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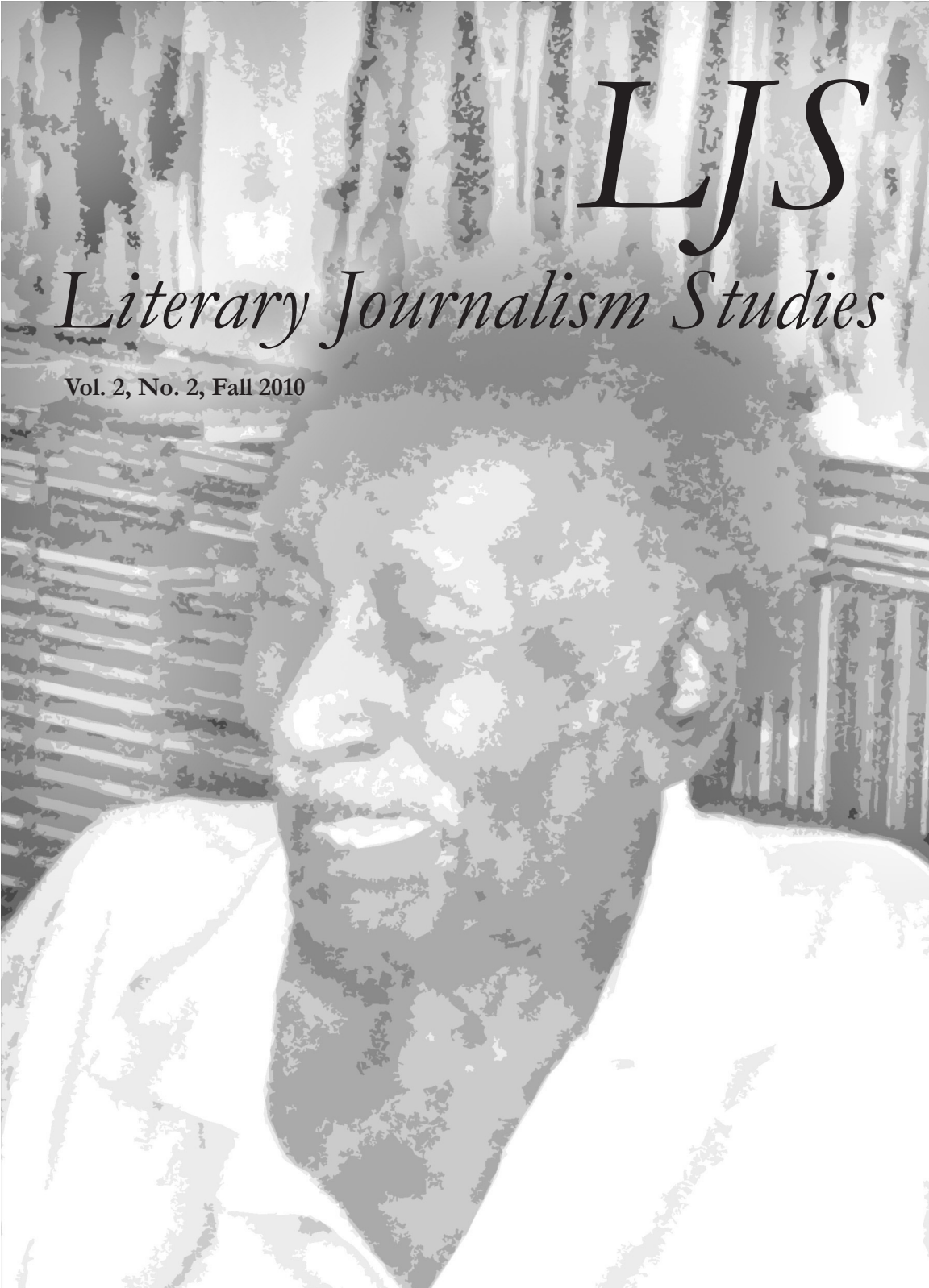
Literary Journalism Studies

Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 2010



The Journal of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

When apostles of the New Journalism (the usual suspects: Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer) were proclaiming a new literary order, and the gurus of social science were proclaiming a new journalistic order, Albert Murray was wryly noting that they wouldn't know a black man if they saw one. The result was his 1972 "anti-journalism," *South to a Very Old Place*. Today, at 94, Murray lives in retirement in New York City. Please see page 9.

Photo by Miles Maguire

Literary Journalism Studies

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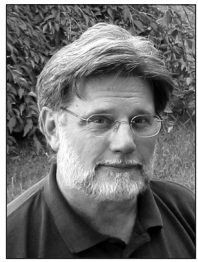
SUBMISSION INFORMATION

LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES invites submission of original scholarly articles on literary journalism, which is also known as narrative journalism, literary reportage, reportage literature, New Journalism, and the nonfiction novel, as well as literary 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>.

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 . . .



Tom Wolfe. Norman Mailer. Two apostles of the New Journalism. And iconoclasts, challenging the conventions of both literature and journalism. As literary journalism does and must, because as Wolfe noted, the focus is on subcultures—subcultures often ignored, unobserved, undefined by both the *salon litterateur* and the *salon journaliste*. To his credit, Wolfe advocated for acknowledging and exploring the cultural Other, thus challenging dominant conventions blind or indifferent to its existence. And so the likes of Wolfe and Mailer were elevated, even deified, as new icons. Which was the problem.

Because like all icons, they too must be challenged. In such a deification there was a reason why the iconoclasts of the eighth century threw down the icons. To see if what we venerate will break, or continue to be worthy of our veneration. Or something in between, as in the collective case of Wolfe/Mailer.

That's what struck me as I read Roberta S. Maguire's account of Albert Murray, and how he challenged Wolfe/Mailer during the period of the New Journalism, as well as those who have attempted to turn journalism into a social science (please see page 9). He took Wolfe and Mailer down a peg or two because they could not begin to understand the African American experience, despite the fact that they wrote and dwelt on it, as Mailer did, for example, in his essay "The White Negro." And while Wolfe could dress up in his refined and elegant white plantation suits, his portrayals of blacks were hardly refined and insightful portraits. Rather, they were cardboard cutouts: objectified, inaccessible. And perhaps because of the white plantation suits, Wolfe inadvertently comes across as a bit of a cardboard cutout, too. Paradoxically, he becomes a caricature of the "status details" he so profoundly called for in journalism.

