

**Analyzing the Images of the Journalist in Popular Culture:
a Unique Method of Studying the Public's Perception
of Its Journalists and the News Media**

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Abstract: By analyzing the images of the journalist in popular culture over the centuries, the researcher can offer a new perspective on the history of journalism as well as the delicate relationship between the public and its news media. The anger and lack of confidence most of the public has in the news media today is partly based on real-life examples they have seen and heard, but much of the image of the journalist is based on images burned into the public memory from movies, TV and fiction. These images of the journalist have an enormous influence on how the public perceives and judges the news media and they have a profound effect on public opinion and consequently, the public's support of the effectiveness and freedom of the news media. Many of these images come from age-old sources, long forgotten yet still relevant in the 21st century.

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PROLOGUE

The popular image of the journalist swirls between the real and the fictional without discrimination. The public memory seldom distinguishes between the actual and the non-real. Often the two are linked together. Larger-than-life fictional characters overwhelm their less vivid real-life contemporaries. Real-life journalists become so immersed in legend and distortion that their images are as surrounded by fiction as any character in a novel, film or TV program.

In different times and different places, these names were as familiar as the names of one's family:

General Assignment Reporters such as Babe Bennett, Homer Bigart, Torchy Blane, Nelly Bly, Edna Buchanan, Wally Cook, Matt Drudge, Stephen Glass, Mack Keely, Clark Kent, Hildy Johnson, Lois Lane, Breckenridge Lee, Jake Lingle, Ann Mitchell, Diz Moore, Ethel Payne, Brenda Starr, Hunter S. Thompson, Peter Warne, Tom Wolfe.

Investigative Journalists such as Malcolm Anderson, James T. Austin, Carl Bernstein, Joe Frady, Jenny Dolan, Steve Everett, Gray Grantham, John Howard Griffin, Veronica Guerin, Seymour Hersh, Carl Kolchak, Adam Lawrence, P.G. McNeal, Jonathan Neumann, Ida Tarbell, Bob Woodward.

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Editors such as James Bellows, Walter Burns, Ben Bradlee, Henry Connell, Norman Cousins, Lou Grant, Warren Haggerty, Don Hewitt, Ed Huteson, Chuck Lane, Joseph W. Randall, Oliver Stone, Perry White, William Allen White, Donald Woods.

Media Owners such as James Gordon Bennett, Elliott Carver, Otis Chandler, Harrison Crawford III, Katharine Graham, Horace Greeley, Charles Foster Kane, Rupert Murdoch, William Randolph Hearst, Robert McCormick, D.B. Norton, Joseph Pulitzer, Julius Reuters, Arthur Sulzberger, Kay Thorndyke, Ted Turner.

War Correspondents such as Margaret Bourke-White, Nick Condon, Jonny and Kirk Davis, Margaret Fuller, Veronica Guerin, David Halberstam, Marguerite Huggins, Johnny Jones, Jack London, Augusta Nash, Ernie Pyle, Sydney Schanberg, Henry M. Stanley, McKinley B. Thompson.

Critics such as Samuel Clemens, Addison DeWitt, Roger Ebert, Bosley Crowthers, Pauline Kael, Walter Kerr, Waldo Lydecker, Lawrence Mackay, Tom Shales, Ellsworth Toohey.

Columnists such as Carrie Bradshaw, Dear Abby, Hedda Hopper, J.J. Hunsecker, Ann Landers, Anna Quindlen, Liz Smith, Louella Parsons, Grantland Rice, Mary Sunshine, George Will, Walter Winchell.

TV Journalists such as Sally (Tally) Atwater, Ted Baxter, Tom Brokaw, Murphy Brown, Robert Caufield, Walter Cronkite, Mike Donovan, Linda Ellerbee, Morley Safer, Jessica Savitch, Peter Jennings, Ted Koppel, Edward R. Murrow, Dan Rather, Mary Richards, Betty Rollins, Diane Sawyer, Barbara Walters.

Who is real? Who is fiction?

The public doesn't care. It takes its images wherever it sees and hears them and it often fails to differentiate between the real and the fictional. The public bases its impression and

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understanding of the news media through these images. In the end, it really doesn't matter to the public if these images are real or fantasy. The reality is the public integrates these images into its own reality and acts accordingly.

The word *journalist* dates back to 1693 and is defined as “one who earns his living by editing or writing for a public journal or journals.”¹ In modern times, the journalist has grown to mean much more than someone simply involved in the production of printed journals. It has become a synonym for reporting and writing in any news medium.² For this historical look at the journalist in popular culture, a journalist is defined as anyone in any century who performs the function of the journalist today – gathering and disseminating news, information, advice, editorial comment and criticism.

Going back to ancient times, we discover the origins of many of the images of journalists of modern times. They are the historic counterparts of the men and women we see in our news media every day: the newsgatherer, the newswriter, the correspondent, the professional writer, the social commentator, the critic, the propagandist, the hack, the merchant, the publisher, the editor, the reporter, eventually the producer and writer of everything from print periodicals to television and radio newscasts to Internet Web sites and blogs. The ancient journalists, writing and reporting at a time when “journalist” and “journalism” did not exist, fulfilled the functions of acknowledged journalists of the 21st century.³

Then as now, the images of the journalist in popular culture embody the basic notions of what a hero and villain are. The hero reflects a society's innermost hopes and dreams, the villain its fears and nightmares. The journalist as hero and scoundrel is no exception.

Journalist heroes often are self-made persons, independent spirits, people who get angry over injustice and unfairness. They distinguish themselves by their achievements, not their

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boasts.⁴ They are people of good will, unselfish, trusting, decent, honorable with a sense of fair play, self-confident, resourceful and sometimes too witty for their own good. They work hard, display tenacity and enterprise, are good neighbors, love the simple things, have humility, are brave and honest,⁵ and will wield the power of the press, but never abuse it. Journalist heroes use words to help neighbors, to right wrongs, to stop injustice, to do what is fair and right. The journalist hero is convinced that the ends, the triumph of right over wrong, justify any means, no matter what the ethical or moral cost may be. They believe in and embrace the public interest.

Journalist scoundrels or villains are arrogant and have no scruples. They are braggarts who are vain and conceited.⁶ They are socially undesirable, usurpers, abusers, snobs, strangers, traitors, sneaks, chiselers, narcissists. Journalist villains are big-headed parasites⁷ who use the news media to serve their own social, economic, political or personal ends. They care nothing about the public and repeatedly abuse its trust and patronage. They usurp the public's right to know by using information to extort and destroy. They are cads and bounders, knaves and blackguards, scoundrels who stop at nothing to further their own corrupt goals. They care nothing about the public interest, except to use it for their own selfish ends.

An argument can be made that there have never been any true heroes or villains in journalism, simply celebrities. The difference between heroes and celebrities is a matter of degree. Heroes are distinguished by achievement, celebrities by image. Heroes create themselves. Celebrities are created by the media. The hero is a big man or woman. The celebrity is a big name. The hero grows with stature as time passes. The celebrity is always a contemporary flash. The passage of time destroys the celebrity, who is unmade by repetition.⁸ As one commentator put it, "The hero is made by folklore, sacred texts, and history books, but the celebrity is the creature of gossip, of public opinion, of magazines, newspapers, and the

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ephemeral images of the movie and television screen.”⁹

A tragic hero is one who has fallen from greatness, someone with a tragic flaw. There is no tragedy in the celebrity's fall from grace. Celebrities simply go back to their proper anonymous station. The dead hero becomes immortal, more vital with the passage of time. Celebrities, even in their lifetimes, become passé and pass out of the picture seldom if ever to be remembered again.¹⁰

Most of the heroes and scoundrels of journalism are, if stripped bare by these definitions, more the celebrity than hero, more celebrity than villain, and this was as true in ancient times as it is today. The early purveyors of information often were elevated to heroic stature through myth and gossip. The scandalmongers won fame through self-promotion and media manipulation. The only difference between then and now is the media involved – mouth, tablets and papyrus instead of newsprint, electronics and megabytes.

The image of the journalist in popular culture is a long-neglected, fertile field for research virtually untapped by journalism and mass communication scholars.¹¹ It is a field ripe for scholarly research. Since most academics studying this subject have been film-oriented, there has been little written on the image of the journalist in novels and other fiction, less on the image of the journalist in television or radio, and practically nothing on other forms of popular culture, including comics, cartoons, commercials, and soap operas. Minimal research has been focused on the historical images of the journalist in popular culture. Following are some possibilities, places to start, resources to use, concepts to be expanded.

**AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:
SOME EXAMPLES OF ANCIENT IMAGES OF THE JOURNALIST¹²**

Call them messengers, heralds, minstrels, gossips, busybodies, news criers, balladeers, travel correspondents, letter-writers, epitaphers, pamphleteers, hacks, free-lancers, newsmongers, news-writers, reporters, editors, journalists. They all trafficked in the same commodity: News, the latest messages about government and war, fire and earthquake, miracles and monstrosities, private and public lives, soldiers and criminals, neighbors and royalty, heroes and scoundrels, religion and myth, life and death.¹³

The lust for news, for tidings, for gossip, for information about everything and anything goes back to the beginnings of recorded history. Inseparable with this passion for news was a dislike for those who peddled information. The messengers dealing in this valuable commodity always wanted something in return, some form of currency for their information: money or an exchange of information, favors or gratitude. Those who had information had power over those who wanted that information. The more valuable the news, the greater the power. The have-nots began to envy and even fear purveyors of news, and these emotions quickly turned to anger and hate. This love-hate relationship, this dichotomy, winds throughout history: the news was valued, but those who brought it were despised, ridiculed, attacked, jailed, murdered.

The anonymous messengers in Semitic, Greek and Roman mythology, poems and plays¹⁴ are primarily reporters in the field bringing back vivid, detailed eyewitness accounts of what happened, to whom it happened, where it happened, when it happened, how it happened, and sometimes why it happened. They were the eyes and ears of those left behind waiting for word from the battlefield or another throne that would have an enormous effect on their lives.

Messengers would be peppered with questions and their answers would be as thorough and as

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colorful and dramatic as any contemporary news story. The messenger had the modern reporter's skill of observation, description, narrative and organization. And he had the same problem reporting bad news – don't blame the messenger. He's just doing his job.

