

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IALJS
LITERARY JOURNALISM

VOL 3 NO 1

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

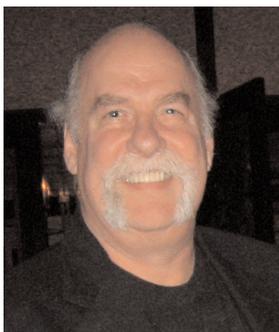
WINTER 2009

THE JOYS OF CHICAGO'S WINTER

Why thinking about our May conference warms the soul.

By David Abrahamson, Northwestern (U.S.A.)

As the early winter gales blow across Lake Michigan, giving Chicago its well-deserved reputation as a somewhat chilly locale, I must admit that it is something of a relief to contemplate the many pleasures of May, not least of which will be the pleasant fact that my school, Northwestern University's Medill School of



PRESIDENT'S
LETTER

Journalism, will be hosting IALJS-4, our association's fourth annual convention. The conference's title will be "Literary Journalism: Past, Present and Future," and in recent conversations with Isabel Soares Santos, the chair of our Research Committee, and Norm Sims, our Program Committee chair, they have reported that papers for research sessions, abstracts for poster/work-in-progress sessions and proposals for panels have already begun to be submitted.

What this suggests is that the efforts of our Publicity Committee chair, Ginger Carter Miller, to publicize the conference's Call for Papers through e-mail lists and announcements at other academic meetings has worked very well. And for those who might benefit, a full copy of the Call can be found in this issue on Page 4. Please note that the final submission deadline (via e-mail only) is 31 January 2009.

In other news, John Hartsock

reports that he and his staff are working to bring out an inaugural issue of our journal, *Literary Journalism Studies*, that we will all be proud of.

It may seem like a small, largely bureaucratic step, but, taking our victories where we can find them, we have succeeded in obtaining from the U.S. Library of Congress the needed International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN) for both the print and on-line editions of the journal.

And speaking of *Literary Journalism Studies*, our colleague Ginger Carter Miller—using information heretofore collected by our secretary-treasurer Bill Reynolds—has kindly consented to maintain the association's membership database. This will be essential to produce

The deadline
for submission for the
conference is
31 January 2009. Please
do not delay!

the labels for the mailing of the print copies of the publication. In this capacity, she has agreed to serve as the Circulation Manager of the journal.

Another member, Isabelle Meuret, has in the last year or so made a number of commendable contributions to our association; for example, at our own conferences and in organizing an IALJS-sponsored seminar at the American Comparative Literature Association annual meeting in March 2009 in Boston. In recognition of this, we have asked Isabelle—and she has agreed—to chair our Liaison Committee, which will focus on outreach to other learned societies.

The final item of my letter involves money matters. In the midst of

YEAR-END REPORT FROM THE IALJS TREASURER

As of 1 December 2008, Treasurer Bill Reynolds reports that the total balance in our treasury is \$7,127.57, and the association currently has 84 paid-in-full members. **Please note: For all members, the 2009 IALJS membership fees are due 1 January 2009** (if needed, see Page 13 for the association's membership form).

FUTURE SITES FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCES

The following future IALJS convention venues have been confirmed or are under consideration. For more info, please see <www.ialjs.org>.

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

2010: IALJS Annual Convention at Roehampton University, London, UK, 20-22 May 2010.

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

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WWW.IALJS.ORG

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2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND

The first suburb north of Chicago, Evanston's history was shaped by the city.

By Nicholas Jackson, Northwestern (U.S.A.)

CHICAGO & EVANSTON

Paris on the Prairie. City in a Garden. The City That Works. And the City of Broad (or Big) Shoulders. In its 171-year history, Chicago has been tagged with many nicknames. Most, though, focus on positive aspects of a successful urban area. For many, it has been celebrated for its Midwestern ideals—that argue anything can be accomplished if you work hard and work together—and for its innovation in the fields of architecture, urban planning and sustainable living.

When the city was ravaged by the Great Fire of 1871, which destroyed a third of the city, workers saw it as an opportunity to rebuild bigger and stronger. Within 50 years of the fire, the population had tripled to over 3 million and, in the rebuilding process, the first skyscraper in the world was constructed. In 1900, when too much sewage was polluting Lake Michigan, the city's primary source for drinking water, engineers reversed the flow of the Chicago River to carry waste in the opposite direction. When critics have assigned less-than-stellar nicknames to the city—perhaps the most famous being the Second City—Chicagoans have adopted them as their own. The Second City is now one of the most highly-regarded training centers for improvisational comedy, with branches spread across the country.

Over the years, Chicago has remained prosperous largely due to its ability to shift seamlessly from one sector of the economy to the next. Soon after it was incorporated in 1837, the city quickly became the transportation, financial and

industrial center of the Midwest; the city's Union Station became the transportation hub for the entire nation. The bustling Union Stock Yards soon contained the world's largest meatpacking facilities. As the center of the country's rail network, Chicago could quickly ship the animals in "on their feet" from all corners of the United States—and send them back out in pieces. When the Union Stock Yards and the manufacturing sites that once blossomed along the river and lake were closed, they were replaced with what is called the tertiary sector; entertainment, nightlife and dining thrived. Today, the city is largely recognized for its quaternary sector, which is principally concerned with knowledge-based services such as research and development, marketing and consulting.

