

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IALJS
LITERARY JOURNALISM

VOL 2 NO 1

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

WINTER 2008

PURSUING OUR JOURNAL PLANS

A new "Literary Journalism Proceedings" is underway.

By John Bak, Nancy 2 (France)

As the fall semester winds down and the IALJS listserv remains fairly quiet, please do not think for a moment that we have lost the momentum of which I spoke in the fall issue of the IALJS Newsletter. Much has been going on behind the scenes as we build up toward IALJS 3 in



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Lisbon next May. First, some good news: The European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) accepted our proposal for a seminar at their Ninth International Conference at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, 22-26 August 2008. The seminar,

entitled "Literary Journalism and the Canon," is currently seeking submissions from IALJS and ESSE members that respond to the following topic:

While literary journalism has generally been considered an American phenomenon, whose writers include Capote, Mailer, Wolfe, Agee and Didion, today it is practiced and studied world-wide. And as journalists look more and more to literary devices to tell their stories, and fiction writers to immersion reporting to lend a phenomenal reality to their narratives, scholars of literary journalism have concerted their efforts to define the genre's emerging academic discipline. One immediate issue has surfaced: how will the classic examples of literary journalism over the last century or more be regarded within a given nation's growing literary canon? This seminar

will examine to what extent literary journalists past and present—from the U.S. and the U.K., but also from Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa—have contributed to palliating the quarrel of fact versus fiction and have (re)shaped our notion of what constitutes a national "literature."

For those interested in participating, please send an abstract of 200 words (including your name, university affiliation and rank, and title of your talk) in a Word attachment to me (john.bak@univ-nancy2.fr) and to David Abrahamson (d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu) by 1 March 2008. For more information about the conference or the CFP, visit the ESSE 9 website at <http://www.esse2008.dk> (see seminar S.32).

Given Routledge's decision, we now feel it is necessary to respond to the needs of our members

You might also be interested in two other seminars proposed: S.10, "Research and the Literary Periodical: Theory and Methodology" and S.36, "American Little Magazines and Innovative Voices on Language and the Self."

Every silver lining has a cloud, however. For reasons both financial and editorial (since our *Literary Journalism Studies* would potentially compete with Routledge's two other journals, *Prose Studies* and *Journalism Studies*), Routledge has decided, after an intense yearlong study, not to publish *LJS*. That year had pretty much blocked any progress toward publishing work from IALJS 1 and 2. Several of the IALJS board members had discussed how to handle the publication of papers read in Nancy in 2006 and Paris in 2007, and it was decided that any publication project be put

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WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS

Our association now has almost 40 members. Recent paid-in-full members include Maria Zulmira Castanheira (Nova de Lisboa, Portugal), Dan Close (Wichita State, U.S.A.), Tom Connery (St. Thomas, U.S.A.), Kathy Roberts Ford (Minnesota, U.S.A.), Mike Grenby (Bond, Australia), Amy Mattson Lauters (Wichita State, U.S.A.), Jacque Marino (Kent State, U.S.A.), Sam Riley (Virginia Tech, U.S.A.), Patsy Sims (Goucher, U.S.A.), Charles Whitney (California-Riverside, U.S.A.) and Douglas Whynott (Emerson, U.S.A.)

FUTURE ANNUAL MEETINGS

The following future IALJS convention venues are under consideration.

2009: IALJS Annual Convention at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, USA, 14-16 May 2009.

2010: IALJS Annual Convention at Roehampton University, London, UK, 13-15 May 2010.

2011: IALJS Annual Convention at Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 12-14 May 2011.

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WWW.IALJS.ORG

LISBON CONFERENCE DETAILS

Plans for our 2008 meeting are coming together nicely.

By Alice Donat Trindade, TU-Lisbon (Portugal)

The 2008 IALJS meeting is taking place in Lisbon, Portugal, and our main goal is to be able to build on the experience achieved so far. The Nancy and Paris Conferences were two milestones: Nancy was the starting point for our association, and Paris confirmed the consolidation of an idea that developed into a true organization. The driving force that took us to France on both occasions was the common interest shared by all involved: our interest in literary journalism from both academic and practitioners' points of view.



CONVENTION
UPDATE

Lisbon, we hope, will mean a further step in our association. Our goal is to remain a comprehensive group, welcoming members both from the academic world and the writing community. The fact that all conferences have taken place at universities does not entail any hidden agendas. After all, literary journalism would never be an object of study if there were no writers, so all are more than welcome. In fact, we are getting in touch with Portuguese professional associations in order to invite them to join us in our discussions.

On the other hand, the conference will take place at a college that offers a degree in the Media Studies and while classes are in session. This means that we will be meeting amongst a community of students who might be encountering liter-



ary journalism as an actual genre for the first time in their lives. Perhaps our conference will encourage some of them to take an interest in the subject—either as a topic for further research or, following in the footsteps of Portuguese practitioners, as a form for their own writing.

For would-be participants, who are still considering whether or not to attend (or perhaps submit an abstract), here is a foretaste of things to come. Thanks to the efforts of our vice president, David Abrahamson, Professor Thomas Connery has kindly accepted to join us and will be delivering the keynote speech on Thursday, May 15. The tentative title of his presentation is “Literary Journalism’s Critique of Conventional Journalism: Historical Origins and Contemporary Issues.” Given the fact that Professor Connery is one of the seminal founders of the field, conference attendants will have the opportunity to listen to one of literary journalism’s major scholars.

Professor Connery’s presentation will conclude the first morning of the conference. Other sessions will include Poster/Work-in-Progress and Research Paper Sessions. These will be the two types of papers presented at the conference. On acceptance, participants will be informed of the type of session they will participate in. We must emphasize that time allotments will be strictly adhered to: 20 minutes for Research Papers, 10 minutes for Works-in-Progress. Although it may sound harsh to be so restrictive, please bear in mind that the added value of these conferences lies in the questions and comments from other attendees after the actual presentations. Current members can attest to the special atmosphere

of IALJS conferences, which are occasions to listen, participate and interact. In addition, three panels that have been organized: “Teaching Literary Journalism I: As Writing,” “Teaching Literary Journalism II: As Literature” and “Short-Form Literary Journalism: Testing the Boundaries.” We hope that this complementary triplet of panels will address the need many of us feel to share experiences, as well as to perhaps allow us all to hear about what is happening in our field on an international scale.

More details on the conference and how to attend it may be found at our association’s website, www.ialjs.org. Até breve! ♦

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE (tentative)

Wednesday, 14 May 2008

Session 0	15.00 – 17.00	IALJS Executive Committee Meeting
	19.00 – ?	Informal drinks and dinner

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Session 1	8.00 – 8.45	Welcome and Introduction
Session 2	9.00 – 10.00	Poster/Work-in-Progress Session I
Session 3	10.15 – 11.15	Research Paper Session I
Session 4	11.30 – 12.30	Keynote Speech
Lunch	12.30 – 14.15	
Session 5	14.15 – 15.15	Panel I
Session 6	15.30 – 16.30	Poster/Work-in-Progress Session II
Session 7	16.45 – 17.45	Research Paper Session II
Session 8	18.00 – 19.00	IALJS Executive Committee Meeting
	19.00 – ?	Informal drinks and dinner

Friday, 16 May 2008

Breakfast	8.00 – 8.45	Scholars' Breakfast (optional)
Session 9	9.00 – 10.00	Panel II
Session 10	10.15 – 11.15	Poster/Work-in-Progress Session III
Session 11	11.30 – 12.30	Research Paper Session III
Lunch	12.30 – 14.15	
Session 12	14.15 – 15.15	Poster/Work-in-Progress Session IV
Session 13	15.30 – 16.30	IALJS Annual Members Meeting
Party	16.45 – 18.00	Conference Reception
Dinner	19.00 – ?	Conference Banquet

Saturday, 17 May 2008

Session 14	9.00 – 10.00	Panel III
Session 15	10.15 – 11.15	Research Paper Session IV
Session 16	11.30 – 12.30	Closing Convocation
Lunch	12.30 – 14.15	
Tour	14.15 – 17.15	Lisbon Tour
	19.00 – ?	Informal drinks and dinner

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Literary Journalism Studies. All rights reserved.

