

CHAPTER 3

STORIES AND INFORMATION: TWO JOURNALISMS IN THE 1890s

REPORTING was an invention of the end of the nineteenth century, but it was a two-part invention: the emergence of the new occupation played off against the industrialization of the newspaper. And while there was much that united the ideology of reporters, there was much that divided the identities of the newspapers for which they worked. In New York, most of the major papers were direct descendants of the penny press: the *Sun*, the *Herald*, the *Tribune*, and the *Times*. Of papers that antedated the penny press, only the *Evening Post* still had an important following. The two largest papers were the *World*, begun in 1859 and revived by Joseph Pulitzer in 1883, and the *Journal*, begun in 1882 by Pulitzer's brother but escorted to the stage of history when William Randolph Hearst bought it in 1895. Both of these papers were sharply distinguished from the others; they represented what contemporaries generally referred to as "the new journalism." The established papers found their competition and their manners deeply disturbing and wrote of them with the same moral horror that had greeted their own arrival in New York journalism fifty years before.

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While reporters subscribed concurrently to the ideals of factuality and of entertainment in writing the news, some of the papers they worked for chose identities that strongly emphasized one ideal or the other. The *World* and the *Journal* chose to be entertaining; the old penny press, especially the *Times* after Adolph Ochs rejuvenated it in 1896, took the path of factuality. I shall refer to these two models of journalism as the ideal of the "story" and the ideal of "information." When telling stories is taken to be the role of the newspaper, journalism is said to fulfill what George Herbert Mead described as an "aesthetic" function. Mead wrote that some parts of the news—the election results or stock market reports—emphasize exclusively "the truth value of news," but for most of the news in a paper, the "enjoyability" or "consummatory value" is more important. The news serves primarily to create, for readers, satisfying aesthetic experiences which help them to interpret their own lives and to relate them to the nation, town, or class to which they belong. Mead took this to be the actual, and the proper, function of a newspaper and observed that it is manifest in the fact that "the reporter is generally sent out to get a story, not the facts."¹ In this view, the newspaper acts as a guide to living not so much by providing facts as by selecting them and framing them.

An alternative model of the newspaper's role proposes that the newspaper is uniquely defined as a genre of literature precisely to the extent that the facts it provides are unframed, that it purveys pure "information." Walter Benjamin suggested that "information" is a novel form of communication, a product of fully developed capitalism, whose distinguishing characteristic is that it "lays claim to prompt verifiability." Its aim, above all, is to be "understandable in itself." While it may actually be no more exact than varieties of "intelligence" of the past, unlike earlier intelligence, which might be justified by reference to the miraculous, "it is indispensable for

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information to sound plausible." For this reason, in Benjamin's analysis, information "proves incompatible with the spirit of storytelling."² This view of the newspaper is echoed in the recent work of Alvin Gouldner, who refers to news as "decontextualized" communication. It is a form of what Basil Bernstein, on whose work Gouldner relies, calls an "elaborated code," in which all is spelled out, nothing left to implicit or tacit understanding.⁸

Rightly or wrongly, the informational ideal in journalism is associated with fairness, objectivity, scrupulous dispassion. Newspapers which stress information tend to be seen as more reliable than "story" papers. But who makes this judgment and on what grounds? Who regards the information model as more trustworthy than the story ideal, and what is meant, after all, by "reliable" or "trustworthy"? If journalists on the whole give credit to both ideas at once, how is it that different newspaper institutions come to stand for one or the other? And how is it that those which stand for the information model come to be regarded as the more responsible?

It is the unexceptional theme of this chapter that, in the most general terms, there is a connection between the educated middle class and information and a connection between the middle and working classes and the story ideal. The puzzle here, as in most other discussions of popular culture, is why this should be the case. What is it about information that seems to appeal to the educated middle class? What is it about the story that seems to attract the working-class reader? Is it right to associate the information model with the notion of objectivity? Should we regard it as a "higher" form of journalism than the story model? In the critical decades from 1883 to the first years of this century, when at the same moment yellow journalism was at its height and the *New York Times* established itself as the most reliable and respected newspaper in the country, why did wealthier people in

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New York read the *Times* and less wealthy people read the *World*? What is the meaning of the two journalisms of the 1890s?

Journalism as Entertainment: Joseph Pulitzer and the *New York World*

Joseph Pulitzer began his newspaper career in St. Louis. Party papers prevailed there until the 1870s when "independent journalism" gained a foothold. A turning point for St. Louis journalism came in 1871 when the *Morning Globe* hired Chicago's Joseph McCullagh as editor. McCullagh stressed news, rather than opinion, and, on what was by then the increasingly familiar model of James Gordon Bennett, concentrated on local police, court, society, and street reporting.

Pulitzer was an Austrian Jewish immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1864, at the age of seventeen, to fight in the Civil War. In St. Louis, after the war, he studied law and was admitted to the bar, but, in part because of his limited facility in English, he did not practice law. Instead, he became a reporter for the city's German-language newspaper, the *Westliche Post*. Active and successful in journalism and in politics—first Republican, then Democratic—Pulitzer was able to buy the *St. Louis Post and Dispatch* in 1878. He served as its publisher, editor, and business manager. Under his guidance, the paper became more audacious in promoting the Democratic Party and turned much brighter in its style. It began to carry statistics of trade from the Merchants' Exchange, the produce markets, and the waterfront. In 1879 it became the first St. Louis paper to publish quotations on stocks issued by local firms. Pulitzer repeatedly appealed to

"the people," by which he meant, it seems, "the stable householder, of whatever class."⁴ The *Post and Dispatch* was antagonistic to labor, and it held to the high price of five cents an issue. According to Julian Rammelkamp, historian of Pulitzer's years as St. Louis editor, "The fundamental aims of the paper were middle class—to foster the development of St. Louis as a business center and as an attractive place of residence for the average citizen."⁵ Pulitzer's great innovation in his years in St. Louis was the development of the newspaper crusade. The crusade was by no means unknown elsewhere, especially in New York, but Pulitzer made startling headlines and political exposés a constant feature of his paper, stimulating circulation and presumably changing the city for the better.

