth of his YouTube channel; people want honest reporting with useful guidelines. Pool does not mingle with the people who support Fake News; he is somewhat more out instead of in. However, he can get into the story because of today's technology.

Fake News and Alternative News vs. other formulas

Fake News and Alternative Media vs. Objective Journalism

In contrast to the other chapters, this analysis of the formulas from the former chapters shall use one story, Russiagate. At the start of each formula, the Russiagate story will be approached by a reporter with the formula that will be compared with mainstream's "Fake News" and the Alternative Media. Afterwards, the objective is to see if the formulas from the other chapters can add some good (or better) methods to the formulas of Fake News and Alternative Media. In order to answer what formula can give journalism a solution. With comparing and contrasting the different formulas. Before jumping into Objective Journalism, some information on what has happened with Objective Journalism.

Objective Journalism has become nostalgic in recent history. Journalists, professors and people who trusted the news before, crave for objectivity in the media. Matthew Pressman is an example. As a professor at Seton Hall University, he authored the book *On Press: The Liberal Values that Shaped the News*. The book itself consists of the positives and the negatives of Objective Journalism since the sixties and seventies. Pressman argued that there was a growing dislike for Objective Journalism as far back as fifty to sixty years ago, and now the mainstream press has lost this formula. Pressman affirmed that there was (and is) a need for Objective Journalism to come back to the media. Because subjective or more precise Faction Journalism (Faction Press) have damaged the reputation of the media.¹⁴⁷ As discussed in previous chapters, Objective Journalism has been criticized by Thompson, Wicker, Crouse and others. I will show that Objective Journalism can have its uses.

If a reporter wrote the Russiagate story in 2016 and 2020 with the formula of Objective Journalism, the story would consist of the five W's (Where, What, Who, When and Why). However, this reporter would also include both sides of the story, both the FBI/Mueller/Steele side and the Flynn/Trump side. As an example, the reporter would write the whole Steele dossier, just like Fake News (eventually did). However, the reporter would include what the other side reported or provided proof against the dossier. No speculation or picking sides would be included in the story.

If we compare/contrast it to Fake News, there would be no worthy news. Neither would it be an opinion piece, Propaganda, with significant omissions, fake sources or a lack of proper

¹⁴⁷ Pressman, *On Press*. p.220-221, 240-241, 247-252

sources, nor misinformation or all of the methods. Because all Fake News methods have one thing in common, they are selective toward a particular political end. Would Objective Journalism then be the best solution and formula for today's issues of the untrustworthy press? The result would be a temporary fix, going back to the sixties and seventies, facing the same issues they had, with no solution that could fix the media. As presented in the first chapter, Objective Journalism had flaws, with no opinion or evaluation/speculation of the news and passive reporting.

Comparing Objective Journalism to Alternative Media is a different matter. My exemplar, Tim Pool, tries to be as objective as possible when covering a story. Pool employs the five W's in his videos but also goes much deeper into the known facts about the story. For instance, Why did the FBI scramble inadequate information to prosecute Trump with Russiagate? According to Pool, it was to hurt the Trump administration in order to keep their jobs or to create a coup. A reporter with the tools of Objective Journalism could not bring forward all the details or provide answers such as Pool did. There are two reasons for this; firstly, there would not be enough space to write this in an article (unless the reporter has unlimited pages to write this). Secondly, the formula lowers/reduces the ability to give an honest answer or additional information like speculation. So with that in mind, could Objective Journalism help Alternative Media become a fully-fledged model of journalism? Yes, for Alternative Media that is not objective, but Pool uses both subjective and objective methods. Objective Journalism can help Pool's formula to be a little less subjective. Nevertheless, Objective Journalism, mixed with Alternative Media, is not enough to create a journalistic solution.

Fake News and Alternative Media vs. Investigative Journalism

How would an investigative reporter cover the Russiagate story? Look no further than to Matt Taibbi. As mentioned above, Taibbi found out that the story itself was nonsense, that there was no evidence, and there had not been any crimes committed by the Trump administration. If it were a different investigative reporter with the pure formula of Investigative Journalism, the reporter would follow these leads. First, travel and dig up some information on where the events of Russiagate took place. The Steele dossier mentioned Prague; thus, the reporter would have to find sources and proof in the Czech Republic (finding witnesses such as the “prostitutes” that joined Trump’s Golden shower) and find out if there was a meeting as reported by Steele. Then, perhaps even travel to Moscow, and ask some officials or people connected as “Russian agents” to get more sources and information in order to connect the purported links. Third, the reporter would get in touch with Steele, Trump, Mueller, Flynn, Obama, Biden and the FBI, to question them about the case, and gather more information. Moreover, in the end, or at the same time, confront all of the people/organizations mentioned above with evidence. With all the information gathered, the reporter can find new links, possible answers and more sources to dig up before giving the full story to the people in their respective papers.