Nor were the social scientists of journalism any better. The result so often was to objectify, to alienate at a distance from what subjectivity perceives. What ensued was a picture of a people who could only be downtrodden, ghettoized. But what about those who weren't, and who were living vital, active lives in vital, active black communities?

Murray provided, then, an important corrective in challenging such icons, reminding us that our subjective interpretations are, after all, subjective, implying our human limitations. Or, as James Agee said in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, "George Gudger is a man. . . . I know him only so far as I know him . . . and all of that depends as fully on who I am as on who he is." That, of course, is also the virtue of an acknowledged subjectivity that has the prescience *to understand its own limitations* (true, Mailer gets better marks in this regard, except that his outsized ego can blind him to the Other), and why the

result then becomes a truer objectivity than that of the spurious "objective" journalism of twentieth-century fame. That was the strength of Murray's insights into the limitations of what had become revered, journalism as social science, and those who had become revered, Wolfe and Mailer. To be sure, there have been important contributions—the "something in between." But at the same time human endeavor is inevitably fallible.

There is an additional paradox in all of this, a paradox both maddening and illuminating that can only tease us with the possibilities: For all the limitations of our subjectivities, our subjective engagement with the aesthetics of experience offers one of the more promising ways for conveying the complexities of that very same isolating and objectifying science. This is what our colleagues Mateus Yuri Passos, Érica Masiero Nering, and Juliano Mauricio de Carvalho explore in their article on "opening up" the "black box" of science (page 27). In doing so, they make an important contribution by recovering for our consideration the observations of the French sociologist-of-science Bruno Latour. It was Latour who observed twenty-three years ago, before the present groundswell of scholarship in the study of literary journalism, that the genre provides one indispensable form for exposing what so often seems to be the impenetrability of science to the understanding of the lay reader. This is because when we follow via the aesthetics of experience the scientist as he makes his rounds, we imaginatively participate with him in his discoveries, his triumphs, and his failures. Imagine this: It's 1904 and Einstein sneezes, interrupting himself as he pours a glass of Port wine for his old mother, Pauline, in the dining car of the train rushing between Berlin and Zurich. Opening his eyes, post-sneeze, he catches sight of a raven in flight. Now comes his *Eureka!* moment because on observing the raven recede across the sky he detects at the same moment the swollen Rhine River which he knows is moving at flood stage in the opposite direction of the train. Except that because his motion is south-bound the river doesn't seem to be moving at all as it flows north. Which is disorienting. Dimly he recalls his earlier departure from the seeming solidity and centrality of the Potsdamer Platz where the crossroads of Europe converged (at least in 1904), and now how it's a distant world slipping farther away. The world is in constant motion as he starts to pour the wine again while his mother says, "*Danke, Bertie,*" squeezing his other hand affectionately as if he were still a little boy. So that what emerges as he responds absentmindedly, "*Bitte, Mama*," with his thoughts elsewhere, is his Special Theory of Relativity (that even as we move, the world around us moves independent of our own motion, because there is no fixed, unmoving Potsdamer Platz of the universe). Now we can begin to prise open the black box of science, making us imaginative participants in his moment of recognition (disclaimer: insofar as I know, none of this ever happened, and is only based on my own dim recollections of reading, however imperfectly, the theory many years ago).

This brings us back to our paradox, in that we lay people can engage science in a meaningful way subject to the writer's subjectivity selecting from the aesthetics of experience—the sneeze, pouring the glass of Port, perhaps the silhouette of Burg Maus on its promontory slipping silently past us. In other words, in the attempt to convey the "absolutes" of science we are, paradoxically, reduced to doing so subjectively—by means of the inherently subjective medium of language. This is what physicist Niels Bohr had in mind when he engaged in a contrarian if good-natured discussion with his friend Einstein on the nature of physics and the universe. When the latter said, "God does not play dice with the universe," Bohr is reported to have responded, "Einstein, stop *telling* God what to do!" Of course, when Einstein tells God what to do, he is also telling himself what he wishes to believe. This recalls in turn what Bohr's protégé Werner Heisenberg said, "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of *questioning*." Bohr had the last word on the matter when he simply noted that physics "concerns what we *say* about Nature," and not, he makes clear, what nature *is*. *To tell, to question, to say*. Thus we detect the intrusive nature and filter and other implications of language. Conveying science depends on the writer's selection of the details of the aesthetics of experience and not on science alone, despite the desperate efforts of some in science to seek the safety of their arguments in objectified and alienated isolation by pretending that language is transparent. Which is why I've never understood the social scientific disposition to measure the language of journalism with numbers. Numbers are themselves language and not somehow separate from it. What we end up with is language as a reflection measuring language as a reflection in what reminds me of distorting mirrors in a funhouse reflecting off each other, each reflection, of course, a further distortion of some original now lost in an abstract ether impenetrable to a layperson. Add two tablespoons of smoke, stir, and we can take refuge in our own mystification.

Thus the virtues—and limitations—of subjectivity, of one person explaining his or her relations to another and the world, which, if it's not evident by now, bears an uncanny resemblance to Einstein's theory. Modest, but objectively credible because it makes no claims to *omni*science. Hence, the paradox.

These were some of my thoughts as I read the examination by our Brazilian colleagues. And it makes me wonder why creative writing and journalism programs haven't rushed to develop programs that apply literary journalism to understanding science, if for no other reason than as a societal obligation to open up the "black box" of science.