In 1883 Pulitzer plugged his Western voice into the amplifier of the East, New York City. He bought the *New York World*, a paper of some reputation during the 1860s and 1870s which had fallen on hard times. When Pulitzer bought it, its circulation was about fifteen thousand. A year later it was sixty thousand. In another year it was one hundred thousand, and by the fall of 1886 it passed a quarter million. Pulitzer attributed this astonishingly rapid success to his editorial position. "We can conscientiously say," he wrote in an 1884 editorial, "that we believe the success of THE WORLD is largely due to the sound principles of the paper rather than to its news features or its price."⁶

There was a measure of truth in this. It is not an accident that the *World* and Hearst's *Journal*, the city's two most widely read papers at the turn of the century, were both Democratic. But this was not the mainspring, or mainstay, of Pulitzer's (or Hearst's) success. Pulitzer's energy and innovation in business practice played a larger role. Publishing the *World* at a penny a copy, he forced the *Times* to drop its price from four cents to two, the *Herald*, from three to two, and the *Tribune*, from four to three (the two-cent *Sun* stayed the

same). He initiated the practice of selling advertising space on the basis of actual circulation and selling it at fixed prices; at the same time, he abandoned the traditional penalties for advertisers who used illustrations or broke column-rules.⁷ Pulitzer thus helped rationalize newspaper business practice and the relations between newspapers and advertisers.

This was a significant achievement. Until the 1880s, despite James Gordon Bennett's business enterprise, magazines and newspapers were hostile to advertisers. Most newspapers believed large ads wasted space and were "unfair" to the small advertisers who were the foundation of advertising revenue. Editors felt that advertising should command only so much of the newspaper's space, which, from the expense of paper and from custom, was severely limited. Advertising, then, was confined to agate-size type. James Gordon Bennett, in fact, held that the advertiser should gain advantage from what he said, but not from how the advertisement was printed or displayed.⁸

The relationship between newspapers and advertisers changed dramatically in the 1880s. Thanks in part to the growth of department stores and the development of brand names and trademarks by national manufacturing concerns, business demand for advertising space accelerated.⁹ The ratio of editorial matter to advertising in the newspaper changed from about 70-30 to 50-50 or lower.¹⁰ Advertising revenue represented 44 percent of total newspaper income in 1880, 55 percent by 1900.¹¹ This did not diminish the reliance of newspapers on circulation but, on the contrary, made circulation more firmly the measure of a newspaper's competitive standing. Newspapers became brokers of their own columns, selling their space and the readership it represented to advertisers. Circulation became less a private matter of pride and income, more a public and audited indicator of the newspaper's worth as an advertising medium. Newspapers no longer could judge their advertisers from on high; they were them-

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selves judged by the advertisers. This became especially true as advertising developed as an independent institution apart from the press and separate from businesses themselves. Entrepreneurial advertising agents, in the years after the Civil War, would buy newspaper space and then try to sell it to advertisers; agents would be tempted to exaggerate the circulations of newspapers in which they owned space to increase their chances to resell the space. But, in 1869, George P. Rowell, who later founded *Printer's Ink*, published his first newspaper directory listing all the newspapers in the country and the best available circulation figures for them. This did not win friends among newspapers or among advertising agents, but as Rowell's reliability came to be accepted, advertising agents were forced to find new bases for competition. N. W. Ayer and Son, the first modern advertising agency, inaugurated an "open contract" system in 1875. Under this plan, the agent became the sole advertising representative of the advertiser and offered him expert advice on how and where to advertise in return for a fixed commission. This led newspapers to become more businesslike, as Daniel Boorstin observes:

Advertising space in newspapers and magazines became a commodity in the open market, and publishers were finally under pressure to give full and accurate facts about the circulation and character of their publications.¹²

The new relationship between newspapers and advertisers was marked in 1887 by the establishment of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. The main concern of this trade association in its early years was regulating the newspapers' business with advertising agencies. It regulated commissions paid to agencies, it standardized the means by which advertising rates would be computed, and, as early as 1889, began to publish a list of approved ad agencies.¹³

Pulitzer's rationalization of the *World's* advertising policies helped the *World* adapt to general changes in the social

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organization of business, but the innovation most responsible for the paper's rapidly growing circulation was, in a word, sensationalism. The sensationalism Pulitzer brought to New York was not altogether revolutionary. Its attention to local news, especially crime and scandal and high society, continued in the tradition of the penny press. Indeed, this subject-matter focus, which had scandalized the established press of the 1830s, was typical of most major papers by the 1880s in New York—with some variation, of course, and with the lagging and Olympian exception of the *Evening Post*. But what defined sensationalism in the 1880s was less substance than style: how extravagantly should the news be displayed? Sensationalism meant self-advertisement. If, as James Gordon Bennett recognized in the 1840s, everything, including advertising, could and should be news, the sensational papers of the 1880s and 1890s discovered that everything, including news, could and should be advertising for the newspapers. For instance, the *World* in the 1890s regularly took a column or two on the front page to boast of its high circulation. It regularly headlined the fact, in its advertising pages, that it printed more advertisements than any other paper in the country and included the facts and figures to prove it.

Self-advertisement, as I use the term, is anything about newspaper layout and newspaper policy, outside of basic news gathering, which is designed to attract the eye and small change of readers. One of the most important developments of self-advertising in this sense was the use of illustrations. Pulitzer, perhaps feeling that illustrations lowered the dignity of a newspaper, intended at first to eliminate them from the *World*, but he found, as *The Journalist* wrote, that "the circulation of the paper went with the cuts."¹⁴ Pulitzer reversed field and, within the first year of his *World* management, hired Valerian Gribayedoff, a portrait artist, and Walt McDougall, a cartoonist. Their efforts, according to Robert Taft's history of American photography, "mark the beginning

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of the modern era of newspaper illustration.”¹⁶ The *New York Daily Graphic*, in 1873, became the first American daily to regularly use illustrations—and it offered little except illustrations. At first, Pulitzer did not regard the *World* as competing with the *Daily Graphic*. By the summer of 1884, however, Pulitzer classified both papers as “illustrated daily journals”; by 1889, the *World*’s extravagant use of both political cartoons and, especially in the Sunday editions, “cuts whose only justification was the fun of looking at pictures” drove the *Daily Graphic* out of business.¹⁶

Another major development in self-advertisement was larger and darker headlines. Here Pulitzer remained conservative for years. Rather than introduce headlines spanning several columns, he emphasized important stories simply by adding more banks of headlines within the same column. Headlines, like advertisements, abided by column-rules. Not until 1889 did the *World* run a two-column headline, but by the late 1890s, especially through the competition with Hearst, large, screaming headlines were frequently a part of the *World*’s make-up.¹⁷

Newspaper self-advertising also had to do with the newspapers’ promotion of their own exclusive features. Comparing the *World*, the *Times*, and the *Evening Post* in the 1890s, sharp differences in the amount of self-advertising become apparent. For the first week of January, 1896, the *Evening Post*, true to its long-standing editorial and stylistic conservatism, was free of overt self-advertisement. The *Times* was different. On January 2, it devoted almost all of its front page to historian John Bach McMaster’s essay on the Monroe Doctrine, which was relevant at the time with respect to conflict over Venezuela. The next day, the *Times*’ front page featured the remarks of Congressmen who responded (favorably) to McMaster’s paper. The *Times*’ decision to print the McMaster piece made it news, of a sort, and the follow-up coverage proved the *Times* to be an important paper read by

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important people. The McMaster essay had no other notable significance. The *World*, meanwhile, was crusading against J. P. Morgan and the financial manipulations of his “bond syndicate.” On six of the first seven days of January, the *World*’s lead story was the bond issue. The *Times* featured the bond story just twice the same week, leading with Venezuela three times. Both were important events. But it is clear that the reason the *Times* featured Venezuela, and the *World* the bonds, was linked to the possibilities the stories afforded each of the papers for self-promotion, not to the relative importance of the stories in some abstract scale of significance.