Fake News reporting does not use the pure formula of Investigative Journalism. A mainstream reporter during the Trump era typically investigates only one part of the story. For instance, the reporter could just focus on the Steele dossier, and not mention the Mueller report that had no proof, and write a misleading and worthy article on Russiagate. Alternatively, even worse, a Fake News reporter could create a fake investigation with fake sources and report a story as Investigative Journalism (which corroborates many details of the fabricated Russiagate story). The illusion of investigative reporting is the only feature that the Fake News formula has in common with Investigative Journalism. Fake News reporters can fabricate what they do, writing that they travelled and investigated, such as the Trump/soldiers story.¹⁴⁸ Is Investigative Journalism enough to make the media today reliable? No, the formula alone does not have the power to take away or replace Fake News. However, Investigative Journalism is a formula that should (and hopefully will) always be around, because it is needed to find the truth, to solve stories such as Russiagate.

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.foxnews.com/media/anonymous-sources-atlantic-donald-trump>

With Alternative Media, Investigative Journalism can have similar methods to find information about a story. Pool, as mentioned above, has a history of doing some investigating, or at least being at certain events or places to find out the truth and undertake some digging. Such as with his breakthrough with the Occupy Wall Street and finding out if Malmo, Sweden was an unsafe place to live in.¹⁴⁹ In that matter, Alternative Media does have investigative methods. Including journalist Andy Ngo for *The PostMillennial*, as he investigates several cases in Portland, Oregon, such as identifying Antifa rioters.¹⁵⁰ With regards to Pool's video recordings today, the only investigative tools he uses are scrutinising multiple sources. Also, confronting people in his video, who are guilty of illegal activities. However, that is where the similarities between the two formulas end, at least with Pools reporting today. For instance, Pool does not travel to as he previously did, nor investigate the way he did. Pool is limited compared to this formula; however, he can always re-establish his prior approach and use the Investigative Journalism formula. Hence, the formula of Investigative Journalism already exists in some Alternative Media, and the two formulas can indeed co-exist. Nevertheless, the formulas combined are not enough to create a solution.

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pochreLwrQs>

¹⁵⁰ <https://thepostmillennial.com/realtor-son-of-former-democrat-lawmaker-antifa-firebombing>

Fake News and Alternative Media vs. Column Journalism

Column Journalism is very alike with Fake News. With Russiagate, the column reporter would speculate and have the freedom to provide information and ideas in an article. Since Russiagate went on for four years, the new information and disinformation the reporter would update the story gradually. At the beginning of 2016, the reporter would speculate Trump's role with the Russians officials, bringing forward the Steele dossier, facts, opinions and ideas on the story. New content such as Flynn's "involvement" and the Mueller report would give more overview for the reporter. However, if the reporter were loyal to the formula of Column Journalism, there would be many corrections. If the reporter had ideas and articles that supported the mainstream view, he or she would have to "*set the record straight*" as Wicker wrote. In the end, the story would conclude that Russiagate was a misleading story to hurt Trump's administration and why Russiagate was a misleading story.

Column Journalism formula is the honest version of Fake News. Fake News reporters and columnists alike write stories with ideas and opinions. The methods are similar to speculation with subjectivity. Except that, Fake News journalists use fabricated and misleading news that are suitable for them to injure or defend whomever they wish to damage or support respectively. Today, the mainstream press would not correct themselves or acknowledge their errors. A column reporter who is true to his/her formula/honour would keep the code (including the Law of Journalism). Does the Column Journalism formula provide a possible solution for today's press? Not entirely, there are also similar limitations to both Fake News and Column Journalism. That reporters that use the formulas mentioned do not dig at the events or places for information compared to some of the other formulas (such as Investigative Journalism).