Challenging the icons of the New Journalism and opening the black box of science are a couple of the articles you will find in this issue. Amy Snow Landa provides an uncanny echo of Latour, Passos, *et al.*, when she calls for using texts of literary journalism to engage in discussions of

medical bioethics (page 47). Once again we see different worlds, subcultures, the cultural Other, one of medical science and the other of ethics, seeking dialogue by means, in this case, of a literary journalism. Moreover, Pablo Calvi introduces many of us to the modern Latin American tradition of the *testimonio* (page 63). While he notes that it bears a resemblance to the Anglo American New Journalism of the 1960s and 1970s, and was roughly contemporaneous, nonetheless it emerged for very different reasons. Thus, Calvi contributes to our comparative understanding of the genre. Finally, our former president of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, David Abrahamson, provides some parting thoughts on what the exploration of literary journalism has meant for him as a teacher in recent years (page 87). He notes how he had to become a student again, discovering that he had to dispense with some of the time-honored traditions of professional journalism in order to embrace older, even more time-honored narrative traditions dating back at least to classical Greece. Indeed, back to the storyteller in her prehistory cave reciting—her voice rising then lowering ominously around the embers of the dying fire—the story of the tribe's travail since Eden. Abrahamson's is a reminder that sooner or later we must all reexamine and challenge our assumptions.

To be iconoclasts, in other words. To see if what we venerate will break, or continue to be worthy of our veneration. Or something in between.

— John C. Hartsock

LJS Seeks Additional Associate Editor

Literary Journalism Studies seeks an associate editor. The new associate editor will have three responsibilities. First, s/he will routinely send out notices to journals and online sites seeking submissions. Second, s/he will be responsible for cataloging the contents of each issue of *Literary Journalism Studies* and providing bibliographic entries to selected bibliographic databases such as *MLA International Bibliography* and *Communication Abstracts*. Third, she will edit a new biblographic section in the journal that will keep readers abreast of current literary journalism scholarship. The successful candidate must have an understanding of the role of scholarly bibliographies in peer-reviewed learned journals, as well as strong copy-editing skills. Our staff is small but supportive, and we realize that this is very much a learning-on-the-job position. As with the rest of the editors, there is no pay for the position other than the satisfaction of developing a scholarly journal. The new editor's role will be identified on our journal masthead. Interested individuals should contact the editor, John C. Hartsock, at john.hartsock@cortland.edu, or literaryjournalismstudies@gmail.com.

Riffing on Hemingway and Burke, Responding to Mailer and Wolfe: Albert Murray's "Anti-Journalism"

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

In South to a Very Old Place, *Albert Murray challenged the social "science" of journalism and the icons of the New Journalism.*

On January 5, 1972, Albert Murray, an African American novelist, cultural critic, and authority on jazz, celebrated the publication of his second book, *South to a Very Old Place*, with a party at the home of Ruth Ellington, the sister and business manager of jazz great Duke Ellington. The book, which began as an assignment for *Harper's* magazine's "Going Home in America" series, was nominated for a National Book Award and received generally positive notice. But what sort of book it was remained open to debate. Murray's first book, *The Omni-Americans*, appearing in 1970, was a collection of essays and book reviews—many of them previously published. This second book, also nonfiction, incorporating interviews with prominent white Southern writers, primarily newsmen, followed by conversations with downhome Mobile, Alabama folk, seemed to defy categorization: one reviewer described it as "an original mixture of autobiography and cultural critique"; another called it "a cross between inspired journalism, cultural commentary, and spiritual autobiography"; yet another summed it up as "a travel book in an intellectual journalese stream of consciousness style."[1] As those early attempts to categorize it indicate, *South to a Very Old Place* might best be described as literary journalism. Reading it as such—and as a contribution to the "New Journalism" subgenre and cultural ferment—expands our thinking not only about who the practitioners of the New

Journalism were, but also about the form such literary journalism could take and the function it served.

First, a little background on Murray. Born in 1916 and still alive ten years into the twenty-first century, he embarked on his writing career relatively late in life; he published his first book at age fifty-four, eight years after retiring from the Air Force. In that regard he departs from the prototype of the New Journalist as a young, brash writer overturning the values of the older generation. But in terms of sheer ambition and ego, Murray matches up well with such leading figures of the New Journalism as Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer whose work and outsized personalities were making headlines in the 1960s. Since his college years at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, Murray had been captivated by the image of the writer as hero and set about creating himself in that image. His apprenticeship began with prodigious amounts of reading that included both the Western literary canon and magazines chronicling the latest literary developments, especially *Esquire*, his favorite. There, in the mid-1930s, he first encountered Hemingway's literary journalism, which, Murray has said, made him think, "I'd like to do that."[2]

Augmenting this reading program was a key friendship Murray developed in the 1940s with Ralph Ellison, who was an upperclassman at Tuskegee when Murray was a freshman and whose first novel *Invisible Man* won the National Book Award in 1953. Ellison read as widely as Murray, and the two men regularly recommended books and writers to each other. One of Ellison's recommendations in the late 1940s was the rhetorician and language theorist Kenneth Burke, whose work was not entirely unknown to Murray, but Ellison's enthusiasm for it and the man (he and Burke had become friends) convinced Murray to pay special attention to it. As a result, some of Burke's terminology, especially that regarding rhetorical motives, became major components of Murray's literary toolbox.[3] Just as important as urging Murray to focus on Burke was Ellison's support of Murray's ambitions: Ellison reasoned that because of their Southern backgrounds (Ellison was from Oklahoma; Murray from Alabama); their deep understanding of black culture, especially as manifested in the jazz they both loved; and their profound commitment to great literature, no matter its culture of origin, the two friends had an important contribution to make to American letters. That contribution, as Murray came to see it, would serve as a corrective to the prevailing view of black culture and its role in the American mainstream.

To offer a corrective was certainly a goal of Murray's first book, *The Omni-Americans*, which on republication got the subtitle he originally wanted: *Some Alternatives to the Folklore of White Supremacy*. Using Burkean

terminology, Murray in his introduction refers to his book as a "counter-statement" targeting "*the professional observer/reporter* (that major vehicle of the nation's information, alas) who relies on the so-called findings and all-too-inclusive extrapolations of social science survey technicians for their sense of the world."[4] Here we see Murray absolutely engaged with contemporary trends in journalism. Not long before Murray was writing those words about social science surveys and their pernicious effect on mainstream journalism, *Newsweek* had published a glowing story about Philip Meyer, whose use of survey data had helped him win a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the 1967 Detroit race riots. Referring to Meyer in their August 28, 1968, article as "the most recent recruit to the ranks of those who are applying scholarly, computerized research methods to the demands of journalism," staff writers at *Newsweek* also used the piece as an opportunity to pat themselves on the back for pioneering social science methodology in 1963 with their cover story, "The Negro in America."[5] In fairness, Meyer himself would much later acknowledge the shortcomings of using survey data alone when developing a news story. Author of the influential textbook *Precision Journalism*, first published in 1973, Meyer in the preface to the fourth edition, published in 2002, argued that his book's previous status as a "how-to" for survey research was unintended and that this new century's lack of "confidence in social science" had resulted from "overuse" of its methods.[6]

