

# THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IALJS LITERARY JOURNALISM

VOL 3 NO 3

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

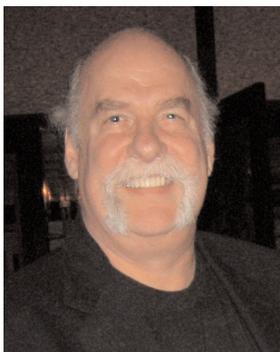
SUMMER 2009

## OUR SECOND MAJOR GOAL IS ACHIEVED

*A special treat at IALJS-4 was the debut of our new scholarly journal.*

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

It must surely be a commonplace that learned societies such as ours have one overarching *raison d'être*: to encourage and advance the scholarly engagement and teaching of their study subject—in our instance, of course, literary journalism.



### PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Similarly, the means used by associations such as ours to accomplish this are principally two distinct activities: the holding of an annual conference and the publication of a scholarly journal.

The former, IALJS-4, we concluded in mid-May, and it was a particularly rewarding occasion for me because both my own school and more than a dozen of my students were kind enough to host the meeting. And the success of the conference, in large measure due to the hard work of Isabel Soares and Norm Sims, the research and program chairs respectively, made for a memorable meeting. For more words and pictures documenting our two-and-a-half-day celebration of literary journalism scholarship, please see Page 2.

But the truly ground-breaking

news of the late spring fell into the second category: the debut of our society's learned journal. And what a debut it has proved to be. Under the steady editor's hand of John Hartsock—along with the wonderful efforts of managing editor William Dow, associate editor Jenny McKay and book-review editors Tom Connery and Susie Eisenhuth—the inaugural issue of *Literary Journalism Studies* clearly exceeded all expectations. The Spring 2009 issue contained peer-reviewed scholarly research articles, substantive discursive essays and notes, a piece of literary journalism accompanied by an insightful explication, and a number of thoughtful book reviews. And we are certain that the issues which will follow, at a rate of two per year, will all meet the same high standard of thoroughness, rigor and integrity.

In other news, we are already planning IALJS-5; the setting will be London, and the host institution will be Roehampton University (see Page 15). Looking forward to the following year, our 2011 conference, IALJS-6 will be hosted by the Université Libre de Bruxelles in Brussels, and then in 2012 we will return to North America under the auspices of Ryerson University in Toronto.

In closing, please know I welcome your ideas for improving our association. ♦



THE IALJS-4 CONFERENCE BANNER IN FRONT OF OUR SCHOOL, AND ANGIE JAIME, ONE OF OUR 16 "STUDENT HOSTS."



## IALJS MEMBERSHIP KEEPS GROWING

From a modest start of the original dozen members who—after our first conference in Nancy, France—helped to found our association in July 2006, the increase in our membership has followed a promisingly ascendant curve. As of the end of May 2009, we are happy to report that we have 93 paid-in-full members of IALJS.

## 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](http://www.ialjs.org)>.

**2010:** IALJS Annual Convention at Roehampton University, London, U.K., 20-22 May 2010.

**2011:** IALJS Annual Convention at Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium, 12-14 May 2011.

**2012:** IALJS Annual Convention at Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 17-19 May 2012.

**2013:** IALJS Annual Convention, venue tba, 9-11 May 2013.

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WWW.IALJS.ORG

## IALJS ANNUAL CONVENTION AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

*A successful program and, we admit, a truly wonderful occasion.*

*By Isabel Soares, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (Portugal)*

On talking with David Abrahamson during one of the coffee breaks at this year's conference, I could not help but notice his enthusiasm. "Who would have thought?" he said. "Another miracle has happened!" The miracle, of course, is that IALJS has grown from a mod-



CHICAGO  
CONFERENCE

est conference into an international association with a significant yearly increase in membership. But what David was really describing, I thought, was that IALJS conferences are becoming a natural occurrence, something which has been transformed from the extraordinary

into the realm of the "Yeah, you've got this association's meeting, because this is just business as usual." Still, what an amazing conference this was! And not only because, for the first time since the founding of IALJS, the annual meeting was held outside Europe.

Hosted at the Medill School of Journalism (Northwestern University, Evanston, U.S.A.), this year's meeting has definitely crossed the threshold of internationalization with 11 nationalities present, all of whom were willing to share with us the distinct realities of literary journalism in their respective countries. Among these we could highlight the visions into modern literary journalism in Ukraine; in-depth studies on literary journalism in the

*Continued on Page 14*

JOHN HARTSOCK (SUNY-CORTLAND, U.S.A.) SPOKE ABOUT THE FIRST ISSUE OF OUR NEW JOURNAL, *LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES*. FAR RIGHT, CONFERENCE KEYNOTER RICHARD KEEBLE (LINCOLN, U.K.) WAS INTRODUCED BY IALJS V.P. ALICE DONAT TRINDADE (TULISBON, PORTUGAL), NOT PICTURED.



A SESSION ON "TRANS-CONTINENTAL BOUNDARIES" INCLUDED, FROM LEFT, BILL REYNOLDS (RYERSON, CANADA), SONJA MERLJAK ZDOVC (LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA), MARIA LASSILA-MARISALO (JYVÄSKYLÄ, FINLAND) AND MARIYA TYTARENKO (LVIV IVAN FRANKO NATIONAL, UKRAINE).

THE CONFERENCE WAS HELD IN FISK HALL, THE HOME OF THE MEDILL SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY. DATING BACK TO 1899, IT IS ONE OF THE BUILDINGS ON CAMPUS DESIGNED BY THE NOTED ARCHITECT DANIEL BURNHAM.



Literary Journalism  
Summer 2009 Vol 3 No 3  
Editors: Bill Reynolds and David Abrahamson  
ISSN 1941-1030 (print)  
ISSN 1941-1049 (online)  
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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IALJS

CONFERENCE *Continued from previous page*



FAR LEFT, JOHN LAVINE (NORTHWESTERN, U.S.A.) DEAN OF THE MEDILL SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, WHICH HOSTED THE CONFERENCE. LEFT, BENOÎT MAUCHAMP (MIAMI, U.S.A.) AND ISABELLE MEURET (LIBRE DE BRUXELLES, BELGIUM) SPOKE AT THE SESSION ENTITLED "AT THE THRESHOLD OF LITERATURE."



JOSH ROILAND (ST. LOUIS, U.S.A.) AND SUSAN GREENBERG (ROEHAMPTON, U.K.) AT THE CONFERENCE BANQUET.



RESEARCH CHAIR ISABEL SOARES (TU-LISBON, PORTUGAL) PRESENTED THE INAUGURAL "GREENBERG PRIZE" TO ARYLN BARTLEY (MICHIGAN STATE, U.S.A.) FOR THE CONFERENCE'S BEST RESEARCH PAPER.



ONE OF THE MORE PLEASANT THINGS ABOUT THE CONFERENCE WAS THAT—EVEN WITH MORE THAN 45 PERSONS ON THE PROGRAM AND ALMOST 55 IN ATTENDANCE—THE TWO-AND-HALF-DAY MEETING DID NOT REQUIRE CONCURRENT SESSIONS. AS A RESULT, THE CONFERENCE WAS HELD IN A SINGLE LARGE FORUM-STYLE CLASSROOM, WHICH HELPED PRODUCE A WONDERFULLY COLLEGIAT ATMOSPHERE.



A PANEL ON "ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY" INCLUDED, FROM FAR LEFT, CHRISTEL LANE SWASEY (BRIGHAM YOUNG, U.S.A.), ISABEL SOARES (TU-LISBON, PORTUGAL), RACHEL DAVIS MERSEY (NORTHWESTERN, U.S.A.), MARK H. MASSÉ (BALL STATE, U.S.A.), AND MODERATOR DOUG CUMMING (WASHINGTON AND LEE, U.S.A.).



## KEYNOTE ADDRESS FROM THE IALJS-4 CONVENTION

### *War and the Journalistic Imagination: The Reporting of George Orwell and Robert Fisk.*

By Richard Lance Keeble, University of Lincoln (U.K.)

