



IJS

Literary Journalism Studies

Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2011

*Writing
literary history*

The Journal of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies



Credit: U.S. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI. In the public domain.

“Negro boys on Easter morning. Southside, Chicago, Illinois, April 1941” by Russell Lee. Basis for the photo on the cover of *The Promised Land* by Nicholas Lemann. Please see page 9.

Literary Journalism Studies

The Journal of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2011

Contents

<i>Information for Contributors</i>	4
<i>Note from the Editor</i>	5
<hr/>	
Writing Literary History . . . <i>The Promised Land</i> , and <i>The Big Test</i> , an interview with author Nicholas Lemann by <i>Norman Sims</i>	9
Exploring an Early Version of Literary Journalism: Nineteenth-century Epistolary Journalism by <i>Katrina J. Quinn</i>	33
Literary Journalism as a Key to Reporting's Richest Prize by <i>Miles Maguire</i>	53
<i>When a journalist's scholarly inquiry informs his literary journalism</i> <i>Matthew Thompson</i> writes about . . .	73
Outrider: William T. Vollmann, Tony Tanner, and the Private Extremes of an Anti-Journalism	74
"Barrio Boxing," an excerpt from <i>My Colombian Death</i>	96
BOOK REVIEWS	105
Selected Bibliography of Scholarship and Criticism Examining Literary Journalism	123
<hr/>	
<i>Mission Statement</i>	142
<i>International Association for Literary Journalism Studies</i>	143

2 *Literary Journalism Studies*

Copyright © 2011 International Association
for Literary Journalism Studies.
All rights reserved.

Website: www.literaryjournalismstudies.org

Literary Journalism Studies is the journal of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies and is published twice yearly. For information on subscribing or membership, go to www.ialjs.org.

MEMBER OF THE
Council of Editors of Learned Journals

Published twice a year, Spring and Fall issues.
Subscriptions, \$50/year (individuals), \$75/year (libraries).

ISSN 1944-897X (paper)
ISSN 1944-8988 (online)

Literary Journalism Studies

Editor

John C. Hartsock
State University of New York at Cortland, U.S.A.

Associate Editors

Bill Reynolds
Ryerson University, Canada

William Dow
American University of Paris, France

Jenny McKay
University of Sunderland, U.K.

Miles Maguire
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, U.S.A.

Roberta Maguire
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, U.S.A.

Book Review Editor

Thomas Connery
University of St. Thomas, U.S.A.

Publisher

David Abrahamson
Northwestern University, U.S.A.

Editorial Offices

Literary Journalism Studies
State University of New York at Cortland
Department of Communication Studies
P.O. Box 2000
Cortland, New York 13045-0900 U.S.A.
Email: literaryjournalismstudies@gmail.com



Published at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University
1845 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208, U.S.A.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES invites submission of original scholarly **L** 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 and narrative nonfiction that emphasizes cultural revelation. The journal has an international focus and seeks submissions on the theory, history, and pedagogy of literary journalism throughout the world. All disciplinary approaches are welcome. Submissions should be informed with an awareness of the existing scholarship and should be between 3,000 and 8,000 words in length, including notes. To encourage international dialogue, the journal is open to publishing on occasion short examples or excerpts of previously published literary journalism accompanied by a scholarly gloss about or an interview with the writer who is not widely known outside his or her country. The example or excerpt must be translated into English. The scholarly gloss or interview should generally 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 generally should 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. The journal is also willing to consider publication of exclusive excerpts of narrative literary journalism accepted for publication by major publishers.

Email submission (as a Microsoft Word attachment) is mandatory. A cover page indicating the title of the paper, the author's name, institutional affiliation, and contact information, along with an abstract (50–100 words), should accompany all submissions. The cover page should be sent as a separate attachment from the abstract and submission to facilitate distribution to readers. No identification should appear linking the author to the submission or abstract. All submissions must be in English Microsoft Word and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Humanities endnote style) <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>. All submissions will be blind reviewed. Send submissions to the editor at <literaryjournalismstudies@gmail.com>.

Copyright reverts to the contributor after publication with the provision that if republished reference is made to initial publication in *Literary Journalism Studies*.

BOOK REVIEWS are invited. They should be 1,000–2,000 words and focus on 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 editor for suggestions. Usually reviewers will be responsible for obtaining their respective books. Book reviews and/or related queries should be sent to Thomas B. Connery at <tbconnery@stthomas.edu>.

Note from the Editor . . .



These are exciting times for the study of literary journalism and for *Literary Journalism Studies*. For one, the long-awaited volume *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences* (University of Massachusetts Press) has just been published. Edited by John Bak, IALJS's founding president, and Bill Reynolds, *LJS*'s associate editor and current IALJS vice president, the volume will undoubtedly make an important contribution to more firmly establishing a place for literary journalism as an international phenomenon. (Full disclosure: Your editor has a contribution in it.)

Also, we are privileged to publish in this issue—among the other fine articles each of which each, I would emphasize, is groundbreaking in its own way—what I believe will prove to be an important interview with Nicholas Lemann, who is not only the dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, but also an accomplished literary historian in his own right. The interview is important not only for who is interviewed, but also for the issues that are raised by Lemann and his interviewer, Norman Sims. Most important to my mind is that they discuss a different kind of “literary history” than what many of us are generally familiar with in the form of a history about literary works, movements, and authors. Instead, what we see here is a different conceptualization of history as literary, in this instance in Lemann's two critically recognized works, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*, and *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*. Moreover, this topic will be the subject of a promising panel at the upcoming IALJS conference in Brussels.

But now I will take up what for many may be a decidedly dull subject: bibliography. While it may be dull, it is nonetheless critical to the future study of literary journalism and its variations. This is because one of the constraints I detect in the development of the study is readily accessible bibliographical material. And no wonder: It is a complicated problem. To begin with, there has been no one centralized academic home for its study. There are no departments of literary journalism. Rather, its study is spread among different disciplines. Another problem, and perhaps even more challenging, is that there is no one nomenclature for the genre, what with variants such as narrative journalism, literary reportage, literary nonfiction, reportage literature, creative nonfiction, the nonfiction novel, and the New Journalism, to name some of the more widely used in English. Nor are they always quite the same creature, although there can and often is considerable overlap. The result is confusion: What does one look “it” up under when doing bibliographical searches? Clearly, one must be sufficiently broadminded and look it up under every name one can think of for the form. And then differentiate, when necessary. Of course, that's part of the detective work that makes scholarship exciting.

Bearing all of this in mind, I have, for some time, planned as editor to make a start at developing a bibliography of critical and scholarly work related to literary journalism. This is because there is more out there than is perhaps generally appreciated for newcomers to the field. One of the reasons for the lack of an extended bibliography is that courses on the subject of the scholarship are not offered at the graduate level,

6 *Literary Journalism Studies*

at least in so far as I know. Generally, the focus is on teaching either praxis or engaging in discussion of original works in the classroom. These are, of course, important, necessary, and very central to the study of the genre. But one of my goals as an editor and scholar has been to encourage the scholarly study of the form or related forms in order to establish it more firmly as a legitimate field of study in the academy. Moreover, I have been asked from time to time if I were to teach a graduate course in the scholarship, what would I include on a reading list? Thus this editor's note is an attempt to begin that discussion.

There is another reason, too, why such a discussion is necessary, and it bears directly on this journal. I have observed, and readers of submissions have noted too, that at times there tend to be efforts at reinventing the wheel. If the scholarship is to mature, it will have to do so by using as a point of departure what has preceded, whether to engage in an elaboration and evolution, or to challenge and contend. In other words, it is what back in graduate school we described as a "literature review."

To that end I am providing a list of scholarly and critical works on literary journalism that I have accumulated over the course of more than twenty years of research on the subject (I've been studying the subject since 1989). The result is a list pushing 300, surely enough for a graduate reading list and perhaps even comprehensive exams on the subject (I hear some groans of sorrow and gnashing of teeth at the mention of this last). I have no illusion that the bibliography is complete or thorough. But while it may be incomplete, I see the matter as urgent if knowledge of the scholarship is to grow. And grow I have no doubt it will. Because to this end, Miles and Roberta Maguire of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh have kindly agreed to take on the role of associate editors for this all-too-important bibliographical exercise. Readers of the journal will know their names well. Both are established scholars who, moreover, have contributed to the journal. Indeed, in this issue Miles has made another contribution. I'm excited about the participation of the Professors Maguire (doesn't that sound like the title to one of those delightful, light, domestic comedies from the 1940s—"The Professors Maguire"—perhaps starring Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn?) because both have very strong credentials in two separate but nonetheless compatible areas, literature and journalism. It will be for them to decide how to construct the bibliography as it grows. They may decide, for example, to organize bibliographical materials by author, pedagogy, history, and theory. Or they may come up with other models, models that of necessity will likely evolve and change. And, just as I send out submissions to readers, they will consult with other scholars on the suitability of works for the bibliography. Or they may wish to establish a committee. It's their call.

I would also add that my bibliographical work very much builds on the work of others, and they deserve due credit. I say this, because as I was scratching my head trying to remember if I had left out anything of all-too-obvious importance, I went back to some of my old sources and was delighted to rediscover earlier efforts in bibliographical development. In particular, there is Thomas B. Connery's Selected Bibliography in his groundbreaking 1992 *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Readers will find the *Sourcebook* referenced in the bibliography here. For me it was like returning to find an old friend, and I realized where many of my own early bibliographical discoveries originated. I have not included all of his in the list published here in the interests of time and resources, so scholars should bear in mind that this is still one more promising bibliography to

which one can turn (among other strengths, it has references to some of the very early critical responses to the New Journalism of the 1960s and early 1970s). Undoubtedly a time will come when they will be added. Then there are still others, such as Norman Sims's bibliographies in his *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism*. There are rich pickings here. And John Bak and Bill Reynolds's newly published *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences* should offer a very rich trove of bibliographical resources with an international focus. All of which is a way of saying that bibliographies are communal efforts because scholars have an enthusiasm for sharing their research.

I make no comprehensive efforts here with this very initial list. But I observe the following: First, in a not very inspired move, I list the various works by the scholarly author, not by the name of the literary journalist. But this is appropriate, because it's an acknowledgment of the many years of hard work, often in obscurity, by these scholars to contribute to the development of the study of this field. They deserve the recognition. Second, I include either works focused directly on literary journalism and the other terms by which it is known or those works that I believe substantially explore literary journalism in a sustained manner. For example, among the latter I include Lars Ole Sauerberg's *Fact into Fiction: Documentary Realism in the Contemporary Novel* because in my view it does engage in a sustained and substantial discussion of the literary journalism of the authors he examines. On the other hand, I do not include Alfred Kazin's highly influential *On Native Grounds*, even though his is one of the few literary histories (ah!—the other “literary history”) to deal with the reportage literature movement of the 1930s. But I do not find his to be a sustained or substantial examination of the phenomenon. My sole purpose for the moment is to keep the focus on those works dealing directly with the genre or that contain sustained and substantial examinations.

Third, I divide the works by nationality. Perhaps not surprisingly the American for the moment is the most developed, reflecting undoubtedly the scholarly consequences of studying the New Journalism phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as my own bias because the American experience is what I was most familiar with in my research until I began in the earlier part of the last decade to explore the genre as an international phenomenon. But, as it turns out, dividing such material by nationality is not as easy as it sounds when we see, for example, British writers writing about the Spanish Civil War. In such instances I list the work under both the United Kingdom and Spain. The result is some redundancy, but that is inevitable in bibliographies.

Fourth, I avoid for now bibliographic commentary or annotation on the nature of each of the works, again given restraints of time and resources. There is one exception, however, and that deals with collections of critical articles by different scholars and critics. In some instances I've been able to provide the complete listing of articles, but in others, not. In any event, I identify such works as: “A collection of articles by different scholars and critics.” This should tip off the scholar to still other avenues of research. And there are many. Undoubtedly, those individual articles not listed now will eventually be added to the bibliography under the able guidance of Miles and Roberta Maguire. I would further note that scholarship from *Literary Journalism Studies* has also been included.

Again, the bibliography is based on more than twenty years of collection, and, I emphasize, recollection, given the frailties of memory. Readers are invited to submit their recommendations to Miles at maguirem@uwosh.edu, or Roberta at maguire@uwosh.edu.

uwosh.edu for consideration for inclusion in the bibliography. They will be gratefully acknowledged. The only guideline we provide at the moment is that such works deal directly with the subject, or substantially so. In terms of bibliographical style, listings should be submitted according to the requirements of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Also, any errors in this initial list must be attributed to me, and for them I apologize. But we would be grateful if we could be informed so that corrections can be made. This is, like all bibliographies, a work in progress.

Finally, an international category is included for those works that intentionally reach across more than two international boundaries. Although such works make for a slender list, nonetheless it is important for encouraging the comparative study of the genre, which is one of the goals of the IALJS.

Undoubtedly, the bibliography will grow organically, and so new needs will arise. And perhaps we will see the addition of ancillary works that deal more tangentially on the subject, such as Kazin's work, and, for that matter, Larzar Ziff's nod to the form in his equally influential *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation*, or Alexander Grigorevich Tseitlin's *Stanovlenie Realizma v Russkoi Literature: Ruskii Fizjologicheski Oчерk* (translated as "The formation of realism in Russian literature: The Russian physiological sketch"), and Martina Lauster's *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century: European Journalism and its Physiologies, 1830-50*. They all have some bearing, whether noting the genre in passing or exploring antecedents and similar forms (such as the nineteenth century "physiology," which can be either fictional or nonfictional, which is why I have not included Tseitlin or Lauster in this list). For now, in taking this preliminary step, we need in my view to clearly identify those works that, at the least, engage in a sustained examination of literary journalism.

Also, I make no judgments here about the quality of scholarship. That of course is the responsibility of the scholar, to assess the value of the work. One can all too easily see that some older works have become quaintly outdated (but in doing so they reflect the critical and cultural perspective of their eras), while others are as relevant today as they were when first published. In the end, scholars must make their own evaluations in this regard, and be responsible for them.

In the future, we will post the bibliography on the journal's website (www.literaryjournalismstudies.org) so that it can assist scholars as they seek resources when they consider submitting articles. It will also be a way of saying, gently, have you conducted an adequate research review?

Again, in providing such a list I have no illusion that it is anywhere near complete, if in fact it can ever be complete. I am reminded of what Alberto Manguel said of libraries: "Every library is a library of preferences; and every chosen category implies an exclusion." The same can be said of bibliographies, because, after all, they too are libraries.

The selected bibliography begins on page 123.

— *John C. Hartsock*

Writing
Literary History . . .

*The Promised Land,
and The Big Test*

an interview with author . . .

Nicholas Lemann

ILLINOIS 1941
922 022

Literary Journalism Studies
Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2011

Writing Literary History . . .



Nicholas Lemann

In a wide-ranging interview, Nicholas Lemann, Idean and Henry R. Luce professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City, talks with Norman Sims about the many influences on and challenges posed by his literary histories, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1991), and *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (1999). But in this instance, literary history does not refer to histories of literary movements, or authors. Instead, the discussion harks back to an earlier tradition when the writing of history was considered a literary endeavor, as reflected, for example, in Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, or Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The tradition is alive and well today practiced mostly by journalists who seek the story or narrative in the history.

*Norman Sims is regarded as one of the senior scholars in the field of literary journalism studies. Sims is currently professor of journalism at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the editor of two anthologies, his landmark *The Literary Journalists* (Ballantine, 1984) and *Literary Journalism* (Ballantine, 1995, edited with Mark Kramer); editor of a groundbreaking collection of scholarly articles by several authors, *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century* (Northwestern University Press, 2008); and author of a history, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Northwestern University Press, 2007).*



An interview with Nicholas Lemann

by Norman Sims
University of Massachusetts Amherst, U.S.A.

The distinguished literary journalist Nicholas Lemann grew up in New Orleans. He studied American history and literature and was president of the *Harvard Crimson* newspaper. He graduated from Harvard University in 1976. He has worked as managing editor of the *Washington Monthly*, executive editor of *Texas Monthly*, staff reporter at the *Washington Post*, and national correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly*. He has been a staff writer for the *New Yorker* since 1999. Many of his articles in *Texas Monthly*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *New Yorker* are considered literary journalism.

In addition to *The Promised Land* and *The Big Test*, Lemann is the author of *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (2006), and *Out of the Forties* (1983), which can also be labeled literary histories.

As a teenager, he read *The New Yorker*, but he was more engaged by reading Willie Morris's *Harper's*, the early *Rolling Stone*, and *New York Magazine*, and Harold Hayes's *Esquire*. "What entranced me about New Journalism was that you could produce in journalism work that had the advantages of literature, including a voice that wasn't the neutral voice of newspaper journalism, the ability to get into the complexities of character and society, an ability to make narrative moves in journalism—to have a beginning, middle, and an end. That was what it promised to me. You could do more as a journalist and get closer to what literature could do," he told me in a 2004 interview.

The Promised Land begins at a moment that would amplify the twentieth century Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North: the invention in 1944 of the mechanical cotton picker. The device effectively ended the sharecropper system that kept black farmers in a feudal arrangement. Many migrated north by routes such as the Illinois Central Railroad out of Louisiana and Mississippi and arrived in northern urban centers such as Chicago. The migration peaked in the fifties and then declined after five or six million people had made the move. Lemann follows his central characters from the Delta town of Clarksdale, Mississippi, to Chicago. Into the story of their families and lives, Lemann blends an analytical narrative of the poverty and race legislation enacted by the administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, among others, and its impact on such notorious Chicago ghetto projects as the Robert Taylor Homes and the Cabrini-Green complex.

At the end of the story, some of the migrants return to Clarksdale, which had been transformed in the intervening years.

Our most recent interview was conducted January 12, 2011, in the dean's office at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.

Note: Ellipses (. . .) indicate a pause in speech, not omitted words.

• • •

Norman Sims: *I've been writing about literary journalists who do history, and their personal connections to their subjects. You're one of those writers.*

Nicholas Lemann: If I could just digress a little bit on that. There are obviously a lot of journalists who do this superbly well. There's a short-form training one could do—we do this somewhat here—for journalists who want to write history. Most journalists have only a hazy sense of how to do a literature review, how to locate archival material, and how to actually enter and work in an archive. It's really basic stuff to any academic. Just to teach it at a superficial level is a big step forward for a lot of journalists who do this kind of work.

Sims: *And I think it's so time-consuming that it puts them off when they do go to those archives and discover all the material.*

Lemann: Well, yes... I love doing it and a lot of journalists who do this kind of work like working in archives. And then there's some who just don't know how to get there. Some of this work is embarrassing because they're unaware of stuff that's obvious to any historian who works in the field. Anyhow, that's my little pitch about it.

GROWING UP IN NEW ORLEANS

Sims: *Some of my questions deal with that. I want to ask you about your personal connections to the Great Migration. You grew up in New Orleans then you moved north to Harvard. When you think about your life, growing up, how did you perceive of blacks in New Orleans? How did you perceive of race relations? Was there a transformative moment?*

Lemann: Well, I wouldn't say there was a transformative moment. I really didn't know anything specifically about the Great Migration. In fact, I don't think I'd ever heard of it growing up.

Sims: *Right. I grew up in central Illinois in the fifties and sixties. The Illinois Central Railroad ran right through my town and I knew nothing about the migration.*

Lemann: I was born about three or four months after the Brown decision came down [*Brown v. Board of Education*]. August 1954. I think the decision came

down in May 1954. Even before that, everything in New Orleans—today, and certainly when I was growing up—was about race relations. That was the defining issue in the South. Some would say in the nation. Certainly in New Orleans when I was growing up. You couldn't not be supremely aware of race as an issue. There wasn't a moment when suddenly I realized it was an issue because it was everywhere, all the time, everything.

Sims: *So it was like knowing the weather was hot.*

Lemann: Yes. Add to that my timing in life. I grew up in a time of some change in race relations. There was this issue and it was in play the whole time I was growing up.

But I want to say, New Orleans in particular has somewhat complicated race relations. There wasn't the same level of hyper-segregation at that time. White and black people, in very ritualized and caste-driven ways, had a great deal of contact, even intimate contact. They lived in very separate worlds with a lot of rules. As a white person, the black world was kind of a mystery. You really didn't know what was going on inside of it. People had all these fantastic suppositions about it but they didn't really know and the many black people we were in touch with every day weren't going to tell us because the interaction was so ritualized. So it was hovering in the background of everything.

Sims: *In 1970, I met a guy who taught at Tulane University. He said that New Orleans was more tropical in its race relations than it was Southern. The surrounding areas of Louisiana and Mississippi had oppressive Southern racial relationships, but New Orleans was more like what you'd find in the Caribbean.*

Lemann: I don't really buy that. There's a new John Guare play, *A Free Man of Color*, that deals with that idea. But I think, after many years of thinking about it, that it's a fantasy that white people have in New Orleans. The city is closer in a number of ways to Caribbean culture than [North] American culture, but that's different from saying race relations are Caribbean. Because that implies, for example, that you don't have the "one drop" rule, that you have a series of racial categories and distinct means of treatment. That was not true in the New Orleans I grew up in. Yes, there was a light-skinned black elite but for legal purposes they were black.

In fact, one of the first stories I ever did as a journalist at the alt[ernative] weekly, now departed, where I started working—this was probably in '73 when I did this story. There was somebody working in city hall as the race classifier. It was a lady who had an office. She would reclassify people racially, usually from white to black, if she could discover that they were one thirty-second Negro. It was the "one drop" rule. There was a little group of lawyers

who would represent people in her office. It was usually in connection with divorce cases where one spouse would leave the other and the other would be pissed off. So they would go to this office and say, “I want my ex reclassified as Negro” because if you look in the records you’ll find whatever. So that’s not very Caribbean.

Even the Caribbean is not that free and easy, either. There’s some way in which New Orleans lives between the culture of North America, the culture of the South, and the culture of the Caribbean. OK. But the color line was the color line.

Sims: *What about in your personal situation with your family? What were the attitudes floating through your family?*

Lemann: Well, very, very, very complicated. Because it’s an all-pervasive issue, it’s complicated. It’s complicated on the black side and it’s complicated on the white side. So I’m speaking in shorthand.

My family owned and still owns a plantation in Louisiana. It still operates a plantation outside of a town called Donaldsonville [near the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans]. I would say my dad’s attitude, if I had to characterize it in a thumbnail way, would be straight out of Eugene Genovese—paternalism with all the good and bad. You never would hear him saying something “racist.” But there was paternalism. It was fond, but clearly every reference to race was infused with the idea that there was an ordering. There was supposed to be a benign, feudal relationship. That was him.

My mother was from New Jersey. She was more of a standard-issue Northern liberal. How did this manifest itself? When they first moved to New Orleans, my mother decided that they were going to live in an integrated neighborhood and create an alternate culture to New Orleans. The problem with that is New Orleans has a lot of neighborhoods that look to a Northerner like integrated neighborhoods, but they’re really not because the black sections descended from slave quarters. There will be a big house for a white person and a little house for a black person right next to it. So my parents bought a big corner lot with an old, sort of white-elephant house on it on a corner in what read to my mother as an integrated neighborhood. It was on the borderline between a white neighborhood and a black neighborhood in the patchwork pattern of New Orleans. They tore down the house and divided it into four lots. They sold the other three lots, by design, to professors at Tulane because they wanted us to grow up surrounded by academics. All the families put up mid-century modern houses. We lived in this little

compound of four houses, us, three academics around us—all of them were deans, I would note, if you're wondering why I'm doing what I'm doing now—and we were in a supposedly integrated neighborhood, which wasn't really integrated. There was some sort of glancing contact. There was a black church on the corner.

The other thing my mother did was insist... In the deep South then, everybody who was white had black servants. Even postal carriers had black servants. My mother had the idea that she would hire as household help students who were from Xavier and Dillard, the historically black universities in New Orleans. She wanted me to be exposed to educated black people who were like us. We always had a few people like that floating through the house. Many of them, as I remember, were involved peripherally in aspects of the Civil Rights movement. Several of them worked in the community action program and other war-on-poverty programs. That was a window into that world.

Sims: *Did you go to high school in New Orleans?*

Lemann: I should say my high school, which was a progressive private school, by charter was segregated. They changed the charter when I was in maybe eleventh grade to take out that it was for whites only. But that was pretty late in the game.

Sims: *There were probably no blacks there by the time you graduated.*

Lemann: They took a couple of black students in elementary school. But in my class, everybody was white.

Sims: *So you came to Harvard, which must have been a very different atmosphere. When did you enter Harvard?*

Lemann: Fall of 1972.

Sims: *OK, was it all that different?*

Lemann: The first thing I would say is the Harvard admissions officer who had New Orleans in his portfolio was black. A man named David Evans, who I'm still in touch with, and he's still an admissions officer at Harvard. My parents were Harvard graduates who met at Harvard. David Evans to my memory and knowledge was the first African American to sit at our dinner table. The other thing I remember is when the party was held in the summer of '72 for the people from New Orleans who had been admitted to Harvard, it was roughly speaking two whites and eight blacks. Interaction with Harvard, even from a distance, was a way of integrating my world.

Sims: *Was Harvard trying to increase its black population back then?*

Lemann: Oh, yes. There's a book by a sociologist or political scientist named Robert Klitgaard called *Choosing Elites* [New York: Basic Books, 1985] about Harvard admissions during that period. The trend line is that all these schools, Harvard and Yale at least, had a big spike in the late sixties and early seventies. My class was probably more black than five years after me because they retreated somewhat from that. I got there in the middle of a big push to increase the percent of black students. Harvard had a bigger black population by far than my high school, which was zero. It had a noticeable black population. It had a black studies department. As has been noted by many, the black and white students were ultimately somewhat separate. But nonetheless, it was by far the most integrated atmosphere I'd ever seen.

Sims: *How did you react to that personally?*

Lemann: I don't remember reacting in any sort of big dramatic way. I was always intensely interested in race relations. I don't remember becoming more interested when I got to Harvard. Although I do remember thinking, "Well, oh, this is an issue here, too." The time I was in college was the birth moment of neoconservatism. There were certain people that I knew at Harvard who were operating off this narrative of: "We used to live in an Edenic world with integration and Dr. King's dream and now it's been ruined by affirmative action and black studies." That just didn't map out to my experience at all. I had friends who were disillusioned by what was going on racially, but that wasn't where I was.

Sims: *Were you aware of the racial conflict in places like Cambridge?*

Lemann: Oh, yes. I mean I was the editor of the *Harvard Crimson*. We covered all that stuff constantly. Racial issues were a staple of the *Crimson's* coverage, both at Harvard and in covering Boston and Cambridge. It was during busing. It was everywhere.

Sims: *Let's come back to this because I've got several other questions. So, you've written about [post-Civil War] Reconstruction, the SAT test or intelligence testing, the Great Migration, and you did the book *Out of the Forties from the Standard Oil photographs*. I'm trying to conceive of a narrative arc in your life that includes all of these books.*

Lemann: Oh, they all have to do with my life. *Out of the Forties* a little less so, but the big three last books all map onto my life very directly. They're all substantially about race. *Redemption* I think of as a prequel to *The Promised Land* essentially. It grew out of something that I came across in the research for *The Promised Land* that I mentioned very briefly in passing. It's essentially an answer to the question: "Why did there have to be a Civil Rights move-

ment at all, when all the rights that the Civil Rights movement fought for existed in 1870?” Certainly for whites in the South, Reconstruction is always hovering in the background of everything, even now, and certainly when I was growing up.

Sims: *What about going to Harvard? Did you get into Harvard because of test scores or because of family background?*

Lemann: I would say three things. One never knows.

Sims: *It probably didn't hurt that your parents had gone there.*

Lemann: Oh, no, it certainly didn't. I had three things going for me. One, I was a plausibly good applicant. Two, my parents—well, thirty or forty of my relatives have Harvard degrees. A lot of my relatives have Harvard degrees. My parents met in a Harvard classroom. So I'm sure that had a lot to do with it. And then finally, being from Louisiana I was a sort of diversity candidate.

Sims: *Did you also have good scores on the SAT or ACT test?*

Lemann: Yes.

Sims: *So you're more in Bill Bradley's world than in George Bush's?*

Lemann: Yes. On the meritocracy, first of all that book [*The Big Test*] is very substantially about race, about the conflict between test scores supposedly creating a paradise of equal opportunity, and race butting up against each other.

Sims: *I thought one of the most interesting sections of the book was about the creation of the Asian American.*

Lemann: But where that book comes from is like the African American world. It comes from curiosity as much as experience. I've never written about the world I grew up in, per se. It's kind of the Edmund Wilson “The Wound and the Bow” theory [in which writers find indirect, thematic means of using their childhood experiences, rather than being straightforwardly autobiographical]. It's interesting because I grew up in an atmosphere that was very intellectual and bookish but I didn't know any writers. However, if you cut to now, it's a family of writers. I'm an author, my sister's an author, my wife's an author, my ex-wife's an author, my stepmother is an author, my quasi-cousin or younger-brother Michael Lewis is an author, etc. In a stereotyped way, the female writers tend to write more personal stuff and the male writers tend to extrapolate from our lives and pick another subject to write about.

Meritocracy was a big issue in the culture of my family. And it was certainly a huge issue in the culture of Harvard when I went there. It was just always around in the world I was in.

In addition, significantly, I wasn't all the way in it. That gives me some perspective. Because I grew up in a sort of feudal society in New Orleans, I think I could see it more clearly as an alternate system than people who inhabited the meritocracy entirely.

Sims: *You were on the cusp of that because your parents and everyone had gone to Harvard and done well—you could see the value in that kind of admissions. I guess you were describing Yale in *The Big Test* and the way the younger George Bush benefited from family connections. You also mentioned that was how FDR went to college. It's not an utterly failed system. It's a system that produced a lot of good brains.*

Lemann: My frustration with that book is it's really not a book about college admissions and SATs and who gets into college. It uses that as the occasion to talk about something bigger. But when you write about that subject, it's very hard to get the world to see what it's really about.

Having said that, the construct that all these Ivy League schools used to be entirely populated by incompetent frat boy types, and that they are now utterly populated by people who deserve to be there, is way too simple. As you just said, in the old, supposedly unmeritocratic days, they were drawing from a very narrow catchment area but, (a) they were fantastically competitive internally, and, (b) they produced everybody from FDR to T. S. Eliot. It wasn't as if every single graduate was some guy swilling cocktails at the country club in a John O'Hara novel. There's a tremendous level of self-congratulation and unself-awareness inside today's meritocratic culture.

Sims: *So this arc that I imagine is one where there are connections to the books that you've done. I was imagining a general topical connection to something such as social history. I sense a quest in these books where you're getting a piece of various things but there may be a quest for a larger subject. Is there a quest? Is it social history? Or, now that you've mentioned the stereotypical "women go for more personal things" while men deflect onto other things, is there a quest perhaps to write about the world you grew up in?*

Lemann: It's complicated. I don't think of it as a quest to write about the world I grew up in. I have regular discussions with a lot of people, including my wife, about whether I should write explicitly about the world I grew up in. It's interesting, Michael Lewis, who is certainly a prolific writer, much more than me, has several times sat down and tried to write about New Orleans, and not done it. It's hard. Our reasons are somewhat different. He has on a couple of occasions moved back to New Orleans to write about New Orleans but decided not to.

Sims: *Is it possible to write about New Orleans if you're not black?*

Lemann: Oh, yes, sure. Of course. Yes! That would be like saying, "Is it possible to write about New York if you're not white?" It's a city populated by different groups.

My reasons for not wanting to write about it are somewhat off that map. If I were writing something memoiristic, I wouldn't say, "Here is my memoir of growing up in black New Orleans." There's a big shelf of books about New Orleans by white writers that are very good. It would be hard to write a great book about New Orleans that pretends that race doesn't exist. But I can't imagine how you'd do that. The idea that you have to be black to write about New Orleans, I would reject.

New Orleans is what, about 42 percent white? The idea that in any location if you belong to the 42 percent part of the population, you "can't write about it" is untrue on its face.

Sims: *I was just thinking that after Hurricane Katrina and the focus primarily on what happens to the black community and the underclass in New Orleans, that's where all the beat is.*

Lemann: The conversation about me is a different conversation. A nutshell version: Where I really come from is 1 percent of New Orleans: Jewish. If I were to write about my own experience, and this is what the constant conversations are about with my wife, it would be about Jewish New Orleans. Which I might do sometime, but the truth is if I did so, it would make my Dad unbelievably uncomfortable. I don't want to inflict that on him.

Sims: *There have been some books about being Jewish in the South.*

Lemann: And I think I've read them all.

Sims: *It seems a very complicated, isolated . . .*

Lemann: Very complicated, but I wouldn't say so isolated. Anyway, that's different.

So what do I think of myself as doing? I don't think of myself as doing history or doing social history or whatever. I would like to think that if you had to categorize my books that they are a blend of social history and intellectual history with some element of conventional political history. It's more following my interests. Compared to most of my friends who are nonfiction writers, I tend to start with a theme and then find a story that expresses the theme. Most of my friends start with a story and weave the theme into the story.

START WITH A THEME AND THEN FIND A STORY

Sims: *I know you did that with the meritocracy. You were working on the meritocracy for a long time, and then the book comes out about the Big Test. You found the story but first you had the meritocracy. Did that work with The Promised Land?*

Lemann: *The Promised Land* had a long gestation period. It really started in 1980 when I was a reporter for the *Washington Post*. Ronald Reagan was running for president. There was a whole debate about welfare. Reagan himself had criticized welfare throughout his career. So I did a series for the *Post* on the welfare system through the lens of one welfare mother, a woman in Philadelphia named Mary Manley. I spent quite a good deal of time in Philadelphia—she lived in north Philadelphia. I wrote a series that came out during the campaign. It was meant to be: “How well does the system match the Reagan rhetoric about welfare?”

This gets into a lot of issues. I’ve been interested in developing curriculum here about framing. In framing the story the way I did, I was in a sense buying into a conservative or Washington or white perspective, or policy wonk perspective, in assuming that when you went to an inner-city ghetto neighborhood you were seeing the welfare system at work.

It’s funny. I found this consistently happened to me as a reporter for the *Washington Post*. It had a big effect on me and it’s part of why I left the *Washington Post*. I spent hours and hours and hours with Mary Manley, who was a migrant herself from Virginia, and I asked her all these questions about the welfare system. I went with her to the welfare office. But I always had a nagging sense that I was forcing her into a Procrustean bed because I was operating on this assumption that her life was about welfare. But it wasn’t about welfare. When I finished the story, which I was proud of and all that, I had the feeling I’d done the wrong story. I didn’t frame it as black migration, although that was in my mind. I had a very uncomfortable feeling for a reporter. She always wanted to think of her life as the life of a migrant. And I always wanted to make her think of herself as a welfare mother, which she was. It was an uncomfortable feeling of making her talk about what I wanted her to talk about instead of what she wanted to talk about.