Immediately north of the city, the suburb of Evanston rests along the coast of Lake Michigan. Named after John Evans, a founder of Northwestern University, the city developed around the school in the mid-19th century. The plans for Northwestern were put together in 1851 when the area that is now Evanston was known as Ridgeville. Evans, along with the school's other eight founders, were practicing Methodists; three were actually ministers. So their religious affiliation shaped much of the religious life in the city that grew around their institution. Today, the churches in the area—there are many—represent all denominations.

While cities are often celebrated for their famous residents, it is the rest of the population that determines how life is lived there. From its very beginning, Evanston has been known for its large and diverse middle class. The average home in the area, however, is worth just over \$700,000, a number skewed by the high-price condominiums in the downtown area and historic homes on lakefront property. The affluent segment of the population in a largely middle-class city gives Evanston the resources to maintain a posh downtown district with up-market chain stores and dining options, a clean



VIEWED FROM LAKE MICHIGAN TO THE EAST, CHICAGO'S DRAMATIC SKYLINE IS DOMINATED BY THE 412-METER-TALL SEARS TOWER.

beach-lined lakefront and a lively arts community.

Today Evanston is frequently referred to as the dining capital of the North Shore, the collection of prosperous suburbs that stretch from the northernmost border of the city to the edge of Wisconsin along the coast of the lake. Dining locations cover all tastes, from traditional American fare to Mexican, Mediterranean and everything in between. In addition, Evanston boasts one of the most diverse arts communities in the state. The city's Cultural Arts Division manages two popular festivals that take place in the summer and numerous other festivals are held around the year in the city that are sponsored by other groups.

The summer arts season kicks off in May, when the transition from spring to summer can be seen throughout the city in other ways as well. Runners and walkers alike take to the trails that follow the curve of the lake, dog owners can be seen with their pets at the beach designated specifically for man's best friends, and the farmer's market—an Evanston staple for more than three decades—opens with 30-plus vendors. The Northwestern students will leave town after the school year ends, but in mid-May they are still around, midway through their spring term. So expect the sidewalks to be busy as crowds flock to this beautiful college town. ♦

CALL FOR PAPERS

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

"Literary Journalism: Past, Present and Future"
The Fourth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies

Northwestern University • Medill School of Journalism
Evanston, Illinois, USA
14-16 May 2009

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies invites submissions of original research papers, abstracts for posters and research in progress, and proposals for panels on Literary Journalism for its annual gathering of international scholars.

About IALJS: 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 young 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.

The conference is 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." All submissions must be in English.

Download the official conference call at:

http://www.ialjs.org/IALJS_2009_CFP_05.pdf

Details of the programs of previous annual meetings can be found at

<http://www.ialjs.org/conferences08.html>

For more information regarding the conference or the association, please go to

<http://WWW.IALJS.ORG>

or contact:

Prof David Abrahamson

Northwestern University (U.S.A.)

President, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

E-mail: <d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu>

DEADLINE FOR ALL SUBMISSIONS: NO LATER THAN 31 JANUARY 2009



CALL FOR PAPERS

International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

**“Literary Journalism: Past, Present and Future”
The Fourth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies**

**Northwestern University
Medill School of Journalism**

Evanston, Illinois, USA

14-16 May 2009



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 14-16 May 2009. The conference will be held at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, USA (Evanston is the first suburb immediately north of the city of Chicago).

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: Past, Present and Future." 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/conferences08.html>

<http://www.ialjs.org/conferences07.html>

<http://www.ialjs.org/conferences2006.html>

Continued on next page

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 of the practice and/or teaching literary journalism in the new era of digital media is already under consideration. Anyone interested in participating as a panelist is invited to contact the Conference Program Chair (e-mail address below).

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. Isabel Santos
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (Portugal)
2009 Conference Research Chair, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies
E-mail: <isantos@iscsp.utl.pt>

Please submit proposals for panels to:

Prof. Norm Sims
University of Massachusetts, Amherst (U.S.A.)
2009 Conference Program Chair, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies
E-mail: <sims@jourm.umass.edu>

Deadline for all submissions: No later than 31 January 2009

For more information regarding the conference or the association, please go to <http://WWW.IALJS.ORG> or contact:

Prof. David Abrahamson
Northwestern University (U.S.A.)
President, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies
E-mail: <d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu>

Prof. Alice Trindade
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (Portugal)
Vice President, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies
E-mail: <atrindade@iscsp.utl.pt>

Prof. John Bak
I.D.E.A., Nancy-Université (France)
Past President, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies
E-mail: <john.bak@univ-nancy2.fr>

OUR UNIVERSITY VENUE FOR IALJS-4

Northwestern University's unique history.

By Mindy Zacharjasz, Northwestern (U.S.A.)

WELCOME
TO "NU"

Founded in 1851 by a group of nine men with a vision to make

Chicago, then a crude but improving hub of the former Northwest Territory, a center of learning, Northwestern University has grown from an original graduating class of four to a top private research institution with more than 19,500 students, faculty and staff. One of the founders, John Evans, put up the \$1,000 down payment for land north of Chicago—an area later named Evanston in his honor. The university preceded the town; as Northwestern grew, so grew Evanston.

