

# The Intersecting Spheres of Media: Theory of Text, Problems of Media, and Journalistic Genres in the Digital Age

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*The media and communication landscape is in a constant flux, marked by technological advancements and evolving societal norms. At the heart of this dynamic environment lie the intricate relationships between the theoretical frameworks we use to understand media, the persistent challenges that plague the media ecosystem, and the diverse forms through which journalistic content is presented. The "theory of work and text," despite its origins in literary criticism, offers enduring relevance in analyzing contemporary media challenges and the shifting nature of journalistic practices. These practices are increasingly confronted by significant "problems of media," including the widespread dissemination of misinformation, a noticeable decline in public trust, and the pervasive influence of rapidly evolving technologies. Furthermore, "journalistic genres," serving as both structural containers for media content and reflections of journalistic norms, provide a crucial site where these theoretical concepts and societal problems converge. This report aims to explore these interconnected themes, drawing upon a range of scholarly literature to analyze their complex relationships and propose potential titles for academic papers suitable for publication by Oxford University Press.*

*To effectively analyze the complexities of contemporary media, it is essential to first establish a robust theoretical foundation. The "theory of work and text," primarily associated with post-structuralist thought, provides valuable frameworks for understanding how media content is created, disseminated, and interpreted.*

*Keywords*

*Theory of Text, Problems of Media, Journalistic Genres*

## Introduction

Roland Barthes' influential essay "From Work to Text" presents a fundamental dichotomy between the traditional notion of a literary or artistic "work" and the more contemporary concept of the "text".<sup>1</sup> Barthes argues that the "work" is a

tangible object, confined to a specific medium and often associated with a singular authorial intention. It exists as a fragment of substance, occupying a defined space, such as a book on a library shelf.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the "text" is not merely a physical entity but rather a methodological field, a process of demonstration that speaks according to certain rules.<sup>1</sup> It is characterized by its unclassifiable nature, its generation of perpetual signifiers, and its inherent intertextuality, existing only when caught up in a discourse.<sup>2</sup>

Barthes delineates seven key characteristics that distinguish the "work" from the "text." Firstly, concerning method, the "work" is a concrete object that can be handled, while the "text" is a composition or meaning derived by the reader.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, regarding genre, the "work" adheres to rigid classifications, whereas the "text" is unclassifiable.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, in terms of signs, the "work" is complete with a signified meaning, while the "text" is metonymic, encouraging multiple associations and interpretations.<sup>2</sup> Fourthly, concerning plurality, the "work" has a literal interpretation, but the "text" is open-ended with multiple layers of meaning and intertextual references.<sup>2</sup> Fifthly, regarding filiation, the "work" is associated with a specific author, but the "text" is untraceable, with the unity lying in the reader.<sup>2</sup> Sixthly, in terms of reading, the "work" is a commodity for passive consumption, while the "text" invites collaborative and active reading.<sup>2</sup> Finally, concerning pleasure, the "work" might lead to boredom if not actively engaged with, whereas the "text" arouses a different kind of pleasure through active participation in meaning-making.<sup>2</sup>

Barthes' concept of the "text" as a dynamic and intertextual entity is particularly pertinent to understanding digital media. The hyperlinked and interconnected nature of online content, where a single journalistic piece can link to numerous other sources and interpretations, aligns with the fluid and associative qualities of the "text." Furthermore, the participatory nature of digital platforms, with features like comments sections and social sharing, exemplifies the "text" in action, where meaning is collectively produced and negotiated by audiences.<sup>1</sup> The focus shifts from the author's singular intention (more aligned with the "work") to the reader's active role in constructing meaning from the media they consume.

In the context of journalistic texts, different genres might be perceived as leaning towards either the "work" or the "text." For instance, a breaking news report, striving for immediate factual dissemination, might initially aim for the characteristics of a "work," seeking a singular, authoritative interpretation. However, even such a report, when encountered in the digital sphere, becomes part of a larger network of information, subject to diverse readings and discussions. Conversely, a long-form investigative piece or a narrative feature, with its potential for multiple perspectives and deeper engagement, could be seen as embodying more of the open and associative qualities of a "text." The intertextual nature of online journalism also means that any

journalistic piece exists within a broader web of references, potentially cutting across various "works" and inviting a "textual" mode of engagement.