I thought this is really an amazing story because if you go to a place like north Philadelphia, first it’s an all-white neighborhood. In five minutes [snaps his fingers], it becomes an all-black neighborhood. Then in five more minutes [snap], it becomes a depopulated, all poor-black neighborhood. From being an all-black but multi-class and very tightly populated neighborhood, the middle class folks all move out. At the same time, you have all these

people moving up from the South. There's a lot going on demographically and therefore politically. *That's* the story.

Then in '83 I went to work for the *Atlantic Monthly* and I immediately pitched my editor, Bill Whitworth, on this idea. At that time, the idea was: "Where did the ghetto come from?" How did this happen over this huge series of changes? This was at the height of the underclass debate, now long forgotten but it was a big thing when it was going on in the eighties and nineties. So I was going to write about the ghetto and the underclass and how it happened. Bill wanted me to pick a different site. He was the one who suggested Chicago. In retrospect, I consider that an inspired suggestion.

I started visiting Chicago all the time, just talking to people. I wrote a long piece in the *Atlantic* called "The Origins of the Underclass" [June 1986]. Out of that, I signed a book contract. But it was only after I had signed the book contract that I decided to frame it as a story of migration. That was in '86.

It got reframed from being a welfare story to being a ghetto underclass story to being a migration story. The work on the *Atlantic* stories was helpful, but essentially I started over again.

How Do You Combine Narrative and Analysis?

Sims: *Were you working fulltime on the book for those last four years or so?*

Lemann: My life was complicated. I was officially a fulltime employee of *The Atlantic* and I was writing pieces for *The Atlantic*, partly pieces of the book, particularly the middle Washington section.

Sims: *So you were able to write the middle section on Washington, which was more of a standard political history of the policy debate?*

Lemann: I want to push back a little on that, but I'll get to that in a minute.

The logistics in my life were I was living in New York in Pelham working at home. I had the advantage that no one was seeing what I was doing all day. Whitworth was very interested in the book. I was doing some stuff for the book and other stuff to feed the *Atlantic* beast. Though I was working on the book a lot, I was never able to say, "This is all I'm doing in life."

Sims: *What were you going to say about the Washington section?*

Lemann: To my mind it was more conceptually important than you're making it sound. Even though I had dropped the construct about making this about welfare and social policy, nonetheless welfare and social policy are always around this set of topics—race and poverty. When I read other journalists' work on this, either they'd say, "I'm just not going to talk about that

stuff at all. I'm just going to take you inside the lives of the characters and that's all we're up to." Or they would say, "We're going to have a narrative about the characters and then there's going to be either a foreword or an afterword where I discuss the policy issues in a completely different voice." An essayistic voice.

What was very important to me and continues to be—it's the great cause of my career—is in a craft sense, how do you combine narrative and analysis? And not have them separated. It was very important to me to find a way to deal with those themes without breaking out of the construct that this was a big, sweeping narrative history. I was very proud of myself for having found a way to do that. Yes, the scene shifts to Washington but it's very carefully linked back into Chicago and Mississippi. I want to give you the experience as you're reading that you're reading a book about people acting in history. Rather than, the story now stops and we're going to switch gears and talk about the implications of this in a completely different voice.

Now my editor, Elizabeth Sifton [at Knopf], as in *The Big Test*, sort of forced me at gunpoint to write an afterword, which I did. And I guess I'm glad I did. But it was really, really important to me to find... First of all, I think it was a good story that hadn't been told very much and it does fit into the other material. But also, it was very important to find a way to put it all under the roof of narrative rather than separating it.

Sims: *And I think you achieved that. You're telling the story of the people who were creating those policies.*

I'm just not that familiar with the history of those Washington policies, so I don't know the difference between what you were doing and what other people were doing. But when you got to the Chicago history, I thought that was brilliant. I grew up in Illinois and went to school in Chicago for a while. Some of the professors I had at the University of Illinois in Urbana were actually Chicago newspapermen. I had heard the stories. This is in the late 1960s. I'd heard those same stories from them. They had a kind of insider's knowledge. And then you come along and you tell exactly the same story. I thought, "This is insider political history in Chicago." My assumption was that unless you're part of the news culture or the political culture of the time, it was very difficult to see that history.

Lemann: I'm flattered that you would say that, but I'm a reporter, so you know, I just got the story. I thought the Washington material was more original than the Chicago material, in the sense that I had stuff that nobody else had. I had more access to the major participants. But anyway, I'm flattered to hear you say that.

CASTING THE BOOK

Sims: *So you're writing this as narrative. What are the biggest challenges in writing narrative about a social migration that involves millions of people?*

Lemann: Many challenges, obviously. Anybody who tries to do this is just taking a cut at something. There are a couple of issues.

One challenge is putting all the pieces together—making a book that starts in rural Mississippi in the 1940s and winds its way to Chicago and Washington and back to Chicago and so on without it seeming like a pastiche of unrelated material. It's not so visible, what a challenge it is.

Another challenge is finding people who make interesting characters, who go where you want them to go.

Another issue is, do you try to pick statistically typical characters or do you try to pick people who have had unusually interesting lives but are not statistically typical? That's a constant issue in journalism of this kind.

Sims: *How do you feel you handled that?*

Lemann: The main character, Ruby [Haynes, *née* Daniels], many have said that it's a fundamental flaw of the book to hold her up as a representative migrant because she's not. I would come back and say I didn't say she was the representative migrant. My own view is it's fine to pick an unrepresentative character as long as you get the context right and make it clear that you're not saying this is what the whole experience was like.

There was a long, long, long process of what I would call casting the book, figuring out who the characters would be.

Sims: *That issue of choosing characters to represent larger populations is of interest to me. It makes sense to pick representative characters but it also reduces their lives to something that is outside their understanding, and may be unfair. Ruby has a very interesting story and she ends up going back to Clarksdale, which is a nice thing. She turns out OK for this horrific experience. In fact, her children turn out less OK than she is, which follows the statistical pattern. She's close to representing the statistics but you never treat her as a representative. She's just Ruby. This is her life. You've got contrasts with people such as George Hicks. He has a similar background but he works for the post office and gets into the middle class. He has a different life. He doesn't move to the suburbs exactly but he does get outside the ghetto.*

Lemann: There's a little more complexity there because the black population of a place like Chicago increased so quickly that the term "native born" usually means children of migrants. If you were being a social scientist you'd have a more complex picture of it. Nonetheless, I take the point.

In a meaningful way, Ruby nominated herself as the main character. George didn't turn out to be as interesting a character as Ruby. For whatever reason, Ruby was more interesting to talk to for longer and was more cooperative. A lot of people were in and out of the book at different times who could have been characters. Ruby sort of popped out. A lot of the reason was just her. She was such a remarkable person for this kind of exercise, where you're not watching somebody live their life in real time. You're doing retrospect. She had an unbelievable memory. She could remember everything. She could remember every phone number she ever had in her life. Things like that that I can't remember. She'd had an unusually significant and interesting life. And she was unusually good for a person in her seventies with no formal education at just being able to sit down and tell it. Sort of like *All God's Dangers* or something—that book by Ted Rosengarten is like the world's longest oral history interview. It's about a guy who was an organizer of a black sharecroppers' union in the South in the thirties. Ruby just told the story, basically.

Sims: *And it's so complicated that to me it gives a flavor of what life in the ghetto and the underclass and the projects in Chicago was like. Lots and lots of relatives and some of them getting in trouble, lots of pregnancies, moving from one place to another. I thought, given all the complications of life here, when does anyone have time to think about anything other than the immediate?*

Lemann: On this issue, a couple things. First of all, there's a very similar issue with *The Big Test* because in effect the main character there is a woman named Molly Munger. In some ways, she's a lot like Ruby. She's a person who emerged from a casting process as the person who you couldn't avoid because she wanted to tell her story. The rap on her is the opposite of the rap on Ruby, which is she's the daughter of one of the richest people in the world. Several reviewers said, "How can you write a book about the meritocracy and make the main character this very wealthy person?" I guess I'd say, one, I never said she was representative, and two, at a subtler level, that's a lot of what the meritocracy is about. In effect, people from privileged backgrounds getting unbelievably invested in how they perform in this system. When you go to Harvard, you're not finding a lot of poor people. You find upper-middle-class people who think of themselves as self-made.

Just a quick story about Ruby. This is taking you through just a tiny bit of the unbelievable complications to get the characters right. In the first version in the *Atlantic*, I used a town called Canton, Mississippi. The way that happened was I was in Chicago. I landed at O'Hare, rented a car, and I was driving to my hotel and listening to a black radio station. They had a community announcement feature. They said, "The Canton, Mississippi, high school class

of 1955 is planning its thirtieth reunion. Please call this number.” I said, “Wait a minute. I’m in Chicago.” So I pulled over to the side of the highway and scribbled down the number and called. I got to know and spend a lot of time with a group of people who were in the Canton, Mississippi, class of 1955. I wrote about them in the piece, went back to Canton, etc.

Then I decided, first of all, if you’re going to do this book, you’ve got to write about the Delta, which Canton is not in. And, number two, I didn’t make up my mind in advance about who the characters would be, but I wanted somebody in the mix who had been more in the ghetto. Not just all middle-class people like George, which is essentially who I was meeting from Canton.

Then I started going to the Delta a lot, driving through it, deciding which town would be the source area for the migrants. I knew Chicago would be the destination. Looking for people in Chicago, looking for people in the Delta. I met a guy named Bennie Gooden, who just recently passed away. He’s mentioned in the book. He ran all the public housing in Clarksdale. He got to like the idea of the book, so he sent out the word to all the public housing in Clarksdale that I could go and talk to anybody I wanted to. Senior citizen housing was especially good. Almost everybody had some direct connection to Chicago. I did these long days where I’d go to these housing developments and just interview twenty people in a day who would come through an office or a manager would send me to their apartments. These interviews were a little cut and dried. I’d say, “Where were you then?” And then I’d do follow up in Chicago.

I met Ruby in one of those long days. We had a sort of OK interview. I then met Connie Daniels, her former daughter-in-law, in Chicago at the Robert Taylor Homes. I had a really good interview with her. I had some follow-up questions and I called Ruby to ask her a few questions on the phone.

She said to me, “You know, you’re really stupid. When you talk to me, you ask me stupid questions. You ask me all the wrong things. If you really want to know about me, you should come back down here and listen to me tell you about what I think is important in my life.” I said, “OK, that sounds good.” I basically got on the next plane, went to Clarksdale to her apartment, and I didn’t ask questions. I just said, “OK, tell me.” She talked for two or three days. That was the spine of that material in the book. That’s why I say she was self-nominated as the central character.

Sims: *When she said you were asking the wrong questions, the lights must have gone on.*

Lemann: Exactly. It’s all variations on the theme of history as an outsider versus history as an insider.

Sims: *And also getting rid of the problem you had at the Washington Post of putting the story on top of the material.*

Lemann: Yeah, framing, me framing it. The migration frame works better in many ways than the social policy frame.

THE WAY LITERARY JOURNALISTS DO HISTORY

Sims: *I copied one paragraph from your note on sources, the afterword, the last paragraph in the book actually. You said, "Most of the material in this book comes from my own interviews. Perhaps I'm displaying a reporter's bias here, but it seemed to me that as rich in information about the black migration and its consequences as the archives and published sources were, the memories of the people involved were even richer." [The Promised Land, p. 362]*

I wrote that out because I see a difference in the way literary journalists do history from the way academic historians tend to do history. Michael Norman expressed it to me. He said historians don't necessarily trust live bodies. They prefer archival records. They consider the live bodies to be terribly messy and horrible to deal with. He said for reporters, the first place we go is to the live bodies because that's where the stories are. That paragraph you wrote seemed to be saying the same thing.

Lemann: What Michael says is true. You know, Columbia is the home of oral history. There are some historians who do interviewing. But most historians that I know mistrust interviews. I think it's important for journalists to be introduced to that mistrust because journalists tend to over trust interviews and not exhibit any skepticism about it. I love to find a blend of archives and interviews.

Part of what was on my mind when I wrote *The Promised Land* was, at least at that moment, almost all of the academic work on the migration focused on the World War I period and not the World War II and after period that was much bigger. If you're interested in this issue and you're sitting in Chicago in the eighties, these people are there. I was amazed that historians were not going out and talking to them. They preferred to deal with archival material pertaining to people from the first phase of the migration who were dead. There wasn't a lot of work being done on the second, and largest, phase of the migration. Partly because most historians were so uncomfortable going out and doing interviews.

Now Bill Wilson [William Julius Wilson, a sociologist at the University of Chicago from 1972–1996 and now a University Professor at Harvard] had a lot of his crew of young sociologists out doing interviews but it wasn't about migration so much. It was more about social policy and economics.

Sims: *The word narrative covers a lot of ground. How would you describe a difference in sensibility that you bring to this work from the kind of sensibility that might be brought by a historian?*

Lemann: You mean an academic historian?

Sims: *Yes, an academic.*

Lemann: First of all, many academic historians have little interest or no interest in narrative as a form of professional practice. Read Hayden White: there are a lot of historians who are interested in narrative as a perilous thing whose perils one should expose as a historian. Actually writing narrative history in the upper echelons of the historical profession is coming back a little bit. But what gets you tenure at a major university history department, that's just not it. The career arc is that what gets you professional status as a historian is not political history, military history, biography, all the staples of the journalist-historian.

Most professional historians do not set themselves up as constructing book-length stories, and some historians would even see that as a thing to affirmatively avoid. They're very different worlds, academe and journalism.

Almost all journalists are looking for a story to tell when they do this kind of historical work.

Sims: *I've been reading a couple of books about the writing of history. Someone said writers of journalism who do history—and he mentioned Ida Tarbell—write well but they don't have the training of the academic historians, who tend to look down on them. The public has the opposite view. The public isn't generally interested in history at all, but when it is, the public wants it well written. I think that's true, and a lot of historians do appreciate narrative, and especially if they're in the public history movement and trying to connect. But when I was doing my masters, quantitative historians were coming in and they absolutely distrusted the narrative.*

Lemann: I want to push back on a couple points about this. First of all, the public historian types, at least the ones I know, their interests are quite different from those of most history-writing journalists. The big fat middle of the journalistic history experience is presidential biography, military history, and that kind of thing. The public historians have zero interest in that. They think of history writing as a kind of partnership between historians and ordinary people. They are coming out of social history. If you look at the bestseller lists, you don't see a lot of social history on there. Somebody I admire a great deal, Ron Chernow [author of *Alexander Hamilton*, *The House of Morgan*, and *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.*], would have absolutely nothing in

common with a public historian. [Public historians] like Julie Ellison [author of *Emerson's Romantic Style*, *Delicate Subjects: Romanticism, Gender and the Ethics of Understanding*; and *Cato's Tears*] or David Scobey [director of the Harvard Center for Community Partnerships], or any of these folks. Or my teacher, Roy Rosenzweig, who's now gone [author of *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* with Elizabeth Blackmar, and *The Presence of the Past* with David Thelen]. There's just zero overlap in interests because the public historians are onto a different project.

I also think that—I'll repeat what I said before—many journalists who write history would benefit from a little dose of understanding the academic critique of them, as being something other than pure jealousy or lack of interest in writing. In particular, most journalists who do this kind of presidential biography or military history, they are so into the “great man” theory of history that they don't even know there is one and there's been an argument about it for two hundred years. It is assumed that there are these towering figures and history moves because they move it. They tend to be not very good at context.

Academic historians are maybe too much the other way. Several of my friends who are professional historians or academic historians have said that George W. Bush convinced them that there is something to the great man theory of history, even if they don't think he is a great man. The Tolstoyan bias of academic historians [in *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy laid out a theory of history in which the main actors are merely unknowing objects of larger forces] is interesting to think about, and most journalists don't think about it enough.

The ability to exist in a community of peers, to know how to find the literature and react to it, the ability to work with original archival materials, all of those things are very valuable additions to the journalistic toolkit. Too many journalists who write history just say, “I don't care about any of that stuff.” There's something that can be gained in the interaction between the two sides.

Sims: *I've read your book twice now, and I was impressed both times with the amount of research that went into it. You said you had four research assistants working on the book. They must have been piling up an incredible amount of information, which you were then synthesizing into the narrative. It had a very close feel to it. I could sense Lyndon Johnson's situation and emotional state after Kennedy was killed and how he was going to move on his agenda. Johnson strikes me as an enormously interesting character—someone I hated in the 1960s because he was conducting a war, but I didn't have an appreciation of the social changes that were happening as a direct result of the passage of a few pieces of legislation. It's a tremendous story. It was all nicely told in a personal way.*

Is there a secret to converting that pile of information into a narrative?

Lemann: First of all, with respect to the researchers and what they were doing: They were all part time. There wasn't an army of researchers. They were working in sequence. I would have them compile secondary source background on various subtopics. All of the primary source material I did by myself—that is, every interview and all the archival work I did by myself. They were doing mini-literature reviews on topics.

Research and writing are very closely connected. I research thinking about what I want the finished written product to look like, and how each piece of research would fit into it. I look for things that support what I'm trying to do. There's a dynamic interaction where I find a piece of research that would change either the concept or the form of the finished product, and then I adjust. I don't just go get a mountain of material and then sit down and say, "Now let's start thinking about what the story looks like." You have to do that while you're working.

Sims: *The mountain would be way too big.*

Lemann: Yes, and you'd find that a lot of the material you had gathered couldn't be used in the book. As you can tell from this whole conversation, there were a lot of false starts. A lot of stuff ended up on the cutting room floor. You can't go do a bunch of interviewing and assume it will all fit together into a seamless book.

THE DISCOURSE IN NEW YORK

Sims: *I wanted to ask in general if you had any literary models in mind when you were doing this? I know of several books about New York City and the underclass, some after 1991, by Ken Auletta, Susan Sheehan, and Adrian Nicole LeBlanc. Also, has there been any progress that you've seen in New York City on race relations in the last twenty years or so? Are the same patterns playing out here that played out in Chicago?*

Lemann: Speaking anecdotally, not as someone who covers it, New York City is a race relations paradise compared to the Chicago I was writing about in this book. I tend to be an optimistic person. The discourse in New York is very minimally about race today. I'm not saying it's not an issue, but when the discourse is minimally about race that's really, really different from when [David] Dinkins [1990-1993] was mayor and when [Rudolph] Giuliani [1994-2001] was mayor and when [Ed] Koch [1978-1989] was mayor. The composition of the city is unbelievably multi-cultural with a remarkably low tension level. Crime is way down. In Harlem at least, there's almost no block in all of Harlem that is anywhere in the range of the west side of Chicago when I was doing this book. There's almost no abandoned housing. There's almost no place where you feel like you wouldn't walk there by yourself. It's really different.

Sims: *Has the middle class stayed in New York City in a way it didn't in Chicago?*

Lemann: You know, Chicago has changed remarkably since I wrote the book. There's no more Robert Taylor Homes; there's no more Cabrini-Green. A lot of things have changed. I haven't worked here in New York as a reporter on race very much. I'm just giving you more of a resident's impressions. The gentrification story is much more powerful here. Harlem never entirely lost the middle class. Clearly the middle class, in fact the upper class, is back in Harlem, big time. If you look at the real estate ads, there are tons of million-dollar properties for sale in Harlem. If you go to Fort Greene in Brooklyn or even Bedford-Stuyvesant—really, if you have any picture that Bedford-Stuyvesant is a ghetto, you should go there. It's unbelievable how different it is.

Sims: *So is this a reversal of what it's said was happening in the sixties, where blacks were expanding their territory and driving the whites out, or real estate agents were, and now it's wealth coming back in and driving poor people out?*

Lemann: New York is somewhat atypical. That's one reason why I didn't write the book about New York. In New York, think about Bed-Stuy; I'm just going to use that as an example. Robert Kennedy highlighted it. It was the most famous ghetto neighborhood in New York. It would have followed the pattern up to a point, of being white, flipping, becoming black multi-class, then the middle class left for Queens and points beyond, and it was a poor black neighborhood. But now, the first complication is immigration. It's not all black, and it's certainly not all African-American black. It would be a lot of West Indians and Africans and so on. And then a lot of other ethnic groups, and then Buppies [Black Urban Professionals], and then Yuppies. They're all jostling and there's some gentrification. But you don't see a lot of abandoned housing in Bed-Stuy.

Sims: *So, back to the literary influences. Did you have any literary influences?*

Lemann: I guess if I had to mention a few things. . . . with Ken's [Auletta] book on the underclass [*The Underclass* (New York: The Overlook Press, 1982); revised and updated, 1998], I liked it but I found it frustrating in two ways. One is he's encountering the people in a social service environment. It's set in some sort of social service delivery place. So the characters are at a remove. They're clients. You don't get a feeling of their homes and their lives, and as independent people. And the second is the one I mentioned, the policy stuff is kept for an afterword. Tony Lukas's book, *Common Ground* [New York: Knopf, 1985; Vintage, 1986], was much on my mind. I was reading that. It came out right as I was working on this material. I'm a 98 percent

admirer of the book. The 2 percent that I didn't admire was I thought that he had the narrative camera in so tight that there was very little way for him to discuss the larger issues. He tried to do it through the idea of salting in five profiles of people, which are very well written, but I wanted to find a way to say more analytically than he was able to in that book.

Beyond that, I grew up reading all the great New Journalism stuff, voraciously. I read all the standard Chicago literature. There were a lot of things I came across. A book I totally loved, number one on the list of things I didn't know about, was *Black Metropolis* by Sinclair Drake and Horace Cayton [New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1945]. That's just a great book from the forties. It's a huge book about everything about black Chicago.

Sims: *What else should I know about The Promised Land?*

Lemann: Boy, I feel like I've covered the waterfront pretty well.

Methodologically, if you will, the question I spend my whole writing life struggling with is, "Can you successfully start with a theme and turn it into a narrative without sounding too schematic? Can it be made to live and breathe as a story? Within the story, can you use the narrative form in ways that let you be analytical?" I hope the answer is yes. But those are the kinds of things I worry about.

Sims: *What's next? Do you have a new project?*

Lemann: My situation now is that I cannot do this kind of work while doing this job [as dean]. *Redemption* is shorter. It's totally from archives because it's set in a time when everybody's dead. And I had finished all the research for that before I started this job. It still was a little hard to get the writing done. I'm thinking, but it awaits my completing my tour of duty here. And then I hope to go back into the fray. I'm thinking about a couple things in a vague way. When I talk about books at this stage, it doesn't sound like a book even because, as I say, I start with a topic I'm interested in. Then I find the story inside of it.

Interview © 2011 Nicholas Lemann

ACROSS THE CONTINENT:

A SUMMER'S JOURNEY

TO THE

ROCKY MOUNTAINS, THE MORMONS,
AND THE PACIFIC STATES,

WITH SPEAKER COLFAX.



By SAMUEL' BOWLES,

EDITOR OF THE SPRINGFIELD (MASS.) REPUBLICAN.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS. :
SAMUEL BOWLES & COMPANY,
NEW YORK :
HURD & HOUGHTON.
1865.

Exploring an Early Version of Literary Journalism: Nineteenth-century Epistolary Journalism

Katrina J. Quinn
Slippery Rock University, U.S.A.

Often overlooked by scholars, much of the epistolary journalism in nineteenth-century American newspapers can be considered a form of narrative literary journalism.

About to depart on a four-month journey across North America in 1865, just weeks after the end of the Civil War and four years before the completion of the transcontinental railroad, an eager traveler penned the following words:

[A]nd so, dear friends all, we sail out into this vast ocean of land. I shall think of you with every joy, and, possibly with selfish longing, with every pain. Do you think of me when the June roses open, with the dew of July mornings, with the fragrant cool of an August evening shower, when the katy-dids sing in September; and, God willing, I shall be with you again ere the maples redden in October.¹

A private letter to family or friends, it would seem. But no, instead it's a newspaper letter, written by *Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Republican* editor Samuel Bowles to his readers. This passage concluded the first of the thirty-two newspaper letters published in his paper during a remarkable trip across the continent in 1865. It doesn't sound much like a newspaper article—but, then, what is it?

Bowles was writing in what I call an epistolary journalism form—a form that assimilates traditions of journalistic writing and the discursive functionality of personal correspondence. The Bowles example reveals a text that corresponds significantly to contemporary scholars' expectations for literary

At left, facsimile title page of Samuel Bowles's Across the Continent. Reprinted by permission from personal copy of the author.

Literary Journalism Studies
Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2011

journalism. Points of comparison include content—comprising scene construction, character development, dialogue, and solid reporting; style—comprising literary forms and language; and authorship—characterized by the subjective and mobile vocal stance of the author.

This article suggests that many of the same qualities that mark nineteenth-century newspaper letters as epistolary texts such as Bowles's *Across the Continent* also places them within a tradition of early literary journalism. This is not to say that all epistolary journalism is necessarily literary journalism. But what the Bowles example demonstrates is that the form carries the potential for compellingly rich narrative structures, grounded in fact, and representing ideas or a philosophy that exist beyond the facts of a story—in this case, the idea of a new America in the wake of the Civil War—and that is a distinctly literary journalism. Thus, as an antecedent and influence on literary journalism in the twentieth century as we have come to know it, nineteenth-century epistolary journalism, as a literary form, and Bowles's representative *Across the Continent* letters, have fair claim to a place within the study of literary journalism. I will demonstrate that claim by first examining the epistolary tradition, and then examining how content, style, and the author's role connect epistolary journalism and literary journalism.

Epistolary journalism lies at the intersection of journalism and epistolary, assimilating traditions of journalistic writing as well as the discursive functionality of personal correspondence. The form negotiates the literary space between private letters and journalistic writing in a kinetic way, drawing and retaining structures from the private letter and yet modifying them to fit the journalistic milieu; accommodating content that typifies the personal letter but which the newspaper might otherwise neglect; and oscillating between the personal voice of the author and the voice of the journalist within an epistolary text that lays claim to both. The term epistolary journalism designates letters written by journalists to be published in the newspaper. Readers could expect that the letters would convey newsworthy material but in a personal way, providing the journalist's own experiences and opinions in addition to information we typically expect in newspaper articles. In the nineteenth century, epistolary journalism often appeared in the form of travel letters, reporting information from distant locations such as Europe or remote areas of the United States. Excluded from this study and not meant to be implied by epistolary journalism are letters to the editor and novels constructed as a series of letters, commonly called epistolary fictions, which are not composed with the same expectations for content, form, and function.

My concept of epistolary journalism is tied to works of epistolary criticism, which historically have focused on private letters and epistolary fic-

tions, and which seek to uncover formulaic structures and textual functionality implicit to the letter-writing and reading processes. *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America Before Telecommunications* is William Merrill Decker's outstanding work of critical letter theory in which he theorizes letter writing in its structural sense and also examines the rhetorical and historical contextualization of the epistolary act. Decker demonstrates that the letter genre is both broadly and variously defined. He considers relevant texts to be characterized by letter-writing conventions as well as authorial idiosyncrasies that lend a significant diversity to the genre—and yet, the activity of letter-writing itself is a clearly identifiable and self-conscious activity. In other words, an individual self-consciously composes a letter, although the structure, content, and style of the finished product may be widely divergent.² But existing approaches to epistolarity are just a starting point here, since Decker and others expressly exclude public letters such as epistolary journalism from consideration despite an acknowledgement that “[w]riting of this kind often grows out of, leads to, and overlaps with private correspondence.”³ It is in this overlap that we take up epistolary journalism.

Samuel Bowles provides a case study of the form because of his approach to journalism and his motivation for this series of letters in particular. As a proponent of a newly emerging factual journalism that would ultimately be called “objective” journalism, a journalism seeking to be independent of the biases and constraints of political affiliation, Bowles nonetheless was an innovator in style and perspective. So when it came to finding a form which could adequately communicate the story he saw unfolding during his trip across the continent, he was not restricted to more traditional newspaper models then establishing themselves after the Civil War, which has often been viewed as a watershed in, or at least one important benchmark for, the evolution of “objective” style in the American journalistic experience.⁴ Like other late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century examples of literary journalism, the *Across the Continent* letters demonstrate the transformation of information into a literary text by use of narrative and rhetorical techniques generally associated with fiction. Character and scene development, an attention to concrete detail, incorporation of traditional literary forms, attention to word selection and sentence construction, the foregrounded subjectivity and involvement of the author in the story—all are present in Bowles's letters. At the same time, Bowles does not abandon the reportorial function which emphasizes information, as evidenced by extensive passages on topics such as mining, culture, and transportation. So when Bowles adopted a course of correspondence with his readers in place of more traditional reporting

models, he embraced a literary form in which he could incorporate not only the chronological events of the overland journey but also extemporaneous conversation; stories and rumor; lengthy analysis—from Bowles's point of view, of course—of politics, economics, and commerce; personal reactions to people, places, and events; and even a side-splitting joke or thinly veiled insult. Bowles's epistolary text provided a rhetorical space in which to connect his story to ideas and philosophies beyond the facts.

CONTENT

Bowles's *Across the Continent* letters abound in passages that harmonize with expectations for the content of literary journalism, particularly, as noted, through attention to scene construction, concrete details, extemporaneous dialogue, and thorough reporting. One of the ways Bowles continually inscribes an intimate presence with his readers—a rhetorical function of private correspondence—is by positioning himself as their eyes and ears in the West. To make this possible, he relates scenes and events through copious detail and vivid imagery. To adequately construct a multivalent experience for his readers—whether from a dingy tavern, in a mine shaft, or atop a mountain—Bowles incorporates multisensory concrete details and narrative action. In letter two, for instance, relating the party's passage across the Great Plains, Bowles constructs an image of the topography, the feel of the breeze and the sun, the hunger of empty stomachs, and the appearance of the sunset. These complement elements of action: scampering wildlife, constantly passing wagoners and tradesmen, and, notably, a fiery, gusting, drenching storm:

First came huge, rolling, ponderous masses of cloud in the west, massing up and separating into sections in a more majestic and threatening style than our party had ever before seen in the heavens. Then followed a tornado of wind. Horses, coach and escort turned their backs to the breeze, and bending, awaited its passing. . . . Next fell the hail, pouring as swift rain, and as large and heavy as bullets. The horses quailed before its terrible pain. . . . [I]t bit like wasps, it stunned like blows. . . .⁵

Other passages illustrate similar scene construction built of concrete details. In letter twenty-five, Bowles's description of the geysers in California, for example, includes colors, textures, temperatures, smells, sounds, topography, and the resulting physiological effects of a walk in the steamy, malodorous air.⁶ In another example, found in letter twenty-seven, Bowles describes conditions in what seems to be an underground city during an unnerving excursion into the Gould and Curry mine:

Many of the chambers or streets were deserted; in others we found little coterie of miners, picking away at the hard rock, and loading up cars of the ore . . . Some of the chambers had closed in after being worked out of ore

. . . but many of the open passages were stayed or braced open still with huge frame work of timber. . . . And in many of the passages, such is the outward pressure into the vacuum, that these timbers, as big as a man's body, are bent and splintered almost in two. Great pine sticks, eighteen inches square, were thus bent like a bow, or yawned with gaping splinters; and the spaces left in some places for us to go through were in this way reduced so small that we almost had to crawl to get along.⁷

Another type of scene is constructed in letter thirty-two aboard ship as Bowles and his companions, beginning their trip home, head south from California:

The weather . . . grows hot; flannels come off; . . . the close and crowded state-rooms turn out their sleepers on to the cabin floors, the decks, everywhere and anywhere that a breath of air can be wooed; . . . you have to pick your way at night about the open parts of the ship, as tender visitor to battle-field at Gettysburg. The languor of the tropics comes over you all; perspiration stands in great drops, or flows in rivulets from the body; a creamy, hazy feeling possesses the senses; working is abandoned; reading becomes an effort; card-playing ceases to lure; dreaming, dozing and scandal-talking grow to be the occupations of the ship's company, — possibly scandal-making, for the courtesans become bold and flaunt, and the weak and impudent show that they are so.⁸

In this passage, Bowles chooses to convey content that is not so much factual as experiential. Bowles constructs the scene not as a momentary snapshot but as a living, sensory, semicolon-laden experience that readers can reconstruct for themselves. Surely, in the absence of universal air conditioning, readers in 1865 could respond to “a creamy, hazy feeling,” for instance, with some degree of familiarity.

One reason scholars of literary journalism may hesitate to include epistolary journalism in the lineage of the form, however, is the succession of subject matter within each letter. Nineteenth century newspaper letters were commonly characterized by an alternation among many of the same topical elements as personal correspondence. Such topics may include recent events and future plans of the traveler, updates on mutual friends, rich descriptions of landscape, gossip, stories, and seemingly trivial details of daily life. By alternating between various topics within the letter, scholars might argue, Bowles is aspiring to a discursive rather than a narrative mode—comprising a miscellany of topics without a unified narrative line or, for that matter, an unambiguous overarching discursive goal as one might expect of expository writing.⁹

I would suggest, however, that the range of subject matter covered by each letter and by the *Across the Continent* collection of letters as a corporate

whole does indeed support an overarching narrative of the trip and the story of a nation. In his prefatory letter to his distinguished traveling companion, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Schuyler Colfax, Bowles characterizes the book as a “story.”¹⁰ When Bowles illustrates the discomforts of the stagecoach or the prices of commodities carried by the stage lines, for example, he is not making isolated small talk; he is contributing to a narrative about the need for a transcontinental railroad. When he describes a new or prospering town, or when he discusses successes in agriculture or mining, Bowles is not making arbitrary, digressive comments; he is encouraging settlement and investment in the West. And when Bowles introduces familiar names or represents the West in terms of the East, he is actually writing a narrative of nationhood. I would also indicate that in the context of a trip across the continent, a multiplicity of themes is the only way to create a coherent and accurate depiction of the nation. Like the trip itself, the nation of 1865 comprised many people, places, cultures, foods, markets, and landscapes—all of which could be conveyed through epistolary journalism. An attempt to represent the experience through discursive isolation of topics may appear inadequate. But the letters taken together should be interpreted as portions of a larger, unified narrative, comprising the whole experience of the transcontinental trip. In fact, Bowles intentionally makes the effort to co-opt the seeming incompleteness of such isolated topics by acknowledging them as such when he states in his letter to Colfax that, despite his summer-long efforts to learn and convey an experience of the continent, “yet it were impossible adequately to represent all the strange features, all the rare capacities of this new half of our Nation.” In the “impossible,” he has summed up a significant complication of the narrative in order to bring it to a (temporary) resolution: The reader is staring into the face of the impossible to know the unknown. After thirty-two letters, Bowles acknowledges “a margin still against me,” with much more to tell than the pages would permit.¹¹ Thus, the story of a developing America is one that will have to continue in the future.