The university's growth, however, was somewhat unique. Instead of expanding from within, the growing institution gained schools and divisions through merger and acquisition. For



A PROMINENT ARCH MARKS ONE CAMPUS ENTRANCE.

example, the university acquired a medical college, a music conservancy and a women's college throughout the second half the 19th century. In 1869 women were admitted "under the same terms and conditions as young men," and five years later the first woman received a degree. The school soon became a charter member of the athletic conference which became the Big Ten and by 1900 boasted the third highest enrollment in the nation.

The result of this agglomeration process was a diverse university that expanded to a Chicago campus with leading professional programs in medicine and law. The Evanston campus expanded as well, growing eastward into Lake Michigan as new buildings were built onto 152 acres of landfill. Theater, film and journalism programs became noted among the top in the country.

Over the years the university has produced standouts in many fields: writer Saul Bellow, director Garry Marshall, actor Charlton Heston and U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. And from its very beginnings, Northwestern has had a strong literary tradition. In 1855, the first extracurricular activity began—the Hinman Literary Society. Now, more than 150 years later, some 11 colleges and 2,500 faculty fill the town that Northwestern built. The university is a global enterprise, drawing talent from all 50 states and nearly 100 countries. It has earned a firm place among first-tier universities in the U.S.A. And Northwestern continues to be a university with wordly ambitions—as we look forward to hosting IALJS-4 this May. ♦

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.

- Josh Roiland (St. Louis, U.S.A.) recommends the title essay in **David Foster Wallace's *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*** (1997) as "an excellent example of postmodern literary journalism." He notes that the piece, like **James Agee's "Havana Cruise"** in *Fortune* (September 1937), "reports on a seven-day Caribbean cruise and combines immersion reporting with extreme self-consciousness to produce a pastiche of status details and personal experiences at once hilarious and despairingly lonely. Moreover, the author continually disrupts his narrative with arcane and philosophical footnotes (137 in 97 pages) which mirror the discombobulating experience aboard the kinetic and sensory-overloaded ship." Josh also nominates "**Swamp Nurse**" by **Katherine Boo** from *The New Yorker* (6 February 2006) because of its teachability; he suggests that "Boo's chronicle of the lives of newborns and their young, poor mothers in rural Louisiana can be taught in departments ranging from English and ethnic studies to public health and social work."

- Sharon Norris (Roehampton, U.K.) recommends ***In Cold Blood*** by **Truman Capote** (1966) and **Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark***, the 1982 Booker-prize-winning masterpiece on which the Spielberg movie was based.

- Jim Rogers (St. Thomas, U.S.A.) suggests **John M. Synge's *The Aran Islands***. Published in 1907, it is "a wonderful book that was way ahead of its time."

- Cheryl Renee Gooch (Clafin, U.S.A.) recommends an entire publication, ***The Sun Magazine*** (www.thesunmagazine.org), "which features an array of thoughtful, authentic human stories that rarely make the news—stories which exemplify what writers can create when we are unencumbered by critics, academe and the 'market-place.'"

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IALJS-4 CONFERENCE SCHEDULE SUMMARY

Wednesday, 12 May 2006

Session 0 16.00 – 18.00 Executive Committee Meeting
19.00 – ? Informal drinks and dinner

Thursday, 14 May 2006

Session 1 9.00 – 9.30 Welcome and Introduction
Session 2 9.30 – 10.30 Poster/Work-in-Progress Session I
Session 3 10.45 – 11.45 Research Paper Session I
Session 4 12.00 – 12.45 Keynote Speech
Lunch 12.45 – 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 Executive Committee Meeting
19.00 – ? Informal drinks and dinner

Friday, 15 May 2006

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 President's Address & Annual Business Meeting
Reception 16.45 – 18.00 Conference Reception
Dinner 19.00 – 21.00 Conference Banquet

Saturday, 16 May 2006

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 – 13.30
Tour 13.30 – 18.15 Chicago Tour
19.00 – ? Informal drinks and dinner

LITERARY JOURNALISM IN AUSTRALIA

A strong narrative nonfiction tradition has always found devoted readers, but the country has a history of struggling publications.

By Willa McDonald, Macquarie (Australia)

For a country that prides itself on its love of sport, Australia has a surprisingly healthy reading culture. We have strong newspaper and magazine circulations per capita and, as publisher Michael Heywood reminds us, we regularly feature in lists of top book buying



AROUND THE WORLD

countries, along with Iceland and New Zealand. We also have first-rate writers—Helen Garner, John Birmingham, Amanda Lohrey, Gideon Haigh, Malcolm Knox, Ashley Hay, Craig Sherborne, Margaret Simons—who consistently produce exceptional pieces of literary journalism, bringing fictional techniques to their skillful reporting.

Where literary journalism lags in Australia is in the publication. While non-fiction books outsell fiction by more than four to one, long-form literary journalism struggles to find a home in our mainstream newspapers and magazines.

First-person essays and run-of-the-mill features abound in the lifestyle sections of the major newspapers, but beyond the weekend magazines and “news reviews” there are few outlets for longer pieces of quality narrative non-fiction. Even in these supplements, articles longer than 4,000 words are rare. Such spreads, if they appear at all, are usually only given to investigative journalists on breaking stories.

Yet there has been a long history of literary journalism going back to the early days of the nation. Henry Lawson wrote about the Australian bush for the *Brisbane Boomerang*, the *Worker* and the

recently defunct *Bulletin* magazine. Banjo Patterson also featured in the *Bulletin*, later becoming a Boer War correspondent sending dispatches in both prose and poetry to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age* newspapers.