### **Louise Rosenblatt: Transactional Theory of the Literary Work**

Complementing Barthes' perspective, Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of the literary work emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the reader and the text in the creation of meaning.<sup>4</sup> Rosenblatt argues that meaning is not inherent in either the text alone or the reader alone, but rather emerges from the unique "transaction" that occurs between them at a specific time and under particular circumstances.<sup>4</sup> This theory underscores the active role of the reader, who brings their entire personal history, including cultural background<sup>5</sup>, experiences, beliefs, and emotional state, to the reading event.<sup>4</sup> These factors significantly influence how the reader perceives and interprets the verbal symbols on the page.

While the reader is active, the text itself is not merely a passive object. It possesses certain potentialities and constraints through its organized structure of verbal symbols, guiding the reader's transaction.<sup>4</sup> The author's choices of language, structure, and literary devices offer a framework within which the reader operates, holding the reader accountable to its meaning.<sup>4</sup> For Rosenblatt, "the poem" or the literary work as experienced is not the physical book or the abstract text, but the lived-through experience or the meaning that arises during this transaction.<sup>4</sup> It is a unique event in time, personal to each reader and each reading, resulting from the reader negotiating meaning with the text, creating a "live circuit".<sup>4</sup>

Rosenblatt distinguishes between two primary stances or purposes that readers may adopt: efferent reading and aesthetic reading.<sup>4</sup> Efferent reading focuses on what the reader will "carry away" from the text – the information, facts, or instructions. The primary goal is to acquire knowledge. Aesthetic reading, on the other hand, focuses on the experience of reading itself – the feelings, images, ideas, and associations that arise during the interaction. Rosenblatt emphasizes that literary reading is primarily aesthetic, but in the context of journalism, readers often engage in both modes. They might read a news report efferently to gather factual information and then engage aesthetically with a feature story to connect with human experiences and narratives.

Rosenblatt's theory is crucial for understanding why different audiences might react differently to the same journalistic content. A news report on a political event, for example, might be interpreted through the lens of a reader's political affiliation and prior knowledge, leading to diverse understandings and emotional responses. Their cultural background, shaped by their habitus<sup>5</sup>, can also influence their preferences and interpretations. This perspective

highlights the importance of media literacy <sup>6</sup>, enabling readers to actively engage with and critically analyze media texts. Different journalistic genres might also encourage different reading stances. A highly narrative feature story might elicit a more aesthetic reading, focusing on emotional engagement and personal connections, while a factual news report might encourage a more efferent reading, focused on extracting information.

### Media Studies Perspectives on Textual Analysis

Beyond the foundational theories of Barthes and Rosenblatt, media studies offers a range of other valuable approaches to analyzing journalistic texts. Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols and their interpretation <sup>7</sup>, provides tools for decoding the visual and linguistic elements of media and understanding how meanings are constructed.<sup>7</sup> Analyzing a news photograph, for instance, through a semiotic lens can reveal the connotations of specific visual choices, such as framing, lighting, and subject matter. Narratology, the study of narrative structures and how they create meaning<sup>7</sup>, helps in examining the storytelling conventions employed in journalism. Narratives often follow predictable structures, such as Todorov's theory of equilibrium and disequilibrium <sup>7</sup>, which can shape our understanding of events presented in news reports. Critical theory, encompassing various approaches like Marxist critique <sup>11</sup>, offers frameworks for examining power relations, ideologies, and assumptions embedded in media content.<sup>11</sup> It allows for an analysis of how media might reinforce or challenge dominant societal structures and norms, often through repetitive patterns of representation.<sup>11</sup>

These diverse theoretical lenses provide a rich toolkit for deconstructing the layers of meaning within journalistic texts and understanding how they function within broader social and cultural contexts. They complement Barthes' and Rosenblatt's theories by offering specific methodologies for textual analysis and highlighting the social and cultural dimensions of meaning-making. For example, critical theory can help uncover underlying assumptions and potential biases in the representation of social groups within news coverage <sup>12</sup>, while narratology can illuminate how the framing of a news story influences audience perception of cause and effect.<sup>10</sup>

### The Multifaceted Problems of Contemporary Media

The theoretical frameworks discussed above provide essential tools for analyzing media, particularly in an era marked by significant challenges and transformations. Contemporary media faces a multitude of problems that impact its role and influence in society.

