THE WALRUS

Medium

RollingStone

THE NEW YORKER

NiemanStoryboard

GQ

LONGFORM

Atavist

the Atlantic

BuzzReads

GRANTLAND

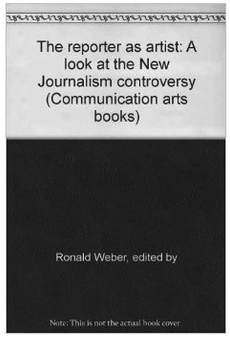
Esquire

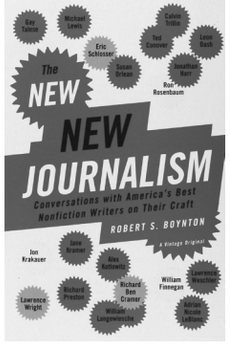
POLITICO

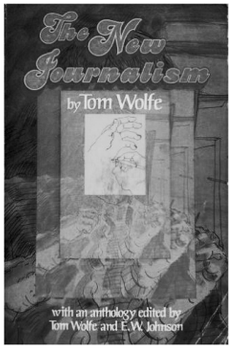
LONGREADS

SB NATION

Mother Jones







By Any Other Name: The Case for Literary Journalism

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Keynote Response: Literary journalism has experienced a resurgence in recent years, and like all popular movements it has sustained a backlash from those who believe it fetishizes narrative at the expense of research and reporting. *New Yorker* writer Nicholas Lemann's IALJS-10 keynote talk returned the spotlight to the social function of journalism: to provide "a running account of the world." He argues that for literary journalism to complete that task, it must privilege research and reporting over artistic expression. This response essay expands on Lemann's talk by clarifying misconceptions about what the "literary" in literary journalism means, and demonstrates that the debates about what to call this genre—debates that have been rekindled in recent years with the ascendance of such vague-but-vogue terms "long form" and "long reads"—are not new. This narrative history explores both the misbegotten trail of the term "literary journalism" and its attendant field of study, but it also argues that the label long form represents a neoliberalization of language that positions readers not to consider or question, but only to consume.

"But however vague and slippery a term, the New Journalism has become a convenient label for recent developments in nonfiction writing and for the sharp critical controversy this writing has stirred up." So wrote Ronald Weber in his 1974 preface to the book he had compiled and edited, *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*.[1] Some four decades later, standing before a confederation of several dozen literary journalism scholars who had gathered from across the globe in Minneapolis, Nicholas Lemann wasted little time getting to the question that has bedeviled not only his audience of academics but also practitioners and, increasingly, casual readers: "What is literary journalism anyway?"[2] Nearly every book-length work of

scholarship on the subject has waded into this definitional morass, with journal articles often recapitulating those arguments in précis. To appropriate a phrase from Tom Wolfe, characterizing literary journalism has proven to be a real "whichy thicket."[3] For his part, Lemann cited Wolfe's introductory manifesto to *The New Journalism*[4] and his 1989 *Harper's* essay, "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast"[5] as the "most fully articulated" description of the genre.[6] Lemann pointed to Wolfe—whom he calls "one of the pioneers of writing nonfiction that reads like fiction"—in contradistinction to fellow *New Yorker* writer Janet Malcolm, who, a few weeks prior to his keynote address, had offered, anew, a porous and permissive definition of the genre, this time via a review of Thomas Kunkel's biography *A Man in Profile: Joseph Mitchell of the New Yorker*. Lemann uses Malcolm's dubious claim that Mitchell was an "artist" and therefore should be forgiven his fabrication sins, as his lecture's point of departure in a journey that ultimately returns the genre's emphasis to what he called the "hard-won reward" of accurate and truthful reporting, which, he argues, should be privileged over the more creative aspects of story composition.

Lemann's talk is important because it emphasizes the social function of journalism. He reminds us that these stories have public and political significance, and warns that when journalists dubiously "harness their fiction to the booster rocket of truth claims" they undermine the credibility of all nonfiction. However, in making his case for the importance of reporting as the key mechanism for upholding literary journalism's civic role, I believe Lemann sets up a false binary between the genre's two terms, one that is predicated on a slightly overdetermined usage of the term "literary." That adjective does not—or should not—connote high art and its attendant value judgment, as Lemann and many others have suggested.[7] Instead, it should be understood as a descriptor of the range of literary elements that avail themselves to writers of nonfiction and fiction alike.

This misapprehension has a long history, as I'll demonstrate in this essay. Moreover, the concern that narrative desire leads to factual promiscuity has been taken to almost absurd levels in recent years due to several high-profile journalistic transgressions happening alongside the proliferation of the terms long form and long read, which substitute concrete—if misunderstood—terminology for generalized abstractions that are divorced from journalistic history. These coincident occurrences have led editors and critics to call for journalists to be lashed to the mast of reporting so as not to be dashed on the rocks by the siren call of storytelling. Given this climate, it's important to understand Lemann's keynote as occurring within a specific cultural context. Literary journalism is experiencing an extended renaissance both as a creative practice—reaching perhaps an apotheosis with Belarusian journalist Svetlana Alexievitch winning the 2015 Nobel Prize in literature—and as an object of study. And as is often the case with popular movements, this style of reporting and writing has experienced a backlash in recent years, the roots of which are tangled around the ahistorical-therefore-malleable descriptor long form and the erroneous belief that literary journalism stands for stylish or artistic journalism.

What follows is a narrative history of these various terms and their attendant field of study. The labels themselves are exceedingly important because they denote professional boundaries and offer a shared vocabulary for practitioners and critics alike. I interviewed writers, editors, publishers, and academics about their investment in these terms and their pasts. What they revealed is that there was literary journalism before long form, and there was literary journalism before Wolfe. And that history is a pretty good story.

A New Brand of Storytelling

In the fall of 1962 Wolfe read the opening lines of Gay Talese's *Esquire* feature, "Joe Louis: The King as a Middle-aged Man," and proclaimed "What inna namea christ is this?" Talese had seemingly stretched journalistic conventions in his profile of the Brown Bomber. He set the narrative in scenes. He included intimate details and full dialogue. He even reported Louis's thoughts. The story had the tone and temper of fiction, and Wolfe was beside himself, wondering, *"What the hell is going on?"*[8]

The answer, of course, was the New Journalism. Or so Wolfe claimed eleven years later in his anthology's introductory manifesto. As the genre's self-appointed spokesman, he did much to promote the myth that the New Journalism was, in fact, new, innovative, and revolutionary. In his classic, understated style Wolfe suggested that the New Journalism "would wipe out the novel as literature's main event."[9]

Not everyone agreed. Dwight MacDonald dismissed the style as a "bastard form" that wanted it both ways, "exploiting the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric license of fiction."[10] Lester Markel brushed the writers aside as "factual fictionists" and rejected claims that the work achieved a greater truth. Gerald Grant thought the creative license led to sloppy reporting. And Dan Balz just thought the writing wasn't very good.[11]

In his appraisal of the Talese piece, Wolfe actually reproduced many of these same anxieties and suspicions. He confessed that his "instinctive, defensive reaction was that the man had piped it, as the saying went . . . winged it, made up the dialogue. . . . Christ, maybe he made up whole scenes, the unscrupulous geek."[12] If journalism was about accuracy and facticity, the thinking

went, then perhaps *new* journalism threw those covenants out the window.

Perhaps, but not quite. Talese didn't pipe anything. It all checked out. And while the New Journalism did have its transgressors and transgressions, their sins were not novel. It was the name and its attendant connotations that freaked everyone out.

Yet the term stuck, and with it contrails of criticism. Joe Nocera tried to proclaim it dead in 1981,[13] fingering Hunter S. Thompson as the killer. John Hersey continued to fret,[14] a decade after Wolfe published his anthology, that the legend on the journalist's license was changing. The senior scribe warned that the profession's key tenet must not succumb to change, nominal or otherwise. It must always read: *None of this was made up*. And yet through the 1980s and 1990s writers continued to produce deeply reported nonfiction narratives, to the point that when Robert S. Boynton compiled his collection of interviews with this next generation of authors he called his book *The New New Journalism*.[15] And so for decades the proper noun popularized by Wolfe has been synonymous with a style of nonfiction that blended immersive reporting and narrative writing.