Attention to character development is another characteristic associated with fiction that can distinguish literary from traditional journalism and is facilitated by the epistolary form. Among impressions of the people he meets along the route are the fiery Mormon vigilante Porter Rockwell, the widely respected Oregon pioneer Jesse Applegate, the penurious but beloved General John C. Frémont, and the mythic Brigham Young and the other Mormon leaders. Bowles is also careful to paint complex portraits of his three traveling companions. It was standard fare of travelers to describe their companions in personal letters and a liberty journalists can take in the epis-

tology journalism form. In letter four, with attention to both his responsibilities as a journalist as well as his prerogative within the epistolary form to express subjectivity, Bowles offers his impressions of the men, beginning with Speaker Colfax:

Mr. Colfax is short, say five feet six, weighs one hundred and forty, is young, say forty-two, has brownish hair and light blue eyes, is a childless widower, drinks no intoxicating liquors, smokes *a la* General Grant, is tough as a knot . . . and is the idol of South Bend and all adjacencies. . . . He certainly makes friends more rapidly and holds them more closely than any public man I ever knew; wherever he goes, the women love him, and the men cordially respect him; and he is sure to be always a personal favorite, even a pet, with the people.¹²

Bowles describes another of the travelers, Illinois Lieutenant-Governor William Bross, primarily in terms of his relationship with his companions. Bross is “cheery in temperament, enjoying rough, outdoor life like a true, unspoiled child of Nature; . . . enthusiastic for all novel experience, we all give him our heartiest sympathy and respect and constitute him the leader of the party.” The profile is thoroughly laced with Bowles’s characteristic humor and personal observations. He calls Bross “our best foot” whom “we always put . . . foremost, whether danger, or dignity, or fun is the order of the occasion.” Because Bowles is writing in a familiar epistolary mode within the form of the newspaper letter, he relates a standing joke of the party: “Governor Bross was born in New Jersey,—and so says he never can be president, as the Constitution requires that officer to be a native of the nation.”¹³

The third member of the party, journalist Albert Richardson, was a Civil War hero and a past participant in the wild life of the Old West. Bowles describes his sophisticated habits:

[Richardson] does not chew tobacco, disdains whiskey, but drinks French brandy and Cincinnati Catawba, carries a good deal of baggage, does not know how to play poker, and shines brilliantly among the ladies. He is a young widower of less than thirty-five, of medium size, with a light complexion and sandy hair and whiskers, and is a very companionable man.¹⁴

Depictions of the party, then, come full circle to Bowles himself, but the author demurs with a rhetorical sleight-of-hand: “Looking-glasses are banished from overland baggage, and the fourth member of the party must, therefore, remain unsketched.”¹⁵

Another of the characteristics distinguishing literary from traditional mainstream journalisms is an incorporation of extemporaneous and often extended dialogue.¹⁶ Although extended direct dialogue, presented within quotes, is not common in *Across the Continent*, indirect or paraphrased dia-

logue appears regularly. But it should be emphasized that the orthographic conventions of using quotation marks today were not always the same as then. An illustration in Bowles's account is a discussion between Brigham Young and Schuyler Colfax, which appears in letter eleven, integrating dialogue with Bowles's voice, or what conventionally is called indirect or paraphrased dialogue. The exchange is presented without the use of quotation marks, beginning with Young's inquiry concerning the government's intentions for the Mormons and polygamy:

The Speaker replied that he had no authority to speak for the government; but for himself, if he might be permitted to make the suggestion, he had hoped the prophets of the church would have a new revelation on the subject, which would put a stop to the practice. . . . Mr. Young responded quickly and frankly that he should readily welcome such a revelation; that polygamy was not in the original book of the Mormons; that it was not an essential practice in the church, but only a privilege and a duty, under special command of God. . . .¹⁷

Bowles incorporates additional speakers as the dialogue continues:

The discussion, thus opened, grew general and sharp, though ever good-natured. Mr. Young was asked how he got over the fact that the two sexes were about equally divided all over the world, and that, if some men had two, five, or twenty wives, others would have to go without altogether. His reply was that there was always a considerable proportion of the men who would never marry, who were old bachelors from choice. But, retorted one, are there any more of such than of women who choose to be old maids? Oh yes, said he, most ungallantly; there is not one woman in a million who will not marry if she gets a chance!¹⁸

The intent is clear, namely to convey extended, extemporaneous speech, albeit paraphrased.

Shorter passages conveying direct and extemporaneous dialogue appear occasionally throughout *Across the Continent* as part of narrative passages. "Look at your watch," stage driver Clark T. Foss told the Colfax party before a treacherous mountain descent described in letter twenty-five. Bowles continues, "When we wondered at Mr. Foss for his perilous and rapid driving down such a steep road, he said, 'Oh, there's no danger or difficulty in it,—all it needs is to keep your head cool, and the leaders out of the way.'"¹⁹ Following a discussion of the status of women in the West, appearing in letter twenty-eight, Bowles quotes a local resident: "'It is the cussedest place for women,' said an observant Yankee citizen, some two or three years from home, and not forgetful yet of mother, sister and cousin,—'a town of men and taverns and boarding-houses and billiard saloons.'"²⁰ And in letter twen-



"The Colfax Party in the Yosemite," named for U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Schuyler Colfax. Their journey in 1865 was the subject of Bowles's Across the Continent. Bowles stands in the back row, left. Colfax (who would go on to become the seventeenth U.S. vice president under Ulysses S. Grant) is seated in the middle row, third from left. The landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted appears front row, second from left. As Bowles noted: "We . . . grew steadily barbaric and dirty; laughed at dignity; and voted form and ceremony a nuisance." From the Carleton Watkins collection. Reprinted by permission of Yosemite Research Library.

ty-seven, from Austin, Nevada, where Bowles and his companions were to stay for only three days, he relates a discussion with local residents which led to a series of expeditions into the local mines: "But [three days] is nothing, said the disappointed people; you can't begin to see our mines in that time; you better have staid away. Well, come on, was the reply; show us what you can in three days, and then let us see what is left that is new and strange."²¹

Finally, there is the quality of the reporting. Even when content includes extended descriptions of scene and character, as well as complex narrative structures, the literary journalism form is grounded in solid reporting of the phenomenological world. In his introductory letter to Speaker Colfax, Bowles states his reportorial goals, that his intention in undertaking the trip was to see, study, and describe the country "to acquit ourselves more intelligently, . . . each in our duties to the public,—you in the Government, and

we as journalists.” Bowles states that he was particularly qualified for the duty because he brought interest, enthusiasm, “and the trained eyes and ears and the educated instincts of journalism.”²² *Across the Continent* bears considerable evidence of Bowles’s reportorial acumen. Extended discussions of mining, agriculture, economics, and other topics are integrated into Bowles’s narrative.²³ He provides historical background on complex or evolving topics; he seeks out developments in these and other areas which are timely and relevant; he pursues interviews from multiple sources; he thoroughly presents information, even when it conflicts with his personal opinions; and he cites sources when appropriate. Mark Kramer expects such digressions in literary journalism. He states that the author may bring related material and background information to the midst of his or her story.²⁴ It is one of the ways Bowles can adequately convey the largely unfamiliar information concerning the West, and another way story determines form in epistolary journalism. Following four unusually lengthy paragraphs on the mining industry in letter twenty-seven, for instance, Bowles abandons the reportorial voice for that of the intimate correspondent to direct his text away from the solely informational model and back to narrative. Bowles resumes the story by inscribing an image of the readers: “Do not complain, my reader, that this letter is getting dull with dry fact and statistics; consider the mass of figures and ‘disgusting details’ that I have before me, and have spared you, and be grateful.”²⁵

Bowles’s truth claim, which is a claim that invests any journalism, is both explicit and implicit, resting in his public intentions for the trip and in the use of a first-person voice that positions him as witness and the text as testimony. The letters, he writes in his introductory letter to Colfax, “serve . . . to convey true ideas of the country we passed through.”²⁶ The truth claim of his narrative rests, furthermore, on his responsibility to communicate accurately to his readers. He speaks of the “independence and integrity” he brought to the project and dispels any notion of a hidden or selfish agenda.²⁷ He also states that his obligation to speak truthfully to eastern readers was not displaced by an obligation to speak flatteringly of people in the West. They “need nothing but the Truth,—none of them asked us to tell other than the Truth.”²⁸

STYLE

A link between epistolary journalism and literary journalism can also be demonstrated in the author’s stylized freedom with language. The literary and epistolary forms liberate authors from dominant forms of journalistic writing to select and arrange words for literary effect more than for traditional journalistic conciseness, a journalistic value that developed during the Civil War.²⁹ For example, rich, compound adjectives mark a nostalgic pas-

sage in letter twenty that was written as Bowles prepared to leave Washington Territory. To compare the mild climate of the Northwest to that of New England, Bowles uses language loaded with emotive images like “our slow, hesitating, coy spring times” and “our luxuriously-advancing, tender, red and brown autumns.” Metaphorical constructions—such as “the delicately fretted architecture of the leafless trees” and “the nerve-giving tonic of the air”—reinforce the literary dimension of the passage.³⁰

Lest we think his selections accidental or convenient, Bowles comments on language in a letter to his friend Charles Allen, dated November 23, 1865, written during the process of compiling the letters for publication. Responding to Allen’s suggestions for revision to the text, Bowles reveals his attention to language:

Webster has it *transhipped* and *fullness*, and so the book. Don’t you hope to deprave us up here with your ancient spelling! “Unkempt” I used in the broader sense that is coming over it, of slouching and untidy But I can’t give up “aboundingness.” I know it is new, but it fits, and “abundance” doesn’t. . . . You see I am not learned in grammar, syntax, and prosody; my ear and my habit are my only guides.³¹

Bowles’s word usage is complemented by careful sentence construction evident in letter eight in his description of a long, tedious stage ride through the Wasatch Mountains and into Echo Canyon:

So we rolled rapidly through summer and winter scenes, with sky of blue and air of amber purity, and when the round moon came up out from the snowy peaks, giving indescribable richness and softness to their whiteness, we kept on and on, now up mountain sides, now along the edge of precipices several hundred feet high, down which the stumble of a horse or the error of a wheel would have plunged us; now crossing swollen streams, the water up to the coach doors, now stammering through morass and mire, plunging down and bounding up so that we passengers, instead of sleeping, were bruising heads and tangling legs and arms in enacting the tragedy of pop-corn over a hot fire and in a closed dish; and now from up among the clouds and snow, we tore down a narrow canyon at a breakneck rate, escaping a hundred over-turns and toppling on the river’s brink until the head swam with dizzy apprehensions.³²

With a single, very long, rhythmic sentence, Bowles’s text structurally reproduces the motion of the stage and its effects on the travelers, as evident in the repetition of the preposition “now,” which is repeated five times, thus establishing a rhythm taking the reader impetuously from one moment to another.

Use of literary tropes further characterizes Bowles’s *Across the Continent* letters, reflected particularly in poetry and allegory. As demonstrated in

preceding passages, a poetic sensitivity to sound and cadence emerges from Bowles's pen, particularly when commenting on the passing landscape. Spectacular scenery or dramatic manifestations of nature's power—such as the hail storm discussed earlier—are regularly conveyed through literary conventions. For example, Bowles, in letter eighteen, inscribes the beauty of the Columbia River valley through metaphor and personification:

River and rock have striven together, wrestling in close and doubtful embrace, —sometimes one gaining ascendancy, again the other, but finally the subtler and more seductive element worrying its rival out, and gaining the western sunshine, broken and scarred and foaming with hot sweat, but proudly victorious, and forcing the withdrawing arms of its opponent to hold up eternal monuments of its triumph.³³

In letter sixteen, Bowles delivers his impressions of another breathtaking natural scene, Lake Tahoe, with metaphorical language and an allusion to Shakespeare:

The surging and sighing of the wind among the tall pines of the Sierras came like sweetest music, laden with memories of home and friends and youth. Brass bands begone, operas avaunt! . . . All human music was but sound and fury signifying nothing, before such harmonies of high nature.³⁴

And Bowles's poetry is not limited to the grandiose subject; even the alkali dust of the desert beyond the Salt Lake Valley, which Bowles characterizes in letter fourteen as "thick and constant and penetrating beyond experience and comparison," is fodder for the poetic muse: "It filled the air,—it was the air; it covered our bodies,—it penetrated them; it soared to Almighty attributes, and became omnipresent. . . ."³⁵

Additionally, extended digressions, which are a common element in private correspondence, are regular features of Bowles's letters. Letter fifteen begins with an allegory of the family on the birth of Nevada:

California, mature at eleven, plants a colony in 1859–60, which ripens into a new State in 1864. Nevada is the first child of California. As bachelor uncles and fond friends sometimes think children are born in order to wheedle them out of silver cups; so Nevada sprang into being under like metallic influence. And if she promised to give, rather than to get, she fails yet to keep full faith. . . .³⁶

Appearing in letter fourteen is an example of Bowles's longer narrative digressions, the story of Hank Monk, a noted stage driver who had memorably delivered Horace Greeley across rough stage roads in 1859. The story was offered as consolation to Bowles and his companions following an uncomfortable and bouncy ride, and Bowles transcribes it at length for his readers. When Greeley, in his earlier visit, suggested that the stage make better time,

the driver replied, “keep your seat Mr. Greeley, and I will get you through in time.” Bowles continues:

Crack went his [Monk’s] whip; the mustangs dashed into a fearful pace, up hill and down, along precipices frightful to look at, over rocks that kept the noted passenger passing frantically between seat and ceiling of the coach;—the philosopher soon was getting more than he bargained for; and at the first soft place on the road, he mildly suggested to the driver that a half an hour more or less would not make much difference. But Monk was in for his drive and his joke, and replied again, with a twinkle in his left eye, after a fresh cut at his mustangs, “Just keep your seat, Mr. Greeley, and you shall be through in time.”

By sharing a narrative which he describes as “classic with all the drivers and all travelers on the road,” Bowles capitalizes on the flexibility of literary journalism to personally address his Eastern readers and, despite their geographical distance, engage them in the conversations of westward travelers.³⁷

AUTHOR’S ROLE

Personal, active, and subjective, the author is another principal link between epistolary journalism and literary journalism, and *Across the Continent* provides a useful case study. Bowles is present in the *Across the Continent* letters at several levels. First, because the news was generated by his personal travels, his participation in the trip was an a priori condition of the text. As a travel writer, Bowles is inherently a reporter and a participant—a quality of the literary journalism form. Norman Sims notes that travel writing and memoir, forms that were particularly popular in the nineteenth century, are “forms that traditionally allow writers more voice. Standard reporting hides the voice of the writer, but literary journalism gives that voice an opportunity to enter the story, sometimes with dramatic irony.”³⁸

Second, Bowles is also present in the text as an author because he writes in his particular voice or voices. A more formal, reportorial voice and a more informal, conversational voice are clearly discernable in Bowles’s *Across the Continent*. Facilitated by the epistolary journalism form, the oscillation of these voices allows Bowles to assume the discursive tone that best communicates his story. These voices, unified by the discursive “I,” are both inherently and distinctly voices of Sam Bowles. While the “I” is stabilized, it is disparately manifest, and operates as a “mobile stance”—to adopt the phraseology of Mark Kramer—that highlights the presence of the author and his perspective in the text. When using a personal, intimate voice, Kramer argues, the author assumes a narratory role:

The narrator of literary journalism has a personality, is a whole person, intimate, frank, ironic, wry, puzzled, judgmental, even self-mocking—qualities

academics and daily news reporters dutifully avoid as unprofessional and un-objective. . . . The genre's power is the strength of this voice.³⁹

I share Kramer's perspective that an oscillation of voices between informational and conversational modes operates as a discursive tool that engages the reader. Direct address contributed to a textually inscribed relationship of intimacy within which Bowles could express a "heightened and at times foregrounded subjectivity" that distinguishes literary journalism.⁴⁰ With epistolarity grounded in textual correspondence of one individual to another, direct address to the reader is an inherent part of the epistolary journalism form, and a critical link with literary journalism. One need only recall the passage at the beginning of this paper, in which Bowles addresses his readers as "dear friends all," to appreciate this.

Bowles's *Across the Continent* letters strikingly demonstrate regular fluctuation between the informal or conversational voice and the more formal, reportorial voice. The alternation of voices may take place between letters, lending each letter a distinctive flavor or perspective. It may also take place, potentially, in succession within each letter, creating for the reader a sense of discursive oscillation between voices and among subject matter. The alternation between Bowles's reportorial and conversational voices can be subtle or dramatic, and the voices, notably, can even interrupt each other. In letter four, "The Rocky Mountains and Their Gold Mines," for instance, the shift between voices is explicit. After a literary passage on the natural "panorama of perpetual beauty" surrounding Denver, presented in what I would characterize as a highly subjective informal voice, Bowles unambiguously signals a change: "Leaving nature for the material, beauty for booty, fancy for fact, I come to speak of the mineral wealth and development of this section of the Rocky Mountains." The letter then turns to an account of the mining industry and an assessment of the evolution of related settlements in what I would characterize as a distinctly more formal, reportorial voice.⁴¹ Letter twenty-three, "The Chinese: Grand Dinner with Them," also identifies a shift from an informal to a formal voice. The letter, dated August 18, 1865, begins with intimate comments that might characterize a private letter, as Bowles describes his personal condition following the dinner. But the voice is transformed abruptly to correspond with the ensuing report detailing demographic, economic, and social conditions of the Chinese in California. The transformation from informal to reportorial is apparent and abrupt: "[W]hile I am full of the subject,—shark's fins and resurrected fungus digest slowly,—let me write of this unique and important element in the population and civilization of this region. There are no fewer than sixty to eighty thousand Chinamen here. . . ." ⁴²

One of the most anticipated portions of the trip, and one that inspired significant discourse among the public, was the party's interaction with the Mormons. In addition to background information and a narrative account of his stay in Salt Lake City, Bowles also offers a subjective assessment of the experience, choosing language that clearly positions him as a subjective agent of perception. Letter eleven begins with Bowles's personal reactions to his stay in Salt Lake City. "Our visit here closes in the morning," he writes. "It has been very interesting, instructive and gratifying to us." Phrases such as "to increase my appreciation," "to evoke congratulations," "to excite wonder," and "to enlarge my respect" clearly convey the personal nature of the experience.⁴³ But other aspects of Bowles's experience with the Mormons are written in a clearly reportorial voice. Analyses of political and social implications of polygamy, for example, receive extensive treatment in this formal voice, as does the sophistication of social and agricultural structures in the Salt Lake Valley. In describing the distribution of the Mormon population in the Salt Lake Valley, for example, Bowles writes in letter nine, "[T]he Mormon settlements extend one hundred miles . . . into Idaho on the north, and perhaps two hundred miles into Arizona on the south, clinging close, through their entire length of six hundred to seven hundred miles, to a narrow belt of country hardly more than fifty miles wide."⁴⁴ And sensitive issues such as polygamy are reported in Bowles's more formal voice, as in letter eleven: "Ultimately, of course, before the influences of emigration, civilization and our democratic habits, an organization so aristocratic and autocratic as the Mormon church now is must modify its rule. . . ."⁴⁵

A significant feature of these alternating voices is the potential to convey textually-encoded inflections that may be decoded by the reader. These elements of sonance—"voiced speech" by definition—reveal moments of sarcasm or irreverence when the words alone may suggest a different message. Discussing the fauna of the Great Plains in letter two, for instance, Bowles notes the appearance of the plover, a small bird related to the sandpiper. In the midst of a typical epistolary cataloguing of the many animals encountered on the trail, Bowles's matching of lyricism and cynicism concerning this particular creature represents a tonal shift, recreated in the mind of the reader: "[W]e catch frequent glimpses of . . . the plover, paired as in Paradise, and never divorced even in this western country of easy virtue and cheap legislation."⁴⁶ In another passage brimming with lyricism and self-deprecating humor, textually-encoded sonance is enabled by an informal, conversational voice. Bowles's language is animated with inflection in the mind of the reader as he describes his anticlimactic experience passing over the great Continental Divide:

It was no more than a 'thank-ye-marm' in a New England's winter sleigh-ride, yet it separates the various and vast waters of a Continent, and marks the fountains of the two great oceans of the globe. But it was difficult to be long enthusiastic over this infinitesimal point of mud; the night was very

cold, and I was sore in unpoetical parts from unaccustomed saddles, and I got down from all my high horses, and into my corner of the stage, at the next station.⁴⁷

At times, the fluctuation of voices is so clear, and sometimes so abrupt, that the reader is sensitized to the fusing of the epistolary and journalistic forms within the text. Contrast portions of preceding passages, which bear a more formal vocality, to passages written in the informal voice, as when Bowles describes the appearance of Brigham Young in letter eight or when he assesses his own potential for becoming a Mormon in letter thirteen. In letter eight, Bowles writes, “He is a very hale and hearty looking man . . . handsome perhaps as to presence and features, but repellent in atmosphere and without magnetism. In conversation, he is cool and quiet in manner, but suggestive in expression; has strong and original ideas, but uses bad grammar. . . .”⁴⁸ In letter thirteen, he explains that Young objects to polygamy for those men who do not have the ability to keep their wives “in sweet and loving and especially obedient subjugation. So there is no chance for you and I, my dear Jones, becoming successful Mormons!”⁴⁹

*A*cross the Continent is rich, then, with examples that demonstrate how Bowles actively and subjectively enters the story—both implicitly, as a present witness and reporter, and explicitly, as a character in the narrative. As a witness and reporter, he brings the eyes and mind of an easterner to bear on scenes and events in the West. He can communicate and interpret these things in a way that is meaningful and resonant with his primarily eastern readers. Bowles doesn’t just report on the Chinese dinner; he tells us what it looked, smelled, and felt like—or *feels* like, as he attests that he is, at the time of writing, still “full of the subject.” Bowles doesn’t just talk about mining and the construction of a mine shaft; he tells us about psychological responses to fear and the physiological sensations of groping through the dark. Bowles doesn’t just report on the conditions of the road or the accommodations along the stage route; he tells us what it was like to be jostled, bumped and whipped along, and what really went bump—or squeak—in the night.

Finally, if literature does indeed stimulate informed feelings in readers and represents ideas or a philosophy that exist beyond the facts of a story, then *Across the Continent* is an example of such a literature. As suggested at the outset, the sum of these parts—including the bump and squeak in the night—reflect a text that speaks, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, compellingly and even profoundly to the American experience as it began to look beyond the death and destruction of battle to see a larger allegorical horizon, one that at the time seemed limitless and “impossible,” as Bowles suggested, to contain. Thus is revealed once more the literary claim of this one example of epistolary journalism.

CONCLUSION

When scholars go in search of a pedigree for twentieth-century literary journalism, epistolary journalism clearly presents a promising field for further study, especially its literary elements. With proclivities toward narrative content, a liberal use of literary language and tropology, and an author who is present, active, and subjective, epistolary journalism encourages the communication of news that is not just limited to who, what, where, and when, but of news that is also relevant to larger discourses. Literary and compelling, *Across the Continent*, in particular, should be considered part of the history of literary journalism for the way it draws readers' attention to social, political, and philosophical contexts of enduring relevance and interest.

Katrina J. Quinn is assistant professor of communication at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania. Her research interests include nineteenth-century literary journalism, travel literature, and narratives of the American frontier.



ENDNOTES

-
1. Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States, with Speaker Colfax* (Springfield: Bowles, 1865), 9.
 2. William Merrill Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America Before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998). For additional studies of epistolary texts from a literary point of view, see Bruce Redford's *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986); Janet Gurkin Altman's *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State, 1982); Barbara Herrnstein Smith's *On the Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature to Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978); and two works by Linda S. Kauffman—*Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1986) and *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992).
 3. Decker, 24.
 4. John William Tebbel, *The Media in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1974), 206; Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice) 1978: 228.
 5. Bowles, 15–16.
 6. Bowles, 279–82.
 7. Bowles, 318.
 8. Bowles, 373–74.

9. By discursive, Hartsock refers to writing that carries many of the features of literary journalism, but which lacks a unified narrative structure. John Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2000), 18, 81.

10. Bowles, v. Colfax was a journalist himself, becoming the editor of the *South Bend (Indiana) Free Press* at age 19. Colfax was vice president of the United States under Ulysses S. Grant.

11. Bowles, ix.

12. Bowles, 45–46.

13. Bowles, 46–47. Bross was an editor of the *Chicago Tribune*.

14. Bowles, 48.

15. Bowles, 49.

16. Thomas B. Connery, “A Third Way to Tell the Story: American Literary Journalism at the Turn of the Century,” *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed., Norman Sims (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 11.

17. Bowles, 111–12.

18. Bowles, 112–13.

19. Bowles, 280.

20. Bowles, 324.

21. Bowles, 316.

22. Bowles, iii–iv, v.

23. See for example 21–23 and 341–42 for the price of commodities; 36–38 for the process of removing precious metals from ore; 89–91 for a discussion of irrigation and agricultural production; 312–15 for information on the developing mining industry in California, Nevada, Idaho, and Colorado; and 348–57—all of letter thirty—for the prospects for investment in mining ventures throughout the western states. In Bowles.

24. Mark Kramer, “Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists” in *Literary Journalism: A New Collection of the Best American Nonfiction*, ed. Norman Sims and Mark Kramer (New York: Ballantine, 1995), 31.

25. Bowles, 315.

26. Bowles, ix.

27. Bowles, v.

28. Bowles, ix.

29. Tebbel, 206.

30. Bowles, 212.

31. Quoted in George S. Merriam, *The Life and Times of Samuel Bowles, Vol. 2* (New York: Century, 1885), 46.

32. Bowles, 81.

33. Bowles, 185–86.

34. Bowles, 165. From *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5:

SEYTON: The queen, my lord, is dead.

MACBETH: . . . Out, out, brief candle!/Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player/That struts and frets his hour upon the stage/And then is heard no more: it is a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/Signifying nothing.

35. Bowles, 136.

36. Bowles, 141.

37. Bowles, 137–38.

38. Norman Sims, “The Art of Literary Journalism,” in Sims and Kramer, *Literary*

Journalism, 3. Sims suggests that travel writing is a form that has expanded the boundaries of literary journalism, and others suggest the new journalism should be more broadly interpreted to include various forms of nonfiction prose and personal memoir. Some possibilities include works of exploration such as George Catlin's *Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (1841) and Clarence King's *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada* (1872), environmental works such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), and nonfiction nature writing such as Annie Dillard's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974).

39. Mark Kramer, "Breakable Rules," 28–29.

40. Hartsock, 54.

41. Bowles, 33.

42. Bowles, 238.

43. Bowles, 105.

44. Bowles, 92.

45. Bowles, 108. It was not until twenty-five years later that Bowles's prediction would come true. In 1890, a manifesto by the church's fourth president, Wilford Woodruff, prohibited members of the church from entering into polygamous unions but did not challenge those plural marriages already in existence. A second manifesto, issued in 1904, restated the church's opposition to the practice and promised excommunication for those performing or entering into plural marriages.

46. Bowles, 13.

47. Bowles, 75.

48. Bowles, 86.

49. Bowles, 125.

Literary Journalism as a Key to Reporting's Richest Prize

Miles Maguire
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

If the journalists who receive the prestigious MacArthur Foundation "genius" grants are an indication, writing literary journalism serves as one indicator of journalistic excellence.

In their thirty years of existence, genius grants from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation have been awarded to a range of journalists representing many different corners of the profession and many different modes of practice: newspaper reporters, magazine writers, and radio producers; freelancers and staffers; well-established names and little known ones; foreign correspondents and music critics; individualists and institution builders (table 1). But a common characteristic of the MacArthur fellows who are journalists is their application of the techniques of literary journalism in their work. In fact, the use of literary techniques may be the distinguishing feature of more genius journalism than any other explanatory factor. This article explores the work of the MacArthur journalism fellows to indicate the role of literary journalism in their selection. Such an examination can help lead toward a reconsideration of literary journalism as more than just an eccentric cousin in the realm of "real" reporting, a shift that would have implications for conceptions of journalism and for journalism education.

NATURE OF THE MACARTHUR FELLOWSHIPS

Currently valued at \$500,000, a fellowship from MacArthur represents the most lucrative prize in journalism, fifty times the size of the more established Pulitzer awards. It is also highly selective, as MacArthur numbers just eighteen recipients in its journalism category in the three decades since the foundation announced its first "genius award" on May 18, 1981.¹ Accounting for much of the mystique that surrounds the award is the secretive process by which recipients are selected. The foundation says that it does not accept

applications for a fellowship but instead relies on a panel of anonymous, and temporary, nominators to suggest names, which are then reviewed by a confidential selection panel that makes recommendations to the MacArthur board of directors for its final decision. The criteria seem purposely vague: “exceptional creativity” and “manifest promise.”²² But in this way the MacArthur award looks both backward and forward, recognizing past accomplishments and the potential for future activities that are worthy of financial support. Those who emerge as winners from the process have the luxury of knowing that absolutely nothing is expected from them—their grants arrive under a policy of “no strings attached.”²³

To be sure, the MacArthur selection process is highly idiosyncratic, and some of the selections seem to fall outside even the skimpy criteria that the foundation has articulated. Adding to the confusion, the foundation says that fellows are not selected in a specific field, even though it lists them by area of “principal focus.”²⁴ When the names of the fellows are announced, MacArthur doesn’t have much to say about what they have done to merit such a distinction. A life’s work may be summarized in just a sentence or two with major achievements going unmentioned. MacArthur’s announcement about Michael Massing, for example, cited the “clarity and tenacity”²⁵ of his reporting but did not mention his instrumental role in the founding and early operations of the Committee to Protect Journalists, which since the early 1980s has worked for press freedom around the world, often by pressuring authoritarian governments to release imprisoned reporters.

Given the size of the prize, the prestige that it has accumulated, and the lack of detailed criteria for selection, it’s not surprising that various commentators have tried their hands at figuring out what exactly the award is rewarding. Joshua Muravchik, writing in the conservative *American Spectator*, noted a strong ideological bias in the process. He argued that a disproportionate number of fellowships had gone to those on the political left, reflecting an apparent belief by the foundation that “an imperishable faith in socialism is a mark of genius.”²⁶ David Plotz, writing in the online magazine *Slate*, offered a tongue-in-cheek, seven-point plan for gaming the system to improve one’s chances of winning a fellowship. Suggestions include living in New York or San Francisco, holding leftist views, and being “slightly, but not dangerously, quirky.”²⁷

IDENTIFYING CRITERIA FOR GENIUS AWARDS

Another way to try to discern the criteria applied in the MacArthur process is to review the professional activities of the fellows in the months and years before they were named as MacArthur recipients and to assess their accomplishments before the fellowships were awarded. Certain of the fellows appear to have been recognized for their efforts to build new

Table 1. MacArthur fellows with journalism as their principal focus

Fellow	Year	Pre-award accomplishments
Richard Critchfield	1981	Freelance articles, foundation-funded studies, and three books on life in the developing world.
Thomas Whiteside	1986	A dozen books, many of which were based on <i>New Yorker</i> articles, including several on science and the environment.
Tina Rosenberg	1987	Articles in the <i>Atlantic</i> , <i>New Republic</i> , <i>Esquire</i> , <i>Washington Monthly</i> .
Paul Berman	1991	Essays on liberty published in the <i>Village Voice</i> .
Robert H. Hall	1992	Founded journal <i>Southern Exposure</i> , an investigative magazine focusing on social and political issues in the American South.
Michael Massing	1992	Cofounded Center to Protect Journalists; had begun study of public policy toward drugs based on freelance work in Central America.
Stanley Crouch	1993	<i>Notes of a Hanging Judge</i> , a 1990 collection of essays and reviews, mostly written for the <i>Village Voice</i> , critiquing social movements.
William H. Siemering	1993	Helped launch National Public Radio as first director of programming.
Sandy Close	1995	Executive editor of Pacific News Service.
Alma Guillermoprieto	1995	Broke the story of the El Mozote killings; published <i>Samba</i> , her account of preparing for carnival in a slum neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro.
Charles R. E. Lewis	1998	Founded the Center for Public Integrity, an investigative nonprofit.
Mark Danner	1999	Articles in the <i>New York Review of Books</i> and the <i>New Yorker</i> , including one that became the book <i>The Massacre at El Mozote</i> .
David A. Isay	2000	Radio documentaries and related works that often included no overt journalistic presence, such as a reporter/narrator.
Katherine Boo	2002	A Pulitzer Prize winning series (2000) published in the <i>Washington Post</i> on the District of Columbia's system for mentally retarded citizens.
Adrian LeBlanc	2006	Publication of <i>Random Family</i> , an exploration of inner city lives based on 12 years of close observation.
Alex Ross	2008	Publication of <i>The Rest is Noise</i> , a history of the twentieth century viewed through the prism of music composition, primarily classical.
Lynsey Addario	2009	Photos from Afghanistan, Darfur, Iraq published in the <i>New York Times</i> , <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , <i>National Geographic</i> , <i>Harper's</i> .
Jerry Mitchell	2009	Coverage of unsolved murder cases related to Civil Rights movement.

institutional approaches to journalism. These include Sandy Close, executive editor of Pacific News Service, a nonprofit group that has focused its attention on covering people and events that often fall outside the scope of traditional news organizations; Charles R. E. Lewis, one of the founders of the Center for Public Integrity, a nonprofit organization that produces investigative journalism related to public policy; and William H. Siemering, the first director of programming for National Public Radio.

But, more commonly, the fellows have produced a body of work based on their individual efforts in covering the news. These efforts were most often marked by a posture of advocacy, for none of the fellows seems content with the idea of reporter as detached transcriber of events. Rather, their journalism is gauged to advance an argument, almost always within a social or political context. It is this posture of advocacy that appears to be one essential qualifier to be deemed a genius journalist. But advocacy alone is not enough, for the MacArthur fellows are distinguished not only by what they are doing but how they are doing it, and one of the salient characteristics of the MacArthur fellows is their application of the techniques of literary journalism in their work.