#### The Proliferation of Misinformation and Disinformation

One of the most pressing issues in contemporary media is the widespread proliferation of misinformation and disinformation.<sup>13</sup> Misinformation refers to

false or inaccurate information, often spread unintentionally.<sup>13</sup> Disinformation, on the other hand, is deliberately misleading information intended to deceive or cause harm.<sup>13</sup> This distinction is crucial in understanding the intent behind the spread of false narratives. A particularly potent form of disinformation is "fake news," often defined as false or misleading content that mimics the format and style of legitimate journalistic reporting.<sup>16</sup>

The digital age has created an environment where such false information can spread with unprecedented speed and reach, often outpacing the efforts of journalists and fact-checkers to correct it.<sup>19</sup> This rapid dissemination poses significant challenges to public trust in reliable sources and can have detrimental effects on democratic processes and public health.<sup>13</sup> The sheer volume of information available online, including disjointed and often contradictory content<sup>30</sup>, further complicates the ability of individuals to discern truth from falsehood. The ease with which users can share unverified information on social media platforms, often without even reading the full content<sup>31</sup>, significantly exacerbates this problem. This "shares without clicks" phenomenon indicates a superficial engagement with news, making users more susceptible to misleading headlines and fabricated stories.<sup>31</sup>

The motivations behind the creation and dissemination of misinformation are varied and complex. Political agendas often drive the creation of propaganda and disinformation aimed at influencing public opinion or discrediting opponents.<sup>12</sup> Financial incentives, such as generating clicks and advertising revenue, can lead to the creation of sensational or entirely fabricated "clickbait" content.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the spread of misinformation is often fueled by the exploitation of inherent human cognitive biases.<sup>27</sup> Confirmation bias, for example, leads individuals to seek out and believe information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, regardless of its accuracy.<sup>33</sup> The bandwagon effect can also contribute, where people are more likely to believe something if they see that many others believe it.<sup>38</sup>

### Declining Trust in Journalism and Media Institutions

Coupled with the rise of misinformation is a noticeable decline in public trust in journalism and traditional media institutions.<sup>23</sup> This erosion of trust undermines the fundamental role of journalism as a reliable source of information and a crucial pillar of democratic societies. Several factors contribute to this decline. Perceived bias, whether labeled as liberal or conservative<sup>23</sup>, can lead audiences to distrust news outlets that do not align with their own viewpoints. Sensationalism, the tendency to emphasize dramatic or shocking stories<sup>23</sup>, can also erode credibility. The increasing blurring of lines between objective news reporting and subjective opinion pieces<sup>47</sup> further complicates the issue, making it difficult for audiences to discern fact from interpretation. The very proliferation of misinformation and

the perception that news outlets sometimes fail to adequately address it also contribute significantly to this decline.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the perception that media outlets may prioritize profits over serving the public interest<sup>39</sup> can also damage public trust.

Trust levels in media also vary significantly across different demographics and political affiliations.<sup>51</sup> For instance, research suggests that conservatives may exhibit higher levels of trust in sources identified as "fake news" compared to moderates, while liberals may place greater trust in mainstream media and scientific journals.<sup>51</sup> This partisan divide in media consumption and trust<sup>26</sup> highlights the increasingly fragmented nature of the media landscape. Younger individuals, those with lower income, and those with lower levels of formal education tend to trust the news less.<sup>40</sup> This uneven distribution of trust can have significant implications for how different segments of the population access and interpret information.

### The Impact of Technology and the Digital Transformation

The digital transformation, driven by the internet and digital platforms, has profoundly impacted every aspect of news consumption, distribution, and production.<sup>19</sup> Audiences are increasingly consuming news online, favoring digital access over traditional offline media.<sup>62</sup> This shift has fundamentally altered how news is distributed, with digital platforms now serving as primary points of access, a function previously dominated by traditional media companies.<sup>62</sup>

This digital transformation has also presented significant challenges to the traditional revenue models that sustained journalism for decades.<sup>23</sup> The decline in print advertising and subscriptions has created financial strain for many news organizations<sup>23</sup>, leading to downsizing, job cuts, and reduced resources for in-depth reporting and fact-checking.<sup>23</sup> The pressure to compete in a 24/7 news cycle and to produce content quickly for online platforms can sometimes compromise the quality and accuracy of journalistic work.<sup>23</sup> The rise of social media has further transformed news consumption habits, with many, particularly younger individuals, turning to platforms like YouTube and individual content creators as primary sources of information.<sup>73</sup> This shift necessitates that journalists adapt to new technologies and platforms, continuously honing their digital skills.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, algorithms employed by digital platforms play a significant role in shaping news consumption.<sup>62</sup> These algorithms often determine which content users see, sometimes without transparency<sup>62</sup>, raising concerns about the potential for filter bubbles and echo chambers, where individuals are primarily exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs.<sup>62</sup> The emphasis on audience metrics and engagement<sup>63</sup> in the digital environment

can also pressure journalists to prioritize content that generates clicks and shares, potentially at the expense of more substantive or critical reporting.