**T**here was a pause, and an eerie silence, just before he did it. A green scarf masking his face, the man held a large piece of scaffolding above his head and, surrounded by photographers, eyeballed the unprotected window of the Royal Bank of Scotland branch on Threadneedle

Street. In that split second, one voice amid the thousands in the crowd broke the silence.

"Don't do it," she screamed. He did.

A bespectacled man in a beige corduroy suit then began remonstrating with hooded protestors. "Gandhi taught us not to use violence," said John Rowley, from the Gandhi Foundation. "This isn't violence," retorted another voice in the crowd. "We paid for this building."

Notice the use of precise description and factual details, of dramatic, narrative tension; of eye-witness immediacy, contrasting sentence lengths and rhythms; of short and snappy, wonderfully evocative direct quotes. All of these are literary

devices. And yet this piece by Patrick Barkham appeared on *The Guardian's* front page of 2 April 2009.



#### Conventional and Literary Journalism: The Unnecessary Split

For me, all journalism—whether this *Guardian* demo colour piece, a hard news intro of a red top tabloid, a 1,000 word feature in a lifestyle magazine or sturdy tome by Tom Wolfe—is literature and as worthy of academic analysis as a Jane Austen or Arundhati Roy.

Perhaps what I am about to say reeks of heresy at a gathering of so many experts in literary journalism. But frankly, I have never seen the point of distinguishing between so-called conventional journalism and the presumably "higher" forms of journalism—otherwise known as reportage, narrative journalism, creative non-fiction or literary journalism. All journalism is creative. This is not just an academic point—it has implications for our teaching. From my experience, most students apply for journalism courses because "they love writing." In other words, it's the creative dimension that excites them. Yet so often the courses they join are suspicious of the notion of creativity—associating it with fiction—and prefer to stress journalism's roots in notions of factual accuracy and "objectivity." Feature writing and magazine courses can focus more on the development of personal writing styles—but such courses still feel uncomfortable with notions of "creative writing." Certainly the academic analysis and celebration of the journalistic imagination have hardly begun.

English courses are also sadly reluctant to consider journal-

ism as literature. Intriguingly, an English lecturer reviewing *The Journalistic Imagination*, which I recently edited, in the prestigious *Times Higher Education*, said he expected professors of journalism would have more pressing priorities than deciding whether the output of the press was on a par with Proust!

Conventional journalism, according to Thomas Connery, in his fascinating keynote last year, deals with Reality—single and simplified with a capital R. Literary journalism, on the other hand, deals with a "slippery and shifting reality." But is such a distinction useful in any way? So-called conventional journalism has always dealt with "slippery" lies, fabrications, misinformation, myth and the manufactured spectacle. Are not the boundaries even between journalism and fiction somewhat blurred? It certainly seems appropriate to me that the greatest book about journalism is a novel, Evelyn Waugh's wonderfully witty *Scoop*. Here is his description of "the fabulous journalist" Wenlock Jakes that sums up beautifully the fictionalization of the corporate media consensus:

*Once Jakes went out to cover a revolution in one of the Balkan capitals. He overslept in his carriage, woke up at the wrong station, didn't know any different, got out, went straight to a hotel and cabled off a thousand-word story about barricades in the streets, flaming churches... Well, they were pretty surprised at his office getting a story like that from the wrong country but they trusted Jakes and splashed it in six national newspapers. That day every special in Europe got orders to rush to the new revolution. They arrived in shoals. Everything seemed quiet enough but it was as much as their jobs were worth to say so, with Jakes filing a thousand words of blood and thunder a day. So they chimed in too.*

This fictionalization continues.

For instance, too much journalism today (whether it focuses on politics, celebrities, the "war on terror," intelligence, the fabrication of constant terrorist scares, the media themselves) is dependent on anonymous sources—and this inevitably propels it into the realm of fiction. For how can we trust that what is quoted is nothing more than the invention of a journalist? One research area of particular interest to me is the reporting of U.S./U.K. imperialism—and here, drawing on the postmodern critique of mediocentric societies of the spectacle, I have highlighted the ways in which the mainstream media play a crucial role in the making of "manufactured wars."

Literary journalism's advocates often stress its ten-

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dency to place the subjective experience of the writer or journalist at the center of the narrative. But doesn't so-called conventional journalism constantly adopt this tactic? For instance, as David Deacon shows in his recently-published, brilliant study of correspondents in the Spanish Civil War, *Tomorrow May Be Too Late* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), a form of narrative reportage in which the author occupied center stage was the dominant genre in the mainstream print media at the time.

**The Necessary Distinction  
Between Literary Journalists  
and Literary Journalism**

Hang on, you may be thinking: didn't Richard Keeble edit a book called *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists From Defoe to Capote and Carter* (Routledge 2007)? But there is an important distinction between so-called literary journalism and literary journalists. I would maintain that it is extremely useful to highlight and critically examine the journalism of writers more commonly associated with their novels, plays, poems (such as George Sand, Graham Greene, Ian Fleming)—who I call literary journalists. It helps direct attention to the ways in which journalism and literature are too often seen as separate spheres (one "low," the other "high") resulting in journalism's low literary and academic status.

In addition it helps highlight the ways in which within the intellectual economy of modern societies, authors, editors, publishers, campaigners and academics are regularly found changing roles. Indeed, for so many men and women of letters since the 18th century the continuous flow of their writing has incorporated books, reviews, polemics, sociological research or poetry—and journalism. In other words, it's impossible to consider Virginia Woolf or Angela Carter as writers and intellectuals, without considering their journalism: but so often it's ignored.

**Why Orwell and Fisk?**

All this then to contextualise my talk about the war journalism of George Orwell and Robert Fisk. Why these two? Well, Orwell typifies the journalist much better known for his novels than for his journalism. His wonderful reporting of his times on the frontlines during the Spanish Civil War, in *Homage to Catalonia* of 1937 (probably my favourite Orwell work—and I speak as a pacifist) is reasonably well known though only 700 copies of the book were sold during his lifetime and it enjoys nothing like the global fame of his novels such as *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Moreover, his stint reporting from the

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front lines in 1945 at the end of the Second World War (the only time he worked to strict journalistic deadlines) is hardly known at all. Paradoxically, Orwell himself was dismissive of journalism as mere "pamphleteering" and a "lesser" form of literature. He had a horror of hack reporting and despised the "dreary sub-world of the freelance journalist."

Fisk, on the other hand, is acclaimed as a brilliant and courageous correspondent of conflicts yet is hardly known at all as a literary stylist—though it's good to see his work highlighted in Susie Eisenhuth and Willa McDonald's *The Writer's Reader* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). To give a flavour of his journalism let's choose arbitrarily an intro from his vast oeuvre. It's February 2005. He hears a bomb go off near his flat in Beirut:

*I ran down the street towards the*

*bombing... Twenty-two cars were burning and in one of them I saw three men cowered in fire. A woman's hand, a hand with painted fingernails, lay on the road... Then through the smoke I found the crater. It was hot and I climbed gingerly into it. Two plain clothes cops were already there, picking up shards of metal. Fast work for detectives, I thought. And it was several days before I realised that—far from collecting evidence—they were hiding it, taking it from the scene of the crime.*

Notice there the narrative urgency, the meticulous attention to detail in the shocking eye-witness account, the personal drama, and above all the political concern to expose corruption (the cops taking away evidence from the scene of the outrage).

**The Politics and Ethics of  
Orwell's War Reporting**

When we read Orwell and Fisk we see powerful intelligences at work—but also minds fired by ethical and political concerns. Indeed, while it may be fascinating to focus on literary techniques when we analyze journalistic texts, Orwell and Fisk remind us that it is pointless to discuss the journalistic imagination without reference to the ethical and political imaginations. It was Orwell who famously wrote in his essay "Why I Write" of 1946:

*Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism. What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice.*

Orwell's politics were not only reflected in the content of his journalism but crucially in the media he chose to write for. Indeed, as we explore the literary aspects of journalism it's always important also to consider the underlying political economies of the texts. Realizing that the mainstream newspapers were basically propaganda for their wealthy proprietors,

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Orwell's main objective after his experiences in the Spanish Civil War was to speak for and to socialists. It was thus his deliberate choice to concentrate most of his writing (often for free) on small-scale, left-wing publications in both Britain and the United States—*New English Weekly*, *Fortnightly Review*, *New Leader*, *Left Forum*, *Left News*, *Progressive*, *Politics and Letters* and *Gangrel*.