Until now. A half-century later, we're in the midst of a seemingly new form of storytelling—or at least a new *brand* of storytelling. And with that emergence a familiar pattern has unfolded: debates about what to call it,[16] arguments over its ethics,[17] questions concerning conventions,[18] public controversies and handwringing.[19] Whether we acknowledge it or not, we've been here before. Like the New Journalism, the style of writing now popularly called long form has an extended yet overlooked history, as do the debates over what to call it. And now, as it enjoys a renaissance in print, is amplified by curators online,[20] and breaks new ground in the digital world,[21] it is more important than ever that we call it by its most proper name: literary journalism.

In his lecture, Lemann defines literary journalism obliquely, through metaphor and emphasis. He calls fiction an "art," and delineates it from journalism which is a "craft, or applied art." Lemann sees the relationship between the two as something akin to painting and architecture: a painting can exist for its own sake, but architecture, though it may have visual appeal, must also be functional. He argues that journalism, like architecture, "must deal with a set of presented conditions and rules, which ought to inspire, rather than constrain, its practitioners." He continues the analogy: "An architect has aesthetic choices to make, but the building has to have running water and heat and keep the rain out." Among the aesthetic choices that journalists encounter, Lemann counts style, voice, structure, characterization, and description, although he cautions: "But these are techniques that make nonfiction look more like fiction than it really is." Such a sentiment is problematic because it reifies both categories and leads to the oft-repeated expression that literary journalism "reads like fiction." The trouble with this phrase is that it treats fiction as a unified category of art that produces a singular, imaginative response. It also creates an implicit hierarchy where a deficient type of prose aspires to be like its admired relative. These types of binaries between form and function, art and craft do not have to exist. They are the product of hitching the "literary" in literary journalism to the same value judgment used to evaluate the aesthetic merit of a piece of art. When one thinks of the literary elements that Lemann lists above, not as frippery but as foundation, it then becomes easier to understand the work they do on their own terms.

This type of terminological exegesis, which might sound to some[22] critics like academic hairsplitting, is actually a much more serious endeavor: historical accuracy. Wolfe's origin story is seductive. It's also false, ahistorical, and misleading. Likewise, the idea that long form developed *ex nihilo*[23]—or even that it grew from the rib of the New Journalism—misrepresents the truth and cuts it off from important antecedents.

For example, when *Politico* hired Susan Glasser, now editor-in-chief, in June 2013 to serve as its long-form editor, it released this statement: "Susan and the rest of our senior team believe that high-impact, magazine-style journalism is not a throwback to the past. It is a genre that is even more essential in today's hyperkinetic news environment. It is a style of reporting and a mindset about illuminating what matters most that has a brilliant future."[24] And like all grand proclamations, of course, this one had been made before. In 1937, University of Minnesota journalism professor Edwin Ford wrote in his introduction to *A Bibliography of American Literary Journalism*: "More than ever today there is a need for the literary journalist; for the writer who is sufficiently journalistic to sense the swiftly changing aspects of this dynamic era, and sufficiently literary to gather and shape his material with the eye and the hand of the artist."[25]

It's easy to exaggerate the present when you don't acknowledge the past. Ford characterized his short compendium of titles as works that fell "within the twilight zone that divides literature from journalism." He included authors like Dos Passos, Steinbeck, and Hemingway—writers who today could be said to be in the tradition of long form, except long form has no tradition. Calling or tagging a story #longform (or #longread) divorces it from the rich lineage of literary journalism in America. And when we're cut off from that history we can't answer questions like: Why is this style bubbling up now when the web, and its infinite length, has hosted journalistic content for twenty years?[26] What cultural causes led the New Journalism to ignite and flare in the 1960s? Why was Depression Era–journalism an especially

rich repository for this style of writing? What were the social and cultural conditions at the *fin de siècle* that contributed to the surfeit of stories that still survive today?

In his book *A History of Literary Journalism in America*, John C. Hartsock points out that in each of these historical periods, journalists faced an acute realization that the world was fraught (immigration, urbanization, depression, war, civil rights, et cetera) and made the epistemic determination that conventional ways of making sense of these social, cultural, and political ruptures would not do.[27] To borrow a phrase from fellow historian Thomas B. Connery, these writers needed a "third way to tell the story."[28] And from very early on, many of these writers called that style "literary journalism." Hutchins Hapgood used the term in a 1905 issue of *Bookman* magazine.[29] Ford deployed it in the title of his 1937 bibliography, and then two years after that Hapgood wrote in his autobiography *Victorian in the Modern World* that he felt at home when he began work at the turn of the century for Lincoln Steffens's paper the *New York Commercial Advertiser* because he fit in with the editor's "idea of a literary journalism."[30] The term itself lost traction during the New Journalism era, but it reemerged in the early 1980s with the publication of Norman Sims's *The Literary Journalists* (1984), an anthology of (mostly) *New Yorker* pieces from the late 1970s and early 1980s.[31] It remains a book that certain writers still find indispensable.[32]

But where did Sims get the term? He told me his usage began a decade prior to the publication of that first anthology, around the same time Wolfe put out *The New Journalism*. As Sims worked on his PhD dissertation in the mid-1970s at the University of Illinois, his adviser, the renowned communication scholar James W. Carey, introduced him to a group of Chicago journalists from the turn of the century, including George Ade and Finley Peter Dunne, who came to be known as the Whitechapel Club:

> Editors started riding them for having a bit too much imagination. Their best work ended up fenced off into "columns" in the newspaper. We understand this now, of course, because they were writing "Fables in Slang" or using a half-fictional bartender named Mr. Dooley to convey their thoughts about the city.
>
> I couldn't figure out exactly what to call the editors' restrictive stance, which had not appeared much in journalism beforehand. I started calling it "scientific" journalism, although I didn't like that term because journalism has little relationship to science.
>
> On the other side—the side of Ade and Dunne and others—I came up with a different term. On the first page of my dissertation, I mentioned Opie Read, arriving in Chicago from Arkansas in 1887. The ride north "had taken him far away from the experiences of his youth, his adventures, and the home ground where he learned the skills of a literary journalist and humorist." On the next page I said, "Faced with the difficulty of transferring lived experience into symbolic reports on paper, many of those reporters of the 1890's grasped the same style.[33]

Sims credits his discussions with Carey—"a Rhode Island Irish genius"—with shaping his understanding of the style and its constitutive elements, which he came later to define as "immersion reporting, complicated structures, character development, symbolism, voice, a focus on ordinary people . . . and accuracy."[34] Carey, he said, "understood the role of symbols in everyday life. While we were focused on its symbolic aspects, I preferred the term literary for this journalism. I find it remarkable that I still think of literary journalism in much the same way today."[35]

Although there certainly was scholarship about the genre before Sims's first anthology—most notably Ronald Weber's two edited collections, the aforementioned *The Reporter as Artist* and *The Literature of Fact: Literary Nonfiction in American Writing*[36]—that text paved the way for countless articles and books to follow, including the classroom favorite *The Art of Fact*: *A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*, edited by Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda.[37] Their collection stretches centuries and continents with pioneering excerpts from Defoe, Boswell, and Dickens, and contemporary examples from some of the same writers—Wolfe, McPhee, and Didion—Sims included in his collection. Yagoda acknowledged to me their debt to Sims, especially with respect to nomenclature:

> The term was out there, and I think we were most familiar with it via Sims. . . . I actually don't recall if we had a discussion on the point, but it definitely seemed appropriate for the kind of thing we had taught, were interested in, wanted to include in the anthology, so we went with it. As we proceeded with putting the book together, it continued to feel right.[38]

The Kerrane and Yagoda anthology was part of a thriving decade for literary journalism scholarship. Sims put out two more collections, an invaluable compendium of scholarship called *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*[39] and a second anthology entitled *Literary Journalism: A New Collection of the Best American Nonfiction*,[40] which he coedited with Mark Kramer. Connery published a seminal collection of critical biographies entitled *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*,[41] which included an extended introduction that chronicled the main currents in the genre's history, along with its distinctive literary and reporting characteristics. Edd Applegate put out *Literary Journalism: A Biographical*

Dictionary of Writers and Editors,[42] and the Dictionary of Literary Biography series published *American Literary Journalists, 1945–1995*[43] under the editorship of Arthur J. Kaul. Kerrane and Yagoda's text also came that year, and Hartsock's history rounded out the decade.