No matter how complete the messenger's report, the ancient audience was always asking for more, especially why it happened, how could it happen and other questions the mortal messenger wasn't equipped to answer. No doubt, Olympian muses knew far more. As one Greek poet put it: "Enlighten me now, O muses, tenants of Olympian homes. For you are goddesses, inside on everything, know everything. But we mortals hear only the news, and know nothing at all."¹⁵

Theophrastus (370 BC to 285 BC) was the best kind of a reporter – he listened and watched, and copied down words and deeds without trying to analyze them or put them into a larger context. He was a realistic miniaturist and his 30 brief Character Sketches, *The Characters*, quickly re-create actual persons who lived in a crowded urban world. Like the journalist of today, Theophrastus fills his stories with what seem to be a mass of unrelated details, but each detail adds to the realistic portrayal of the person he is writing about.¹⁶ In *The Newsmaker (The Fabricator – Logopoiia)*,¹⁷ Theophrastus' produces a newsmaker who is not just a newsmonger. He creates the news as well. He quotes sources no one can verify. He adds plausible, yet fictitious information upon basic facts. He is more than an embellisher, a reckless gossip, a purveyor of idle rumors. He acts cool and intelligent as if one has to draw the information out of him. "Fabrication is making up untrue stories because you want people to believe them," he says.¹⁸ "The Newsmaker is a person who, when he meets his friend, will assume a demure air and ask with a smile – 'Where are *you* from, and what are your tidings? What news have you to give about this affair?' And then he will reiterate the question – 'Is

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anything fresh rumored?' Well certainly these are glorious tidings!"¹⁹

The earliest local news merchant was branded a gossip, a busybody, a witch, and treated with contempt in life and literature. Although the information was coveted, it was considered demeaning to talk about individuals behind their backs and to look down at the misfortunes and frailties of neighbors. The herald, the messenger, the news crier often had to run for their lives if the news they delivered was bad or considered inappropriate. Bellerophon was a royal messenger in Greek mythology who carried a message from one king to another requesting his own death. Because of this, *Letters of Bellerophon* became a much-used phrase describing documents that were dangerous or prejudicial to the bearer.²⁰ Sophocles used messengers in his plays²¹ to give exposition and information about the headlines of the day. He also knew the dangers faced by messengers bearing bad news. In *Antigone*, the Greek playwright Sophocles summed up the popular opinion more than 400 years before Christ was born: "None love the messenger who brings bad news."²² About the same time, another Sophocles play told the story of a herald bringing shocking news to the mad hero who is believed to be involved in a murder plot. The hero picks up the herald and dashes his brains upon a rock. No doubt the shocked audience cheered. And so, the image began.²³

Many Greek and Roman poets were would-be gossip columnists looking for an audience. The lifestyles of the rich and famous, the notorious and the infamous, were fair game for any anonymous poet in ancient Rome. The eager free-lance poets of the day were part-propagandists, part-literary men, part-press agents, part-reporters, part-social commentators, part-gossip-mongers who were constantly on the lookout for a patron to pay their bills. Patronage was a part of all walks of life in Rome. The poor were mostly on the dole. And most poets, even popular ones, were poor. The search for literary patronage was a cutthroat game, grubby and mercenary.

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It usually made the writer feel cheap and unnecessary. Only the most popular, or the most devious, won the day. If newspapers had been around, Roman Epigrammist Gaius Valerius Catullus (84-54 B.C.), for example, would have been the all-knowing columnist whose wide range of experience and intimate relationships with the rich, the powerful and the famous would make his daily column must reading.²⁴

The most convenient ancient form for gossip, news, or propaganda was the epigram, a brief piece of verse that could easily be turned into any item that could be found in the modern newspaper. It might be an epitaph or eulogy, a report of a battle or a new building, an amusing or tragic incident, a dangerous or humorous circumstance, a moral or philosophical reflection, a declaration of patriotism or love or grief, a tribute to the emperor or any of his supporters, an account of a miraculous event or a curious death or a physically deformed grotesquery, a grievance against another citizen, a bitter diatribe, a satirical thrust, or a thousand different anecdotes, moral lessons or tributes. In short, the epigram was the perfect vehicle for a would-be journalist.

Anyone with a pen and a quick wit could knock out an epigram turning small everyday incidents into a moral lesson. Many anonymous writers degraded the form, but some went beyond the mere recitation of facts and opinions to create graceful, witty, ingenious inscriptions that amused or annoyed those who read them, that took the events and personalities of the day and commented on them with sardonic humor, hyperbole and sarcasm. Some, such as the Greek poets Crinagoras and Lucillus, did more than report gossip and news, and commemorate significant events. They often turned their poetry into savage comments and ridicule.²⁵

No one, however, matched Marcus Valerius Martialis (Martial) in using the epigram to report on life in Rome in the latter part of the first century after Christ. He covers the metropolis

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from top to bottom, from its dinner and drinking parties to its public baths and spectacles, through its noisy crowded streets, and its preoccupation with social status, sex and money.

Martial outlines how the Roman newsmonger went about his business: “These are the tricks that you devise to pay for hospitality... You forge a hundred silly lies and state them as reality.”²⁶

Martial tells us about a newsmonger popular at parties because he knows everything that is going on, even before it happens: “No sooner is a ship at sea surpris'd, then the newsmonger learns about it and passes the news on.”²⁷

No image in journalism is as potent as the foreign correspondent: the exotic reporter traveling in distant lands, the cynical observer, the dashing soldier-hero, or the careful scribbler of history. The earliest reporter of foreign and domestic news was not much more than a tipster, a letter writer, a visiting dignitary, a dilettante writing notes abroad, and finally an historian writing history from oral accounts, both new and old, eyewitness testimony, memories, and myth. Early historians invented what they did not know. They made up historical facts that suited their fancy.²⁸ It was a form of journalism of the worst kind: Forget the facts, print the legend. They wrote in prose and then gave oral performances of what they had written. Their accounts became ingrained in the public mind. They helped create the ancient images of the journalist that still prevail today.²⁹

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: SOME EXAMPLES OF 16th and 17th CENTURY IMAGES OF THE JOURNALIST

To survive, the news trader quickly learned how to please an audience, whether royal or common. The news balladeers cloaked their stories in patriotism, morality, and popular sentiment. Early publishers of newsbooks followed suit. And it continues to this day. Give the

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public what it wants became the catchphrase of the earliest of journalists. People always have been curious about the flaws and eccentricities of their neighbors. In the fifteenth century, the earliest journalists, the professional news-ballad writers³⁰, quickly figured out what the public wanted to hear and buy: verses about executions, battles, coronations, crimes, violence, scandal, witches, oddities, and magic. This was tabloid journalism in its infancy.³¹ While it may be true that tabloid journalism tends to trivialize who and what we are, it always involves visceral emotions: love, hate, joy, fear. It usually involves the famous and the infamous, the unusual, the criminal, or the bizarre. The concept of tabloid journalism and the elite who are appalled or fascinated with tabloid reporting, is as old as journalism itself.³² The rhyming newswriters originated the image of the newsmongering journalist who gives the public what it wants no matter how ugly or coarse the story and its presentation may be. Most of the professional balladeers remained anonymous, but a few became famous.

The undisputed king of the London ballad-makers was William Elderton.³³ First and foremost he was a journalist who used the topics and events of the day as his bread-and-butter ballads. It was the perfect time for a news balladeer, a time when plots and counter-plots, wars and rumors of war, natural and man-made disasters consumed a population eager for information and news. Elderton covered that world with the eagerness and skill of a reporter interested in everything around him. He put current events into clever rhyme and eventually became a legend himself.

In a 1614 play, *Bartholomew Fair*, Playwright Ben Jonson, who believed that true poets should detest “balletmakers,” offers a corrupt ballad-singer, Nightingale, who with a cutpurse, is a part of the chicanery and corruption of swindlers who show up at public amusements to fleece a gullible public. While other sellers cry out “Buy any pears...buy any gingerbread” or

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mousetraps or hobby horses, Nightingale, in cloak, hat and with sword, sings out his product: "Ballads, ballads! Fine new ballads: Hear for your love and buy for your money!"³⁴ It is a realistic picture of the ballad singer trying to sell his wares.

The earliest newswriters knew that a report on an execution of a notable traitor or a crime involving jealousy or passion was hot copy. No one worried about what was real or false. What they didn't know, they made up – fusing together topical facts, innuendo, rumor, libel, and gossip into vivid descriptions that captivated their audiences. The method of transmission may have been primitive, but the end result was the same: The elite moaned about the corruption of the populace's mind and morals while the people waited eagerly for the next story documenting an act of revenge or honor.

The Elizabethan pamphleteer was the original freelance journalist, investigative reporter and editorial writer. The only problem being that he was a journalist without any newspapers or magazines, a professional without a profession, yet one capable of churning out features, editorials, personal columns, human-interest stories and news reports for anyone who would buy them. Like freelance journalists throughout history, they were always at the mercy of the businessman and the reader. Put a phone in the pamphleteer's hand, and you have a *Front Page* reporter. Give him a tape recorder and you have a freelance magazine writer. Stick him by a computer with stacks of reference materials and you have an editorial writer. Many of the images associated with journalists throughout the centuries started here: the drinking, the drugs (tobacco), the lack of funds, the continual complaining, the grand aspiration to something better, something higher, something respectable, something like literature.³⁵

Sitting in a coffeehouse or a tavern, these rakish free-lance professional writers sat and drank, smoked and gambled and continually complained about the business of writing, how their

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bosses took advantage of them and how degrading it was to be a professional pamphleteer. From the day the Elizabethan writer turned professional, he derided his profession, expressing great bitterness about writing for money and not for art. He would spit on his colleagues calling them hacks and crying in his ale when reminded he was no better or worse than the rest of them.

This constant vocal derision was picked up by the public and passed on from decade to decade, through the 19th and 20th centuries and into the 21st. The scenario hasn't changed. Those who wrote for money got to be pretty good at it. They learned their craft well. They figured out what appealed to popular audiences. Because they were good at what they did, they ended up enjoying the actual work, the skill of putting out copy quickly and efficiently, of the immediate gratification of seeing their story in print and hearing their audiences' reaction. But even as they savored their success, they still felt the embarrassment, the shame, the frustration in not doing something legitimate and profound.

When Elizabethan journalists failed to use the news medium to get to what they considered to be a better place, they became disillusioned, angry, cynical, bitter, burnt-out, drowning their disappointment in alcohol or drugs. Occasionally one made the jump to respectability, but the great majority, the thousands of journalists from Elizabethan times to today, remained forever either anonymous or famous for what they considered all the wrong reasons. For most, fame as a journalist simply embarrassed and frustrated them all the more and they growled their displeasure and disgust to whoever would listen to them.

Again it was playwright Ben Jonson who created an image of the journalist that showed the newsmonger in the worst possible light. In *The Staple of News*,³⁶ Cymbal is the governor of The Staple, a new enterprise that anticipates developments in the news trade. Jonson envisioned the creation of a monopolistic newsgathering and distribution system on a national scale in which

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Staple emissaries were assigned to the nerve centers of social and commercial life. His fear of this kind of a streamlined news agency offering up-to-date information for a price was formulated from the reality he saw around him. He wasn't worried about the crude pamphlets and newsbooks he saw all around him. He was worried about the organized exploitation of contemporary events by men exploiting the news of the day. For Jonson, the notion of a news office gave him one more opportunity to satirize another social institution.

A staple dealing in the commodity of news was not even contemplated at the time because of severe legal and political barriers in force when Jonson's play was written. Jonson was worried that the news business was abolishing the old way of doing things. He believed the newsbooks were usurping the time-honored trade of gossip and hearsay. Instead of trading gossip in taverns and barbershops, hand-written newsletters and printed newsbooks were being collected at a central point and sold for profit. Gone was the informal relationship between the news purveyor and the recipient of the news.³⁷ The news business, in Jonson's words, "a weekly cheat to draw money," was establishing an impersonal relationship between the producer and the consumer, severing this direct contact.³⁸ In another one of his plays, *News From the New World*,³⁹ news was free to anyone who had ears. In the Staple office, news is available only in exchange for pennies and pounds. It is packaged in gross amounts (a ream, a bale, a ton), regardless of its contents.

