

## Hate, Inc Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another

Matt Taibbi

A welcome book, a mea culpa and a trenchant analysis of the madness in today's media circus

Matt Taibbi's introduction is an endearing confession. He tells us what he was paid to do – write poignant political putdowns. He came to my attention when a former girlfriend sent an article including the sentence "**The** world's most powerful investment bank is a great **vampire squid** wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money." Liberal or conservative (I'm the latter) you have to applaud this wonderful characterization of Goldman Sachs. Which, by the way, is neither liberal nor conservative, but twists its blood funnel whichever way the prevailing political winds are blowing.

Many astute reporters have noted that we are becoming more vitriolic by the year. See Douglas Murray's [[ASIN:B07SLLRFDY The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity]]. We don't know about Murray's politics, but he is a conservative in that he takes on the madness that he identifies in his title. One has to feel that the overlapping waves of political correctness that radiate from the huge splash of the 1960s are finally cresting. We have reached peak absurdity. There is nobody who has more sharply honed the tools to write about it than Taibbi. This is a welcome book.

He writes "I despair at the blame-a-thon of modern political media and wonder all the time if I didn't help construct this new attitude with the flamboyant insults I put in print for years. Worse, today's media debate has left its sense of humor behind, and we now argue even minor issues as life-or-death matters, despite not even knowing each other. People who would certainly engage in courteous chats at their kids' birthday parties freely trade horrific threats on Twitter. It's insane."

Taibbi paints a picture of a halcyon era in which the news was mostly unbiased. He writes "Whereas the task was once to report the facts as honestly as we could – down the middle of the "fairway" of acceptable thought..."

He does not go into who defined "acceptable thought." The fact is that there were few Gentile press barons between the eras of William Randolph Hearst and Rupert Murdoch. Print media were dominated by men such as Eugene Meyer of the Washington Post, the Sulzbergers and Ochs of the New York Times, the Pritzkers of Chicago. Broadcast media were dominated by William Paley and Robert Sarnoff.

"Acceptable thought" embraced civil rights for racial minorities, sexual minorities and women. Moreover, they wanted it now. There were pejoratives for people who might say "Slow down a bit – it's not that simple." Acceptable thought welcomed immigrants. Acceptable thought embraced all of the changes underway in Europe – guestworkers, the expansion of the European Union, the adoption of the euro, and the full United Nations platform.

For Taibbi to claim that Fox News invented the silo is a little bit disingenuous. The men who dominated the press had their own silo that did not include the bulk of their audience – Gentiles. Rupert Murdoch made a lot of money by figuring that out. Taibbi says that Roger Ailes claimed that his target demographic was "white men between 55 and dead." It was broader than that.

Another dimension that Taibbi does not mention is television entertainment. Fox was equally successful in figuring out what this broad demographic wanted in the way of humor. They did not all want to have their minds expanded by programs such as "All in the Family" or "Star Trek."

As an amusing side note, white people who are not Gentiles, the ones who dominate American academia, finance and media, can be defined by a single common word. That word does not appear anywhere in this book. Coincidence?

The most valuable material is in the last few chapters. Government officials always have a narrative that they want to push. Reporters have a professional duty to be skeptical. Yet, they are not. They suppress their curiosity in order to maintain access.

Taibbi devote a lot of text to two major fiascoes. The first was the second Iraq war, the WMD question. The intelligence community wanted a war, and they had a perfect villain in Saddam Hussein. They spent years putting together the case for taking him down. Saddam was not a nice man, but there was no need for war. Beating the drums for war was the entire Bush apparatus – the usual heavies, Rumsfelt, Cheney, Poindexter and the like – but also a great many liberal and neocon outfits. Taibbi is tough with all of them.

In the end, the Republicans were the strongest proponents of the Iraq war. Therefore it is easier to get the press to be honest with itself on the subject. Another advantage is that the British Chilcot Report does a thorough and honest job of analyzing how the British press was co-opted into supporting this ill-advised war.

The second, Russiagate, on the other hand, is a Democrat operation. Democrats dominate the press. It appears that they dominate the intelligence agencies as well – the "Deep State", although Taibbi doesn't call it that. It will be harder to do a postmortem on Russiagate because the information sources for such an investigation would be to highly compromised.

Taibbi's book itself will be an excellent start. While he has no love for Republicans or for Trump, he does seem to like the truth. May the truth when out.

Among the other things to like about Matt Taibbi is that he is a straight white man. His Amazon portrait photograph shows him holding his son. How amazing! He is one of the few who is writing about the current state of affairs in the world who has a stake in its future. He has to care how his son will grow up and whether he has grandchildren. A look around will indicate that relatively few of the world's leaders share these concerns. A majority in Europe are childless.

Taibbi's arch sense of humor expresses itself even then his chapter titles.

1. The Beauty Contest: Press Coverage of the 2016 Election...
2. The Ten Rules of Hate
3. The Church of Averageness
4. The High Priests of Averageness, on the Campaign Trail...
5. More Priests: The Pollsters
6. The Invisible Primary: or, How We Decide Ele...
7. How the News Media Stole From Pro Wrestling
8. How Reading the News is Like Smoking
9. Scare Tactics: All the Folk Devils Are Here
10. The Media's Great Factual Loophole

11. The Class Taboo
  12. How We Turned the News Into Sports
  13. Turn it Off
  14. The Scarlet Letter Club
  15. Why Russiagate is This Generation's WMD
- Appendix 1: Why Rachel Maddow is on the Coy...
- Appendix 2: An Interview with Noam Chomsky
- Acknowledgments

That's enough of a brief review for the moment. I will add chapter reviews as I have time to write them. Without a doubt, a five-star effort.