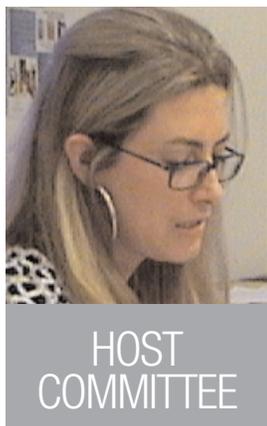
2008 IALJS CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM 15-17 May 2008 Universidade Tecnica de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal		
1.a. PRE-REGISTRATION FEES (MUST BE POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE 31 MARCH 2008)	Please indicate the applicable amounts:	
IALJS Member – \$100 / 70 Euros		
IALJS Member Retired – \$80 / 55 E		
Student with research paper on program – free		
Student without paper on program – \$50 / 35 E	<i>(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)</i>	
Non-IALJS member – \$140 / 100 E	<i>(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)</i>	
Spouse – \$35 / 25 E (This fee is required only if a spouse will be attending scheduled research sessions and/or panels)		
1.b. REGISTRATION FEES POSTMARKED AFTER MARCH 31, 2008 (Note: Meals & special events may not be available to those who register after 31 March 2008)		
IALJS Member – \$130 / 90 Euros		
IALJS Member retired – \$110 / 75 E		
Student with research paper on program – \$30 / 20 E		
Student without paper on program – \$80 / 55 E	<i>(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)</i>	
Non-IALJS member – \$170 / 115 E	<i>(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)</i>	
Spouse – \$65 / 45 E (This fee is required only if a spouse will be attending scheduled research sessions and/or panels)		
1.c. ON-SITE REGISTRATION – \$155 / 105 Euros (Note: Meals & special events may not be available to those who register on site)		
2. SPECIAL EVENTS: Please indicate the number of meals required next to each item below		
	Number of meals needed:	<i>Regular</i>
Scholars Breakfast (Friday)	Number attending x \$15 / 10 E	
Conference Banquet (Friday)	Number attending x \$45 / 30 Euros	
Sightseeing Tour (Saturday)	Number attending x \$45 / 30 E	
<i>Make registration checks payable to "IALJS"</i>		TOTAL ENCLOSED:
Return <u>completed form</u> with a check or bank transfer made payable to "IALJS" to:	BILL REYNOLDS, IALJS Treasurer School of Journalism, Ryerson University 350 Victoria St. Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3 CANADA 01-416-979-5000 x6294 / reynolds@ryerson.ca	For a reservation at the convention hotel in Lisbon, contact: HOTEL TIVOLI TEJO IALJS Confirmation No. 74.383, Room rate: 105 Euros Phone: +351-218-915-100, Fax: +315-218-915-345 E-mail: httejo@tivolihotels.com
3. REGISTRATION INFO		
Name:		
Address/Department		
School		
City, State, Zip		
Country		
E-mail Address		
Name of Spouse (if attending)		

THE MANY ATTRACTIONS OF LISBON

We will be meeting in “The White City.”

By Isabel Soares Santos, TU-Lisbon (Portugal)

Lisboa, the cityscape that served as the background for Alain Tanner’s movie *In the White City* (1983) is the meeting place for the 2008 annual convention of the International Association



HOST
COMMITTEE

for Literary Journalism Studies. As the second most ancient capital in Europe after Athens, Lisbon has been the source of inspiration for poets (e.g. Byron), travellers (Henry Fielding), film directors (Wim Wenders), philosophers (Voltaire), novelists (Atoni Munoz Molina) and, yes, even literary journalists such as our very own Eça de Queirós. In fact, this age-old white city has always impressed those who venture

into a country caught mid-way between a Mediterranean and an Atlantic identity. It is a hybrid space, just like literary journalism, in which none of the premises succeeds in overriding the other.

Here, then, is where we meet. Lisbon offers the perfect setting for amazing discoveries, just as it did in the times when caravels set sail from its harbour in Belém to explore the far reaches of an unknown Earth. Here, too, we hope that we can chart new ground in the still fairly unexplored realm of literary journalism.

Located at the mouth of the river Tejo (Tagus), Lisbon, like Rome, is set on seven hills. A myth says they are the seven pieces that were left of a monster killed by Ulysses when he disembarked on the calm bay of what came to be known as Olissipo, or city of Ulysses. Legends aside, Lisbon was founded by the Phoenicians, who used its harbour as a trading post for the rest of Iberia. The local Celts intermarried with the Phoenicians, and when Carthage fell Lisbon and its inhabitants became part of

the Roman Empire. An important strategic and trading point, Felicitas Julia (as Lisbon was called) benefited from certain privileges and never paid imperial taxes to Rome. But empires are not eternal, and after Attila forced Rome to capitulate Lisbon was taken by the Vandals—and then the Visigoths, and then the Moors in 719 AD. Four hundred years later, the

Rising from the
ashes of the 1755 earthquake,
Lisbon was
rebuilt as an entirely
new city

first Portuguese king, Dom Afonso Henriques, brought the city back to Christendom, and it became the capital of Portugal in 1255, a position it has held ever since.

In the Age of the Discoveries, the expeditions of Vasco da Gama and Pedro Álvares Cabral left the shores of Lisbon in the hope of finding the elusive kingdom of Prester John. What they found, of course, was far more important: the maritime route to India and a New World in Brazil. Lisbon became the centre of the known universe and the most prosperous city of the time. But the dream was short-lived, and the city was destroyed by a violent earthquake and an ensuing tsunami in 1755. Rising from its ashes, Lisbon was rebuilt in an entirely new (and quakeproof) fashion. The magnificent Baixa Pombalina with its large avenues and the imposing Praça do Comércio overlooking the Tejo testify today to the resilience of the city’s citizens.

Such a rich and ancient history

THE PEOPLE OF LISBON OFTEN LOVE EATING
AL FRESCO, AND MANY OCCASIONS
ARE CELEBRATED WITH OUTDOOR FEASTS.



Continued on next page



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has left its imprint on 21st century Lisbon. It is a modern metropolis and the second most important financial and economic centre of the Iberian Peninsula. Climbing to Castelo de São Jorge, however, one can travel in time. Behold the breathtaking view over the whole of Lisbon, the Tejo, and the lands beyond the river.

In the westernmost part of Lisboa one finds the capital of a great and proud overseas empire that stretched

from Asia to Africa and Brazil: the Praça do Império with the monumental Mosteiro dos Jerónimos (a UNESCO world patrimony site), the Monument to the Discoveries and the emblematic Torre de Belém. In contrast, the eastern part of the city symbolises the capital that hosted Expo 98 with its modern buildings, the impressive Vasco da Gama bridge over the

ABOVE LEFT, THE DRAMATIC ARCO DA RUA AUGUSTA AT NIGHT. RIGHT, A MONUMENT TO PORTUGAL'S AGE OF DISCOVERY. BELOW, THE PALMY SKYLINE AT DAWN.

Tejo and the futuristic train station by Santiago Calatrava.

And if all of this is not enough to characterise Lisbon, we might mention the incredible ethereal white light, the gastronomy with its delicious pastry (pastéis de Belém are a must) and the ever fresh fish (charcoal grilled, preferably) accompanied by the excellent Portuguese wines.

And, of course, there is always the welcoming spirit of Lisboaans. Benvindos a Lisboa! ♦



CALL FOR PAPERS THE 2008 IALJS CONFERENCE

A new theme and a call for papers, works-in-progress and panel proposals

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Association for Literary Journalism
Studies

"Literary Journalism: Theory, Practice, Pedagogy"
The Third International Conference for Literary
Journalism Studies

Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (TU-Lisbon)

Lisbon, Portugal
15-17 May 2008

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies invites submissions of original research papers, abstracts for research in progress and proposals for panels on Literary Journalism for the IALJS annual convention on 15-17 May 2008. The conference will be held at the Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas at the Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (TULisbon), Lisbon, Portugal.

The conference hopes to be a forum for scholarly work of both breadth and depth in the field of literary journalism, and all research methodologies are welcome, as are research on all aspects of literary journalism and/or literary reportage. For the purpose of scholarly delineation, our definition of literary journalism is "journalism as literature" rather than "journalism about literature." The association especially hopes to receive papers related to the general conference theme, "Literary Journalism: Theory, Practice, Pedagogy." All submissions must be in English.

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies is a multi-disciplinary learned society whose essential purpose is the encouragement and improvement of scholarly research and education in Literary Journalism. As a relatively new association in a relatively recently defined field of academic study, it is our agreed intent to be both explicitly inclusive and warmly supportive of a wide variety of scholarly approaches.

