What Kind of News Is Fake News

A New Taxonomy

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T HE FACT that "the value of information" has long ceased to represent a mere meta-phor does not need further demonstration.[1] Previous years have shown, however, that beyond companies and organizations, false information and the decisions taken on the basis thereof can affect a nation's destiny or the very livelihoods of people all over the world in the most palpable manner. Situations and events such as the 2016 US presidential elections, the referendum that paved the way to Brexit, the hostility fostered by North-American citizens towards Latin American immigrants, or that of certain Europeans towards Middle Eastern refugees, the escalation of interethnic and interreligious disputes, the revival of antisemitism, the poor vaccination rates recorded in certain countries—all of these are, at least in part, a consequence of the deeply flawed way in which certain channels and social media spread information regarding the factors involved in these particular phenomena and events. Countless studies have shown that these instances were greatly determined by what we traditionally call "misinformation" or "manipulation," but which, following the rise of social media, have been instead called "fake news."[2]

Naturally, the complex ways through which this new phenomenon was established and spread requires not only detailed analyses, but also a series of measures meant to counteract its nefarious effects, measures that should be implemented at an institutional level. For instance, David M. J. Lazer et al. propose that social media platforms offer their users "signals of source quality that could be incorporated into the algorithmic rankings of content."[3] Regina Rini goes even further in claiming that social media should consider "tracking the testimonial reputation of individual *users*."[4] However, regardless of how efficient the collective strategies of filtering out fake news would be—from adopting a legislative framework meant to sanction it to the development of specialized software able to automatically detect it—, there should be an effort towards raising awareness of it among the news' readerships. Romy Jaster and David Lanius are right in claiming that, until "effective countermeasures" are put in place, "a necessary first step is understanding the phenomenon of fake news, pinpointing its epistemic risks, and calling it out."[5] In this regard, numerous media analysts, philosophers, linguists, and computer scientists have formulated a series of definitions of fake news, meant to facilitate their identification.[6] Less attention has been paid, however, to the relationships and distinctions between

fake news and similar phenomena that do not fall under this category, i.e., other types of news. This is precisely what I aim to do in the present article, namely to classify fake news according to a new taxonomy of news.

Current Fallacies in News Classification

W HY IS a new scientific classification system necessary, since there are currently several attempts to integrate fake news into the broader journalistic genre of news? As I will demonstrate in the following, some of these taxonomies have brought valuable contributions to the better understanding of fake news (and news in general). However, they still unavoidably feature several fallacies that tend to accompany such approaches. I will discuss the three most popular of them: the deontic fallacy, the binary fallacy, and the gradual fallacy.

One major problem in identifying fake news continues to be the *deontic fallacy*, namely, the excessive permissiveness of scholars who are inclined to include nearly anything in the definition of fake news. For instance, when proposing a classification of different definitions of fake news, Edson C. Tandoc Jr., Zheng Wei Lim, and Richard Ling seem to include six types of discourse within this category: "news satire," "news parody," "news fabrication," "(photo) manipulation," "advertising," and "propaganda."[7] This excessive inclusiveness generates numerous confusions: satirical and parodical news possess a fictional component, whereas advertising's straightforward purpose is to sell a product rather than convey the "truth" about it. Even if the authors ultimately confess that they "disagree that news satires are fake news, at least with how [they] are currently defining it,"[8] this observation occurs late in the argument and is not substantiated. Similar issues are raised by Maria D. Molina, S. Shyam Sundar, Thai Le, and Dongwon Lee's classification, as they discuss the existence of "eight categories of online content": "real news, false news, polarized content, satire, misreporting, commentary, persuasive information, and citizen journalism."[9] Although the four authors make use of a relatively rigorous method of distinguishing between these categories, based on a Decision Tree, it is not altogether clear which of the seven remaining candidates and to that extent it actually constitutes "fake news" when compared to real news. At the same time, equating fake news with the concept of "false news" does not help further the argument in any way, since the authors warn that "'fake news' is not simply false information"[10] in the article's very title.