One newspaper in 1653 ridiculed news pamphlets that relied on the grotesque and the sensational to woo readers. It said they printed stories unworthy of even ballad-mongers: stories about a man in the West "arraigned and condemned for 27 Wives; and of another in the North, for broiling of her own Child on a Gridiron; and a Third Lie, of a Woman that chopt her own Child a pieces, and bak'd it in a Py; this strange News made the Ballad-makers run to the Carriers

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of those Places to know the truth of these things; but the poor Ballad-makers, after they had spent their stock on the Carriers, and found nothing of this true, returned home again cursing the Grubstreet Newes-Mongers, who had so basely deceived them.”⁴⁰

**AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:
SOME EXAMPLES OF 18th CENTURY IMAGES OF THE JOURNALIST**

As the 17th century drew to a close, the professional journalist came into his own. Readers were getting used to regular publication of newspapers and periodicals written by authors no longer handcuffed by official censorship. An early publication, *The Athenian Mercury* – a periodical listing questions along with their answers – had whetted their appetite for publications that informed and entertained them on a regular basis. They wanted more, and the more they got, the more they wanted.

The journalist was there to give it to them. As one historian put it, “to fill four or eight or sixteen folio pages became the daily or weekly stint of the writer: to cater to the whims and prejudices of his readers, to keep them supplied with the current political gossip, or to divert them with the novel and salacious became his opportunity, if not indeed, as many a writer felt, his obligation.”⁴¹ New copy, often abusive and vitriolic, constantly littered the bookstalls and coffee house tables.

It had become possible for a writer to make a living by his pen. The more original and prolific the writer, the better the living. Patronage was dying out and the rules of trade and business were coming in. If it sold, write more. Supply and demand. The new journalism, like the new literature, lived or died on the marketability of the product. The coffee house, the handwritten newsletter and the printed newspaper lived side by side well into the 18th century.

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To augment their spoken news, coffee houses added newsletters and newspapers to lure drinkers in and keep them there. By the 1700s, the newspaper, with its curious mixture of news, gossip and advertising was an expected convenience over morning coffee.

Looking through the newspapers of the day, the curious reader could find out about news battles in Europe, Irish massacres or an Indian assault on New England colonists, about the latest political or religious rumors and alliances, about crime, fires, storms, robberies and duels, about country fairs, horse and foot-racing, cock fights, the theater, music, magicians, recipes, pets, fish and fish ponds, auctions, gardens, ballads, songs, the newest chocolate and coffee, animal monstrosities, fiery dragons, the national lottery, insurance policies, advice on courtship, marriage and a hundred other areas of social conduct. Although the individual newsheets may have been crude, inaccurate, and too brief, taken together they were still a miracle of communication, a growing vital force in the social and political life in England.⁴² And they were immensely popular.

The pamphleteers of the early 18th century were journalists writing at the cutting edge of the social, economic, political, religious, and philosophical issues of the day. Readers grabbed the pamphlets up by the handful to find out the latest information or controversy. The writers were grinding them out as quickly as the printing press could accommodate them. These prose pamphlets were sermons, speeches, conduct books, proverbs, newsbooks, literature all rolled into one. They were written in the true style of the journalist: personal, familiar, filled with observations and remarks on shared experiences and opinions. The journalist spoke directly to the reader. The writing was often plain, colloquial, conversational. Accessibility and clarity were the goal, not beauty and essence of language and style.

These professional journalists were observers and reporters of experiences and events.

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They learned that the only sure way to attract readers was to be inventive, to write lively, vigorous prose and to stick in the sensational whenever possible. Scandal and gossip always sold. As political parties realized that pamphlets on their behalf were the best way to reach the public, the professional who could hack out pamphlet after pamphlet could count on a regular income. One hack named William Arnall was said to have earned 10,000 pounds in four years.⁴³

The public continued to watch gasping, laughing, wondering, judging as one journalist after another attacked each other in verse and prose. What was the public to think? If the ones who knew each other best thought so little of each other, then the image of the journalist as an insolent, scandalous, corruptible, contemptible, dishonest, drunken lout must be true.

Daniel Defoe, pamphleteer, newspaperman, essayist, propagandist, party writer, newsgatherer, gossip, advisor, commentator, and merchant was the most prolific journalist of the early 18th century. No one matched his output or his effectiveness and no one received more abuse. Defoe was called everything from a Whig and a Tory, a Dissenter and a Papist, to a stupid dog, a canting rascal, a mercenary prostitute, a party tool, a devil, a hackney author, a Foul Mouth, an "Insolent Scribbler with a Scandalous pen."⁴⁴

One vehement critic said Defoe "deserves not only the Correction of the Gallows, but the Personal Correction of every Man that meets you, and 'twill be no more Sin to cut your Throat, than to Kill a Dog."⁴⁵ Another called him a Poisonous author whose Review was, unfortunately, still the Entertainment of most Coffee houses in Town.⁴⁶

The first half of the 18th century was a luminous period in English journalism in which some of the great literary men such as Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, John Gay, Aaron Hill, Joseph Fielding, and Samuel Johnson infused journalism with a style and literary presence, a clarity and wit, a critical taste and reason that was absent from the periodicals

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that came before them. They created indelible images of the journalist in a variety of fanciful pseudonyms that the public embraced as real and vital scribblers.

In America, the image of the journalist during the Revolutionary War is one that conjures up heroic patriots and villainous traitors. It created a journalism hero, the printer who would do anything for country, that has been admired throughout the 20th century. Once the war started, editors were faced with three alternatives: remain loyal to England, become true patriots supporting the Americans, or change loyalties as often as necessary and possible. Unlike other small businessmen who could keep their mouths shut and still sell their goods, an editor was forced to choose sides. Neutrality was impossible and the few printers who tried to remain neutral discovered such a course to be untenable. Some editors tried to change sides as quickly as the course of the war dictated. But most ran away with their presses whenever the opposing army moved in so they could publish another day. These early editors represented the strong and powerful passions of the day and they were loved or hated as symbols of those passions.

By 1750, the printer-editor was accepted by the community, and the newspaper considered an essential part of daily life. Newspaper owners were happy with the status quo. Most did not want to rock the boat, content to print noncontroversial business and political news. While many used the John Peter Zenger decision⁴⁷ as an excuse for an expanded freedom to criticize, few newspaper owners wanted a fight. They left the controversial arguments on public issues to the pamphleteers and were content to make a profit and to win public acceptance.

**AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:
SOME EXAMPLES OF 19th CENTURY IMAGES OF THE JOURNALIST**

The multiple images of the journalist increased dramatically in the mid-19th century because the editors of the popular press were sure of their own power and they were making a strong impression on the public. They made their quarrels front-page stories and they talked long and hard about the bounteous power of the press and many of them believed they could do no wrong. They didn't care much about libel suits because they figured the publicity was good for business – they would earn far more in circulation than they would have to pay in damages. They walked along the corridors of political power as equals. It was the age of personal journalism when, as one historian put it: “The American newspaperman who stood in the limelight was a captain of communication, a self-made hero who strutted on the public stage as the star in a popular national drama of success.”⁴⁸

Novels, written by some of the most popular writers of the day, were filled with images of odious and righteous journalists shining a spotlight on the way journalists were accepted in a modern society. Steadfast Dodge, for example, created by best-selling novelist James Fenimore Cooper in two 1838 novels,⁴⁹ is a scoundrel, a disgusting depiction of a vulgar, corrupted journalist without decency, who cares only about himself and who believes that anyone or anything said in public or in private, is fair game for his columns. Dodge was “a piece of the growing penny press,”⁵⁰ a writer who behaved like many of the real-life contemporaries familiar to Cooper's readers. In another novel, *Westwood Ho!*,⁵¹ written in 1832, James K. Paulding presents one of the most devastating portraits of a country journalist ever put on paper. It is a mortifying satire of a scurrilous backwoods journalist, an ignorant, ill-mannered and unethical editor of a frontier newspaper.

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Honore de Balzac may have been writing about journalism in France in his 1837-1843 novel *Lost Illusions (Illusions Perdues)*,⁵² but there were few American readers who failed to recognize the scoundrels he was depicting – spiteful, unprincipled literary journalists who would do anything for money, whose primary allegiance wasn't to accuracy and fairness, but to profit and position. In Paris as it was in London and New York, there were literary journalists who would praise or damn anything for the right amount of money or patronage.

The twisted, confusing image of the reporter as both hero and villain pushed its way into the public consciousness with a vengeance just as the American Civil War began. On the one hand, reporters were becoming indispensable. It was the reporter who made it possible for the newspaper to bring the latest information to the breakfast table or the evening meal, information that more and more was becoming as valuable as any other commodity in America. It also was the reporter who represented the public by asking questions of the powerful and forcing them to explain themselves. In the process, the reporter occasionally even went beyond the news of the day to reveal shams and corrupt business practices. On the other hand, these prying, fact-hungry reporters probed into private lives and wrote about subjects that were often scandalous. To be a reporter was to do something disreputable, to live on the edge of decent society, to be “a busybody, a keyhole snooper, a penny-a-liner, a ne'er do well.”⁵³ To be a reporter was to be someone who was “unspeakably aggressive in seeking the news and deplorably loud in writing it up.”⁵⁴ Or as one Tribune reporter put it, “It is shameful to earn a living in this way.”⁵⁵

As it would be throughout the 20th century, to be a reporter meant to be understood by no one – not the editor, not the publisher, not friends or lovers, not private or public officials, and most certainly not the public itself, which barely understood what the role of a reporter was in the new, half-forbidden world of news. What was news anyway? Usually the intrusion into the

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private business of the rich and famous, the notorious and the scandalous, or some unspeakable human or natural catastrophe. It was a quarter of a century since the penny papers put sex and crime on the front page. The result was instant approval as seen in soaring circulation, but these kinds of stories instilled in the public mind that a reporter was somehow engaged in an ignominious, shady business. No matter how honorable or trustworthy a reporter would become during and after the Civil War, the dishonorable aspects of the profession would linger in the public mind, forever browning the image of the reporter as hero.