*Homage to Catalonia*, as well as being a remarkable celebration of socialism seen at first hand, is bursting with a wonderful array of writing styles. At one time Orwell can be very direct, personal, emotional (earnestly trying to convey his authentic/real experience); or there will be personal commentary and political analysis (however reluctant). At other times there is marvellously descriptive eye-witness reporting informed by a heightened social and political awareness. Orwell can equally engage in the confessional or demonstrate a practical, down-to-earth sensibility. He can devote pages to a laborious, though crucial content analysis of the newspaper coverage of the conflict. And he can direct his journalistic instinct to emphasizing the extraordinary and the contradictory. Throughout all of this a wonderful wit shines through. For instance, of the fat Russian agent he spots at his Barcelona hotel, he says: "I watched him with some interest for it was the first time that I had seen a person whose profession was telling lies—unless one counts journalists."

The literary qualities of *Homage* have long been acknowledged. In contrast, Orwell's 14 dispatches to the *Observer* and five to the *Manchester Evening News* from the front lines in 1945 have been generally dismissed as "untypically drab" or "curiously flat, lifeless and impersonal." Orwell was probably engaged in an intelligence mission using the reporting assignment as cover on behalf of his editor, David Astor, who was at the time heading a unit of the Special Operations Executive liaising with the resistance in France. The responsibilities of this assignment must have distracted

Orwell. Yet the reports are far from flat. Embedded in them are the best elements of the journalistic style:

- immediacy, clarity, a sense of urgency;
- an ability to highlight the most interesting, the paradoxical, the most tragic;
- a facility to both generalize effectively and to focus on the specific, relevant detail;
- an economy of language even within colorful, descriptive, eye-witness reportage;
- an openness to conflicting views.

In these short dispatches (each of them roughly 1,000 words) he reports from Paris, bombed out Cologne, Nuremberg, Stuttgart and Austria as the

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This is  
eye-witness reporting ultimately  
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Nazi dictatorship collapses all around him. Typical is the *Observer* article dated 25 February 1945 headlined, "Paris Puts a Gay Face on her Anxieties."

Orwell emerges as strangely unsure in his subjective stance and uncertain about his relationship to his audience. First he is the generalized "every newcomer." Then he shifts to the "I" voice which he had developed to such effect in his "As I Please" columns in *Tribune*, reporting that "in several days of wandering to and fro in all kinds of quarters I have not seen a barefooted person and not many who were conspicuously ragged." Next he speaks as an impersonal "one." He moves on to address the reader through the "you" voice; then shifts back to "one" before returning to the "I." Next the reader accompanies Orwell around the French capital comparing in meticulous detail the sites with those he had known dur-

ing his previous stay in 1937 on his way back from the Spanish Civil War. Finally, he becomes aware of the appalling suffering behind the Parisian façade and ends:

*Across the street the tiny hotel  
where I used once to live was boarded up and  
partly ruinous. It appeared empty. But as I  
came away from behind the broken window  
pane of what used to be my own room I saw  
two hungry-looking children peeping out at  
me just like wild animals.*

This is hardly dull prose: the eye-witness reporting ultimately fired by a profound compassion toward suffering. Yet, paradoxically, it's Orwell's apparent difficulties in finding an appropriate voice in his unaccustomed role as a mainstream reporter that point ultimately to the most important issues. What is a journalist? What is the authentic voice of the genre? How far is the voice addressed to a declared, implicit or idealized audience? At times Orwell's solution in his war reporting is to assume various quasi-objective personas: that of the newcomer, the eye-witness and the over-hearer of conversations. Or he emerges as the confident essayist. At other times he confronts the problems of the genre more directly by reporting on reporting, by analyzing newspaper coverage and dealing with the issues relating to propaganda and language.

**Orwell and Fisk: Confronting the War Correspondent Stereotype**

War is also conventionally the theatre in which masculinity thrives. As Chris Ayres, in his humorous debunking job, *War Journalism for Cowards* (John Murray, 2005), comments: "War gives your life narrative structure. The banal becomes dramatic. When you're at war, you don't worry about American Express bills. War spares you the washing up." For Ayres war reporters are a different species: fearless and sun-tanned outdoor types who became Boy Scout leaders at school, studied Latin and Urdu at Oxford and probably knew the correct way to eat a sheep's

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS *Continued from previous page*

penis at the table of an African warlord. He writes: "I felt a mixture of envy and bafflement at their careers."

Both Orwell and Fisk confront this stereotype but in very different ways. In *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell is always the self-effacing narrator, mixing military knowhow with a droll debunking of the claims of history:

*Throughout the fighting I never made the correct "analysis" of the situation that was so glibly made by journalists hundreds of miles away. What I was chiefly thinking about was not the rights and wrongs of this miserable scrap but simply the discomfort and boredom of sitting day and night on that intolerable roof and the hunger which was growing worse and worse... If this was history it did not feel like it...*

Fisk is quite explicit about the appeal of the journalist's job and the hunt for the scoop: "For a journalist, nothing can beat that moment when a great story beckons, when history really is being made and when a foreign editor tells you to go for it." But he is also wary of falling into the "war correspondent" stereotype. With a typical literary flourish, he writes: "I think 'war correspondent' smells a bit, reeks of false romanticism; it has too much of the whiff of Victorian reporters who would view battles from hilltops in the company of ladies, immune to suffering, only occasionally glancing towards the distant pop-pop of cannon fire."

But while Orwell mixed a certain commendable uncertainty about the role of journalism with an overt, though constantly shifting political engagement, Fisk has always been consistent in stressing his role as the honest eye-witness. Good journalism, he argues, should produce a political response. But, for Fisk, the journalist is always engaged in professional practice, never (like Orwell) political practice. He confronts more obviously the swash-buckling stereotype of the war journo in his somewhat gloomy reflections on his career: Interviewed by Susie Eisenhuth, he comments:

*I think when you see so much suffering and so much blood, never mind the per-*

*sonal risk, I don't think you despair but I think you come away with a very bleak and pessimistic view of the world you live in. I used to think that watching history was a privilege but now I think probably it was a curse.*

**The War Reporting of Robert Fisk:  
Relentlessly Exposing the Horror**

Fisk has certainly relentlessly exposed the horrors of war having covered many of the major conflicts since the late 1970s, first for *The Times* and then for *The Independent*—in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East, Afghanistan and North Africa. Orwell penned an estimated 2 million words in his relatively

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not drawn from the elite; nor are  
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short writing career from 1933 to 1949. I have seen no estimate of Fisk's output but it could well be much bigger: the books alone are mighty works—for instance, *Pity the Nation* (Oxford University Press, 2001), a history of Lebanon, comes in at 726 pages; *The Great War for Civilisation* (Harper Perennial, 2006), a history of the Middle East 1,368 pages; most recently his selected writings, *The Age of the Warrior* (Fourth Estate, 2008), a 522-page tome. On top of all of this are his regular dispatches and commentaries in the *Independent*—one is only left wondering: how on earth does he manage it?

Moreover, reading his articles in two short collections provided free with *The Independent* last year titled *The World of Robert Fisk* to celebrate his two decades of award-winning journalism, the focus on appalling suffering appears after a while to be obsessive. Torture, genocide, slaughter, rape, massacres, frontline

butchery—these are the themes of Fisk's journalism. Time after time the horrors are shown in his graphic eye-witness reporting. I should warn you all: his writings can be profoundly shocking. For instance, on 30 July 1993, as Israel moved an armoured column into southern Lebanon, he reports:

*A minute down the road and we found the scene, a massive hole, a spray of rubble and three Mercedes cars tossed upside down on the powdered concrete. Terrible shapes lay inside, two of them, the doors running with blood. At Jouaya, the Israelis shelled a baby clean out of its cot...*

Later he sees an 80-year-old woman with almost all her skin burned off by an Israeli phosphorous shell, naked and dying in a hospital ward. And he ends with this enraged question: "How much further into horror could a 'war against terrorism' go?"