On the other hand, Alternative Media utilises elements of Column Journalism often (except alternative reporters who only use investigative methods). Some of the Alternative Media, such as Pool, have a very similar approach. Pool's videos all contain some opinions and speculation just like Column Journalism. Both methods do not fabricate stories, but they can comment and reveal fabricated stories. Pool's format might even be branded as today's column videos, with more room to bring forward information. Both have similar ethics, except Pool tries to introduce objectivity. Both formulas have similar limitations like Fake News, with the lack of investigating stories themselves. Since both Pool's and Column Journalism have the same weaknesses and strengths, they do not make each other stronger nor affect full solutions for the press.

Fake News and Alternative News vs. Thompsons New Journalism

If Thompson was alive and at his prime and alive today, and he covered the Russiagate story with his New Journalism formula. The result would be a fascinating and well-written story that people would believe. Thompson would have spent time travelling and engaging with Steele, Flynn, Obama, Trump, Biden, Mueller, The FBI and other journalists/officials if he had permission to do so. Thompson would probably even drink with them, but mainly describe them and probably create a book on Russiagate. Illuminating on how every person behaved, acted and spoke. Perhaps, Thompson could find out what Trump's dreams were, and Obama's beliefs. This context would be one of the novelistic devices derived from the New Journalism formula.

Moreover, if Thompson employed a similar approach as with Nixon, he could find out who was the “hyena” in Russiagate, whom to blame, and expose the real crook/s in the story. The next novelistic device used by Thompson would be a first-person point of view. Thompson's comment on his feelings and views on Russiagate. He could write how confusing the story was, how ridiculous the Mueller report was (like Thompson did with the Lynch report in chapter two). Including how ridiculous the mainstream media reporting was on Russiagate. Thompson's viewpoint would include how his relations were with the people involved. He could have presented the good or bad qualities, Flynn or Mueller. Thompson most importantly would be honest about everything he saw, heard and thought.

The third novelistic device from Thompson, full dialogue, would have given Russiagate a new insight about the people who were involved. As an example, Thompson could have used quotes and conversations from Biden, including how the FBI, Trump and Obama spoke of Thompson. Full dialogue would not be overused, but it would give a good description of Russiagate, and the players involved. The last novelistic device, scene to scene, would not be implied. However, he would mention one-time events and information relevant to the story. With these devices, Thompson would create the Russiagate story as a novel with appropriate content. Furthermore, with Thompson's skills as a writer, it would transform the story into an excellent piece for the reader on how the media and politicians operate. Nevertheless, Thompson would be honest, exposing the truth, without taking sides with Trump or Obama, thus, holding to Wicker's second and third law.

Comparing New Journalism with the mainstream Fake News have few similarities. The two standard features exhibited is how they describe characters or people and subjectivity. Thompson used, for instance, many bad words to describe Nixon, both factual and drawing

from his feelings. The Fake News mainstream media however have taken that method to the extreme, with no filters, calling Trump every bad name in the book.¹⁵¹ Other than that, the formulas contrast in almost every way, from ethics/rules to the form of writing. If the two formulas are so different, would that make New Journalism a possible solution for today's media/problems? Yes, it could. The reasons New Journalism could create a solution are trust and hard news. As seen above, the lack of trust in the media is enormous. If journalists were to create materials with the New Journalism formula, this would change. Not only will trust be restored, but the quality of reporting will also improve as well. Reporters would have the ability to do more leg-work and explore the truth of the story much more closely than from a PC or mobile device. As a result, fewer sources from different media outlets would be irrelevant, as a reporter could have direct interaction with their sources. Also, the writing would be much better, written like a novel, but with the truth.

Alternative Media would gain many benefits from New Journalism. Furthermore, some of the methods are already employed by journalists such as Pool. The videos from Pool have much first-person point of view, as he argues (mostly) or agrees with newsworthy events. Also, sometimes Pool is part of the story he is reporting.¹⁵² However, by using a video format Pool no longer covers events physically as in contrast with his former approach. Could Pool's journalism be transformed into a mix with New Journalism in order to create a revolution? Possibly, if the novelistic devices from New Journalism could be incorporated into Pool videos. A combination as such could create a new formula in journalism, if not new methods. Nevertheless, there is an inherent risk of becoming boring, such as hard news often does. The theory cannot be proven here, but putting into practice; could engender something suitable.