Another type of error frequently encountered in the study of fake news is what could be called *binary fallacy*. It consists of reducing the concept's specificity to the simple opposition to an ideal category, usually identified under the name of "real news." Consequently, we are basically faced with a "black-and-white" perspective, in which fake news seem to designate anything else *but* "real news." The main effect of this binary fallacy is including satirical news in the category of fake news. This is, for instance, what Victoria L. Rubin, Niall J. Conroy, Yimin Chen, and Sarah Cornwell do: while conceding that, in the case of fake news, "the falsehoods are intentionally poorly concealed, and beg to be unveiled," they argue that "some readers simply miss the joke, and the fake news is

further propagated."[11] However, concentrating on satirical news, which are easier to identify and extract, runs the risk of overlooking "real" fake news. As Jennifer Golbeck et al. rightfully claim, "if actual fake news is to be combatted at web-scale, we must be able to develop mechanisms to automatically classify and differentiate it from satire and legitimate news."[12] Admittedly, scholars seem to increasingly differentiate between fake news and satirical news during recent years, but this distinction is far from being a matter of consensus.

Lastly, an additional difficulty in identifying fake news owes to the presence of *the gradual fallacy*. Going against unnuanced dichotomies, the flaw of such an approach is the excessive generosity with which it establishes its categories. Therefore, drawing on the concepts established by the famous website PolitiFact (www.politifact.com), William Yang Wang maps his news corpus into six "fine-grained labels": "*pants-fire, false, barely-true, half-true, mostly-true,* and *true.*"[13] This scale, however, is highly controversial, because the dividing line between the categories seems to be fluid and sometimes the most harmful of fake news frequently emerges as "mostly-true," i.e., news that manipulates the "true" content in such a way that the level of believability of the "false" information increases. The approach proposed by Liqiang Wang, Yafang Wang, Gerard de Melo, and Gerhard Weikum raises similar issues in attempting to distinguish among "finer shades of untruth" by correlating the aforementioned categories with "five major categories of fake news": "factual," "propaganda" (with the subtypes of "incomplete" and "manipulative"), "hoax," and "irony."[14] Notwithstanding the debatable inclusion of irony, i.e., of satirical news, in the category of fake news, the four authors do not deliver a clear exposition of the distinction between "incomplete" and "manipulative" news, which encumbers the typology's effective use. However, as we have seen, imprecision seems to be a shared issue among most news taxonomies, regardless of the fallacies they are guilty of. Accordingly, we require a new classification of news in order to be able to adequately relate fake news to adjacent categories.

Three Kinds of News: True, Fake, Imaginary

THE CLASSIFICATION I pursue here tries, first and foremost, to transgress the three aforementioned fallacies. To this end, in order not to commit the *deontical fallacy*, I will first establish a common reference point (the news), taking into consideration, in order to identify the various *differentia*, nothing but phenomena that more or less belong to this *genus.* In other words, I will not focus on types of texts such as opinion pieces or advertising, regardless of how useful a comparison between these two and fake news would be. Regarding the binary fallacy and the gradual fallacy, it is obvious that these two are in opposition. The solution is, however, not to try to find a fleeting middle ground between them, but to bypass both at the same time. I will achieve that by admitting, on the one hand, that the differences between the different types of news are not gradual, but rather typological, and on the other, that this typology cannot be narrowed down to a mere conceptual pair. More exactly, I will investigate not only the

opposition between "fake news" and what I, for reasons I will expose in the following, call *true news*, but also their link to a third category, i.e., *imaginary news*.

The addition of the latter category to a taxonomy of news is crucial for understanding the phenomenon of fake news, both from the standpoint of its deceiving similarities and from that of the in-depth differences to other types of news. These links are best revealed if we proceed from a definition of fake news which I formulated elsewhere: "*Fake news is a (sub)genre of journalistic/informative discourse that conveys false information presented as true, with the purpose of eliciting a certain type of action in a certain community.*"[15] This definition consists of four parts: (a) the textual genre to which fake news belongs (news as journalistic discourse); (b) the nature of the information it conveys (false); (c) the manner in which the information is presented (presented *as* true); (d) the news' purpose (practical, i.e., to compel somebody to perform an action). Among these elements, the textual genre seems to be the common ground shared by the other news categories (true news and imaginative news). They are also supposedly news,[16] in the same way that fake news is news, something that allows us to compare them in the first place; consequently, the genre cannot represent a condition on which we can distinguish among the three types of news. Conversely, the other three dimensions can constitute ways of dissociating fake news from true and imaginative news, respectively.