The Civil War was a dramatic turning point for newspapers and reporters. During the four-year calamity, journalists created an image of the responsible reporter that journalists have cherished ever since: the esprit de corps of seasoned professionals who boast an infallible nose for news and who do not rest until they can get the most complete and accurate story available as quickly as possible. Although this image was delivered to the public in many of the novels of the post-Civil War period, its existence has always been compromised by the more popularly endorsed image of the journalist as intruder and scandal-monger, a blackguard only interested in individual glory and profit.⁵⁶

The hunger for news, for information, reached new heights during the Civil War and turned the war correspondent and the reporter into honorable heroes. Still, that heroic image was blurred because the pressure to be first was so great that correspondents often filed anything to get their story into the newspaper before anyone else. The result was a flood of information that was often based on false reports, rumors and misunderstanding. In addition, the majority of the Northern correspondents were said to be naive, ignorant, dishonest and unethical, news scavengers of the worst sort. The dispatches they wrote were “frequently inaccurate, often invented, partisan and inflammatory.”⁵⁷ A good portion were just plain made up. One historian

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wrote that “too many reporters were writing fantastic, erroneous stories,” embroidering atrocity reports.⁵⁸ Another added that reporting “entire battles that they had neither seen nor heard about from witnesses.”⁵⁹ This became so commonplace that reporters and editors often counseled readers to never believe the first narrative of a battle. Often competitors would constantly correct each other, adding to the notion that many of the stories were exaggerated or untrue. Headlines proclaiming glorious victories became a bitter joke among the troops. And a surgeon in 1863 wrote, “Even the newsboys are being infected, though I heard one this morning, wittily burlesquing the reporters by crying, 'Morning Republica-a-an. Great battle in Missouri! Federals victorious. Their troops retreating in good order!’” In a *Vanity Fair* humorous article, “Confessions of a Reporter,” the reporter's dying words were filled with a confession of his fake stories. A popular proverb in 1862 was, “He lies like a newspaper.”⁶⁰

Although some of the fiction of 1860 and 1870 details the press of previous decades, much of the fiction of this era is less concerned with the editorial power of the press and more focused on the gathering and publishing of the news. In the late decades of the 19th century, the reporter takes center stage as both hero and villain. He or she usually is not blamed for the corruptness of the commercial press. The true corruptor is the business of journalism in which newspapers compete with each other to make the most money by luring the most subscribers. It was believed that the only way to appease the vulgar mass of readers who paid the bills, was for unscrupulous newspaper bosses to send hapless reporters out into the big city to get the news by any means possible and to make it sensational enough to keep the rabble happy.

In the 1864 novel *John Godfrey's Fortunes; Related by Himself. A Story of American Life*,⁶¹ Bayard Taylor relied on his own experiences to give authenticity to the story of a young New York journalist during the 1850s. Godfrey starts out as a rewrite man and reporter on a

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respectable journal and ends up as a writer on a seedy scandal sheet. In the process, he creates one of the most vivid pictures of two kinds of editors, one responsible and the other irresponsible. In telling Godfrey's story, he depicts a newspaper world in which advertisers expect something for something, reviewers destroy new authors or give favorable reviews for compensation, and new journals hope to succeed through blackmail.

Two despicable journalists are among the characters in *Five Hundred Majority*,⁶² an 1872 novel about Tammany politics written by John Ferguson Hume under the pseudonym of Wyllis Niles. These two editors are unscrupulous political hacks who cluttered up the journalism landscape of the 1850s. Scratchal, editor of the *New York Daily Rocket*, chooses to be a faithful follower of a Tammany boss even though he knows the politician is corrupt and a rascal. Scourge, editor of the *Sunday Plague*, is worse – he's not only a scoundrel, but also a deceitful turncoat. He joins a political conspiracy against the Tammany boss when he discovers his paper is receiving no more patronage than his competition, the *Daily Rocket*. Scourge turns his paper into a daily and fills it with hateful denunciations of the Tammany chieftain and his cohorts. For his efforts, the reform party gives him money to assure his continued support. Then, Tammany officials bribe Scourge and he turns on the reformers as quickly and as viciously as he had previously attacked Tammany.

Even novels that had little to do with journalism, such as *The Gilded Age*⁶³, written in 1873 by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, painted a picture of a disreputable press corrupted by business and politics in the speculative years following the Civil War. Both Twain and Warner had worked on newspapers and hadn't much faith in the modern paper. They showed how politicians influenced the press by cultivating reporters and editors.

The *New York Tattler*, as presented in J.G. Holland's 1875 novel, *Sevenoaks: A Story of*

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To-Day,⁶⁴ was “a paper with more enterprise than brains, more brains than candor, and with no conscience at all; a paper which manufactured hoaxes and vended them for news, bought and sold scandals by the sheet as if they were country gingerbread, and damaged reputations one day for the privilege and profit of mending them the next.”⁶⁵ This was the typical newspaper presented in the fiction of the day. The press was usually in collusion with sordid business and political interests, interests not merely indifferent to the public welfare, but hostile to it. In most of the popular novels, the editor and his newspaper become the tools of businessmen and politicians eager to line their own pockets at the expense of everyone else. Reporters, honest or corrupt, had to be handled one way or another. Sometimes it was done with chicanery and duplicity, through flattery and favors. Other times through out-and-out bribes. If none of that worked, there was always pressure that could be brought to bear on the editor or publisher to stop the story before it could be printed. Holland knew the territory. He worked on the *Springfield Massachusetts Republican* for seven years.

In Rebecca Harding Davis' 1874 novel, *John Andross*,⁶⁶ we meet Julius Ware, a *New York Daily* critic, “a poor devil of a newspaperman, out for a holiday”⁶⁷ who wanders in and out of a story about John Andross, a young man in the grips of a corrupt powerful corporation that has no conscience and is able to buy the law and public opinion. “If there's a shameful story to be told of you, [Ware will] write it and charge you so much a line to keep it out of print; if there's a chance for gross flattery of you, he'll print it first, and send you the bill for it as an advertisement next day...Ware goes nowhere without the chance of grist to his mill. He follows a crime as a buzzard the carrion.”⁶⁸

The fiction of the era documented the press as part of every aspect of American life and the corruption dominating it during the 1860s and 1870s. It showed how journalism was

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threatened by the business interests and politics operating around it. It told stories of editors who were subservient to corrupt businessmen and political bosses in the big cities as well as in the small towns across the nation. Bribes, blackmail and other forms of corruption were accepted as commonplace. The bribing of editors and reporters was an accepted image of the day.

In Harriet Beecher Stowe's two sentimental and preachy novels, *My Wife and I* (1871)⁶⁹ and its sequel, *We and Our Neighbors* (1875)⁷⁰, a picture of contemporary New York journalism emerges around the hero, Harry Henderson. Stowe shows a corrupt press run for profit without regard to the public welfare. The new relationship between business and journalism in which the business office becomes an increasing threat to the independence of the editorial staff is depicted here. Editorial policy is dictated by the business office, employees are overworked and underpaid, and the order of the day is sensationalism. When an editor or a reporter wants to use the press for the public good, the publisher now stands in the way. He wants to know how the stories will affect the economics of the newspaper. He is all for using the newspaper as an agency for the promotion of public good – if it doesn't interfere with the bottom line. He owns the paper and everyone must do as he says. The selling of news is paramount. Newspapering is a business. Editors and reporters may be honest, well educated, even well bred and when given the chance are even effective crusaders against political or financial corruption. But in the end, the journalist is also a victim of a business that wants profit at any price. Stowe's *My Wife and I* may well be the first significant portrayal of the newspaper publisher in fiction.⁷¹

The publisher, whether in American or British journalism, was the man most novelists blamed for the sins of the press. He was usually known as chief or Mr., whose orders were always final and to be obeyed no matter what. In William Thackeray's three-volume 1861-62 novel, *The Adventures of Philip*,⁷² the publisher is presented as an high-handed owner of a

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periodical who didn't care who was offended by his lack of social grace and bad manners and would endure any insult if it came from someone of influence or power.

The contradictory portrayal of the journalist as part hero, part scoundrel can be found in American popular literature of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries when a new class of fiction emerged in America that took the journalist for its hero.⁷³ Historians point out that the educated classes from the beginning were critical of the new wealth and power of the press. They complained that the mass-circulation dailies, with their big, black headlines screaming of murder, misfortune, and madness, pandered to the semiliterate and poisoned the atmosphere of American life. Journalists, longing for public acknowledgment that their jobs were important, were cut to the quick by this kind of criticism. They may have appeared to be indifferent to the attacks on the press, but most were deeply hurt by their failure to gain respect. Because of this, the novels and short stories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries featuring journalists continually attacked and downgraded the profession. In novel after novel, journalism was depicted as a strange world where brilliant young men turn into sad old men.⁷⁴

The age of yellow journalism (a name derived from a newspaper comic character called the Yellow Kid) was in full swing. From the 1890s, yellow journalism had, in the words of one historian, “choked up the news channels on which the common people depended with a shrieking, gaudy, sensation-loving, devil-may-care kind of journalism,” twisting stories into the “form best suited for sales by the howling newsboy.”⁷⁵ The people loved it. Even conservative newspapers were forced to take on a yellow hue to sell their products. By 1900, nearly a third of the metropolitan dailies were turning news stories into melodramas that could be summed up in one loud headline. It was the perfect time for moving pictures.

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SOME EXAMPLES OF 20th CENTURY IMAGES OF THE JOURNALIST⁷⁶**

Although some newspaper novels won popularity and became best sellers, they never attracted the mass audience that the early newspaper film did. On the big screen, the image of the journalist was magnified and put in noisy motion. The journalists immediately were defined onscreen by brashness and cunning. They were creatures of the city familiar with its fast pace, crowds, and the opportunities to get ahead. They often acted more like detectives than journalists. They embodied the myth of the self-reliant individual who pits nerves and resourcefulness against an unfair society.⁷⁷ These images of journalists in the early 20th century include reporters, editors, columnists, foreign correspondents, magazine writers, newsreel camerapersons, photojournalists, and publishers. Their modern counterparts include broadcasters, news producers, assignment editors, media owners, and cyberspace journalists.⁷⁸

The newspaper gave the moviemaker an endless flow of story possibilities in an atmosphere that soon became so familiar to movie audiences that journalists could be thrown into a film without the scriptwriter having to worry about motivation or plot. A newsroom is always filled with fast-talking, bright people whose main work is to speak to strangers, investigate a situation, get answers, develop a story. Since reporters are always finding out something about someone, they create countless stories with good beginnings, middles, and endings.

By the early 1920s, audiences already knew that reporters were always involved in some kind of story, no matter how bizarre or melodramatic. They accepted it as a matter of course. In the process, they got not only large doses of entertainment but also a series of lasting impressions about the news media that has stayed in the public mind for more than ten decades.

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A journalist without a voice is only a shadow of the real McCoy. The images at first didn't speak, but all of the Jekyll-and-Hyde stereotypes of the newspaperman and woman were there in the pages of melodramatic fiction and in the silent films often based on that fiction. People who read newspapers didn't have the slightest idea how the news came to them until they read about it in lurid books or saw it on the silent screen. Right from the beginning of film, the world of the newspaper was an easily accessible and recognizable background.

The basic image of the journalist from the silent days of the movies to the media-drenched days of the early twenty-first century is that of the flawed hero fighting everyone and anything to get the facts out to the public.⁷⁹ The reporter or editor could get away with anything as long as the end result was *in the public interest*. The journalist could lie, cheat, distort, bribe, betray, or violate any ethical code as long as the journalist exposed corruption, solved a murder, caught a thief, or saved an innocent. Most films about journalism end with the reporter or editor winning the battle, if not the war. Some journalists – the war correspondents and investigative reporters – may have acted more like soldiers or detectives, but they usually lived up to good journalism standards, only to be killed at the end of the film.