Charmian Clift, although relegated to the women’s pages of the *Morning Herald*, used description, dialogue and other techniques to write finely crafted personal essays in the 1950s and ‘60s. In the ‘70s Bob Ellis and Clive James produced “creative” journalism for the *Nation Review*, while the *National Times* provided outlets for ground-breaking investigations and experiments in literary style by some of Australia’s best-known journalists, including David Marr, Marian Wilkinson, Adele Horin and Debra Jopson.

But neither *Nation Review* nor the *National Times* survived. Nor did *The Eye* or the *Independent Monthly* which followed them. Why such journalism struggles to be heard here is complex. But with

a population of only 21 million, Australian media markets are small, and so are circulations. The right to free speech is not enshrined in our Constitution, and our libel and defamation laws are notoriously strict. For outlets to continue, publishers need to be socially committed to quality nonfiction—and able to find financial subsidies.

To this end, the federal government supports the literary journals attached to our public universities: *Heat*, *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Southerly* and others. Some of the most innovative literary non-fiction can be found in the pages of these magazines which have been vital to the development of Australian literature, in some instances over many decades.

But in most cases the literary journalism that is to be found in mainstream publications relies on its backing from classified advertising or the business interests of the proprietors—both of

Continued on next page



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AUSTRALIA *Continued from previous page*

which are threatened by the Internet and global economic uncertainties.

Yet, Black Inc, an independent publisher based in Melbourne, recently has taken up the literary journalism torch. Supported by the property development profits of its businessman founder, Morry Schwartz, Black Inc produces a series of literary anthologies, including *The Best Australian Essays*. When edited by Peter Craven, the definition of "essay" was expanded to encompass any good nonfiction writing, including the best reporting using literary techniques. Unable always to source pieces from newspapers and magazines, Craven commissioned many directly from the writ-

ers themselves. Craven also established *Quarterly Essay* for Black Inc—which, uniquely in Australia, runs a single 20,000-plus-word nonfiction article each issue. And in a foray into glossy magazine publishing, the firm launched *The Monthly* in 2005. With the demise of the *Bulletin* in January 2007, *The Monthly* is rapidly becoming our preeminent political and cultural magazine.

Let's hope it can continue to showcase literary journalism in Australia—and perhaps even be joined by more outlets willing to take the risk of publishing quality narrative journalism both online and in print. ♦

PRESIDENT'S LETTER *Continued from Page 1*

making the arrangements for and working out the costs of our May 2009 conference, the association's executive committee found that the process required us to address the issue of our 2009 annual dues. Since (a) 95 percent of the respondents to our Survey Monkey membership survey agreed that a \$10 raise was acceptable, and (b) our membership dues are structured on the calendar year, we felt it appropriate to put the raise into effect for 2009. On Page 13 of this issue you will find our 2009 membership form, which

reflects the \$10 increase in our annual dues, as do the revised PayPal payment "buttons" on our <ialjs.org> web site. Please note that your annual membership payment is due in January.

In closing, please allow me to add that I would warmly welcome any ideas you might have to ensure IALJS's continued success. And on a personal note, my colleagues and I here at Northwestern are really looking forward to seeing you all—and warmer weather—in May. ♦

PREPARATIONS FOR HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE SUCH AS IALJS-4 TAKE MANY FORMS, SOME OF WHICH DO NOT ENCOURAGE MODESTY. A FAIRLY GOOD EXAMPLE IS THE TWO-METER-WIDE BANNER THAT WILL FIND A PROMINENT PLACE AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY THIS COMING MAY.



READING LIST
(CONTINUED)

• John Hanc (New York Institute of Technology, U.S.A.) recommends **Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from***

the Unfinished Civil War (1998) as an example of "participatory history which involves the author's travels in the American South to look at the way the war is remembered today, providing some unforgettable portraits along the way." He also nominates ***Wilt, 1962: The Night of 100 Points and the Dawn of a New Era*** by **Gary Pomerantz** (2005). "It's a beautifully structured work of narrative, journalistic history: Starting with a wide-angle-lens view of American society in 1962, the author gradually sharpens the focus, to Civil Rights, sports, the emergence of the African-American athlete, basketball, the National Basketball Association in the early 1960s and finally to one amazing night when a very tall fellow named Wilt Chamberlain did something no one before or since has accomplished on a basketball court. Diligent reporting and crackling writing make the book a marvelous read."

• Michael Higgins (Strathclyde, U.K.) suggests **Joe Bageant's *Deer Hunting With Jesus*** (2007). "The author deploys an undemanding writing style to offer a powerful piece of political journalism. With an admirable shamelessness, Bageant appeals to the reader's liberal sympathies—and then throws them back in their faces. What appear to be a dubious set of premises are pursued with a brio that infuriates only because Bageant is so successful in convincing the reader that his are questions that really should matter."

• Rachel Davis Mersey (Northwestern, U.S.A.) recommends **"If You Knew Sushi"** by **Nick Tosches** of *Vanity Fair* (June 2007) because "he uses exactly the right voice and cultural references to bridge the oceanic gap from reverent Japanese traditions to today's hipster sushi-eating crowd. His attention to detail is so crisp, you can smell the fish of Tokyo's Tsukiji market."

• Jim Boylan (Massachusetts-Amherst, U.S.A.) still likes **"The Jumping-Off Place"** by **Edmund Wilson** in *The American Earthquake: A Chronicle of the Roaring Twenties, The Great Depression, and the Dawn of the New Deal* (1932, 1996 reprint), "an exceptional piece about depression-era San Diego." ♦

RECKONINGS

An excerpt offering reflections on the craft.