### Ethical Dilemmas and Challenges in Journalism

Navigating the complexities of the digital media landscape presents contemporary journalists with numerous ethical dilemmas and challenges.<sup>23</sup> The constant pressure to produce content rapidly to meet the demands of the 24/7 news cycle can sometimes lead to rushed reporting and insufficient fact-checking, potentially compromising accuracy.<sup>23</sup> The use of anonymous sources, while sometimes essential for obtaining crucial information in the public interest, also raises ethical considerations regarding transparency and the potential erosion of public trust if not handled responsibly and with clear justification.<sup>74</sup> Journalists also grapple with the ongoing debate of balancing their commitment to objectivity and impartiality with the perceived need to advocate for social justice or expose injustices.<sup>24</sup>

The increasing integration of artificial intelligence into news production introduces a new layer of ethical complexities.<sup>56</sup> Questions surrounding transparency in how AI is used, accountability for errors or biases in AI-generated content, and the potential for algorithmic bias to perpetuate societal stereotypes and inequalities<sup>84</sup> are paramount. The lack of inherent journalistic ethics in AI systems<sup>83</sup> and the absence of human intuition in its analysis and reporting<sup>83</sup> raise concerns about the quality, context, and potential for misrepresentation in AI-driven journalism. Furthermore, the potential displacement of human journalists by AI technologies raises significant ethical considerations regarding the future of the profession and its role in a democratic society.

### Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Journalistic Genres

To further understand the interplay between media theory and the challenges facing the industry, it is crucial to examine the concept of journalistic genres and the theoretical frameworks used to analyze them.

### Defining and Categorizing Journalistic Genres

Journalistic genres can be understood as conventional categorizations of recognizable texts or discursive practices within journalism, based on perceived similarities and differences in their characteristics, aims, and structures.<sup>32</sup> These genres guide both news producers in creating content and news consumers in understanding the purpose and expected style of that content.<sup>88</sup> Various approaches exist for categorizing journalistic genres, often based on criteria such as their primary function or purpose (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to entertain), the degree of subjectivity permitted or expected (e.g., news reporting vs. opinion writing), or the mode of composition (e.g., description, narration, argumentation).<sup>88</sup>

Common examples of journalistic genres include news reports, which aim to convey factual information objectively and concisely<sup>52</sup>; feature articles, which offer more in-depth exploration of topics, often with a focus on storytelling and human interest<sup>98</sup>; editorials and opinion pieces, which express the personal views and analysis of the writer or the publication<sup>52</sup>; and investigative journalism, which involves in-depth research to uncover hidden truths and expose wrongdoing.<sup>90</sup> However, in the contemporary media landscape, particularly with the rise of digital platforms, the traditional boundaries between these genres are becoming increasingly blurred.<sup>55</sup> This fluidity has led to the emergence of hybrid forms that combine elements of different genres, posing new challenges for categorization and analysis.

### Theoretical Approaches to Genre Analysis

Genre theory from media studies provides frameworks for understanding how audiences recognize and interpret different types of journalistic texts.<sup>86</sup> This theory emphasizes the role of shared codes and conventions that are recognized by both producers and consumers of media.<sup>86</sup> Audiences develop expectations based on their familiarity with these conventions, and these expectations influence their reading and interpretation of the text.<sup>86</sup> The interplay between repetition (familiar elements that define a genre) and novelty (new or unexpected elements within a genre) is a key aspect of genre theory, explaining how genres evolve over time.<sup>86</sup>

In contemporary journalism, there is a notable trend towards genre fluidity and hybridity.<sup>55</sup> Traditional genres are increasingly combined and adapted to suit the affordances of digital platforms and the evolving needs of audiences. This hybridization can lead to new forms of journalistic expression but can also challenge traditional understandings of journalistic roles and responsibilities. Theoretical frameworks such as Bourdieu's field theory<sup>63</sup> offer valuable perspectives for analyzing journalistic fields and cultures, helping to understand how different journalistic communities operate, establish norms, and compete for recognition within the broader media landscape.<sup>87</sup> The concept of journalistic ideologies<sup>87</sup> further highlights the diverse professional values and beliefs that shape the production and reception of journalistic genres.