At the same time, the most indelible image may be that of the journalist as scoundrel, as evil, as the worst of villains because these journalists use the precious commodity of public confidence in the press for their own selfish ends. If the journalist uses the power of the media for his or her own personal, political, or financial gain, if the end result is *not in the public interest*, then no matter what the journalist does, no matter how much he or she struggles with his or her conscience or tries to do the right thing, evil has won out. The only possible salvation is resigning and leaving the profession – or death. Betraying the public trust is one of the great sins of democracy, and whether it is a journalist or a politician who does the dirty deed, it is so

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despicable that it lingers and festers in the memory, gradually overwhelming any heroic deed. The media mogul's goals and tactics are familiar to everyone, and real-life parallels in modern media abound. That may be the reason so many people are skeptical of the motives of such media billionaires as Rupert Murdoch and Ted Turner.

Perhaps the most dominant and damaging image of the journalist in popular culture is that of anonymous reporters chasing after stories. In countless movies, television programs, and novels, they travel in packs, usually armed with television cameras and microphones. They cover fast-breaking news by crowding, yelling, shouting, bullying, and forcing their way into breaking news events. There were always such packs of aggressive print journalists chasing after heroes in movies, and they made a negative impact through the years, but their zeal was usually taken in good spirits. Nowadays, they appear far more menacing and out of control because their lights, cameras, microphones, and tape recorders are jabbed into faces of real people on television news and favorite actors in movies and entertainment television programs.

In the 1930s and 1940s, practically every popular actor eventually portrayed a journalist. By the 1980s, anonymous reporters were chasing popular actors. The audience, as always, identifies with the popular actor. For the most part, audiences now root against reporters who are chasing familiar and friendly faces. It isn't Clark Gable or Barbara Stanwyck chasing after a story. It is now overzealous media newshounds chasing Bruce Willis or Julia Roberts.

This image of a harassing press with no valid reason undermines the public's trust in the news media, conflicting with the movie and television image of the reporter as hero. One result is that the public has turned against reporters, concluding that journalists are obnoxious, interested only in their own egos, not the public interest, and that laws should be passed to stop reporters from harassing innocent people – innocent people often translated in the public mind to be a

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favorite movie or television star.

These conflicting images of the journalist contribute to the love-hate relationship between the public and its news media that is at the center of the public's confusion about the media today. Surveys⁸⁰ continue to show that most Americans, for example, want a free press that is always there to protect them from authority and give them a free flow of diverse information. But those same surveys also show that most Americans harbor a deep suspicion about the media, worrying about their perceived power, their meanness and negativism, their attacks on institutions and people, their intrusiveness and callousness, their arrogance and bias.

CATEGORIZING THE IMAGES

How to categorize the images of the journalist is something worth considering when it comes to researching the image of the journalist in popular culture.⁸¹

Alex Barris, who created the first comprehensive look at the journalist in American films,⁸² created specific categories of journalists that most historians have followed, with variations – the Reporter as Crime Buster, the Reporter as Scandal monger, the Reporter as Crusader, the Reporter Overseas, the Reporter as Human Being, the Sob Sister, Editors and Publishers, and the Newsman as Villain.

Another historian, Loren Ghiglione, divided journalists into the *Front Page* Reporter, the Big-City Editor, the Newswoman, the Scandal monger, the Small-Town Editor, the War Correspondent, the TV Journalist, and the Owner, and then added the Newspaper Carrier.⁸³

Richard Ness, who has completed the most comprehensive journalism filmography, concentrates on a chronological survey of films featuring journalists but in an introductory essay talks about reporters, editors, columnists, photographers, sportswriters, critics, and owners. He is more

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interested, however, in defining the genre of journalism films rather than in identifying specific categories.⁸⁴

Another historian talks about the News Hound, the Sob Sister, the Crusader, the Rural Press as well as the Newspaper as Crime Drama, the Newspaper as Social Drama, and the Newspaper as Comedy Drama.⁸⁵ A fifth researcher divides the newsgatherer into many categories and subcategories: the Male Newspaper Reporters, the Female Newspaper Reporters, the Magazine Reporters, the Radio Reporters, the Television Reporters, the Editors, the Publishers, the Columnists, the Sportswriters, the Cameramen, the Foreign Correspondents, the War Correspondents, and the Celebrities. He then adds “the News Gatherer and Cupid,” “the News Gatherer and Crime,” and “the News Gatherer and Strong Drink.”⁸⁶ Other authors have taken a piece of the pie and divided the group into heroes and villains, with the heroes being the investigative reporters and war correspondents who first and foremost serve the public interest, and the villains being the scandalmongers, those journalists who deceive the public by using the media for their own personal, economic, or political gain, betraying the public trust.⁸⁷

The reporter as detective is probably one of the most popular categories, since both the journalist and the detective are curious inquirers trying to solve a mystery, whether it be a crime or a complex story. They both try to piece puzzles together to come up with a reasonable conclusion as to what happened, where it happened, when it happened, and to whom it happened as well as how it happened and why it happened. But dividing reporters into crimebusters or crusaders or scandalmongers creates a host of problems. Often they are the same journalist who ends up being a combination of all three categories in the last fifteen minutes of the film.

The following categories, listed in alphabetical order, seem to fit the great majority of the images of journalists in films and television programs. These categories can be used by scholars

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to create a new literature that helps explain how various publics feel about different kinds of journalists⁸⁸:

- **Anonymous Reporters** – By the last decades of the twentieth century, the journalists most people remember are the anonymous journalists, played by nondescript actors, who chase after a story by rudely invading the privacy of others. These reporters become bit players, part of an intrusive pack of harassing journalists, many armed with lights, cameras, and microphones. The public watches uncomfortably as these obnoxious reporters fill the movie and, especially, the television screens. They poke their cameras into people's faces, yell out questions, recklessly pursue popular actors – the kind who used to play journalists once cheered by audiences. The result of this particularly offensive image of the reporter from the 1970s to the new century is the public's rejection of the reporter as a hero, as someone helpful and necessary to society. In the beginning, these anonymous reporters were more likable because they were given witty lines, and they asked questions the audiences wanted answered. They were often used to advance the plot and summarize the action. They were created by former journalists who, no matter how critical of the profession, couldn't disguise their true love of the people in it.

- **Columnists and Critics** – One of the most popular villains in newspaper movies is the power-hungry gossip columnist who always seems to end up at the bottom of the journalistic barrel. In the movies, gossip columnists stop at nothing and hurt anyone to get that must-read item. They are cocky and power mad, ready to sacrifice anyone and everyone to get ahead and then to stay on top. And yet, they are played by such likable and ingratiating actors that their evil is muted. You seem to like them in spite of what they do and how they act. And by the end of the

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film, they usually redeem themselves a bit by acting human and doing the right thing. Most were modeled on Walter Winchell, the Broadway gossip columnist, and Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper, the Hollywood gossip columnists, who achieved enormous power from the 1930s through the 1950s. Their bylines were well known to millions of readers across the country. Particularly nasty in films are the unscrupulous, circulation-building Broadway gossip columnists who are always in hot water. They are shot at, beaten up, threatened, and generally hated by everyone in town. Other movie and television columnists include the adviser (advice-to-the-lovelorn, marriage, children, consumer affairs, manners and etiquette, how-to), the political commentator (local and/or national), the social commentator (opinions, issues, point of view), the detective (the police beat, unsolved cases), and the generalist (writing on any subject of interest).

Critics often write columns as well as reviews, and many are cold-blooded, unscrupulous journalists who use their power to get what they want when they want it and collect their pound of flesh whenever they feel like it. Often writers and directors get revenge against critics by holding them up to scorn and ridicule in their films and television and radio programs. The nicer critics are usually married and mired in domestic comedies.

- **Cub Reporters** – Beginning reporters make the same mistakes in silent films as they do in high-tech digital movies and television programs. The cub reporter is the one journalist with whom everyone in the audience can identify. He or she knows nothing about journalism, and everyone else knows everything about journalism, so the cub can ask all the questions that the audience wants to know. When veteran journalists correct the cub, either the audience laughs with knowing derision or learns something. It is a win-win proposition, and it makes for an easy

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plot device to let the cub find out what the audience already knows or wants to know.

• **Editors** – These journalists throughout the century are always gruff and sharp-tongued but usually soft under their bluster. There are editors-in-chief, managing editors, and city editors. In later years they are the news directors or executive news producers or news producers. The editors-in-chief are sometimes indistinguishable from the publishers. They dress better than the other editors, seldom raise their voices, and leave the dirty work to the managing editor or city editor. In most films, the managing editor, the city editor, and the broadcast news director look and sound alike. If they aren't the stars of the film, they seldom leave their desks. They smoke cigars any chance they can, scream out orders at cubs and veterans alike, regularly fire their star reporter (who always comes back for more), and decide what stories to run and where to place them. Almost every media film has at least one major argument between the reporter and the editor or news director or executive producer. The mold was cast in *The Front Page* (1931) when the reporter Hildy Johnson and the editor Walter Burns (Pat O'Brien and Adolphe Menjou, respectively) went at it from the first reel to the last. In 1940, *His Girl Friday* added sex to the mixture by turning Hildy into a woman who, with her editor (Rosalind Russell and Cary Grant), spoke faster than most humans can think. Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau picked up the argument thirty years later in a remake of *The Front Page* (1974), and Kathleen Turner as Christine Colleran, a TV reporter, and Burt Reynolds as Sully, the news director, continued the all-out fight in 1987 (*Switching Channels*).

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• **Flawed Male Journalists** – This category includes all media reporters, from newspaper newshounds to newsreel cameramen to radio and television broadcasters to Internet journalists. Most male reporters in the movies and television are, like those in the audience, flawed human beings. They are not all good and not all bad but simply trying to get the story at all costs. They may lie or cheat or act more like detectives than reporters, but they are usually forgiven their trespasses because the end result favors the public rather than themselves. These films range from Clark Gable as the opportunistic reporter Peter Warne in *It Happened One Night* to *True Crime* with Clint Eastwood as the beaten-down, womanizing journalist Steve Everett who will stop at nothing to follow a hunch that a convicted killer is innocent.

• **Investigative Reporters** – Next to the war correspondent, the investigative reporter, who always works tirelessly to aid the public, is often the only other legitimate hero of journalism films. He or she usually risks life and limb to get the story that will help the public. They join a handful of editors and even publishers who do not let personal gain or safety stand in the way of running down a story that exposes crime or corruption (James Stewart as P.G. McNeal in *Call Northside 777* or Dustin Hoffman as Carl Bernstein and Robert Redford as Bob Woodward in *All the President's Men*. They often end up dead – killed by a mobster they were trying to expose, or a crooked policeman, or a corrupt politician (Reporter Jerry McKibbon played by William Holden in *The Turning Point*). More often they end up beaten – but never broken. They are always threatened and show great courage in putting their lives on the line to get the story in the newspaper or on television. Many of the reporters who are killed in action are secondary actors whose deaths are avenged by the star reporters. These journalists are expendable in Hollywood because they give the hero a motive to go after the bad guys with a

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vengeance: Their pal has been murdered and nothing will stop the reporter from capturing the killers and putting their mugs on page one and their bodies in jail. Newspapermen and women are incredibly loyal to their publications and, most of all, to their colleagues.