Otherwise, he conveys the horror through the testimony of his sources. Orwell intriguingly in his 1945 dispatches never used direct quotes from interviews—perhaps because he lacked a reliable recording technique; perhaps because he viewed the interview as a formalized event in which the reporter assumes a dominant, controlling position over the person being interviewed. Fisk has no such scruples. His sources are generally not drawn from the elite; nor are they unnamed victims caught up in a history out of their control. Fisk always goes out of his way to name them. On 19 June 1994, he interviews a woman raped by Croats. He writes:

*A woman called Samijawas was freed by the Serbs at the Kalinovik camp after she had agreed to collect the bodies of Serb soldiers who had died in a minefield. She was just 22. "It was at night and the mines were everywhere. I went with three other women. I don't know how I did it. The bodies were in parts—arms legs, heads. We collected all these pieces of flesh and put them in plastic bags. We will have nightmares about this for the rest of our lives."*

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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.

- Andris Straumanis (Wisconsin-River Falls, U.S.A.) recommends *Salvador* by Joan Didion (1983) for “the way she captures the uncertainty of life in El Salvador.” In addition, he reports that he “just enjoys the reporting” in John Reed’s *Insurgent Mexico* (1914).

- Brian Gabriel (Concordia, Canada) nominates Paul Reyes’s “Bleak Houses: Digging Through the Ruins of the Mortgage Crisis” in *Harper’s* (October 2008), “a fine personal narrative.” Also “Mississippi Drift: River Vagrants in the Age of Wal-Mart” by Matthew Powers from *Harper’s* (March 2008), “a humorous memoir which recalls a style reminiscent of Twain and McPhee.” Focusing on Canadian authors, he recommends Douglas Bell’s “The Accidental Course of My Illness” in *Wood Carving: The Craft of Literary Journalism* (2003), “a memoir that illuminates both how the human spirit survives and how memory deceives us,” and *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed* by John Vaillant “for its strong characterizations.”

- Sue Joseph (University of Technology, Sydney, Australia) recommends Greg Bearup’s “Left for Dead” from the *Sydney Morning Herald’s Good Weekend* magazine (28 April 2007), “the story of a man who, when left for dead almost on the top of Mt. Everest, also left a piece of his soul there.” Also “Local Hero” by Greg Bearup from *Good Weekend* (22 September 2007), “which paints a portrait of one of the world’s understated heroes, but with a surprising twist.” Finally, she nominates *Huckstepp: A Dangerous Life* by John Dale (2001). “I read this compelling biography eight years ago but can still remember it as if it was a film, in scenes and settings—the mark of excellent writing.”

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Fisk’s Extraordinary Writing Skills

Amazingly, amidst the horrors, there is always a conscious literary dimension to his reporting. On 21 April 2001, he visits an international arms fair in Abu Dhabi. He first dwells on striking contrasts: the pomp, glitz and civility of the surroundings compared to the potential horrors to be unleashed by the hardware on show. He writes:

*There were tea stands and flowers, purple and gold and green in the early spring heat. The Arabs wore their white robes with dignity, the western visitors dark blue suits and ties...*

But then he adds:

*...behind the tents and the trinket shops and the pipe band, there lay on display the most sophisticated and most lethal ordnance ever made by man, so new you could smell the fresh paint, so clean, so artistically bold in its design that you might never guess its purpose.*

Next, an urgent personal questioning intrudes, inspired by an acute moral imagination. He admits to regularly prowling Middle Eastern arms fairs seeking answers to the same questions: Who are the men who produce this vile equipment? How do they justify their trade? Like Orwell, Fisk is fascinated by the language of war. And like Orwell analyzing the French press in Paris, Fisk dissects the glossy arms fair brochures. Notice the attention to precise details—and the impact created by the relentless build-up of nouns.

*It was a linguistic journey into a fantasy world. Half the words used by the arms sellers—protection, reliability, optimisation, excellence, family, history, respect, trust, timelessness and perfection—hinted at human goodness, even the achievement of the spirit. The other half—punch, gutsy, performance, experience, potency, fightability, brawn and breed—were words of naked aggression, a hopelessly infantile male sexuality to prove that might is right. The only thing they didn’t mention was death. Even war is a banned word. It’s defence.*

And so he goes on to interview the men at the stands, and extracts some marvelously telling quotes. For instance, there’s Derek Turnbull from Blyth, Northumberland, at the Vickers Pavilion and he asks him if he ever thinks about what all these weapons do to human beings. His response is immediate: “You have to remember that a tank is to kill tanks, not people. That’s the purpose of it.”

Fisk is rarely humorous. Yet towards the end of this feature irony intrudes: he remembers attending an arms fair in Dubai over a decade previously. Not long before, the USS Vincennes had fired a missile into an Iranian civilian airliner killing all 290 passengers. He adds:

*No mention of that at the pavilion, of course. Just a trail of smiling dignitaries... and finally our very own Prince of Wales. He was wearing in his lapel, I recall, a Remembrance Day poppy.*

In his latest collection of writings, *The Age of the Warrior*, Fisk recounts his experiences during his first reporting job—in the Blyth office of the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* when he was just 17. Here is his description of the town, away from the frontlines but still haunted by death:

*Blyth was a down-at-heel collier harbour, smothered in the dust of doomed mines and a thousand coal fires. The slagheaps glowed red at night, the dying shipyards were bankrupt, pools of vomit lay splashed over the pavements outside the Blyth and Tyne and two dozen other pubs and clubs every Sunday morning. Even in summer, a kind of North Sea mildew settled over the town, a damp, cold cloth mixed with cold smoke that smothered all who lived there.*

See there the use of repetitions, alliteration, of descriptive eye-witness details, the sombre tone that echoes to some extent the Orwell of *The Road to Wigan Pier*. But let’s not call this—nor Orwell’s writings from the frontline—literary journalism. Let’s call it simply great journalism! ♦

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Richard Lance Keeble is professor of Journalism at the University of Lincoln. He has written and edited 13 books, including *Secret State, Silent Press: New Militarism, the Gulf and the Modern Image of Warfare* (1997), *The Newspapers Handbook* (2005) and *Ethics for Journalists* (2008). He co-edited *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter* (2007) and *Communicating War: Memory, Media and Military* (2007) and is the joint editor of *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics*.

## IALJS SEMINAR AT ACLA MEETING

## Our panel in March at Harvard University.

By Isabelle Meuret, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)

The prospect of attending a seminar organized at the mythical university of Harvard finally materialized when I landed in Boston after an eight-hour flight from Brussels, interrupted by a short stopover in New York. The



IALJS  
OUTREACH

“Global Languages, Local Cultures” conference promised to be a wonderful opportunity to meet literary scholars from all over the world—more than fifty nations, proudly announced Professor David Damrosch—and, indeed, we were not disappointed. The Harvard

campus is a picturesque assemblage of red brick and colonnaded buildings harmoniously arranged on a well-kept greensward. Treading upon such sacred soil was a real thrill. As a European, I was particularly moved to visit this awe-inspiring campus in spite of the freezing weather and the icy drizzle.

Friday, March 27 The participants to the “Literary Journalism across Cultures” seminar gather for their first session. As is obvious from their beaming faces, they are delighted to be assigned Barker 133, a high-ceilinged room with exposed beams, a huge wooden table and an impressive fireplace. Norman Sims, whom we are privileged to have as moderator for our panel, is the first to notice Mark Twain’s portrait on the wall. Being greeted by such a prominent figure is a very good omen for our seminar. Robert Alexander starts the ball rolling by discussing the “literariness” of literary journalism, which he did by examining two articles by Joseph Mitchell. His talk was particularly enlivened with the projection of an unforgettable picture of Joe Gould. William Dow, our second speaker, compares John Dos Passos’s and Blaise

Cendrars’s mutual influences and analyzes the strategies they use to reinvent the art of persuasion. I then present a new French magazine created to fill in a gap in the country’s media industry. *XXI* (Twenty-One) specializes in narrative writing and turns out to be a smash hit, against all odds. Masood Raja questions V.S. Naipaul’s cosmopolitanism by pointing to the imperial sympathies underlying his fiction and non-fiction work on Islam. Josh Roiland then makes the case for the canonization of the late David Foster Wallace, whose literary journalism he examines in the light of Nietzsche’s concept of oblivion.