In any event, this trend in journalism that began in the 1960s clearly concerned Murray. Given his reading habits, he no doubt saw the *Newsweek* piece on Meyer, the magazine's earlier story on "The Negro in America," and other news stories featuring survey data—and he was sounding the alarm with *The Omni-Americans* in 1970. The picture that emerged, Murray found, was an abstraction, overly generalized and overwhelmingly negative, rendering blacks as culturally deprived ghetto inhabitants with abnormal family structures. Black Americans, Murray countered in *The Omni-Americans*, "regard themselves not as the substandard, abnormal *non-white* people of American social science surveys and the news media, but rather as if they were . . . fundamental *extensions* of contemporary possibilities."[7]

The Omni-Americans was a polemic; "quite deliberately so," Murray said in his introduction, then added, "perhaps only works of fiction on the scale of Tolstoy, Joyce, and Thomas Mann can truly do justice to the enduring humanity of U.S. Negroes."[8] Or at the very least, such a justice would require a "nonfiction novel," Truman Capote's term for his literary journalism and a term Murray has used in interviews to describe *South to a Very Old Place*. That form appealed to him for his second book because it

could "contain the essence of a report of a journey" while also functioning as metaphor.[9] And using that form provided him with the opportunity to try his hand at Hemingway-style journalism—or "anti-journalism," as Ronald Weber has described it—that he had first admired so much as a young man. What makes Hemingway's work "anti-journalism," according to Weber, is his focus on his "own reacting presence" and his "mingling [of] observation with invention, always making more than describing."[10]

Examples of Hemingway's "anti-journalistic" technique can be found in the 1967 collection of his journalism, *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*. Among them is "Notes on Dangerous Game: The Third Tanganyika Letter," which appeared in the July 1934 issue of *Esquire*. Focusing on two especially successful white hunters (or non-native guides for first-time hunters in Africa) and the game they shoot, Hemingway inserts himself not only in the descriptions of the white hunters but also in italicized asides—on different topics, referring to other moments in time. Early on in the piece, he explains why the two white hunters are special standouts "the point is that they do not get mauled and . . . their clients get record heads, record tusks and super lions year after year. They simply happen to be super hunters and super shots." He follows that in the same paragraph with this: "(*There are too many supers in these last two sentences. Re-write them yourselves lads and see how easy it is to do better than Papa. Thank you. Exhilarating feeling, isn't it?*)" (italics in original).[11] And then, toward the end of "Letter," after describing how he perceives the differences between buffalo and the "fighting bull" in the ring (the buffalo "would be more like the big truck that comes charging in during the intermission"), Hemingway offers this italicized aside: "(*There won't be any more asides you will be glad to hear. Am going to write Mr. P* [one of the two white hunters] *a letter instead. The asides were put in when I read this over on the boat. Got to missing him.*)"[12] In both examples, we get Hemingway responding to his craft and then responding to the subject matter he has featured, drawing attention to both his "making" and his "reacting presence."

Another technique Hemingway uses to create his anti-journalism emerges in "On the Blue Water: A Gulf Stream Letter," also published in *Esquire* (April 1936) and also collected in *By-Line*: There his reacting presence is foregrounded through his use of "you," which can include the reader as well. The "Letter" opens with Hemingway recounting a conversation with a nameless friend who thinks any hunting other than elephant hunting is dull; the friend challenges Hemingway, who likes all hunting, and especially hunting for big fish, to write about the latter so as to convince him of its value. This task Hemingway takes up in "Letter," and that is where "you" plays a pronounced role. Initially the "you" is generic: "In the first place,

the Gulf Stream and the other great ocean currents are the last wild country there is left. Once you are out of sight of land and of the other boats you are more alone than you can ever be hunting. . . . "[13] This mode continues for several pages, until the "friend" intrudes with a question, "But where does the thrill come in?,"[14] allowing for a transition to a specific time when Hemingway was big-fish hunting from a boat in the Gulf Stream. Then Hemingway represents in direct discourse a conversation with two crew members named Carlos and Julio and presents himself as "you": Carlos tells Hemingway that he "would like" fishing in a dinghy, which is followed by "'I'll look forward to it,' you say." The piece ends with the following, which further personalizes and particularizes Hemingway's discourse on big-fish hunting:

> "What we need for prosperity is a war," Carlos says. "In the time of the war with Spain and in the last war the fishermen were actually rich."
> "All right," you say. "If we have a war you get the dinghy ready."[15]

Murray uses these techniques throughout *South to a Very Old Place* to likewise make himself the center of his report while creating a context that mingles observation and invention to move beyond mere neutral and disengaged description. An example is evident in the book's opening, addressing a generalized "you": "You can take the 'A' train uptown from Forty-second Street in midtown Manhattan and be there in less than ten minutes. There is a stop at Fifty-ninth Street beneath the traffic circle which commemorates Christopher Columbus. . . ."[16] The next section begins similarly: "you can also go south from midtown Manhattan by taking another northbound train from Forty-second Street." But in the very next sentence, the "you" becomes individualized to Murray—"But this time you keep on past 125th Street"—as it is particularized to this moment of traveling on assignment ("this time"), which he expands on in the following sentences: "This time you roll on across the Harlem River and continue on through the Bronx and that part of suburbia to Connecticut. Then one hour and maybe fifteen, maybe twenty, maybe thirty or thirty-five minutes later you are that many more statute miles further north from Mobile [Murray's hometown] than Lenox Terrace [Murray's New York street address]. "You" largely continues to refer to Murray for several pages, as the text moves to his memories of how he felt growing up outside of Mobile: "as far as you were concerned just about the only white man who really knew how to strut his stuff walking back in those days was not anybody anywhere in and around or even near Mobile, Alabama. It was a western cowboy. It was the one and only Tom Mix."[17] In this way Murray is making the context for his reporting while foregrounding his reacting presence, his insights,

as he begins creating himself as the metaphor for his text—an important counterstatement for both mainstream and the "New" journalism, about which there is more to come below.