Therefore, a fundamental difference between true news and fake news is that the former not only claims to deliver true information, but actually does. Whereas fake news profits from its formal similarity with true news in order to spread *false information* (or, in the best-case scenario, unverifiable information[17]), true news respects its commitment of disseminating *true information* (or, in the worst-case scenario, of acknowledging its own uncertainties in the clearest way). Here lies a second very important difference between the two news categories. As we know, the main purpose of true news is that of *informing*. This does not entail that a journalist does not foster the hope that his news produces a palpable effect on its public (on the contrary, such an effect can represent the main reason for which an event makes the news in the first place); but ideally, the news reporter does not pursue a *particular*, i.e., a targeted effect. Of course, there are numerous situations in which professional journalists—explicitly or not—aim to produce *particular* effects on their public. However, they—ideally—do not do this through news, but through their opinion pieces. On the other hand, fake news *always* aims to produce certain effects on its public, i.e., to compel it to perform a particular action or to choose inaction. In fact, this is the very reason for which *fake news* exists: it is called *fake* not because it is entirely so (which would prove quite impossible), but because a (relatively small) amount of information found therein is false. And the existence of *certain* false elements is explained precisely through the fact that fake news aims to determine its public to perform *specific* actions.

The differences between fake news and imaginary news belong to a different category. However, in order to better understand them, we have to start by discussing their common trait: both fake news and imaginary news contain false information, i.e., information without a correspondent in the real world. In this context, one of the main differences between them resides in the way in which information is presented. Whereas fake news presents its information *as true,* imaginary news offers its reader a series of hints

indicating that its information possesses no real-life correspondent. These hints can take the form of disclaimers (in the case of literary works or satirical pieces) or can make use of much subtler ways of signaling their imaginary character, such as various conventions or narrative techniques. In any case, the presence of these cues is mandatory in imaginary news, since its aim is not to prompt the reader to undertake an action based on the (false) information presented therein, but rather to offer him a particular type of satisfaction that could be summarized as a comic or aesthetic effect. Hence the second important difference between fake news and imaginary news, but also the added danger of confusing them, since there could also be cases where the reader will ignore the authors' cues and hold imaginary news for "true," and therefore assimilate them, in fact, as fake news.

However, things do not end here. Each of the three news subgenres (true/fake/imaginary news) have additional microgenres, which we could illustrate according to the following table:

Genre	News					
Subgenres	**True news (TN)**		**Fake news (FN)**		**Imaginary News (IN)**	
a) nature of the information	true information		false information		"false" information	
b) presenting the information	presented as true		presented as true		suggested as false	
c) aim	to inform		to instill an action in the reader		comedic/aesthetic effect	
Microgenres	**Real news**	**Authentic news**	**Propaganda news**	**Fabricated news**	**Satirical news**	**Literary news**
Distinctive elements	news that are substantiated by other sources	news that mention their own limitations	falsehood through omission	falsehood through addition or substitution	attributes imaginary actions and features to real-life entities	describe imaginary characters (or the fictional depictions of real characters)

In the following, I will carry out a detailed analysis of each of these categories (subgenres and microgenres of news) by drawing on examples from the FAKEROM platform, a corpus consisting of over 10,000 Romanian-language news dealing chiefly with the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, in order to better distinguish between the different categories of news, I selected—with the except of fictional news—texts with similar themes, associating the pandemic with the spread of 5G technology in various ways.

True News

THE FIRST news subgenre I will discuss is that of true news, including, as shown previously, the news that convey real information with the aim of informing its public regarding specific events that are considered relevant for a particular com-

munity. More precisely, this subgenre designates news in the traditional and somehow idealized understanding of the term. However, this concept covers two subcategories with several relevant differences. The first of these microgenres is that of *real news,* i.e., news that conveys real and fully verifiable events (mainly because *they already took place* and they can be certified by corroborating multiple independent sources). A good example in this regard is the following:

> ***Coronavirus: Telecommunication Antennas, Targeted in Conspiracy Theory-Fueled Attacks in Great Britain***
> *Approximately 20 relay antennas have been attacked in the United Kingdom following rumors linking 5G technology to the spread of Coronavirus, according to British press, thus compelling the government on Wednesday to adopt a firmer position against a so-called "ridiculous conspiracy theory," according to* AFP.
> *Two young men aged 18 and 19, suspected of having set fire to a relay antenna in Dagenham (a neighborhood in the outskirts of London) on Tuesday were arrested, and in West-Yorkshire police have opened an investigation into the circumstances of another arson that took place on Tuesday morning, targeting an antenna in Huddersfield.*
> *A spokesperson of the British Government on Wednesday condemned these attacks as "seemingly inspired by this preposterous conspiracy theory circulating online," which he qualified as "utterly absurd."*
> *At the same time, he underlined the "essential" role played by the telecommunication network for the National Health System* NHS, *but also for the general public, as it enabled people to keep in touch with their close ones during these "difficult times."*
> *In Ireland as well, where a relay antenna was attacked over the weekend, the government has warned the public against these conspiracy theories.* AGERPRES/(AS—*author: Lilia Traci; content editor: Florin Ştefan, web editor: Anda Badea)*
> (https://www.tagtog.net/fakerom/fakerom/pool%2F5G/a8qkj2iqdrvuc3CCk-J5sA6U1vtxa-5G_92.txt?p=1&i=0)

This news illustrates a series of distinctive traits of real news. First, it not only has a known author, but it also went through a process of editorial review, both by a content editor and by a web editor. Moreover, all of its direct or indirect sources ("British press," AFP, "a spokesperson of the British Government") are conscientiously mentioned, and the information taken from other sources is always inserted between quotation marks. Furthermore, we encounter an abundance of nominal, verbal, and adverbial constructions of the type *X does Y in the circumstances Z…* At the same time, adjectives are sparse—and usually found in the cited excerpts—, indicating that the author wants to avoid unnecessary speculation. It is also worth noting that even the few phrases expressing value judgements ("rumors" or "suspected") exercise caution in trying not to direct the reader's understanding towards a particular interpretation, which should instead take shape on the basis of the assessment of presented facts.

The traits of what I called *authentic news* in the table above are somehow different and could be illustrated by the following example:

PwC Report: 5G Technology Will Contribute 1.3 Trillion Dollars to the Global GDP
until 2030

The use of 5G technology will help increase productivity and efficiency in several economic
sectors and will contribute to the global GDP *with up to 1.3 trillion* US *dollars until 2030, a*
recent analysis conducted by PwC shows.

According to the report "The global economic impact of 5G. Powering your tomorrow,"
considering the scale of the economic potential, each organization will require a plan for
implementing 5G in the following 5 years, in order to maximize opportunities.

At the same time, adopting 5G will urge companies and governments to take into con-
sideration new approaches to regulations, focusing on cybersecurity when implementing this
technology.

The data gathered by PwC illustrates that, at a global level, North America will register
the highest growth in GDP, *followed by Asia and Oceania, Europe, the Middle East, and*
Africa (EMEA).

At the same time, at a national level, it is estimated that the USA *and Australia will ben-*
efit the most from 5G applications for financial services, India for utilities services, whereas
China and Germany for the manufacturing industry.

Concerning the global economic impact of 5G technology, half of the revenue, approxi-
mately 530 billion dollars, will be generated from the shifts in the health sector and social
assistance.

"The accelerated growth of telemedicine during the COVID-19 *pandemic opened up a*
new perspective over the future of medical assistance, proving its efficiency in the relation to
the patients, as well as at the level of costs. 5G applications include monitoring and online
medical exams, real-time exchange of patients' records between hospitals, enhancing doctor-
patient communication, and the introduction of automatized processes across hospitals to
reduce costs," mentions the report.

Moreover, other industries benefitting from 5G technology are Utilities providers, Media
and Entertainment, Production, and Financial Services, according to the PwC analysis.
AGERPRES/(AS—*author: Daniel Badea, content editor: Nicoleta Gherasi, web editor: Ady*
Ivaşcu)
(https://www.tagtog.net/fakerom/fakerom/pool%2F5G/amM_q9HaELKIx.JJX-
MThPLhS3.Au-5G_133.txt?p=0&i=10)

The cited news shares a series of traits with the news concerning the destruction of com-
munications antenna in the UK: it similarly seems to have undergone a rigorous control,
featuring an author and two editors; it is equally careful to name its sources (the publisher
and the cited text alike); it marks the information taken from other sources by using
quotation marks; it structures its information in a rigorous manner, careful to always
indicate the analysis' reference point ("at a global level," "at a national level," "global
economic impact," etc.); from the standpoint of syntax, we encounter nominal, verbal,
and adverbial constructions, and the few terms conveying value judgements ("efficiency,"
"maximize," etc.) belong, in fact, to the specialized language of economics. Beyond these
characteristics, there is a clear difference between the two news: whereas the story regard-