After a thought-provoking and exhilarating session, we arrange for a well-deserved dinner at our hotel on the Charles River, later that night. We share a hearty meal made of all the yummy regional seafood—lobster, scallops, crayfish—and savor some excellent chilled wine.

Saturday, March 28 John Hartsock kicks off the second session by showing how much the American and European traditions of literary reportage have in common, and warns against their arbitrary separation. David Abrahamson then discusses the connections and interactions between literature and journalism, and examines the benefits of their combination. Novia Pagone explores the influence of American New Journalism on the writing of Spanish women journalists during their country’s transition to democracy. She also demonstrates how their groundbreaking production was instrumental in constructing Spanish cultural identity. Bill Reynolds speaks last and examines the influence of Tom Wolfe’s style on the work of a few Canadian authors. Philip Marchand’s work, in particular, epitomizes the literary journalism crossover between Canada and the U.S.

Still impressed by the genuine grandeur of the room and enthralled by the good chemistry of our panel, we conclude our Harvard experience and look forward to meeting again at the annual IALJS conference in Chicago in May. This “Literary Journalism Across Cultures” seminar was truly a unique opportunity for us to widen our own horizons and bring together scholars with a global agenda and a comparative approach to literary journalism. ♦

READING  
LIST  
(CONTINUED)

• Stephen Kimber (University of King’s College, Canada) recommends Tom French’s “Angels

& Demons,” a Pulitzer prize-winning series in the *St. Petersburg Times* (26 October 1997). He adds: “I only assign my students to read the first chapter. But most get hooked—and then show up for class bleary-eyed, having had to devour every word to find out how it all turns out. We can then talk about the techniques French uses to make us want to know ‘what happens next’ through seven chapters and three years.” He also suggests “**The Killer Elite**” by Evan Wright from *Rolling Stone* (26 June 2003). The article “became the book and then HBO series *Generation Kill* about a group of Marines during the first few weeks of the invasion of Iraq. It’s powerful immersion journalism that makes you feel you really are there, whether you want to be or not.”

• Frank Harbers (Groningen, The Netherlands) recommends the collected Vietnam War reportages of Michael Herr titled *Dispatches* (1977) as “a perfect example of the expressiveness of literary journalism.” He praises “the way Herr not only describes the events of the conflict, but also vividly conveys the experience of being in and coming out of a war.” He also suggests Roberto Saviano’s *Gomorra* (2006), a non-fiction novel about the Italian Mafia. “By drawing parallels between images from popular Mafia movies and real life, the author shows his audience how thin the line is between fiction and reality.”

• Sonja Merljak Zdovc (Ljubljana, Slovenia) suggests “**Carnal Knowledge**” by Bill Buford from *The New Yorker* (1 May 2006) for “its ability to attract the readers eyes with a single paragraph and make him/her read the whole text.”

• Novia Pagone (Chicago, U.S.A.) suggests the essays about Montserrat Roig and Rosa Montero in *Spanish Women Writers and the Essay* edited by Kathleen M. Glenn and Mercedes Mazquiarán de Rodríguez. “Though their nonfiction texts are not yet translated into English, both Roig and Montero have contributed significantly to literary journalism in Spain, and these essays showcase their best work, providing a valuable introduction to the unacquainted reader.”

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>.



## LITERARY JOURNALISM IN FINLAND

*The Unidentified Journalistic Storyform...or why Finnish literary journalism has proven to be such a poorly known phenomenon.*

By Maria Lassila-Merisalo, University of Jyväskylä (Finland)

At the end of 2008 a Google search on “kaunokirjallinen journalismi,” that is “literary journalism” in Finnish, generated three results. In this article I take the opportunity to present a



AROUND THE WORLD

few reasons that in my consideration could explain the modest status of literary journalism in Finland.

First of all, literary journalism does not have a clear identity as a genre or a form of journalistic writing in Finland. I have

discovered that literary journalism has been exercised in Finland for as long as there has been professional journalism, that is from the beginning of the 20th century, when reporters started to add their own experiences and observations to their stories, thus transforming the stories from mere factual reports towards more comprehensive reportage. Literary journalism has been practised in Finland ever since, but it has never been truly recognized.

For example, as a part of my doctoral study I interviewed four people who I consider to be literary journalists and who all work in the same small editorial office of the same newspaper supplement. When I asked them to characterize the kind of journalism that they were writing, I got several answers: feature, long stories, writings, narrative journalism, nonfiction. Even people who work closely together do not share a common vocabulary—not to mention people in other magazines and newspapers.

Literary journalism in Finland has mostly been published in magazines. The second explanation for the modest status of literary journalism is undoubtedly

ly the weak academic status of magazine journalism in general. Until the 1960s media studies had been divided into two areas: one was concerned with newspapers and magazines, and the other with radio and TV. In the late 1960s magazines started fading out of the picture altogether. Since then magazine journalism has only accounted for a few individual courses in university programs. Only in the beginning of 2007 was the first professorship in magazine journalism established in Finland.

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The most recent explanation is the dissolving borderlines between traditional storyforms

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Thirdly, realistic fiction has traditionally had a strong standing in Finnish culture. Finnish literary canon is full of fictional characters set in historical environments. Readers expect the novels to be factually accurate; for instance, Laila Hirvisaari, who is one of the best selling authors in Finland, has told that the feedback she gets from her readers is often engaged with small factual details; once a reader pointed out that the chimney on top of the Carelian sauna was placed incorrectly. It has even been said that Finnish novels compete with history when they discuss the past and sociology when they discuss the present. Perhaps in Finland we have so much “factual fiction” that our need for “fictional fact” is thereby smaller?

The fourth and the most recent explanation could be the dissolving borderlines between the traditional storyforms. It is hard to find a traditional, stereotypical inverted-pyramid-shaped news story in a Finnish newspaper nowa-

days. Instead, one finds stories that combine news leads with emotions, anecdotes and speculations. And correspondingly, it seems that Finnish literary journalism has taken a step in the opposite direction: it has become more factual and informative. Stories are filled with background information and references to other texts, statistics, Internet sources, etc. The flow of the narrative is usually cut short as a businesslike background voice steps in. The stories undoubtedly share more information than before, but as narratives they are not as strong as they were a few decades ago, and thereby it is harder to find “pure” literary journalism in Finland now than it was, for example, in the 1980s.

When it comes to the Google search, nowadays “kaunokirjallinen journalismi” creates nearly 90 search results. The dozens of new results are all related to my Ph.D. study which was published in January. Hopefully this one woman’s project could become a part of a larger academic interest in Finnish literary journalism, a phenomenon which is definitely worth researching. ♦

SURROUNDED BY NORWAY, SWEDEN AND RUSSIA, FINLAND IS UNIQUE IN MANY WAYS, INCLUDING ITS JOURNALISTIC TRADITIONS.



## VOICING THE UNVOICEABLE

*How one of South Africa's best known men of letters told the truth about AIDS.*

By Murray Hunter, University of Cape Town (South Africa)

Dear Jann," the article begins, "You will be saddened to hear that Adelaide Ntsele has died." Who would have guessed that such a modest sentence could preface such a remarkable episode in South African journalism—"AIDS in Africa: In Search of the Truth," 10,000 words which cut to the core of a post-apartheid South African crisis. The writer is Rian Malan, the publication is *Rolling Stone*, the print date is November 22, 2001, and "Jann" is Jann Wenner, editor of the magazine. To summarize, what Malan says in those 10,000 words is this: "I believe that AIDS exists, and it's killing Africans—but I believe that the death toll could be much less than we think." The statistics, he says, are unreliable computer projections; governments and researchers who receive funding for a crisis have no reason to play down its severity. It's an extraordinary thing to say about an epidemic that is thought to be killing nearly a thousand people a day in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> The natural



GUEST  
ESSAY

reaction is outrage, and whether he's got his facts straight or not (and it is not the purpose of this essay to decide) Malan needed to perform some serious literary gymnastics if he hoped to get away with it. This essay busies itself not with what Malan has to say, but how he chooses to say it.