Details of the programs of previous annual meetings can be found at:
<http://www.ialjs.org/conferences07.html>
<http://www.ialjs.org/conferences2006.html>

I. Guidelines for Research Papers

Submitted research papers should not exceed 7,500 words, or about 25 double-spaced pages, plus endnotes. Please regard this as an upper limit; shorter

papers are certainly welcome. Endnotes and bibliographic citations should follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Papers may not be simultaneously submitted to any other conferences. Papers previously published, presented, accepted or under review are ineligible. Only one paper per author will be accepted for presentation in the conference's research sessions, and at least one author for each paper must be at the convention in order to present the paper. If accepted, each paper presenter at a conference Research Session may be allotted no more than 15 minutes. To be considered, please observe the following guidelines:

(a) Submission by e-mail attachment is required, in either an MS Word or Adobe PDF format. No faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted;

(b) Please include one title page containing title, author/s, affiliation/s, and the address, phone, fax, and e-mail of the lead author;

(c) Also include a second title page containing only the paper's title and the paper's abstract. The abstract should be approximately 250 words in length;

(d) Your name and affiliation should not appear anywhere in the paper [this information will only appear on the first title page; see (b) above].

II. Guidelines for Poster/Work-in-Progress Presentations (Abstracts)

Submitted abstracts for Poster/Work-in-Progress Sessions should not exceed 250 words. If accepted, each presenter at a conference Poster/Work-in-Progress session may be allotted no more than 10 minutes. To be considered, please observe the following guidelines:

(a) Submission by e-mail attachment is required, in either an MS Word or Adobe PDF format. No faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted;

(b) Please include one title page containing title, author/s, affiliation/s, and the address, phone, fax and e-mail of the lead author;

(c) Also include a second page containing only the work's title and the actual abstract of the work-in-progress. The abstract should be approximately 250 words in length.

III. Guidelines for Proposals for Panels

(a) Submission by e-mail attachment is required, in either an MS Word or Adobe PDF format. No faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted;

(b) Panel proposals should contain the panel title, possible participants and their affiliation and e-mail addresses, and a description of the panel's

subject. The description should be approximately 250 words in length;

(c) Panels are encouraged on any topic related to the study, teaching or practice of literary journalism;

(d) SPECIAL NOTE: A panel on the subject, "Representation and Mediation in the Texts of Literary Journalists," is already under consideration. Anyone interested in participating as a panelist is invited to contact the Conference Program Chair (e-mail address below).

IV. Evaluation Criteria, Deadlines and Contact Information

All research paper submissions will be evaluated on originality and importance of topic; literature review; clarity of research purpose; focus; use of original and primary sources and how they support the paper's purpose and conclusions; writing quality and organization; and the degree to which the paper contributes to the study of literary journalism. Similarly, abstracts of works-in-progress and panel proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which they contribute to the study of literary journalism. Submissions from students as well as faculty are encouraged.

Please submit research papers or abstracts of poster/works-in-progress presentations to:

Prof. Alice Trindade
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (Portugal)
2008 Conference Research Chair, IALJS
E-mail: <atrindade@iscsp.utl.pt>

Please submit proposals for panels to:

Susan Greenberg
Roehampton University (United Kingdom)
2008 Conference Program Chair, IALJS
E-mail: <s.greenberg@roehampton.ac.uk>

Deadline for all submissions: No later than 31 January 2008.

For more information regarding the conference or the association, please go to <http://www.ialjs.org> or contact either:

Prof. John Bak
University of Nancy2 (France)
President, IALJS
E-mail: <john.bak@univ-nancy2.fr>

Prof. David Abrahamson
Northwestern University (USA)
Vice President, IALJS
E-mail: <d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu>



IALJS Membership Form

Please fill out form and return (by mail, fax or e-mail attachment) with dues payment to address below.

Your name _____ Title (Dr., Prof., Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss) _____

University/School/Department _____

Current home address (street number, city, state/province, country) _____

Phone (include intl. code) Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Fax phone _____ E-mail address _____

Area(s) of teaching/research interest _____

Membership Categories: Members receive all IALJS announcements, including information about conferences, IALJS Newsletter, and the IALJS journal, *Literary Journalism Studies*.

Please check category: US\$ 40 or 30 Euros: Regular Member (Faculty member)
 US\$ 40 or 30 Euros: Associate Member (Professional member)
 US\$ 15 or 10 Euros: Student Member (Master or Doctoral level)
 US\$ 15 or 10 Euros: Retired Faculty Member
 US\$100 or 70 Euros: Sponsoring Member (to support the IALJS general operating fund)

Please Note: Because your IALJS membership dues are apportioned to various publication accounts, as well as for operating expenses, the U.S. Postal Service requires that you sign off on this procedure. Please sign below.

Signature _____ Date _____

PAYMENT METHODS: Check or Wire Transfer

1. Make Check Payable, in U.S. Funds only, to IALJS.

Please mail check with completed form to:

Bill Reynolds, IALJS Treasurer
School of Journalism, Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M5B 2K3

2(a). Wire Transfer (Outside U.S.)

From your bank, send wire transfer, using Swift Code #CHASUS22, to IALJS account #705981314. Please notify the treasurer by email, reynolds@ryerson.ca, with date of wire transfer and federal wire number.

2(b). Wire Transfer (U.S.)

From your bank, send wire transfer, using Routing #071000013, to IALJS account #705981314. Please notify the treasurer by email, reynolds@ryerson.ca, with date of wire transfer and federal wire number.

PLEASE NOTE: Unfortunately, the IALJS cannot accept payment by credit card at this time.

READING LIST

A number of our colleagues in the discipline have particular favorites in the

broad canon of literary journalism that they have found to have special meaning both in and out of the classroom. Their nominees are the books and/or articles they find uniquely useful examples of the craft. We asked a few for their choices, and, for your reading pleasure and possible classroom use, the results follow.

- R. Thomas Berner (Pennsylvania State, U.S.A.) recommends "**Final Salute**" by **Jim Sheeler** of the *Rocky Mountain News*, which he terms "a tour de force [and] compelling narrative nonfiction." Indeed, one of Berner's students commented that the Sheeler is the "kind of reporter that all of us want to be."
- Richard Keeble (University of Lincoln, U.K.) suggests the journalism of **Arundhati Roy's** nonfiction collection, *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, as well as **John Pilger's Tell Me No Lies**—both of which "combine bravery, political passion and elegant writing."
- Jacqueline Marino (Kent State, U.S.A.) nominates "**The Boy Who Loved Transit**" by **Jeff Tietz** in the May 2002 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, for the way the author "weaves his observations, shoe-leather reportage and the subject's own writings into a moving narrative."

REPORT FROM THE IALJS TREASURER

As of 1 December 2007, Treasurer Bill Reynolds reports that the financial circumstances of our association are as follows: The total balance in our treasury as of this report is \$2,223.31. The association currently has 39 paid-in-full members. In addition, nine other colleagues have indicated that they are interested in membership, but their dues are still pending. **Please note: For all members, the 2008 IALJS membership fees are due 1 January 2008** (if needed, see page 7 for the association's membership form).

LITERARY JOURNALISM IN NORWAY

From oil to books.

By Susan Greenberg, Roehampton (U.K.)

Members of the IALJS already take nonfiction writing very seriously. How many of us live in a country where nonfiction writing has its own national organization, able to fund writerly research, publication and international cooperation?

At the tail-end of summer 2007, I packed my bags for a four-day visit to Norway at the invitation of University College Vestfold, just south of Oslo. The university recently launched a new Master of

Arts program in Nonfiction Writing, and I was invited to give a lecture. While making the arrangements, I learned the trip was being funded by a Norwegian organization called the *Norsk Faglitterær Forfatter-Og Oversetterforening* (NFF), which translates into the Norwegian Non-



CONFERENCE NOTES

Fiction Writers and Translators Association. I confess that my first thought was: Who knew?

The NFF was created 30 years ago, largely out of the sense of injustice felt by a nonfiction writer, about the exclusion of nonfiction from public monies made available from Public Lending Rights. It now has 5,000 members, a notable number in a country with a total population of just 4.6 million.