### The Influence of Technology on Genre Conventions

Technology is not merely a tool for disseminating journalistic content; it is actively reshaping the formal and stylistic conventions of different journalistic genres.<sup>55</sup> The affordances of digital platforms allow for multimedia storytelling, integrating text, images, audio, and video into a single news report, thereby blurring the lines between traditional print and broadcast formats.<sup>55</sup> The internet has also facilitated real-time updates and continuous reporting, impacting the traditional structure and length of news articles.<sup>66</sup> Social media

platforms have become integral to newsgathering and dissemination, leading to the rise of "social journalism" and the incorporation of user-generated content into news reports.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, technology has enabled the emergence of new digital-native journalistic forms and formats. Data journalism, for example, utilizes data analysis and visualization techniques to uncover insights and present information in visually compelling and interactive ways.<sup>57</sup> Interactive documentaries and multimedia features allow audiences to explore a topic through a combination of different media and engage with the content in a more immersive manner.<sup>69</sup> These technological advancements are not only changing how journalists work but also redefining the very nature and characteristics of journalistic genres in the digital age.

### The Impact of Technology on Journalistic Genres and Practices

The pervasive influence of technology extends beyond merely altering genre conventions; it is fundamentally transforming journalistic practices and the landscape of news production.

### Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of News Production

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being integrated into newsrooms, impacting various aspects of news production, from data analysis to content generation.<sup>56</sup> AI tools are being used for tasks such as sifting through large datasets, identifying patterns, generating routine news reports (e.g., sports scores, financial summaries), fact-checking information, and even personalizing content delivery to audiences.<sup>77</sup>

The potential benefits of AI in journalism include increased efficiency by automating mundane tasks, the ability to process and analyze vast amounts of data quickly, and the capacity to scale content production.<sup>77</sup> AI can also assist in tasks like transcribing interviews, suggesting story ideas, and optimizing headlines.<sup>119</sup> However, this increasing reliance on AI also raises concerns about the quality, accuracy, and ethical implications of AI-generated content. While AI can enhance efficiency, it currently lacks the nuanced understanding, critical thinking, and ethical judgment of human journalists.<sup>76</sup> The role of journalists is evolving towards that of "digital curators" who manage and verify AI-generated content, ensuring its accuracy and adherence to journalistic standards.<sup>56</sup>

### Algorithmic Authorship and the Redefinition of Journalistic Work

The ability of AI to generate text that is increasingly difficult to distinguish from human writing has profound implications for the traditional concept of journalistic authorship and authority.<sup>80</sup> The question of whether AI can ultimately replace human journalists is a subject of ongoing debate.<sup>119</sup> While AI can automate certain aspects of writing and data analysis, it currently lacks

the creativity, emotional intelligence, and ability to conduct original reporting that are central to much of journalistic work.<sup>120</sup> The role of the journalist is shifting towards managing and verifying AI-generated content, focusing on in-depth reporting, building trust with sources, and providing critical analysis.<sup>56</sup> Public trust in news might also be negatively affected when AI involvement is perceived, even if the extent of that involvement is not fully understood.<sup>134</sup> The increasing use of algorithmic authorship also raises ethical challenges related to transparency, accountability, and potential biases.<sup>83</sup> It is crucial to ensure transparency about when and how AI is used in news production.<sup>121</sup> Determining accountability for errors or misinformation generated by AI models is a complex issue.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, AI systems are trained on data that may contain existing societal biases, which can be perpetuated or even amplified in the content they generate.<sup>83</sup>

### Hybrid Journalistic Genres in the Digital Age

Technological advancements are also facilitating the creation of new and innovative hybrid journalistic genres that blend traditional elements with the unique affordances of digital platforms.<sup>68</sup> Data journalism, for instance, combines data analysis and visualization with narrative storytelling to uncover insights and present complex information in engaging ways.<sup>69</sup> Interactive documentaries and multimedia features integrate various media formats, allowing audiences to explore topics in a more immersive and personalized manner.<sup>69</sup> Social media platforms are increasingly integrated into news reporting, with journalists using them for real-time updates, engaging with audiences directly, and incorporating user-generated content into their stories.<sup>69</sup> These hybrid forms often blur the traditional lines between genres, requiring journalists to develop new skills in multimedia production, digital storytelling, and audience engagement. The rise of podcasts and digital audio, as well as email newsletters, also represents a shift towards different formats for news delivery.<sup>70</sup>

### The Challenge of Misinformation: A Genre in Itself?

Given the significant impact of misinformation on the media landscape, it is pertinent to consider whether it can be conceptualized as a genre in itself.