By Lara Lynn Lane, Goddard College (U.S.A.)

Literary journalism, like the realist movement of the 19th century, holds that accurate portrayal of the realities of common life can be a literary goal. Unlike standard journalism, journalistic narrative doesn't necessarily focus on established power centers, celebrities, or typical new events of the day. It often brings into focus and takes a deeper look at current events and contemporary people who are not well-known or over-explored. It is writing which can honor the more subtle things in life. This was also a basic tenant of the realism movement which in Europe and America turned its attention to non-royal, common folk. The documentary work of the 1930s and 1940s also focused on the common and overlooked, before it spun itself into propaganda and sentimentalism.



GUEST
ESSAY

Humans have always had a pull towards recording their existences and

trying to understand themselves in their art. Realist writing movement grandmaster William Dean Howells explained his penchant toward realism this way:

"I am not sorry for having wrought in common, crude material so much; that is the right American stuff; and perhaps hereafter, when my din is done, if anyone is curious to know what the noise was, it will be found to have proceeded from a small insect which was scraping about on the surface of our life and trying to get into its meaning for the sake of the other insects larger or smaller. That is, such has been my unconscious work; consciously, I was always, as I still am, trying to fashion a piece of literature out of the life next at hand."

One of the most important things Howells is saying in this quotation is that he believes, as I do, that American writing and literature can be about anything, the more "popular" the subject, the "better"—the more "real" it is. He is also pointing out that to get at the context of us we should look at the particulars. The making of a globe, too, requires a more intimate knowing of the smaller parts of the landscape of the world.

Though the hardcore "realism" movement in writing fizzled out (this we know by looking at trends in the market and reading academic criticism) about the same time that photography became popular and "documentary" took over capturing life in art, the notions of making worthwhile writing out of "real" life crept stealthily on and for the past 40 years or so the genre of literary journalism has been a cross-section of studying society and celebrating those findings in writing.

I like "literary journalism" as genre especially because it often delves into the roads less traveled and the people less likely

to be focused on in the mainstream spotlight. There is something extremely important to me in advocating that which is "alternative," that which lives a life independent of the mimetic machine that I see our society as largely being. Though America is a land of freedom, I see consumerism as a prison we've constructed where anything that isn't worth money is marginalized and anything that has monetary value is replicated and replicated and replicated to a generation so removed from the original that the original essence can be disregarded and lost. I see the general media playing a major role in reinforcing this removal process by focusing on stories of power and money and status and label-making and violence which drives us all to hide away from real experience in some way, or to think of our own experiences as less important.

I find that for me things that don't necessarily make money and/or don't have value in our society (like art and women, often) are critical to a fuller life, or at least one which has more meaning. In my writing I seek to find and honor all kinds of value in people and meaning in existence that isn't only about money and established power. For me, a bag-lady's take on politics and society is just as important and far more impressive than most of a president's planned speeches. Perhaps more selfishly, writing about the less popular or glitzy things in life is also a way of celebrating and sharing my interests and interesting things that I find in the world. Like Alice Walker, "I simply feel that naming our own experience after our own fashion (as well as rejecting whatever does not seem to suit) is the least we can do—and in this society may well be our only tangible sign of personal freedom."

By some of its other names this genre of writing, literary journalism, has been called creative reportage, creative nonfiction, personal or subjective reporting, high-jinx journalism, and/or the literature of reality. Phyllis Frus, author of *The Politics of Journalistic Narrative: The Timely and Timeless*, suggests the term "journalistic narrative," as opposed to "literary journalism," because it takes the value judgment out of the concept. I like the notion of taking the value judgment out of the inflated academic Literature and Art labels, because I think we need to bring creativity back to a very human place. But I also like the phrase "literary journalism" because it distinguishes itself from standard journalism. For me, the terms are interchangeable. Many writers throughout the ages have written works that I may call literary journalism.

The boundaries of journalistic narrative are blurred like the lines of a Monet and something which may be called literary journalism may also be called travel writing, personal essay, auto/biography, nature writing, poetry, ballad, and/or simply:

The boundaries
of journalistic narrative
are blurred
like the lines of a
Monet

Continued on next page

RECKONINGS *Continued from previous page*

nonfiction.

Journalistic narrative is a hybrid form of writing, an umbrella term for writing about current events and people (writing about dead people or events of the past, unless witnessed, would more likely be called historical nonfiction) which has, in part, at its elemental core—accuracy, meaning the work needs to be "truthful." Of course, "truth" is a pretty open-ended word, and, to me it boils down to pure subjectivity pretty quickly. Though literary journalism strives to record that which is "real" and actually happening often the work is essentially interpretive or impressionistic. So, for instance, the people in the "Reckoning" project are real people whom a reader might actually meet. The art work discussed is real and may be actually seen. The dialogue I've

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written into the piece actually happened and is recorded on tape. The descriptions are the way I see things and the material selected is what I feel best conveys the meaning I find. Journalistic narrative recognizes the paradox innate to writing "real" life. Part of why I expanded this project into a multimedia presentation is because I wanted to be able to prove the accuracy of my writing and to show how subjectivity plays into every account of life that we encounter.