But before moving to that, I offer a couple more examples of how Murray adapts Hemingway's anti-journalistic techniques. On his travels south, one of the first newsmen Murray meets with is Edwin Yoder, then associate editor of the *Greensboro Daily News*. Murray recounts what the two men talked about—William Faulkner, the state of contemporary journalism—and then in italics indicates what the conversation prompts him to recall but not say:

> "*Hey look man, the same old [Uncle] Remus, who . . . used to spin for you and all . . . [Southern] white boys such weather-worthy yarns as make such nets as can hold what is . . . comprehensible of human motivation is . . . the selfsame old uncle . . . who used to hand-take me fishing and crabbing on Three Mile Creek [and who] . . . taught me the socialogistics of nightclub entertainers and road musicians, the psychologistics of skin-game survivors and the vernacularities of calculus and trigonometry among other unmentionable unmentionables during all my steel-blue times in rook joints and jook joints, for all the A-B-C days I spent in book joints.*"[18]

And after recalling that they also talked about what Murray calls the "Sambo Fallacy"—the flaws in Stanley Elkins's then widely accepted theory that slavery reduced African Americans to "perpetual child[ren]"[19]—Murray adds an italicized aside to the reader in the style of Hemingway: "(*Why is nothing ever made of the fact that to be Afro-American is to be derived at least in part from a mask-wearing tradition?*)"[20] Again, what is foregrounded is Murray's reacting presence, his reactions now not only to his interview subject, but also to the topic at hand, a topic that Murray himself has introduced into the conversation with Yoder.

So by echoing the form of Hemingway's "anti-journalism," Murray places himself at the center of his book, which allows him to extend to a symbolic level the overt critique he offers of mainstream journalism practices. What he is up to becomes even clearer when he reports his conversation, again with Yoder, about the routine use of "ghetto" to describe black neighborhoods. Here's Murray's complaint: "inherent in the word itself is a very strong danger of overinterpreting both behavior and personality in terms of environment."[21] And he explains to Yoder that the theoretical grounding for his complaint is Kenneth Burke's five terms of dramatism—scene, act, agent, agency, and purpose—that Burke lays out in *A Grammar of Motives* (1945), which was the first book of Burke's that Murray bought.[21] He goes on: "when [journalists] use 'ghetto' the way they do they are really trying to explain all action and purpose from scene

alone—which just can't be done, especially when all you think you need to know about circumstance is a bunch of goddam [sic] statistics."[23]

A review of articles in the *New York Times*—the paper of record that Murray read—on race relations and the black community in the late 1960s confirms his view that "ghetto" is routinely used: black children are described as "ghetto-bred" and "ghetto-confined"; it is "ghetto residents" who are "victims of social change"; two young soldiers, recently returned from Vietnam, are first and foremost "ghetto blacks," etc.[24] The potential here is for the entire black community, when defined by environment, to be seen only as victims, incapable of action and dependent on those outside "the ghetto." In other words, Murray's point by way of bringing up Burke is that this usage of "ghetto" robs the community of its most important dimensions: agents and agency—or people who have the wherewithal to act. A corrective, then, to mainstream journalism's representation of the black community is Murray himself, a Harlem "ghetto" resident at the center of his report. And how wonderfully ironic the whole premise is: a black man visiting white Southern writers, primarily journalists, who is controlling the conversations and their representation, while recording *his* perceptions of these writers's responses to *his* ideas. Hence, he notes Yoder's "twinkle which always lights up his expression whenever some topic [Murray raises] engages him," a twinkle that earns him the distinction of being a journalist apart from "the nonsense, terminological and otherwise, that is too typical of so many other newsmen and editorialists these days."[25] And, likewise, this assessment by Murray of Yoder's response to his ideas ensures that, at least with regard to this representative black man, the shift in emphasis from scene to agent and agency is complete.

But if Murray himself is a sign of the black community's agency in *South to a Very Old Place*, the greatest evidence of agency Murray argues elsewhere is "stylization"[26]—lifestyle, art style, writing style. Here he aligns with Wolfe and Mailer, whose "stylish reporting" challenged the workmanlike prose of 1960s mainstream journalists. But Murray was not a fan of either man's work, made clear in *The Omni-Americans,* with the former being tagged as "a non-Jewish New York know-it-all . . . trick-typist from Virginia" and the latter "a white Negro," in reference to Mailer's famous 1957 essay.[27] Mailer makes a couple of appearances in *South to a Very Old Place* as well: Early on in the book, Murray ruminates seriously about how an article on the role black mammies played in raising little white Southern boys would help counter the negative view of black matriarchs put forward by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in his 1963 treatise *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*, which was widely embraced by the liberal mainstream at the

time. But in addition, he notes, it might also "help even Norman Mailer to make up his mind as to whether he wants to be a Texan or an Irishman (say, like Big Daddy Pat Moynihan), or maybe he'll settle for being a U.S. Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev after all."[28]

The second mention of Mailer occurs toward the end of the fourth chapter, whose title "Tuskegee" refers to the town and school to which Murray has returned to assess the changes since his last visit. While there he recalls the conversations with a former beloved teacher, then deceased, that he always had after traveling someplace new—the Swiss Alps, "hemingway's spain, and the paris . . . of *The Sun also Rises*"(lowercase in original),[29] or London, Rome, Athens. He imagines the conversation they would have had on this trip South: "among the tidbits that most certainly would have been included this time" would have been the story of Norman Mailer at a recent publishing party "disguised . . . not as a somewhat white Negro or a Brooklyn Texan but as a Brendan Behan Irishman."[30] After describing their brief exchange at the party, Murray moves to his perception that while he has heard that Mailer is "a very nice Brooklyn nice guy," he still "tends to confuse being a swinger with a swaggerer," and "his capers never really suggest Ernest Hemingway as he used to seem so eager to have people think[,] but F. Scott Fitzgerald."[31] Murray then criticizes through his imagined conversation how Mailer's work represents blacks: "*As for what old Norman thinks of us in print, all I can say as of now is that instead of taking off our balls he only wants to relieve us of our brains. He seems to like our balls even to the extent of painting his own black*" (italics in original). And he ends the section—which covers about a page and a half of text—by jumping forward in time to the present, apparently early 1970 when he is back in New York writing, offering what he could have said if the trip South had taken place "a few months later":