- **Memorable Newsroom Families** – Journalism wreaks havoc on most personal relationships. Movies aping real life seldom feature journalists in marriages that last. Journalists usually end up alone in the big city without family. Divorce rates in TV newsrooms are astronomical. The only marriages that seem to work involve a man and a woman who are both working journalists. The only friends most newspeople have are the people who work with them. And these people – the reporters, editors, photographers, producers, and the others who work in a newsroom – become an extended family, often the only family most journalists have. Frequently, a film would feature a family of journalists that would include many different kinds of journalists working together or, at times, against each other, but all part of a separate nuclear family. Movies and television programs offer some of the best examples of the extended family of journalists, whether it be in a 1929 newspaper office in *Big News* or in a state-of-the-art TV newsroom such as television series' *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Murphy Brown* or *Breaking News*. No one journalist here stands out – each has a role, and each plays it to the fullest. Most embody all of the film-TV clichés of what it means to be a journalist in the big city, alone, cynical, hardworking, ready to do anything for the paper or news program even it means giving up a personal life, and always ready with a wisecrack, a funny line, a joke. Laughter is sometimes the only thing that keeps a journalist going even in the worst of times.

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• **Photojournalists and Newsreel Shooters** – Photographers using still film or moving pictures often risk their lives to get the images that show us what is going on in this country and around the world. Often news photographers shoot pictures of indescribable horror and barely escape death to bring back pictures to the public (films that show the photojournalist in action his include *Margaret Bourke-White, Salvador* and *Under Fire*). Some photographers, especially newsreel shooters, are among the most courageous and corrupt journalists on film. These newshawks use a camera instead of a pad and pencil, and they frequently will do anything to get an exclusive picture of a hot news story. Lie, cheat, deceive a friend, take advantage of a loved one – all's fair in this end of the news business (*Headline Shooter* is typical of the genre). The faking of newsreel film is rooted in history. Newsreel cameramen began faking coverage of news events as soon as the camera was invented. Although these films are a bit exaggerated, real-life newsreel cameramen earned similar reputations in the field. Photojournalists are natural heroes and villains for the movies and television. Sometimes their fictional tales are grafted onto footage of actual fires, earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters.

• **Publishers and Media Owners** – Whether they be publishers of big-city newspapers or new media, these men and women usually are depicted trying to use the media for their own ends. At first there was only the newspaper publisher. Many are shown as benevolent journalists who tried to offer a good product at a fair price. But the movies soon discovered that they needed a villain, and reporters and editors were too busy trying to capture the crook or expose corruption to make very good bad guys. Publishers, and now the media moguls, are rich and powerful, so movie audiences love to hate them. Soon, greedy, hypocritical, amoral publishers were crowding

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the conscientious publishers off the screen. They are either concerned with economic power – willing to do anything to increase circulation – or they lust after political power. Money-mad or power-hungry, it doesn't matter. They are the ones who are destroying the media's role in a free society: to serve the public interest at all costs. No one understood this better than director Frank Capra who created some of the most notorious publishers in film history including media tycoon D.B. Norton (Edward Arnold) in *Meet John Doe*.

- **Real-Life Journalists** – These reporters and editors are thrown into movies from the 1920s on to give the newspaper film more authenticity. From columnists Walter Winchell to Jimmy Breslin, these real-life byliners are valuable cameo stars. Newspaper headlines and, later, radio and television broadcasts are often used as the easiest and fastest way to sum up what is going on, even in films and television programs that have nothing to do with journalism. In recent decades, the familiar TV journalist shows up in almost every film either as background to the action or as a commentator on the people in the news who happen to be the stars of the movie. In addition, many real-life journalists are portrayed by actors, from war correspondent Ernie Pyle (Burgess Meredith in *The Story of G.I. Joe*) to Philadelphia investigative reporter Jonathan Neumann (Rob Morrow in *The Thin Blue Lie*).

- **Sob Sisters** – Female journalists in silent films face almost the same problems many females face in today's media. In real life, few ever heard the words *sob sister* until the movies popularized the term. It sums up the dichotomy of the movie female reporter – she is considered an equal by doing a man's job, a career woman drinking and arguing toe-to-toe with any male in the shop, holding her own against everyone and anything, yet often showing her soft side and

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crying long and hard when the man she loves treats her like a sister instead of a lover. By the end of the film, most sob sisters, no matter how tough or independent, would give up anything and everything for marriage, children, and a life at home (Bette Davis as editor Linda Gilman does just that in *June Bride*, and Glenda Farrell as Torchy Blane melted in the arms of her stupid policeman boyfriend at the end of a series of B movies). They simply have no choice. Female journalists moving into broadcasting and new media show more independence, but the parallels between the early sob sisters and the modern female journalists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are striking.⁸⁹

• **Sports Journalists** – Sports reporters and writers aren't much different from their city-room counterparts, although their venue makes them unique. There are syndicated sports columnists who will do anything to get an exclusive, including using blackmail and payoffs (such as Max Mercy played by Robert Duvall in *The Natural*). But the majority of sportswriters depicted in film and on television simply go out and do their job. Some are heroic in that they ferret out corruption in sports, risking public animosity (*Eight Men Out* is a good example). Most often, they are used as realistic dressing for biographies of sports personalities, both in the movies and on television.

• **War and Foreign Correspondents** – The undisputed journalist hero is the war correspondent, even if these journalists sometimes hide behind a patriotic and jingoistic script. During the 1940s, the war correspondent became a national folk hero. Popular actors couldn't wait to play the glamorous overseas war reporter who would save democracy, his loved one, and

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his country in less than a couple of hours (Clark Gable in *Somewhere I'll Find You*, James Cagney in *Blood on the Sun* and Joel McCrea in *Foreign Correspondent* are good examples). Some war correspondents were a variation on the oldest stereotype in newspaper films – the crime reporter. During dangerous times abroad, they were working on a larger canvas but still solving the crime without official help or guidance. When there aren't any conflicts, the foreign correspondent in movies is a lot less dramatic. The war correspondent is the perfect movie hero, whose daily work involves patriotism, danger, violence, and drama. The war correspondents are where the action is, and a whole nation holds its breath while they risk their lives overseas to get the story back to the home front. Issues of censorship and distorting the truth in times of war are sometimes touched upon in the movies, but when bullets are flying and lives are in jeopardy, these are nuances in which American moviemakers and the American moviegoers aren't much interested. Kill the enemy and save our boys no matter what it takes – and if that means journalists who practice jingoism and racism, that is a price everyone seems willing to pay. Many war correspondents died on the battlefield or trying to get a story out of enemy territory.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the images of the journalist in popular culture throughout recorded history offers a unique way to evaluate the relationship of the public with the news media throughout the centuries. It really doesn't matter to the public if these images are true or false. What matters is that these images are very real in the public mind. The reality is that few people ever witness a journalist in action. They rarely visit a newspaper or magazine office or a broadcast newsroom or any other place where journalists work to report the news of the day. Yet they have a very

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specific idea of what a journalist is and what he or she does because they have read about journalists in novels, short stories and comic books, and they have seen them in movies, TV programs, plays, and cartoons.

It doesn't even matter if the journalists are fictional or real. Real-life journalists become larger than life because of what is written about them both in fiction and non-fiction. People felt they knew editors such as William Randolph Hearst or Horace Greeley and columnists such as Walter Winchell and Louella Parsons, and TV journalists such as Barbara Walters or Geraldo Rivera because these journalists' public personas were so overwhelmingly convincing. Few ever met them in person, few had any idea of what their private lives were all about, but their public personalities presented in movie newsreels, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, films and finally television programs and the Internet overwhelmed any private reality.

By studying the various images of the journalist, the historian can get a better understanding of what the public of a specific era believes about its media and the people in that media – whether it be a messenger overcoming great odds to bring accurate news to a waiting public; or a news balladeer offering royal gossip or reports of an amazing natural atrocity or disaster; or an unscrupulous editor or publisher using the power of the press for his own financial gain; or an investigative reporter exposing some public corruption or abuse; or the war correspondent risking life and limb to report some horrendous battle; or an anonymous journalist doing anything to get a story.

What the researcher can discover is to the variety of images of real and fictitious journalists available to the public through its popular culture at a specific point in time. By going to the pre-20th century poetry, plays, novels, satires, essays and pamphlets as well as the images of the real journalists of the time, it is possible to understand where the deep-rooted 20th-century

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affection and animosity toward news media and its representatives originally developed. Then, by analyzing the fiction, comic books, radio programs, movies, TV programs, and Web and Internet sites of the 20th and 21st centuries, the researcher can get a fresh perspective on how the public feels about its journalists and news media in modern times.

Only by understanding why the public feels the way it does about its news media will it ever be possible for future journalists, academic researchers and media critics to change the public's perception of who and what journalism is all about as it moves into the early decades of the 21st century. This paper is an attempt to show the possibilities and rewards involved in analyzing the image of the journalist in popular culture throughout recorded history.

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ADDENDUM: IJPC RESOURCES

To help the new scholar in this field, the IJPC has created three major resources for IJPC Associate members:

*The unique IJPC Database, which in its current edition has more than 42,000 entries on journalists, public relations practitioners and media in films, television, fiction, radio, cartoons-comic books-comic strips, commercials, games, art and songs, from ancient times to last month.

This invaluable Microsoft Access Database, which can be searched by year, title, type and comments, is a treasure-trove of information that has taken more than 15 years to compile.

(Associate IJPC Director Richard Ness of Western Illinois University and author of the seminal work *From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography*, is the principal film researcher for the IJPC.)

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*The second major resource is the IJPC Web site – www.ijpc.org. The Web site not only features original articles and research, but also seminal articles difficult to find elsewhere, including papers given at conferences and other academic events or published in hard-to-find journals and magazines. One example of original research is “Sob Sisters: The Image of the Female Journalist in Popular Culture.” It includes a lengthy introductory essay (already required reading in not only journalism classes, but also gender and feminist courses around the country) and a bibliography featuring more than 8,500 items from 1700 to 2004, the first time such a resource has been created. Another popular feature of the Web site is the IJPC Class Materials section, making it easy for any professor to establish an Image of the Journalist in Movies and Television class using tapes and materials available from the IJPC. These classes have proven to not only be very popular, but also to provide students with a unique perspective on journalism and the media. A student journal on the Web site is being created so graduate students will have an outlet for papers written in class on the subject.

*The third major resource is the IJPC Collection of research materials including more than 2,500 video tapes and discs; more than 5,000 hours of audiotapes and MP3 files; more than 8,500 novels, short stories, plays, and poems (the largest collection of novels and short stories featuring journalists ever assembled); and scripts, research materials, articles, art works and other artifacts. These materials are available for personal use only by any IJPC Associate.

Anyone interested in this growing research field can become an IJPC Associate and receive complete access to the IJPC Database and all IJPC research materials. Contact the IJPC Web site (www.ijpc.org) or saltzman@usc.edu for more information. We welcome your participation. Anyone interested in collaborating on the IJPC's 10-volume history of the image

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of the journalist in popular culture (*Heroes and Scoundrels: The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture*) should contact Saltzman directly.