It ensures that nonfiction writers of all kinds (from literary nonfiction to textbooks) benefit from the state largesse made possible by the country's oil wealth, a tradition of state welfare and the impulse of a smaller nation to protect a minority language. Norway operates a system of state purchase orders, buying a thousand copies of more than 200 Norwegian-language fiction titles every year. Now, after pressure from the NFF, it does the same for nonfiction.

The NFF awards grants to writers worth more than 50 million Norwegian kroner per year (approx \$9.5 million). Around a third of that goes to fund travel, and the rest is given out for larger projects. Successful candidates (about half of all applicants) get around NOK22,000 (\$4,170) per month for up to a year, to complete a nonfiction book. In 2007, 291 writers were awarded a grant, and to date, more than 3,300 books have been published as a result of this support.

The organization has a journal called *Prosa*, and it supports a new chair at the University of Oslo, currently held by Dr. Johan L. Tonnesson, who is a professor of what is called "Sakprose." NFF's general

The association funds a University of Oslo chair in what is called "Sakprose"

secretary, Trond Andreassen, was until very recently the president of the European Writers' Congress.

The combination of circumstances that led to the growth of the NFF is perhaps an unusual one. So far—please correct me if this is wrong—I know of no similar organization other than the American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA), a 1,000-member professional association of nonfiction magazine and book writers in the U.S. But it certainly does give one ideas. ♦

NFF-RELATED WEB SITES

As with any organization these days, the NFF has a number of related web sites. For those who might be interested, a brief list follows. (Caveat: As far as we've been able to determine, *Prosa* has no English link.)
<http://www.nffo.no/english.htm>
<http://www.prosa.no/>
<http://www.european-writers-congress.org/>

THE WRITER'S CHOICE

Truth may be many things, but it is not nothing.

By Walt Harrington, Illinois (U.S.A.)



GUEST
ESSAY

Once upon a time I knew a young woman who was smart and beautiful, talented and hardworking. She reported well and wrote gracefully. She was, like everybody I knew in those years, ragingly ambitious. On the day that this promising and engaging woman—Janet Cooke—would be forever banished from the *Washington Post* and American journalism for having made up her Pulitzer Prize-winning story about an eight-year-old heroin addict, I came to the *Post* newsroom early in the morning. The place was nearly empty

when I sat down at Janet's desk to do what any aspiring literary journalist should do—report. I took out a pad and began jotting notes on what was before me:

- A bottle of pink Maalox.
- A snippet from a Jackson Browne song: "Nobody rides for free . . . nobody gives you any sympathy . . . nobody gets it like they want it to be . . . nobody, baby."
- These words: "There is no therapy for whatever ails a good reporter like the challenge of an *impossible assignment*"—with "impossible assignment" underlined.
- And this aphorism: "Some people know what they want long before they can have it."

As I had expected, at 12:24 p.m. on April 16, 1981—I know the time and the day because I also jotted them in my notes—two burly men arrived at Janet Cooke's desk, cleaned its top and its contents into cardboard boxes, and rolled them away on a metal dolly. The infamous Janet Cooke was gone.

Well, not exactly.

You are living with her ghost—and her descendants and ancestors in fakery. Jayson Blair of the *New York Times*, a most astonishingly brazen faker known to all of you because his crimes are recent and led not only to his downfall but to the sad downfall of Howell Raines and Gerald Boyd, Numbers 1 and 2 at the *Times*. Stephen Glass of the *New Republic*, who five years ago was caught making up not only quotes and scenic details but entire human beings, businesses, legislation, even products—a Monica Lewinsky inflatable doll that recited Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass." That took fakery and creativity. Michael Finkel, who invented a West African teenage slave for the pages of the *New York Times Magazine*. Patricia Smith and Mike Barnacle, fallen columnists of the *Boston Globe*.

In the scholarly world—the *Journal of the American Medical Association* admitted that med student Shetal Shah's account of an

old Alaskan villager killing himself by walking out into the frozen Arctic was a fake. In book publishing the examples are nearly endless, depending on how you define "fake." Benjamin Wilkomirski's 1995 memoir, *Fragments*, in which Wilkomirski, as a child, watched his mother die in a Nazi concentration camp. Too bad he was actually Bruno Grosjean, a Christian raised in foster homes in Switzerland. The "rounding" of the "corners" to which author John Berendt admitted after the publication of his nonfiction best-seller *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, a Pulitzer finalist. In a strangely unconvincing defense, Berendt said, "This is not hard-nosed reporting, because clearly I made it up."¹

Faking it for art's sake has a long tradition: Truman Capote's made-up scenes for *In Cold Blood*; John Hersey's then-unacknowledged creation of a single character carved from the lives of many World War II vets in his famous 1944 *Life* magazine piece, "Joe Is Home Now"; George Orwell's recreation of multiple events as a single scene in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. And, let's be honest, newspapers of the 19th and 20th centuries that were famous for never letting the facts get in the way of a good story.

Finally, perhaps most frightening, the rise of the personal memoir as a profitable book form in the last 20 years has fostered some of the most bizarre, through-the-looking-glass logic about what is and isn't *truth* in what's loosely called nonfiction. Frank McCourt remembering dialogue as a toddler in *Angela's Ashes*. Vivian Gornick acknowledging that scenes with her mother, described with absolute realism in her much-praised memoir *Fierce Attachments*, didn't take place, and that

a conversation her mother had with a street person in New York didn't happen—but that's okay because Gornick knew what her mother *would have said* to that street person if she had run into him. Dave Barry, I'm not making this up!

Now you probably expect me to rant with moral indignation against the fakers and hoaxers and the grand thinkers who argue with a straight face that fact and fiction are indistinguishable and, therefore, any effort to mark their boundaries is itself a fiction, a fraud, a fake.

Not gonna do it.

Because the battle against the aggressive fakers—the Janet Cookes, Stephen Glasses, Michael Finkels and Jayson Blairs—is hardly worth our time. They are liars who lie to get ahead. They lie out of weakness and fear because they know what they want before they've earned the right to have it. They want fame and glory, and they want it early

As reporters
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and often and easy. We can understand such people. They are old-fashioned people. They lack character. Of course, there are still lessons for us.

Simply put, as reporters and writers we must resist our darker angels, not fall to temptation. Get old-time religion. Remember that recognition and respect should come to people for their achievements and that real achievements are hard-earned. A journalism student of mine a few years into the work world once told me that the most inspiring thing I had ever said to him was that I'd never written anything worth remembering in the first ten years of my career.

The truth is, people are weak and flawed, and some percentage of them—of you out there today—will cheat. Look to your left and to your right. Nope, you can't tell which of you are the cheaters. Not by the cut of your suit or the width of your smile or the style of your hair. But cheaters live among us. If you are one of them, stop it. Perhaps you have only a small chance of getting caught, but when you are caught, it will be 100 percent. And *you* will not get Jayson Blair's six-figure book deal. He took down the editors of the *New York Times*. You will take down the editor of the *Fort Worth Weekly*. You will just be gone.

The lesson for editors? Interrogate even your most trusted reporters. Follow the old adage of investigative reporting: Assume the best and look for the worst. Anyone who resents that interrogation has something to hide or is too immature to realize what's at stake. And what's at stake is your credibility, your paper's credibility, and journalism's credibility. Ultimately, if the weight of all the lies becomes too great and society becomes too cynical about our work, our freedom to make honest mistakes without fear of going to jail or being sued into the poorhouse—the real roots of our "free press"—is at stake, too. When you hype a quote, fake a source, pipe a scene, you aren't committing an individual act. You are committing a social act. You are ripping a small tear in the contract of trust that Americans indulgently grant the press.

Yet, as I said, that's the easy stuff. We can attack the militant liars

with diligence. We know how to toughen our standards. We understand lying for gain. But the sweeping societal drift of our thinking about what is and is not a *fact* is a tougher nut. Consider the following examples:

- Reality tv shows that are not reality at all.
- Respected biographer Edmund Morris making himself a fictional character in *Dutch*, an otherwise conventional biography of Ronald Reagan, in pursuit, he said, of his art.
- Teachers of "creative nonfiction" who argue that fine nonfiction writers don't seek a shabby thing called "literal truth" but the higher-minded "essence of truth." So combining disparate scenes isn't lying but "composing" in pursuit of literature.