Literary Journalism: A Confusing and Contentious Label

Building upon these publishing moments, the field of study reached an apotheosis in 2005 when a small collection of scholars convened a conference in Nancy, France, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* to discuss "A Century of Literary Journalism throughout the World." That meeting led to the creation of a scholarly organization devoted to the study of literary journalism across the globe. The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies now has more than 150 members from more than two dozen countries. IALJS holds a yearly conference attended by scholars (and, increasingly, by practitioners), and for the past seven years has published the peer-reviewed journal *Literary Journalism Studies*.

In every measurable way, literary journalism has established itself in the academic world. Yet the term has never caught on with writers and readers the way long form or long reads has, and there's still a great deal of confusion about what the label even means. An illuminating example can be found in a live chat that Nieman Storyboard hosted in late July 2013.[44] Jeff Sharlet and Leslie Jamison were the featured guests, and then-editor Paige Williams moderated a discussion about the term literary journalism. Unsolicited, I joined the conversation midway through, as did others, including the writers Ron Rosenbaum and Julian Rubinstein. At one point, I commented that Rosenbaum had a distinguished history as a literary journalist. He demurred, thanking me for the compliment, but eschewing the distinction that his work was "literary." The moment encapsulated the parallel path these conversations often take between writers and academics. Even in a forum devoted to discussing, defining, and delimiting the term there was confusion. And the root of that confusion is the mistaken belief that the adjective "literary" denotes a value judgment or is a rhetorical ploy for legitimacy.

Rosenbaum's aversion to that appellation is not uncommon; most writers are indifferent-to-hostile about the term. For instance, in the spring of 2014 I asked *GQ* writer Jeanne Marie Laskas, who is also the director of the writing program at University of Pittsburgh, if she had a preferred name for the kind of writing she did. She, uh, did not:

> NO, NO and NO. In fact, I hate that we need a term at all. I write stories. If anyone cares, I'll clarify and say "nonfiction." Or "magazine stories." The end. I don't mind "pieces." I don't mind "articles." I don't mind "long-form"—more on that below. What I hate is the begging for legitimacy we do with the terminology with stuff like "literary nonfiction," "literary journalism," or the one that really causes my brain to go into hot spasm: Creative Nonfiction. STOP IT! Readers don't care. Who are you writing for? The trend setters of the day? You care about them more than your reader, or your story, if you get stuck in this labeling nonsense. You care about your "career." You care about what people think of you. Well, okay. I understand, and "there, there little one, it's gonna be okay." You are special. Sure you are. Now go take that anxiety and do something else with it and just write your story.[45]

Many of the journalists I've talked with agree with Laskas, though perhaps with slightly less verve.[46] When John Jeremiah Sullivan visited the University of Notre Dame (my then-academic home) in January 2014, one of my students asked if he considers himself a "literary journalist." Sullivan conceded that the name and its lineage, which he knew exceedingly well, made sense to him, but added that he's never much thought about the terminology. He said he and his magazine editors always just called and considered his stories "pieces."[47] And James Bennet struck a similar glossy note last year in his popular *Atlantic* jeremiad "Against Long-Form Journalism," concluding: "You might just call it magazine writing. And get on with it." So there does seem to be some unanimity among writers—but that doesn't mean they're right.

Long form as Neoliberal Term?

So why not call it magazine journalism? Because not all magazine journalism is the same. Open *Harper's* and look through its table of contents: Readings, Essay, Folio, Report, Reviews. Do the same with the *Atlantic*: Features, Dispatches, Culture File. All are nonfiction and all are in magazines, so how to distinguish them? More importantly, however, is the fact that this style of reporting and writing does not belong only to the province of magazines. It exists in books[48] and newspapers,[49] podcasts,[50] and broadcasts.[51] It's journalism—thoroughly reported, fact-checked, and true. And it employs an A-to-Z list of literary elements, from allegory to metaphor to theme. The style has a professional history, the term an academic history, and yet in has never gained much traction in popular culture.

Given the erasure of these ancestral lines, why has long form become the new *nom de naissance*? One obvious answer is that the websites Longform.org and Longreads.com have made their attendant terms ubiquitous. They do great work—not only in curation, but also in presentation, innovation, and marketing—and in the meritocratic Twitterverse that great work is often rewarded. In October 2010, @Longreads had 7,000 followers;

today it has more than 180,000,[52] while @Longform has more than 85,000.[53] And with such popularity comes a legion of imitators starved for some savior in an unstable media landscape. The news industry has always been competitive and copy-cattish. The online democratization of platforms and writers has only accelerated that historical process. No longer is this style of writing the domain of the *New Yorker*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Harper's*, and *Rolling Stone*—and that's a good thing. Now, traditionally nonnarrative news organizations are creating their own brands: BuzzReads, SB Nation Longform, Politico Longform, et cetera.[54] Employing the hashtag #longform or #longread symbolically links a story to those popular curatorial sites—which often contain work from those traditional repositories of literary journalism—thus conferring a nod of legitimacy to the piece.

So what's wrong with that? Nothing, except the magnetism of the hashtag attracts such an array of fundamentally different stories that the term itself becomes superfluous. There are no delimiting elements. Is the story nonfiction or fiction? Does it contain reporting or reflection? These answers matter. They set up reader expectations. But the only clue we get from the classification long form is that the pieces have estimable length. Check out the #longform hashtag[55] and you'll encounter an unholy mishmash of stories that have no discernibly shared characteristics. A deeply reported narrative by Janet Reitman[56] shares the same space as a 3,000-word review of reissued Sleater-Kinney albums.[57] Both pieces certainly have merit, but it's wrong to classify them together. One is literary journalism, while the other is a music review. Such a statement does not mean that one is better than the other—forever strike the notion of value judgment from this definition—only that they are different. And it's important to find out what that difference means. But on the hashtag (and in popular culture), all they share, as if in some Linnaean nightmare, is the genus long form, which obscures distinction and promotes uniformity.

It would be wrong to lay all of this misunderstanding at the feet of Longform.org and Longreads.com, though. There are also sociolinguistic reasons for the term's ubiquity. Paige Williams, a *New Yorker* staff writer and University of Missouri journalism professor, explains: "It's clean and lean, like a good story."[58] To this characterization I would add that the term is utterly empty and void.[59] The label "long form" represents a neoliberalization of language. It's an abstraction that positions the reader not to consider or question, but only to consume. The idiom long form is just short enough to be effectively hashtagable, which contributes to its easy and pervasive deployment.[60] We use it only because it is short and because it is easy. Writers, readers, editors, and critics can project any and all of their own ideas and definitions onto it, and we never have to argue or make our case. Simply put, long form is a problematic term because it deemphasizes the elements of the story—how the facts are reported, how the narrative is told—and instead shifts and holds attention on the virtues and limitations of length, a shrinking commodity in print, and near infinite resource on the web. And it's not a coincidence that as the term long form has become more popular, as we've seen a parallel rise in the troubling frequency of the term "content" used as a substitute for stories.[61] Vagueness sells, and we're buying.

So why don't we use "literary journalism" to more accurately describe the kind of work we're all referring to when we say and use long form? There are two reasons. First, the term is clunky as hell. Two words, seven syllables in total, it doesn't exactly roll off the tongue. Plus it takes up too many characters to be a useful hashtag, and @LiteraryJournalism can't even exist because it violates Twitter's maximum username length. Second, the *seemingly* implied value judgment inherent in the adjective is a negative factor for many writers and editors. I'll concede the first point, that literary journalism is not sexy or graceful, neither clean nor lean, but the second point is mistaken: *There is no value judgment.* Literary journalism does not mean "higher quality" journalism. It is not a comparative. It does not mean better than conventional journalism. There are plenty of poorly done pieces in this tradition.

"Literary" is a descriptor, a robust adjective that denotes the use of rhetorical elements ranging from scene, character development, plot, dialogue, symbolism, voice, et cetera. Writers can employ these devices with greater or lesser facility, but the fact remains they are using elements that are often beyond the conventions of standard journalism. Journalism, the second part of this idiom, is equally important. Journalism distinguishes itself from other forms of nonfiction by one important component: reporting. Together, the two terms create a powerful and specific definition: *literary journalism is a form of nonfiction writing that adheres to all of the reportorial and truth-telling covenants of conventional journalism, while employing rhetorical and storytelling techniques more commonly associated with fiction*. In short, it is *journalism as literature*.