> *Did you see that crap old Norman Mailer wrote about us in* Life *Magazine? He writes a whole big fat article defining himself in terms of the zodiac (Aquarius this, Aquarius that and the other) and then turns around and declares that it is black people who are such lunatics that they are all shook up because a white man has put his foot on the moon! Very nice guy that Mailer or as Jimmy Baldwin says "A very sweet guy, really." But is he ever full of adolescent gibberish about us!* [32]

There is an awful lot to unpack in those references to Mailer. First, Murray is clearly signifying on Mailer's "The White Negro," a piece that Mailer was enormously proud of, as he refers to it in *Advertisements for Myself* as "one of the best things I have done."[33] To recap what Mailer does in that essay in terms of representing the black community: His argument is that the posture of the white hipster, "the American existentialist," is derived from

a distinctively black lifestyle, the causes and effects of which he describes thusly: "Hated from outside and therefore hating [themselves]," blacks are disfranchised, psychopathic primitives, "virtually illiterate" and living only in the "enormous present," who are forced into "relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body."[34] And, further, the black man "in his music"—jazz—gives "voice to the character and quality of his existence, to his rage and the infinite variations of joy, lust, languor, growl, cramp, pinch, scream and despair of his orgasm."[35] Hence, Murray's distillation of Mailer's attitude in his first reference to that New Journalist in *South to a Very Old Place*—admiration, even awe, for black men's presumed sexual prowess combined with condescension toward their supposed lack of brains. In Mailer's New Journalism of the 1960s, blacks are not frequently mentioned, but when they are, the characterization put forward in "The White Negro" is perpetuated. An example: In *Armies of the Night*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 and which began as a magazine piece for *Harper's*—in fact it was the whole of the March 1968 issue—Mailer asks, "Was a mad genius buried in every Negro? How fantastic they were at their best—how dim at their worst."[36] This comment not only harkens back to "The White Negro," but also suggests the one-dimensional abstractions of social science surveys that Murray found so disturbing.

Second, unpacking the section on Mailer also brings into relief that Murray has set himself up in the book as Mailer's equal, and perhaps his better, in terms of intellect and writing. Mailer, like Murray, was known to have been a great admirer of Hemingway. The *Life* magazine piece to which Murray refers—actually, it was a three-part series on the Apollo 11 space mission and moon landing that was published between August 1969 and January 1970—uses a quotation from Hemingway's "Second Poem to Mary" as an epigraph. The epigraph was retained when the series was expanded for the book *Of a Fire on the Moon*, which came out later in 1970. So Murray's references to "hemingway's spain and the paris of . . . *The Sun also Rises*" signal he is claiming the man as *his* literary ancestor. But more interesting is the signifying Murray does on Mailer being less like Hemingway and more like F. Scott Fitzgerald—while a very nice guy—which is in part Murray alluding to Mailer's own words in the second installment of the Apollo story in *Life*, published on November 14, 1969. There Mailer notes this about astronaut Michael Collins, the one astronaut on the mission who did not get to walk on the moon: "Indeed, if Collins was later to grow a mustache on the trip back, an act which increased his slight but definite resemblance to the young Hemingway, he had a personal style which owed more to Fitzgerald. It was Fitzgerald, after all, who first suggested that you could become the

nicest man in the world."[37] And so Mailer becomes Murray's Collins by way of Fitzgerald—a very nice guy, competent, yes, but not worthy of a moon landing.

It would have been the third installment of the Apollo series in *Life*, appearing on January 9, 1970, that sealed Mailer's unworthiness for Murray, as it is there that "Aquarius"—the name by which Mailer refers to himself in the third person throughout the series—encounters a black man, a professor at an Ivy League school, who is attending the same moon-landing party as Mailer. The interactions Mailer has with this man, and his reactions to him, are what Murray distills to Mailer "declar[ing] that it is black people who are such lunatics that they are all shook up because a white man has put his foot on the moon."[38] Indeed, Mailer writes, "Yesterday, Whitey with his numbers had taken a first step to the stars, taken it ahead of Black men. How that had to burn in the ducts of this Black man's stomach, in the vats of his liver."[39] It would burn, Mailer argues, because blacks had "distaste for numbers," and by extension technology, because "numbers were abstracted from the senses, numbers made you ignore the taste of the apple for the amount in the box, and so the use of numbers . . . eroded that extrasensory aura" that blacks possessed and which separated them from whites, for blacks "lived with the wonders of magic as the whites lived with technology." Mailer asks, "How many Blacks had made a move or inhibited it because the emanations of the full moon might affect their cause," adding, "Now Whitey had walked the moon, put his foot on it"—and so "[t]he Black professor had cause to drink," in order to drown his sorrows.[40]

As the above indicates, Mailer maintains the separation between blacks and whites he describes in "The White Negro," with all blacks living a life of the senses and the majority of whites—all but the hipsters—mastering the universe. Murray offers yet one more counterstatement of that, for which I return to his first reference to Mailer in *South to a Very Old Place*, where, after suggesting that a positive treatise on the role of black mammies might help Mailer settle his identity crisis, he lists several possible identities Mailer might choose, ending with "a U.S. Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev." With this reference to Levi Yitzchak, Murray uses allusion to yoke relatively contemporary events with his counterstatement. Yitzchak was an eighteenth-century rabbi renowned for his arguments with God that were memorialized in folk songs, especially one called "A din torah mit got," which translates as "a court session with God," and which came to be known as "The Kaddish of Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev." The African American baritone Paul Robeson famously sang this song after World War II through the 1950s, and Leonard Bernstein used it as the basis for his

Kaddish Symphony No. 3, which premiered in 1963.[41] The reference ties Robeson, a black cultural celebrity, really a heroic figure not only for his artistic excellence but also for his social activism and political convictions, to white cultural excellence, which is entwined yet again with black culture, as Bernstein's symphony is noted for its jazz inflections. In other words, the reference becomes a sign of one of Murray's signature arguments: that white and black Americans by way of their culture are vitally connected, rendering American culture and U.S. citizens "inextricably mulatto." To separate black culture from white cultural excellence, as Mailer does in his last Apollo installment and elsewhere, indicates a profound misunderstanding of the country, and especially African Americans.