To a certain crowd—probably most of you reading this—the debate of accuracy is a bit comical

- The journalist who began teaching nonfiction to bright Ivy League students and was shocked at how unconcerned they were about, say, whether a person's hair color was correctly remembered as blond or brown. "What does it matter?" they asked.
- The respected, brilliant book editor who argues that taking notes or using a tape recorder actually undermines accuracy by making people change their behavior, therefore it's more accurate to report only from memory.
- The respected, brilliant book editor who says that if something happened recently in a person's life but it better serves the story by happening 20 years earlier, it's fine to change that particular event because the alteration is in service to the narrative—to the essence of the truth, I suppose.
- The respected, brilliant book editor who tells a writer he should never fabricate anything but instead "trust" the accuracy of his memory—a thinly veiled

excuse, I believe, to make up whatever you want because who will know?

- The respected publishing lawyer who says you can pretty much make up what you want as long as you put a little disclaimer in the front of your book saying that some facts and details have been changed for dramatic purposes. The memoir writer Augusten Burroughs included the following note in his book *Dry*, "Certain episodes are imaginative re-creations, and those episodes are not intended to portray actual events," to which the *Washington Post* book critic Jonathan Yardley responded, "There is a word for that: fiction." ²

- Compare Burroughs's view of veracity with that of the revered historian John Hope Franklin, who once told the *Washington Post's* Linton Weeks that he had been at the Library of Congress checking his memories against documentary facts as research for his autobiography. Franklin told Weeks he had remembered hearing George Gershwin's orchestra play "Rhapsody in Blue" at a concert in 1928 but that old newspaper accounts had proved his memory wrong—the actual work was "Concerto in F." Weeks asked Franklin what he thought about books written solely on memory. Franklin's answer was simple: "I couldn't do that."

In a certain crowd—probably most of you here today—this debate over accuracy is comical. You, as journalists, are shabby literalists—and proud of it! Yet we can't let it go at that, because the people who think this way are not dumb. They are not all self-serving and greedy. They have been born and bred in a time when we have come to question everything that we think we know. In a time when we understand that, as Akira Kurosawa made us see in his 1950 movie *Rashomon*, that where one stands while observing an event deeply shapes what one sees. What assumptions and biases we bring to bear matter.

We now know that memories are malleable and shifting over time, as we re-remember our pasts to fit our presents. We do not necessarily shape-shift our memory out of malice or self-interest. It's just what we as humans do to make sense

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of ourselves in our worlds. We have rightly been made thoughtful and sensitive about the multiplicity of perspectives and the watery quality of memory. We are better off for thinking this way, better knowing that much of what we believe we believe, what we believe we have seen and heard and experienced, is not shared even by others who lived the same experiences. Yet when we extend that insight to say that "facts" do not matter because all is perception, we enter dangerous territory. I think of a time a group of journalism graduate students I knew were being lectured by a philosopher arguing many of these points.

"But what about the truth?" a student asked.

"Truth?" the philosopher said confidently. "After all, what is truth?"

That cowed the students into silence.

Well, truth was at least the table at which they sat. Truth was at least that you could rap it with your knuckles and sound waves would shoot through the room and sensation would rocket through your hand. Truth was at least that the rectangular shape of the table distributed the students in a defined manner. Truth was at least that the table was made of a certain kind of wood that came from a certain kind of tree in the forest. Truth was at least that a craftsman had taken that rough chunk of wood and, through the creativity of his mind and the mastery of his hand, sawed and shaved and sanded and finished it into a table. Truth was at least that beneath its solid existence lived millions of dancing molecules.

Truth may be many things—but it is not nothing at all.

When a tree falls in the woods and nobody hears it, it still makes noise. Words spoken were spoken whether or not we can reconstruct them correctly. Events occurred in a certain sequence whether or not we can discern it. A man scratched his head after speaking certain words and did not scratch his head after speaking other words. It was raining or it was not.

I love the novels of Cormac McCarthy, who writes: "this world [. . .] which seems to us a thing of stone and flower and blood is not a thing at all but is a tale [. . .] All is telling. Do not doubt it."³ Well, if we are interested in human meaning, then what objects mean to us always matters. But life as people live it is not a "tale." A

thousand people killed in a mud slide is not a "tale." It is mud-clogged lungs choking for air, crushed bones and skulls, unimaginable pain. It is dead mothers encased in muck clinging to their children. That mud slide—and the world of stone and flower and blood—is a *thing*. Do not doubt it. Truth is a documentary, physical reality—as well as the meaning we make of that reality, the perceptions we have of it. It's not one or the other. It's both, entwined. We cannot know the "essence of truth" if we are cavalier about "literal truth."

That belief must be what defines us as journalists, and our credo must be: When accuracy and art conflict, accuracy wins.

All this debate is deeply relevant to those of us who champion what has come to be called "narrative journal-

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real

ism"—what has been variously called "new journalism," "literary journalism," and "intimate journalism." You know the drill—stories rooted in immersion reporting; that move through time; develop character; use real-life action, scene, dialogue, and detail to bring them to life; that have a narrative story arc and that aim to feel like short fiction—what two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner Jon Franklin has called the "true short story." An approach that for 35 years now has consciously borrowed the devices of the novel. We can't pretend away that some of our craft's famous liars were reaching for this form of journalism. Janet Cooke was, in newspaper parlance, a "feature writer."

It's not a discussion we should duck. Because being clear about the place and purpose of literary device versus the place and purpose of documentary reality in our work needs serious conversation. In the last few years at the

National Writers Workshop conferences held around the country, I've found myself asking speakers and participants if they have ever felt under pressure to make their reporting conform to the needs of dramatic storytelling. Many of them do. H. G. Bissinger, the author of the scrupulously nonfiction books *Friday Night Lights* and *A Prayer for the City*, said a few years ago, "More and more, the public expects nonfiction books to [. . .] have that perfect, seamless storytelling quality. That's an impossibly high bar [. . .] If you're trying to get it right, you really do suffer with the facts you have. Believe me, I went through a lot of days of depression and self-doubt, but one thing I was not going to do is make it up."⁴ But the pressure to have the perfect story—facts be damned—is increasingly real.

I once listened to a group of true crime writers talk about how they select book topics. Other than the commercial pressure to write about *rich* murdered people, they were overwhelmingly concerned about finding a strong narrative story line, a hero, and a redemptive ending. In other words, the needs of the storytelling form—not a story's social significance—were dominating the stories they chose to tell. I fear that, as literary or narrative journalism has come to be seen as an outgrowth of fictional literary devices that make stories more compelling, we have forgotten that we are not only "storytellers" but the "tellers of stories." We have allowed literary device and framing to become ends in themselves.

The power inherent in novelistic storytelling is not only the power of plot and character and scene. Certainly it's true that drama, intrigue and tension hold readers. That's good in itself. But the elements of story are not only tricks but tools of inquiry, devices that direct our vision to the many nuances of real life. There's a reason we still read Robert Penn Warren's book, *All the King's Men*. It isn't only because Warren can turn a

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nice phrase and because the book's plot is compelling and its characters fascinating. It's a brilliant novel because it captures the depth and breadth of human experience—passion, greed, decency, selfishness. It portrays Depression-era Louisiana politics in ways that ring true. And it does so by evoking the richness of lives and culture through not only intellect but through emotion and sensory experience—through the full array of human experience.

The novelist's eye for detail and attention to moral complexity is not just a bag of techniques. It is a way of seeing, a kind of theory of human behavior. When we inquire with what we think of as the needs of storytelling embedded in our search, we are actually attuning ourselves beforehand to that human richness so often missing in our journalism. When used properly, the novelist's eye opens our eyes and heads and hearts to the breadth of what we can and should be looking for in our reporting. It doesn't take us away from the truth, as some traditional journalists fear. It helps us better see and hear and touch and feel the truth before us.

But that powerful lens must be coupled with journalism's twin commitment to documentary reality—a table is a table. The early New Journalists who came out of journalism as opposed to fiction shared this commitment—Tom Wolfe and Gay Talese. The *New Yorker* writers Lillian Ross, John McPhee, Susan Sheehan, and Tracy Kidder have never been accused of playing loosely with the facts. Nor have the younger generation of journalistically-bred literary journalists—the *Washington Post's* David Finkel, *Sports Illustrated's* Gary Smith, the *Oregonian's* Tom Hallman, the *New Yorker's* Susan Orlean; book authors such as Bissinger, Richard Ben Cramer, and David Maraniss. These men and women are artists not because they make stuff up but because, when unraveling the lives of others, they imbue their inquiries and stories with their own constellation of experiences, values, intelligence, and commanding philosophical questions to unlock the stories within the people they are writing about. What distinguishes a literary journalist-artisan from a literary journalist-artist is that if one or a thousand other

reporter-writers went out to do the same story, they would never tell as uniquely insightful a tale.