Naming Rites

The subordinating conjunction in that last sentence is important because it distinguishes this definition from a common British usage, which instead employs a preposition to create a wholly different genre: *journalism about literature*. Nonfiction in this category would include book reviews, profiles, criticism, et cetera. A European term that more closely approaches the accepted American definition is "reportage," which *Granta* employs and

defines as "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."[62] Still, Hartsock has shown that reportage has its own elastic and murky history, depending on country and context. What the phrase "literary journalism" does is literally connect conversations across continents. I asked John S. Bak, professor of English at the Université de Lorraine in Nancy, France, and the founding president of IALJS, how the organization decided on "literary journalism" as the descriptor of choice. He acknowledged that the debate at that first conference back in July 2005 was "hotly contested" and that Hartsock pushed for "narrative literary journalism" in order to "keep the term distinct from 'Literary Criticism in Newspapers,'" another common interpretation by British critics. Bak continued:

> Most of Europe used and uses reportage, but have begrudgingly accepted Literary Journalism, even the French, who call it in various circles *le journalism littéraire*—but it is not yet a common practice here. Most countries have their own brand name for the form, which was what we brought up during the naming of the association. But we stuck with literary journalism because reportage was too vague (any news report here can be called that, though the French have now turned to "recit" for stories and "reportage" for more in-depth reporting, though not necessarily literary.[63]

Bak acknowledged that the whole naming debate was and is "confusing," but reiterated that one of the goals of the association was to "coalesce that usage worldwide, and it has to a certain extent." But, he said, when people casually call this style of writing "long form," that usage further divorces the genre and its tradition from these global referents: "You can simply argue with people who use longform or longread as they are nonsensical outside of an English (i.e., US) context. And since the genre is worldwide, as is literature or journalism, that it needs a worldwide currency, thus LJ is translated often into LJ within the different languages worldwide."[64]

Worldwide usage is important. One of my few criticisms of Boynton's introduction to *The New New Journalism* is his insistence that this style of reporting and writing is uniquely American.[65] It is not. This journal has published articles on literary journalistic traditions throughout Latin America,[66] as well as on authors and publications in the Netherlands,[67] Portugal,[68] South Africa,[69] Australia,[70] Germany,[71] and Finland.[72] It even devoted its Spring 2013 issue (volume five, number one) to Norwegian literary reportage.[73] But it's not only IALJS that is broadening the worldwide usage, as the writers Tom Junod, Jacqui Banaszynski, Leslie Jamison, Chris Jones, Lisa Pollak, Michael Paterniti, and others can attest. They've all participated in the Power of Storytelling conference held every autumn for the past five years in Bucharest.

The conference is hosted by the Romanian quarterly journal *Decât o Revistă*, which was founded by the writer Cristian Lupsa and is devoted to the nonfiction storytelling of everyday lives and experiences of Romanians—a content trait shared with much American literary journalism. The Power of Storytelling features practitioners rather than scholars, but its growing popularity, as evidenced by the high wattage writers and performers it attracts, is further evidence of the renaissance of literary journalism.

Although the Romanian conference's preferred usage for this type of prose is "narrative journalism," the organization does note that that term has synonyms including literary journalism, creative nonfiction, and narrative nonfiction. While I don't believe these terms are synonymous at all—Why not narrative journalism? Because not all the stories are narratives. Why not narrative literary journalism? Because it's redundant. Nonfiction novel? A novel is invented prose—this hedging is indicative of the historical intricacies involved in the naming debate. Before long form and New New Journalism there was Truman Capote's "nonfiction novel," Alex Haley's "faction," Norman Mailer's "true life novel," and Barbara Lounsberry's "realtor" and "deep-see reporters." There also exist more general labels such as journalit, artful literary nonfiction, activist journalism, alternative journalism, underground journalism, precision journalism, advocacy journalism, new nonfiction, saturation reporting, submersion journalism, participatory journalism, and high journalism.[74]

Perhaps the most ubiquitous term before long form and long read became de rigueur was the phrase "creative nonfiction." I regard this label as a catchall that covers all manner of imaginative, but not invented, prose, including memoir, autobiography, literary history, literary journalism, et cetera. An analogous comparison is to consider bebop, swing, and ragtime as distinct genres within the larger tradition of jazz.

Still, as Sims told me, "Names can be tough." Of all the variations and offshoots of the term literary journalism, "creative nonfiction" is the one that rankles him the most:

> To my mind, "creative nonfiction" invited writers to make things up, and named it for what it was not, like calling an airplane a non-train. Of course, I taught journalism at the time, and almost all the writers in the genre were journalists. Journalists generally try not to make things up, which is fine, but it was the term "literary" that disturbed people. How could mere journalism be literary? Well, that was exactly the point we were trying to make. Get over it.[75]

While Sims essentializes the meaning of "literary" here and gives it a value judgment that I believe is both misleading and unnecessary, his disen-

chantment with the umbrella term as a synonym of "literary journalism" is apt, and it is a feeling shared by Laskas, who told me:

> I just delete the word "creative" whenever I see it next to the word "nonfiction." Or I go off on someone and say hey, why don't we say "Creative Fiction" and "Creative Poetry" too! I am not proud of myself in these moments. Also, right now we've got a lot of "lyric" essay talk going on. It makes me twitch but I am trying to be patient. "Essay" was good enough for Montaigne, so it's good enough for me. Tell me you've written a "braided essay," and I'll say good for you. It doesn't mean it's art because you've called it something fancy. (Lately grad students seem to think any linear narrative is . . . crap.) If you want to be an artist you should study art and constantly push the real you to come out in whatever form you can best get it out. The minute you start caring what the labeling looks like in the great museum that will one day house your work is the minute your piece starts going into a death spiral.[76]

Janet Malcolm's Narrative Technique on Trial

Although labeling may be understandably distracting for writers, it is not without importance. Journalism is the only profession in the United States to enjoy constitutional protection. Consequently, what counts as journalism has material, legal significance. Beyond historical and linguistic accuracy, it is important to understand what these labels mean because journalistic genre classification played a role in "the only US Supreme Court case that directly addresses the First Amendment dimensions not just of altered quotations but of narrative technique in journalism."[77] And it's a case that, ironically enough, involved Janet Malcolm.

In November 1984, Jeffrey Masson, a prominent Sanskrit scholar and one-time, controversial projects director of the Sigmund Freud Archives, filed suit against *New Yorker* writer Janet Malcolm, her magazine, and her book publisher, Alfred A. Knopf. Masson alleged that Malcolm had libeled him via fabricated quotes in her two-part profile, "The Annals of Scholarship: Trouble in the Archive" that the magazine published in December of the previous year. (Knopf later published the book version, *In the Freud Archives*). Malcolm acknowledged compressing Masson's quotations and rearranging time chronologies, but she defended her actions by staking them to the long journalistic history of cleaning up quotes and presenting them in a "logical, rational order so he would sound like a logical, rational person." What ensued was a dramatic federal court battle that lasted nearly twelve years and reached all the way to the US Supreme Court.

So when Malcolm reviewed Tom Kunkel's recent, meticulous biography, *A Man in Profile: Joseph Mitchell of the New Yorker*,[78] which documents, among other things, how Mitchell's exaggerations extended beyond the composites he acknowledged creating in the character Old Mr. Flood, she brought along her own transgressive baggage. Writing in the *New York Review of Books*, Malcolm echoed the epochal, emphatic opening sentence of her earlier work *The Journalist and the Murderer*,[79] making the declamatory remark that writers aren't any more virtuous than Mitchell, just less gifted.[80] Malcolm's comments led Lemann to quip in his keynote: "Whenever Janet Malcolm begins a statement about journalism with the word 'Every,' one should count one's change."[81]

These indiscretions, of course, are not limited to a particular magazine or time period, nor are they indictments to the genre of literary journalism (even if we call it "long form"). No less than John Hersey readily acknowledged that his popular 1944 *Life* magazine profile "Joe Is Home Now," about GIs returning from World War II, was a composite of roughly twenty different soldiers.[82] A decade later, Mitchell's good friend, the venerable A.J. Liebling, embellished details of the character James A. MacDonald, better known as the eccentric horseracing journalist "Colonel Stingo," a story he later published as *The Honest Rainmaker*.[83] Where was the reality boundary in Hunter S. Thompson's acid-washed dispatches for *Rolling Stone* during the 1970s? (And is it notable that no less a journalist than Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy Kidder admits to not caring what was real and what was fake?)[84] I've written previously about the intricate philosophy David Foster Wallace constructed for himself, as a fiction writer, for when he faced questions of accuracy versus truth in his journalism for *Harper's*, *Rolling Stone*, and other magazines.[85]

These examples are not, as Malcolm wryly suggests in her review of Kunkel's book, reasons to pillory Mitchell, et al. Rather, they are (mostly) a reflection of changing journalistic mores. As Ben Yagoda demonstrates in *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made*, a survey of that magazine's early pieces illustrates that writers and editors did not differentiate between fact and fiction.[86] This distinction did not become fully codified in the magazine world until various protests about literary license erupted during the New Journalism era of the 1960s and 1970s. And there have been scores of subsequent transgressions with Malcolm's litigious treatment of Masson going to the core of this issue.