¹ Oxford English Dictionary: *Humours Town* in 1693 (Epistle-Writer or Journalists-Mercurists). After the French *journaliste*. In 1712, Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 323, p. 2, "One who journalizes, or keeps a journal." Online Etymology Dictionary: *Journal* is from 1355 "book of church services," from the Anglo-French *journal* "a day," from O. Fr. *journal*, originally "daily" from L.L. *diurnalis* "daily" or *diurnal*. Sense of "daily record of transactions" first recorded in 1565; that of "personal diary" in 1610. *Journalism* in 1833 in English; likewise from French (where it is attested from 1781).

² Definitions of journalism have become complex and varied. As Barbie Zelizer writes in "Definitions of Journalism," in *Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, Oxford University Press, pp. 66-80: "As journalism has come to be thought of as a profession, an industry, a phenomenon, and a culture, definitions have emerged that reflect various concerns and goals...Naming, labeling, evaluating, and critiquing journalism and journalistic practice reflect the populations from which individuals come, the type of news work, medium, and technology being referenced, and the relevant historical time period and geographical setting."

³ This holds true for any ancient writer described in modern terms. For example, the Greek and Roman historians are not historians by any modern definition. Detlev Fehling's *Herodotus and his 'Sources,' Citation, Invention and Narrative Art* dramatically shows how the "father of history" followed the rules of his own genre, which were not those of modern historiography. And many so-called ancient historians functioned more like ancient journalists than historians, using the techniques of the modern journalist rather than the techniques of modern historians. As R.W. Macan writes about Herodotus: "...his inexhaustible interest, his insatiable curiosity, his infinite capacity for taking notes, his flair for a good story, his power of sustaining a continuous narrative, his delight in digression, aside and bon mot...the lightness of his touch, the grace of his language, his glory in human virtue and achievement wherever to be found, and withal the feelings of mortality, the sense of tears, the pathos of man's fate." *Cambridge Ancient History* V, p. 417

⁴ Dixon Wecter, *The Hero in America: A Chronicle of Hero-Worship*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1972, pp. 11-12

⁵ Wecter, pp. 482-487.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 11-12

⁷ Orrin E. Klapp, *Heroes, Villains, and Fools: The Changing American Character*, A Spectrum Book, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962, pp. 50-65.

⁸ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream*, Atheneum, New York, 1962, pp. 61-62.

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⁹ Boorstin, p. 63.

¹⁰ Boorstin, p. 63.

¹¹ The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture (IJPC), a project of the Norman Lear Center in the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California was created in 2000 to investigate and analyze – through research and publication – the conflicting images of the journalist in film, television, radio, fiction (novels, short stories, plays poems), cartoons-comic strips-comic books, commercials and other forms of popular culture to demonstrate their impact on the public's perception of journalists. In a short three years, the IJPC Web site has become the definitive worldwide source for scholars and journalists interested in the subject.

¹² Much of this research was done in conjunction with a projected 10-volume history, *Heroes and Scoundrels: The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture, Volume One: Antiquity*.

¹³ This early history comes from many readings in the period. Especially helpful are Mitchell Stephens, *A History of News: From the Drum to the Satellite*, Penguin Books, 1988; M.A. Shaaber, *Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476-1622*, Octagon Books, Inc., 1929, 1966; and Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper, 1620-1660*, Harvard University Press, 1961.

¹⁴ Many examples can be found in Homer (*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*); Aristophanes (*The Acharnians, The Birds, Lystrata, The Ecclesiazusae or Women in Council, The Thesmophoriazusae or Festival Time, Thesmophoriazusae*); Sophocles (*Antigone, Ajax, Oedipus Rex, Oedipus Coloneus, Women of Trachis*); Euripides (*The Heracleide or The Children of Heracles, Hippolytus, Heracles, Andromache, The Suppliant Women, Orestes, Iphigenia in Aulis*); Aeschylus (*Agamemnon, The Choephoroi, Persians, Prometheus, The Seven Against Thebes*, Seneca (*Medea, Phaedra, Oedipus, Thyestes, Octavia*); Virgil (*Aeneid*). A good source for Semitic messengers in ancient times is Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World*.

¹⁵ Homer, *The Iliad*. Book Two. Translator Richard Lattimore interprets the last line to mean: "We have heard only the rumour of it and know nothing." Translator Samuel Butler: "And now, O Muses, dwellers in the mansions of Olympus, tell me – for you are goddesses and are in all places so that you see all things, while we know nothing but by report...."

¹⁶ Theophrastus, *The Character Studies*, Warren Anderson, pp. xviii-xix.

¹⁷ Theophrastus, *Characters*, No. 8 is variously translated as "The Newsmaker or Logopoiia" (Anderson), "The Fabricator" (translator: R.C. Jebb), "News-Making" (translator: R. Thomson Clark), "News-Forging or Rumor-Speaking" (translator: Joseph Healey, 1628).

¹⁸ Theophrastus, *The Fabricator*, No. 8 in *Characters*, Anderson, p. 35.

¹⁹ Theophrastus, *The News Maker*, No. 8 in *Characters*, R.C. Jebb, p. 107. Also of interest is Demosthenes, in his First Philippic speech, 10: "Or tell me, are you content to run around and ask one another, 'Is there any news today?' Could there be any news more startling than that a Macedonian is triumphing over Athenians and settling the destiny of" Greece? Also in the New Testament, Paul preaches to the Thessalonians and Bereans on the Athenians (Section 5, Chapter 18, 17:21): "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

²⁰ Homer, *The Iliad*, Robert Fitzgerald, pp. 146-148. Austin H. Chase-William G. Perry, Jr., pp. 114-115.

²¹ Sophocles wrote at least 120 dramas, but only seven tragedies survive. Oxford World Classics, p. xiii.

²² Sophocles, *Antigone*, Lines 276-277, Part II. Messenger to Creon. Sir George Young translation, *The Dramas of Sophocles*, p. 16.

²³ Sophocles, *Women of Trachis*, (430 B.C.), C.K. Williams translation, p. 50. The play shows the dangers of delivering bad news, whether the Greek be a messenger or a herald acting as a messenger. It also shows how much the public as well as royalty valued the messenger bearing important news, and

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how an untrustworthy messenger could be killed for his lies regardless of the motive behind those lies. It also speaks to the perceived function of the messenger as being one who should stick to observing and relaying information, not someone who is a participant and gets involved in the story. Herakles "shouted for poor Lichas, who'd had nothing to do with it, and asked him why he'd brought that robe, what kind of scheme did he have in mind? But Lichas didn't know anything. He could only say what you told him to say; that the robe was a gift from you. When Herakles heard that, a spasm of pain seemed to shoot into his lungs and he grabbed Lichas by the foot, right where the ankle pivots in the socket and just threw him at a rock sticking out of the water. His head shattered. The brains erupted through his hair and blood and pieces of the skull. Everyone in the crowd was shrieking with horror. One was insane, the other dead, but nobody dared come near him because he kept throwing himself on the ground and leaping, howling and screaming into the air...."

²⁴ Charles Martin, *Poems of Catullus*, Introduction; E.A. Havelock, *Lyric Genius of Catullus*. Carl Sesar, *Selected Poems of Catullus*, Afterword.

²⁵ J.P. Sullivan, *Martial, Unexpected Classics*, pp. 85-90.

²⁶ Martial, *The Twelve Books of Epigrams, Book 9, No. 35, The Newsmonger*, J.A. Pott-F.A. Wright, p. 273.

²⁷ Paul Nixon, *Martial and the Modern Epigram*, p. 155

²⁸ William Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, p. 80: "Herodotus freely invented texts." "Fourth-century orators and politicians...frequently invented historical facts in a most abandoned fashion and historians avoided documentary research."

²⁹ Examples of original sources include Herodotus' *The Persian Wars*; Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*; Xenophon's *Hellenica*; Cicero (*Letters To Atticus*; *Letters, To L. Lucceius*). Secondary sources speaking to the subject include Stephen Usher, *The Historians of Greece and Rome*; William Harris, *Ancient Literacy*; Francis Godolphin, *The Greek Historians*; Gilbert Norwood, *The Writers of Greece*. Truesdell S. Brown, *The Greek Historians*.

³⁰ Henrie Chettle *Kind-Hartes Dreame*, 1592 and William Kemp, *Nine Daies Wonder*, 1600, edited by G.B. Harrison, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos*, Barnes & Noble Inc., 1966; J.B. Leishman, *The Three Parnassus Plays, 1598-1601*, edited with an introduction and commentary, Ivor Nicholson & Watson Ltd., 1949.

³¹ Much of this discussion originated in the author's *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, Norman Lear Press, 2002, and other writings.

³² In ancient China, for example, the *hsiaopao* "indicated a feverish demand for up-to-date news." "Private reporters" were connected with so-called tabloid newspapers and were often "accused of leaking out official news." A memorandum written by Chou Linchih, who lived around 160 A.D. petitioned the government for the suppression of tabloid news: "At times when drastic measures were promulgated by Your Majesty through your edicts, there were always rumour-mongers who took the opportunity to spread sensational news misleading the public. For instance, when Your Majesty summoned some of your old ministers back to power the other day, there was a great deal of talk about the town emanating from an unknown source. On close examination I found that such rumours always started from the tabloid news, which leaked out from the Bureau of Official Reports and are the work of the official agents of the residences. In recent years, whenever there is news in the air and the public is held in suspense, these agents would snatch the chance to write the news down on little scripts and circulate them abroad. This is the so-called *hsiaopao* ("small newspapers"). For instance, they often say "So-and-so was summoned to an imperial audience to-day" or "So-and-so was dismissed," or "So-and-so got an appointment." This news is often inaccurate or even a groundless fabrication, but scholars at the capital would say, on hearing such news, "We have already seen it in the *hsiaopao* and magistrates in the country would say on hearing the news, "We have received the *hsiaopao* already. Sometimes it turned out to be true and sometimes it turned out to be false. If it was true, the news should not have been permitted to leak out, and if it was

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false, it was misleading. I rather think that trivial as the subject seems to be, the spreading of news through such channels is injurious to the administration and demands our attention. I humbly petition that Your Majesty should issue an edict prohibiting their circulation with definite forms of punishment attached to it. In this way people will learn about the government orders without conjecturing about them, and whatever is issued will be correct and reliable. In this way the dignity of the government is upheld and the source of publicity will be unified.” Chou Linchih, Vol. II, pg. 2, quoted in Lin Yutang's *A History of the Press and public opinion in China, Part One: The Ancient Period*, pp. 1-75.

³³ Hyder E. Rollins, *William Elderton: Elizabethan Actor Ballad-Writer*, Studies in Philology, Volume 17, 1920, University of North Carolina, pp. 199-245.

³⁴ Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614, edited by Eugene M. Waith, Yale University Press.