The adherence to accurate reporting has long been a recognized staple of journalism and documentary work. The insistence that "facts are facts" is where standard journalism fails for me. In my writing I try to find a balance between my acknowledged impressionism and the recording of "reality." I agree with John McPhee, who Norman Sims, in *The Literary Journalists*, records as having said:

"The nonfiction writer is communicating with the reader about real people in real places. So if those people talk, you say

what those people said. You don't say what the writer decides they said. I get prickly if someone suggests there's dialogue in my pieces that I didn't get from the source. You don't make a composite character. Where I came from, a composite character was fiction. So when somebody makes a nonfiction character out of three people who are real, that is a fictional character in my opinion. And you don't get inside their heads and think for them. You can't interview the dead. You could make a list of things you don't do. Where writers abridge that, they hitchhike on the credibility of writers who don't. And they blur something that ought to be distinct. It's one thing to say nonfiction has been rising as an art. If that's what they mean by the line blurring between fiction and nonfiction, then I'd prefer another image. What I see is that we don't know where fiction stops and fact begins. That violates a contract with the reader." (Sims, 15-16)

One result of maintaining accuracy in my work is that it helps in establishing trust with both my subjects and my readers. With my subjects, accuracy helps me get a better story. Over and over I've heard people complain about newspapers which tell only one side of the story (usually these papers are politically and financially motivated to do this) or papers where the writers make things up entirely. For me the solution is not to disengage or get rid of standard newspaper reporting altogether, but to also implement into the institution another way of reporting as well. I do see more and more newspaper writing crossing over into the realm of literary journalism. This type of writing, which for a long time lived only in magazines and journals and books, is more enticing to read and allows for more thinking among the audience about contemporary issues and people. Journalistic narrative can establish a trust with the readers which promotes more participatory action. When a reader can identify with a writer, they are more likely to listen to what the writer is trying to say. A reader is also more likely to want to sit and read—which in today's busy world is not as common an occurrence as it once was. ♦

**2009 GLOBAL STUDIES
CONFERENCE CALL**

The Second Global Studies Conference is scheduled to be held on 30 May - 1 June 2009 at Zayed University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The conference and *Global Studies Journal* are devoted to mapping and interpreting new trends and patterns in globalization from many points of view and many locations in the world. As well as a line-up of international main speakers, the conference will include numerous paper, workshop and colloquium presentations by practitioners, teachers and researchers. As a result the organizers have issued a conference Call for Papers. Presenters may choose to submit written papers for publication in the fully refereed *Global Studies Journal*. Those unable to attend the conference in person may use the virtual registration which allows submission of a paper for refereeing and possible publication in the fully refereed academic journal. Full details of the conference, including an online proposal submission form, may be found at the conference web site, <http://www.globalstudiesconference.com/>. For more information, e-mail <jan.pieterse@globalstudiesconference.com>.

**TEXTUAL SCHOLARSHIP
MEETING SET FOR 2009**

The Society for Textual Scholarship has announced its Fourteenth Biennial International Interdisciplinary Conference, scheduled for 18-21 March 2009 at New York University, U.S.A. The conference seeks to foster an interdisciplinary discussion of current research into particular aspects of textual work: the discovery, enumeration, description, bibliographical analysis, editing, annotation, and mark-up of texts in disciplines such as literature, history, musicology, classical and biblical studies, philosophy, art history, legal history, history of science and technology, computer science, library science, lexicography, epigraphy, paleography, codicology, cinema studies, media studies, theater, linguistics, and textual and literary theory. Of particular interest will be research in the areas of textual production and the social sphere; textual cultures; digital editing and textuality; the production and editing of "minority" texts; theoretical and practical intersections between textual scholarship and book history; and textual scholarship and pedagogy. For more information, please e-mail <astauff@bu.edu>.

Call for Submissions

Literary Journalism Studies

Published by The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

Literary Journalism Studies, a peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS), invites submissions of scholarly articles on literary journalism, which is also known as narrative journalism, literary reportage, reportage literature, "new journalism" and the nonfiction novel, as well as literary nonfiction and creative nonfiction that emphasizes cultural revelation. The journal is international in scope and seeks submissions on the theory, history and pedagogy of literary journalism throughout the world. All disciplinary approaches are welcome.

To encourage an international dialogue, the journal is also willing to consider publishing short examples or excerpts of literary journalism accompanied by a scholarly gloss about a writer not widely known outside his or her country. The example or excerpt must be translated into English. The scholarly gloss must be between 1,500 and 2,500 words long and indicate why the example is important in the context of its national culture. Together, both the text and the gloss must not exceed 8,000 words in length. The contributor is responsible for obtaining all copyright permissions, including from the publisher, author and translator as necessary.

E-mail submission (as an MS Word attachment) is mandatory, and submissions should be between 4,000 and 8,000 words in length, including notes. A cover page indicating the title of the paper, the author's name and institutional affiliation, and contact information must accompany all submissions. The author's name should not appear on the required 250-word abstract or on the paper itself, as all submissions will be blind reviewed. All submissions must be in English and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style (Humanities)*. Submissions will be accepted on an ongoing basis. Contributors of articles selected for publication will receive one copy of the journal. Copyright reverts to the contributor after publication with the provision that should the submission be subsequently republished reference is made to initial publication in **Literary Journalism Studies**. Please e-mail all submissions and/or related queries to:

John C. Hartsock, Ph.D.
Editor, *Literary Journalism Studies*
Department of Communication Studies
State University of New York at Cortland
Cortland, NY 13045-0900 U.S.A.
<hartsockj@cortland.edu>

BOOK REVIEWS: The journal will include a book review section and invites short reviews of 1,000-2,000 words on both the scholarship of literary journalism and recent original works of literary journalism that deserve greater recognition among scholars. Book reviews are not blind reviewed but selected by the book review editor based on merit. Reviewers may suggest book review prospects or write the book review editors for suggestions. Usually reviewers will be responsible for obtaining their respective books. Book reviews and/or related queries should be e-mailed to Tom Connery at <tbconnery@stthomas.edu> or Susie Eisenhuth at <susie.eisenhuth@uts.edu.au>.