If we can argue that the *World* became the circulation giant of New York journalism in the 1880s because of its vigorous and unembarrassed use of illustrations and other techniques of self-advertisement, we must still ask *why* that helped the *World*’s circulation. The answer to that is complicated and reminds us how closely intertwined are the histories of newspapers and the histories of cities. New York, in the 1880s and 1890s, was a city of immigrants. The first year in which more than half a million immigrants came to America was 1881, and immigration would reach that figure or higher in six more years of the next twelve. Immigrants from southeastern Europe outnumbered those from northwestern Europe for the first time in 1896, which suggests not only that there were more immigrants in these years than ever before but that, especially with respect to language, they were more “foreign” than ever before. By 1900, the United States had 26 million citizens whose parents were immigrants and 10 million who were immigrants themselves—46 percent of the country’s population.¹⁸ Most immigrants settled in cities, and many of them settled in New York. New York’s foreign-born population rose from 479,000 in 1880 to 640,000 in 1890, by which time it was about 40 percent of the city’s total population.¹⁹

Many immigrants could not read, or could not read Eng-

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lish; almost all of them wanted to learn. They could learn something from the foreign-language press that grew rapidly at the end of the nineteenth century. But many of the foreign papers were edited by immigrant intellectuals whose understanding of journalism was modeled on the journals of politics and opinion they were used to in Europe. The foreign-language press that proved most successful benefited from imitating the liveliness and style of mass-circulation papers like the *World*. Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, pruned his Yiddish paper of difficult expressions, introduced English words most immigrants would know, and tried to make his paper bright, simple, and interesting, as he had learned to do while working with Lincoln Steffens on the *Commercial Advertiser*.²⁰ The *World's* liberal use of cartoons and drawings, liberal use of headline type, and its own emphasis on relatively simple words, content, and sentence structure appealed to people inexperienced in reading English.

Pulitzer intended the *World* to provide both editorial leadership and news. As he wrote, he wanted the *World* to be "both a daily school-house and a daily forum—both a daily teacher and a daily tribune."²¹ This equal estimation of the editorial and news functions of the press was unusual in the late nineteenth century. Pulitzer may have created the first modern mass-circulation newspaper, but he did so as the last of the old-fashioned editors. Most leading newspaper proprietors of the late nineteenth century were businessmen rather than political thinkers, managers more than essayists or activists. Pulitzer cared deeply about his editorial page, but Adolph Ochs considered eliminating the *Times's* editorials altogether; Hearst looked upon the editorial page with contempt; James Gordon Bennett, Jr., toyed with dropping the editorial department of the *Herald*.²² But if the newspaper was losing one function in the eyes of many of the leaders of journalism, it was—for some of them—gaining another: en-

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tertainment. Hearst proudly proclaimed: "It is the *Journal's* policy to engage brains as well as to get the news, for the public is even more fond of entertainment than it is of information."²³ Melville Stone, of the *Chicago Morning News* and *Daily News*, maintained that the newspaper had three functions: to inform, to interpret, and to entertain.²⁴

Pulitzer did not talk up the idea of entertainment, but the *World* came to embody it. The importance of the entertaining function of the paper was marked especially by the growth of the Sunday *World* which, like Sunday newspapers still, was as close to an illustrated magazine as to a daily newspaper in style and content. Sunday papers had been rare early in the century. In 1842 only one New Yorker in twenty-six bought a Sunday paper, while one in seven bought a daily. In 1850, after heavy Irish immigration, one in nine New Yorkers bought a Sunday paper. The Irish and other later immigrants came to the country without the American conservatism about Sabbath observance. This, plus the practice newspapers developed during the Civil War of printing special Sunday editions with war news, made it easier for papers to take the plunge into Sunday journalism and to appeal directly to the interests of readers for diversion on the day of rest. By 1889, one New Yorker in two bought a Sunday paper, making more Sunday newspaper readers than daily readers that year.²⁵ Charles Dana, editor of the *Sun*, estimated in 1894 that a paper with a daily edition of 50,000, at two or three cents, would have a Sunday edition of 100,000 to 150,000, at five cents.²⁶ What readers found and liked in the Sunday papers, they began to find in the daily press, too. Pulitzer used the Sunday *World* "as a laboratory to test ideas that finally proved to be applicable throughout the week."²⁷ Illustrations and comic strips (the first color comic strips appeared in the Sunday *World* in 1894) spread from the Sunday paper to the daily editions.

The Sunday papers also led the way in special women's

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pages. Romantic fiction, which began in the Sunday *World* in 1883, and poetry tended to be confined to Sundays, but other features for women made their way into the daily *World*. George Juergens explains the *World's* growing attention to women readers in the 1880s as Pulitzer's response to the rising status of women. He could not ignore feminism, or the "New Woman" movement, but neither could he endorse it if he were to keep expanding his working class readership. The compromise he worked out was to give more space to women's issues, but especially domestic life, fashion, and etiquette, rather than women's suffrage or the question of women working in traditionally male occupations.²⁸ This suggests that the status of women was changing as much as it was "rising," and that some of the change had little or nothing to do with women's emancipation. What was "rising" in importance was not, in the first instance, women so much as *consumption*, the side of economic life for which women were conventionally more responsible than men.

Not the status of women, then, but the status of consumption and the consumption of status were more important than ever before, and this affected the newspapers. Many goods once produced by women in the home for home use were now manufactured outside the home for women to buy. Moreover, many goods once sold in neighborhood stores were now promoted by department stores which sought city-wide distribution. Advertisers, and especially the department stores, sought a female audience and were surely impressed by newspapers which made conspicuous efforts to attract women readers. While the advertisers had no vested interest in women's suffrage—or its absence—they must have been favorably impressed by the growing coverage of fashion, etiquette, recipes, beauty culture, and interior decorating in Pulitzer's *World*.²⁹

Advertisers may also have taken heart from the evidence in the newspapers of women's consciousness of social status. The

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first women's "advice" column began in the *World* in 1883 as a series of letters from city cousin Edith to country cousin Bessie. Edith agreed to write "about some points of social etiquette in New York, so that when you move to the city next year from your lovely country home you can be *au fait* at once."³⁰ Edith's concerns—such as the proper way to leave a calling card—had no connection to the daily problems of women in the tenements, but it was closely tied to, and constituent of, their dreams. Part of the experience of the city, even for the poor, was that it nourished dreams. Every day one walked by, or rode by, one's nighttime visions incarnate; the stories of Horatio Alger may not have been true but must have appeared to be true, or at least possible, and people live by their concept of the possible.