So let us return to that opening paragraph. A letter to a friend, detailing the tragic passing of a mutual acquaintance—Adelaide, a black South African woman, who died of an AIDS-related illness. Malan provides an account of Adelaide's funeral, and notes his own anxiety and confusion on the subject: "But now the mourning is done, and there are things that must be said." Swiftly, he moves from this postcard style to the main body of his exposition, to explain how he came to write an article about AIDS in Africa—that his intention had been to prove wrong the apparent AIDS dissidence of former President Thabo Mbeki.<sup>2</sup> Gradually, Jann as the addressee, as the "you," disappears from the narrative. But we see that his search for damning statistics was nowhere as easy as he expected. The "story" is the story about the story: it is the narrative of Malan's search for some kind of comforting truth, being bounced from statistic to statistic, from expert to expert, and the mysterious non-correlation between projected AIDS deaths and visible evidence. He even canvasses coffin makers to see if business is booming. In fact, he writes, he found no clarity at all. "And that's my story," he writes: "Enigma upon enigma, riddle leading to riddle, and no reprieve from doubt."

There are two stems to his argument. Malan concludes that AIDS statistics are unreliable, perhaps unrealistic, perhaps crazily inflated—but also that it would be greatly in the interests of AIDS

lobbyists and their budgets to inflate those statistics. And with that troubling deduction, he returns to the letter format:

*For even as I tried to track down the old numbers, bigger new ones were supplanting them—17 million Africans dead of AIDS and 25 million more with HIV, UNAIDS now estimates; not one in five South African adults infected but one in four. Are these numbers right? Who knows. Feel free to publish this, Jann, but if it drives you as mad as it has driven me, I'll understand.*

*Yours, Malan*

In the simplest sense, this letter-writing form serves to buffer Malan from a certain degree of criticism. A letter has more immediacy than a report, less currency. As the writer André Wiesner put it to me, the epistolary mode is in-between writing: higher than raw notes, but not quite the opus. Perhaps in the letter format, Malan found a parcel less invested with the authority of journalism in which he might find just a bit more wiggle room to wedge his counter-hegemonic claim? Surely one can almost shrug this off with "I mean, it's just a letter, for God's sake!"

If that is the case, of course Malan never expected to dupe his readers—especially not the ones who would take personal and professional exception to his claims. He could soften the blow, but not conceal it. The scientists, statisticians and AIDS activists whom Malan contradicts would not dismiss this with "It's just a letter."<sup>3</sup> From their point of view, AIDS dissidence isn't just factually incorrect, it's a moral wrong.<sup>4</sup>

But let us not forget who Rian Malan is. This is the writer who, during the great rash of white liberal life-writing in South Africa that started near the end of apartheid and has not yet ended,

gave voice to the unvoiceably ugly truth of white liberalism in *My Traitor's Heart*.<sup>5</sup> If anything, he's earned that we should pay close attention to what he says. We should note, then, that if Malan is flirting with a form of AIDS dissidence, his article lacks all the loud-mouthed polemic that might be associated with that school's body of literature.

Those men and women who write from the fringes of Western science often do so with the zeal of those believing they possess secret knowledge. I know of no literary review of dissident writing, but readers might get a sense of this if they read some of the punditry on <www.whatis-aids.com>, where I found Malan's article. One good example is the ur-text of President Mbeki's dissidence, the infamous "Castro Hlongwane" document which sought to articulate the ruling party's view on AIDS. The anonymously

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The story  
is the story about the story,  
the narrative of  
a search for some kind of  
comforting truth

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*Continued on next page*

VOICING *Continued from previous page*

authored document stirred up rage and ridicule in equal amounts, and as a policy document it makes for extraordinary reading: "...all of us are obliged to chant that HIV=AIDS=Death!" it declares. "Then our government must ensure that it makes anti-retroviral drugs available throughout our public health system. But

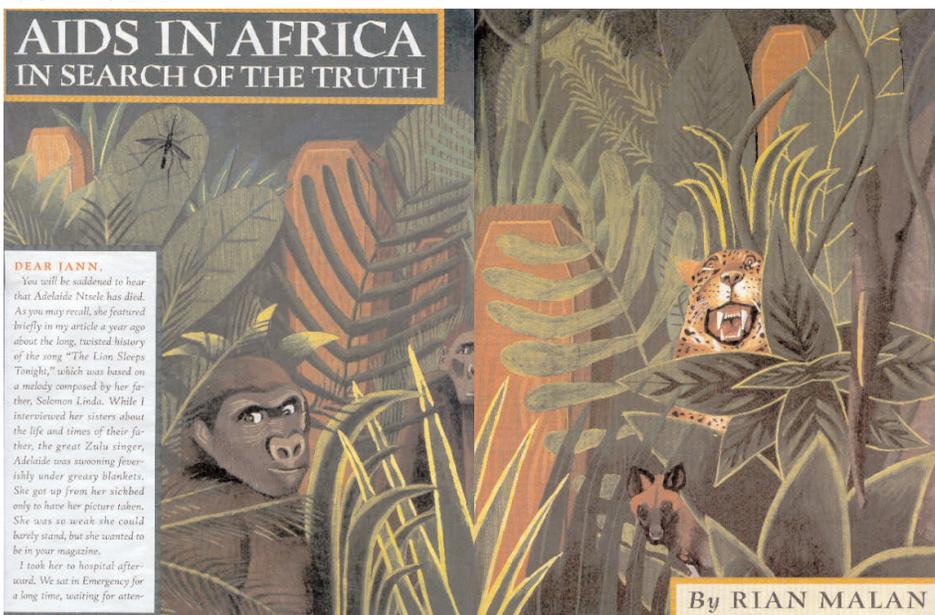
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The framing of his quest for truth serves a rhetorical function, reminding the reader of how much donkey work he did

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first of all, we have to repeat in unison—HIV causes AIDS causes Death!"<sup>6</sup> But Malan eschews the bold declamations, the bombast, the sneering references to 'science' or 'medicine' with inverted commas. By comparison, his manner here seems demure, his proposals modestly made—especially for a man with a self-described "indestructible ego."<sup>7</sup>

BELOW, THE OPENING SPREAD OF MALAN'S ARTICLE AS IT ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN *ROLLING STONE* MAGAZINE.



I would argue Malan's way of framing his quest for truth serves a rhetorical function aside from reminding the reader how much donkey work he did for the article. In fact, in its angst, Malan's voice resonated with confessional novels I'd read. The confessional hero, as Peter Axthelm reminds us, is "afflicted and unbalanced, disillusioned and groping for meaning."<sup>8</sup> To me, these qualities are hallmarks of the piece: "No one wanted to hear this," Malan tells us.<sup>9</sup> "Sometimes it seemed I was the only one in South Africa who found this odd."<sup>10</sup> Confession is an intrinsically lonely enterprise. By foregrounding not only his personal journey in pursuit of the statistics, but also the isolating experience of this journey, Malan casts himself as the tortured protagonist in his own little Sartre-esque narrative.

So Malan, like Axthelm's model protagonist, "uncovers elements of pain, humiliation, and guilt, yet continues his quest as his suffering increases, hoping at last to find some perception of the truth that lies at the centre of his existence."<sup>11</sup> Does Malan not implicate himself, when confessing to us that he was "rubbing his hands with glee" when AIDS started putting South Africa back in the international spotlight?<sup>12</sup> On occasion he is able simultaneously to offer up his own guilt,



THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTHOR, RIAN MALAN

and dodge potential criticism, such as when he writes, "But you don't want to hear this, do you? Nor did I. It spoiled the plot, so I tried to ignore it."<sup>13</sup>

When viewed in these terms, the "Jann" to whom Malan addresses himself ceases merely to be Jann Wenner the editor, naturally, becoming instead the object that every confession needs. Jann becomes, in Felman's terms, an "addressable other" at which Malan projects his own angst. The reader, interpellated in Jann's place, receives Malan's confession as would a judge, a priest or a policeman. Malan is laying himself at our feet, and my instinctive response is pity. If I disagree with the things he says, it hardly matters because Malan has made me feel sorry for him. This article is less a bold proclamation of the failure of science as a guilt-ridden admission of Malan's own ghastly inferences.