I suspect that most of these masters thought of what they were doing not only as art but also as popular ethnography. They are people who consciously (as in the case of Susan Sheehan who was influenced by Oscar Lewis) or unconsciously borrowed the mindset of the ethnographer who wants to understand, describe and explain worlds foreign to him in their own terms while evoking, as documentary writers said as far back as the 1930s, the "feeling of a living experience." That, too, is part of our tradition. As journalist Pete Hamill once said, "Writers are rememberers or nothing. That's why the tribe gives us that job." We aren't trying only to tell a good story. We're trying to chronicle and illuminate the world, take readers into the lives of

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people they would never meet, write stories that are mirrors in which readers can glimpse a piece of unexpected humanity in others and, perhaps, even in themselves. If you do not have this deep commitment, it will be far easier for you to fall prey to making it up.

This is hard work. It's not a fluke that old newspaper union requirements used to define a journeyman reporter as someone with seven years of experience. That's because you learn something in those years of covering fires, murders, airplane crashes, town carnivals and cats stuck up in trees. You learn first that although philosophers can argue that all reality is socially constructed, in the flesh-and-blood world people have a very clear idea of truth and accuracy.

John Smyth, with a *y*, doesn't spell his name the same way as John Smith, with an *i*—and he actually cares

about the difference. You learn that getting his name wrong reveals a dangerous tendency in you: You are assuming you know what you don't know. Reporting at the grass roots teaches you how many unconscious assumptions you make about everything, how difficult it is simply to describe what we believe to be in front of us, and how little we know with confidence about anything—the spelling of a name, the genus of a plant, the type of clouds billowing overhead, the exact make and model of a certain car, the difference between baby blue and delft blue. And those are the easy challenges. The hard challenges are knowing what people *mean* when they say things, what their gestures and expressions *mean*, what the objects arrayed in their homes *mean* to them.

Fine literary journalists are always masters of their craft, as are all masters of their forms. The famous jazz musician Charlie Parker, who when asked how he had gotten so good, supposedly answered that he had practiced his musical scales every day, all day for 10 years and then forgotten them. A fine furniture maker I knew said it took years to learn to cut tight dovetail joints perfectly without having to think about the work intensely. When he had mastered it, though, when it became second nature to him, he could spend his hours of cutting joints thinking about the larger matters of design and artistry. *Esquire* writer Mike Sager, a fine literary journalist who came out of the *Washington Post*, says this of our craft: "The key is to get your tools honed to such an extent that the tools do their job without too much thought. Then your head is freed to do its job. Master technique, and then listen to your heart."⁵

I've always been intrigued by what philosophers call "tacit knowledge," which is knowledge so ingrained that we no longer know how we came to know it—the way we learn to walk and then take mobility for granted, the way we learn to talk and then take language for granted. Perhaps it's no accident that so many of the unmasked liars in our craft were young. They wanted to be the Charlie Parker of journalism before they

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had mastered their scales, before their knowledge had become tacit.

So much to learn: How to spell names, yes. But we also learn to take nothing at face value, to check and recheck everything. As the old journalism adage goes: "You say your mother loves you—check it out." We learn that there is often a difference between what people remember and what actually happened, and we believe—true to our documentary heritage—that the difference matters, that it is often revelatory. We learn that it is almost impossible to write anything that makes everybody you write about happy. We learn to take criticism as a daily diet. We learn, sadly, that our critics are too often correct—that we were wrong. We learn that we have power, that people we write about call us on the phone and cry or run into us at the supermarket and turn away. We learn that their daughters go to school with our daughters. We learn that we can hurt people's reputations in the eyes of not only their community but in the eyes of their children. We learn that people call our bosses and try to get us fired, that they hire lawyers and sue us for millions of dollars, and that judges don't have an intellectual's view of the relativity of facts. We become paranoid about never being found indisputably wrong and to take every detail, word, quote and conclusion as seriously as death.

We learn that the complicated worlds we enter are next to impossible to recreate in words. It is humbling and exhilarating to realize this. It sets off a lifelong journey to figure out how to turn those thousands of pieces of life and shards of perception into stories that are true to the documentary facts, as they also evoke people's subjective experiences in ways that are accurate to them, that make perfect strangers want to read on, and that, ideally, teach those strangers something important about themselves. We ask strange questions others would never think to ask because we know the answers are necessary to create the flow, sensory texture, and physical atmospheric of our stories: What did the dying woman's room smell like? What does the icy wind feel like on the priest's face? What color was the old Chevy you used to drive? What was the taste of your mother's spaghetti sauce? What did the gunshot that killed your son sound like in the small room? And this is before

you even begin to write—rendering scenes, selecting telling details, avoiding melodrama, shaping material without distorting it, aptly balancing the particular and the universal, imposing themes rightfully rooted in your reporting, structuring stories so insight emerges, action concludes, characters change and tension is relieved. Seven years is not so long a time to learn all of this. But if it were easy, everybody would be Tom Wolfe or Susan Orlean or David Finkel. They aren't. And most of us never will be. How do you live with that? Do you fake your way?

In the end—you can't escape it—it's a matter of character.

I teach a class in personal journalism. And just last week I was going through passages in my most recent book, *The Everlasting Stream*, a chronicle of my years of rabbit hunting with my

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father-in-law and his Kentucky country friends. I was trying to help my students understand how paragraphs that read omnisciently were actually sourced. I said that when I write that the wind was gusting at 30 miles an hour, I had gotten the National Weather Service reports for that day. When I write that there was a waxing crescent moon in the sky, I had an astronomer calculate what kind of moon was in the sky on that date. When I write that the green briar bushes have been munched by deer, I had taken a naturalist into the field to confirm this for me. Rain really was falling because I noted it on my pad or into my tape recorder. When I say the men and I lit up and smoked Arturo Fuente Curly Head Deluxe Maduro cigars, we really smoked that brand of cigar, at that moment, in that place. When I write that the men stood in the woods and talked about chicken hawks, Carl's old .22 rifle and beagle

pups lost to marauding coyotes, they actually talked about these things then—not later, not before. When I say the sky was stacked with cloud plateaus on the eastern horizon, it was. I know because I carried a compass on my watchband. When I describe what the innards of a rabbit look like as I am cleaning the dead animal with my knife, I have been through a necropsy of a rabbit with two veterinarian students who annotated a rabbit's plumbing for me.

When I write that the spring water is 51 degrees, I have measured it with a thermometer. When I write that on a visit to the White House, I sipped La Crema Reserve Chardonnay and ate smoked salmon mousse, I have checked old White House records through the Bush Presidential Library. When I write that a series of mountains in the Kentucky countryside rise 700, 800 and 900 feet, I have checked those elevations on soil conservation maps. When I write that I remember my father and myself, as a boy, riding in the car one night singing "The Red River Valley" as we drove through the dip in Ashland Road just past Virgil Gray's house, I have relied on my memory of that night and the song but checked with my father to learn that it was Virgil Gray who lived in the house. Then I drove two hours to visit Ashland Road to make sure there really was a dip in the road just past Virgil's home. There was.

My students were quiet when I stopped giving examples. Then one young woman asked incredulously, "Do other journalists do that, too?"

Well, yes. Think of Paul Hendrickson's chapter, "Ode to an Instrument," in his Critics Book Circle Award-finalist book, *Looking for the Light*, about the life of Depression-era documentary photographer Marion Post Wolcott. It describes the old Speed Graphic camera that Wolcott used. It's an artful chapter. But it's the in-artful substructure—the reporting—that Hendrickson leaves out that makes the artful possible. What he doesn't mention is that he went to the

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Smithsonian Institution and got copies of the original catalogues and publicity literature on the Speed Graphic. Then he bought an old Speed Graphic so he could examine it, hold it, run through its complicated mechanical routine, hear its clicks and whirs. Then he found an old photographer who had used a Speed Graphic in his youth. Watching and hearing the man talk about the camera with awe and respect, Hendrickson told me later, was "like poetry." Yet none of this laborious reporting is in his chapter. The hard work is hidden. Only the reporter knows what it took. To the reader, it all looks easy. It's not, although it is easy to fake.