A central role for literary journalism in this prestigious awards program may come as a surprise since literary journalism is not always considered a central part of journalism practice or training. Any number of critics have long noted that the dominant paradigm of journalism in the United States is one associated with the objective style adopted by newspapers.⁸ By contrast the idea of journalism dependent as much on artful presentation as on rigorous inquiry, a notion advanced unsuccessfully by John Dewey in his ongoing debates with Walter Lippmann, has been relegated for much of the last hundred years to “niche publications, muted and chastened,” as Kathy Roberts Forde has observed.⁹

Viewed from another perspective, however, literary journalism would seem to be an ideal fit with the MacArthur fellows program. To begin with, literary journalism and advocacy journalism have a long association. In his autobiography Lincoln Steffens describes himself as “always on the reform side,”¹⁰ a position that has been shared by many subsequent practitioners of literary journalism.¹¹ In addition, the markers of literary journalism are consistent with the criteria that are often applied to prize-winning reporting.

These markers, according to Norman Sims, include “immersion reporting, complicated structures in the prose, accuracy, voice, responsibility, and attention to the symbolic realities of a story.”¹² Literary journalism thus conforms to Dewey’s call to combine the “highest and most difficult kind of inquiry” with a “subtle, delicate, vivid, and responsive art of communication.”

Evaluators of journalistic merit agree that this combination is singularly important.¹³

For example, Ivor Shapiro, Patrizia Albanese, and Leigh Doyle interviewed judges for two leading Canadian journalism awards, and found that among a wide range of criteria cited, “only two values were affirmed consistently: writing style and reporting rigor” with the former perhaps even more important than the latter.¹⁴ Moreover, when in 1999 the faculty of New York University’s journalism school set out to identify the “Top 100 Works of Journalism in the United States in the 20th Century,” the judges put John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, a classic work of literary journalism, at the top of their list.¹⁵ The MacArthur judges seem similarly inclined to value works of literary journalism.

By examining key works that journalism fellows have published in the period preceding selection, and in one case a work that was funded by a MacArthur grant, this paper will show the importance of literary journalism to the MacArthur fellows program. At least five of the fellows had completed significant pieces of literary journalism shortly before their fellowships were awarded. Another fellow was recognized for his investigative work in the field of environmental journalism but ranged over a variety of topics and frequently brought to bear the techniques of literary journalism. At least two others had employed some of the tools of literary journalism in a hybrid form that combined conventional approaches to current events with literary stylizations. Yet another fellow used his MacArthur money to engage in a complex mix of policy analysis and immersive journalism to provide a critique of the U.S. government’s war on drugs. By contrast, only one fellow, Jerry Mitchell, has been recognized in the MacArthur program for work that has been done in the traditional “objective style” that is most often found in daily newspapers, and even he has produced work that could be noted for its literary stylizations.

LITERARY JOURNALISM’S PARTIAL ROLE

Before identifying MacArthur fellows who produced fully fleshed works of literary journalism, this article reviews the works of other fellows who used literary technique in a more limited way. Their works employ those tropes of language commonly thought of as “literary” because they are found in the realistic novel and short story, but in most cases these are flourishes that stand out within a work, or a body of work, that generally relies on a more straightforward approach.

One of these journalists is Katherine Boo, a 2002 fellow and one of the few genius journalists whose work has also been recognized in the Pu-

litzer competition. In her case a Pulitzer, for public service journalism, was awarded in 2001 to the *Washington Post* based largely on a series that she had written describing problems in the way the District of Columbia monitored the health and safety of mentally retarded citizens. She begins the series with the following:

Elroy lives here. Tiny, half-blind, mentally retarded, 39-year-old Elroy. To find him, go past the counselor flirting on the phone. Past the broken chairs, the roach-dappled kitchen and the housemates whose neglect in this group home has been chronicled for a decade in the files of city agencies. Head upstairs to Elroy's single bed.¹⁶

It's easy to imagine how an entire work could continue in this vein, moving scene by scene and incorporating descriptive details of status, two of Tom Wolfe's prescriptions for his brand of literary journalism.¹⁷ But within half a dozen paragraphs, Boo shifts from a rhetorical mode of presentation to one of exposition when, in staccato fashion, she identifies in a series of bullet points the dimensions of the problem she has uncovered. Rather than inviting her reader to continue sharing the experience of Elroy, she provides summary findings, statistics that could as easily be found in an official, bureaucratic report: "more than 350 incidents of abuse, neglect, molestation or stealing" and retarded citizens "dispatched by the city to work for wages as low as 50 cents a week."¹⁸ So, on the one hand, Boo is not content to rely only on the conventions of objective journalism, such as an abstracting distillation, to report her findings. But on the other, her use of the kind of tropes associated with literature at the beginning is not maintained throughout the article.

Other MacArthur fellows have used a similar mix of objective and literary approaches, but throughout a body of work rather than within a single piece. Stanley Crouch, for instance, received a fellowship in 1993, three years after the publication of his collection of essays, *Notes of a Hanging Judge*. Many of these essays contain harsh, polemical statements delivered with Crouch's trademark directness, such as ascribing to Spike Lee a "fascist aesthetic,"¹⁹ and calling Toni Morrison's *Beloved* a "blackface holocaust novel."²⁰ But the final piece in the book, "Body and Soul," is a long and lyrical meditation that functions by juxtaposing observations about the history, art, and religions of Italy with observations about the role of history, art, and religion in the American civil rights movement. Crouch introduces the piece with the kind of writing that could as easily have been found at the start of a novel as at the start of a newspaper column:

During the day, Rome has the feeling of rot and revelation one experiences when in the private domain of a handsome old woman, where sweat, sex,

cologne, rouge, yellowed notes and papers, bottled remedies with indecipherable labels, crumbling flowers, photographs that seem to have been taken in a brownish gray mist, clothes stained with experience but never worn anymore, and the smells of countless meals have formed a heavy collective presence in the air.²¹

From here Crouch proceeds to describe the event that occasioned this essay, the music festival known as Umbria Jazz. Like Boo, Crouch has used language to engage with readers but then relies on an expository mode of writing elsewhere in this collection.

Thomas Whiteside, a longtime *New Yorker* writer, was honored with a MacArthur for his work in covering environmental health issues, particularly related to dioxin. But he also published on many other topics and wrote for the ear as well as the mind. One example of his willingness to depart from the standards of contemporary journalism practice is a short essay called "To the Cytherean Phase." There he set as his goal the depiction of cosmic exploration in the spare and eloquent "language of space,"²² which he found to possess a "peculiar grace"²³ in its reliance on precise and technical terminology. The story describes the mission of the space probe Mariner 2 and ends with a description of its final place in the universe, orbiting the sun. Whiteside writes:

That orbit is describable, in the coldly elegant language of astronomy, by its orbital elements: the semi-major axis and the eccentricity of its conic section; its inclination to the ecliptic; the longitude of the ascending node; the argument of perihelion; the time of perihelion passage. The orbit of the spacecraft, subject only to possible slight distortion by the solar wind, is a perpetual one.²⁴

Whiteside's achievement is reached in part through the music of his language, alternating long and short "i" sounds in phrases that build through a series of repetitively constructed phrases until he reaches the final sustained image of eternal, though constricted, motion. This musical language is deployed to help portray a concept, in this case the anthropomorphic qualities of the spaceship: its "eccentricity" and "inclination," its "argument," and "time of . . . passage." This is journalism cast as prose poem.

Another instance of a MacArthur fellow who combined literary techniques with an objective methodology is Massing. His case is of particular note because it is one of the relatively few instances when MacArthur in announcing its selection made mention of a particular project that a fellow was working on.²⁵ As a general rule MacArthur does not cite possible uses of its funding because of its belief that allowing recipients to follow their creative instincts without outside influence is the key to its fellows program.

Massing, who received his MacArthur award in 1992, used his money to complete a 1998 book, *The Fix*, which is based on, to use MacArthur's wording, "a study of the public policy toward the drug wars."²⁶ Despite the importance of this topic, it is difficult to see how a purely analytical treatment of the issue would have merited extraordinary attention. In fact, Massing's approach was an innovative combination, as he put it, of "both political and street reporting."²⁷ The MacArthur money gave Massing the time, four years, to spend interacting with drug users and other residents of Spanish Harlem.

Massing's overarching structural device is to focus on two main characters and the frustrations they encountered. The first of these, Dr. Jerome Jaffe, was a psychiatrist at the University of Chicago who became the first special White House adviser on drugs in 1971. He left under pressure two years later as the Nixon administration took an increasingly law-and-order approach. The other was Raphael Flores, a New York drug counselor who apparently found himself entrapped in a crack cocaine habit. In this way, Massing's book offers a stereoscopic view of drug policy, contrasting the often abstract policy debates in Washington with the concrete ramifications of those policies as they play out in urban neighborhoods.

Massing's publisher had originally wanted him to write a shorter book focusing primarily on policy, a task that Massing acknowledges would have taken less time and effort.²⁸ But he had become "enthralled"²⁹ with the idea of narrative journalism. In the end he credits the use of the immersive approach that was necessary to gather the raw material for the street side of his reporting with bringing him to a more complete view of the issue. "I don't think I would have arrived at the same type of understanding," he said.³⁰

LITERARY JOURNALISM'S MAJOR ROLE

This article next examines five MacArthur fellows for whom sustained literary journalism is a distinguishing mark of exceptional work. Again, given the secretiveness surrounding award selection, there can be no definitive proof that their literary journalism on its own brought them their fellowships. But it is also clear that one of the ways that they demonstrated their skill was through literary journalism. These fellows are Richard Critchfield, Alma Guillermorpieto, Mark Danner, David Isay, and Adrian Nicole LeBlanc. They seem to have taken to heart Dewey's argument about artistry and journalism: "Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation."³¹

RICHARD CRITCHFIELD—1981 FELLOW

The first reporter to be named a MacArthur fellow was Richard Critchfield, a freelance writer who was honored in November 1981. (Ada Louise

Huxtable, then architecture critic for the *New York Times*, was honored at the same time, but for whatever reason MacArthur lists her as an architectural critic and historian rather than a journalist.) Earlier that year Critchfield had published a collection of essays called *Villages*, and three years earlier he had published *Shahbat: An Egyptian*, in which Critchfield attempted to provide a window into contemporary Middle Eastern issues by following a young peasant and his family through the course of the annual agricultural cycle. In other words, his focus would be on the concrete descriptive particular.

As a former newspaper journalist who had published an introductory textbook on reporting, Critchfield was well aware of the conventions of objective journalism and believed that the tools of anthropology, particularly the participant-observation methods used by Oscar Lewis, would allow him to transcend the limits that he felt working at the *Washington Star*.³² In *Shahbat*, he includes an author's note that makes quite clear that he has constructed this book not to provide merely the facts about one person's life but "to show, through the life of one Egyptian peasant"³³ the "universal"³⁴ situation that results when modern "disruptions affect the way people think and feel."³⁵ In other words, Shahhat may be just a poor Egyptian peasant, but in Critchfield's retelling he takes on a symbolic resonance that is intended to help the reader generalize from the particulars of his situation to a deeper understanding of the social and economic challenges in the developing world.

The first chapter of the book tells the strange story of Shahhat's origin, how his mother was terrified that her husband would divorce her because none of the four male babies she had borne had survived childhood. Although a devout Muslim, the woman, Ommohamed, sneaks "late one night into the walled grounds of the great stone mortuary temple of Ramses III to appeal to the ancient god."³⁶ Critchfield then details her descent to a ritual pool, where:

She moved and swayed, quivering from throat to ankles, now begging Allah to forgive her, now fervently calling upon Ammon-Ra, the Unknown, to help her conceive a son so endowed with the force of life that he would not die as her other sons but would live on to manhood. Round and round she moved, hypnotized by her own whispered invocations, at last collapsing in a panting, trembling heap. Then, fighting back revulsion, she dipped her hands in the slimy black water and drank of it.³⁷

We also learn that upon Shahhat's birth, and befitting a figure who is intended to transcend his specific circumstances, the name he receives actually has two meanings, a low one, "beggar," and a more noble one, "he who demands of God."³⁸ Such details are used to add to Shahhat's symbolic stature in the way a fiction writer would use intentional ambiguity to develop a character in a novel or short story.

Critchfield converts the chronology of a research study into the kind of plot one would find in a novel by marking time in a way that emphasizes the harvest cycle and suggests the unfolding of a storyline. Ommohamed's preconception ritual at the ancient temple took place in August, "the time of year when a howling wind rose each night from the Libyan desert."³⁹ The action of the book then moves ahead to another August, twenty years later, when her husband dies and the male responsibilities of the household shift to Shahhat. The body of the book covers the next year and climaxes the following August, in what might have been an attempted suicide by Shahhat, who has grown increasingly disillusioned with his life and his prospects. This brush with death occurs on the last night of the Feast of Abu Hagag, when a band of desert horsemen are scheduled to appear, "brandishing wooden staves over their heads, screaming thrilling cries, and galloping furiously back and forth on a narrow track through the crowd."⁴⁰ Somehow Shahhat, resplendent in a new white turban and tunic, gets caught up in the charging horses, and the focus turns to "the horses' plunging hooves and the white tunic and the clouds of thick yellow dust all rolled over and over again together slowly, the white turning red, and the slowly pounding hooves and the yellow dust, rolling over and over again slowly."⁴¹ Such is the creation of literary scene. Shahhat survives, and in Critchfield's telling, at least, the peasant becomes reconciled to the conflicting tensions of ancient tradition and the modern world. While his youthful passions are gone, Shahhat, in the closing lines of the last chapter, "is as easily amused and quick of comprehension as he ever was. No one tells a better story in Sha'atu's café of an evening."⁴² Just as Crouch introduced his essay with sentences that could have begun a novel, Critchfield has crafted a novelistic ending. He does so not by describing a particular incident the way a reporter might but by evoking a mode of being that Critchfield has experienced as a participant in, as well as an observer of, the life of Shahhat's village.

ALMA GUILLERMOPRIETO—1995 FELLOW

Like Critchfield, Alma Guillermoprieto published two books in the years leading up to her selection as a fellow, one a collection of essays and the other a year-in-the-life story of a particular locale. The latter, *Samba*, once again focuses on the concrete descriptive particular, and in this case the samba dance form as a way into the life of the *favelas*, the shanty towns that ring Rio de Janeiro, and by extension into the nonwhite cultures of the developing world. Guillermoprieto shows how samba has become a source of pride, an outlet for creative expression, a way of demonstrating excellence, an organizing principle, and a platform from which to look down upon the dominant elite culture. "One of the subtler forms of amusement for blacks at carnival time

is watching whites try to samba,” she writes. “It’s not that blacks mind; that whites look clumsy while they’re trying to have fun is a misfortune too great to be compounded by mockery, but it’s also a fact that can’t be denied.”⁴³ For powerless people, samba is a way to participate in power, a power she evokes by describing the *bateria*, or rhythm section that is at the core of a samba performance, and the sounds that it produces:

It was what one tied to the railroad tracks might hear as a train hurtles immediately overhead: a vast, rolling, marching, overpowering wave of sound set up by the *surdos de marçacao*—bass drums about two feet in diameter in charge of carrying the underlying beat. Gradually a ripple set in, laid over the basic rhythm by smaller drums. Then the *cuica*: a subversive, humorous squeak, dirty and enticing, produced by rubbing a stick inserted into the middle of a drum-skin. The *cuica* is like an itch, and the only way to scratch it is to dance.⁴⁴

These layers of percussion become a metaphor for the dynamics of the *favela*, where tensions and counter-tensions run over each other, punctuated from time to time by outbursts of anger or passion.

The book is structured with a prologue, in which the author explains the discomfort she feels living with the services of a maid in an elegant section of Ipanema and how she is slowly drawn to learn more about the samba and the samba “schools”—the huge volunteer dance teams, thousands strong, that compete in noisy celebrations at the time of carnival. At the end of this introductory section, Guillermprieto describes her request to be allowed to observe, as a reporter, the samba school Mangueira as it goes through its preparations for carnival. Although she is rebuffed by Mangueira’s president, she is befriended by a group of women who encourage her to come back to the group’s next major event. Soon Guillermprieto goes from observer to participant, when she is invited by one of the women to perform in a fifty-dancer “wing” that will be part of Mangueira’s entry. Eventually she decides to move to the Manguiera neighborhood, which allows for her to adopt the immersive mode of reporting that is often key to literary journalism. The rest of the book builds toward carnival, and the final chapter ends with these two sentences:

Very fast now, we trot behind as the float gathers speed, rushing over the beer cans, the cobblestones, past the shacks, past Zumbi, past the throngs of waving, cheering well-wishers, past the entry gates and the latrines to where the din of the *bateria*, the deafening, welcoming roar of the crowd are waiting. We’re on.⁴⁵

Guillermprieto has brought her readers to the climactic moment of the competition—and left them there, hanging. It is the trick of the teasing storyteller.

MARK DANNER—1999 FELLOW

Although the MacArthur Foundation maintains that it has no set criteria for selecting its fellows, there is one event that, perhaps coincidentally, brings together at least three of the award winners: Guillermprieto, Mark Danner, and Susan Mieselas, a 1992 fellow whom MacArthur lists under photography rather than journalism. All three were involved in the press coverage of a large-scale killing of civilians in El Salvador in 1981. Guillermprieto and Mieselas provided some of the initial reports of the atrocity in early 1982, reports that were disputed by the U.S. State Department, the Salvadoran government, and by other elements of the media, notably the *Wall Street Journal*. A dozen years after the incident those doubts were dispelled in a definitive account of what happened published by Danner, first as a *New Yorker* article that took over nearly an entire issue, and later as a book, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War*.

Danner makes clear from the subtitle of his book that he intends it to be read both as literature and as journalism. The work is particularly resonant with literary symbolism when he identifies it as parable, in other words a narrative to teach a lesson of how an atrocity “came to happen and came to be denied.”²⁴⁶ Much of the book provides a chronological accounting of the incident and its aftermath, including an investigation many years later that included the exhumation of human remains. Nonetheless, it is structured so that it begins in October 1992, close to the end of the events that make up the parable, when a team of forensic anthropologists arrives at El Mozote. Danner uses the prologue to introduce a witness named Rufina Amaya Marquez, who responds, “Didn’t I tell you?”²⁴⁷ when the forensic anthropologists excitedly report that they have unearthed two dozen skeletons, most of them children, proof that the disputed massacre had occurred. In that simple question, “Didn’t I tell you?” the narrative complication is posed, and will eventually provide entree to the beginning of the narrative chronology. It is, of course, a tried and true literary technique, and perhaps one of the most notable of recent examples is that by another Marquez, the Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez, when in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the novel that launched his reputation as a world-class author, he begins with, “Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.”²⁴⁸ Thus, in a literary device that manipulates chronology, the present is prologue to the past. And that is the case when Rufina Amaya Marquez asks, “Didn’t I tell you?”

Although presented as a parable, Danner’s story remains firmly rooted in facts. In the book version, notes and a reprinting of original documents take

up more than 100 pages, which is roughly two-thirds the length of the narrative. But the author wishes for his readers to look beyond the people and the scenes that are presented here to understand them as symbolic of larger forces and elements of the lesson he seeks to convey.

In the final passages of the book, Danner highlights how information is collected and shared as he describes a trip that a visitor might make through the region where the massacre occurred. Based on encounters with people and places that the author refers to, this excursion invites the reader to consider the role of initial reports, folk legends, artistic commemoration, and finally institutional preservation, as Danner ends this trip at a museum displaying photographs of the clandestine radio station that broadcast news about the rebellion.

The radio station also played a key role in the demise of the military commander who was most directly responsible for the El Mozote massacre. Rebels placed a booby-trapped transmitter so that it would fall into the hands of the military. After the commander took off in his helicopter carrying the rigged transmitter as evidence of the apparent demise of the radio station, the equipment was detonated by guerillas using a remote control, destroying the aircraft and killing all aboard. In front of the museum, Danner writes, “You will find a dramatically twisted and burned torso of steel. As the people there will tell you, it is what remains of a helicopter that was blown from the sky one fine day, and it happens to be the most cherished monument in all Morazán.”⁴⁹ This final image, monumentalizing ruin and revenge, is the moral of the story and illustrates Danner’s lesson, that those who are fixated on controlling the dissemination of knowledge will eventually be brought down by their efforts.

DAVID ISAY—2000 FELLOW

David Isay is frequently described as an independent radio producer, a term that fails to describe his methods and achievement adequately. In announcing his fellowship, MacArthur said, “Isay incorporates impeccable craftsmanship and a strong social conscience into his first-person nonfiction storytelling,”⁵⁰ which comes closer to capturing the nature of his work but still falls significantly short. In fact, one of Isay’s key innovations has been to avoid a first-person presence and instead to remove himself from his accounts, an approach that he says he borrowed from literary journalist Joseph Mitchell.⁵¹

An example of a radio program that he consciously modeled after Mitchell’s work,⁵² from subject matter to presentation, is *The Sunshine Hotel*, which aired in late 1998 and described the inhabitants of a Bowery flophouse. Al-

though listeners may not recognize it on a first listening, the documentary unfolds as an epic descent into the netherworld. Like Medieval or Renaissance allegories, it is a tour of a frightening parallel world that includes an all-knowing guide. Moreover, it's structured within a matched set of opening and closing scenes, which record how tenants check in and check out.

The hotel manager serves as the piece's narrator and like Virgil in Dante's *Inferno*, he serves as tour guide, taking the listener from one part of the hotel to another and along the way introducing various residents. They tell their stories in highly condensed form, sometimes only a few sentences, that have been woven tightly together through Isay's precise and highly selective editing, a process that took seventy hours of raw tape and reduced it to less than half an hour. Isay, who once described himself as coming from "a family of therapists,"⁵³ has likened his work to sessions of talk therapy that take listeners to "places they probably wouldn't want to go."⁵⁴ In this case the trip seems to be through the back, dark spaces of the human psyche. The guests give the true accounts of their lives, but it is not hard to make the leap to understand them as representations of various personality disorders. There is, for example, Anthony "Fat Tony" Coppolla, a 420-pound example of the unconstrained id. His impulsive and uncontrollable eating has ballooned his body so that he can no longer wear regular clothes and instead covers himself with a sheet. Other residents of the hotel include a guitarist who compulsively plays the same the tune even while saying that he is writing new melodies in his head, and a Vietnam veteran who retreats into fantasy, elevating a routine run to the drugstore into a reenactment of a jungle patrol.

Just as Mitchell worked to create a literary experience in which the presence of the journalist has been minimized so as not to be a distraction to the reader,⁵⁵ Isay has developed a signature technique in which the radio story is told without intrusion by a journalistic narrator or interviewer. *The Sunshine Hotel* unfolds in exactly this way, with the hotel manager providing the narrative bridges and background information to round out the story. Isay's voice is never heard.

ADRIAN NICOLE LEBLANC—2006 FELLOW

Adrian Nicole LeBlanc's journey to a MacArthur fellowship was almost as ragged as the lives she describes in her book *Random Family*. As *New York* magazine noted, it "took 12 years, two agents, two publishers, five editors, and 16 grants"⁵⁶ for her original plan to write about the rise and fall of a \$1 million-a-week New York drug dealer named Boy George to evolve into a densely reported and evocatively written account of what her subtitle described as a story of "love, drugs, trouble, and coming of age in the Bronx."⁵⁷

LeBlanc's narrative reflects and reinforces the sense of disordered con-

nectedness that is her overwhelming theme. She starts the book with a portrait of Jessica, “a sixteen-year-old Puerto Rican girl”⁵⁸ who will become one of Boy George’s prime girlfriends but who eventually lands in jail and drops out of sight for many of the book’s forty-four chapters. LeBlanc introduces the teenager with a description of the way that she “radiated intimacy” with her “voluptuous shape”⁵⁹ and then lays out the complicated family milieu through which she travels, living with her mother, brother and two half-siblings as well as her mother’s live-in boyfriend. Jessica soon finds herself in jail, and the bulk of the rest of the book is devoted to Coco, who comes into the picture through her relationship with Jessica’s younger brother Cesar, the father of her first child and before long convicted and in prison for after accidentally killing a close friend.

Over the next decade and a half Jessica and Coco endure a series of setbacks, some of their own doing and some not. At times the structure of the book may seem no more than a mirror of the complications of their lives. But at the end of the book LeBlanc pairs a set of birthday parties, for the two women’s first-born daughters, to bring her story to a conclusion and to focus on the subtle but sure ways in which poverty can retain its grasp over people.

To celebrate that her daughter Serena has reached the age of sixteen with virginity intact, Jessica arranges for Serena and her friends to have a limo and driver for the evening. Automobiles are, of course, the kind of status detail that is often found in literary journalism. But in Serena’s case a limousine, far from being an indicator of financial freedom or upward mobility, demonstrates the way in which an impoverished imagination that is trapped in established routines can prove to be the greatest barrier to escape. The teenagers are enchanted with the idea of the limo but don’t know what to do with it. They direct the chauffeur to take them to Times Square, but once they arrive they can’t figure out where to go next. Ultimately they decide to return to Jessica’s old neighborhood in the Bronx, and upon arrival they undermine the whole idea of the limo by getting out to walk. Jessica is furious when she hears this.

Serena’s limo ride is the final action that LeBlanc includes in her reporting, but she does not present it as the final scene of her story. Instead the last chapter of the book backs up in time to recount an optimistic moment at the climax of a birthday party the year before for Mercedes, the first of Cesar and Coco’s daughters, a party held at the prison where Cesar is incarcerated. Thus the haphazard lives of Jessica and Coco and their families seem to be tied together through the enactment of family rituals that somehow manage to suggest a flicker of hope amidst great misery. But this is authorial sleight

of hand, as a consideration of the chronology reveals. The moment that ends the book is not, as it might first seem, a window to a brighter future. It is a memory—a way of showing how people without prospects are trapped within the past.

CONCLUSION

The MacArthur Foundation says that its awards are not so much for past achievement as for the promise of significant new accomplishments. But clearly the foundation relies on evidence of past achievement to make its assessment. This study suggests that the successful application of literary techniques that break from traditional standards of detachment and objectivity was at least a contributing factor in the selection of nearly a third of the eighteen fellows with journalism as their main “focus” who were picked in the first thirty years of the program. At least three other fellows made some use of literary techniques in the years prior to their selection while another used the MacArthur money to fund the reporting that helped provide a literary dimension to a policy study. Whether they were writing about the relationship between Renaissance art and jazz, the rituals that surround the *samba*, or the chaotic conditions faced by America’s urban underclass, the subject didn’t matter. They still approached the material with literary methods in mind.

These findings should lend impetus to G. Stuart Adam’s call for a reorientation of journalism, and journalism education, toward the humanities and away from the social sciences. Writing more than a decade ago, Adam argued that “it is time to start at the beginning, to incorporate an understanding of the creative process more fully into the study of journalism, and to equip students with more appropriate capacities of execution and judgment.”⁶⁰ Echoing Dewey, Adam emphasized the importance of incorporating “the spirit of art and the humanities”⁶¹ into journalism and the study of journalism.

But no one should be fooled into thinking that such a shift can be accomplished quickly or easily. The story of the MacArthur genius journalists is a story of arduous effort expended over long periods of time and involving a rare and meticulous level of craft. Journalism education, generally limited to courses offered by the quarter or semester, does not lend itself to this kind of activity, and most newsrooms are similarly biased toward shorter turnarounds. What this study highlights, however, is that for those who are willing to take on the challenges of literary journalism the rewards can, indeed, be rich. Perhaps the evidence presented here can contribute to the ongoing consideration of ways to move the study and appreciation of literary journalism away from the edges and closer to the core of an understanding of what makes great reporting great.

Miles Maguire is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, where he teaches writing, editing, and reporting. He wrote about the “fallacy of verification” in the fall 2009 issue of Literary Journalism Studies.



ENDNOTES

1. Although the MacArthur foundation does not apply the term “genius” to its fellows, the word has been associated with the program since before the first awards were made. See, for example, Barbara Kleban Mills, “Millionaire Rod MacArthur Is Looking for Geniuses with an Open Mind and Pocketbook,” *People*, 25 August 1980, 24.
2. John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, “MacArthur Fellows Program Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.macfound.org/site/c.lkLX8MQKrH/b.959481/k.2EF5/Fellows_FAQ.htm>. Retrieved 12 February 2011.
3. Ibid.
4. MacArthur, “Search All Fellows,” <http://www.macfound.org/site/c.lkLXJ8MQKrH/b.1139453/k.B938/Search_All_Fellows.htm>. Retrieved 13 February 2011.
5. MacArthur, “33 MacArthur Fellowships Announced by MacArthur Foundation,” 16 June 1992. Retrieved 12 February 2011. *LexisNexis Academic*.
6. Joshua Muravchik, “MacArthur’s Millions,” *The American Spectator*, January 1992. Retrieved 12 February 2011. *LexisNexis Academic*.
7. David Plotz, “Seven Ingenious Rules: How To Become a MacArthur Genius,” *Slate*, 25 September 2007. <<http://www.slate.com/id/2174676/>>. Retrieved 13 February 2011.
8. See, for example, Michael Schudson, *The Sociology of News* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2003).
9. Kathy Roberts Forde, *Literary Journalism on Trial: Masson v. New Yorker and the First Amendment* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 15.
10. Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), 567.
11. John C. Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism. The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

12. Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 12.
13. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927), 184.
14. Ivor Shapiro, Patrizia Albanese, and Leigh Doyle, "What Makes Journalism 'Excellent'? Criteria Identified by Judges in Two Leading Awards Programs," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31, no. 2 (2006). <<http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/1743/1855>>. Retrieved 13 February 2011.
15. Mitchell Stephens, "The Top 100 Works of Journalism in the United States in the 20th Century," New York University. <[http://www.nyu.edu/classes/stephens/Top 100 page.htm](http://www.nyu.edu/classes/stephens/Top%20100%20page.htm)>. Retrieved 13 February 2011.
16. Katherine Boo, "Forest Haven Is Gone, But the Agony Remains; District's Elaborate System of Group Homes Perpetuates Exploitation, Abuse of Retarded," *Washington Post*, 18 March 1999, A01.
17. Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 31–32.
18. Boo.
19. Stanley Crouch, *Notes of a Hanging Judge: Essays and Reviews, 1979–1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 242.
20. Crouch, 205.
21. Crouch, 244.
22. Thomas Whiteside, *Alone Through the Dark Sea* (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 131.
23. Ibid.
24. Whiteside, 174.
25. MacArthur, 1992.
26. Ibid.
27. Michael Massing, *The Fix* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 277.
28. Michael Massing, personal interview with the author, 20 June 2010.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927), 184.
32. Richard Critchfield, "Can Three Billion Peasants Be 'Covered?'" *Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February 1978.
33. Richard Critchfield, *Shabbat: An Egyptian* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1978), xiii.
34. Critchfield, xiv.
35. Critchfield, xiii–xiv.
36. Critchfield, 8.
37. Critchfield, 9.
38. Critchfield, 10.
39. Critchfield, 8.
40. Critchfield, 209.
41. Critchfield, 222–23.

42. Critchfield, 226.
43. Alma Guillermoprieto, *Samba* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 36.
44. Guillermoprieto, 16.
45. Guillermoprieto, 240.
46. Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 10.
47. Danner, 7.
48. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 1.
49. Danner, 161.
50. MacArthur, "25 MacArthur Fellowships Announced by MacArthur Foundation; One Phone Call, 500,000—No Strings Attached," 12 June 2000. Retrieved 19 July 2010. LexisNexis Academic.
51. David Stewart, "Audio producer David Isay: Curiosity . . . Respect . . . Trust," *Current*, 23 April 2001. Accessed 28 November 2010. <http://www.current.org/people/peop0108isay2.html>.
52. Stewart.
53. Melissa Ludtke, "Radio Documentaries Take Listeners into Dark Corners," *Nieman Reports*, Fall 2001. Accessed 28 November 2010. <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101584/Radio-Documentaries-Take-Listeners-Into-Dark-Corners.aspx>
54. David Isay, personal interview with author, 30 July 2010.
55. Sims, 177.
56. Melanie Thernstrom, "A Novel Idea," *New York*, 10 February 2003, <http://nymag.com/nymetro/arts/features/n_8307/>. Retrieved 16 February 2011.
57. Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx* (New York: Scribner, 2003).
58. LeBlanc, 3.
59. Ibid.
60. G. Stuart Adam, "Notes Toward a Definition of Journalism," in *Journalism: The Democratic Craft*, ed. G. Stuart Adam and Roy Peter Clark (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 366–67.
61. Adam, 367.

When a journalist's scholarly inquiry informs his literary journalism

What are the relations between the scholarship of literary journalism and the practice of literary journalism other than as one critiquing the other? To some that might be a recipe for a divided camp: The “Author” is one thing and the “Scholar” another, and never the twain shall meet. But Matthew Thompson, author of *My Colombian Death*, does both, and for him scholarly inquiry is an attempt to better understand his practice. Although he is an American national, he grew up in Australia and continues to live and work there—when he’s not traveling and gathering material for his next book. Currently, he is the foundation lecturer in Literary and Narrative Journalism at the Journalism and Media Research Centre of the University of New South Wales. No small influence on him has been the work of the American author and journalist William T. Vollmann. Starting on the following page, Thompson engages in an inquiry as to why Vollmann has been so important to him as a writer of literary journalism. This is followed by an excerpt from *My Colombian Death*, published by Pan Macmillan Australia in 2008.



Thompson

The editors

Outrider:

William T. Vollmann, Tony Tanner, and the Private Extremes of an Anti-Journalism

Matthew Thompson
University of New South Wales, Australia

*The private visions of William T. Vollman and other American authors
are part of an inherent resistance to how society seeks to “envision” us.*

One of Australia's most august newspapers, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, hired me as a trainee after I earned my baccalaureate. Yet newspaper reporting had never been my calling and I was not even a journalism graduate; my bachelor degree studies had been in modern history, literature (Shakespeare, the Romantic era, Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence), and creative writing. It was a thirst for capturing situation and character that I sought to bring to journalism—not the slavish devotion to daily jolts of news nor a relish for the reporters' culture that united many of my colleagues. I also had a hunger for adventure and risk, partly to find more realistic and exciting stories to tell and partly to meet my own psychological needs. I wanted to know the world, to know what history feels like, to know my limits and capabilities, and to write prose with longevity. The longer I endured the newspaper, battered by daily deadlines and chafing at the bit of the institutional culture of caution, seniority, and media groupthink, the more I found my mind returning to the long and anarchic, adventurous, anti-journalism of William T. Vollmann. Inspired by Vollmann, I started spending my annual vacations in the armed conflicts of the southern Philippines, writing long freelance magazine stories that were gratifying for me but that did not endear me to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Eventually I resigned, went to Colombia to immerse myself in the country's tensions and joys, wrote a book about it, and completed a doctorate in creative arts. Now I write reportage and work in academia. My attitude to Vollmann has matured and grown more complicated, but he will always be there at the start of my lunatic ambitions.