Besides, while most of the *World's* readers did not come from "lovely country homes," they were nonetheless country cousins uncertain about how to behave in the city. The experience of newcomers to the cities may have been like that of the British working-class families, described by Peter Willmott and Michael Young, who moved from a well-established urban neighborhood to a suburban housing development in the 1950s. In the new environment, they did not know where they stood. Outward signs of status, there being no commonly recognized inner ones, became all-important:

"If," says Mrs. Abbot, "you make your garden one way, they'll knock all theirs to pieces to make theirs like it. It's the same with curtains—if you put up new curtains, they have new curtains in a couple of months. And if someone buys a new rug, they have to hang it on the line so you can see it."³¹

In the settled working-class community, the status of job and income and education and home furnishing was largely irrelevant to judgments of personal worth. But in the housing development where all people were strangers, judgments were made "on the trappings of the man rather than on the man himself." Young and Willmott conclude:

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Though people stay in their houses, they do in a sense belong to a strong and compelling group. They do not know their judge personally but her influence is continuously felt. One might even suggest, to generalize, that the less the personal respect received in small group relationships, the greater is the striving for the kind of impersonal respect embodied in a status judgment. The lonely man, fearing he is looked down on, becomes the acquisitive man; possession the balm of anxiety; anxiety the spur to unfriendliness.³²

If this is a fair generalization, it may also be fair to suggest that the United States in the 1880s and 1890s, particularly in its urban centers, was becoming more oriented to consumption, not only because of the expansion of manufacturing capacity and the rise of population—supply and demand in the crudest form—but because of the changing web of social relationships in the cities. The economy was becoming more social: the market tied together people of unconnected occupations, while factories and offices linked people of related occupations in hierarchies. The society was, at the same time, becoming more economic: it bound people together more and more in a system of social status inscribed in consumer goods.³³

Newspapers, like the *World*, which sought a wide and general readership responded to the changing experience, perceptions, and aspirations of urban dwellers. This meant, indeed, an enlargement of the “entertainment” function of the newspaper, but it also meant the expansion of what has recently been called the “use-paper” rather than the newspaper, the daily journal as a compendium of tips for urban survival. City living, by the 1880s, had become very different from what it had been in the 1830s. It was much more a mosaic of races and social types; it was much more a maelstrom of social and geographic movement. Geographic mobility for a growing middle class was something it had never been before—it was a daily round of movement from home to work and back again. Improved urban transportation and the movement of the middle class into the suburbs meant

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that this daily movement could be considerable in terms of miles and time consumed. Horse-drawn omnibuses helped urban expansion away from a port-based locus beginning in the 1830s, but the growth of intracity transportation was even more dramatic in the last half of the century. The walking city of 1850 had become a riding city by 1900. The expansion of horse-drawn buses and railways (horse manure and urine had become a serious pollution problem in New York by 1890), and later cable lines and electric surface lines, elevated rapid transit and subways, made mass suburban living possible by 1900 and created a new segregation in the city: the poor lived near the city's center, while the middle class moved farther out.³⁴

This had several consequences for the newspaper. Riding an omnibus or street railway was a novel experience. For the first time in human history, people other than the very wealthy could, as a part of their daily life, ride in vehicles they were not responsible for driving. Their eyes and their hands were free; they could read on the bus. George Juergens has suggested that the *World's* change to a sensational style and layout was adapted to the needs of commuters: reading on the bus was difficult with the small print and large-sized pages of most papers. So the *World* reduced the size of the page, increased the size of headlines and the use of pictures, and developed the “lead” paragraph, in which all of the most vital information of a story would be concentrated.³⁵ From the 1840s, the “lead” had been pushed by the high cost of telegraphic transmission of news; now it was pulled by the abbreviated moments in which newspapers were being read. It is likely, then, that the growing use of illustration and large headlines in newspapers was as much an adaptation to the new habits of the middle class as to the new character of the immigrant working class.

What the availability of the role of passive passenger on a vehicle moving through city streets meant for people of many

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classes is that one could take more naturally to the role of onlooker. Charles Dickens, visiting New York in 1842, observed with wonderment the omnibuses on Broadway, though he paid just as much attention to the variety of private carriages.³⁶ By 1868, when Walt Whitman wrote of his delight with the omnibus, he was looking *from* it, not at it:

Shall I tell you about [my life] just to fill up? I generally spend the forenoon in my room writing, etc., then take a bath, fix up and go out about twelve and loaf somewhere or call on someone down town or on business, or perhaps if it is very pleasant and I feel like it ride a trip with some driver friend on Broadway from 23rd Street to Bowling Green, three miles each way. (Every day I find I have plenty to do, every hour is occupied with something.) You know it is a never-ending amusement and study and recreation for me to ride a couple of hours on a pleasant afternoon on a Broadway stage in this way. You see everything as you pass, a sort of living, endless panorama—shops and splendid buildings and great windows: on the broad sidewalks crowds of women richly dressed continually passing, altogether different, superior in style and looks from any to be seen anywhere else—in fact a perfect stream of people—men too dressed in high style, and plenty of foreigners—and then in the streets the thick crowd of carriages, stages, carts, hotel and private coaches, and in fact all sorts of vehicles and many first-class teams, mile after mile, and the splendor of such a great street and so many tall, ornamental, noble buildings many of them of white marble, and the gayety and motion on every side: you will not wonder how much attraction all this is on a fine day, to a great loafer like me, who enjoys so much seeing the busy world move by him, and exhibiting itself for his amusement while he takes it easy and just looks on and observes.³⁷

The country cousin in the city gawks, and most city dwellers, at the end of the nineteenth century, were from the village or farm. But the city cousin looks, too—the cities of the late nineteenth century were spectacles. Social life, in general, was spectacular. Whitman watched women and foreigners on the street; women, going out to work or to shop, watched one another; immigrants watched and learned as much as they

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could. Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, out looking for work on her first day in Chicago, was "delayed at every step by the interest of the unfolding scene." She headed for the department stores, which she knew through their advertisements in the *Chicago Daily News*. Carrie was dazzled by their displays of goods and awe-struck by "the fine ladies who elbowed and ignored her" and the shop girls with their "air of independence and indifference." Dreiser himself, as a reporter in the 1890s, was a spectator, both by occupation and by avocation:

My favorite pastime when I was not out on an assignment or otherwise busy, was to walk the streets and view the lives and activities of others, not thinking so much how I might advantage myself and my affairs as how, for some, the lightning of chance was always striking in somewhere and disrupting plans, leaving destruction and death in its wake, for others luck or fortune.³⁸

Chance and disaster interested others as onlookers, too. Local stores in New York sold a pink booklet which was a key to the fire department's bell system. With the booklet, anyone could listen to the fire bells and then find their way to the scene of the fire. Mabel Osgood Wright declared that "going to fires was one of my greatest desires."³⁹ Robert Park, a quarter century later to be the chief force in building the first important department of sociology in the country at the University of Chicago, was in the 1890s a reporter for the *New York Journal* and wrote of his delight in watching the life of the city: "Walking on upper Broadway or down to the Battery on a bright afternoon, or watching the oncoming and outgoing human tide as it poured morning and evening over Brooklyn Bridge, was always for me an enthralling spectacle."⁴⁰

Newspapers benefited from the experience of city life as a spectacle, and they contributed to it. They provided their readers a running account of the marvels and mysteries of urban life. The "action journalism" of Pulitzer, and later Hearst, created new marvels. In March, 1885, the *World*

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called on citizens to contribute pennies to build the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. By August, the *World* had collected \$100,000, almost all of it in small contributions. This enabled the *World* to picture itself as the champion of working people, to criticize the "luxurious classes," and to promote simultaneously the city of New York, the mass of ordinary citizens, and, of course, the *New York World*. This was self-advertising with a vengeance.

As late as 1870, church steeples towered over all other buildings in New York. This changed dramatically in the next several decades. By 1890, the *New York World* completed its new building—the tallest and grandest building in the city. The newspapers not only recorded social change; they were part of it.

In some measure, the mass journalism Pulitzer developed merely extended the revolution of the penny press in its attention to everyday life. But everyday life was different than it had been. It was the everyday life of people new to political participation, to reading, to cities, to America, to the kaleidoscope of social and geographic mobility. They wanted the moral counsel of stories as much as any people did, but the tales of the Bible and the lives of the saints were not suited to the new cities. The new journalism was. Pulitzer, an immigrant, a Jew, a self-made man, was, and his *World* set the pace.

Journalism as Information: The Rise of the *New York Times*

The *World* may have set the pace for modern mass-circulation journalism, but after 1896 the *New York Times* established the standard. *The Journalist*, in a 1902 editorial on "Standards in American Journalism," recalled Charles Dud-

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ley Warner's claim in 1881 that the successful newspaper of the future would be the best newspaper: "... only that type of newspaper can live which represents something, accurately and sufficiently, to command a growing and attached clientele." *The Journalist* took this to be a prophecy of the success of the *New York Times*: "... there is a clear recognition as the road to substantial success in the newspaper business of the course which the *New York Times* has aimed to follow. . . ." ⁴¹ Reporter and newspaper critic Will Irwin wrote in 1911 that the *Times* came "the nearest of any newspaper to presenting a truthful picture of life in New York and the world at large." ⁴² Melville Stone, writing in the *Times*' seventy-fifth anniversary issue (1926), praised publisher Adolph Ochs for having defied the view that only the sensational newspaper could be a successful newspaper: "He in the end taught them [his competitors] that decency meant dollars." ⁴³ There would probably have been little dissent from Frank Presbrey's estimation of the *Times*, in his 1929 *History and Development of Advertising*, as "the world's most influential newspaper." ⁴⁴

Nor did there seem to be much question about the source of the *Times*' influence: wealthy people read the *Times*, attracted by its conservatism, decency, and accuracy. *The Journalist* praised the *Times* in 1897 as follows:

It has lived up to its motto of "All the news that's fit to Print," and the great cultivated, well-to-do class do not want anything beyond that. As an advertising medium for good goods it is steadily growing in value. It may not have so large a number of readers as some of its less conservative contemporaries, but its readers represent more dollars, which, after all, is what the advertiser is after. ⁴⁵

Wealthy people found the *Times* of value to them in their business. Chester S. Lord, for three decades managing editor of the *New York Sun*, wrote a guide to aspiring journalists in 1922, in which he approvingly quoted one observer of the journalistic scene as saying:

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Probably five hundred men in New York City would pay a thousand dollars a year each for the commercial information alone that they receive from the New York *Times* if they could not obtain it in any other way.⁴⁶

When Ochs took over the *Times* in 1896, he inaugurated the publication each day of a list of out-of-town buyers in the city, he began to report real estate transactions, expanded the financial reporting of the paper, and initiated a weekly review of financial news. The *Times* quickly established itself as the "Business Bible."⁴⁷ By the time Elmer Davis published his history of the *Times* in 1921, he felt called upon to defend the paper from charges that it was run by its bondholders and served as an organ for the wealthy classes. His rebuttal is revealing: "*The Times* can be called the organ of the investing class only in the sense that most investors read it because of the volume and reliability of its financial news."⁴⁸ It is clear, in comparing the *Times* and the *World* at the turn of the century, that the *Times* not only had more financial news but more financial advertising. Why did wealthy people read the *Times*? Because it was their business to do so.

But this is only the beginning of an explanation. The political tone of the *Times* also made a difference: the *Times* tended to be conservative and expressed its conservatism in both editorials and in presentation of political news. The *Times* characteristically favored the reelection of Republican governor Benjamin Odell in 1902, while the *World* championed the Democrat, Bird Coler. Comparing the front pages of the two papers for the week before the election is instructive. On October 25, both papers featured (by which I mean placed in the right-hand column on page one) the story of a train robbery in Montana. (The *Evening Post*, by the way, did not report this story at all.) On October 26, the lead story in the *Times* covered Odell's speeches upstate in which he defended himself against charges of corruption by the Democratic ex-Senator David Hill. The *World*, typically taking the

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opportunity to advertise itself, reported that its own canvass showed Odell would win by ten thousand votes, despite the fact that the charges against Odell were "regarded generally as proved." On October 27, the *Times* featured an accident in Yonkers in which twenty persons were injured in a collision of a trolley and an automobile. The *World* took this as its second most important story (reporting twenty-two injured) and featured, instead, a story headlined, "Reports Flying of More Charges Against Odell."