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IALJS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS, 2008-2010

PPRESIDENT

David Abrahamson
Northwestern University
Medill School of Journalism, 1845 Sheridan Rd.
Evanston, IL 60208
U.S.A.
w/01-847-467-4159
h/01-847-332-2223
fax/01-847-332-1088
d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu

VICE PRESIDENT

Alice Donat Trindade
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa
Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas
Pólo Universitário do Alto da Ajuda, Rua Almerindo Lessa
1300-663 Lisboa
PORTUGAL
w/351-213-619-430
fax/351-213-619-442
atrindade@iscsp.utl.pt

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Bill Reynolds
Ryerson University
School of Journalism, 350 Victoria St.
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3
CANADA
w/01-416-979-5000 x6294
h/01-416-535-0892
reynolds@ryerson.ca

CHAIR, RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Isabel Soares Santos
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa
Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas
Pólo Universitário do Alto da Ajuda, Rua Almerindo Lessa
1300-663 Lisboa
PORTUGAL
w/351-213-619-430
isantos@iscsp.utl.pt

CHAIR, PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Norman Sims
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Department of Journalism, Bartlett Hall #108
Amherst, MA 01003
U.S.A.
w/01-413-545-5929
h/01-413-774-2970
fax/01-413-545-3880
sims@journ.umass.edu

CO-CHAIRS, MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Sonja Merljak-Zdovc
University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Social Sciences, Kardeljeva ploščad 5
Ljubljana
SLOVENIA
w/386-(0)1-5805-340
cell/386-(0)4-1746-503
sonja.merljak-zdovc@fdv.uni-lj.si

Lynne Van Luven
University of Victoria
Department of Writing, PO Box 1700,
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 2Y2
CANADA
w/01-250-721-7307
fax/01-250-721-6602
lvluven@finearts.uvic.ca

CHAIR, PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Ginger Carter Miller
Mass Communication Program
Georgia College & State University
CBX 032, 231 W. Hancock Street
Milledgeville, Georgia, 31061
U.S.A.
w/01-478-445-8257
fax/01-478-445-0959
ginger.carter@gcsu.edu

CHAIR, LIAISON COMMITTEE

Isabelle Meuret
Université Libre de Bruxelles
Campus du Solbosch,
ULB CP123, avenue F.D. Roosevelt 50
1050 Bruxelles
BELGIUM
w/011-32 -(0)2-650-4061
fax/011-32- (0)2-650-2450
imeuret@ulb.ac.be

MEMBERS, NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Bill Reynolds
Ryerson University
School of Journalism, 350 Victoria St.
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3
CANADA
w/01-416-979-5000 x6294
h/01-416-535-0892
reynolds@ryerson.ca

Isabel Soares Santos
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa
Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas
Pólo Universitário do Alto da Ajuda, Rua Almerindo Lessa
1300-663 Lisboa
PORTUGAL
w/351-213-619-430
isantos@iscsp.utl.pt

WEBMASTER

John Bak (president emeritus)
Université Nancy 2
Centre de Télé-enseignement Universitaire (CTU)
42-44, avenue de la Liberation, B.P. 3397
54015 Nancy
FRANCE
w/33-(0)383-968-448
h/33-(0)383-261-476
fax/33-(0)383-968-449
john.bak@univ-nancy2.fr

Continued on next page

IALJS OFFICERS AND CHAIRS, 2008-2010 *Continued from previous page*

EDITORS, LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

John Hartsock (editor)
State University of New York College at Cortland
Department of Communication Studies
Cortland, NY 13045
U.S.A.
w/01-607-753-4103
h/01-607-749-6756
fax/607-753-5970
hartsockj@cortland.edu

William Dow (managing editor)
American University of Paris
Department of Comparative Literature
147, rue de Grenelle
Paris 75007
FRANCE
w/33-1-4062-0600 ext 718
william.dow@wanadoo.fr

Jenny McKay (associate editor)
University of Stirling
Department of Film and Media Studies
Stirling FK9 4LA
Scotland
UNITED KINGDOM
w/44-1786-466-228
j.m.mckay@stir.ac.uk

Susie Eisenhuth (book review co-editor)
University of Technology Sydney
Journalism Program
PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007
AUSTRALIA
w/61-2-9514-2308
susie.eisenhuth@uts.edu.au

Tom Connery (book review co-editor)
University of St. Thomas
Department of Communication and Journalism
2115 Summit Ave.,
St. Paul, MN 55105
U.S.A.
w/01-651-962-5265
h/01-651-647-0048
fax/01-651-962-6360
tbconnery@stthomas.edu

Ginger Carter Miller (circulation manager)
Mass Communication Program
Georgia College & State University
CBX 032, 231 W. Hancock Street
Milledgeville, Georgia, 31061
U.S.A.
w/01-478-445-8257
fax/01-478-445-0959
ginger.carter@gcsu.edu

EDITORS, LITERARY JOURNALISM NEWSLETTER

Bill Reynolds (co-editor)
Ryerson University
School of Journalism, 350 Victoria St.

Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3
CANADA
w/01-416-979-5000 x6294
h/01-416-535-0892
reynolds@ryerson.ca

David Abrahamson (co-editor)
Northwestern University
Medill School of Journalism, 1845 Sheridan Rd.
Evanston, IL 60208
U.S.A.
w/01-847-467-4159
h/01-847-332-2223
fax/01-847-332-1088
d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu

MEMBERS, BOARD OF ADVISORS (in progress)

Tom Connery
University of St. Thomas
Department of Communication and Journalism
2115 Summit Ave.,
St. Paul, MN 55105
U.S.A.
w/01-651-962-5265
h/01-651-647-0048
fax/01-651-962-6360
tbconnery@stthomas.edu

Susan Greenberg
Roehampton University
School of Arts, Creative Writing
Roehampton Lane
London SW15 5SL
UNITED KINGDOM
w/44-20-8392-3257
s.greenberg@roehampton.ac.uk

John Hartsock
State University of New York College at Cortland
Department of Communication Studies
Cortland, NY 13045
U.S.A.
w/01-607-753-4103
h/01-607-749-6756
fax/607-753-5970
hartsockj@cortland.edu

Norman Sims
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Department of Journalism, Bartlett Hall #108
Amherst, MA 01003
U.S.A.
w/01-413-545-5929
h/01-413-774-2970
fax/01-413-545-3880
sims@journ.umass.edu

Doug Underwood
University of Washington
Department of Communication, Box 353740
Seattle, WA 98195
U.S.A.
w/01-206-685-9377
dunder@u.washington.edu

Rx FOR BETTER WRITING

These five treatments can yield significant improvement.

By Lynne Van Luven, Victoria (Canada)

Writing Class Stress is a predictable disorder that erupts at the beginning of each term among both professors and students. My theory is that performance anxiety underlies these feelings of tension. And since we know intuitively that fear lurks at the root of anxiety, why not put this condition right up on the examining table, along with our style guides and course syllabi. The following course of medication works best with smaller classes, but last year I successfully dispensed this medicine to a class of 32, in which we studied the personal essay as a vehicle of both self-expression and public engagement.



TEACHING
TIPS

DR. VAN LUVEN'S ANTIDOTE FOR ANXIOUS STUDENT AUTHORS

Tablet 1: *Ownership*. Students write better—and more creatively—if they are given leeway to make a topic their own. Set your own topics for essays by all means but take them from events and situations in your community. And keep them general enough so that students can tailor them to their own interests and passions. For instance, early in the term you might ask the students to write a personal

essay on the idea of “home.” Leave it up to them to define this term themselves but insist that the essay must move beyond mere personal recollection into the broader public sphere. Students might end up writing about homelessness, the mortgage crisis, immigration or even the meaning of home plate in baseball. The idea is to tether them to a focus but to also let them range broadly.

Tablet 2: *Time*. At the outset of each writing assignment, book a 20-minute interview with each student in which he or she will “tell you the story” behind his or her adaptation of the essay topic. This allows you to then help them interrogate their ideas, to enable them to really think about what they want to say, to identify what aspect of the topic actually interests them. Your task is to help them reason their way towards a format for making those ideas work on the page. They have to see how they will turn an idea into a convincing personal argument. Once a student sits across from you in your office, with only a few inches between your two heads, they are less likely to skip the process of planning and organizing a piece of work. Once they sense your interest in their ideas, they’re less apt to conduct research only on generalized Internet sites. Once they have made themselves known to you as a writer and thinker, they have a greater investment in the work they hand in.

Tablet 3: *Opportunity*. Offer each student the chance for further initial feedback by setting an “early deadline” by

which students must have e-mailed you a rough draft of their essays. It does not matter how rough the draft is. What’s important is that there *is* one. This forces students to actually engage with their topic between the initial interview and when the writing is actually due. It truncates the La-La Time during which students glibly talk about their essays but are not actually refining them in any useful manner. The draft allows you, the instructor, to suggest other research angles, new data to support their ideas, ways for them to meld their personal voice with a more public mode of discussion. In the end, you get to read a better piece of work. And your students are gratified by a better grade.

Tablet 4: *Process*. You must reiterate that writing is a process, and not a mysterious one. The trajectory of creation goes something like this: Idea—Research Viability of Idea—Repositioning of Thesis or Premise—Additional Research—First Draft—Revisions—Final Draft. Once students actually see “process” work for them, they begin to shed romantic beliefs in the personal Muse or that inspiration comes via the forefinger of Zeus.

Tablet 5: *Feedback*. Whenever feasible, deliver feedback as quickly as possible. I try to hand back essays within a week, so that students have not had time to become disengaged from the process of thinking and writing about their topic. Students are overwhelmed by assignments most of the time, so late feedback is often ignored simply because they are distracted by new concerns.

So, five easy-to-digest tablets which should ease everyone’s entry into the exciting fray of writing authentically. Use as directed, and call me in the morning only if absolutely necessary. ♦

LITERARY JOURNALISM

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES
WINTER 2009 VOL. 3 NO. 1