That's surely a ruse, because Malan couldn't give a biscuit who disagrees with him. He is, to use the words of a prolific South African editor, "an extreme example of the contrarian. Self-marginalised."<sup>14</sup> And we can certainly see truth in those words here, with Malan mapping out his epistemological isolation from the rest of society: "Lots of people thought it was wrong for me even to pose questions such as these," he writes at one point, ever the one sane man in a mad world.<sup>15</sup> (This tendency in his writing can also be observed in *My Traitor's Heart*, at

*Continued on next page*

## CALL FOR PAPERS ON HISTORICAL TRANSITIONS IN JOURNALISM

The International researchers within the areas of journalism and media studies are invited to send an abstract to participate in a special issue of *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* on "Histories of Transition in Journalism."

Journalism today is undergoing a profound transition, albeit in different permutations around the globe, and a great deal of current scholarship is devoted to assessing the exact nature, form and consequences of this transition. But of course this is not the first time that journalism has undergone such a change. Just in the Anglo-American context, to note one example, journalism has experienced several dramatic shifts in the past four hundred years. The current disruption in journalism offers a nice prompt for a new consideration of issues related to these prior transitions. Papers ought to be empirically based, theoretically driven, and focus on a particular transition in journalism. Papers on any geographic region or historical period are welcome. Abstracts should be approximately 500 words and are due by email to either David Ryfe <dryfe@unr.edu> or Marina Prentoulis <m@prentoulis.com> by 1 July 2009.

## CALL FOR ARTICLES FOR GENDER ANTHOLOGY

Authors are invited to submit articles for an anthology entitled *(In)Scribing Gender: International Female Writers and the Creative Process* to be edited by Jen Bouchard and published by Diversion Press. The purpose of the anthology is to explore the creative processes of women writing fiction, non-fiction and poetry from multiple cultural contexts, in different styles, and within various disciplines. Through personal anecdotes, interviews, articles, narratives and essays, established and emerging female writers from diverse backgrounds (and those who write about them) will examine how gender shapes an author's creative process and the ways in which gender tints the lens through which a writer's work is viewed by literary and/or academic audiences. Essays, articles and narratives on (but not limited to) the following themes are encouraged. We welcome a wide range of disciplines, topics, and stylistic, theoretical and methodological approaches. Entries may be self-referential or focus on another writer's process. All entries should be between 5,000-10,000 words. Interested contributors should email an abstract of around 300 words, a short bio and a current CV to Jen Bouchard at <jtwestmore@yahoo.com> by 15 August 2009.

## VOICING *Continued from previous page*

the center of which lies his epigraph, "How do I live in this strange place?")

So is it possible that Malan couched the narrative in the form of a tortured confession disingenuously to soften the impact of his argument? If so, it's a hell of a pretty package for such a powerful stick of dynamite. ♦

### NOTES

1 This according to the UNAIDS 2008 Report on the global AIDS epidemic.

2 Here seems as good a place as any to note that the AIDS dissident position has all but disappeared from public discourse in South Africa. At the time, however, it was a source of fiery debate, daily, and the issue would dog Mbeki's presidency until he stepped down from office in September 2008. For a good account of the dissident stirrings in South Africa's political leadership, see Mark Gevisser, *The Dream Deferred: Thabo Mbeki*. Jeppesstown, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007.

3 A Google search of "Rian Malan" and "AIDS" yields a great number of angry letters written to the press by scientists, statisticians and activists. Many of these refer not to the *Rolling Stone* article of 2001, however, but Malan's follow-up articles in South African magazine *noseweek* and *The Spectator* in Britain in 2003 and 2004.

4 See, for example, Edwin Cameron, *Witness to*

*AIDS*. Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2005

5 *My Traitor's Heart* is certainly not the only worthwhile work in the often tedious genre of white life-writing during the fall of apartheid, but it is one of the definitive pieces.

6 *Castro Hlongwane, Caravans, Cats, Geese, Foot & Mouth And Statistics: Hiv/Aids and the Struggle for the Humanisation of the African* [Author unknown]. 2002. Available at: [www.virusmyth.com/aids/hiv/ancdoc.htm](http://www.virusmyth.com/aids/hiv/ancdoc.htm)

7 Fred de Vries, *The Fred De Vries Interviews: From Abdullah to Zille*. Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2008, p47.

8 Peter Axthelm, *The Modern Confessional Novel*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, p8

9 Malan, 8

10 Malan, 15

11 Axthelm, 11

12 Malan, 3

13 Malan, 6

14 Quoted in Tim Adams, "The dark heart of the new South Africa," *Observer*, March 25, 2007.

15 In the bio accompanying his excellent investigative piece, "In The Jungle," Malan relates his recent experience with chicken pox: "I went off my head and concluded I was the only sane man in Cape Town. 'You're all mad,' I told the doctor." There is some evidence to suggest that perhaps Malan gets this feeling more often than most of us.

## IALJS-4 CONFERENCE *Continued from Page 2*

Netherlands; the case of Finnish Matti Jämsä, precursor of literary journalism writing in Finland; and an analysis into Canada's *Toronto Star* and its contributors Ernest Hemingway and Morley Callaghan. Similarly adding to the internationalization of both the association and the conference, the meeting's keynote speech was delivered by Richard Keeble of the University of Lincoln (U.K.) and focused on "War and the Journalistic Imagination."

Started last year as a tradition to be carried forward at future conferences, the Scholar's Breakfast was a opportunity for graduate students in the association to share their work with more senior faculty attendees. The event was organized by our Graduate Student Committee, chaired by Josh Roiland, a PhD candidate at Saint Louis University (U.S.A.).

This year also had its share of "first moments" in the history of IALJS.

These include the official release of the inaugural issue of *Literary Journalism Studies*, a definite cornerstone for a three-year-old association and the achievement of one of its earliest aspirations. And there was the award of the "Susan L. Greenberg Research Prize for Literary Journalism Studies" to Aryn Bartley, a doctoral student at Michigan State University (U.S.A.) for her groundbreaking paper "The Citizen-Witness and the Politics of Shame: James Agee's and Walker Evan's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men."

Judging by the record-high amount of submissions for this year's conference (at an acceptance rate of 70%), we can rightly assume that interest for this field of research has found a home in IALJS. It certain bodes well for another successful IALJS conference next year at Roehampton University in London. Hope to see you there! ♦

## CALL FOR PAPERS

**International Association for Literary Journalism Studies**

**“Literary Journalism: Perspectives and Prospects”  
The Fifth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS-5)**

**Roehampton University  
School of Arts  
Centre for Research in Creative and Professional Writing (ReWrite)  
London, U.K.**

**20-22 May 2010**



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 20-22 May 2010. The conference will be held at the School of Arts at Roehampton University in London, U.K.

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: Perspectives and Prospects." 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 an 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 variety of scholarly approaches.

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

- 2009 [http://www.ialjs.org/?page\\_id=21](http://www.ialjs.org/?page_id=21)
- 2008 <http://www.ialjs.org/conferences08.html>
- 2007 <http://www.ialjs.org/conferences07.html>
- 2006 <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 Work-in-Progress Presentations (Abstracts)**

Submitted abstracts for Work-in-Progress Sessions should not exceed 250 words. If accepted, each presenter at a conference 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;

**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 Soares  
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (Portugal)  
2010 Conference Research Chair, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies  
E-mail: <isoares@iscsp.utl.pt>

**Please submit proposals for panels to:**

Prof. Norman Sims  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst (U.S.A.)  
2010 Conference Program Chair, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies  
E-mail: <sims@journ.umass.edu>

**Deadline for all submissions:** No later than 31 January 2010

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

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## IALJS ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

*Minutes from 15 May 2009.*

President David Abrahamson called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. and acknowledged the efforts of IALJS co-founder and first president John S. Bak, who provided the impetus for the creation of the society with a conference in Nancy, France in 2006. Abrahamson then called for a round of applause for *Literary Journalism Studies* editor John Hartsock, who masterfully delivered Vol. 1, No. 1 on time and in time for the Chicago conference. *LJS* book review editor Thomas Connery then asked for new contributions, from all countries.