Kathy Roberts Forde masterfully documents the legalities of the Malcolm case in her book *Literary Journalism on Trial: Masson v. The New Yorker and the First Amendment.* She notes that Judge Alex Kozinski of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals was one of the few justices in the numerous iterations of the Masson case who took genre history into consideration when

writing his opinion. In his 1989 dissent against the majority's ruling for Malcolm he wrote:

> A more complex problem is presented when the story in question does not involve straight news reporting, but contains material of more lasting literary value, such as is frequently published by the *New Yorker*. A school of thought known as the New Journalism advances the view that an author has the right to vary or rearrange the facts of a story in order to advance a literary purpose. This is a highly controversial view among journalists, one not shared by many who have spoken on the subject."[87]

Not all writers associated with the New Journalism would agree with Kozinski's permissive characterization—see Gay Talese shouting to a gathering of Goucher College MFA students: "Nonfiction means no fiction!"[88]—but as Forde notes, *Masson v. New Yorker* dredged up old resentments toward the New Journalism and those grievances about the dissociation of accuracy and truth—key concepts when trying to determine falsity in a libel case.

The nebulous shade that genre variance offers journalists can be justifiably disputed on ethical grounds, but legally it safeguarded judgment for Malcolm, the *New Yorker*, and literary journalism. Forde concludes:

> As much as Masson's lawyers, and the press at large, may have wanted the use of verbatim quotations to be a settled ethical principle in journalism, the principle clearly changed with circumstance—perhaps even as it moved from the genre of daily newspapers, the birthplace of the traditional report, to that of magazines, where the narrative report (like Malcolm's profile of Masson) has long flourished. The Supreme Court recognized this much in its ruling.[89]

Longreads.com, Longform.org and a Bigger Party

What I hope is evident here is that the history of journalism in America is complex and dynamic. Standard newspaper conventions and their narrative counterparts in the magazine world have never been fixed.[90] *Masson v. New Yorker* highlights the breadth and consequence of these different genres. When we use the terms "long form" and "long read" as easy synonyms for "literary journalism" we flatten out these dimensions and reduce the past to a continuously regenerative present. Such ahistoricism leads to nonsensical phrases like the one used in a recent *Grantland* feature on the sportswriter Bob Ryan, which noted that during the Celtics scribe's heyday in the 1970s the *Boston Globe* encouraged "'voice' and 'long form' before those labels had been stuck on them."[91] Such determinism can also lead to blaming journalistic transgressions on the alleged fetishization of narrative, which happened in the aftermath of *Grantland*'s problematic "Dr. V's Magical Putter"[92] and

Rolling Stone's spurious University of Virginia rape story.[93] These are moments when professional discussions overflow into general public discourse, and when that happens it's important to not only have a shared vocabulary, but also a shared understanding of history.

But it wasn't history that Mark Armstrong was concerned with when he conceived of the website Longreads.com. Instead, he was trying to solve the persistant problem of figuring out how to pass the time on his daily New York commute from Cobble Hill into Midtown. "I began my career as a journalist," Armstrong told me, "but I started Longreads to serve my own needs as a casual reader."[94] The mission of the site and its concomitant Twitter hashtag was aggregation—collect and organize stories to read on those twice-a-day rides on the R Train. And for curation, Armstrong said, broadness was exactly the point:

> I created #longreads (and chose the name Longreads) precisely because it didn't already exist as a term. It didn't have a history, that's what made it great for my purposes. It could be anything. The goal was to create a clear, simple way to organize and share any text over 1,500 words on the Internet. Longreads should include all genres that meet the word count requirement—longform journalism, essays, short stories, sci-fi, "literary journalism," interview transcripts, historical documents, book chapters, screenplays. [95]

Despite the website's cross-genre imprimatur, it is arguably best known as the home of the Longreads Weekly,[96] a collection of the "Top 5 Longreads of the Week," most of which can be categorized as literary journalism. Armstrong sees the popularity of nonfiction on the site largely as a byproduct of the Internet: "Twitter . . . is a news- and media-driven environment, so it has been less accommodating to anything that is outside of that."[97] He added that fiction readers' current cultural preference for novels over short stories further limits the inroads fiction has made on the site. Nonetheless, Longreads does have a fiction tab,[98] and Longform.org added a fiction section in 2012 and has a Longform Fiction Pick of the Week.[99] Overall, Armstrong said he is pleased with the progress of his site:

> I feel like Longreads and #longreads have solved the problems I initially set out to solve—create an ecosystem on the Internet that organizes, supports, and promotes in-depth reading and outstanding storytelling. I'm less interested in the terminology debate than the questions of how we continue to organize ourselves to ensure the sustainability of quality on the Internet, and remove barriers for independent publishers and writers to participate. There's been a huge increase in the number of publishers investing in feature writing, and they're seeing that their most popular stories will have long lifespans across Twitter and Facebook, so that's a positive sign.[100]

And while Armstrong, like Laskas, is not worried about naming debates, he does acknowledge their presence and persistence: "Definitely. A lot of baggage with some of the terms."[101] And he tied that baggage to "a lot of angst about where journalism is headed regardless."[102] But he's confident that sites like Longreads and Longform are "the future of online publishing." While the traditional strength of Longreads and Longform has been curation, these sites are moving into funding and producing original content, whether it's Longreads Exclusives[103] or Longform Podcasts.[104] As these sites continue to grow and this style of storytelling becomes even more ubiquitous, there is increasingly a need to have a way to extend the mode of understanding and analysis beyond print. It's impossible to map the features of a long read or long form onto multimedia stories. How to define a long read when it's an illustrated documentary?[105] What constitutes long form in a reported Instagram essay?[106] Here, again, the reporting tenets and writing elements of literary journalism are more easily quantifiable and transferable.

What does this reclamation history mean for the websites Longreads.com and Longform.org? Not much, probably, and that's fine. I would prefer to see these terms used as online vessels for the delivery of literary journalism (and other types of stories) rather than be synonymous with the contents therein. Regardless, I'm a fan of both websites, and I appreciate the fact that they are a significant reason why this conversation is even relevant, to the degree that it is. Laskas, whose writing program at the University of Pittsburgh sponsors Longform.org, further explains:

> We used to be the idiots of Creative Writing programs, if we were invited to the table at all. Now students are flocking to our classes. It's a weird time. It's exciting. Longform.org has played a role—a living museum of great nonfiction stories that had been all but dead for years. Magazine stories have a short shelf life in print, and now they're eternal. This is huge for the genre. We're suddenly the popular crowd. For those of us who have been writing this stuff our whole careers, it's like, Oh, wow, people are noticing us? Really? We're still writing the same kinds of stuff we've always written.
>
> I love all of it because people actually care enough to argue about a genre that really wasn't part of any public discourse before. The subjects we wrote about could drive public discourse, of course, but the genre? I don't think people even thought of it as a genre. And now look. It's fun. More people are writing it. The party is getting bigger and I'm jumping for joy, really I am, while at the same time trying to find a quiet corner in the room where I can go write my damn story.[107]

Likewise, Sims sees these debates as good for business: "All the discussion of different names simply means that many people have recognized an interest in this form. Literary journalism, or something like it, now gets taught and discussed in conversations about English literature, history, journalism, and other areas. It's all good."[108]