### Defining Misinformation as a Potential Genre

There is a growing argument that misinformation, particularly when intentionally crafted to closely resemble the formats and styles of traditional journalistic reporting, can be considered a distinct genre of its own, often referred to as "fake news".<sup>16</sup> This "genre" is characterized by several key features, including a low degree of facticity (the information presented is false or inaccurate), a deliberate intent to deceive the reader into believing the

falsehood, and a presentation that mimics the visual and structural elements of legitimate journalistic outlets.<sup>16</sup>

The deliberate mimicry of journalistic conventions is a defining characteristic of this potential genre. "Fake news" often employs headlines, website layouts, and even source citations that are designed to closely resemble those used by established and trusted news organizations.<sup>18</sup> This strategic imitation aims to mislead audiences and lend a false sense of credibility to the fabricated information. The crucial element that distinguishes this from unintentional errors in reporting or from satire is the underlying intent to deceive.<sup>18</sup> While satire uses mimicry for humorous or critical purposes with the expectation that the audience will recognize the exaggeration, "fake news" aims to be taken as genuine and factual. The proliferation of such content poses a significant threat to the credibility of legitimate journalism, as it can erode public trust and make it increasingly difficult for individuals to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information.

### Journalistic Strategies for Combating Misinformation

In response to the challenge posed by misinformation, journalism is actively adapting and developing strategies focused on verification and debunking.<sup>136</sup> Fact-checking organizations and the emergence of debunking news articles are becoming increasingly prominent features of the contemporary media landscape.<sup>138</sup> Fact-checking involves systematically verifying the accuracy of claims made in news reports and by public figures.<sup>137</sup> Debunking goes a step further by actively refuting false information and providing evidence or factual information to the contrary.<sup>137</sup>

Various strategies are employed in the debunking process. One notable example is the "truth sandwich" approach, which involves starting with the correct information, briefly mentioning the falsehood, and then immediately returning to and reinforcing the truth.<sup>137</sup> This method aims to frame the truth first to give it an advantage in memory retention. However, research suggests that simply stating something is false may not be effective, and more detailed corrections that provide context and evidence are often necessary.<sup>143</sup> Journalists are also exploring ways to engage audiences in the process of correcting misinformation, such as encouraging commentary and thoughtful participation.<sup>143</sup> Despite these efforts, effectively countering misinformation remains a complex challenge, as repeated exposure to false claims can lead to an "illusory truth effect," making people more likely to believe them, even if they know they are false.<sup>37</sup>

### The Evolving Role of Journalists in the Fight Against Misinformation

The responsibility of journalists in the digital age is expanding beyond simply reporting the news accurately; it increasingly includes the crucial task of identifying, reporting on, and actively debunking misinformation.<sup>137</sup> This new

responsibility requires journalists to develop specialized skills in verification, digital forensics, and effective communication strategies for addressing false narratives.<sup>140</sup> Many journalists now see themselves as having a direct role in combating the spread of falsehoods and acting as arbiters of fact in an increasingly complex information environment.<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the importance of media literacy education in empowering audiences to critically evaluate the information they encounter and to develop their own resilience against misinformation.<sup>6</sup> By equipping the public with the skills to identify unreliable sources, understand the tactics used to spread misinformation, and critically assess the information they consume, journalism can contribute to a more informed and discerning citizenry. This collaborative approach, where journalists actively combat misinformation and empower the public to do the same, is crucial in safeguarding the integrity of the information ecosystem.

### Trust, Transparency, and the Future of Journalistic Authority

In the face of declining trust and the proliferation of misinformation, the future of journalistic authority hinges on how journalists and news organizations adapt their practices.

### Factors Influencing Public Trust in News

Public trust in news is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a wide range of factors related to both the content and the process of journalism, as well as the characteristics and predispositions of the audience.<sup>40</sup> Accuracy is paramount; audiences consistently rank it as one of the most important factors in determining whether they trust a news source.<sup>147</sup> Fairness and impartiality in reporting are also crucial, as perceptions of bias can significantly erode trust.<sup>40</sup> Transparency about how news is gathered, verified, and produced can also play a vital role in building confidence among audiences.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the extent to which audiences feel that news outlets represent diverse communities and their concerns fairly can significantly impact trust levels.<sup>40</sup>

However, trust in news is not uniform across the population. It varies based on reader demographics, such as age, income, and education.<sup>40</sup> Political affiliation is a particularly strong predictor of trust, with individuals often exhibiting greater trust in news sources that align with their own political viewpoints.<sup>51</sup> Prior experiences with news outlets and the overall level of trust in other institutions in society can also influence how individuals perceive the trustworthiness of journalistic sources.<sup>40</sup>