ing the antennas refers to events that already took place, the news regarding the global impact of 5G technology references predictions. Notwithstanding, one could not objectively assess whether this news is true or false. The main reason for which the news is perceived like this is that, even though the frequent use of the future tense can sometimes create the impression of a mandatory outcome, the news is aware of its own limitations both through constantly reminding its reader that it adopts and interprets an exterior point of view (that of the PwC report) and by detaching itself from the events by employing phrases such as "it is estimated." In fact, it is precisely this detachment from the news' absolute truth value that certifies its authenticity: without being (yet) "real," i.e., in effect, it remains "true" at least to the extent that it honestly and adequately presents the premises, circumstances, and the limitations of its factual truth (its "truthfulness").

Fake News

U NLIKE THE aforementioned example, fake news lacks precisely the lucid reflection on the conditions and limitations of its truthfulness. This does not entail, as I have shown elsewhere,[18] that fake news intentionally aims at deceiving its public. It is very likely that some of the authors, producers, publishers, or sharers of fake news are simply indifferent to its truth value, whereas others genuinely credit the information it contains. Yet, this distinction is of lesser importance, especially since most of the time, the producers' real intention cannot be verified. More important are the—more or less deliberate—techniques through which information is adulterated resulting in fake news, which fall into two distinct categories. The first microgenre consists of what could be called *propaganda news*, a consequence of falsehood by omission: none of the information the news presents is in itself false, but the story leaves behind important information pertaining to its context, which could shed a new light on the news' topic. A good example in this regard is the following news:

5G can Trigger Coronavirus-Type Viruses at a Cellular Level
*Scientific paper titled **5G Technology and Induction of Coronavirus in Skin Cells***
Authors' affiliation:
- *Department of Nuclear, Subnuclear and Radiation Physics, Marconi University, Italy*
- *University of Michigan Medical School, USA*
- *Dermatology & Venerology Department at the I. M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University in Moscow, Russia*

The Paper's Conclusion
In this scientific research, it is shown how the millimetric 5G waves could be absorbed by dermatologic cells that manifest themselves as antennas, thus transferring the effect to the other cells in the body and play a crucial role in producing coronaviruses in biological cells. DNA consists of electrons and atoms and has a structure akin to that of an inductor. This structure could be classified into linear, toroidal, or round inductors. Inductors interact with external electromagnetic waves, move and generate additional waves within the cells. The

shape of these waves is similar to the basic hexagonal and pentagonal shape of the cells' DNA sequence. These two could merge and form virus-like structures such as the Coronavirus.

In order to produce these viruses in a cell, it is required that the wavelength of external waves is smaller than the dimensions of the human cell. In this way, the millimetric 5G waves (5G emissions) can be a source for new structures in the cells, similar to Coronavirus (COVID-19).

(https://www.tagtog.net/fakerom/fakerom/-search/5g/akpdIKfnxsHvuC1FSx-Wx8FHWfaRK-text.txt?p=0&i=12)

Taken separately, all the elements of this news hold true: there is, indeed, a scientific study titled "5G Technology and Induction of Coronavirus in Skin Cells," published in an issue of the *Journal of Biological Regulators and Homeostatic Agents*; the authors have, indeed, the institutional affiliations mentioned in the news; and the conclusions are, indeed, those presented. There is, however, one crucial aspect that the news deliberately fails to mention (even in the sense that, if the authors were unaware of it at the moment of its publication, they would have had to add it later on, as professional journalists do): the article was retracted by the journal's editor-in-chief, with the following note: "This article has been retracted at the request of the Editor. After a thorough investigation the Editor-in-Chief has retracted this article as it showed evidence of substantial manipulation of the peer review."[19] Omitting this information, crucial for understanding the issue, renders the news entirely false.

The other microgenre of fake news is that of *fabricated news*, wherein the falsehood is the result of addition or substitution, i.e., through the invention of inexistent information that is either added to real information or replaces it altogether. Naturally, in both these cases, not all information in a particular news is invented, but only a part of it. Sometimes, highly specific real information is being used while altering just one agent, circumstance, or action, as is the case in the following news:

Bill Gates Wants to [sic] the Control of Births Through Microchipping

Climate Control: Geotechnology
Gates is seemingly convinced that God has predestined him to use technology to save humanity and that is illustrated through one of his most ambitious projects. Gates is funding Harvard scientists to use geotechnology in order to block the sun, therefore reversing global warming and climate change.