Clearly, it served the *World's* views to play up Hill's charges against Odell; it served the *Times* to play them down. On October 28, both papers featured the Democratic congressional rally in New York. But the *Times* simply headlined the event—Democratic congressional rally—while the *World* announced what it believed happened there: "Hill at Great Meeting Says Odell Confessed." The *Evening Post* showed its colors by failing to find any place on the front page for the Democratic rally and by featuring, instead, a story, "Comment on Hill Charges," in which Republican leaders sought to clear Odell.

This exercise in comparing newspapers is important in two respects. First, it simply helps establish the fact that the *Times* was politically conservative, which no doubt increased its popularity among the rich. Second, it suggests the relative difficulty of establishing, at least in the area of political reporting, that one newspaper is markedly more fair than another. In the emphasis and choice of news, the *Times* and the *World* both were guided by their political biases. That is scarcely a dazzling conclusion, but it is one which asks us to look further to figure out why the *Times* gained the preeminent reputation it did.

Two important aspects of the *Times's* rise after 1896 need to be explained and are not explained by the financial focus or political bent of the paper's contents. First, in advertising itself the *Times* stressed its "decency," not its news coverage

or accuracy or politics. Second, the *Times* made its first large leap in circulation two years after Ochs assumed control of the paper, when it lowered its price from three cents to a penny. *The Journalist* spoke for many others in arguing, "Men who want *The Times* would pay 3 cents as soon as 1. The circulation won't increase one little bit."⁴⁹ But within a year circulation had grown from twenty-five to seventy-five thousand—not enough to compete with the *World* or the *Journal*, but easily enough to secure a solid place in New York journalism. If we can understand these two aspects of the success of the *Times*, we will be closer to comprehending the "two journalisms" of the 1890s.

Adolph Ochs bought the failing and demoralized *New York Times* in August, 1896. Ochs, at thirty-eight, was a very successful newspaper publisher. The eldest of six children born to German Jewish immigrants in Knoxville, Tennessee, Ochs became a chore boy and printer's devil on the *Knoxville Chronicle* at fourteen, then a printer in Louisville and Knoxville, then a business solicitor for the *Chattanooga Dispatch*, and finally, at age twenty and for \$500, publisher of the *Chattanooga Times*. He turned his paper into one of the most lucrative newspapers in the South and hoped, in 1896, to be just as successful with the *New York Times*.⁵⁰ He announced his newspaper policies in the *Times* on August 19, 1896:

To undertake the management of *The New York Times*, with its great history for right-doing, and to attempt to keep bright the lustre which Henry J. Raymond and George Jones have given it, is an extraordinary task. But if a sincere desire to conduct a high-standard newspaper, clean, dignified and trustworthy, requires honesty, watchfulness, earnestness, industry and practical knowledge applied with common sense, I entertain the hope that I can succeed in maintaining the high estimate that thoughtful, pure-minded people have ever had of *The New York Times*.

It will be my earnest aim that *The New York Times* give the news, all the news, in concise and attractive form, in language that is parliamentary in good society, and give it as early, if not earlier,

than it can be learned through any other reliable medium; to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of any party, sect or interest involved; to make the columns of *The New York Times* a forum for the consideration of all questions of public importance, and to that end to invite intelligent discussion from all shades of opinion.

There will be no radical changes in the personnel of the present efficient staff. Mr. Charles R. Miller, who has so ably for many years presided over the editorial page, will continue to be the editor; nor will there be a departure from the general tone and character and policies pursued with relation to public questions that have distinguished *The New York Times* as a nonpartisan newspaper—unless it be, if possible, to intensify its devotion to the cause of sound money and tariff reform, opposition to wastefulness and speculation in administering the public affairs and in its advocacy of the lowest tax consistent with good government, and no more government than is absolutely necessary to protect society, maintain individual vested rights and assure the free exercise of a sound conscience.

It is a remarkable statement. *The World* at the time, in its morning and evening editions, had a circulation of 600,000 and the *Journal*, 430,000. The *Sun's* two editions sold 130,000; the *Herald* sold 140,000; the *Evening Post*, 19,000; and the *Tribune*, 16,000. The *Times'* circulation was just 9,000.⁵¹ And yet, Ochs announced no plan to change the character of the paper. He would not change its staff; he would not alter its politics. And he hoped the paper would continue to address a select readership of "thoughtful, pure-minded people." His words are calm and determined, both high-minded and businesslike.

George Jones, who had edited the *Times* from 1869 until his death in 1891, had boasted that no man had ever been asked to subscribe to, or advertise in the *Times*.⁵² Ochs had no such contempt for solicitation. He became the first publisher, in 1898, to solicit circulation by telephone. He offered a bicycle tour of France and England to the one hundred persons bringing in the most new subscribers. The former campaign, of course, reached only the relatively well to do

who had telephones. The latter scheme focused on school and college teachers and stressed, in the contest advertising, that "To be seen reading *The New York Times* is a stamp of respectability."⁵³

Two months after Ochs took over the paper, the famous motto, "All the News That's Fit to Print," first appeared on the editorial page. At the same time, Ochs started a circulation-building contest offering \$100 for a better slogan. The winning entry was "All the World's News, but Not a School for Scandal." Still, the editors preferred their own invention, and by February, 1897, "All the News That's Fit to Print" was moved permanently to the front page.

The *Times*' slogan, like its general statement of policy, emphasized decency as much as accuracy. The *Times* could not, and did not, compete with the *World* and the *Journal* for circulation; advertising in *The Journalist* in 1902, the *Times* claimed the highest circulation of any newspaper in the city—and then, in smaller print, excepted the *World* and the *Journal*, as if they were in another category of publication altogether.⁵⁴ In a sense, they were, and the *Times* used them as a foil in promoting itself. The *Times* joined the *Sun* and *Press* and other papers in a new "moral war" in journalism. It pointedly advertised itself with the slogan, "It does not soil the breakfast cloth," as opposed to the "yellow" journals.⁵⁵ Some items from the *Times*, in the winter of 1897, are probably representative of its attitude toward the yellow press. In a story headed "The Modern Newspaper" on February 12, the *Times* covered a speech at the Press Club of Colgate University given by the city editor of the *Utica Observer* in which editor W. W. Canfield attacked papers which padded news, printed private matters, spread indecent literature, and proved themselves unreliable. He pleaded for more newspapers like the *Times*. "A newspaper," he said, "was declared to be a companion, and surely the intelligent would not accept as a companion the vicious and the de-

praved." On the same day, the *Times* editorialized on "Freak Journalism and the Ball." It attacked the *World*'s extravagant coverage of the Bradley Martin ball at the Waldorf, suggesting that the *World*'s artists made their drawings of the festivities before the ball took place. (It should be observed that the *Times* did not skimp on its own coverage of the ball. It reported the gala affair in a page-one, column-one story on February 12 and devoted all of page two to detailing who the guests were, what they wore, and where they dined before the great event.)