Regarding being both author and scholar—that dual existence is very important to me, as I explore in the following.

I believe in the American myth that it is both admirable and even possible to devote one's life to a private dream. The probability of failing oneself, either through laziness, incompetence or bad luck, or else, worse yet, through dreaming what one only *imagined* one desired, is terrifying. All the same, *you had no more obligation* to public dreams which dreamed you wrongly.

William T. Vollmann, *from Riding
Toward Everywhere. Italics in original.*

In the early 1990s, I was keenly aware that American alternative culture was rising fast, with much of its often raw and uncompromising writing and music breaking through to popular success. One of the American magazines putting considerable resources into capturing the tumult was *Spin*, which had been founded in 1985. *Spin's* in-depth reportage in the early to mid-1990s was aggressively global. One of *Spin's* two staff journalists through this period was William Tanner Vollmann. A Californian with a growing reputation as a member of America's literary avant garde, Vollmann had published postmodernist fiction, semi-fiction, and an experimental memoir about trying to embed himself with anti-Soviet mujahedin in Afghanistan in the early 1980s.

I don't remember whether it was before or after I skimmed Vollmann's fiction and dismissed it as obtuse and pretentious that I discovered his reportage while reading *Spin*. It struck me as far more compelling, and I have never forgotten the peculiar mix of intrigue and annoyance and then the jolt I felt reading his article, "The War Never Came Here."¹

Published in *Spin* in 1994, this curious dispatch from the war in the former Yugoslavia was unlike any other I had read. Much of the Yugoslav coverage fed readily into common narratives of moral outrage, or, on the other hand, was detached and analytical, examining the origins and context of the conflict. Vollmann's "essay . . . about extremists," as he describes it, was in neither of these camps.²

"The War Never Came Here" is novella length, and stands apart through its meandering, idiosyncratic, and even contrarian first-hand dispatch from the conflict. Rather than offering a witnessing of the war's headline events or delivering a dramatic revelation or expose, Vollmann floats within and around the moods and psychologies at play in the conflict.

In fact, Vollmann's first-person coverage borders on the perversely contrarian. The supporting character clearly closest to his heart is a belligerent,

ultra-nationalist Serbian femme fatale, Vineta, aged twenty-two, a volunteer soldier who served in the notorious 1991 Serbian conquest of the Croatian city of Vukovar. The bitterly resisted but successful siege was carried out by the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav National Army with Serbian paramilitary support, and it happened only a few months after Croatia's declaration of independence from Belgrade. The Serbian forces' ruthlessness and atrocities set the tone for another four years of hate-fuelled fighting in the Balkans; fighting studded with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and massacres since deemed acts of genocide by the International Court of Justice.³

Vineta is a paid interpreter for Vollmann, then aged thirty-four, who introduces her to his readers with, "Fiercely frightening, beautiful, racist, loyal, proud, honest and filled with hate, Vineta is my friend."⁴ And, writing at a time when the violent excesses of Serbian nationalism had provoked no shortage of international outrage, Vollmann mentions that Vineta is a member of the Serbian Radical Party, "perhaps the most extreme political group in Serbia."⁵

Furthermore, unlike many of his peers who customarily ranked the moral responsibility for the killing by pointing the finger firstly at Serb nationalists and opportunists, then, to a lesser extent, at Croatian nationalists and the politically naïve Bosnian Muslims, Vollmann does not assign responsibility, even if "the first thing we like to know about somebody else's war is whom to blame." Indeed, he then writes that his view, albeit one "not especially popular," is that "it doesn't matter who is to blame."⁶

Vollmann's unwillingness or inability to lay blame for such widespread death and suffering exacerbates the diffused, almost expressionist quality of a scattered, often non linear, non chronological narrative in which inconclusive, paranoia-fuelling interviews with mercenaries, civilians, politicians, militiamen, academics—traumatized conspirators of all Yugoslav persuasions—are interwoven with the author's observations, memories, sexual longings, and his entanglement with Vineta.

When I bought the magazine in 1994 and saw it had a report from the former Yugoslavia, I was expecting a conventional witnessing of the war: first-hand news from the front.

Instead, in a kind of anti-journalism, Vollmann was delivering endless conversations, second-hand accounts and ugly rumors, punctuated by his repeated admissions of not knowing or having seen the truth, nor even feeling the need to discover the truth. Here is a selection:

What Vukovar meant to the Serbs I never learned, because they refused to talk about it, except for Vineta, whom I never asked . . . I had no right to disturb her tortured memories. Nor was there any need to know.⁷

Another Croat told me he'd just heard a story about a division of Afghans who'd come to fight against HVO, the Bosnian Croat army. . . . This story may or may not have been true.⁸

Vineta . . . believed that all the articles about rape camps were lies, as perhaps they are or aren't since I've never seen one.⁹

Vollmann started to strike me as a bold amateur: he had the nerve to wander in dangerous places but lacked the professional journalist's relentless drive to see and know.¹⁰ Then, in a new section titled: "Mostar: Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina; Casualties," Vollmann abruptly makes the war real and the article, to my mind, unforgettable.

Vollmann opens this section saying he feels compelled to visit Sarajevo because he has recently received a please-help-me letter (posted eighteen months earlier) from a woman he knows in the besieged Bosnian capital. The mission irritates Vineta, who sneers about "my [Vollmann's] Muslim bitch."¹¹

A Serbo-Croatian-speaking high school friend of Vollmann's named Francis Tomasic is accredited for the war zone by *Spin* at Vollmann's request, and joins the writer for the Sarajevo trip. After twice being bumped from U.N. flights to Sarajevo, Vollmann and Tomasic rent a car and set out to drive there from Split, a Croatian port city on the Dalmatian coast.

Typical of Vollmann's disjointed narrative, he gives no indication as to how he got to Split from Serbia or how he knew or met a third American, Will Brinton, who joins the *Spin* pair for the drive. Nor do we learn why Brinton is there. The article's inconclusive, episodic, often creepy but rarely dramatic style to this point gives the starkness of what happens next a terrible power, when, "for reasons which it's now simpler to forget, we took the wrong road from Mostar."¹²

With Brinton driving them down a road along the lip of a dam, Tomasic a passenger in the front and Vollmann in the back, the trio are chatting and joking in their rented Peugeot when:

The first explosion smashed through the windshield. . . . I can no longer remember whether the second explosion came just before or just after Francis's two screams, short and shrill and horrible with what I took at that moment to be only panic. Now I understand that the war had finally caught up with us.¹³

Likewise, the war now has the reader. So startled was I in 1994 to drift into this account of the killing of Tomasic and Brinton right there in the car with Vollmann (who suffers slight shrapnel injuries) that I flicked back to the start of the article to look for reporters' customary foreshadowing of brutal-

ly dramatic content. I reread the opening with its almost sepia toned, World War II-style scene of Vollmann crossing between countries in war-torn Europe and handing his passport to a sneering border guard to be stamped, but there was no clue of the immediate, headlining horror to come:

Seeing Will's bald head slumped forward with bright blood on it and spatters of dark blood on the ceiling and sun visor, seeing two holes like bullet holes in the windshield—all this now in less than half a second—I flung myself down on the floor, certain that a sniper had just killed Will and Francis had fainted . . . of course I could not believe that my friend of almost twenty years was dead. Just then I noticed that the car was motionless, and probably had been for some seconds. I shouted to Will to drive on, but of course he did not answer . . . there was a smell like the smell at a rifle range, except that it had perhaps more of a scorched quality than gunpowder usually did. The smell lingered and thickened in the car, even though the windows were down. Now I heard soldiers shouting something from the Muslim side, and then there was laughter. Not far away at all, and that was when I felt a ball of terror in my stomach. . . . More laughter, deep and relaxed.¹⁴

Brinton's corpse "began to vomit in long moans, the same sort of moans that I have heard a walrus make when it is shot."¹⁵ The dead Tomasic is motionless. A group of Muslim militiamen approach and after discovering the victims are American, not Croatian, they help Vollmann from the car. Vollmann pulls the bodies out, lays them on the ground and photographs them. Eventually, Spanish peacekeepers come to collect him and the dead.

This ordeal elevated "The War Never Came Here" from merely a beguiling but frustrating piece of reportage to being, for me, an unforgettable article. I have read countless dispatches from wars and several accounts of journalists being killed at work, but none like this. Certainly none where a surviving companion, a war correspondent who places himself in such terrible risk in the service of his craft, not only declines to dress the fate of his companions with purpose and meaning, but writes, "I'd known from the very first, of course, that my two friends had died for nothing."¹⁶

Vollmann, however, ignores their sacrificial role in grounding and empowering "The War Never Came Here" as a layered work of troubling literary reportage. In a sense, Tomasic and Brinton died for literature.

Conventional journalism claims to overtly explain and clarify the given subject matter. Ideally, it informs its audience about people, events or arguments with accuracy, balance and whatever degree of comprehensiveness is possible given the limits of resources and word counts or airtime. Conventional journalism fits well with Northrop Frye's assertions about non-literary writing:

In descriptive or assertive writing the final direction is outward. Here the verbal structure is intended to represent things external to it, and it is valued in terms of the accuracy with which it does represent them. Correspondence between phenomenon and verbal sign is truth; lack of it is falsehood; failure to connect is tautology, a purely verbal structure that cannot come out of itself.¹⁷

Literature, on the other hand, is a realm where “the standards of outward meaning are secondary, for literary works do not pretend to describe or assert, and hence are not true, not false.” In a definition fitting Vollmann’s article, Frye argues:

In literature, questions of fact or truth are subordinated to the prime literary aim of producing a structure of words for its own sake, and the sign-values of symbols are subordinated to their importance as a structure of interconnecting motifs.¹⁸

Vollmann largely absents himself from questions of truth or fact. Instead of pursuing verifiable details and other concrete components of “descriptive or assertive writing [in which] the final direction is outward,” Vollmann—who inhabits the story as one of its mysteries rather than being simply its chronicler—focuses relentlessly on elements of psychology, mood, and other intangibles, which provide the atmosphere for his “structure of interconnecting motifs.”

After the deaths in the car, Vollmann, the protagonist and survivor, drifts in an altered state in which the devices and qualities of literature overwhelm the article. Vollmann and his psychic wounds infuse all we encounter. In one scene, for example, a woman takes his hands and asks Jesus to rain his sacred blood upon them. Speaking in tongues, she draws Vollmann into a rapture, which he likens to an experience taking the drug ecstasy with a woman he loved, when, “it was as if all the nerve endings in my hands suddenly sprouted a million clitorises.” The woman’s sensual rapture brings a sense of forgiveness, Vollmann writes, something he needs after Tomasic’s death: “Of course I felt guilty. Any survivor would. Francis had been working for me, so maybe I was responsible for him; there were certainly those who thought so.”¹⁹

Who thought so, and what did they say? Vollmann doesn’t tell. Instead, he teases the reader much as he does when he raises and then dismisses the critical question of why he and his companions were driving on a road the U.N. has said was marked as mined: “for reasons which it’s now simpler to forget, we took the wrong road from Mostar.”²⁰

Vollmann is as determined as the caustic Yugoslavs he quotes to cling to his own vision of the conflict. The war must remain unfathomable with death the only certainty. Vollmann and his responses are primarily artistic, not journalistic.

PARANOID FREEDOM

Literary analysis has relatively little to say about journalism and its author-protagonists. When a work of nonfiction attracts critical assessment, the work's information or arguments generally take center stage. Reviews and evaluations of journalistic works focus primarily on the subject matter and how adequately or logically it is presented—with its style (or, I prefer, its soul or consciousness) relegated to the more expendable realm of how badly or well the information is delivered. Yet, Vollmann's nonfiction rewards literary analysis and given the grave personal risks that he endures and exhibits—often less in the service of conventional journalistic revelation of facts and connected data, and more to gratify his literary and psychological needs—the analysis is well-suited to a more traditionally fiction-oriented focus on the author-protagonist's personality and negotiations of risk and responsibility. Indeed, Vollmann's radical individualism places him in currents explored by British critic Tony Tanner in *City of Words: American Fiction 1950–1970*.

Tanner writes in his prefatory note that his aim in *City of Words* is to “understand the American imagination” (*italics in original*) as expressed by authors through a period in which the individualistic streak in U.S. literature turned paranoid, developing an often deeply anti-social, anti-governmental consciousness.²¹ The contrarian nature of the literature's psychology—the compulsion to “resist and extrude” the mentalities at play around the authors²²—grew as a shadow to the Romanticism and Transcendentalism that had long flourished in American arts.

Tanner writes, “there is an abiding dream in American literature that an unpatterned, unconditioned life is possible, in which your movements and stillnesses, choices and repudiations are all your own.”²³ The libertarian Vollmann, a husband and father who is also an unabashed patron and enthusiast of prostitutes, as well as a freewheeling freight-train hopper, certainly ignores politically correct social conventions and laws with good cheer in the quest for an authentic life.²⁴ Yet twinned with his bravado—and perhaps driving much of its openly masochistic expressions—is anger. In his book about hopping freight trains, *Riding Toward Everywhere*, Vollmann writes with venom about the growing intrusiveness of the state:

As I get older I find myself getting angrier and angrier. Doubtless change itself, not to mention physical decline and inevitable petty tragedies of disappointed expectations, would have made for resentment in any event; but I used to be a passive schoolboy, my negative impulses turned obediently inward. Now I gaze around this increasingly un-American America of mine, and I rage.²⁵

“So many of these developments are well-meaning,” continues Voll-

mann, before complaining about seat belts on school buses, pedophile paranoia, anti curb-crawling laws, motels wanting identification from guests, border security, and other ways in which, “Year by year, those good Germans march deeper into my life.”

Vollmann misses few chances to push back, even—or especially—when it slows queues, provokes more intrusive scrutiny from America’s “good Germans,” and embarrasses his companions: “I used to be with a woman who would plead with me to *play the game a little*, I was doing this to myself, she said. But I figured that they were doing it to me” (italics in the original).²⁶

To accept and collaborate with society’s constraints and impingements—“to play the game”—is to have one’s individuality reduced, Vollmann argues. It is to give one’s authenticity away, and the path to reclaiming authenticity lies through flouting society’s constraints:

Every time I surrender, even necessarily, to authority which disregardingly or contemptuously violates me, so I violate myself. Every time I break an unnecessary law, doing so for my own joy and to the detriment of no other human being, so I regain myself, and become strong in the parts of me that the security man can never see.²⁷

In Tanner’s analysis, Vollmann would find plenty of company in his belief that “they” are a force to be recognized and resisted. Tanner surveys the psychological landscape of work by Saul Bellow, William Burroughs, Joseph Heller, Ken Kesey, Norman Mailer, Sylvia Plath, Thomas Pynchon, John Updike, and several other writers of the period, and finds a marked paranoia about control. Tanner examines at length the theme that accepting life as it is served up is to be hoodwinked, to be conned into surrendering one’s opportunities for freedom. To be content with what one is served up in life is to be blind to the erosive manipulations of civilization. These forces are a primary source of antagonism in U.S. writing for just as there is the “abiding dream . . . that an unpatterned, unconditioned life is possible,” there is an accompanying “American dread that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous.”²⁸ Vollmann’s nonfiction career is an obsessive’s war against such patterning, and against its accomplices in the self: inertia, self-doubt, and repulsion from the abject or strange. This is a man who—ever determined to help all manner of people (even 1990s Serbs) see each other as real and worthy of respect—makes his little daughter shake the excrement-smearred hands of homeless men he lets sleep in the yard of their Sacramento home.²⁹ To Vollmann, our default consciousness is too often a wilful ignorance; a readiness to “play the game” as laid down by others. These games can be political: in his 2002 speech, “Some Thoughts on the

Value of Writing During Wartime,” Vollmann argues that he is not necessarily opposed to the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq—a country he has visited as a journalist—but to endorse it he would need a more convincing narrative than the U.S. government has so far supplied. To Vollmann, Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis are being presented to Americans as “flat characters,” like villains and victims in crime fiction. Vollmann’s complaint is that crime fiction is a genre which does not aim to capture the unpredictable, unresolvable, often counter intuitive nature of reality, but instead seeks to slot people in to serve the plot:

Life is less simple than it seems, which means that a government which tells its citizens that the world is black and white is not lying, necessarily, but at best it’s a Raymond Chandler government, whose characters will use their skills, if they possess any, to move the story toward a predetermined result.³⁰

Vollmann along with Tanner’s authors share a dread of “predetermined results,” not only in terms of foreign policy or politics in general, but in a personal, existential sense. To surrender through ignorance or impotence to a prepackaged life, or what Tanner describes as “the cycle of conditioned action,” is to betray and abandon one’s authentic even if as yet undiscovered self.³¹ In a passage about fears of formlessness and nonidentity explored in James Purdy’s *Cabot Wright Begins*, Tanner writes that the American protagonist is often caught between the fear of never knowing how best to live and the fear of being corralled into an inauthentic mode of living; a manipulation into someone else’s structures and narratives: “In the name of liberty these armatures, or imposed outlines, or the constructions other people build around us are to be cast off or broken through.”³²

Vollmann’s iconoclastic contrarianism aims at life’s traps and illusions, and tries to break out of them into the authentic; the real. Many moments in the authenticity-obsessed *Riding Toward Everywhere* become opportunities to reflect on breaking through:

On the pallid sand I saw a lump of obsidian, perhaps dropped here by a Paiute hunter a century ago or more; for that stone does not naturally occur here. I ran my hand over its smooth, almost soapy facets. Its weight in my hand was insistent. I could handle it and experience it, but it kept itself within itself, as did the night which was now a moment away. What if I smashed it with a hammer? What if I could smash the night? Would I see within or between its shards the *hereness* that I had failed to determine in the day? (*italics in original*).³³

Like the obsidian lump; like John Updike’s Harry “Rabbit” Angstrom in *Rabbit, Run*, Kurt Vonnegut’s Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse 5*, Joseph Hel-

ler's Yossarian in *Catch-22*, William Burrough's ever restless junkies, queers, and outlaws, and like all the other fleet-footed protagonists of Tanner's authors, Vollmann finds himself dumped some unknown distance from where he "naturally occurs." In *Riding Toward Everywhere*, Vollmann riffs on the disorientation of the long-term quester:

Who am I? Where am I? I know less and less certainly, if I ever did at all, to where this grassy, shadowy world is rushing. I sit perpetually immobile within my spinning blood, at home nowhere and never anything but lost.³⁴

Such American protagonists keep society and its group compromises and group corruptions, its soporific effects and creeping spiritual death, at arm's length in order to remain sane and find their true homes. Yet, by doing so, they risk a compounding misery and estrangement: what if their self-belief is misplaced and their romantic mission a failure driven by little more than deluded arrogance?

Tanner sees a determinedly antisocial quality as central to U.S. literature and the paranoid individualism of its literary writers. After quoting Saul Bellow's protagonist, Augie March, about humanity's relentless efforts to defeat dissenting views of reality, Tanner writes: "One of the main struggles of the American writer is to hold out against all such recruiting assaults on his own consciousness, if only to secure space in which to experience his own powers of mental arrangement and construction." This fits well the awkward contrarianism of Vollmann, as does Tanner's comment on social distances: "Loss of communication rather than loss of private vision is an option many American writers have preferred."³⁵

Vollmann reveals more of his life's toll on himself and his family in *Riding Towards Everywhere* than he does in his other nonfiction, expressing self-loathing and admitting his wife has asked for a divorce. In the chapter in which his thoughts run to hammering the night open, Vollmann mentions the self-doubt that plagues those who exit society's "dream":

I believe in the American myth that it is both admirable and even possible to devote one's life to a private dream. The probability of failing oneself, either through laziness, incompetence or bad luck, or else, worse yet, through dreaming what one only *imagined* one desired, is terrifying. All the same, *you had no more obligation* to public dreams which dreamed you wrongly (italics in original).³⁶

Vollmann and all the protagonists of Tanner's analysis suffer these terrors, and all keep rejecting those "public dreams which dreamed you wrongly." At the most charismatic, most sociable end of Tanner's survey sits Randle McMurphy, the doomed hero of Ken Kesey's 1962 debut, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Despite the rebel in the asylum's relentless self-

assertion, his humor and casual stoicism, Kesey gradually reveals American literature's maverick extraordinaire to be tired to his bones. Not only does clinging to a private dream in the face of institutionalized malevolence wear McMurphy down, it ultimately robs him of autonomy by locking him into a performance, or pattern. When McMurphy is eventually overwhelmed and beaten to the ground by wardens in the book's final round of hostilities before he is lobotomized, the free man is spent:

He let himself cry out: A sound of cornered-animal fear and hate and surrender and defiance, that if you ever trailed coon or cougar or lynx is like the last sound the treed and shot and falling animal makes as the dogs get him, when he finally doesn't care any more about anything but himself and his dying.³⁷

Perhaps this is what free-minded Americans sound like when they go down: recall Vollmann's description in "The War Never Came Here" of the mortally wounded Brinton making "the same sort of moans that I have heard a walrus make when it is shot."³⁸ Or perhaps—and remembering Kesey's narrator is the Chief, a Native American who roamed free until modern, white America dreamed him wrongly—in such literature it takes someone with the experience and instincts of a natural, instinct-centered life to recognize the beast that surfaces in us at the moment of death. Throughout his nonfiction, Vollmann is fond of reminding the reader that he has seen armed conflict, urban anarchy, joined indigenous hunting parties, braved the Arctic, deserts, jungles, and mountains, and witnessed or approached the human condition at its most exotic and stretched. Vollmann also makes no secret of his enthusiasm for guns, even complaining about his father's stance against civilian gun ownership.³⁹ The crack-smoking, freight-train-hopping, whore-worshipping, gun-toting chronicler of the world's margins is determined to live in a world where instinct outranks social mores. "I believe in violent self-defense," says Vollmann, who takes pride in his armory and ideologically justifies the toll in gun crime and accidents ensuing from the proliferation of guns in America:

I believe in freedom of choice for everybody, which entails immense risks. Often people abuse the power that comes with freedom. Either way, society pays a tremendous cost. We pay for our gun violence and we are paying an ever more immense cost for the repressive policies of our government.⁴⁰

The libertarian Vollmann opens *Riding Toward Everywhere* with a discussion of how the American spirit has withered since his father was growing up; since the days when Americans—white Americans, he qualifies—were more self-reliant and spoke their minds without giving a damn what anyone thought. "My grandfather's time must have been even more individualistic," Vollmann writes. The lost age of standing up for yourself without a second

thought and doing as you want without worrying about offending people or appearing eccentric (or drawing the ire of security officials) was an era when to be an American was “to be yourself.”⁴¹

One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest is the story of a man from such an era colliding with civilization’s totalitarian-leaning modernity—or the “Combine” as the Chief calls it—which employs regulation, fear, peer pressure, pharmaceuticals, and every other available instrument of social engineering, law enforcement, and mood control to devitalize people and enforce conformity. Tanner writes, “McMurphy speaks an older American language of freedom, unhindered movement, self-reliance, anarchic humor and a trust in the more animal instincts.”⁴²

This archaic dialect is a siren for Vollmann. He allows that his critique of America is “fundamentally incoherent,” given the more naked abuses of power that plagued the older U.S., but concludes: “All I know is that although I live a freer life than many people, I want to be freer still; I’m sometimes positively dazzled with longing for a better way of being.”⁴³

In an appendix to *City of Words*, Tanner surveys ideas from American academics who published in the 1950s and 1960s on the struggle between the self and culture. Tanner opens the appendix with a quote from Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man*: “The nature of our society is such that we are prevented from knowing who we are.”⁴⁴ Society—with its habit, as Vollmann writes, of “dreaming us wrongly”—can distort both our view of ourselves and our view of others; it can trap us with its infectious, aggressive patterning.

In *Riding Toward Everywhere*, Vollmann laments: “My darling America has become a humpyard where cars and citizens can be nudged down the hill onto various classification tracks. I’ve got to get out of here.”⁴⁵ Vollmann is so determined to remain free of society’s normalizing forces that he accepts lower than usual royalty rates in exchange for the right not to have his manuscripts edited. Publishers may give their views, but “it’s very rare that I agree with suggestions to cut,” says Vollmann.⁴⁶

The problematic idiosyncrasies of Vollmann’s writing have been noted by publishers when rejecting his manuscripts, but his strategy seems to be to keep the manuscripts coming fast and shop them around until someone buys one either on the love of it or on his “fiercely original” reputation. A 1983 letter from Austin Olney of Houghton Mifflin rejecting the *An Afghanistan Picture Show* manuscript offers telling observations:

We’ve now had a chance to give careful consideration to your book on Afghanistan. Certainly your journey there was a remarkable one as was your

boldness in making it. Our problems with the manuscript are not so much with the keenness of your perceptions as with what we feel is the nature of your presentation. You write well and can bring a scene to life in a graceful way, but the changes in point of view and style and the abrupt transition in tone and mood, combined with a pretty relaxed narrative and thematic organization tend, in our opinion, to make the book more a collection of fragments rather than a unified story.⁴⁷

A rejection letter earlier that year from Esther Whitby of Andre Deutsch tells Vollmann that the company gave his manuscript to two readers:

One was very enthusiastic about the thing itself but cautious about its saleability. The other was less wholehearted—this reader was particularly irritated by the device of referring to yourself in the third person and felt you had promised conclusions which you failed to draw.⁴⁸

References to the “Young Man” are indeed grating, and perhaps the greatest broken promise of the narrative comes at the climax in Afghanistan. Less than ten pages from the end of the narrative (but not the book, which boasts another twenty pages of letters, sources, and a chronology of Afghan history) comes the long-awaited battle. Described in a single paragraph, it is shorter than Vollmann’s subsequent account of trudging back to Pakistan and includes a refusal to tell more of what happened. On reading it I felt like throwing the book in the garbage. Nevertheless, the scene helps us draw conclusions about Vollmann. Here it is in its entirety:

Ahead of them, at the summit of the red hill, there was a flash. Poor Man had begun to fire. The boy who carried the rocket launcher ran up to Poor Man, smiling happily. A Soviet shell exploded loudly somewhere near them. The Young Man felt cold. He looked around him. All his companions were happy. Another shell landed, flinging stones. While the boy prepared the rocket launcher, the other Mujahideen began to fire. They shot beyond themselves, like the snap of the slide projector in darkness as he advanced the carousel, letting image after image tumble down into the abyss of light (more than ten seconds’ exposure is said to put the transparency at risk of fading, and now it has been eleven years!), and the Mujahideen fired in this long moment that was the reason that I came; I don’t want or need to say much more about it; they were fighting and I was not; they were accomplishing the purpose of their lives in those endless night moments of happiness near death, no fear in them as I honestly believe; they had crossed their river so long ago that I could not really comprehend them as anything except heroes like Erica on the far side of the water; they were over the hill and nothing else mattered.⁴⁹

To clarify some of the references, Poor Man is Vollmann’s name for the mujahedin commander, and Erica is Vollmann’s ex-girlfriend. Vollmann’s re-

fusal to explain or depict what happened “in this long moment that was the reason that I came” is perhaps the paramount example in his writing of his choice to flout obligations to the reader. For better or worse, the battle is to a large part the reason that the reader came, too, and it is exasperating that Vollmann abruptly shrugs off his responsibility to bring the reader through the experience. It makes me wonder if Vollmann invented the scene but perhaps felt too guilty about doing so to write it convincingly. Nevertheless, whether or not we believe Vollmann was on a red hill in 1982 with guerrillas snapping away like a slide projector at the Red Army, this passage illuminates his anti-social nature.⁵⁰

When Vollmann was asked (in 1990) to list his favorite contemporary authors, he said—his uncommonly expansive understanding of “contemporary” stretching into the nineteenth century—that “[Ernest] Hemingway is usually a wonderful read, especially *Islands in the Stream* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*—that is to say, the grandly suicidal narratives.”⁵¹ The suicidal narrative is a teleological end point to Vollmann; a discontent’s aggressively imagined destiny. Barely knowing the Afghans who humored him, Vollmann claims they felt no fear in combat and were even “accomplishing the purpose of their lives in those endless night moments of happiness near death.” If Vollmann stayed in any one place with any one group of people long enough for an osmosis to set in then he might be something of a credible source on the feelings and motivations of his companions, but as it is the story seems determinedly his own. And that story is death bound; it is the unfolding of the *Todestrieb*. In *Riding Toward Everywhere*, Vollmann muses on the idea that all dreams of a better place or better time are delusions:

Reconsidered in this light, Hemingway’s great novels, which all revolve around journeys, bear ominous witness; for it can be argued that each journey is a quest for death. . . . It was the journey itself, with its hardships, triumphs, puzzles and unexpected joys that made these books alive in the first place. Their tragedies do not negate that life, but Hemingway is more deeply morbid than most people know, and so they complete it.⁵²

Vollmann writes over and over in his freight-train-hopping paean to escapism, *Riding Toward Everywhere*, that he longs to exist in a better—less limiting—time or place (the transcendental “Everywhere” of the title); a longing he says Hemingway shared, and that Hemingway ultimately felt was hopeless. He points to the deaths common to Hemingway’s protagonists and to the author’s inability to finish *The Last Good Country*, asking why all Hemingway’s paths of glory led to the grave:

The answer must be that Hemingway could not bring Everywhere into

a more than temporary glimmer of being. There might have been somewhere to go beyond out of here, but even if he found it, he could not keep it. When I imagine him fitting that double-barreled shotgun against his head, I wish for him what I do for all his heroes when they reach their final page: *the sudden feeling of release and freedom when the last caboose whipped past.*⁵³ [The section Vollmann italicizes is a quote from Thomas Wolfe.]

ATOMIZATION AND THE DOCUMENTARY IMPULSE

In *City of Words*, Tanner explores the sense of America as an atomized, relatively rootless community in terms of how it shapes the work of U.S. authors, contrasting it to the more socially grounded psychology of European authors:

The European writer usually seems to have felt more firmly embedded in his given environment than his American counterpart; to have been more sure of his language and his society, using the former to speak about the latter with more confidence and insight even if he feels alienated from the prevailing structures. If anything, it is the instability of language and society which has more often made itself felt to the American writer.⁵⁴

Much the same can be said of Vollmann. His use of language in fiction is more unstable—more experimental⁵⁵—than in his reportage, which is sufficiently copy edited to be reasonably straightforward for publishing in magazines such as *Spin*, *Esquire*, and the *New Yorker*. Nevertheless, the psychology is constant and even in his nonfiction he presents the U.S. as an unstable and often hollow society. In a section of *Rising Up and Rising Down* entitled “Definitions for Lonely Atoms,” Vollmann writes of walking in parks at night with a pistol in his pocket, bracing for muggers to test him. His America is splintered into dead ends of ignorance, fear, need, and greed; a land divided into parallel universes of wise losers (such as street prostitutes, drug addicts, skinheads, subsistence-level immigrants) adrift amidst a majority of dumb winners (the rich and blank consumers). Asked why he lives where he does (Sacramento, California), Vollmann says it was his wife’s choice not his and then lists a few other places he has lived, before declaring, “I’m really from the sidewalk. I’m from everywhere. I’m just a typical rootless American.”⁵⁶

With a far less solid and ordered sense of civilization than their counterparts in older, more mature societies, many American authors work as explorers even at home, issuing wide-eyed dispatches from eternally strange lands. Tanner writes that while these authors—born as they are into America’s faith in limitless horizons—regard the world’s mysteries as forever beyond the capacity of language to capture,⁵⁷ they also have “established an authentically realistic (at times documentary) literary tradition.”⁵⁸

Vollmann has come to exemplify this American divide to an almost exag-

gerated degree. An often taxonomic writer, particularly in such auto-didactically sociological books as *Poor People* and *Rising Up and Rising Down*, Vollmann crowds even his fiction with footnoting, glossaries, and appendices. His World War II novel, *Europe Central*, contains fifty-nine pages of annotated sources and acknowledgements. The list of sources opens with a near apology for the book being a work of fiction, yet an apology Vollmann qualifies with claims to have grounded almost everything in exhaustive historical accuracy. He even pre-emptively seeks to snuff out doubts readers may have about his portrait of wartime Germany or the Soviet Union, writing that “the social systems described here, together with all their institutions and atrocities, derive entirely from the historical record.”⁵⁹ Apparently oblivious to the different merits and attributes of novels and histories, Vollmann seems intent on standing above contemporary “postmodern” culture and its writers whom he has accused of being ignorant of life’s “body of facts”⁶⁰ as they casually pluck cultural references from here, there, and everywhere.

Vollmann’s first novel, *You Bright and Risen Angels*, is his only overtly artificial work of fiction—being the story of revolutionary insects that exist only in the virtual world of computer software—and it is his only book that he has since belittled, telling the *New York Times* that it is “a kid’s book—it was too easy to go on and on and have a good time making things up.”⁶¹ Vollmann’s “adult” imperative to impress his research upon readers is a prime example of what Tanner sees as a longstanding trait of American writing:

Since the time of the Puritans, there has been a strong tendency for Americans to regard the fictional as the false, the made thing as the mendacious thing, at least in the realm of art and when viewing the customs and manners of society. . . . Where another civilization might celebrate man’s powers of fabrication and his ability to supplement the given world with his own creations, there is a traditional line of American thought which suspects that these powers and abilities might be cutting man off from ‘reality’—reality being whatever was there before man started heaping up his fictions on it.⁶²

Vollmann is clearly obsessed with being a documentarian. Yet in his non-fiction, sustained and convincing immersions in the lives and places of others are absent, and this is where he diverges from many of the more traditional examples of literary journalism, given that “immersion” journalism has been identified as one criterion for the form,⁶³ and hence why, once again, his is a kind of anti-journalism. Vollmann himself is the object of interest: his bravado displays of literary and historical knowledge matched with relentless skid-row globetrotting serving primarily to create on the page an experience of the isolated, nomadic quality of his intellect. He can have fascinating in-

sights and modes of thought, but the settings and characters around him are too thin and inorganic to care about.