In many ways, this discussion about terminology is really a discussion about stakeholders. Usage is always about power, and so it's important to understand who has a vested interest in calling this style or tradition of writing "literary journalism" versus "long form" versus "long read." The political economy of academia promotes the production of new knowledge and the reclamation of forgotten histories. Those processes emphasize nuance and complication (sometimes to esoteric extremes), which helps explain why the term "literary journalism" has gained more purchase inside the academy than outside of it, where distinct shades are more readily replaced with a generic gray. A good example of this type of historical shortsightedness can be found, unsurprisingly, on Wikipedia, where "long form" has its own entry, but literary journalism redirects (despite my own best efforts)[109] to "creative nonfiction."[110]

Conclusion

All of these terms can be understood as brands, but they should also be recognized as part of a general media literacy endeavor. The world of journalism is a world of jargon.[111] Not only is there an argot to describe different types of stories—from enterprise to sidebar to tick-tock—there's also a host of esoteric terms to describe various parts of those stories: lede, nutgraph, kicker, et cetera.[112] And of course, there are many different kinds of journalism: data, public, watchdog, et cetera. Likewise, the Pulitzer Prizes recognize and reward this diversity of story types.[113] Under this big tent of professional terminology, surely there is room for a better understanding of literary journalism and its history. My frustration with the heretofore synonymous usage of long form and long read with literary journalism is akin to the frustration I feel when I see newspaper readers conflate opinion columns with straight news articles, and then use their own misunderstanding as the basis for leveling claims of institutional political bias. Worse is the easy (and erroneous) way all these journalisms get reduced to the problematic term "media," which has no referent. Ironically, the same critic who believes the long form naming debate is superfluous voiced the opposite belief for the same problem with "media."[114]

The current debates about what to call this style of writing recapitulate decades-old arguments that are often void of historical and occupational literacy. As frivolous as these examinations may initially appear, it is important to note that there is material importance in what we call this style of writing, just as there is importance in what we name *anything*. Names and definitions position readers, critics, and practitioners to read, write, and understand sto-

ries in specific ways. They create a shared vocabulary, denote a usable history, and delimit a common set of expectations. The point here is not to create a rigid taxonomy or a vaunted canon of who's in and who's out. Rather, the purpose is to promote discussion and questioning: What constitutes reporting? How is this genre different from the personal essay? What is the political significance of narrative news? These debates are important.

If literary journalism is what is meant by the popular usage of long form and long reads—and I don't think there's any question that in the journalism community it is—then let's call it literary journalism. The term is more accurate, has a historical lineage, connects the tradition across geographic and temporal borders, and prompts more questioning among readers.

When it comes down to it, what we're talking about is precision, a care for what words mean, what they convey. Perhaps the best reason for replacing long form or long read with literary journalism comes back to the fundamental tenet of reporting: accuracy. Literary journalism is simply a more accurate descriptor. And for journalists, what more reason do you need?

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Notes

1. Ronald Weber, preface to *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*, ed. Ronald Weber (New York: Hastings House, 1974), 9.

2. The question comes in paragraph seven of his talk, about three-and-a-half minutes into his speech.

3. Tom Wolfe, "Lost in the Whichy Thicket: *The New Yorker*—II," *New York* magazine, published in the *New York Herald Tribune*, (April 18, 1965), 24.

4. Tom Wolfe, introduction to *The New Journalism*, eds. Tom Wolfe and E.W. Johnson (1973; repr., London: Picador, 1975).

5. Tom Wolfe, "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast: A Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel" *Harper's* (November 1989), 45–56.

6. Nicholas Lemann, "The Journalism in Literary Journalism" (Keynote, Annual Convention of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, Minneapolis, MN, May 7–9, 2015).

7. For example, Lemann states: "Yes, literary journalism ought to be executed in memorable, stylish prose."

8. Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 24.

9. Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 22.

10. Dwight MacDonald, "Parajournalism, or Tom Wolfe and His Magic Writing Machine," in *The Reporter as Artist*, 223.

11. Lester Markel, "So What's New?" in *The Reporter as Artist*, 258. Gerald Grant, "The New Journalism We Need," in *The Reporter as Artist*, 264. Dan Balz, "Bad Writing and the New Journalism," in *The Reporter as Artist*, 294.

12. Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 24.

13. Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 262.

14. John Hersey, "The Legend on the License," *Yale Review,* vol. 72, no. 2, February 1986, 289–314.

15. Robert Boynton, *The New New Journalism: Conversations with America's Best Nonfiction Writers on Their Craft* (New York: Vintage, 2005).

16. James Bennet, "Against 'Long-Form Journalism,'" *Atlantic,* December 12, 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/12/against-long-form-journalism/282256/.

17. Caleb Hannan, "Dr. V's Magical Putter," Grantland.com, January 15, 2014, http://grantland.com/features/a-mysterious-physicist-golf-club-dr-v/.

18. Ben Smith, "What the Longform Backlash Is All About," Medium.com, January 26, 2014, https://medium.com/@buzzfeedben/what-the-longform-backlash-is-all-about-958f4e7691f5.

19. Jonathan Mahler, "When Long-Form Is Bad Form" *New York Times*, January 24, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/25/opinion/when-long-form-is-bad-form.html?_r=3.

20. Specifically, Longform.org and Longreads.com.

21. The digital magazine the *Atavist* has been a pioneer in merging traditional print-based literary journalism with emergent multimedia storytelling features.

22. See, for example, this testy Twitter exchange between New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen and me over the importance of terminological specificity: https://twitter.com/jayrosen_nyu/status/441243621337997312.

23. Matt Buchanan, "The Origin of #Long Things," Buzzfeed.com, April 11, 2012, http://www.buzzfeed.com/mattbuchanan/the-origin-of-long-things.

24. Dylan Byers, "Politico Hires FP's Susan Glasser to Head New Long-form Journalism, Opinions Division," Politico.com, June 3, 2013, http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2013/06/politico-hires-fps-susan-glasser-to-head-new-long-form-journalism-opinion-divisions-165226.

25. Edwin H. Ford, *A Bibliography of Literary Journalism in America* (Minneapolis: Burgess, 1937), 1.

26. One of today's best practitioners of the form, Tom Junod, has offered an astute cultural analysis of why our short attention spans are drawn to long stories. Junod argues that changes in communication mediums—endless web length, viewing on demand—have allowed writers and television producers to expand the length and scope of their stories, even as, paradoxically, the indices of interpersonal communication have shrunk. Tom Junod, "The Dominance of Looooooong in the Time of Short," Esquire.com, September 17, 2013, http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/reviews/a24818/the-dominance-of-looooooong-in-the-age-of-short-1013/.

27. John C. Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 15.

28. Thomas B. Connery, "A Third Way to Tell the Story," in *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Sims (1990; repr., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 5.

29. Hartsock, *History of American Literary Journalism*, 9.

30. Thomas B. Connery, introduction to *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*, ed. Thomas B. Connery (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 16.

31. Norman Sims, *The Literary Journalists: The New Art of Personal Reportage* (New York: Ballantine, 1984).

32. At 8:22pm on November 22, 2013, the writer Susan Orlean tweeted a photo of Sims's *The Literary Journalists* with the caption, "I can't work unless I have a copy of this book next to me." https://twitter.com/susanorlean/status/404039837826551808.

33. Norman Sims, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2014.

34. Sims, *True Stories*, 6–7.

35. Sims, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2014. Carey's influence is wide in the world of communication and journalism, including the subfield of literary journalism. At Illinois he not only worked with Sims, but also John J. Pauly, another leading scholar in the field. Thomas B. Connery told me he nearly attended Illinois for his PhD as well (which would have placed him there at around the same time as Sims and Pauly), but chose instead Brown University, where, in a bit of academic serendipity, he also took up the study of literary journalism, using that specific term—without knowing Sims's or Pauly's work—in the title of his own PhD dissertation: "Fusing Fictional Technique and Journalistic Fact: Literary Journalism in the 1890s Newspaper." Thomas B. Connery, e-mail message to author, May 15, 2015.

36. Ronald Weber, ed., *The Literature of Fact: Literary Nonfiction in American Writing* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980).

37. Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda, eds., *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism* (New York: Scribner, 1998).