Secretary-Treasurer Bill Reynolds reported that as of 13 May 2009 the financial circumstances of the association were sound, with a bank balance of \$14,069.24 and 93 paid-in-full members from 18 different countries.

Research committee chair Isabel Soares thanked committee members for their hard work, within a compressed timeframe, to blind review conference submissions. This year there was a 70 percent acceptance rate for the conference, i.e., 42 submissions and 30 acceptances. For the record, Soares also noted that the jury that refereed the various conference submissions included the following individuals: David Abrahamson, John Bak, Thomas Connery, Bill Reynolds, Norman Sims, Isabel Soares and Alice Trindade.

Program committee chair Norman Sims asked that everyone please consider submitting their ideas for IALJS-

5 in London as soon as possible so as to help facilitate the planning of the best possible panels.

Graduate student committee chair Josh Roiland said he wanted to continue recruitment via an email campaign to students and professors—especially in communications, English and American Studies departments—who may have or know students who are interested in literary journalism. He also wants to develop an interactive social network to share information, links and debate topics. Possible sites include an IALJS grad student page on Facebook, or a group created through Academia.edu. The goal would be to build both an intellectual and personal community where members can support each other's projects and put together conference panels. Roiland also suggested some examples of resource-building: compiling and making available a bibliography of primary and secondary literary journalism texts and scholarship so curious graduate students might develop a common vocabulary; compiling a list of conferences and journals that are relevant to literary journalism and accessible to graduate students; and working with the IALJS webmaster to develop a forum to showcase graduate student literary journalism.

Susan Greenberg, host of IALJS-5 in London in May 2010, mentioned that the call for papers is already available. She said the discussion of literary journalism in her jurisdiction is quite hidden right now and hoped that IALJS-5 could provide a much-needed opportunity to widen the discussion of the association's favorite subject in England.

Liaison committee chair Isabelle

Meuret reported that a couple of recent IALJS outreach projects had been quite successful. Several IALJS members conducted a seminar at the European Society for the Study of English conference in Aarhus, Denmark in August 2008 (ESSE 9). More recently, in March 2009 a number of IALJS members conducted a two-day literary journalism seminar at Harvard University, as part of the American Comparative Literature Association's annual conference (ACLA 24). Meuret also reported on IALJS's future projects, which included the fact that John Bak has submitted a literary journalism proposal for ESSE 10, to be held in Turin, Italy in August 2010. All interested members of IALJS are encouraged to participate.

It was also reported that John Bak is finishing the first stage of editing an anthology of papers presented at the IALJS-1 and IALJS-2 conferences, and that the University of Massachusetts Press has signaled a tentative timetable of Fall 2010 for publishing the book.

Finally, conference participant Aryn Bartley was acknowledged as the inaugural recipient of the Susan L. Greenberg Research Prize for Literary Journalism Studies, the award for the best research paper of the conference. A generous round of applause followed the presentation of the prize.

At 4:30 p.m., David Abrahamson called for a motion of adjournment, which was moved, seconded and unanimously approved. ♦

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Bill Reynolds, Secretary-Treasurer  
Ryerson University (Canada)*

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### TEACHING TIPS *Continued from Page 22*

tains eight stories that I think are models of narrative nonfiction. In addition, I handed out stories that I had collected over the years and required the students to send me comments for discussion in class. I learned a long time ago that making students submit comments in advance meant they were prepared to discuss the assignment in class. Clearly, email has made this a lot easier.

Before I lectured about inter-

viewing, I had students send me anecdotes about interviewing ups and downs they had experienced. During my lecture I would call on individuals to reinforce a point I was making based on their own experiences.

In addition to peer mentoring of written work, all story ideas were pitched in class and students were encouraged to comment on ideas. This had the positive effect of students hearing good ideas as well as helping weak

ideas become better.

Ultimately, what pleased me about the structure of the course was the success rate of the students. Students who completed the course usually received an A or B grade. As I told them on the first day, the course was designed so they could succeed, that it was up to them, not me, that I didn't give grades, but that they earned them. And they usually did. ♦



## 2009 IALJS Membership Form

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title (Dr., Prof., Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss) \_\_\_\_\_

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Area(s) of teaching/research interest \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Categories:** The annual IALJS membership coincides with the **calendar year** (no pro-rating is available). Members receive all IALJS announcements, conference CFPs, the *Literary Journalism* newsletter and the *Literary Journalism Studies* journal.

- Please check category:  US\$ 50 or 35 Euros: Regular Member (Faculty member)  
 US\$ 50 or 35 Euros: Associate Member (Professional member)  
 US\$ 25 or 15 Euros: Student Member (Master or Doctoral level)  
 US\$ 25 or 15 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 PayPal/Credit Cards**

**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. PayPal and Credit Cards**

Payments may also be made via PayPal (and credit cards). Please see "IALJS Payments" at [www.ialjs.org](http://www.ialjs.org). Please fax completed form (above) to Bill Reynolds, IALJS Treasurer, School of Journalism, Ryerson University: **+01-416-979-5216**.

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## DESIGNING A COURSE FOR THE STUDENTS TO SUCCEED

*An incremental approach to teaching narrative nonfiction writing.*

By R. Thomas Berner, Pennsylvania State University (U.S.A.)

**B**y the time students arrived in my feature-writing class, they had taken the required newswriting and reporting courses, the ones in which they had usually written stories on deadline and sometimes after sitting through deadly town council meetings. So when on the first day I told them that covering a town council meeting was easier than writing a narrative nonfiction article, they began to get the sense that feature writing was not puff and circumstance, but a long haul



TEACHING  
TIPS

built on substance.

The first paragraph of my syllabus informed students that they would need an “intense devotion to reporting and then a similarly intense devotion to revision.” Students were also informed that they would be expected to improve their research and interviewing techniques as well as hone their skills of observation. I then laid out a list of techniques they would use in the months ahead, including description, action, scenes, narration, dialogue, multiple points of view and a storyline.

But how did I get the students to learn these parts of a narrative nonfiction article so they could produce

two such pieces, a 1,500-word news feature and a 2,500-word profile, in a 15-week semester? After much trial and error, I broke the course into a series of assignments that built on each other. I also incorporated reading, revision and peer mentoring assignments and several personal conferences (in lieu of class) with me.

Because the students had to date been trained to take notes on what they heard, their first assignment for me was to write a 200-word description of the oldest building on campus. No adjectives, no adverbs, no quotes, no first person. We discussed the assignment’s challenges before discussing each person’s article. The best results, of course, were the most specific, and students got to see that some of their classmates had not only described the building but had made phone calls or done online research to get factual information.

The next assignment was intended to get the students to learn the value of dialogue. They had to listen in on a conversation and then write something about it, using some description of the people, in 400 words. Students then read their papers in class. I had them read their papers so their classmates would hear people talking. We would discuss how dialogue advanced a story.

Then there was the transition assignment, which I had not thought of, but which students asked for. In my early days of teaching the course, I had

the students jump right into the first long piece, a 1,500-word news feature. Even though it was done incrementally, starting with a scene, students felt that they had to make a big leap from their experience writing hard news to writing a long feature. And so I had them watch a videotape of a small claims court trial and then write a feature story in which they used some description and some dialogue. The particular tape I used included a good quote to end the story and it raised the question of whom to focus on, the plaintiff or the defendant, thus providing the students with an understanding of point of view on a modest level. All stories were subsequently discussed in class.

For both the news feature and the profile, they turned in drafts, usually scenes, which we discussed in class as part of a peer mentoring process and with me in personal conferences. Not only did this help students learn from their classmates, it incorporated rewriting into the course. I also incorporated additional reporting by opening each personal conference with this question: What are you going to do next? I wanted students to understand that they were responsible for their work, not me. (Of course, I made suggestions.)

Mixed in with the journalism assignments were other assignments. Students were required to read and send me comments on chapters in *Writing Literary Features*, which con-

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### LITERARY JOURNALISM

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