In the introduction to his global nonfiction exploration of poverty, *Poor People*, Vollmann acknowledges the thinness but argues conveniently, if somewhat unconvincingly, that it “enhances the truth” of his book:

My own interpretation of how this book’s heroes and heroines see themselves is damaged by the brevity of our acquaintance, which in most cases endured a week or less. I know how little I know. All the same, these snapshots of the ways in which certain poor people experienced their poverty at random moments bear meaning of inexpressible value to me; I’ve been able to pore over them long after my interviewees forgot me and spent the money I gave them. The impossibility of my gaining any dynamic understanding of these lives over time, my very lack of relevance to them, may enhance the truth of this presentation—for what do I have to prove? How could I be fatuous enough to hope to “make a difference”? I’m left with nothing to honorably attempt, but to *show* and *compare* to the best of my ability.⁶⁴ (Italics in original.)

Vollmann’s claim that it would be impossible to gain a “dynamic understanding” of his subjects could perhaps be debunked by spending more than “a week or less” with his subjects. Yet the author claims not to have time to slow down—there is always too much else to learn. Making his argument conveniently exaggerated about why he didn’t get to know the social role of Burma’s drug lord and leader of the breakaway Shan region, Khun Sa, better than he did in order to write more accurately about the man and his popular support, Vollmann is nevertheless faithful to his working rationale as a nomadic discontent when he writes:

. . . did he truly lead a Shan liberation movement? I saw only the tiniest piece of Shan State; I could not say for sure how many supported and revered him. The fact that almost everybody I met praised him before he could possibly have known that I was coming suggests that he truly was well regarded. But again, he himself I met only once. Had I limited myself to writing about Khun Sa over the past decade, I would no doubt have known more about him than I do. But then I would have known less about the Khmer Rouge. . . . I chose broad knowledge, not deep.⁶⁵

Sidestepping his argument’s spurious either/or (surely writing about more than one issue over a decade and gaining deep knowledge of a matter are not mutually exclusive), Vollmann invokes the question of why he unceasingly chooses “broad knowledge” at the expense of deeper insights and richer writing? The answer, psychologically, seems to be that Vollmann—as one of civilization’s discontents—is at heart a nomad determined to keep the wilderness wild. If he stays too long in one of his wild zones, its codes and

practices (its culture, in other words) might domesticate his experience of it and drain uncertainty's menace:

I'm fascinated by exotic things. I suppose I always will be. And very often, if you want some kind of direct contact with exotic things, you find yourself in a dangerous situation, almost by definition. If there isn't some barrier between you and the exotic, then usually it's not exotic. What creates this barrier has to be either danger or difficulty.⁶⁶

The world must remain atomized for Vollmann and his fellow seekers of the exotic so that they can cling to their sense of the frontier. They would be lost without being forever braced, if not armed, against the wilderness' spectres and shocks. This stance feeds into Tanner's thesis that U.S. writers imagine the world from the aggressively individualistic perspective of an unmoored culture. Vollmann inhabits a world in perceptual flux, one in which reality is comprised of contesting views. This is reflected in his advice to writers:

Never forget the other point of view. No matter how you judge it, try to see it fairly and try to describe it accurately. Failing this, you will remain unable to evaluate the ideological claims to which you will be subjected for the rest of your life. . . . Never forget your own point of view. . . . Remember, we writers are among the few who enjoy the privilege of presenting and standing by our own independent position to the world.⁶⁷

In the most exotic and challenging of human environments, Vollmann certainly does not surrender or submerge his identity. In his 2000 *New Yorker* reportage from Afghanistan, "Across the Divide," Vollmann is not coy about being a Christian American when meeting (and later respectfully reporting the views and context of) the Taliban.⁶⁸ It is chiefly when the non-human world of nature places Vollmann's identity in danger of negation that the reader feels him panicking. Such moments surface in *Riding Toward Everywhere*, one being a flash of existential panic that overcomes Vollmann as he walks at night along a desert road that he knows well by day:

By the time I had finished my first bottle of water, its contents were as warm as blood. The wind grew increasingly wild, the darkness more absolute. I could barely see the lights of the old maintenance station ahead; the ranch lights were hidden behind those; I recognized the mountains more by memory than by sight. Suddenly I began to ask myself: *Who am I?* I found that I was speaking aloud. Over and over I whispered and shouted to myself: *Who am I?*⁶⁹

These crises don't seem to strike Vollmann in urban or social settings, where his character, if not body, is in little danger of being shattered or overwhelmed. Even sitting behind his dead friends in the mine-struck car in

Bosnia he acts as cool as a film-noir private eye when the combatants stroll up: “I knew that all three sides in what had been Yugoslavia respected a ‘real man.’ I decided that that was how I’d play it.”⁷⁰ Yet, just over a decade later, in a slice of the world utterly unconcerned with who he is or how he feels—in an arena vastly indifferent to all humans—Vollmann loses hold of his identity, wondering who he is. When at work in his chosen slices of the human world or when positioned in rebellion against other parts of it, Vollmann can coordinate his personality, his being. But when the self has no society to struggle with, when it does suddenly find itself “freer still,” the result can be a profound disorientation.

CONCLUSION

It is a personal and professional hazard for the intellectual nomad, the literary discontent, to face the crisis of “Who am I?” Some writers make the crisis explicit in their work and others don’t but perhaps at the core of every literary outrider’s hard-gained dispatch from the wilderness is a sentiment expressed by the ultimate intellectual contrarian, Friedrich Nietzsche. In the preface to his intellectual autobiography, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, Nietzsche writes that despite his pride, his final duty is to say: “Listen! For I am such and such a person. For heaven’s sake do not mistake me for someone else.” In grandiose moments, the isolated mavericks of prose may well identify with the philosopher’s later filling in of the “such and such”—“I am no man, I am dynamite”—before they join literature’s “grandly suicidal narrative”; its long and bitter ranks of drunkards, junkies, bankrupts, bores and suicides. Or, before they accidentally drive over real dynamite.

So runs the risk of devoting oneself to a private dream.

Endnotes

1. Vollmann, “The War Never Came Here,” *Spin*, November 1994. Reprinted in Vollmann, *Rising Up and Rising Down: Some Thoughts on Violence, Freedom and Urgent Means* (San Francisco: McSweeney’s Books, 2003), 397–465. All further references refer to the reprint, which will be cited as *RURD*.

2. *RURD*, 418.

3. After seizing Vukovar the Serbian-directed Yugoslav National Army entered the city’s hospital and took hundreds of Croatian combatants and civilians who had sought shelter there out of the city and killed them. Several former soldiers of the national army have since been convicted in the Hague of committing war crimes in Vukovar. The International Court of Justice has deemed

as genocide the mass killing of about 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys by Bosnian Serb forces in a series of massacres after the Serbs' conquest of the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, July 1995.

4. *RURD*, 403.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *RURD*, 401, 402.

7. *RURD*, 405.

8. *RURD*, 410.

9. *RURD*, 420.

10. Vollmann, however, expressed a different view to the *New York Times* three months before this trip to the former Yugoslavia, telling journalist Madison Smartt Bell, "I'm actually a competent war correspondent at this point, instead of being a war idiot like I was in Afghanistan." See Madison Smartt Bell, "William T. Vollmann," in the *New York Times*, 6 February 1994. All further references to this work (*WTV*) will be cited in the text. It is worth noting that despite any gung-ho connotations of "war idiot," Vollmann's experience of the Afghan war against the Soviets was simply idiotic—and brief. After months in Pakistan trying to find guerrillas who would lead him into Afghanistan, an unfit, chronically sick Vollmann tags along with a band of mujahedin, slows them down, experiences enough of an exchange of fire to warrant one paragraph in his 267-page postmodern memoir, *An Afghanistan Picture Show: Or, How I Saved the World* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1992), and was then walked back to Pakistan by four men who were diverted from their mission to help the hapless American. All further references to Vollmann's Afghan memoir will be cited as *APS*.

11. *RURD*, 440.

12. *RURD*, 442.

13. *RURD*, 443.

14. *RURD*, 443–44. Vollmann remained unconvinced that a landmine did the damage, but UN peacekeepers soon determined that the car had not been attacked by a sniper, but had driven over a multi-explosive landmine.

15. *RURD*, 444.

16. *RURD*, 461.

17. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 74. To Frye, writing that has a documentarian intent uses descriptions and assertions to explicitly refer the reader to a tangible world outside the prose—an external world that is of prime importance. In such writing, the inner world of the author's mind as experienced on the page is of decidedly secondary importance. Frye's polarization of writing is perhaps exaggerated, but it is a useful exaggeration when weighing up nonfiction writing.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *RURD*, 455, 456.

20. *RURD*, 442.

21. Tanner, Tony, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950–1970* (New York:

Harper & Row, 1971), ii. All further references to this work will be cited as *CW*.

22. *CW*, 29.

23. *CW*, 15.

24. Vollmann writes that breaking “unnecessary laws” out of joy and without victims makes him stronger in *Riding Toward Everywhere* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 97. All further references to this work will be cited in the text as RTE. Vollmann writes about his use of prostitutes in many works. An essay he devoted to the topic is “The Shame of It All: Some Thoughts on Prostitution in America [1999],” in Larry McCaffery and Michael Hemmingson, editors, *Expelled from Eden: A William T. Vollmann Reader* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2004), 167–86. All further references to this work will be cited as EE. “The Shame of It All” opens with: “I have worshiped them and drunk from their mouths.”

25. RTE, 4.

26. RTE, 5.

27. RTE, 97, 98.

28. *CW*, 15.

29. Vollmann, *Poor People* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 268. All further references to this work will be cited as *PP*.

30. William Vollmann, “Some Thoughts on the Value of Writing During Wartime,” *EE*, 144–45.

31. *CW*, 259.

32. *CW*, 19.

33. RTE, 112.

34. RTE, 155.

35. *CW*, 29.

36. RTE, 102–03.

37. Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (London: Picador, 1973), 250.

38. *RURD*, 444.

39. RTE, 3.

40. Kate Braverman, “The Subversion Dialogues,” in *William T. Vollmann: A Critical Study and Seven Interviews* (uncorrected proof). Ed. Michael Hemmingson, 273. All further references to this work will be cited as *WVCS*.

41. RTE, 1.

42. *CW*, 373.

43. RTE, 5, 6.

44. *CW*, 432.

45. RTE, 180.

46. Tony Dushane, “Drinks with Tony,” in *WVCS*, 258.

47. Austin Olney, letter to Vollmann, 19 December 1983, held in the Vollmann archive of Ohio State University’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Library.

48. Esther Whitby, letter to Vollmann, 21 June 1983, held in the Vollmann archive of Ohio State University’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Library.

49. *APS*, 237–38.

50. The primacy of the slide projector simile also illustrates Vollmann’s

elevation of what Frye called a literary work's "structure of interconnecting motifs" over his delivery of information.

51. *EE*, 36.
52. *RTE*, 123–24.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *CW*, 27.
55. For example, Vollmann wrote his novel about Pocahontas, *Argall: The True Story of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith* (New York: Viking, 2001), in Elizabethan prose.
56. Braverman, "The Subversion Dialogues," in *WVCS*, 269.
57. Indeed, in "The War Never Came Here," Vollmann seems militant in this view.
58. *CW*, 27.
59. William Vollmann, *Europe Central*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 753.
60. Larry McCaffrey, "Moth in the Flame," in *WVCS*, 189–190.
61. Madison Smartt Bell, "William T. Vollmann," *New York Times*, 6 February 1994.
62. *CW*, 29–30.
63. Norman Sims, "The Literary Journalists." *The Literary Journalists*. Ed. Norman Sims (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 3.
64. *PP*, xv.
65. William T. Vollmann, *Rising Up and Rising Down: Some Thoughts on Violence, Freedom and Urgent Means* [abridged], (New York: Ecco, 2004), 33.
66. *WVCS*, 144–45.
67. *EE*, 152.
68. Vollmann, "Across the Divide," reprinted in *EE*, 91–119. This is a remarkable piece of reportage in which Vollmann wanders Kabul with a Koran capturing many of the beliefs and tensions that so seized the world after the events of the next year's September.
69. *RTE*, 106.
70. *RURD*, 444.

An excerpt from . . .

My Colombian Death

by Matthew Thompson

“BARRIO BOXING”

Medellín, Colombia

The taxi runs quickly down broad boulevards, past orderly rows of houses and plazas with fountains, until we hit the edge of the valley floor and begin a gear-grinding ascent, winding up through steep, dark scrubland where I glimpse youths watching the road from strategic passes. Or maybe they’re just enjoying the view of Medellín, which is glorious, the city laid out and lit up below, and the mountain wall opposite glittering with barrios.

The driver at times slows the cab to walking speed to cope with the incline and negotiate switchbacks. Jumbles of houses appear, chaotic conglomerates of corrugated iron, hollow red brick and reinforcing wire splaying from upper levels. Many are without glass in the windows and some don’t even have doors. Here and there the earth has been gouged out by mudslides. I thought the driver would be earbashing me about the ill-advised nature of this trip, but he’s grimly silent as he works the clutch.

“Enciso el Pinal,” the driver says, as we top a steep ascent onto a ridge which widens out into a small shopping area. Stray dogs prowl and a string of motorbikes buzzes past the cab, each carrying two or three men, all of whom stare at me with no expression whatsoever. “It’s a little hot here,” says the driver. “Take care.”

“Matthews!” Diana’s been waiting. She jogs over to the taxi holding bags of takeaway food. “Hungry?” We walk to a street which falls steeply towards Medellín, but not steeply enough to prevent a pack of kids from playing soccer.

An empty blue-lit bar sits near the top of the block and a few doors down along the stepping row of connected buildings is a whitewashed wall with **LEBANESE LIQUORS** hand-painted on it in black.

“Congratulations, Diana,” I say.

“Thank you, Matthews.” We step up onto a veranda where there’s a door to a house upstairs and my friend’s shop to the right. Before we go in, Diana points out a hole in the wall where a few bricks have been smashed out. “I sell through the hole late at night.”

Inside the cramped room a battered old refrigerator fills much of the space. Behind it are shelves, some empty and others lined with cigarette half-packs, plastic cups and bottles of rum and *aguardiente*. The walls have been painted with murals of what looks like old heavy metal album-sleeve art. On a plain of pyramids and beneath menacing moons, angry dragons square off against a brooding winged warrior whose sour expression, sharp cheekbones and long hair look very familiar.

“Isn’t that . . .”

“Yes, Matthews,” says Diana, laughing as she sets the food down. “Iván painted it. I think he wants to always watch me.”

She had bought beef and rice dishes for us but realises she forgot avocado, so I volunteer to duck back up the street for one. It feels great being outside alone, striding up the hill and taking in the ragged, splendour of a town stuck to a slope like a wasp’s nest to a wall, and thrilling in the views the slum-dwellers have of their notorious, wonderful city. Every time I relax into somewhere or something new in Colombia, the whole country shifts, as if choosing once again to reveal its uniqueness, its reasons for calling me here.

“My first *gringo* customer,” says an old woman selling fruit from a cart.

“I was told it was very dangerous here.”

“Not so much, now. Before, yes. Always shooting,” she says, flapping a hand in the air. “Now it’s quieter.”

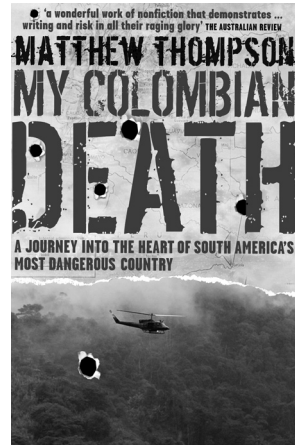
“Why the difference?”

She picks my change out of a cardboard box. “Because two or three years ago the army and the others came and killed so many boys. Then the fighting stopped.”

“The army and the paramilitaries?”

She nods.

I ask Diana about this when we sit on her plastic chairs and eat. “It’s the truth,” she says. “Some gangs join the paramilitaries and they are OK. The guerrillas in the barrios and the gangs who didn’t join the paramilitaries were all killed. Now it’s peaceful, because everyone else is dead. It’s fascist.”



There is a trickle of customers, only ever buying a beer or two at a time—fewer than the drinks I’m buying us—and I start to wonder if El Gringo was right. “You live here now? Not at Cristóbal América anymore?”

“I still have a few things there I need to move.” She skids a match down the wall and lights a cigarette.

“You OK here? It’s safe? Got enough business?”

“Not yet.”

“Is it safe?”

“More or less.”

“Maybe you need a gun.”

“I’m a good fighter,” says Diana, leaning forward and punching me in the head. “Ay, Matthews, I’m sorry!” She is horrified, hand on her mouth, standing up fussing over me. She struck above my left eye with more than a little oomph.

“*Tranquilo*. I’m fine,” I say. “But you have a good punch.”

“*Claro*. I’ve had many fights. Want to fight me?”

“Thanks, but no. I’m good just sitting here.”

“Hit me, gay boy,” she says, slapping the top of my head.

“Diana!” I haven’t had such a high-maintenance friend for fifteen years. Since I was her age.

“Yes, Matthews?” She flashes a hand towards the top of my head and when I go to block it she jolts my chin. “Please, for fun. I like to fight.”

There’s no rest in Colombia. “Serious? You want to fight?”

“*Claro*.” She’s in a boxer’s shuffle, ducking and weaving.

“But I’ve eaten too much. I need some coke first.”

“You have coke!” She pulls down the shutter, stamping hard on the bottom rim to drive it to the floor. “I sell through the hole now,” she says.

After a few stiff snorts and a swig to wash it down she tosses off her denim jacket and we circle under Iván’s troubled watch, feeling each other out with feints and probes. Diana has had no training but she’s wilful and reckless and keeps flinging her strong arms at me. I slap and tap most of the punches out of the way, but she just fires up even more and her eyes are electric as she rushes me, shedding control in her lust to knock me flat. I’m pulling my punches and she likes it when I get through, lighting up to feel a fist grazing her ear or chin or darting into her stomach and sides. She curses and dares me to hit her, covers her head and bangs her body into mine in an attempt to jam me back into in a corner, then she pummels with each hand. I send her back with a flurry in her face, and she squeaks and laughs and throws herself into it again.

Suddenly we notice a cluster of male faces peering through the hole in the front wall.

“What’s happening?” says a man with a thin face and bleached hair.

“Nothing. We’re playing,” Diana says. “What do you want? Beer? Rum?”

“I want a beer and I want to drink it inside your store.”

“No, I don’t open the door again tonight.”

“Yes, señorita. These are our streets and we’re patrolling tonight. You’re new, huh? It’s good to meet. Please open the door.”

I’m mouthing ‘no’ and Diana is tugging at her hair and grimacing, but she opens the door and in walk three young men. A fourth pulls the door shut from the outside and stays out there. The man who spoke is about a head shorter than me, and he smacks his hands together as he sizes up us and the room. His two companions, one muscular with a crew cut and the other lean and tall but lost inside an oversized baseball cap and T-shirt, stay still near the door, each keeping a hand tucked into the back of his jeans, just like the bad-news crews of Cartagena.

Diana snaps straight into hostess mode, smiling, pouring beers and handing out cigarettes. I am against a wall, hating this place for only having one door out, one door on the far side of them.

And they’re checking me out, especially the muscular one, who stinks of rum. His filmy eyes flick all over me. “What you doing with her?” he asks.

“Boxing.”

“Yeah?” He looks down at his feet and tries a fighter’s shuffle. “Box with me.”

“No thanks.”

“Box with him, *mono*,” says the bleached one. “He likes you. He likes your blue eyes. Señorita, would your *mono* fight for you?”

“No fighting, please,” Diana says, lighting the guests’ cigarettes. She has slipped her jacket back on but it remains painfully clear she is the only person here with perfumed skin, long hair and curves to plunder. El Gringo’s warnings about this place were so true it’s a bad joke.

The talker steps around the refrigerator and looks all over, pokes his head in the storage room, plucks a bottle of Medellín Rum off a shelf and runs his fingers across the label. “A copy, yeah? Black market. I know.”

“It’s good,” Diana says.

“Almost as good. Almost. But no problem. I like your store, *chica*. I’m glad you open up here.”

I don’t like the man being over this side talking to her as though there’s no one else here, so I ask what’s happening tonight.

“A man raped a little girl, *mono*.”

“Ay, that’s horrible,” Diana says.

“*Claro*. When we find him we’re going to use knives and make it slow.”

“What does he look like?” Diana asks.

The man shrugs. “We’ll know him when we see him.”

There’s a burst of static outside and the goon waiting out there answers a radio.

“What news?” yells the talker, his hand up for silence.

“Nothing,” the man calls back.

The wiry young boss cruises the room checking out the murals. “Who’s the artist?”

“My boyfriend,” Diana says. “Do you like them?”

“They’re cool.” He blows smoke over a dragon. “*Mono*, you like cocaine?”

“Yeah, do you?”

“If the quality is high. *Señorita*, do you like cocaine?”

“No. I don’t like drugs,” says Diana with total conviction.

“Well then, *mono*, maybe you want to buy.” He nods at the man in the oversized clothes.

Predictability at last. I buy two grams and offer one straight back to the visitors. I didn’t see how it got there but the dealer has a knife in his hand and he flicks it, clicking the blade into place. Diana backs off and my vision’s changing, as if these are the last things I’ll ever see, these stupid, pointless moments, but there’s nothing in it; he just scoops coke with it. He even passes it to me. The bad energy is dispersing and I can taste the beer again. Diana seems more relaxed, too, and I shoot her a smile.

“Let’s go,” says the leader.

“Chao, *amigos*,” Diana says.

“No, no,” he says. “Let’s go with the boxing. Ready, *mono*?”

To my surprise, I am. “Let’s go,” I tell the muscle boy, shaking out my arms and rolling my neck. Diana is wild-eyed but this is fine. I’m indifferent. Maybe I’ll cop a few punches, but I’ll pull mine and this guy is so past it that within a minute or two he’ll be out of puff. Then we’ll clap each other on the back and clink beers. No one gets hurt.

“Play with me like you did with the woman,” says muscle boy, copying my mini-warm up. He’s jumpy as we circle, overreacting if I jiggle a hand or twitch a shoulder. The man’s also stiff—perhaps the bulge in the back of his jeans constrains him.

“Ay, Matthews, be careful.” Diana is fretting, and when I smile to reassure her, muscle-boy shoots a punch at my head. He’s big but slow, and I catch it on the hand and stamp forward with a hook to his cheek. It would have cracked a bone in his face if I’d let it fly home, but I freeze it a centime-

tre out. At least I try to. But with all the booze and lack of practice, my fist keeps going. “Ay!” yells Diana, and the other two guys are standing stiffer.

“Sorry,” I say.

“Blue eyes, beautiful,” says muscle boy, pressing around his eye socket.

“Ha! He likes you, *mono*,” says the leader.

Indeed, he does look filled with a mad love as he surges forward to pound my head. I deflect most of the blows but one over the ear shakes the room. It seems to hurt him almost as much, though. He purses his lips. “Beautiful blue,” he says, making me wonder whose rape hangs in the air.

The hit sobered me and I’m comfortably throwing an inch short. He is distracted by the flurry so close to his face, looking at my hands instead of my eyes, and it gets even easier to mislead him with feints and footwork. I’m living inside his defences, thrashing the air over his ribs and chin and lips and nose and temples. He’s in a storm and he loves it more than Diana, his eyes scared it’s going to end. But it’s tiring, and I back off to breathe.

“Hit me,” he says, or mouths. I don’t know if I heard it or just saw his lips move.

“This is love,” says the leader, jabbing a finger into the sniggering dealer. “Hit him, man, he wants it.”

He jolts as I rip him in the side and slam a right into his stomach. He puts his hands on his knees, gasps, and then looks at me through clear eyes for the first time.

“Again. Harder!” yells the leader.

“No,” I say, stepping back and resting against the refrigerator. “Enough.”

After the men and I share the rest of the gram, I suggest to Diana she stay at Cristóbal América tonight, and offer to pay her cab fare. She nods dumbly.

“Need a taxi?” says the leader. He points to the dealer. “He has a taxi.”

“But you’re busy. You’re looking for the child rapist.”

The leader shrugs. “*Mañana*.”

The radio man is leaning over the veranda smoking a cigarette and talking to a pair of little boys when we come out. The leader dismisses him and directs us to a stock-standard yellow cab.

Diana bunches herself against the cab door, squeezing her legs over and staring out the window, as if she doesn’t want anything to do with me, or the leader, who is relentless in his flattery and small talk. “You OK?” I ask.

“Yes, Matthews,” she says, withdrawing even further. I would love to give her more room, but the muscle boy is beside me in the small sedan, one arm behind my head, thighs splayed wide.

Diana steps out to let me through when we reach the Hostel Odeon.

“Don’t go with them,” I say, grinning and taking her arm. “Bad idea.” She is angry, but doesn’t do anything when I lean back to the goons and hand them the fare, telling them Diana doesn’t need a ride. The leader looks to her for a response but she’s in her own world, arms folded.

“See you soon, *chica*,” he says, and they’re gone.

“Diana, you OK?”

“No more, Matthews!”

“No more what?”

“No more drugs. No more liquor. Too much. Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay!” she says.

“You want to sit down for as minute before you get a taxi?”

“No.”

“Taxi?”

“No.” She turns and strides towards Bolivar Park, which the hotel staff warned me could be unsafe at night.

“Diana, what are you doing?”

She ignores me, turning out of sight at the end of the block. I jog up after her and see she’s heading for 55th Street, parallel to the hotel, which the staff said was *always* unsafe at night, and which El Gringo calls ‘Homicide Alley’. She turns into it.

I skip around into the uncluttered, lonely grey street, where there’s no activity but for Diana’s brisk walk towards a man waiting dead still and silent at the far end of the block. He sees me running and shifts, looking around and then back at me, a hand busy under his shirt. My hands are busy, too; they’re up so he can see them, shaking with my heart, which beats so hard I can feel it in my throat. I wave to Diana and sing out her name like I’m calling a toddler. Don’t shoot me, don’t shoot me, don’t shoot me, don’t shoot me, is the chant in my head, and I’m sure that if it hadn’t been a *gringo* who came bolting around the corner, this guy would have pulled his piece and shot me.

“Matthews! What are you doing?” Diana says as I catch up to her. I wave and shrug to the man ahead to indicate that we’re having a domestic in his alley but what can I do. “It’s very dangerous here, let’s go.”

“I want to buy marijuana.”

“What?” The man is still agitated, glancing around in every direction and then looking back at us. “You told me no more drugs.”

“Yes, but tonight I need marijuana to sleep, or after all this cocaine I go home and think for hours and hours about my horrible life. No, Matthews. I need marijuana.”

“Your life isn’t terrible. You have a shop and Iván and friends, and you’re smart and independent and attractive.”

“No, Matthews. It’s horrible. My business is in the slums, and Iván and I fight all the time, and I’m fat and stupid. Horrible.”

“Diana,” I say, taking her arms. “Listen to me . . . ”

“Hey.” It’s the man. “What do you want?”

“Marijuana, señor.” Diana pushes my hands off.

reprinted by permission

JS

Book reviews . . .

Thomas B. Connery
Book Review Editor

A Mountain Studio of One's Own . . .

Cabin Fever: The Best New Canadian Non-Fiction

reviewed by Jacqueline Marino

page 106

Legacies of Literary Style in

Wartime Journalism

page 109

Todd Schack uses Sebastian Junger's *War* as a point of departure to discuss the stylistic legacy of literary war reporting by examining . . .

The Forever War by Dexter Filkins

The Face of War by Martha Gellhorn

Dispatches by Michael Herr

Liebling: World War II Writings by A.J. Liebling

Ernie's War: The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches by Ernie Pyle

M by John Sack

Night Draws Near by Anthony Shadid

Literary Journalism Studies

Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2011

A Mountain Studio of One's Own

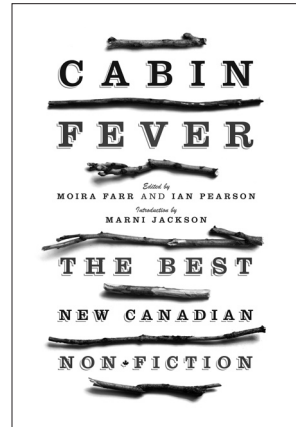
Cabin Fever: The Best New Canadian Non-Fiction

Moira Farr and Ian Pearson, editors. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2010. Paperback, 335 pp., \$24.95.

Reviewed by Jacqueline Marino, Kent State University, U.S.A.

Since 1989, more than 150 nonfiction writers have participated in the Banff Centre's exalted Literary Journalism Program. At this month-long residency in the Canadian Rockies, writers enjoy secluded cabins, onsite editors and the company of the similarly driven. Although the program seems like a treasure to the genre, writers of literary journalism have rarely needed such creature comforts. Literary journalism has always been about telling stories of real life—often stories of struggle, conflict, and *dis*comfort. For *People of the Abyss*, Jack London moved to the East End slums. For *Random Family* a hundred years later, Adrian Nicole LeBlanc hung around the Bronx with drug dealers' girlfriends. Great literary journalism is born of immersion, not seclusion. This is practically a characteristic of the genre, transcending time, circumstance, and culture. So I approached *Cabin Fever*, a thirteen-work anthology representing the best nonfiction of Banff's past six years, with plenty of skepticism (okay, and maybe a little jealousy).

Some stories skew literary and others journalistic. To me, a nonfiction work is "literary journalism" if it matches the five-word definition Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda set forth in *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*, a 1997 collection I still require in my basic Feature Writing class: "Thoughtfully, artfully and valuably innovative." In almost every story in *Cabin Fever*, I found thoughtfulness, art and value. Megan K. Williams's quest for a driver's license in Rome got me thinking about the values we teach our children. It was the first work of journalism I've read that got beyond the Italians-as-morally-inferior stereotype—not the sort of thing one would expect from an article about driving habits. Bill Reynolds also takes us on dangerous roads—on a bicycle in Toronto. Book-ending his narrative with his own bicycling drama, which includes both physical and psychological conflict, he compellingly weaves together facts and figures, anecdotes and ponderings. "We manage by slipping through the cracks in the urban bustle, finding the seam, whether through a traffic jam or in a designated lane," he writes. "Still, the act of riding encases us in a protective fantasy. With one push of the pedal, the rider is bombing around the neighbourhood—ignoring the dull parade of adult duties, full of youthful optimism, insulated from the stultifying conformity of public transportation, the headaches of



car ownership . . ." (279). To bike or not to bike? For those who pedal in the city, that's a loaded question. Reynolds makes sure we know it without sounding the least bit preachy.

Several stories are memoirs, including Charlotte Gill's "Eating Dirt," which is about her life as a treeplanter. Gill's poetic style slowed down my reading because I kept lingering on her dreamy sentences. "Our hands are scratched and scabbed, our fingerpads etched with dirt," she writes. "They feel to us, our own digits, swollen and pulsating, like the hands of cartoon characters when they bash themselves with hammers. We came chubby and pale at the end of the winter. We shrank down and hardened, like boot leather dried too fast. We have calluses on top of calluses, piled up on our palms and soles. Farmer's tans. Six-packs. Arms ropy, muscled and veined" (13). Gill is one of the writers who rely on personal experience over reportage, which didn't surprise me. How much reporting can one realistically get done in a private cabin in the Canadian Rockies? A cabin of one's own is where one *writes*. But other works in this anthology contain a great deal of reporting, making the memoirs seem more suspect. As I read them, a passage from Marni Jackson's introduction kept haunting me:

For works of non-fiction, there used to be a reader's compass we could trust, with a needle that always swung round to the true north of fact. But the closer you get to the magnetic poles, the more unreliable a compass becomes—the needle begins to swing about wildly. Something of the same thing has happened in non-fiction writing. We live in a disoriented time, where truth is a kind of magnetic pole; from a distance it behaves like a stable point of reference, but the closer you come to it—in the intimacy of a memoir or the imagined details of an historical narrative—the more its precise location blurs. (5)

She adds, "The boundaries of fact and fiction will probably continue to blur, encouraging writers to play in the intertidal zone between the two" (5). The genres of fiction and nonfiction will "flirt with one another, and the result will be vital new work" (6).

Others have suggested that literary journalism will evolve to include greater doses of personal (as opposed to independently verified) truth. As Norman Sims pointed out in *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism*, memoir has played an increasing role in literary journalism since the 1970s. However, the distance between verified fact and "personal truth" is not a creek but a gulf. Flirting is fine, but let's not marry the two.

I finally got both the reporting and the literary writing I craved in two travel pieces, classic stories of searching: Taras Grescoe's pursuit of a myth and Andrew Westoll's quest for a tiny frog. Inspired by much literary attention to the Green Fairy, including Gustave Flaubert's warning that "one glass and you're dead" (the quote Grescoe used to title his story), the author thought he found absinthe in 1997 in a hipster bar in Barcelona. "After soaking sugar cubes in the transparent, oily-looking liquid, poisoning them on a three-tined fork, and lighting them on fire until the alcohol burned off, we dissolved the caramelized sugar in the pure absinthe," he writes. "Topped up with cold water, our brandy glasses became the crucible for the now-fa-

miliar alchemy of opacity, and the burnt sugar leavened the bitter herbal bite” (139). He wrote about the experience for *Salon.com* and *The Face*, but his doubts and the ensuing absinthe hype—enter Johnny Depp and Martha Stewart—kept him searching. He got more obsessed, eventually embarking on a journey to find the “holy grail” of absinthe in a Swiss valley, making many taste detours along the way and leaving us wondering whether authenticity, not absinthe, is the real myth.

In “The Blue Jewel of the Jungle,” Westoll reports from Suriname, the least-traveled country in South America, with a scientist’s attention to detail and a poet’s sense of wonder. This is a place where people measure distance in number of sunsets one will encounter while traveling, a place of rain forests and wild things—iguanas, anacondas, and the elusive *okopipi*, “the soul of the last Eden” (224), a poisonous blue frog Westoll is determined to find. During his journey, the author chronicles the brutality of watching a type of monkey he used to study get butchered; then he tells you how it tastes slipping down his throat. The piece follows a beautiful narrative arc that will be instructive for even beginning feature writers.

One memoir meets the literary journalism definition of “innovative.” John Vigna gives the reader a variety of viewpoints from which to witness his tortured relationship with his brother, Paul, an often drug-addicted, manipulative, and unbearably toxic presence in his life. As the little brother, Vigna is adoring, easy prey. Paul gets him to do what he wants by promising compliance will toughen him up for hockey. Vigna relays one instance where Paul lies to his father about John’s role in killing a gopher with a stolen slingshot. He writes, “Father slid his belt off his khaki shorts, grabbed Small, pushed him up the stairs to the bathroom, slammed the door. Big grinned at his cleverness and his ability to lie to Father, who believed him since he was the oldest. Big listened to the sound of leather smacking skin. He wondered if Father would strike Small’s hand and wrist with the buckle, as he often had done to Big. He listened for a confession but heard only wails. He knew Small wouldn’t tell Father. He also knew that Small would brace himself for each stinging blow by telling himself that he’d be a better goalie” (179). At other times in his life, Vigna feels angry, charitable, and guilt-ridden toward his brother. The reader wonders if he will ever find peace. In addition to excellent character development and jarring-yet-effective switching from first to second person, “Ballad” wins fact points for a postscript.