38. Ben Yagoda, e-mail message to author, March 1, 2014.

39. Norman Sims, ed., *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century* (1990; repr., Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

40. Norman Sims and Mark Kramer, eds., *Literary Journalism: A New Collection of the Best American Nonfiction* (New York: Ballantine, 1995).

41. Thomas B. Connery, *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992).

42. Edd Applegate, *Literary Journalism: A Biographical Dictionary of Writer and Editors* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996).

43. Arthur Kaul, ed., *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Literary Journalists 1945–1995* (Detroit: Gale Publishing, 1997).

44. Paige Williams, moderator, "Live Chat: Jeff Sharlet and Leslie Jamison on Literary Journalism," Nieman Storyboard, July 24, 2013, https://web.archive.org/web/20130806132652/http:/www.niemanstoryboard.org/2013/07/24/live-chat-jeff-sharlet-and-leslie-jamison-on-literary-journalism/.

45. Jeanne Marie Laskas, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2013.

46. Laskas could not have been more helpful or friendly during and after our email exchange. After I explained to her that I was not a practitioner, but rather a scholar (a term that causes my brain to go into hot spasm) of the genre, she enthusiastically replied: "See, you get to call it anything you want! That's great! My rant is (apparently) aimed at practitioners, or more accurately, at the nagging piece in me that (apparently) longs for legitimacy just like everyone else. Apparently I feel a need to squash that piece and do serious damage to it lest it contaminate my work. That's the danger. What is wonderful is that there are people like you who now research and write about this style of writing and use words like 'taxonomies' when you talk about us. We didn't have that before. That is the beautiful thing." Jeanne Marie Laskas, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2013.

47. Ironically, Sullivan takes up a similarly historical task with his introduction to *Best American Essays 2014*. His densely researched introduction traces the long, tangled, and misunderstood history of the terms *essay* and *essayist*. Savvy consumers know, of course, that the essay has Gallic origins and can trace its provenance to Montaigne. Except, as Sullivan reveals, maybe not. Maybe these terms and their history are more complex. Maybe recovering that past and understanding what it means for our present is important. Maybe. John Jeremiah Sullivan, "Introduction: The Ill-Defined Plot," *The Best American Essays 2014*, ed. John Jeremiah Sullivan; Series ed. Robert Atwan (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2014), xvii–xxvii.

48. See, for example: Lillian Ross, *Picture* (repr., Boston: De Capo, 2002); Susan Orlean, *The Orchid Thief: A True Story of Beauty and Obsession* (repr., New York: Ballantine, 2000); Adrienne Nicole LeBlanc, *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble and Coming of Age in the Bronx* (repr., New York: Scribner, 2004); or Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (repr., New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

49. The *Tampa Bay Times* is an especially strong publication for this style of writing. It's the home of Pulitzer Prize-winning feature writer Lane DeGregory. Its website is www.tampabay.com.

50. The podcast *Serial*, which attempted to unravel the mystery of a murder cold case, was a sensation during the autumn of 2014. Host and executive producer Sarah Koenig crafted weekly cliffhanger narratives by combining elements like immersion reporting, complicated story structure, and dialogue. The much-anticipated second season is scheduled to begin in late 2015. *Serial*'s website is www.serialpodcast.org.

51. The Public Broadcasting investigative program *Frontline* is an especially strong example of literary journalism in the broadcast sphere. Since its debut in 1983, it has won sixty-nine Emmy Awards, thirty-one duPont Columbia University Awards, seventeen Peabody Awards, and much more. Its website is www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline.

52. @Longreads user account on Twitter.com, https://twitter.com/Longreads.

53. @Longform user account on Twitter.com, https://twitter.com/longform.

54. In his keynote, Lemann acknowledges "the proliferation of new publishers" and notes that they "often describe themselves using the somewhat grating term 'long-form journalism.'"

55. Twitter.com hashtag for #Longform: https://twitter.com/search?f=realtime&q=%23longform&src=typd.

56. Janet Reitman, "Where the Tea Party Rules," *Rolling Stone*, October 14, 2014, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/where-the-tea-party-rules-20141014.

57. Jenn Pelly, Sleater-Kinney review, Pitchfork.com, October 24, 2014, http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/19860-sleater-kinney-start-together/.

58. Anna Hiatt, "A Conversation with Paige Williams from Nieman Storyboard," Tow Center for Digital Journalism, November 13, 2013, http://towcenter.org/a-conversation-with-paige-williams-from-nieman-storyboard/.

59. Despite our difference of opinion on this point, Williams was an early advocate of this essay, which I pitched to her when she was the editor of Nieman Storyboard. Her initial and enthusiastic support of this and my other Nieman projects is greatly appreciated.

60. A similar thing happened with the creation of the phrasal verb "snow fall" in the aftermath of the much talked about *New York Times* multimedia story. John Branch, "Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek," *New York Times*, December 20, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/#/?part=tunnel-creek.

61. Amy Westervelt, "Content Used to Be King. Now It's the Joker," Medium.com, June 3, 2014, https://medium.com/swlh/content-used-to-be-king-now-its-the-joker-d40703c18c73.

62. Ian Jack, ed., *Granta Book of Reportage*, as quoted in John C. Hartsock, "Literary Reportage: The 'Other' Literary Journalism," in *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences*, John Bak and Bill Reynolds, eds. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 24.

63. John Bak, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2014.

64. Bak, e-mail message to author.

65. Boyton delivered an excellent IALJS keynote address, "Notes Toward a Supreme Nonfiction: Teaching Literary Reportage in the Twenty-first Century," at the organization's 2013 conference in Tampere, Finland. Like Lemann's keynote, it was subsequently reprinted in this journal. Robert Boynton, "Notes Toward a Supreme Nonfiction: Teaching Literary Reportage in the Twenty-first Century," *Literary Journalism Studies* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 125–131.

66. Pablo Calvi, "Latin America's Own 'New Journalism,'" *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2010), 63–83. Juan Orlando Pérez González, "Revolution is Such a Beautiful Word!: Literary Journalism in Castro's Cuba," *Literary Journalism Studies* 4, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 9–28.

67. Thomas Vaessens, "Making Overtures: Literature and Journalism, 1968 and 2011—A Dutch Perspective," *Literary Journalism Studies* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 55–72.

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

69. Nick Mulgrew, "Tracing the Seam: Narrative Journalism and Imaginings in South African Literature," *Literary Journalism Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 9–30. Anthea Garman and Gillian Rennie, "Alexandra Fuller of Southern Africa: A White Woman Writer Goes West," *Literary Journalism Studies* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 133–145.

70. Willa McDonald, "A Vagabond: The Literary Journalism of John Stanley James," *Literary Journalism Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 65–81. Sue Joseph, "Preferring 'Dirty' to 'Literary' Journalism: In Australia, Margaret Simons Challenges the Jargon While Producing the Texts," *Literary Journalism Studies* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 100–117.

71. Beate Josephi, Edith Cowan, 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.

72. Maria Lassila-Merisalo, "Exploring the Reality Boundary of Esa Kero," *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 39–47.

73. *Literary Journalism Studies*, Special Issue: Norwegian Reportage 5, no. 1 (Spring 2013).

74. Barbara Lounsberry, *The Art of Fact: Contemporary Artists of Nonfiction* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1990), xii; Lester Markel, "So What's New?" in *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*, Ronald Weber, ed.

(New York: Hastings House, 1974), 258; William L. Rivers, "The New Confusion," in *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*, 235; Ronald Weber, "Some Sort of Artistic Excitement," in *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy*, 14

75. Norman Sims, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2013.

76. Jeanne Marie Laskas, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2013.

77. Kathy Roberts Forde, *Literary Journalism on Trial: Masson v. New Yorker and the First Amendment* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 6.

78. Thomas Kunkel, *Man in Profile: Joseph Mitchell of the New Yorker* (New York: Random House, 2015).

79. Janet Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 3.

80. Janet Malcolm, "The Master Writer of the City," *New York Review of Books*, April 23, 2015, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/apr/23/joseph-mitchell-master-writer-city/.

81. Lemann, "The Journalism in Literary Journalism."

82. John Hersey, "Joe Is Home Now," *Life*, July 3, 1944, 68–80.

83. A.J. Liebling, *The Honest Rainmaker: The Life and Times of Colonel John R. Stingo* (New York: Doubleday, 1953).

84. Sims, *True Stories*, 310.

85. Josh Roiland, "The Fine Print: Uncovering the True Story of David Foster Wallace and the 'Reality Boundary,'" *Literary Journalism Studies* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 148–161.