¹⁵¹ Taibbi, *Hate Inc.* p.30

¹⁵² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiDhREPO8LQ&list=WL&index=233>

Fake News and Alternative News vs. Gonzo Journalism

What would Thompson call Russiagate? A hoax, a rumour or a lie? Probably all, and possibly a funny word like “Fakegate”. With the use of Gonzo Journalism, Thompson would go on to create gold out of the story, by including fiction, truth and satire. With the skills obtained from writing, New Journalism, Gonzos bizarreness and methods, he would begin the story with the Steele dossier. He would write with Gonzo style as if he was with Trump in Prague (at the peeing orgy). Including Trump (or Biden) as his companion in the story. Where either Trump, Thompson or both screw-up. Thompson would have written a hint that the story was made up. At the same time, he would be ridiculing Steele, Mueller, all the politicians, the media and the FBI. There would be no limit or lack of imagination on the extent to which Thompson could have reached with Russiagate. The subjective reporting would be almost like a nuclear bomb, shooting at all the players in the story (just like in the *Campaign Trail*). Every dishonest person would be exposed. Since there was a lot of “fiction” already in Russiagate, Thompson would be in a similar situation as he was in 1972, surrounded by people who were greedy for power and dirty tricks. The use of oral methods would possibly be improved if Thompson used video cameras or phones to record information that could be incorporated into the story or book. Crazy stories that happened would be included, and Thompson would support the side with the people who have been wronged in Russiagate, Trump and Flynn.

As mentioned above, Gonzo Journalism is somewhat a part of Fake News. That part is satire/parody and fiction. It is intended to entertain the reader and the author. Another aspect is the manner of subjectivity or opinion; in Gonzo, this can be as extreme as Fake News. An outrage (like the article *Presenting: The Richard Nixon Doll*) from Thompsons writing on Nixon could also be applied to today's politicians, but usually, it would be for a good reason (if Obama or Trump did terrible things). The contrast between the formulas is extensive, including that Thompson puts himself and his quest for the truth/story as the main story. The other aspect is that when Thompson mentions opinions, he will use self-reflection and comment on the media as a whole. Also, he would follow Wicker's laws much more than reporters of Fake News. Can Gonzo Journalism be a cure for the media? In some ways, yes. Not the same way New Journalism can, but more for people who cannot read hard news. Gonzo Journalism which is partisan news, can present the entertainment factor as fiction, which will relieve the reader of the hard news in an article or a book. Furthermore, it is a better solution than Fake News.

Alternative Media contain some elements like jokes, parody, satire and Gonzo. Accessing Pool's reporting, it is more serious. Of course, some stories can be funny, but Pool does not use methods of Gonzo Journalism except for subjectivity. Pool can call Biden a dirty politician, and have some elements of Gonzo Journalism, including finding out the truth and respecting the Laws from Wicker. However, that is where the similarities end. Gonzo Journalism has not been created as a pure video format for news, and Pool cannot write as well as Thompson. The same can be said about fiction. Pool never tires of mixing the truth with fiction or novelistic devices. Can there be a crossover between the two formulas? Yes, since Gonzo Journalism has a very entertaining factor. Together with a similar formula as Pools, the mix can have the ability to be the right formula. Because news content usually mixed up with satire is entertaining. Furthermore, with Pool's seriousness, it can either be useful or a misstep.

Conclusion: The need for a solution

The objective of this thesis was to determine if Thompsons Gonzo Journalism or New Journalism could help solve the crisis in today's media. In some ways, yes, Gonzo Journalism could enable better news reporting than mainstream Fake News. Since much of the media, today has become a machine for mass-producing lies and Propaganda with no simple rules or guidelines. Alternative Media alone cannot change or create a solution. Hence, Gonzo Journalism can provide at least some truth amid all the Faction Press that exist today, while still entertaining the reader with comedy. The Mickey Mouse quote at the introduction is an accurate description for the present media, at least for soft news. However, New Journalism can enable the advancement of today's media. The result would be hard, real news, and a mix of journalism and novelistic methods that could give enough entertainment and engender interest for the reader. To be more precise, the media needs a solution, now more than ever. The lack of trust and paucity of facts is destroying the reputation of mainstream media. The best solution would be for the media to reinvent itself by creating a new formula instead of resorting to the past. However, for at least the past six years, very few bright lights have come forward from the press, though some have emanated from Alternative Media. If the trend continues into the future, the more urgency there would be for a solution. Suppose no reporter can find a new way out of the flawed Fake News. In that case, I believe both (mostly) New Journalism and Gonzo Journalism can offer the media the needed solution.

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