A few days later the *World* and the *Journal* were scuffling over Richard Harding Davis' report on the Olivette affair. The *Times* did not discuss the item of news itself but editorialized on the press coverage of it: "We remark with interest the rivalry of our esteemed freak contemporaries, and especially the keen interest they manifest in exposing each other's 'beats'." The *Times* took a bemused tone but it had a certain bite:

The fact that the picture from the point of view of the Cuban young lady was a greater horror and indignity than any to which the detectives could have subjected her was a detail not worth the consideration of an enterprising artist or a freak journal.⁵⁶

Unlike other papers in New York, the *Times* apparently had a good memory. Two weeks after the Olivette affair was first reported, when the exiled Cuban women to whom Davis had talked arrived in New York, the *Times*—and it seems only the *Times*—was at the dock to interview them. On March 2 the *Times* printed a page one story, "Cuban Women Ill Treated." Characteristically, the story made no reference to the earlier news reports in the *Journal* and the *World*. The *Times* account confirmed the *World* story that the women were searched by a matron. But, in spirit, it confirmed the imagination of Remington and the outrage of Davis. The Cuban woman the *Times* interviewed complained that while she was being searched, the Spanish inspector of police looked

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through the porthole into the cabin and laughed at the humiliation of the women. The *Times* asked her if she had really helped the insurgents as the Spanish claimed. She smiled "significantly" and said: "Well, I am a Cuban, and my father died fighting for Cuba Libre ten years ago."

The next day the *Times* returned to its indirect assault on the yellow journals by running a page-two story on "New Journalism and Vice" which covered the speech of the Reverend Dr. W.H.P. Faunce at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. Faunce said:

The press of this country to-day is engaged in a fearful struggle, one class against another. On one side stand the reputable papers which represent decency and truth, and on the other, is what calls itself the new journalism, but which is in reality as old as sin itself.

On March 4 a *Times* editorial headed "A Work of Moral Sanitation" praised Faunce. It also drew attention to the decision of the public library in Newark to exclude the sensational papers, but offered its own alternate method of reform: "To make the reading of the new journals, except behind a screen, a social offense punishable with scorn and contempt would be a salutary and sufficient measure of reform."⁵⁷

In October, 1898, the *Times* lowered its price from three cents to a penny. Within a year its circulation jumped from 25,000 to 75,000, and after that continued to rise steadily: 82,000 in 1900; 121,000 in 1905; 192,000 in 1910; and 343,000 by 1920. While some critics suggested that the drop in price would reduce the value of the *Times* to advertisers seeking an exclusive readership, it seems only to have enhanced the *Times*' reputation with advertisers. The *Times* had 2.4 million agate lines of advertising in 1897, 2.4 million again in 1898, but then 3.4 million in 1899 and 4.0 million in 1900, 6.0 million in 1905, 7.6 million in 1910, and 23.4 million in 1920.⁵⁸ The price cut, it appears, making a high-

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toned, conservative paper available to more readers, assured the *Times* of success. In the very years that yellow journalism was at its most manic, the *Times* was thriving.

Ochs' own explanation of this was simple: many people bought the *World* or the *Journal* because they were cheap, not because they were sensational. Many people, if they could afford it, would choose "a clean newspaper of high and honorable aims, which prints all the news that is fit to print, and expresses its editorial opinions with sincere conviction and independence."⁵⁹ But this blithe confidence was not widely shared and, even for some editors at the *Times*, Ochs himself was the mystery to be explained. In 1915 and 1916, editorial page editor Gareth Garrett kept a diary and, in a number of entries, tried to fathom Ochs' power and success. He found Ochs a crude sort of man in some respects. He was too interested in money—he "higgles terrifically over pay" and "is always impressed by large figures of wealth or income." True, Ochs found the suggestion that the *Times* was a commercial success "the unpardonable insult," but Garrett had an explanation for this, too: "His ambition (and it is not strange, seeing how all men long for that which in themselves is unattainable), his ambition is to produce a highbrow newspaper for intellectuals."

Garrett ridiculed Ochs' attention to money and his apparently meager intellectual equipment—"Intellectually he is the inferior of any man at the [editorial] council table"—but Garrett was nonetheless fascinated by Ochs' unquestioned success. He criticized Ochs for choosing words badly and for expressing himself ungrammatically, but he also wrote:

I am aware, however, that the presence of Mr. O. gives our thoughts and expressions an elasticity that they did not have in his absence. None of us values his mental processes highly, and yet, he has a way of seeing always the other side that stimulates discussion, statement and restatement, and leaves a better product altogether than is approached in his absence.

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How could this be? It was, Garrett felt, that Ochs, "for his lack of reasoned conviction, is all the more seeing." At another time he wrote that Ochs had "a kind of emotional tolerance of humanity, bordering on sheer sentimentality, which continually expresses itself in the other point of view, whatever that happens to be. Without fixed convictions on anything, he can let his feelings run." And then he came to this judgment of the enigma of Ochs:

The secret—the secret of the man himself and of his success with the *Times* as well—is that Mr. O. has crowd-consciousness. He, with a newspaper, is like the orator. Both of them address a crowd, with an understanding of its emotions, or rather, with a likeness of emotions, and as the orator and the crowd react on each other, so Mr. O. and the *Times* readers react on each other.

"Mr. Ochs," he concluded, "is a crowd."⁶⁰

In an essay on Ochs in the *Atlantic* in 1926, Benjamin Stolberg echoed Garrett's assessment in a more catty tone. Ochs, he wrote, "is not merely an honest, but a congenital conformist. He is the living norm of the median culture of American life." The *Times* succeeded because it appeared on the scene at a time of widespread emulation and conspicuous consumption. Most people read the *Times* because the elite read it. Ochs himself had noted that "no one needs to be ashamed to be seen reading" the *Times*. This, according to Stolberg, not any intrinsic excellence, accounted for the paper's success: "It is in the *Times* that we can all worship the Idols of the Cave without being caught in our idolatry."⁶¹

Stolberg's gibes are suggestive. The reading public may well be divided morally in ways that are related to class but do not reflect it in any simple way. If Stolberg is right, less educated or less wealthy people read the *Times* to emulate those above them in social standing, and so they read with pride. More educated and more wealthy people read not only the *Times* but the "story" newspapers and magazines, though they do so with a feeling of shame. Today, studies of television

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viewing indicate that highly educated people do not watch significantly less television, or even "better" television, than the less educated—they simply *feel* differently about it.⁶² This repeats what observers at the end of the nineteenth century already saw in the case of newspaper reading. Pulitzer, in 1884, mocked Matthew Arnold's criticism of sensational papers, noting, "Like everybody else, Matthew buys and reads the newspapers that are racy."⁶³ E. L. Godkin, complaining in *The Nation* in 1895 that sensational papers were getting too much attention, nonetheless observed that they drew their readership from all social strata: "... this stuff is greedily read by all classes." He noted that "the grumblers over the wicked journals are often their most diligent readers."⁶⁴

There is, then, a moral dimension to the reading of different kinds of newspapers; there is pride and shame in reading. This helps establish the plausibility of the hypothesis that the *Times*' readership was not won simply by the utility of the articles it printed for businessmen and lawyers or the resonance of its political outlook with the politics of affluent readers. The *Times* attracted readers among the wealthy and among those aspiring to wealth and status, in part, because it was socially approved. It was itself a badge of respectability.