While the above indicates how Murray at specific points directly takes on Mailer in *South to a Very Old Place*, it is in terms of the book's overall style that he counter-states Wolfe (recall the reference to him as the "trick typist" in *The Omni-Americans*). Wolfe's New Journalism up to the time Murray had finished drafting his book, which the text itself indicates was likely summer 1970, would have allowed Murray to conclude that his treatment of the black community did not help to correct, and in fact reinforced, the prevailing view of blacks as a race apart, or marginalized, from the mainstream. Blacks are window-dressing in "The Pump House Gang," when the La Jolla youths, on a lark, go to the Watts community of Los Angeles during the riot just to see "what was going on,"[41] or they are described, in passing, as society's deviants in "Tom Wolfe's New Book of Etiquette," where he explains, "Unique styles, today, tend to be developed by various marginal, religiously possessed, netherworld, outcast—'pariah'—groups. Such as: teenagers, artists & bohemians (or 'hippies'), Negroes, narcotics users, homosexuals & camp culturati."[43]

When a black man is the focus of one of Wolfe's pieces from the 1960s, as is Cassius Clay in "The Marvelous Mouth," which appeared first in the October 1963 issue of *Esquire* (about a year before he changed his name to Muhammad Ali), he comes off as a caricature, at best exotic, but still one of society's outsiders. Note how Wolfe begins the profile:

> One thing that stuck in my mind, for some reason, was the way that Cassius Clay and his brother, Rudy, and their high-school pal, Tuddie King, and Frankie Tucker, the singer who was opening in Brooklyn, and Cassius' pride of "foxes," Sophia Burton, Dottie, Frenchie, Barbara and the others, and Richie Pittman and "Lou" Little, the football player, and everybody else up there in Cassius' suite on the forty-second floor of the Americana Hotel kept telling time by looking out the panorama window and down at the clock on top of the Paramount Building on Times Square. Everybody had a watch.[44]

What's more, the clock is "on that whacky Twenties-modern polyhedron on top of the Paramount Building,"[45] suggesting the whacky building is matched by the whacky Clay and his entourage. And Clay, even though he is a "phenomenon" wherever he goes, is an outsider to New York, unable to really understand it, Wolfe suggests, because it is "beyond his frame of reference."[46] Furthermore, Clay becomes a caricature by the title "The Marvelous Mouth," making that body part Clay's dominant feature, over something like, say, his intelligence. To be sure, the piece is not intended to be a serious exploration of what makes Cassius Clay tick, or to probe his psyche. Rather, in Wolfean style, it is both to poke some fun at the folks who have the nerve to approach Clay, either out of admiration or out of contempt, and to deflate its subject by inflating some of his traits. Interesting reading, but the light touch that the style demands keeps it solidly in line with mainstream ideas about black folk.

And in the end it is Wolfe's style that Murray would see as limiting what Wolfe could accomplish in his representation of African Americans. One additional piece in which blacks play an important role that may have appeared before Murray had completed his manuscript is "Radical Chic," first published in the June 1970 issue of *New York* magazine. "Radical Chic" features the Black Panthers, who are guests of honor at a fundraiser held in the home of Leonard Bernstein and his wife Felicia and attended by New York's most prominent socialites—Otto Preminger, Jean vanden Heuvel, Gail Lumet, Barbara Walters, Frank and Domna Stanton, and others. The object of Wolfe's satire, the socialites, are practicing a kind of *nostalgie de la boue*, which he translates as "romanticizing of primitive souls."[47] And he claims to have been up to pretty serious business with the piece, citing in the head note for the excerpt he included in *The New Journalism* his goal of "draw[ing] the reader inside the emotional life of the characters."[48] The emotional life he exposes is indeed that of the socialites, an exposure that is facilitated by the presence of the Panthers, who themselves remain distant, stylized objects. As the Panthers arrive, Wolfe describes how the socialites thrill to see them:

> Shoot-outs, revolutions, pictures in *Life* magazine of policemen grabbing Black Panthers like they were Vietcong—somehow it all runs together in the head with the whole thing of how *beautiful* they are. *Sharp as a blade*. The Panther women . . . are so lean, so *lithe*, as they say, with tight pants and Yoruba-style headdresses, almost like turbans, as if they'd stepped out of the pages of *Vogue*, although no doubt *Vogue* got it from them.[49]

Wolfe is of course poking fun at the socialites's response to the Panthers's

presence, but that is the only representation of the Panthers available to the reader. So thoroughgoing is Wolfe's style that what a reader takes away from the discourse offered by Don Cox, Field Marshal of the Black Panthers—and he is quoted extensively in the piece—is not the message he brings but rather his tendency to pepper his speech liberally with "see" and "you know," verbal tics that the Radical Chic love, we learn, because "[t]hey are so, somehow . . . *black* . . . so *funky* . . . so metrical. . . ."[50] The Panthers remain, quite literally, imprisoned within Wolfe's style, located at an objectified and alienating distance, as blacks so often had been in white society.

But since style is, according to Murray, a culture's highest achievement, it's not the fact of stylization that is the problem with Wolfe's treatment of blacks, but rather the kind of stylization. So, embracing the New Journalism's—and particularly Tom Wolfe's—emphasis on style, Murray cultivates style in *South to a Very Old Place* as a metaphoric means to counter-state how "the Negro" is represented as a disfranchised outsider by both the mainstream press and the New Journalism of the 1960s into 1970. And his model is jazz, but not the jazz of Mailer's imagining, which is a product of a black lifestyle defined by violence and raw orgasm, but rather the elegant and sophisticated music of Duke Ellington. A "true jazz composer,"[51] Ellington's sound is by turns classical and vernacular, extravagant and controlled, playful and serious—and quintessentially American, according to Murray,[52] as are U.S. blacks. Ellington "wrote music of every kind"—"pop songs and blues; ballets and opera; theater, film, and television scores"[53]—but in part what made him so American, Murray explains, are the "devices" he used to structure his music: Ellington "proceeded not in terms of the convention of exposition, development, and recapitulation, but almost always in terms of vamps (when not coming on like gangbusters), riffs, breaks, choruses of various kinds, such as ensemble, solo, call and response, through chases and bar tradings to outchoruses and tags."[54] And so Murray's "nonfiction novel" seeks to capture that Ellingtonian sound in the structure of the book and in the rhythm and diction of his prose.