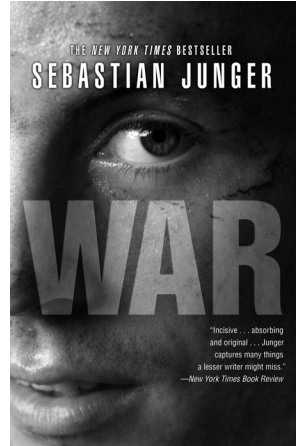
Besides the Banff experience and their physical location between the book’s covers, what common thread (besides Canada, of course) holds these thirteen works together? There are memoir and reportage, travel writing and science writing, and nonfiction with varying degrees of factual accuracy. That compass needle fluctuating at the poles of truth does the same thing when you use it to signal literary journalism. One reader will see it in stories such as these; others will say they miss the mark. It wasn’t always obvious that I was reading works from a program billed as “literary journalism,” but I never doubted I was in the presence of master storytellers.

Legacies of Literary Style in Wartime Journalism

Todd Schack, Ithaca College, U.S.A.

*The publication of recent works of literary journalism about war, especially Sebastian Junger's *War* and Dexter Filkins's *The Forever War* (reviewed in LJS 1, no. 2, Fall 2009, 120–22), are reminders of a rich literary journalistic heritage. The following review essay compares and contrasts a range of significant works of American literary journalism about war to Junger's book.*

*As this article was going to press, we learned that Tim Hetherington, co-director with Junger of *War's* companion documentary *Restrepo*, was killed reporting from the war zone in Libya. We would like to dedicate the following article to his memory*



WORKS DISCUSSED

War by Sebastian Junger. New York: Twelve, 2010.

The Forever War by Dexter Filkins. New York: Knopf, 2008.

The Face of War by Martha Gellhorn. 1959. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988.

Dispatches by Michael Herr. 1977. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Liebling: World War II Writings by A. J. Liebling. Pete Hamill, editor. New York: Library of America, 2008.

Ernie's War: The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches by Ernie Pyle. 1986. David Nichols, editor. New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 2008.

M by John Sack. 1967. Lincoln: IUniverse, 2004.

Night Draws Near by Anthony Shadid. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005.

Sebastian Junger's recently published book, *War*¹ (2010), which depicts the Afghan war in the Korengal Valley "as soldiers really live it," will inevitably garner many comparisons to other, more famous works of literary war reporting, and it is perhaps worthwhile to preempt that critical discussion with an investigation of what, exactly, works of literary journalism bring to the depiction of war. By revisiting some of the classic works of literary war reporting, and by noting those elements that have made them canonical in terms of the level of detail—the themes, character development,

imagery and symbolism, immersive reporting and flair for language—we might see more clearly whether recent works such as Junger's *War* rise to the level of literary journalism. Further, and more important, we might consider how this literary aspect works to better inform the public about our current wars, and how a war correspondent, via these devices, may work to interpret these conflicts for us beyond mere facts.

Junger, best known for his book *The Perfect Storm*, was embedded with Battle Company, Second Platoon of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne unit, operating at the Korengal Outpost in Afghanistan. In one year he took five trips to the Korengal while working on articles for *Vanity Fair*, on which this book is largely based. While Junger is certainly cognizant and quite honest about the limitations embedded journalists face—specific examples of this follow below—there is one aspect of that must briefly be mentioned here.

Considering that there are multiple, well-defined limitations facing an embed²—not least of which are the facts that such a journalist: (1) is dependent upon the military for food, travel, and safety; (2) becomes emotionally attached to the soldiers; (3) may risk the objective integrity of the writing (either via official censorship or a subtle self-censorship); and (4) never witnesses the “other side,” that is, the actual *results* of all those moments of fighting—it may be rightly asked whether an embed is able to produce a piece of literary journalism at all.

While successful examples are few, and while it is entirely predictable what *type* of story an embed who aspires to literary heights is limited to write (i.e., the “worm’s-eye view” made famous during World War II by Ernie Pyle), it is indeed possible to produce literary journalism as an embed. This does, however, depend on author reflexivity and intentionality—or the conscious acknowledgement on the part of the writer to signal to the reader that he or she is entirely aware of such structural limitations.

To his credit, Junger makes clear that *War* is just such a story, that he is aware of his own limitations: “I’ve been in Afghanistan many times before . . . and it is a country I care about tremendously. This time, however, I’m not interested in the Afghans and their endless, terrible wars; I’m interested in the Americans. I’m interested in what it’s like to serve in a platoon of combat infantry in the U.S. Army” (25). And further, on journalistic limitations:

Journalistic convention holds that you can’t write objectively about people you’re close to, but you can’t write objectively about people who are shooting at you either. Pure objectivity . . . isn’t remotely possible in a war; bonding with the men around you is the least of your problems. Objectivity and honesty are not the same thing, though, and it is entirely possible to write with honesty about the very personal and distorting experiences of war. (26)

Once he makes these disclosures, he writes the story of Battle Company using the devices that have made the best literary war reporting so recognizable and that have been used by the best writers of the genre, most notably Ernie Pyle. Arguably the most famous of World War II reporters, Pyle had a signature style that included a fine-grained level of detail, the use of repetition, the first and second-person points of view, and especially his capacity to let the reader witness little moments of what

might be called soldiers' etiquette—or how one acts or doesn't act in a combat zone. One famous piece, "The Death of Captain Waskow," displays all such devices:

Dead men had been coming down the mountain all evening, lashed onto the backs of mules. They came lying belly-down across the wooden pack-saddles, their heads hanging down on one side, their stiffened legs sticking out awkwardly from the other, bobbing up and down as the mules walked . . . I don't know who that first one was. You feel small in the presence of dead men, and you don't ask silly questions. (195–96)

Junger provides many similar moments in *War*, especially regarding the combat moment itself, and how the intensity of that moment determines how soldiers act both in the heat of battle as well in the many monotonous spells in between fire-fights. In combat, Junger writes,

Margins were so small and errors potentially so catastrophic that every soldier had a kind of de facto authority to reprimand others—in some cases even officers. And because combat can hinge on the most absurd details, there was virtually nothing in a soldier's daily routine that fell outside the group's purview. Whether you tied your shoes or cleaned your weapon or drank enough water or secured your night vision gear were all matters of public concern and so were open to public scrutiny . . . The attention to detail at a base like Restrepo forced a kind of clarity on absolutely everything a soldier did until I came to think of it as a kind of Zen practice: the Zen of not fucking up. (160)

Pyle was adept at showing—as opposed to telling—how soldiers acted and spoke, what is and is not done in a combat zone, and most important, what it felt like to be there. A. J. Liebling (arguably the second-most famous World War II reporter), in a *New Yorker* article entitled "Pyle Set the Style," wrote:

A substantial fraction of the readers of the seven hundred papers [in which Pyle's column appeared] read nothing about the war but Pyle and the headlines. He was the only American war correspondent who made a large personal impress on the nation in the Second World War . . . You could have been sleeping on the ground for a fortnight without thinking much about it, but when you read that he had been sleeping on the ground, your bones ached. (752)

Similarly, Junger spends a substantial amount of time showing us the minute details of the soldier's lives, the mundane activities, etiquette, and lingo: "Soldiers spend a good deal of time trying to figure out how to reproduce the sound of gunfire verbally, and 'ka-SHAAH' was the word Second Platoon seemed to have settled on" (82). Certainly, Junger is at his best when the level of his descriptive detail is as fine-grained as Pyle's, as in this passage:

The sun has fired the Abas Ghar with a red glow and a few of the brighter planets are already infiltrating the afternoon sky. The men are standing around in dirty fleeces and their pants unbelted smoking cigarettes and watching another day come to an end. They're dirty in their pores and under their nails and their skin has burnished to a kind of sheen at the wrists and neck where the uniforms rub. Dirt collects in the creases of the skin and shows up as strange webs at the corners of the eyes and their lifelines run black and unmistakable across the palms of their hands. It's a camp of homeless men or hunters who have not reckoned with a woman in months and long since abandoned niceties. (157)

These are Junger's "Pyle-esque" moments, but he has sequences that are indicative of other writers as well. While Pyle was certainly the best-known World War II reporter, he was most likely not the best overall writer during the war, a judgment that would likely have to go to either Liebling or Martha Gellhorn.³ Liebling wrote with a literary style that enabled his readers to see and make sense of the macro-level meaning in micro-level detail. Famous for pulling no punches, he wrote what he saw and said what he meant, no matter the subject, such as the following passage on a not-altogether inconsequential figure in the days following the French defeat: "One man only showed any hope in Tours—the long-nosed, stork-legged Brigadier General Charles de Gaulle, Undersecretary for War, who was there chiefly because the field commanders had refused to have him with them" (103).

But Liebling is at his best when describing with minute detail that is heavy with meaning the actions of the ordinary folk caught in the machinery of war. In *The Road Back to Paris*, he writes of the day Paris fell to the Germans:

The last impression of Paris we carried with us was of deserted streets everywhere around the railroad stations, where the crowds were so big that they overflowed all the surrounding sidewalks. . . . The roads leading south from Paris were gorged with what was possibly the strangest assortment of vehicles in history. No smaller city could have produced such a gamut of conveyances, from fiacres of the Second Empire to a farm tractor hitched to a vast trailer displaying the American flag and a sign saying "This trailer is the property of an American citizen." (99)

Considering that Liebling was writing to express his moral outrage, especially at what he thought was the unconscionable lack of courage in isolationist America, the irony in that last line is especially poignant. It also shows in sharp relief the value of a literary style that is admittedly subjective rather than objective, yet all the more honest due to the author's subjectivity.

Writing on "War and the New Journalism," Greg McLaughlin states that the literary journalist "subverts the whole notion of objectivity . . . It is journalism as art, the writer's moral vision and personal perspective always to the fore" (163), which in turn is better able to provide the type of macro-level historical, political, even moral context of the events than a conventional, objective approach. This is what Junger meant when he stated: "Objectivity and honesty are not the same thing, though, and it is entirely possible to write with honesty about . . . war." Showing precisely this, that he is also adept at providing such macro-level meaning, he writes:

The Korengal was a safe haven from which insurgents could attack the Pech River corridor, and the Pech was the main access route to Nuristan, so a base in the Korengal made sense, but there was something else going on. The valley had enormous symbolic meaning because of the loss of nineteen American commandos there, and some soldiers suspected that their presence in the valley was the U.S. military's way of punishing locals for what had happened in the Abas Ghar. For both sides, the battle for the Korengal developed a logic of its own that sucked in more and more resources and lives until neither side could afford to walk away. (52)

This subjective expression of "moral vision and personal perspective" that defines the literary style in war reporting, either overt or couched in symbolism, invokes

the legacy of Gellhorn, and if Pyle and Liebling are the most famous writers of the World War II era, Gellhorn would have to be the most overlooked and underrated. She also pre-dated the other writers as a war correspondent, beginning her career in the mid-1930s reporting on the Spanish Civil War.⁴ Yet it is her unmistakable voice, which couched no expression of moral outrage nor hid behind any Lippmann-esque standard of objectivity, to which every subsequent generation of literary war reporter is indebted, including Pyle and Liebling. In “The Third Winter” she writes in her signature understated style:

November, 1938. In Barcelona, it was perfect bombing weather. The cafés along the Ramblas were crowded. There was nothing much to drink; a sweet fizzy poison called orangeade and a horrible liquid supposed to be sherry. There was, of course, nothing to eat. Everyone was out enjoying the cold afternoon sunlight. No bombers had come over for at least two hours. The flower stalls looked bright and pretty along the promenade. “The flowers are all sold, Señores. For the funerals of those who were killed in the eleven o’clock bombing, poor souls.” (37)

Such is Gellhorn’s style, where a pleasant afternoon is “perfect bombing weather,” and aerial bombardments are known for the hour on which they occurred, indicating, for the victims, both their frequency and ineluctability. She could also be frank with her moral vision yet remain cognizant of her role as a journalist:

In the Second World War, all I did was praise the good, brave and generous people I saw, knowing this to be a perfectly useless performance. When occasion presented, I reviled the devils whose mission was to deny the dignity of man; also useless . . . but I could not fool myself that my war correspondent’s work mattered a hoot. War is a malignant disease, an idiocy, a prison, and the pain it causes is beyond telling or imagining. (2)

However much she denies her own influence as a journalist, she did tell of this idiotic disease, and she told it remarkably well. In one passage indicative of her reviling the “devils” of war, she writes:

A fat old Italian in Cattolica, who had worked for twelve years on the Pennsylvania Railroad, was trundling his pitiful possessions home in a handcart. The Germans had occupied Cattolica for three months and had evacuated the citizens one month ago, and during this month they looted with horrid thoroughness, like woodworms eating down a house. What they did not wish to steal, they destroyed; the pathetic homes of the poor with smashed sewing machines and broken crockery and the coarse linen sheets and towels torn to shreds bear witness to their pointless cruelty. This old man was going home to a gutted house, but he was a healthy happy old man, and he was overjoyed to see us and he invited me to visit him and his wife the next day. The next day his wife was dead, as the Germans came over that night and plastered the little town with anti-personnel bombs. (136)

It is in her intimate detail, creative use of metaphor, and her understatement of pain, grief, and misery that we find her style, a style that has become indicative of the best of modern literary journalism. Yet despite her understatement, she also wrote with a moral clarity that was as obvious as a children’s parable. In “A Little Dutch Town,” she writes: “October 1944. This is a story about a little Dutch town called Nijmegen and pronounced any way you choose. The moral to the story is: it would

be a good thing if the Germans did not make a war every twenty years or so and then there would be no story about little towns called Nijmegen” (138).

While Junger is certainly less overt in his expressions of moral vision, he is no less courageous in that one of the most striking aspects of *War* is his discussion of two topics that are for the most part taboo in conventional war reporting: the personal psychology of the front-line soldiers, and the addictive nature of combat. Indeed, these topics—both related of course—are the major themes of *War*, and he went to great lengths researching and quoting from psychological and sociological studies of war, from sources as disparate as the U.S. Army, the *American Psychological Association Monitor*, the Rand Corporation, the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* and many other academic, military, and think-tank sources. While he discovers certain truths about combat that are less than comfortable to one who has never lived it, his writing here does flirt with a cardinal sin of literary reporting: too much telling, not enough showing.

Junger must have been aware of this pitfall, however. At the moment the language becomes a bit too academic. He has a way of exploring this psychological theme exemplified through dialogue and scene-setting detail:

Anderson sat on an ammo crate and gave me one of those awkward grins that sometimes precede a confession: “I’ve only been here four months and I can’t believe how messed up I already am,” he said. “I went to the counselor and he asked if I smoked cigarettes and I told him no and he said, ‘Well you may want to think about starting.’” He lit a cigarette and inhaled. “I hate these fuckin’ things,” he said. (40)

Or another example is about a soldier having trouble coping with the death of a much-loved staff sergeant named Rougle:

Cortez worried that Rougle was still alive when the enemy overran the position and that they had executed him where he lay, but there was no evidence to support that. Nevertheless, the thought was to torment Cortez in the coming months. Every night he’d dream he was back on the mountain trying to run fast enough to make things turn out differently. They never would. “I’d prefer to not sleep and not dream about it,” Cortez said, “than sleep with that picture in my head.” (106)

Both of these instances, and others like them, lead to Junger’s musings on combat psychology, biology, and military history. And while Junger does an admirable job of making us feel what it’s like to be a soldier, to identify mentally with a modern soldier fighting in Afghanistan, he is certainly not the first war correspondent to attempt such psychological profiling, and is rather indebted to two other writers, John Sack and Michael Herr.

John Sack, author of *M* (named after M Company of the 1st Infantry Division), whose signature style relies heavily on detailed description and multiple points of view—including getting inside the heads of the soldiers—also explored the psychology of the troops he was embedded with (although that term didn’t exist at the time). In one such passage, he writes of a soldier’s internal anxiousness to get on with the business of killing:

To kill a communist soldier: this was Demirgian’s dream . . . this was Demirgian’s sacred quest. For a boy with no past history of animus to Asians of any political

party, a year on that distant continent and Demirgian's wish to kill communists had gone beyond all expectations, it was something fierce, his bones had become like a thing turned black, a thin black liquid ran in his arteries, no other friends of his felt it that passionately, the reason—that was Demirgian's secret. A bullet, a piece of his bayonet, it didn't make a diff to Demirgian *how*, a tent peg if it was sharp enough, a shovel, a can of kerosene, a kitchen match and—*bastard! die!* Demirgian's imagination knew no mercy—kick him in the genitals, finger in his eyeballs, stick him in the ash-can, ha-ha-ha! *Yeah*, Demirgian thought in his wait at this ambush area, it might be the night tonight—a toss of a hand grenade, success! An explosion and *I'll look at him lying there dead and I'll think*—Demirgian thought of a pale yellow face, the mouth like a broken bottle, the starlight on crooked teeth—*I think I'll be sorry about him*—yeah, Demirgian thought. *I'll say to him poor bastard! You're fighting for a losing cause!* And later if there was a watch upon him, Demirgian thought he might take it, a souvenir. (153–54)

Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, widely considered to be the quintessential book on Vietnam, featured all the devices of literary journalism. In a particularly telling segment on the psychology of fear—and the drug-like quality of combat—Herr writes:

Quakin' and Shakin', they called it, great balls of fire, Contact. Then it was you and the ground: kiss it, eat it, fuck it, plow it with your whole body, get as close to it as you can without being in it yet or of it, guess who's flying around about an inch above your head? Pucker and submit, it's the ground. Under Fire would take you out of your head and your body too, the space you'd seen a second ago between subject and object wasn't there anymore, it banged shut in a fast wash of adrenaline. Amazing, unbelievable, guys who'd played a lot of hard sports said they'd never felt anything like it, the sudden drop and rocket rush of the hit, the reserves of adrenaline you could make available to yourself, pumping it up and putting it out until you were lost floating in it, not afraid, almost open to clear orgasmic death-by-drowning in it, actually relaxed. . . . Maybe you couldn't love the war and hate it inside the same instant, but sometimes those feelings alternated so rapidly that they spun together in a strobic wheel rolling all the way up until you were literally High On War, like it said on all the helmet covers. Coming off a jag like that could really make a mess out of you. (58–59)

Here is the theme that has perhaps been forgotten by generations since Vietnam, and one that today's public would probably rather not acknowledge, one that Junger is anxious to deliver: that combat, while being evil and messy and idiotic, still holds qualities—excitements, really—that are found nowhere else in the world, and this truth is the one that journalists rarely write:

War is a lot of things and it's useless to pretend that exciting isn't one of them. It's insanely exciting. The machinery of war and the sound it makes and the urgency of its use and the consequences of almost everything about it are the most exciting things anyone engaged in war will ever know. Soldiers discuss that fact with each other and eventually with their chaplains and their shrinks and maybe even their spouses, but the public will never hear about it. It's just not something that many people want acknowledged. . . . Don't underestimate the power of that revelation. Don't underestimate the things young men will wager in order to play that game one more time. (144–45)

It is a drug, as addictive to soldiers as narcotics to a user, and while Junger is certainly not the first to uncover this truth, it does bear repeating. In one passage Sgt. Brendan O'Byrne tells Junger: "Combat is such an adrenaline rush . . . I'm worried I'll be looking for that when I get home and if I can't find it, I'll just start drinking and getting in trouble. People back home think we drink because of the bad stuff, but that's not true . . . we drink because we miss the good stuff" (232). And Junger writes of another soldier: "Meanwhile Steiner was running around with a big grin on his face. 'It's like crack,' he yelled, 'you can't get a better high.' I asked him how he was ever going to go back to civilian life. He shook his head. 'I have no idea'" (180).

Considering more contemporaneous writers, Junger is also indebted to both Dexter Filkins's *The Forever War*, and Anthony Shadid's *Night Drums Near*, not only for the visceral aspects of relating to the reader what it feels like to be in combat, and for the level of reflexivity all these writers bring to bear on the subject of war reporting, but for the psychological effects war has, on soldiers, civilians, and journalists. As Filkins confesses in *The Forever War*,

Back in the world, people were serious, about the fillings in their sandwiches, about the winner of last night's ballgame. I couldn't blame them, of course. For me, the war sort of flattened things out, flattened things out here and flattened them out there, too. Toward the end, when I was still there, so many bombs had gone off so many times that they no longer shocked or even roused; the people screamed in silence and in slow motion. And then I got back to the world, and the weddings and the picnics were the same as everything had been in Iraq, silent and slow and heavy and dead. (340)

Remarking on his own struggles to understand post-invasion Baghdad, Shadid writes in *Night Drums Near* that:

Moving through the blood-soaked city, I tried to do my job, but at every turn, I was repulsed, overwhelmed with a desire to leave this place and, for that matter, the country itself. I walked past a finger and a piece of scalp with knotted, matted hair; a chunk of brain had been tossed into a pot of still steaming rice. (The kettle was considered cleaner than the ground) . . . The logic of violence never envisioned a triumph or an ending. There would be no winner, no agreement, no real truce . . . It was theater, and people kept dying to create those indelible scenes, a portrait of a debacle designed for world consumption. (356–57)

Both Filkins and Shadid are able to accomplish what the best of literary war reporting has done all along: be more honest than objective about what Gellhorn called the "idiotic disease" of war, however their particular subjectivities stem from their unembedded status. In Shadid's case, he was one of only a handful of Western reporters who wrote from the Iraqi civilians' perspective, and he did so with a level of insight and historical and cultural sensitivity that would win him the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in 2004. Filkins (whose book won nearly every available nonfiction prize in 2008 except the Pulitzer), wrote from the U.S. military's as well as the Afghani and Iraqi perspective (Schack). Because of this and their use of literary devices, both these reporters were able to provide the sort of insight that better informs the public, and interprets the deeper meanings for us beyond the mere facts

that conventional journalism relies upon in strict adherence to staid objectivity.

Exemplifying precisely this, both Shadid and Filkins independently arrive at a similar conclusion about perhaps the most important aspect of the American military effort: that, despite Madison Avenue strategy backed by billions of dollars, the U.S. will always lose the battle because of its the inability to use language effectively—or even perceive reality correctly. In *Night Draws Near*, Shadid points out:

As always, the Americans used one vocabulary and the Iraqis another. Bremer spoke of the law, while Sadr spoke of martyrdom. . . President Bush described the fighting as pitting those who loved freedom against those who hated it, while Sadr inverted the relationship and claimed the fight itself was blessed . . . The Americans talked about independence but were perceived as occupiers . . . In the war of words, the Americans never really had a chance. (375)

Likewise, Filkins discusses at length the fact that there were two dialogues (and thus two distinct realities) occurring at all times in Iraq: that which the Americans spoke of and believed in, and the other, which the Iraqis never spoke of to the Americans, and which actually existed:

There were always two conversations in Iraq, the one the Iraqis were having with the Americans and the one they were having among themselves. The one the Iraqis were having with us—that was positive and predictable and boring, and it made the Americans happy because it made them think they were winning. And the Iraqis kept it up because it kept the money flowing, or because it bought them a little piece. The conversation they were having with each other was the one that really mattered, of course. That conversation was the chatter of a whole other world, a parallel reality, which sometimes unfolded right next to the Americans, even right in front of them. And we almost never saw it. (115)

Both these writers also employed potent images and symbolism to describe, as did Liebling, Gellhorn, and others, the macro-level meaning in micro-level detail. In a moment symbolic of the ironic ineffectuality of overwhelming military might, Shadid describes the following scene:

Down a street in Sadr City that day, near pools of sewage and wet trash, children showered rocks on an M1A1 Abrams tank. Its force too great for the task at hand, its armaments singularly unsuited to the enemy before it, the tank's turret swiveled back and forth through smoke and dust blown up by a brisk breeze. It swung helplessly, and the children threw rocks defiantly, and this went on and on. In the end, it was a draw. (377)

That image alone tells the reader all she needs to know about the disastrous miscalculations of the Iraq War, and why it was destined to fail. Filkins, emphasizing the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context into which the Americans brought their military machine, uses a sports metaphor to symbolize all that the Americans don't understand about the nature of the enemy which they face:

People fought in Afghanistan, and people died, but not always in the obvious way. They had been fighting for so long, twenty-three years then, that by the time the Americans arrived the Afghans had developed an elaborate set of rules designed to spare as many fighters as they could. So the war could go on forever. Men fought,

men switched sides, men lined up and fought again. War in Afghanistan often seemed like a game of pickup basketball, a contest among friends, a tournament where you never knew which team you'd be on when the next game got under way. Shirts today, skins tomorrow. On Tuesday, you might be part of a fearsome Taliban regiment, running into a minefield. And on Wednesday you might be manning a checkpoint for some gang of the Northern Alliance. By Thursday you could be back with the Talibs again, holding up your Kalashnikov and promising to wage jihad forever. War was serious in Afghanistan, but not that serious. It was part of everyday life. It was a job. Only the civilians seemed to lose. (50–51)

Junger also uses strong imagery and symbolism to interpret the deeper meanings beyond the facts, and though his subject is limited to the cultural context of Company C in the Korengal valley, as we have seen above, he is able to write reflexively and provide insights into not only the psychological effects of war, and the combat etiquette that Pyle made famous, but he is also as adept at making the sort of macro-level meaning from micro-level detail as are Liebling, Shadid, and Filkins. In one such moment, Junger describes the moment when one soldier—O'Byrne—is asking another soldier, nicknamed "Money": "If you were Hajj, why would you want to wake up in the morning and shoot at us? Money, why would Hajj want to do that?" Money, Junger writes, is "not interested in this conversation." So instead, Junger provides his own answer:

The immediate answer was that we built a firebase in their backyard, but there was more to the question than that. Once in a while you'd forget to think of the enemy as the enemy and would see them for what they were: teenagers up on a hill who got tired and cold just like the Americans and missed their families and slept poorly before the big operations and probably had nightmares about them afterward. Once you thought about them on those terms it was hard not to wonder whether the men themselves—not the American and Taliban commanders but the actual guys behind the guns—couldn't somehow sit down together and work this out. I'm pretty sure the Taliban had a healthy respect for Second Platoon, at least as fighters, and once in a while I'd hear someone in Second Platoon mumble a kind of grudging approval of the Taliban as well: they move like ghosts around the mountains and can fight all day on a swallow of water and a handful of nuts and are holding their own against a brigade of U.S. airborne infantry. As a military feat that's nothing to sneeze at. The sheer weirdness of war—any war—can never be entirely contained and breaks through at odd moments: "I went out to use the piss tubes one night," O'Byrne admitted to me once, "and I was like, 'What am I doing in Afghanistan?' I mean literally, 'What am I doing here?' I'm trying to kill people and they're trying to kill me. It's crazy. . . ." (170)

Indeed. And this moment, exposing war, as did Gellhorn, as "a malignant disease, an idiocy," demonstrates the power of literary journalism in wartime, as it shows rather than tells just how crazy and idiotic is this business called war.

In Junger's *War* we have a story that is neither original nor objective, but these are strengths, not weaknesses. The story itself—of soldier's lives, their waking and sleeping nightmares, their psychological victories and defeats, their desire for combat to simultaneously cease forever and continue endlessly—is a story as old as war itself, and while we may wish we didn't have to hear it again, it is the one story that must be told as long as we continue to wage war, again and again. As for the lack of

objectivity, it is precisely in the subjective nature of literary war reporting, the use of style, art, and imagination that is the legacy of writers such as those discussed here. It is that legacy that allows a writer such as Junger to report honestly—but not objectively—beyond the facts and interpret for the public the big picture as evident in small, telling details. Indeed, it is the literary journalism aspect itself and all the attendant devices that work together to provide a deeper, more honest understanding that (once again) war is hell, and, as Michael Herr famously put it: Hell Sucks.

WORKS CITED

- Katovsky, Bill. *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2003.
- McLaughlin, Greg. *The War Correspondent*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.
- Schack, Todd. Review of *The Forever War*, *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2009), 120–22.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The references to literary war reporters above are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to highlight the legacies of style to which Junger is indebted for his book, *War*. I have not, for instance, considered works preceding Spanish Civil War. In addition to the works cited in my essay, readers interested in literary war reporting might wish to consult the following highly selective list for excellent examples of such writing:

COLLECTIONS

- Keegan, John. *The Book of War: 25 Centuries of Great War Reporting* (New York: Penguin, 1999).
- Hemingway, Earnest. *Hemingway on War*. New York: Scribner, 2004.

SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

- Crane, Stephen. *Reports of War* (vol. 9, Works of Stephen Crane), Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1971.
- Davis, Richard Harding. "The Death of Rodriguez," *A Year from a Reporter's Notebook*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1897.

SPANISH CIVIL WAR

- Orwell, George. *Homage to Catalonia*. Chicago: Mariner Books, 1980.

WORLD WAR II

- Hersey, John. *Hiroshima*. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Sajer, Guy. *The Forgotten Soldier*. New York: Brassey's Press, 1990.
- Grossman, Vasily. *A Writer at War: A Soviet Journalist with the Red Army, 1941–1945*. New York: Vintage, 2007.

KOREA

- Halberstam, David. *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*. New York: Hyperion, 2007.

VIETNAM

Halberstam, David. *The Best and the Brightest*. New York: Ballantine, 1993.

THE “HOME FRONT”

Bryan, C. D. B. *Friendly Fire*. New York: Bantam, 1982.

EL SALVADOR

Didion, Joan. *Salvador*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1982.

Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

GULF WAR I

Sack, John. *Company C: The Real War in Iraq*. Bloomington, Ind.: IUUniverse, 2000.

WAR (ON TERROR) IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Sack, John. “Anaconda,” *Esquire*, August 2002.

ENDNOTES

1. The book *War* was written by Sebastian Junger and released in 2010 in conjunction with the companion documentary *Restrepo* (2010), co-directed by Junger and the late Tim Hetherington (d. 20 April 2011). The documentary was nominated for an Academy Award, and won the Grand Jury Prize for Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival.

2. I refer the reader to an excellent edited volume on the topic, *Embedded* (2003) by Bill Katovsky.

3. I am here excluding John Hersey, whose *Hiroshima* is obviously a classic of literary journalism, and rightly so. While his other work during the war, including *Into the Valley: A Skirmish of the Marines* and *Men on Bataan*, might be considered “literary” it was considerably less developed as such, and for this reason I am bringing the reader’s attention towards Liebling and Gellhorn, as they deserve as much credit as Hersey, yet are rarely awarded such.

4. Astute readers will here ask: “What of Gellhorn’s husband, Ernest Hemingway?” While he was also writing about the Spanish Civil War, his writing was neither as polished nor as memorable as his wife’s (a possible exception being “A New Kind of War”), and if there is one thing that may not be said of Hemingway it is that he has been overlooked and underrated. The purpose of this essay is precisely to bring to light the legacies, many of which forgotten, that current war journalists are indebted to, either consciously or not.

LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND CRITICISM

EXAMINING LITERARY JOURNALISM

INTERNATIONAL

Bak, John, and Bill Reynolds, eds. *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

A collection of works by different scholars and critics.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer." *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. and intro. Peter Demetz. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.

Calvi, Pablo. "Latin America's Own 'New Journalism.'" *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 63–83.

Hartsock, John C. "'Lettre' from Berlin." *DoubleTake*, Spring/Summer 2007: 106–11.

———. "Literary Reportage: The 'Other' Literary Journalism." *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*, 42 (Spring/Summer 2009): 113–34. Rpt. in *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

Keeble, Richard, and John Tulloch, eds. *Global Literary Journalism: Exploring the Journalism Imagination*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press: forthcoming.

Passos, Mateus Yuri, Érica Masiero Nering, and Juliano Mauricio de Carvalho. "The Chudnovsky Case: How Literary Journalism Can Open the 'Black Box' of Science." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 27–45.

AUSTRALIA

Joseph, Beate, and Christine Müller. "Differently Drawn Boundaries of the Permissible in German and Australian Literary Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 67–78.

Thompson, Matthew. "Outrider: William T. Vollmann, Tony Tanner, and the Private Extremes of an Anti-Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 73–95.

BOLIVIA

Knudson, Jerry W. "Death in Bolivia: Covering the Chaco War, 1932–1935." *International Communication Bulletin* 41.1–2 (Spring 2006): 46–53.

BRAZIL

Passos, Mateus Yuri, Érica Masiero Nering, and Juliano Mauricio de Carvalho. "The Chudnovsky Case: How Literary Journalism Can Open the 'Black Box' of Science." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 27–45.

CANADA

Brown, Ian. "Writing What You See, Not What You Think You See." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 57–62.

Reynolds, Bill. "Recovering the Peculiar Life and Times of Tom Hedley and Canadian New Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 79–104.

CHINA

Chou, Yin-hwa. "Formal Features of Chinese Reportage and an Analysis of Lian Qichao's 'Memoirs of My Travels in the New World.'" *Modern Chinese Literature* 1, no. 2 (1985), 201–17.

Dutraît, Noel. "La littérature de reportage chinoise." *Europe: Revue littéraire mensuelle* 53 (1985): 77–85.

Hartsock, John C. "Literary Reportage: The 'Other' Literary Journalism." *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*, 42 (Spring/Summer 2009): 113–34. Rpt. and rev. in *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

Kawaguchi Ko. "Deguo de xinxing wenxue" ("A newly emerging literature in Germany"). Trans. Feng Xuanzhang. *Tuohuangzhe* 1, no. 2 (1930).

Laughlin, Charles A. *Chinese Reportage: The Aesthetics of Historical Experience*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002.

Wagner, Rudolph G. *Inside a Service Trade: Studies in Contemporary Chinese Prose*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 34. Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992.

Yin Junsheng and Yang Rupeng, *Baogao wenxue zong heng tan* [Disquisitions on reportage literature.] Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Press, 1983.

Yingjin Zhang. "Narrative, Ideology, Subjectivity: Defining a Subjective Discourse in Chinese Reportage." *Politics, Ideology and Literary Discourse in Modern China*. Ed. Liu Kang and Xiaobing Kang. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. 211–42.

Zhang, Yingjin. "Narrative, Ideology, Subjectivity: Defining a Subversive Discourse in Chinese Reportage." *Politics, Ideology, and Literary Discourse in Modern China: Theoretical Interventions and Cultural Critique*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993. 211–42.