But this only poses the question in a different way: what made the *Times* respectable? What made it seem morally superior? Was it deemed respectable because it appealed to the affluent? Or did it appeal to the affluent because it was respectable? And if the latter, is "respectability" to be understood as a moral ideal emerging from the life experience of a particular social group at a particular time or as a moral ideal with legitimate claims to wider allegiance or, perhaps, both?

This repeats, within the field of journalism, perennial questions about high culture and popular culture. What distinguishes them? Can we find any grounds for asserting that "art" is superior to popular culture? The question is of

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sociological interest because the taste for high culture is so regularly associated with educated and wealthy classes, the taste for popular culture, with lower classes. And yet, while the tastes of different classes remain different from one another in a given period, they change over time. Up until about the Civil War in the United States, the most sophisticated elements in the population preferred their literature, and even their journalism, flowery rather than plain, magniloquent rather than straightforward.⁶⁵ By 1900, when "information" journalism was sponsored by an economic and social elite, it was prized, but in 1835, when the first steps toward an information model were taken by the penny press in challenge of the elite of the day, it was reviled. The moral war between information journalism and story journalism in New York in the 1890s was, like the moral wars of the 1830s, a cover for class conflict.

But it was not *merely* a cover. The *Times* believed what it said about the disreputability of the new journalism. And the new journalisms of the 1830s and the 1890s did have important features in common. Both were great self-advertisers, and self-advertising is a moral stance as well as a journalistic style or commercial strategy. Among professionals like lawyers and physicians, advertising is generally prohibited or regulated by professional associations. The greater a newspaper's self-advertising, the less it appears to maintain a "professional" standing. One who advertises in professional relations, like one who boasts in personal relations, tends to be distrusted, even if there are no other evident reasons for distrust.

Were there other good reasons for the *Times* and its readers to distrust or look down on the *World* and its following? It may be that the *Times* was more faithful to facts, for instance, than the *World*. It may have reined in its own biases, when it knew them, though it did not, of course, always know them. But we cannot infer fairness or accuracy from the fact that the *Times* held to an informational model of

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journalism. Information journalism is not necessarily more accurate than story journalism. The two journalisms differ intrinsically, to borrow a metaphor from music, not according to what physical tones they include, but according to the dynamic quality of the tones. "Information" aspires to the position of twelve-tone music—music without an inherent, psychologically significant order to it. The "story," on the other hand, plays intentionally on connections to human experience, just as seven-tone music counts on the states of tension, unrest, and resolution it excites in listeners.

The moral division of labor between newspapers, then, may parallel the moral division of the human faculties between the more respectable faculties of abstraction and the less respectable feelings. People control themselves to read of politics in fine print; they let themselves go to read of murders or to look at drawings of celebrities. Information is a genre of self-denial, the story one of self-indulgence.

As one grows older and gains experience, one is supposed to be better able to anticipate life, to order it, to control it. One grows more rational. The *Times* wrote for the rational person or the person whose life was orderly. It presented articles as useful knowledge, not as revelation. The *World* had a different feel to it; in tone and display it created the sense that everything was new, unusual, and unpredictable. There is every reason to believe that this accurately reflected the life experience of many people in the cities, the newly literate and the newly urban, members of the working class and middle class. Life was a spectacle as never before for many, and the *World* spoke faithfully to that experience of the many, as the *Times* did for the more ordered experience of a smaller group.⁶⁶

Perhaps, then, the *Times* established itself as the "higher journalism" because it adapted to the life experience of persons whose position in the social structure gave them the most control over their own lives. Its readers were relatively

independent and participant. The readers of the *World* were relatively dependent and nonparticipant. The experience engendered by affluence and education makes one comfortable with a certain journalistic orientation, one which may indeed be, in some respects, more mature, more encompassing, more differentiated, more integrated. It may also be, in its own ways, more limited; refinement in newspapers, people, and sugar, is bleaching. If the *World's* readers might have longed for more control of their lives, the readers of the *Times* may have wished for more nutrients in theirs.

At the turn of the century and even as late as the 1920s, "objectivity" was not a term journalists or critics of journalism used. Newspapers were criticized for failing to stick to the facts, and the *Times* boasted that it printed "all the news"—by which it meant information. But this was not objectivity; the attachment to information did not betray much anxiety about the subjectivity of personal perspective. The *Times* in 1900 trusted to information, that body of knowledge understandable in itself without context (or with a context taken for granted). That was not to last. By the 1920s, journalists no longer believed that facts could be understood in themselves; they no longer held to the sufficiency of information; they no longer shared in the vanity of neutrality that had characterized the educated middle class of the Progressive era. In the twentieth century, the skepticism and suspicion which thinkers of the late nineteenth century, like Nietzsche, taught, became part of general education. People came to see even the findings of facts as interested, even memory and dreams as selective, even rationality itself a front for interest or will or prejudice. This influenced journalism in the 1920s and 1930s and gave rise to the ideal of objectivity as we know it.

CHAPTER 4

Objectivity Becomes Ideology: Journalism After World War I

NOTHING thus far explains the twentieth century's passion for "objectivity." The rise of a democratic market society helped extinguish faith in traditional authorities, but this did not in itself provide new authority. In a democracy, the people governed, not the "best people," and one vote was as good as another. In the market, things did not contain value in themselves; value was an arithmetic outcome of a collection of suppliers and demanders seeking their own interests. In an urban and mobile society, a sense of community or of the public had no transcendent significance, and, indeed, one responded to other people as objects, rather than as kindred, and trusted to impersonal processes and institutions—advertising, department stores, formal schooling, hospitals, mass-produced goods, at-large elections—rather than rely on personal relations. All of this focused attention on "facts." All of it contributed to what Alvin Gouldner has called "utilitarian culture," in which the normative order moved from a set of commandments to do what is right to a set of prudential warnings to adapt realistically to what *is*. Just when Freud was diagnosing the pathologies of the domineering superego, the superego and moral exhortation were in retreat before the