And that's why—at the end of the day—it's your choice.

In what do you believe? To what are you committed?

It really is *your* choice. ♦

NOTES

This article, in a slightly altered form, was the keynote address at the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies/Medill Alternative Journalism Writing Workshop at Northwestern University.

1. Doreen Carvajal, "The Truth Is Under Pressure in Publishing," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1998, B1.
2. Terry Greene Sterling, "Confessions of a Memorist," August 1, 2003, <http://www.salon.com/books/feature/archives/2003/08/01/gornick/index1.html>.
3. Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 143.
4. Carvajal, "The Truth is Under Pressure in Publishing," B1.
5. Walt Harrington, ed., *Intimate Journalism: The Art and Craft of Reporting Everyday Life* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 243.

AUTHOR'S BIO

Walt Harrington, a staff writer for the *Washington Post* Magazine for nearly 15 years, is the author of five books, including *Crossings: A White Man's Journey Into Black America* and *The Everlasting Stream: A True Story of Rabbits, Guns, Friendship and Family*. He is chair of the Department of Journalism at the University of Illinois.

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THE PURPOSE OF PUBLICATION

Three members discuss what motivates them to study literary journalism.

By Bill Reynolds, Ryerson (Canada)

As promised last issue, this column returns and dedicates itself to the informal explication of the work of three scholars in our literary journalism community—all of whom have recently had their good work published.

Here, I should reiterate, is our opportunity to stop and catch up with the intellectual goings on of some of our fellow members. So please make yourself comfortable and enjoy, in the informal setting of your choice, some stimulating thoughts from colleagues on what drives us to study literary journalism—and just a little bit about what makes them tick.



RESEARCH
PERSPECTIVES
(SECOND IN A SERIES)

Norman Sims's Century of Literary Journalism

True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism, a new book by Norman Sims (Massachusetts-Amherst, U.S.A.) was published just last month by Northwestern University Press. Sims, who has compiled three previous collections of literary journalism, one co-edited with Mark Kramer, says he feels like he's been working toward this particular history for the whole of his scholarly career.

"My work on literary journalism began in grad school in the 1970s," says Sims, "when I was studying the history of two kinds of journalism from Chicago in the 1890s: a scientific and an artistic model. My dissertation advisor, Dr. James Carey, was one of the pioneers in a cultural approach to journalism. I made the connection to contemporary journalism later, when I read an article by Jane Kramer in the *New Yorker*, an intimate profile of a cowboy in Texas, presented in

the realm of artistic journalism. Suddenly, I connected her work with that of the Chicago writers of the 1890s and decided that, perhaps, this kind of journalism had a longer history and tradition than people assumed."

Sims continues: "In my new book I make an effort to trace American literary journalism's origins into the 19th century, and then to move forward in time using a set of linked profiles of writers, some of whom were American expatriots writing from Europe. For the past 25 years, I've been interviewing literary journalists, and those interviews form the core of my material on contemporary writers."

Sims includes five excerpts from Michael Paterniti, John Dos Passos, Edmund Wilson, Joseph Mitchell and Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, in addition to an extensive historical bibliography presented as an appendix. "I'm hoping that this package will not only be of interest to readers," he says, "but will make it easier for professors to offer instruction on the genre of literary journalism."

As for what motivates Sims to continue researching in the field of literary journalism, he says he is fascinated by the way in which "writers pass along their traditions and feelings almost as if the world were an oral culture.

"I've had the experience of walking into contemporary literary journalist Tracy Kidder's living room and discovering on his bookshelf a rare copy of Nels Anderson's *The Hobo* from 1923, which Tracy used in researching a work on riding the rails. Joseph Mitchell's books were, for decades, passed from hand-to-hand in the same way. Only in a few colleges and universities can students actually study this stuff.

"Since I think literary journalism does the best job of representing culture in different eras," Sims concludes, "I feel some responsibility for making its history available."

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Susan Greenberg Traces Fault Lines in Journalism as Academic Field

Officially, Susan Greenberg's paper, "Theory and Practice in Journalism Education," *Journal of Media Practice* (Volume 8, Issues 2/3, November 2007), started life as part of a postgraduate teaching qualification. But the course just provided an excuse for the Roehampton University, London scholar to do something that felt essential for sheer survival: to trace the main fault lines in journalism as a academic field.

"It was a shock entering higher education, after nearly 30 years as a writer and editor," says Greenberg. "Not the obvious one of adapting to teaching and life in the public sector, but the shock of realizing that many people involved on the theory side seemed to hate journalism and its practitioners. And indeed, the fact that the feeling was often mutual."

Greenberg's paper surveys members of the U.K.'s Association for Journalism Education (AJE) on how they see theory and its relation to practice in their own classrooms. It puts this in the context of the "reflective practice" pedagogical model, which is sometimes offered as a solution to the theory-practice divide in journalism education. However, since reflection must be done within an explicit theoretical framework, Greenberg poses the question: which theory, and defined by whom? The conclusion is that it is important to avoid assumptions about the nature of the framework that will evolve, and to make it possible for practice to influence theory, as well as the other way around.

"I saw the need for a theoretical context in the practice-based classroom," says Greenberg, "but felt that the off-the-peg varieties left a good deal to be desired. This paper is the first step in what I hope will be a long-term project, to define a framework that arises more organically from within practice itself. If we don't come up with our own, someone else is going to do it for us—and we probably won't like it."

Other stages in the project include an exploration of how poetics and the concept of "story" relate to non-fiction. Meanwhile, Greenberg continues to work on a late-in-life doctorate about

"editing and meaning," which looks at editing as a stage in the creative process.

What unites all of Greenberg's research, she says, is an interest in making what is hidden become more visible. "In many ways, professional education, literary journalism and editing all occupy the same liminal space, because they are about the process, not the product. To champion any of them is to challenge assumptions," she concludes, "and that means there's a good deal of 'mapping' and defining to do."

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Kathy Roberts Forde Studies Literary Journalism's Relation to the Law

University of Minnesota scholar Kathy Roberts Forde says she tries to formulate the kinds of questions about literary journalism that allow her to examine the form through historical, theoretical and legal lenses. As a media historian, with supplementary training in literary theory and media law, she has the background for this approach.

Roberts Forde's first major study of literary journalism is called *Literary Journalism on Trial: Masson v. New Yorker and the First Amendment*, which is due to be published in spring 2008 by University of Massachusetts Press. "It is a book exploring an important libel case in the United States that involved a work of literary journalism and presented significant First Amendment concerns," she says of Janet Malcolm's two-part *New Yorker* magazine feature about Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, which was published in book form as *In the Freud Archives*. "The central legal issue was whether altered quotations constituted libel in the established constitutional framework," says Roberts Forde. "I suggest the case resulted from the collision of traditional daily journalism and literary journalism, two American press traditions that developed different professional standards and norms from the late 19th century to the present."

Roberts Forde continues: "I came to see that the case helped bring into the public purview significant questions of postmodern thought that were roiling the academic disciplines and intellectual circles: can journalistic

reports, and indeed any form of expression, offer an 'objective' representation of the world? What is knowable as 'fact' as opposed to 'interpretation' or 'opinion,' a question at the heart of many libel cases?"

Roberts Forde says she has since moved on to her new research project—a publication and reading history of social protest journalism first published in American magazines, then in book form. "This writing is a form of literary journalism that is widely assumed to have done important work in the Civil Rights Movement," she says. "My goal is to understand how this social protest journalism moved from the author's pen into public life—and how readers have made sense of or appropriated this work for their individual and/or collective purposes. I'm discovering how challenging it is to do this kind of history. To get at readers is a slippery thing and requires a broad range of sources and methodological techniques that I'm still puzzling over."

Roberts Forde says she's always had a "deep and abiding curiosity" about the kind of work journalism—and literary journalism in particular—has done in the public sphere. "My research questions tend to connect literary journalism to larger historical problems, such as the degree of constitutional protection offered to press expression or the role of social protest journalism in the American Civil Rights Movement. I find these kinds of questions intellectually exciting and robust enough to sustain my interest for the several years it takes to write a book.