### The Role and Limitations of Transparency in Building Media Trust

Transparency in journalistic processes is often advocated as an effective strategy for enhancing public trust.<sup>148</sup> The rationale is that by providing

audiences with insights into how news is made – explaining the reporting process, detailing how sources are vetted, and disclosing potential biases – news organizations can demonstrate their commitment to accuracy and fairness.<sup>149</sup> This increased openness aims to foster a sense of accountability and allow the public to make informed judgments about the reliability of the journalism they consume.<sup>152</sup>

However, the effectiveness of transparency in building media trust is not without its limitations.<sup>154</sup> There is a risk of information overload if news organizations provide excessive detail about their processes.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, audiences who are already deeply distrustful of a particular news outlet may not necessarily believe that outlet's own account of its practices.<sup>151</sup> Transparency can also be strategically misused or become a form of "theatre" without leading to genuine accountability.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, trust in media is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including political and cultural contexts, and transparency alone may not be sufficient to overcome deeply ingrained skepticism or address issues such as perceived bias in reporting.<sup>151</sup>

#### The Future of Journalistic Authority in the Digital Age

In an era characterized by misinformation and fragmented audiences, the future of journalistic authority depends on the ability of journalists and news organizations to adapt their practices and rebuild trust.<sup>24</sup> Prioritizing accuracy and adhering to high ethical standards remain fundamental. However, actively engaging with communities, listening to their concerns, and striving to represent diverse perspectives fairly are also crucial for fostering trust.<sup>147</sup> Clearly distinguishing between news reporting and opinion content is essential for managing audience expectations.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, embracing transparency by explaining journalistic processes and being open about corrections can contribute to building credibility.<sup>149</sup>

The potential for new forms of journalistic authority may also lie in embracing accountability and fostering deeper engagement with the public. This could involve actively soliciting feedback, responding to audience concerns, and even involving the community in certain aspects of news reporting.<sup>149</sup> In the digital age, where authority is no longer solely derived from institutional power, it must be earned through consistent adherence to journalistic values, a commitment to truth-seeking, and a genuine effort to serve the public interest.

#### Integrating Theory, Problems, and Genres: Towards New Research Directions

The preceding analysis highlights the intricate and dynamic relationships between the theory of work and text, the problems of media, and journalistic genres in the contemporary media landscape. These interconnected concepts provide fertile ground for future scholarly inquiry. Considering the insights gleaned from the literature, the following are potential titles for three distinct academic papers suitable for Oxford academic publications:

1. *Deconstructing the "Text" of Misinformation: A Barthesian Analysis of Genre Mimicry and Reader Engagement in the Digital Age.*
  - This title proposes an exploration of how misinformation, particularly in its "fake news" guise, functions as a "text" in the Barthesian sense by mimicking the recognizable genres of legitimate journalism. It would analyze the specific textual strategies employed to engage readers and the implications of this mimicry for reader interpretation, trust, and the broader information ecosystem.
2. *The Transactional Divide: How Reader Trust and Genre Expectations Shape the Interpretation of Journalistic Texts Amidst a Crisis of Media Credibility.*
  - This title integrates Rosenblatt's transactional theory with the contemporary problem of declining trust in media. It suggests an investigation into how readers' pre-existing levels of trust in different journalistic genres (e.g., news reports, opinion pieces, investigative features) influence their interpretation and evaluation of media content, particularly in an environment saturated with misinformation and skepticism towards traditional sources.
3. *Algorithmic Genres: Remaking Journalistic Forms and Challenging the Theory of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.*
  - This title focuses on the impact of technology, specifically artificial intelligence, on journalistic genres and the theoretical underpinnings of media creation and interpretation. It proposes an examination of how AI is contributing to the emergence of new "algorithmic genres" of news content and how this transformation challenges traditional notions of authorship, textuality as defined by Barthes, and the very nature of journalistic work in an increasingly automated media landscape.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between the theory of work and text, the problems of media, and journalistic genres is a complex and evolving one, particularly in the context of the digital age. Theoretical frameworks from Barthes and Rosenblatt provide valuable lenses for understanding how media content is created and interpreted, while the challenges of misinformation, declining trust, and technological disruption continue to shape the media landscape. Journalistic genres, as both structural forms and reflections of professional norms, are constantly being influenced and reshaped by these forces. The increasing integration of artificial intelligence further complicates these dynamics, raising profound questions about authorship, ethics, and the future of journalistic authority. Understanding these interconnected relationships is crucial for navigating the challenges and opportunities that lie

ahead for journalism and media studies in this dynamic and ever-changing field. Continued scholarly inquiry into these areas is essential for fostering a more informed, resilient, and trustworthy media ecosystem.