This undertaking is the epitome of arrogance, hypocrisy, and risk-taking. The massive proliferation of wireless communication and 5G technology—a field in which Gates are [sic] a major player—is the most important factor contributing to the increase in energy consumption. The growth of the wireless cloud between 2012 and 2015 represented the equivalent of adding 4.9 million cars on the road. It is estimated that 5G will exponentially increase energy consumption by up to 170% until 2026. Proposing to use the "intelligent" wireless network to decrease the carbon footprint with geotechnological technology is a foolish undertaking—not a solution to climate change. . . .

The technological ambitions fostered by Gates are not biologically sustainable. The Tower of Babel will fall with catastrophic consequences for humanity. It's time to demolish the Tower before it's too late.
(https://www.tagtog.net/fakerom/fakerom/-search/5g/aXb8vmqjw3uZIdsF_5IDQGznp2dK-fake_hybrid_76.txt?p=3&i=9)

Much of the information featured in this news is true: there is, indeed, a Harvard geoengineering project, partially funded by one of Gates' research funds; the massive extension of 5G wireless networks will contribute to a major increase in energy consumption in the following years; and probably, the use of intelligent networks in combating our carbon footprint is "foolish." The issue, however, is twofold: on the one hand, the project did not aim to use 5G technology to reduce carbon emissions but to investigate—with the use of physics and chemistry—"whether there are aerosols that could reduce or eliminate ozone loss without increasing the chance of other risks;"[20] on the other hand, if we choose to ignore this project from the equation, there is no other proof that Gates had attempted to "block the sun, therefore reversing global warming and climate change." Consequently, the first false information in the news, of a more technical nature, is meant here to substantiate another false information, of a rather psychological and theological nature, warning of humanity's hubris of challenging the divine (as suggested by the metaphor of the Tower of Babel at the end of the text).

Imaginary News

THE OPPOSITION between truth and falseness functions only within a discourse that claims to refer to real persons, traits, situations, actions, or events. There is, however, news that does not raise such claims; on the contrary, it gives the reader a series of cues signaling the imaginary nature of the characters, situations, or actions it describes. A first category of news doing precisely that is *satirical news*. Within it, the people mentioned (or at least a part of them) exist in the real world, but the greater part of the situations in which they are depicted, their traits, or their actions are imaginary, generating comical effects and thus ridiculing the people involved or, conversely, the readers' prejudice. One example in this regard is the following news, published on the Romanian site *Times New Roman*:

Bill Gates Attacks Soros: "Who Installed this Microchip Did a Lousy Job!"
The well-known Reptilian, Freemason, and Illuminatus Bill Gates, newly elected leader of the New World Order, mercilessly attacks his predecessor, George Soros, accusing him of negligent craftsmanship in fine informatics.
"Pfft," scoffed Bill Gates. "Who installed chips here before was a lousy handyman. Look, two times out of three, the chips were installed wrong when measuring the temperature. It's right there in the instructions, 'chip shall be installed in the forehead,' but if you take the time to look, in Romania people were chipped in their tits, in their hips…"

"And besides, half of the chips' frequency is totally off. This isn't 5G, lady, it's 4-and-a-half-G at most. He really screwed you over, I swear on my kids," continued Bill Gates in his attack against Soros, while scratching the posterior side of his Masonic overall.

The CEO *of Microsoft added that we have to chip everybody again and that it won't be cheap, but at least it will be a job well done.*
(https://www.tagtog.net/fakerom/fakerom/pool%2Fsatirice-hybrid/a8NUgzZ9Uh-WBzjPnQeghwwRn.T4u-satirice_hybrid_19.txt?p=0&i=19)

The news obviously involves two existing people (Bill Gates and George Soros); likewise, it mentions countries (Romania), companies (Microsoft), and technologies (5G) that can be easily traced back to reality. Notwithstanding, all of this is mentioned in the news in a satirical manner: Bill Gates is portrayed as "Reptilian, Freemason, and Illuminatus," introducing microchips in people's bodies is equated to a construction or carpentry project, and the language and behavior of the characters involved evoke the jargon of handymen attempting to defraud their clients. In fact, the author does nothing but bring together the prevalent stereotypes of several running conspiracy theories (the Masonic plot, the 5G conspiration, chipping the population with the help of thermometers, etc.), and the imaginary, i.e., satirical character of the text is a result of this unlikely cluster of information that seems to unveil a generalized conspiracy.