COLOMBIA

Cabrera, Vicente. "García Márquez and the Game of the Chronicle and the Reportage." *Cuadernos de poética*, 19 (1989): 35–49.

Sims, Robert Lewis. *The First García Márquez: A Study of His Journalistic Writing from 1948 to 1955*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1992.

CUBA

Calvi, Pablo. "Latin America's Own 'New Journalism.'" *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 63–83.

CZECH

Kozlová, Danica, and Jiří Tomáš. *Egon Erwin Kisch: Journalist and Fighter*. Trans. John Newton. Prague: International Organization of Journalists, 1985.

Kuprel, Diana Kuprel. "Literary Reportage: Between and Beyond Art and Fact." *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2004. 375–85.

FINLAND

Lassila-Merisalo, Maria. "Exploring the 'Reality Boundary' of Esa Kero." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 31–38.

FRANCE

Palmer, Ruth. "The Hoax, Uncanny Identity, and Literary Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 85–105.

Passos, Mateus Yuri, Érica Masiero Nering, and Juliano Mauricio de Carvalho. "The Chudnovsky Case: How Literary Journalism Can Open the 'Black Box' of Science." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 27–45.

Pies, Stacy. "'Un fil visible': Poetry and Reportage in Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Un Spectacle interrompu.'" *French Forum* 29, no. 2 (2004): 1–18.

GERMANY

Balk, Theodor. "Egon Erwin Kisch and His Reportage: On the 50th Year of a Noted Revolutionary Reporter." *International Literature*: 67.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer." *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. and intro. Peter Demetz. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. 220–238.

Camigliano, Albert J. "Günter Wallraff: B(e)aring the Facts." *Monatshefte* 75, no. 4 (1983): 405–18.

- Harder, Matthias. "Reporter und Erzähler: Egon Erwin Kisch und die literarische Reportage." *Literatur für Leser* 3 (1994): 157–64.
- Hartsock, John C. "'Lettre' from Berlin." *DoubleTake*, Summer 2007: 106–11.
- . "Literary Reportage: The 'Other' Literary Journalism." *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*, 42 (Spring/Summer 2009): 113–34. Rpt. and rev. in *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.
- Joseph, Beate, and Christine Müller. "Differently Drawn Boundaries of the Permissible in German and Australian Literary Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 67–78.
- Kozlová, Danica, and Jiří Tomáš. *Egon Erwin Kisch: Journalist and Fighter*. Trans. John Newton. Prague: International Organization of Journalists, 1985.
- Majerová, Marie. "Als Egonek den Roman Zum Tod Verurteilte." *Kisch-Kalendar*. Ed. Franz Carl Weiskopf. Berlin [East]: Aufbau-Verlag, 1955.
- Poerksen, Bernhard. "The Milieu of a Magazine: *Tempo* as an Exponent of German New Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 9–29.
- Segel, Harold B. *Egon Erwin Kisch: The Raging Reporter*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1992.
- Schmückle, Karl, ed. "Für Egon Erwin Kisch zum 50. Geburtstag." *Internationale Literatur* 4 (April, 1935): 3–30.

JAPAN

- Kawaguchi Ko. "Deguo de xinxing wenxue" ("A newly emerging literature in Germany"). Trans. Feng Xuanzhang. *Tuobuangzhe* 1, no. 2 (1930).
- Strecher, Matthew C. "Who's Afraid of Takahashi O-Den? 'Poison Woman' Stories and Literary Journalism in Early Meiji Japan." *Japanese Language and Literature: The Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 38, no.1 (2004): 25–55.

THE NETHERLANDS

- Grunberg, Arnon. Interview by Frank Harbers. *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 75–83.
- Harbers, Frank. "Between Fact and Fiction: Arnon Grunberg on His Literary Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 74.

POLAND

- Aucoin, James L. "Epistemic Responsibility and Narrative Theory: The Literary Journalism of Ryszard Kapuściński." *Journalism* 2, no. 1 (2001): 5–21.
- Kuprel, Diana Kuprel. "Literary Reportage: Between and Beyond Art and Fact." *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2004. 375–85.

Wood, Felicity. "The 'Soccer War' and the 'City that Sailed Away': Magical Realism and the New Journalism in the Work of Ryszard Kapuściński." *Literator* 19, no. 1 (April 1998): 79–91.

PORTUGAL

Soares, Isabel. "South: Where Travel Meets Literary Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 17–30.

MEXICO

Shaw, Deborah. "The Literary Journalism of Guadalupe Loaeza and Cristina Pacheco." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 18.4 (1999): 437–50.

RUSSIA/SOVIET UNION

Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer." *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. and intro. Peter Demetz. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. 220–238.

Carden, Patricia. "Reassessing Ovechkin." *Russian and Slavic Literature*. Ed. Richard Freeborn, R.R. Milner-Guland, Charles A. Ward. Cambridge, Mass.: Slavic Publishers, 1976. 407–24.

Hartsock, John C. "Literary Reportage: The 'Other' Literary Journalism." *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*, 42 (Spring/Summer 2009): 113–134. Rpt. and rev. in *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Tradition and Transnational Influence*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

Porter, Cathy. *Larissa Reisner*. London: Virago, 1988.

SPAIN

Monteath, Peter. "The Spanish Civil War and the Aesthetics of Reportage." *Literature and War*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990. 69–85.

Wilkinson, James D. "Truth and Delusion: European Intellectuals in Search of the Spanish Civil War." *Salmagundi* 76/77 (1987): 3–52.

SLOVENIA

Flis, Leonora. *Factual Fictions: Narrative Truth and the Contemporary American Documentary Novel*. Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.

Zdovc, Sonja Merljak. "Literary Journalism: The Intersection of Literature and Journalism." *Acta Neophilologica* 37, 1–2 (2004): 17–22.

———. *Literary Journalism in the United States of America and Slovenia*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2008.

———. "The Use of Novelistic Techniques in Slovene Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 248–63

UNITED KINGDOM

Carey, John. Introduction. *The Faber Book of Reportage*. Ed. John Carey. London: Faber and Faber, 1987; rpt. as *Eyewitness to History*. New York: Avon, 1990. xxix–xxxviii.

- . “Reportage and Willed Credulity.” *New Media Language*. Ed. Jean Aitchison and Diana Lewis. London: Routledge, 2003. 57–64.
- Chapman, Jane. “The Personal is the Political: George Sand’s Contribution to Popular Journalism.” *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 44–57.
- Daly, Kirsten. “William Hazlitt: Poetry, Drama, and Literary Journalism.” *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 29–43.
- Finkelstein, David. “‘The Dangerous Third Martini’: Graham Greene, Libel and Literary Journalism in 1930s Britain.” *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 87–99.
- Gloversmith, Frank. “Changing Things: Orwell and Auden.” *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*. Ed. Frank Gloversmith. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980. 101–141.
- Hiland, Paul. Introduction. *Ned Ward: The London Spy*. East Lansing, Mich.: Colleagues Press, 1993.
- Hilton, Isabel. “Commentary—A Prize for the Underrated Genre of Literary Reportage.” *New Statesman* 13 Oct. 2003. Web 23 June 2008
- Keeble, Richard. “The Lasting in the Ephemeral: Assessing George Orwell’s As I Please Columns.” *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 100–15.
- Keeble, Richard, and Sharon Wheeler, eds. *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. London: Routledge, 2007.
A collection of articles by different scholars and critics.
- Laing, Stuart. “Presenting ‘Things as They Are’: John Sommerfield’s *May Day* and Mass Observation.” *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*. Ed. Frank Gloversmith. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980. 142–59.
- McKay, Jenny. “Defoe’s *The Storm* as a Model for Contemporary Reporting.” *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 15–28.
- Ohmann, Richard. “Politics and Genre in Nonfiction Prose.” *New Literary History* 11, no. 2 (1980): 237–44.
- Peach, Linden. “The Journalist as Philosopher and Cultural Critic: The Case of Angela Carter.” *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 145–57.

Tulloch, John. "Charles Dickens and the Voices of Journalism." *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 58–73.

UNITED STATES

Abrahamson, David. "An Inconvenient Legacy: *The Jungle* and the Immigrant Imperative." *Journalism History* 34 (Fall 2008): 163–65.

"A Narrative of Collegial Discovery on Some Conceptual Essentials." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 87–95.

———. "A Narrative of Collegial Discovery on Some Conceptual Essentials." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 87–95.

———. "Teaching Journalism as Literature and Possibilities of Artistic Growth." *Journalism Educator* 46 (Summer 1991): 54–60.

Alexander, Robert. "'My Story Is Always Escaping Into other People': Subjectivity, Objectivity, and the Double in American Literary Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 57–66.

Anderson, Chris. *Style as Argument: Contemporary American Nonfiction*. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.

Anderson, Chris, ed. *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy*. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.

A collection of articles by different scholars and critics.

Applegate, Edd, ed. *Literary Journalism: A Biographical Dictionary of Writers and Editors*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Asch, Nathan. Review. *The New Republic* 4 Sept. 1935: 108.

Ashdown, Paul. "Ernest Hemingway." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 187–196.

———. "James Agee." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 197–204.

Ball, John. Introduction. *Children of the Levee* by Lafcadio Hearn. Ed. O. W. Frost. [Lexington, Ky.]: University of Kentucky Press, 1957. 1–8.

Banks, Anna. "Norman Mailer." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 297–306.

Bass, Sharon. "John McPhee." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 343–52.

- Bartley, Aryn. "The Citizen-Witness and the Politics of Shame: Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 23–41.
- Berner, R. Thomas. "C. D. B. Bryan." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 317–22.
- . *The Literature of Journalism: Text and Context*. State College, Penn.: Strata Publishing, Inc. 1999.
- . *Literary Newswriting: The Death of an Oxymoron*. Journalism Monographs 99. Columbia, S.C.: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Oct. 1986.
- . "Literary Notions and Utilitarian Reality." *Style* 16 (Fall 1982): 452–57.
- . *Writing Literary Features*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988.
- Beyer, Charlotte. "A Work and a Purpose: Willa Cather's Journalism." *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 74–86.
- Bordelon, Pamela, ed. Biographical essay. *Go Gator and Muddy the Water: Writings by Zora Neale Hurston from the Federal Writers' Project*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1999.
- Boylan, James. "The Long and Short of *The Jungle*." *Journalism History* 34 (Fall 2008): 165–67.
- . "Publicity for the Great Depression: Newspaper Default and Literary Reportage." *Mass Media Between the Wars: Perceptions of Cultural Tension, 1917–1941*. Ed. Catherine Covert and John Stevens. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984. 159–79.
- Boynton, H. W. "The Literary Aspect of Journalism." *Atlantic* 93 (1904): 845–51.
- Boynton, Robert S. *The New New Journalism*. New York: Vintage, 2005.
- Bradley, Patricia. "Richard Harding Davis." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 21–52.
- Braman, Sandra. "Joan Didion." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 353–58.
- Calvi, Pablo. "Latin America's Own 'New Journalism.'" *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 63–83.
- Carey, John. Introduction. Ed. John Carey. *The Faber Book of Reportage*. London: Faber and Faber, 1987; rpt. as *Eyewitness to History*. New York: Avon, 1990. xxix–xxxviii.
- Carrillo, Maria. "Great Expectations: *The Virginian-Pilot's* Commitment to Storytelling." *Points-of-Entry: Cross-Currents in Storytelling* 2, no.1 (2004): 11–13.

- Chance, Jean, and William McKeen. Introduction. *Literary Journalism: A Reader*. Ed. Jean Chance and William McKeen. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2001. vii–xiv.
- Cheney, Theodore A. Rees. *Writing Creative Nonfiction: Fiction Techniques for Crafting Great Nonfiction*. Cincinnati: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
- “Chronicle and Comment.” *The Bookman* 14 (Oct. 1901): 110–11.
- Clark, Roy Peter. “Tell Me a Story.” *Poynter Online* 12 December 2003. Accessed 14 April 2004 <http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=51437>.
- Connery, Thomas B. “Discovering a Literary Form.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 3–37.
- . “Fiction/Nonfiction and Sinclair’s *The Jungle*: Drinking from the Same Well.” *Journalism History* 34 (Fall 2008): 167–70.
- . “Hutchins Hapgood.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 121–29.
- . Preface. *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. xi–xv.
- . “Research Review: Magazines and Literary Journalism, An Embarrassment of Riches.” *Electronic Journal of Communication/La Revue Electronique de Communication*. 4 (1994): 1–12.
- . “A Third Way to Tell the Story: American Literary Journalism at the Turn of the Century.” *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 3–20.
- Connery, Thomas B., ed. *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992.
A collection of articles by different scholars and critics.
- Conover, Ted. Foreward. *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* by Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007. ix–xv.
- Cott, Jonathan. *Wandering Ghost: The Odyssey of Lafcadio Hearn*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.
- Coward, John M. “Tracy Kidder.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 375–86.
- Dow, William. *Narrating Class in American Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Eason, David. “The New Journalism and the Image-World.” *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 206–27.

- Easterbrook, Gregg. "Toxic Business." *New York Times Book Review*, 10 Sept. 1995: 13.
- Evensen, Bruce J. "Abraham Cahan." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 91–100.
- Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. "The Borderlands of Culture: Writing by W. E. B. Du Bois, James Agee, Tillie Olsen, and Gloria Anzaldúa." *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 133–82.
- . *From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- Flis, Leonora. *Factual Fictions: Narrative Truth and the Contemporary American Documentary Novel*. Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.
- Forché, Carolyn, and Philip Gerard, eds. *Writing Creative Nonfiction: Instruction and Insights from the Teachers of the Associated Writing Programs*. Cincinnati: Story Press, 2001.
- Ford, Edwin H. "The Art and Craft of the Literary Journalist." *Survey of Journalism*. Ed. George Fox Mott. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1937. 294–302.
- . *A Bibliography of Literary Journalism in America*. Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1937.
- Forde, Kathy Roberts. "How *Masson v. New Yorker* Has Shaped the Legal Landscape of Narrative Journalism." *Communication Law & Policy* 10 (Winter 2005): 101–33.
- . *Literary Journalism on Trial: Masson v. New Yorker and the First Amendment*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008.
- Fowler, Giles. "John Steinbeck." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 179–85.
- Franke, Warren T. "W. T. Stead: The First New Journalist?" *Journalism History*, 1.2 (1974): 36+.
- Franklin, Jon. "The Narrative Tool." *American Editor* 2 Dec. 1998. Accessed 9 March 2004 <<http://www.asne.org/kiosk/editor/98.octnov/franklin1.htm>>.
- . *Writing for Story: Craft Secrets of Dramatic Nonfiction by a Two-Time Pulitzer Prize Winner*. New York: Plume, 1986.
- Frus, Phyllis. *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narrative: The Timely and the Timeless*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

- . “Two Tales ‘Intended to Be after the Fact’: ‘Stephen Crane’s Own Story’ and ‘The Open Boat.’” *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy*. Ed. Chris Anderson. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989. 125–51.
- Fry, Don, and Roy Peter Clark. “Rebirth of the narrative: The Rebirth Of Narrative in America’s Newsrooms.” *The Quill* May 1994: 27–28.
- Gold, Herbert. “On Epidemic First Personism.” *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*. Ed. Ronald Weber. New York: Hastings House, 1974. 283–87.
- Gooch, Cheryl. “The Literary Mind of a Cornfield Journalist: Joel Chandler Harris’s 1904 Negro Question Articles.” *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 79–87.
- Good, Howard. “Jacob A. Riis.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. New York: Greenwood P, 1992. 81–90.
- Guilfoil, Kelsey. “John Hersey: Fact and Fiction.” *The English Journal* 39, no. 7 (Sept. 1950): 355–360.
- Gutkind, Lee. *The Art of Creative Nonfiction: Writing and Selling the Literature of Reality*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997.
- . *Keep It Real: Everything You Need to Know About Researching and Writing Creative Nonfiction*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2009.
- Hapgood, Hutchins. “A New Form of Literature.” *Bookman* 21 (1905): 424–47.
- Hart, Jack. “Stories in the News.” *Writer’s Digest* Sept. 1995: 29–33.
- Hartsock, John C. “Caught Between the Rhetoric of Scene and the Rhetoric of Polemic.” *Points of Entry* 2.1: 187–96.
- . Forward. *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. vii–xii.
- . Forward. Sonja Merljak Zdovc. *Literary Journalism in the United States of America and Slovenia*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2008. vii–viii.
- . *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000.
- . “‘It Was a Dark and Stormy Night’: Newspaper Reporters Rediscover the Art of Narrative Literary Journalism and Their Own Epistemological Heritage.” *Prose Studies* 29.2 (2007): 263–84.
- . “Literary Journalism.” *Reading in America Today: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Contemporary Popular American Literature*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2008.
- . “Literary Reportage: The ‘Other’ Literary Journalism.” *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*, 42 (Spring/Summer 2009): 113–34. Rpt. and rev. in *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

- . “‘Scribbling the Cat’: In a Dangerous Land of Negotiating Personal and Cultural Revelation.” *DoubleTake* 1, vol. 2 (2006): 100-04.
- . “Telling News Naturally,” *Points of Entry: Cross-Currents in Story Telling* 1, no. 1, 2003: 35–41.
- Harvey, Chris. “Tom Wolfe’s Revenge.” *American Journalism Review* Oct. 1994: 40–45.
- Hawthorne, Julian. “Journalism the Destroyer of Literature.” *The Critic* 48 (1906): 166–71.
- Hellmann, John. *Fables of Fact: The New Journalism as Fables of Fact*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.
- Hersey, John. “The Legend on the License.” *Yale Review* 70: 1–25.
- . “The Novel of Contemporary History.” *Atlantic Monthly* Nov. 1949: 80-84.
- Hettinga, Donald R. “Ring Lardner.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 161–67.
- Heyne, Eric. “Toward a Theory of Literary Nonfiction.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 23 (1987): 479–90.
- Hollowell, John. *Fact & Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977.
- Hough, George A. “How New?” *Journal of Popular Culture* 9 (1975): 114/16–121/23.
- Howarth, William. “The Mother of Literature: Journalism and *The Grapes of Wrath*.” *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 53–81.
- Humphrey, Robert E. “John Reed.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 151–60.
- Humphries, David T. *Different Dispatches: Journalism in American Modernist Prose*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Jones, Dan R. “John McPhee.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 343–52.
- . “John Hersey.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 213–22.
- Jensen, Jay. “The New Journalism in Historical Perspective.” *Journalism History* 1.2 (1974): 37+.
- Johnson, Michael L. *The New Journalism: The Underground Press, the Artists of Nonfiction, and Changes in the Established Media*. Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 1971.

- Jones, Steve. "Jane Kramer." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 323–29.
- Kallan, Richard A. "Tom Wolfe." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 249–60.
- Kaul, Arthur J., ed. *American Literary Journalists, 1945–1995*. First Series. Dictionary of Literary Biography. Detroit: Gale Research, 1997. 185.
- . "Hunter S. Thompson." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 273–79.
- Kazin, Alfred. "The Imagination of Fact." *Bright Book of Life*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1973. 209–41.
- Keeble, Richard. Introduction. *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. London: Routledge, 2007. 1–14.
- Keeble, Richard, and Sharon Wheeler, eds. *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. London: Routledge, 2007.
A collection of articles by different scholars and critics.
- Kenner, Hugh. "The Politics of the Plain Style." *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 183–90.
- Kerrane, Kevin. "Making Facts Dance." *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*. Ed. Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda. New York: Scribner, 1997. 17–20.
- Kirkhorn, Michael J. "Journalism's Guilty Secret." *Nieman Reports* 46, vol. 2 (Summer 1992): 36–41.
- Kramer, Dale. *Ross and The New Yorker*. New York: Doubleday, 1951.
- Kramer, Mark. "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists." *Literary Journalism: A New Collection of the Best American Nonfiction*. Ed. Norman Sims and Mark Kramer. New York: Ballantine, 1995. 21–34.
- . "Narrative Journalism Comes of Age." *Nieman Reports* 54.3 (2000): 5–8.
- Kramer, Mark, and Wendy Call. *Telling True Stories*. New York: Plume, 2007.
- Landa, Amy Snow. "How Literary Journalism Can Inform Bioethics." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 47–61.
- Lee, Gerard Stanley. "Journalism as a Basis for Literature." *Atlantic* Feb. 1900: 231–37.
- Lehman, Daniel W. *John Reed & Writing of Revolution*. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2002.

- . *Matters of Fact: Reading Nonfiction over the Edge*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1997.
- Lemann, Nicholas. Panel discussion: “America: What’s the Story?: The Uses and Abuses of Narrative in Nonfiction: the World, the Word, and the Future: Sesquicentennial Discussion on the State of the Literary Arts.” New York State Writers Center, Albany, N.Y. 18 Nov. 1994.
- . “Writing Literary History: *The Promised Land*, and *The Big Test*,” interview with Author Nicholas Lemann,” interview by Norman Sims. *Literary Journalism Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 9–31.
- Lewis, Oscar. Introduction. *Frank Norris of “The Wave”: Stories & Sketches from the San Francisco Weekly, 1893 to 1897*. San Francisco: Westgate Press, 1931. 1–15.
- Lounsberry, Barbara. *The Art of Fact: Contemporary Artists of Nonfiction*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Lule, Jack. “Joe Eszterhas.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 307–16.
- Macdonald, Dwight. “Hersey’s ‘Hiroshima.’” *Politics* 3 (Oct. 1946): 308.
- . “Parajournalism, or Tom Wolfe and His Magic Writing Machine.” *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*. Ed. Ronald Weber. New York: Hastings House, 1974. 223–33.
- Maguire, Miles. “Literary Journalism as a Key to Reporting’s Richest Prize.” *Literary Journalism Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 53–71.
- . “Richard Critchfield: ‘Genius’ Journalism and the Fallacy of Verification.” *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 9–21.
- Maguire, Roberta. “Riffing on Hemingway and Burke, Responding to Mailer and Wolfe: Albert Murray’s ‘Anti-Journalism.’” *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 9–26.
- Mansell, Darrel. “Unsettling the Colonel’s Hash: ‘Fact’ in Autobiography.” *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 261–280.
- Many, Paul. “Literary Journalism: Newspapers’ Last Best Hope.” *Connecticut Review* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 59–69.
- . “Toward a History of Literary Journalism.” *Michigan Academician* 24 (1992): 359–69.
- Marmarelli, Ronald S. “William Hard.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 131–42.
- Matalene, Carolyn. Introduction. *Telling Stories Taking Risks*. Ed. Alice M. Klement and Carolyn B. Matalene. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1998. 1–3.

- McCarthy, Mary. "Artists in Uniform." *Harper's March* 1953. Rpt. in *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 231–46.
- . "Settling the Colonel's Hash." *Harper's Magazine Feb. 1954*. Rpt. in *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 247–60.
- McKeen, William. *Outlaw Journalist: The Life and Times of Hunter S. Thompson*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009.
- Mills, Nicolaus. Introduction. *The New Journalism: A Historical Anthology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974. xi–xx.
- Nelson, Jack A. "Mark Twain." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 39–42.
- Norman, Michael. "Writing Narrative Portraiture." *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 50–56.
- North, Joseph. "Reportage." *American Writer's Congress*. Ed. Henry Hart. New York: International, 1935. 120–23.
- Moss, Marilyn Ann. "Theodore Dreiser." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 143–50.
- Nuttall, Nick. "Cold-Blooded Journalism: Truman Capote and the Non-fiction Novel." *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 130–44.
- O'Connor, William Van, and Frederick J. Hoffman. Preface. *American Non-Fiction: 1900–1950*. 1952. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970. v–vii.
- Ohmann, Richard. "Politics and Genre in Nonfiction Prose." *New Literary History* 11, no. 2 (1980): 237–44.
- Palmer, Ruth. "The Hoax, Uncanny Identity, and Literary Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 85–105.
- Parisi, Peter. "Lincoln Steffens." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 101–10.
- Paterson, Judith. "Literary Journalism's Twelve Best." *Washington Journalism Review* Oct. 1992: 61.
- Pauly, John J. "Damon Runyon." *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 169–78.

- . “George Ade.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 111–20.
- Peck, David. “Joseph North and the Proletarian Reportage of the 1930s.” *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 33, no. 3 (1985): 210–20.
- Peeler, David P. “Unlonesome Highways: The Quest for Fact and Fellowship in Depression America.” *Journal of American Studies* 18, no. 2 (1984): 186–206.
- Pizer, Donald. “Documentary Narrative as Art: William Manchester and Truman Capote.” *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*. Ed. Ronald Weber. New York: Hastings House, 1974. 207–19.
- Podhoretz, Norman. “The Article as Art.” *Harper’s* July 1958: 74–79.
- “The Point of View: The Newspaper and Fiction.” *Scribner’s Magazine* 40 (1906): 122–24.
- Polsgrove, Carol. “Gay Talese.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 261–71.
- Powers, Thomas. “Cry Wolfe.” *Commonweal* 102 (1975): 497–99.
- Quinn, Katrina J. “Exploring an Early Version of Literary Journalism: Nineteenth-century Epistolary Journalism,” *Literary Journalism Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 33–51.
- Ringnalda, Donald. “Michael Herr.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 281–95.
- Rischin, Moses. Introduction. *Grandma Never Lived in America: The New Journalism of Abraham Caban*. Ed. Moses Rischin. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. xviii–xliv.
- Roberts, Arthur. “Lillian Ross.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 231–37.
- Roberts, Nancy. “Dorothy Day.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 179–85.
- Robertson, Michael. “Stephen Crane.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 69–79.
- . *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

- Roggenkamp, Karen. *Narrating the News: New Journalism and Literary Genre in Late Nineteenth-Century American Newspapers and Fiction*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2005.
- Readership Institute. *Impact Study*. Media Management Center. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 2000. 15 April 2007 http://www.readership.org/resources/impact_study.htm
- Reportage preface. *Proletarian Literature in the United States: An Anthology*. Ed. Granville Hicks, et al. New York: International Publishers, 1935. 211–12.
- Reynolds, Bill. “Recovering the Peculiar Life and Times of Tom Hedley and Canadian New Journalism.” *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 79–104.
- Roiland, Joshua. “Getting Away from It All: The Literary Journalism of David Foster Wallace and Nietzsche’s Concept of Oblivion.” *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 89–105.
- Russell, John. *Reciprocities in the Nonfiction Novel*. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2000.
- Ryan, Maureen. “Green Visors and Ivory Towers: Jean Stafford and the New Journalism.” *The Kenyon Review* 16, no. 4 (1994): 102–19.
- Rygiel, Dennis. “Style in Twentieth-Century Literary Nonfiction in English: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1980–1988.” *Style* 23 (1989): 566–617.
- . “Stylistics and the Study of Twentieth-Century Literary Nonfiction.” *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy*. Ed. Chris Anderson. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989. 3–28.
- Sauerberg, Lars Ole. *Fact into Fiction: Documentary Realism in the Contemporary Novel*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991.
- Schmuhl, Robert. “Richard Ben Cramer.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 331–42.
- Schultz, William Todd. “Off-stage Voices in James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*: Reportage as Covert Autobiography.” *American Imago* 56, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 75–104.
- Segel, Harold B. *Egon Erwin Kisch: The Raging Reporter*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1992.
- Sims, Norman. “The Art of Literary Journalism.” *Literary Journalism: A New Collection of the Best American Nonfiction*. Ed. Norman Sims and Mark Kramer. New York: Ballantine, 1995. 3–19.
- . “Joseph Mitchell and the *New Yorker* Nonfiction Writers.” Ed. Norman Sims. *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 82–109.

- . “The Literary Journalists.” *The Literary Journalists*. Ed. Norman Sims. New York: Ballantine, 1984. 3–25.
- . “The Problem and the Promise of Literary Journalism Studies.” *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 7–16.
- . *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007.
- Sims, Norman, ed. *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. Reprint of 1990 Oxford University Press edition.
- Schuster, Charles I. “The Nonfictional Prose of Richard Selzer: an Aesthetic Analysis.” *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy*. Ed. Chris Anderson. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989. 3–28.
- Smith, Kathy. “John McPhee Balances the Act.” *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 206–27.
- Solotaroff, Theodore. “Introduction to Writers and Issues.” *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*. Ed. Ronald Weber. New York: Hastings House, 1974. 161–66.
- Steiner, Linda. “Joe McGinniss.” *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 367–74.
- Stott, William. *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Talese, Gay. “Origins of a Nonfiction Writer.” *Writing Creative Nonfiction: The Literature of Reality*. Ed. Gay Talese and Barbara Lounsberry. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. 1–25.
- “Talking about Narrative Journalism.” *Nieman Reports* Fall 2000: 20–22.
- Thompson, Matthew. “Outrider: William T. Vollmann, Tony Tanner, and the Private Extremes of an Anti-Journalism,” *Literary Journalism Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 73–95.
- Thompson, Maurice. “The Prospect of Fiction.” *The Independent* 52 (1900): 1182–83.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. “Experiments in Another Country: Stephen Crane’s City Sketches.” *Southern Review* 10: 265–85.
- Troyer, Howard William. *Ned Ward of Grubstreet: A Study of Sub-Literary London in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946.
- Wakefield, Dan. “The Personal Voice and the Impersonal Eye.” *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*. Ed. Ronald Weber. New York: Hastings House, 1974. 39–48.
- Warner, Langdon. “The Editor’s Clearing-House: Need Journalism Destroy Literature?” *The Critic* 48 (1906): 469–70.

- Webb, Joseph. "Historical Perspective on the New Journalism." *Journalism History*, 1.2 (1974): 38+.
- Weber, Ronald. "Hemingway's Permanent Records." *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Norman Sims. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008. 21–52.
- . *The Literature of Fact: Literary Nonfiction in American Writing*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980.
- . "Some Sort of Artistic Excitement." *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*. New York: Hastings House, 1974. 13–23.
- Weber, Ronald, ed. *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*. New York: Hastings House, 1974.
- Weingarten, Marc. *The Gang That Wouldn't Write Straight: Wolfe, Thompson, Didion, and the New Journalism Revolution*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2006.
- Whitby, Gary L. *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*. Ed. Thomas B. Connery. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. 239–48.
- Whitt, Jan. "From *The Jungle* to Food Lion: The History Lessons of Investigative Journalism." *Journalism History* 34 (Fall 2008):170–73.
- . *Settling the Borderland: Other Voices in Literary Journalism*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2008.
- Wilson, Deborah. "An Unscathed Tourist of Wars: The Journalism of Martha Gellhorn." *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*. Ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler. London: Routledge, 2007. 116–29.
- Winterowd, W. Ross. *The Rhetoric of the "Other" Literature*. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.
- Wolfe, Tom. "The New Journalism." *The New Journalism: With an Anthology*. Ed. Tom Wolfe and E. W. Johnson. New York: Harper, 1973. 3–64.
- Yagoda, Ben. *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made*. New York: Da Capo Press, 2001.
- . Preface. *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*. Ed. Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda. New York: Scribner, 1997. 13–16.
- Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976.
- Zdovc, Sonja Merljak. *Literary Journalism in the United States of America and Slovenia*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2008.

MISSION STATEMENT
Literary Journalism Studies

Literary Journalism Studies is an international, interdisciplinary blind-reviewed journal that invites scholarly examinations of literary journalism, a genre also known by different names around the world, such as literary reportage, narrative journalism, the New Journalism, *nuevo periodismo*, reportage literature, literary nonfiction, narrative nonfiction, and creative nonfiction that focuses on cultural revelation. Published in English but directed at an international audience, the journal welcomes contributions from different cultural, disciplinary, and critical perspectives. To help establish comparative studies of the genre, the journal is especially interested in examinations of the works of authors and traditions from different national literatures not generally known outside their countries.

There is no single definition of the genre, but the following descriptions help to establish a meeting ground for its critical study:

- “The art and craft of reportage—journalism marked by vivid description, a novelist’s eye to form, and eyewitness reporting that reveals hidden truths about people and events that have shaped the world we know.” —*Granta*
- “Reportage Literature is an engagement with reality with a novelist’s eye but with a journalist’s discipline.” —Pedro Rosa Mendes, Portugal
- “I think one of the first things for literary reportage should be to go into the field and to try to get the other side of the story. —Anne Nivat, France
- “A good reportage must not necessarily be linked with topical or political events which are taking place around us. I think the miracle of things lies not in showing the extraordinary but in showing ordinary things in which the extraordinary is hidden.” —Nirmal Verma, India
- Literary journalism is a “journalism that would read like a novel . . . or short story.” —Tom Wolfe, United States

Such definitions are not comprehensive and may at times conflict, but they should help to establish an understanding of this fundamentally narrative genre, which is located at the intersection of literature and journalism.

At the critical center of the genre lies cultural revelation in narrative form. Implicit to the enterprise are two precepts: (a) that there is an external reality apart from human consciousness, whatever the inherent problems of language and ideology that may exist in comprehending that reality; and (b) that there are consequences in the phenomenal world, whether triggered by human or natural agency, that result in the need to tell journalistically-based narratives empowered by literary technique and aesthetic sensibility. Ultimately, the emphasis is on the aesthetics of experience.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies is a multidisciplinary learned society whose essential purpose is the encouragement and improvement of scholarly research and education in literary journalism (or literary reportage). For the purposes of scholarly delineation, our definition of literary journalism is “journalism as literature” rather than “journalism about literature.” Moreover, the association is explicitly inclusive and warmly supportive of a wide variety of approaches to the study and teaching of literary journalism throughout the world. The association’s web address is <http://www.ialjs.org>.

IALJS OFFICERS

Alice Donat Trindade, President
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa
Instituto Superior
de Ciências Sociais e Políticas
Pólo Universitário do Alto da Ajuda
Rua Almerindo Lessa, 300-663
Lisboa, Portugal
+351-213-619-430
fax +351-213-619-442
atrindade@iscsp.utl.pt

Bill Reynolds, Vice President-
Treasurer
Ryerson University
School of Journalism
350 Victoria St.
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3,
Canada
+01-416-979-5000 x6294
fax +01-416-979-5216
reynolds@ryerson.ca

Norman Sims, Second Vice
President
University of Massachusetts,
Amherst
Department of Journalism
Bartlett Hall #108
Amherst, MA 01003, U.S.A.
+01-413-545-5929
fax +01-413-545-3880
sims@journ.umass.edu

David Abrahamson, Secretary
Northwestern University
Medill School of Journalism
Evanston, IL 60201, U.S.A.
+01-847-332-2223
fax +01-847-332-1088
d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu

John Bak, founding president, 2006-2008