³⁵ Good sources for balladeers and pamphleteers who specialized in news would include Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets, 1580-1640*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983; Celeste Turner, *Anthony Munday (Munday): An Elizabethan Man of Letters*, University of California Publications in English, Volume II, 1928-1929, University of California Press, 1977; Edwin Haviland Miller, *The Professional Writer in Elizabethan England*, Harvard University Press, 1959; Phoebe Sheavyn, *The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age*, 2nd Edition revised throughout by J. W. Saunders, Manchester University Press, 1967; G.R. Hibbard, *Three Elizabethan Pamphlets*, George G. Harp & Co. 1951; George Saintsbury, *Elizabethan & Jacobean Pamphlets*, Books for Libraries Press, 1892, 1970; Ronald B. McKerrow, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, edited from the original Texts, Volume V, Oxford, 1958, pp. 11-34; Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse, His Supplication to the Divell*, in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, edited from the original texts by Ronald B. McKerrow. G.R. Hibbard, *Thomas Nashe*; Charles Nicholl, *Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe*, Routledge & Paul Kegan, 1984; George R. Price *Thomas Dekker*, Twayne Publishers, 1969; Morse Allen, *The Satire of John Marston, a Dissertation presented to the faculty of Princeton University in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*, Haskell House Publishers, 1920;

³⁶ Ben Jonson, *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson* edited by G.A. Wilkes based on the edition edited by C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, Oxford at the Clarendon; *The Staple of News*, 1626, Anthony Parr, Manchester University Press.

³⁷ Jonson, *The Staple of News*, Parr Edition, p. 27

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 30

³⁹ Ben Jonson, *News From the New World*, 1620, in *Selected Masques*, edited by Stephen Orgel, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1970.

⁴⁰ Hyder Rollins, *Cavalier and Puritan*, p. 55: Mercurius Democritus for July 127 to August 3, 1653, jeers at the Parliament Scout for its incredible stories.

⁴¹ Howard William Troyer, *Ned Ward of Grubstreet*, p. 7.

⁴² William Bragg Ewald, *Rogues, Royalty and Reporters: The Age of Queen Anne through its Newspapers*, Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1978, (Published in England as *The Newsmen of Queen Anne*), Preface, p. x.

⁴³ Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe – His Life*, p. 44.

⁴⁴ J.A. Downie, *Mr. Review and His Scribbling Friends*, p. 354-355. William L. Payne, *The Best of Defoe's Review, An Anthology*, p. xi.

⁴⁵ William Lytton Payne, *The Best of Defoe's Review, An Anthology*, p. x.

⁴⁶ J.A. Downie, *The Best of Defoe's Mr. Review and his Scribbling Friends*, p. 346.

⁴⁷ John Peter Zenger was an editor of the 18th century who has been transformed into a prototypical image of the lone editor fighting for the public good. His name has become a catchword used by journalists ever since when press freedom was in jeopardy. He became a hero in histories of the freedom of the press, the lone editor fighting authority, going to jail to preserve the freedom of the press. The famous Zenger trial (1734-1735) affirmed the power of juries in libel cases to decide the law as well

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as the fact and is a landmark of legal doctrine. Zenger's reward for vindication in the trial was his appointment to the monopoly of "Publick Printer" in 1737. (Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*, Vintage Books, 1958, p. 333.)

⁴⁸ Bernard A. Weisberger, *The American Newspaperman*, The University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁹ James Fenimore Cooper, *Homeward Bound and Home as Found*, 1838.

⁵⁰ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*, Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1973, p. 13.

⁵¹ James K. Paulding (Anonymous), *Westward Ho! A Tale*, in two volumes, printed and published by J. & J. Harper, 1832.

⁵² Honore de Balzac, *Lost Illusions and A Distinguished Provincial at Paris*, in *The Works of Honore de Balzac*, Fohn D. Morris and Company, 1837, 1901.

⁵³ Louis M. Starr, *Bohemian Brigade: Civil Newsman in Action*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1954, p. 6.

⁵⁴ James G. Harrison, "Nineteenth-Century American Novels on American Journalism I," *Journalism Quarterly*, September 1945, Volume 22, Number 3, P. 218.

⁵⁵ Starr, *Bohemian Brigade*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Weisberger, *The American Newspaperman*, p. 118. Rutland, Robert A., *The Newsmongers: Journalism in the Life of the Nation, 1690-1972*, The Dial Press, New York, 1973.

⁵⁷ Philip Knightly, *The First Casualty -- From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York and London, 1975, p. 21.

⁵⁸ Oliver Gambling, *AP: The Story of News*, Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1940, p. 44.

⁵⁹ Starr, *Bohemian Brigade*, Pp, 247-248.

⁶⁰ Ibid, Pp. 244-248. All examples come directly from Starr's text.

⁶¹ Bayard Taylor, *John Godfrey's Fortunes; Related By Himself: A Story of American Life*, G.P. Putnam; Hurd and Houghton, 1864.

⁶² John Ferguson Hume (Willys Niles), *Five Hundred Majority; or, The Days of Tammany*, G.P. Putnam & Sons, New York, 1872.

⁶³ Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, 1873, 1980.

⁶⁴ J.G. Holland, *Sevenoaks: A Story of To-Day*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1875, 1905.

⁶⁵ Holland, *Sevenoaks: A Story of To-Day*, p. 201.

⁶⁶ Rebecca Harding Davis, *John Andross*, Orange Judd Company, New York, 1874.

⁶⁷ Harding, *John Andross*, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 89.

⁶⁹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *My Wife and I: or, Harry Henderson's History*, J.B. Ford and Company, New York, 1871.

⁷⁰ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *We And Our Neighbors or, The Records of an Unfashionable Street*, (the sequel to *My Wife and I*), Houghton, Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Boston and New York, 1873, 1896.

⁷¹ James G. Harrison, *American Newspaper Journalism as Described in American Novels of the Nineteenth Century*, a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina, p. 254.

⁷² William M. Thackeray, Vol. I and II, Dana Estes & Company Publishers, Boston, 1897.

⁷³ Practically every American and English writer seemed to include a journalist in their fiction starting in the late 19th century. Major writers such as Anthony Trollope, Henry James, Mark Twain, and almost every writer of detective and mysteries in the 20th century were attracted to the journalist as either a major or minor character.

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⁷⁴ For a survey of early American novels dealing with journalists, see Howard Good's *Acquainted With the Night: The Image of Journalists in American Fiction, 1890–1930* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 1986). For a survey of American novels of the 19th century, see James G. Harrison's *American Newspaper Journalism As Described in American Novels of the Nineteenth Century*, a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina; *Nineteenth-Century American Novels on American Journalism I, Journalism Quarterly*, September 1945, Volume 22, Number 3, pp. 215-224; *Nineteenth-Century American Novels on American Journalism II, Journalism Quarterly*, December 1945, Volume 22, Number 4, pp. 335-345.

⁷⁵ Michael Emery and Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media*, Sixth Edition (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1988 Sixth Edition), p. 227.

⁷⁶ Some of this material first appeared in the author's *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, the Afterword. pp. 175-188.

⁷⁷ Excellent sources for the image of the journalist in popular culture in the 20th century emphasizing films include Alex Barris, *Stop the Presses! The Newspaperman in American Films* (Barnes, New York, 1976). Donna Born, "The Image of the Woman Journalist in American Popular Fiction, 1890 to the Present," A Paper presented to the Committee on the Status of Women of the Association of Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Michigan State University, East Lansing, August, 1981. Matt Erlich, *Journalism in the Movies* (University of Illinois Press, 2004). Loren Ghiglione, *The American Journalist: Paradox of the Press* (Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 1990). Howard Good, *Outcasts: The Image of Journalists in Contemporary Films* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 1989); *Girl Reporter: Gender, Journalism, and the Movies* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 1998); *The Drunken Journalist: The Biography of a Film Stereotype* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 2000); Pauline Kael, *Raising Kane, The Citizen Kane Book* (Limelight Editions, New York, 1984). Paul Loukides, and Linda K. Fuller, *Beyond the Stars: Stock Characters in American Popular Film* (Bowling Green State University Popular Press, OH, 1990). Richard R. Ness, *From Headline Hunter to Superman: A Journalism Filmography* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD, 1997). Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy, *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair and Politics from the Depression to the Fifties* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1981). Deac Rossell, "Hollywood and the Newsroom" (*American Film*, October 1975). This author's *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* (Norman Lear Press, 2002).

⁷⁸ For as complete a listing as ever compiled of films and television programs featuring journalists see the *IJPC Database, 2005 Edition* (included are entries on 14,200 movies, movies made for TV and miniseries; 11,000 television programs; 8,500 novels, 1,300 short stories, 420 plays and 200 poems; 2,500 radio programs; 3,200 cartoons, comic books and comic strips, and commercials, non-fiction sources, games, art and music).

⁷⁹ Much of this discussion was first explored in the author's *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* and Loren Ghiglione and the author's *Fact or Fiction: Hollywood Looks at the News* essay on www.ijpc.org, from which these conclusions are taken.

⁸⁰ These surveys have remained consistent for decades in showing this dichotomy. As recently as 2003, a national survey showed that "46 percent think the press in America has too much freedom." Other surveys show that "71 percent of all citizens felt it was important for the government to hold the media in check." By contrast, more than eight in ten Americans (82 percent) say they "value the role the press plays in a democracy" and believe it is "important for the media to hold the government in check," *American Attitudes About The First Amendment* From 2001-2004 surveys, a project sponsored by The First Amendment Center and the *American Journalism Review*.

⁸¹ Much of this material has been taken from the author's *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film*, Norman Lear Press, 2002.

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⁸² Alex Barris, *Stop the Presses! The Newspaperman in American Films* (Barnes, South Brunswick, 1976), p. 7.

⁸³ Loren Ghiglione, *The American Journalist: Paradox of the Press* (Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 1990), pp. 97–162.

⁸⁴ Richard R. Ness, *From Headline Hunter to Superman: a Journalism Filmography* (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD, 1997), p. ix, the best resource book on the subject.

⁸⁵ Larry Langman, *The Media in the Movies: A Catalog of American Journalism Films, 1900 – 1996* (McFarland, Jefferson, NC, 1998), pp 1–13.

⁸⁶ Courson Maxwell Taylor, *The Newspaper Movies: An Analysis of the Rise and Decline of the News Gatherer as a Hero in American Motion Pictures, 1900–1974* (University of Hawaii, 1976), one of the most comprehensive studies of the journalist in films up to 1974, and published only as a dissertation, pp. 66–165.

⁸⁷ Howard Good, *Outcasts: The Image of Journalists in Contemporary Film* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 1989) is one such example.

⁸⁸ These categories and descriptions come from Saltzman's *Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film* from which this material is reprinted.

⁸⁹ For a more complete look at female journalists in movies, television and fiction, see this author's *Sob Sisters: The Image of the Female Journalist in Popular Culture*, to be found on www.ijpc.org

Key words: media image, media discourse, Western media, content analysis, Russia, great power, Empire. Introduction One of the significant factors affecting the perception of any country is its image formed by the media in the public consciousness of its audience. A post-Soviet Russia " in its contemporary and fundamentally new quality " has all the prerequisites to become an influential and respected country in the world (Rozhkov, Kismereshkin, 2008: 6). But the media discourse does not always represent exchange of courtesies, emotional support, and neutrality of the presentation of events; o Its essence is a discipline of verification. Journalists rely on a professional discipline for verifying information. While there is no standardized code as such, every journalist uses certain methods to assess and test information to "œget it right.â€ Being impartial or neutral is not a core principle of journalism.Â Rather, it sought to redefine the role of the journalist from a passive stenographer to more a curious observer who would "œsearch out and discover the news.â€ The watchdog role also means more than simply monitoring government.Â The news media are common carriers of public discussion, and this responsibility forms a basis for special privileges that news and information providers receive from democratic societies.