Another category of imaginary news is fictional news, usually abundant in literary works. The characters they refer to are preponderantly invented and do not possess a real-life equivalent. There are also instances where fictional news can refer to actual individuals, objects, or places; however, they usually refer to *the fictional doubles* of real-life entities, regardless of how much they mimic reality. Let us consider the following example:

Dreadful News
As we have accustomed you, we start today's news report with a dreadful news. A copy of **Viața face toți banii** *was massacred during a gunfight, in which twenty other people were injured.*
(https://www.tagtog.net/fakerom/fakerom/pool%2Ffictionale/a.k4sUCmwE-O7xZcJnyow2WWyUFX8-text.txt?p=0&i=0)

This news was taken from the short story collection *Viața face toți banii* (Life is worth every penny) by Vlad A. Popescu, published in 2014. As we can tell, the news refers the book itself and it would be reasonable to imagine that the book was authored by a man bearing the same name, Vlad A. Popescu. But it is equally reasonable to suppose that the "Vlad A. Popescu" *who lives* in the book *Viața face toți banii* is not the same Vlad A. Popescu who *wrote Viața face toți banii*, despite sharing a common name. This claim is substantiated by the fact that the book respects the convention of literary fiction, certified both by its publication in the "Fiction's Street" collection and by its being labelled as "short prose." It is true that the "news" from the book singles out the volume as such, allowing for the other "twenty people" to slide into the background. But this does not render the news either false or true, since it follows different rules from the ones of the real world.

Conclusions

ALTHOUGH IT could not be explored more extensively within the present article, I believe that the classification outlined thus far can contribute to a better distinction between fake news and both true news and imaginary news. The set of traits specific to each sub- and microgenre of news can help avoid confusion and, at the same time, explain why confusion occurs in the first place. All things considered, it is not yet clear whether the six categories possess other differentiating characteristics as well, such as thematic fields, rhetorical strategies, or various other properties that can only be detected with the help of computational analysis. These questions can become the starting point of future inquiries.

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Notes

1. Gerald A. Feltham, "The Value of Information," *The Accounting Review* 43, 4 (1968): 684–696. For a more recent approach, see David B. Lawrence, *The Economic Value of Information* (New York: Springer, 2012).
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13. William Yang Wang, "'Liar, Liar Pants on Fire': A New Benchmark Dataset for Fake News Detection," in *The 55th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Proceedings of the Conference, Vol. 2 (Short Papers)*, edited by Regina Barzilay and Min-Yen Kan (Vancouver: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2017), 424. A similar initiative to Politifact is, for the Romanian language, Factual (http://www.factual.ro)—see Costin Busioc, Vlad Dumitru, Stefan Ruseti, Simina Terian-Dan, Mihai Dascalu, and Traian Rebedea, "What Are the Latest Fake News in Romanian Politics? An Automated Analysis Based on BERT Language Models," in *Ludic, Co-design and Tools Supporting Smart Learning Ecosystems and Smart Education*, edited by Óscar Mealha, Mihai Dascalu, and Tania Di Mascio (Singapore: Springer, 2022), 201–212.
14. Liqiang Wang, Yafang Wang, Gerard de Melo, and Gerhard Weikum, "Understanding Archetypes of Fake News via Fine-grained Classification," *Social Network Analysis and Mining* 9, 37 (2019): 2.
15. Terian, 117.
16. It is still debatable whether imaginary news belongs to journalistic/informative discourse or should be regarded as part of literary/artistic discourse.
17. Most of these situations can be classified as the kind of indifference towards truth that some American philosophers call "bullshit"—see Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 33–34.
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Abstract
What Kind of News Is Fake News:
A New Taxonomy

Recent years have shown that fake news can have an extremely damaging effect on various communities, from companies and organizations to nations and even to society as a whole. In order to effectively fight against fake news, we require not only a series of well-directed institutional practices, but also a rigorous definition of fake news and a clear delimitation from other similar categories of news. Building on the corpus built by the FAKEROM project, consisting of over 10,000 Romanian-language news, the present article puts forward a new classification of fake news within a broader news taxonomy, replacing prevalent dichotomies and distinctions with a typology organized along the following two levels: the subgenres (true news–fake news–imaginary news) and the microgenres derived from them (real news–authentic news; propaganda news–fabricated news; satirical news–fictional news).

Keywords
FAKEROM, taxonomy, fake news, true news, imaginary news