"Plus, research can be tremendously fun and personally rewarding. It's great to discover answers to my questions and to share these with folks who have similar interests. It's also great to read the research of my colleagues far and wide who study literary journalism. I couldn't do my own research without the excellent work of many members of IALJS and others who study literary journalism—to whom I am profoundly grateful." ♦

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WORK BY MEMBERS

A number of IALJS members have interesting work that is either recently published or in press. A modest celebration of their scholarly accomplishments follows.

- **María Lassila-Merisalo** (Jyväskylä, Finland) has an article "Friend or Foe? The Narrator's Attitude Towards the Main Character in Personality Stories" in a new book, *Real Stories, Imagined Realities: Fictionality and Non-fictionality Literary Constructs and Historical Contexts*, edited by Markku Lehtimäki, Simo Leisti and Marja Rytönen (Tampere Studies in Language, Translation and Culture, Series A Vol. 3. Tampere: Tampere University Press, 97-127.)
- **Norman Sims** (Massachusetts-Amherst, USA) has a new book entitled *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism*, which appeared in November (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), \$24.95.
- **Susan Greenberg** (Roehampton, UK) has a journal article, "Theory and Practice in Journalism Education," appearing in the *Journal of Media Practice* (November 2007).

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2008

Members are reminded—as gently as humanly possible but also, we admit, with a hint of firmness—that your IALJS dues for the 2008 calendar year are payable in January 2008. For most members, the dues are \$40 or 30 Euros, but please refer to the detail on page 7 of this newsletter. As a relatively new learned society, prompt payment would be sincerely appreciated.

SCHOLARLY JOURNAL PLANS SPECIAL ISSUE

The scholarly journal, *ZAA (Zeitschrift fuer Anglistik und Amerikanistik): A Quarterly of Language, Literature and Culture*, is planning a special volume on the "New Documentarism" that might be of some interest to IALJS members. The issue will cover documentary formats across the media, and the editor, Christiane Schlote (University of Berne, Switzerland) is looking for transnational contributions. For more information on the journal, please see <http://www.zaa.koenigshausen-neumann.de>.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER Continued from Page 1

on hold until the establishment of *Literary Journal Studies*. The logic behind the decision was that a collection of conference proceedings might possibly reduce the number of submissions needed from IALJS members for the first issue of the journal.

Given Routledge's decision, we now feel it necessary to finally respond to the needs of IALJS members in seeing their work in print. While *LJS* editor John Hartsock continues his search for a home for the journal (which could take up to another year and possibly means that the first volume of *LJS* will likely appear no earlier than Winter 2009), I have been looking around for a publisher who would be interested in publishing *Literary Journalism Proceedings*—the book that would collect a selection of revised essays

simultaneously. Whether or not your essay is finally accepted for the book project mentioned above, submitting your essay is our agreement that it is currently not under consideration elsewhere. I understand the different academic traditions in America and in Europe, which is why I want to offer all our colleagues the opportunity to see their work in print, be it in this collection or in *LJS*.

Finally, IALJS 3 in Lisbon 2008 is fast approaching. If you have not done so already, please submit your research paper or abstract of work-in-progress to Alice Trindade (atrinidade@iscsp.utl.pt) or your panel ideas to Susan Greenberg (s.greenberg@roehampton.ac.uk), respectively, before 31 January 2008. You can still attend the convention even if you are not planning on speaking. There will be other opportunities to participate as well, such as chairing a session or two. Conference co-organizers Alice Trindade and Isabel Santos are promising a wonderful time for all. Keep in mind that early-bird, pre-conference registration fees are due no later than 31 March 2008 (you can find the registration form inside this issue of the newsletter or on the IALJS website); late or on-site fees will be somewhat more expensive. Please note the change in this year's convention: full or part-time teachers who may also be enrolled as students (such as in a doctoral program) will no longer be able to benefit from the lowered student rate. Only full-time, non-working students will be considered for the reduced student rate.

IALJS continues to be dynamic in its personal and professional activities and continues to grow in its membership. To close I would like to formally extend my warmest wishes to all our new members, many of whom I hope to meet in person in Lisbon or in Denmark in 2008. In joining IALJS, you have not only reached out to a group of scholars who wholly share your passion for the teaching and the researching of literary journalism across the globe; you have also made many new and lasting friends. ♦

Keep in mind
that the early-bird pre-conference
registration fee
for the Lisbon meeting is due
by 31 March 2008

from IALJS 1 and 2 to be published sometime next year. I have a few places in mind and will contact them shortly with a proposal. As such, interested speakers from both conferences are invited to contact me by email (john.bak@univ-nancy2.fr) for more information about this project, including deadlines, word counts, style sheets, etc.

Please be advised that only a selection of the final essays will be published, and that acceptance in this book would prohibit you from submitting and publishing the same essay in *LJS*. You are, of course, invited to submit your research elsewhere to one of the many quality journals that would likely be interested in articles on literary journalism; *LJS* and its editors fully understand the demands of academe today and do not want to hinder anyone's tenure and promotion possibilities. But please, do not send out multiple submissions of your article

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THE MYSTERIES OF MASTERING STRUCTURE

A few suggestions for teachers of one of the more difficult aspects of writing.

By Mark Massé, Ball State (U.S.A.)

Successful authors of literary journalism know that the right narrative structure is required to craft clear, coherent and compelling stories. John McPhee is legendary for using an array of organizational models customized to the form and function of his material. Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jon



TEACHING
TIPS

Franklin recommends Anton Chekhov's four-part fictional formula (complication, development, point of insight and resolution) for dramatizing nonfiction writing. Teaching aspiring literary journalists about structure is arguably the most difficult

challenge facing educators and coaches. The first step is getting the writer to state the focus, theme or premise of the story in a brief sentence. If this is difficult, then the writer may be confusing the meaning or focus of the story with its topic or subject matter. For example, a feature on an underprivileged inner-city child overcoming obstacles to earn a college degree is not simply about education, poverty or locale. Those are topic statements. The heart of this story is transcendence: how an ordinary person achieves the extraordinary. Readers want to read stories that inspire and illuminate, not merely inform. So think theme not just topic in analyzing and arranging material.

The *Wall Street Journal* is arguably

the best daily newspaper to read if interested in analyzing structure. In fact, the *Journal* pioneered use of the representative profile and "full-circle" story organization. Another tip is to remember the excellent models that may well have been overlooked: fables, parables and fairy tales. Think of how many award-winning stories (not to mention books and films) have relied on the themes from narratives such as: *City Mouse and Country Mouse*, *David Versus Goliath*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. These archetypes may offer writers a blueprint for their contemporary stories.

Another suggestion is to look for patterns in one's material. What messages or points keep recurring? What themes exist? Who or what are the subjects of the story? Who is doing what to whom with what result? Depending on the type of story, categorization will enhance the analysis. For example, try listing the key conflicts or challenges in one column and strategies or solutions in another. Does the information lend itself to a chronological model? Then material may be organized using a timeline. A variation would be to employ a past-present-future approach.

If the story is driven by dramatic material, then a scene list should be constructed with a brief summary of major actions. When Gay Talese was organizing the notes for his award-winning *Esquire* article, "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold," he approached structure more like an artist than an author. He "sketched" oversized panels with comments for each of several intended scenes in his narrative nonfiction profile of the famous singer.

But remember: Scene writing is not scene setting. For example, if someone describes the setting of a conference

room in great detail, including the appearances and attire of the board of directors holding the meeting, this is merely scene setting. Even if dialogue is added, there is still no scene because something vital is missing: drama.

To write a scene, an author must make the reader care about the outcome of the situation. There must be something at stake. There must be conflict, a complication or a challenge. There must be dramatic tension. In the case of our executive committee meeting, we need a crisis. Let's say the chief executive officer of the company has been indicted for insider trading violations on Wall Street. The media are pressuring company officials for their response. The reputation and future of the company are at stake. Now we have drama.

Formulas for dramatic writing date back to Aristotle. They were refined by masters like Shakespeare. Successful literary journalists look to these fictional structures and apply them to their nonfiction. When it comes to scene writing, the simplest formula applies: a beginning, middle and end. The same requirements exist for both an individual scene and the complete story. Each may be dramatized according to the four-part formula attributed to the famous Russian playwright and short story writer Anton Chekhov. It calls for complication, development, point of insight and resolution. The proper execution of this formula ensures the effective writing of compelling literary journalism. For more information on the application of these dramatic techniques, consult *Writing for Story* by Jon Franklin.

Structure is the road map for successful literary journalism. Enjoy the journey. ♦

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