Characteristic	"Work"	"Text"
Method	Concrete object, can be handled	Meaning taken by the reader, not a definite object
Genre	Adheres to rigid classifications	Unclassifiable
Signs	Complete, comprehensive, signified meaning	Incomplete, metonymic, arbitrary, undetermined signifiers
Plurality	Closure, literal interpretation	Open-ended, multitude of associations, deeply symbolic
Filiation	Defined by author, affiliated with author	Untraceable, unity lies in the reader
Reading	Passive consumption, commodity	Active, collaborative reading, free play
Pleasure	Boredom if not engaged	Pleasure through active participation in meaning creation

Problem of Media	Description	Relevant Snippet IDs
Misinformation and Disinformation	False or inaccurate information (misinformation) and intentionally misleading information (disinformation) that spreads rapidly, often mimicking journalistic formats.	<sup>13</sup>
Declining Trust in Journalism and Media Institutions	Erosion of public confidence in mainstream media due to factors like perceived bias, sensationalism, and the proliferation of misinformation.	<sup>23</sup>
Impact of Technology and the Digital Transformation	Fundamental changes in news consumption, distribution, and production due to the internet and digital platforms, along with challenges to traditional revenue models.	<sup>19</sup>
Ethical Dilemmas and Challenges in Journalism	Complex ethical considerations arising from the pressure to produce content quickly, the use of anonymous sources, the balance between objectivity and advocacy, and the integration of artificial intelligence.	<sup>23</sup>

Journalistic Genre	Characteristics	Theoretical Frameworks
News Report	Objective, factual, concise, answers Who, What, When, Where, Why, How	Mirror theory, objectivity paradigm
Feature Article	In-depth, narrative, explores trends, events, people, more creative expression	Narrative theory, human interest
Editorial	Opinionated, expresses the view of the publication	Persuasion, argumentation
Opinion Piece/Column	Subjective, personal views, analysis, commentary	Persuasion, argumentation, authorial voice
Investigative Journalism	In-depth research, exposes unethical or illegal behavior	Watchdog role, critical theory
Data Journalism	Uses data analysis and visualization to tell stories	Computational journalism
Interactive Storytelling	Engages audience through interactive elements	Digital humanities, user experience
Social Media Reporting	Utilizes social media for newsgathering and dissemination	Network theory, participatory journalism
Debunking News	Focuses on verifying and refuting misinformation	Fact-checking, media literacy

Potential Impacts of AI on Journalism	Benefits	Negative Impacts
Efficiency & Productivity	Automates routine tasks, speeds up data analysis, aids in content summarization and transcription <sup>77</sup>	May lead to job displacement for journalists <sup>126</sup>
Data Analysis & Insights	Processes large datasets, identifies trends, aids investigative reporting <sup>77</sup>	Risk of algorithmic bias based on training data <sup>83</sup>
Content Generation	Creates drafts, suggests headlines, automates routine reports <sup>76</sup>	Generates inaccurate, generic, or biased content <sup>83</sup>
Personalization & Distribution	Tailors content recommendations, automates language translation <sup>76</sup>	May create filter bubbles, raises ethical questions about data privacy

Fact-Checking & Verification	Assists in identifying misinformation and verifying information <sup>58</sup>	Over-reliance may reduce critical thinking and human oversight <sup>110</sup>
Accessibility	Enables text-to-speech, facilitates multilingual news <sup>76</sup>	May not accurately capture nuances in language or context <sup>126</sup>

Journalistic Strategies for Combating Misinformation	Description	Relevant Snippet IDs
Fact-Checking	Verifying the accuracy of claims made in news and by public figures.	<sup>136</sup>
Debunking	Actively refuting false information and providing evidence to the contrary.	<sup>136</sup>
Media Literacy Education	Empowering the public with critical thinking skills to evaluate information.	<sup>6</sup>
Transparency Initiatives	Explaining journalistic processes to build trust.	<sup>149</sup>
Collaboration with Platforms	Working with social media companies to reduce the spread of misinformation.	<sup>146</sup>
Promoting Trusted Sources	Emphasizing credible sources for accurate information.	<sup>146</sup>
Repeated Debunking	Correcting misinformation often through trusted channels.	<sup>146</sup>
Engaging Audiences	Involving the public in the fact-checking and correction process.	<sup>143</sup>

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