86. Ben Yagoda, *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made* (Boston: De Capo, 1997).

87. Kozinski also believed the Reid scandal paled in comparison to Malcolm's transgressions. After surveying the attendant literature, he concluded: "Unlike my colleagues, I am unable to construe the first amendment as granting journalists a privilege to engage in practices they themselves frown upon, practices one of our defendants has flatly disowned as journalistic heresy. The press can legitimately claim the right to editorial judgment when it is selecting the words itself; it cannot, and does not, claim the right to select words for others."

88. Norman Sims, "The Problem and Promise of Literary Journalism Studies," *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 7–16.

89. Forde, *Literary Journalism on Trial*, 174.

90. Even a cursory glance at this history reveals that the profession has undergone radical, systemic changes since the publication of the first periodical, *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestic*, in 1690. These changes—topical, methodological, rhetorical, philosophical, political, and professional—were often the result of transformations in social, cultural, economic, and technological structures. What does the invention of the telegraph have to do with nascent conceptions of "objectivity" in the American press? Plenty. Read David Mindich's *Just the Facts: How "Objectivity" Came to Define American Journalism* (rev., New York: NYU Press, 2000). And for the most comprehensive and compelling history of journalism in this country, I recommend Christopher Daly, *Covering American: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).

91. Bryan Curtis, "The Commissioner," Grantland.com, October 10, 2014, http://grantland.com/features/the-commissioner-bob-ryan-nba-career-boston-celtics-boston-globe-larry-bird-new-book-scribe/.

92. Jonathan Mahler, "When 'Long-Form' Is Bad Form," *New York Times*, January 24, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/25/opinion/when-long-form-is-bad-form.html?_r=1. Mahler's piece was just one of several that responded to the controversy of the Grantland.com January 15, 2014, feature, "Dr. V's Magical Putter," by Caleb Hannan, which investigated a "mysterious inventor" who engineered, marketed, and sold "a scientifically superior golf club." In the course of his research, Hannan learned that "Dr. V.," whose real name was Essay Anne Vanderbilt, was a transgender woman. Vanderbilt did not want Hannan to disclose this information in his story, but he resolved that it was part of unraveling the mystery of the club and its marketing. Subsequently, Vanderbilt committed suicide. Hannan incorporated all of these elements in his story, which led to a tense debate about ethics within the journalistic community that spilled over into what some wrongly dubbed the recent fetishization of narrative.

93. George Packer, "*Rolling Stone* and the Temptations of Narrative Journalism," New Yorker.com, April 6, 2015, http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/rolling-stone-and-the-temptations-of-narrative-journalism. Packer was responding to the fallout from Sabrina Erdely's now-retracted *Rolling Stone* story, "A Rape on Campus," November 19, 2014, about a sexual assault and subsequent investigation at the University of Virginia. The thinly-sourced story produced almost immediate suspicion and was eventually discredited, leading publisher Jann Wenner to enlist the Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism to investigate the magazine's editorial practices to determine where they failed. On April 5, 2015, *Rolling Stone* published the school's findings and recommendations in an report entitled, "'A Rape on Campus': What Went Wrong," http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-what-went-wrong-20150405.

94. Mark Armstrong, e-mail message to author, March 12, 2014.

95. Ibid. Whereas Longreads sets its word length at 1,500, Longform.org collects and recommends "new and classic nonfiction" articles that are "over 2,000 words that are freely available online."

96. "The Top 5 Longreads of the Week," Longreads.com, http://blog.longreads.com.

97. Mark Armstrong, Twitter direct message to author, September 11, 2014.

98. "Longreads Fiction," Longreads.com, http://longreads.com/articles/search/?q=Fiction.

99. "Longform Fiction Pick of the Week," Longform.org, http://longform.org/fiction.

100. Mark Armstrong, e-mail message to author, March 12, 2014.

101. Mark Armstrong, Twitter direct message to author, January 25, 2014.

102. Mark Armstrong, Twitter direct message to author, January 25, 2014.

103. "Longreads Exclusives," Longreads.com, http://blog.longreads.com/category/story/.

104. "Longform Podcast," Longform.org, http://longform.org/podcast.

105. For example, the work of Carrie Ching, an investigative multimedia journalist who produces reported narratives such as "Level 14: Inside One of California's Most Dangerous Juvenile Homes," combines illustration, animation, narration, and closed-caption text within the video, ProPublica, April 2, 2015, https://www.propublica.org/article/video-inside-one-of-californias-most-dangerous-juvenile-homes.

106. Jeff Sharlet has pioneered the InstaEssay, a reported narrative accompanying a photograph on the social media platform Instagram.com. Instagram limits users to 2,200 characters (roughly 400 words) per image, so the stories do not qualify as "long reads" and have never been referred to as "long form." However, they do contain many of the narrative elements of literary journalism, augmented by the immediacy of the accompanying photograph. Sharlet has written about his InstaEssays for the *New York Times* and Longreads.com. Sharlet, "Instagram's Graveyard Shift," *New York Times*, January 22, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/25/magazine/instagrams-graveyard-shift.html?_r=1. Sharlet, "#Nightshift: Excerpts from an Instagram Essay," Longreads.com, September 2014, http://blog.longreads.com/2014/10/01/nightshift-excerpts-from-an-instagram-essay/. Sharlet, Instagram account, https://instagram.com/jeffsharlet/?hl=en.

107. Jeanne Marie Laskas, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2013.

108. Norman Sims, e-mail message to author, March 13, 2013.

109. Wikipedia is a "free-access, free-content Internet encyclopedia." Its users generate and maintain its content. And while it promotes itself as allowing users to "edit most of its articles," these edits are subject to the scrutiny of anonymous "administrators" who determine the veracity and efficacy of the post based on the organization's content guidelines and policies (namely, that the information has to be verifiable and the user must produce a source for the information presented). In this structure, the administrators have a great deal of power even when users with more editorial expertise attempt to correct mistakes on pages. Over the years I have attempted to create a unique page for "literary journalism," which has historically redirected to the entry for "creative nonfiction" when a user searches that term on website. Administrators have always reverted these attempts, prompting me to post a jeremiad on the "Talk" section—where users can make their editorial arguments for edits—of the "creative nonfiction" page criticizing the historical short-sightedness of the administrators who are unwilling to decouple "literary journalism" from "creative nonfiction." No administrator ever responded to my post. Josh Roiland, "Literary Journalism Needs Its Own Page," Wikipedia.org, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Creative_nonfiction.

110. "Creative Nonfiction," Wikipedia.org, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_nonfiction.

111. *Wall Street Journal*, "Glossary of Terms: Journalism," 1998, http://www.encoreleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/WSJ-terminology.pdf.

112. Journalistic Terms and Definitions, http://www.slowburn.com/clients/fais/journalism/jterms.html.

113. The Pulitzer Prizes: Past Winners and Finalists by Category, http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat. The Pulitzers would be a good place to start if one *wanted* to make a value-judgment claim about the higher quality of literary journalism. The awards are rife with writers and stories in this genre. Another argument can be found in a comprehensive list of the "Top 100 Works of Journalism in the 20th Century," compiled in 1999 by the journalism faculty at New York Univerity and more than a dozen industry legends and experts. Of the 100 selections on the list, forty-one can be called literary journalism, including the top two: John Hersey's *Hiroshima* and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, both originally published in the *New Yorker*, "The Top 100 Works of Journalism In the United States in the 20th Century," http://www.nyu.edu/classes/stephens/Top%20100%20page.htm. Finally, the genre achieved perhaps its most significant validation when the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded, for the first time ever, to a literary journalist, the Belarussian reporter Svetlana Alexievitch.

114. NYU journalism professor Jay Rosen, who had previously mocked me about the frivolity of the long-form naming debate, essentially made the same point I make in this article when he engaged other Twitter users about the term "media." In an August 16, 2014, tweet he wrote: "That term—'the media'—has no referent. That's why people use it when they really mean 'an Op-Ed I saw' or 'a talking head I hate watch.'" Rosen's analysis on this matter could not be more correct: Twitter post, August 16, 2014, 9:30 p.m., https://twitter.com/jayrosen_nyu/status/500801758776803328.