In terms of structure, *South to a Very Old Place* consists of a Prologue, six chapters, and an Epilogue—or a vamp, which is the introduction to a jazz tune, generally improvised; six choruses; and an outchorus. The vamp is Murray musing on the meaning of home—and how a transplanted black Southerner living in New York gets from midtown Manhattan home to Harlem. And, of course, his very first words about this signal his engagement with Ellington: "You can take the 'A' train. . . ."[55] recalling one of Ellington's signature pieces, "Take the A Train." The chapters, or choruses, contain solos (often Murray's musings as he meets with such journalists as Yoder,

Joe Cummings of *Newsweek*, and Hodding Carter II of the *Delta Democrat-Times*), call-and-response passages (recalled conversations from the past or with the writers he is visiting), and even ensemble playing (the discourse of the black Mobilians he meets with in Chapter Five, who start out soloing but end up sounding as if their voices are joined, as Murray leads this "band" primarily by "listen[ing] as if from the piano"[56]). And the outchorus allows Murray to sum up his goals for the book: to take the reader not only to the South to see how it has changed from before the Civil Rights Movement to after its heyday, but also to show how a return home brings back "*the promises that exact the haze-blue adventuresomeness from the brown-skinned hometown boy in us all*" (italics in original).[57] The jazz form reinforces not the alienation of black Americans from the mainstream but rather argues for their centrality to it.

But it is in the rhythm and diction of his prose that Murray's homage to Ellington takes flight especially and provides a stylistic alternative to Wolfe. It helps to define Murray himself as hip, urbane, well educated, yet downhome. Suggesting Ellington, the prose is extravagant but controlled, by turns vernacular and learned. One example is when he thinks about how Jonathan Daniels of the *Raleigh News and Observer* offers a model more mainstream journalists would do well to adopt:

> What you actually find yourself thinking is: *old young* Jo-naythan, son of old Joseefus, the old time dimly remembered Tarheel Editor of my young manhood: old *forever young* Jo-naythan, forever young and forever full of piss and vinegar, who wrote such books as *A Southerner Discovers the South* and *A Southerner Discovers New England* as if with the typewriter propped against the dashboard, who got maybe as close to F.D.R. as Jack Burden was to the Boss in *All the King's Men* (up there in the White House with his banker's glasses and his seed- and feed-store facts and figures and his courthouse square yarns which he knew how to spin with exactly the right contemporary Southern mixture of inky-fingered journalistic hipness and immediacy and Chapel Hill grass roots—not without the expected overtones of ante-bellum book learning and phrase turning to be sure).[58]

In that passage, we see Ellingtonian playfulness with the early repetition of "old" four times—the first two times in reference to Daniels himself, then the third time in reference to Murray's memory of the era, and the fourth returning to the first mention of Daniels with the addition of "forever"—all together suggesting a condensed version of the AABA structure of a blues ballad. And related to Ellington's propensity to take everyday—even clichéd—sounds and put them in the context of his own ambitious sound, Murray takes in this passage about Daniels the clichéd language—"forever young," "piss and vinegar"—and sets it in the context of serious work:

Daniels's books; Robert Penn Warren's masterpiece, *All the King's Men*. For both Ellington and Murray, the goal for that kind of move is to connect the vernacular with "high art." And, finally, the last parenthetical is a marvelous brief solo recalling perhaps the sound of Johnny Hodges, the Ellington band alto saxophonist known for his romanticism, as Murray builds a very long phrase with "and" and "which" and no punctuation, asking us to read it without a break up until the one dash, after which he adds a jazz-like tag and Ellingtonian playful wink: "not without the expected overtones of ante-bellum book learning and phrase turning to be sure."

But perhaps it is when Murray recreates the dialogue of the black Mobilians as they converse about that Southern politician who had recently exited the White House that his prose most swings and struts à la Ellington:

> "Lyndon Johnson. Lyndon Johnson. Old Lyndon Johnson. They can call him everything but a child of God as long as you please and I still say old Lyndon Johnson, faults and all. They talking about what they talking about and I'm talking about what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the same thing I always been talking about. I'm talking about us, and I say old Lyndon Johnson is the one that brought more government benefits to help us out than all the rest of them up there put together all the way back through old Abe Lincoln."[59]

In these lines, we see Murray building the tune, starting with the first chorus of "Lyndon Johnson"—simple, punctuated lines that are repeated several times with an interlude and then a return to "I still say old Lyndon Johnson." Then a new chorus begins with the refrain of "talking," which incorporates a kind of call-and-response: "they talking," "I'm talking." Next the tune returns to the subject of that talking, "old Lyndon Johnson," and ends with a flourish, and, as in the previous example, there is no internal punctuation so that the words can build to a crescendo for the outchorus: who is Lyndon Johnson? He's "the one that brought more government benefits to help us out than all the rest of them up there put together all the way back through Abe Lincoln." In this rendering of a black Mobilian's take on Lyndon Johnson, the goal of Murray's stylization comes into clear focus: to provide a picture of the black community playing with language to be sure, but playing to make a point—that African Americans are dynamic, positive, wise, and knowing. Like Ellington. Like Murray himself. And unlike anything by Mailer or Wolfe.

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Endnotes

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[16] Albert Murray, *South to a Very Old Place* (1971; repr., New York: Random House, 1991), 3.

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[25] Murray, *South to a Very Old Place*, 58.

[26] Murray, *The Omni-Americans*, 54–55.

[27] Murray, *The Omni-Americans*, 101.

[28] Murray, *South to a Very Old Place*, 54.

[29] Murray, *South to a Very Old Place*, 127.

[30] Murray, *South to a Very Old Place*, 129.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Murray, *South to a Very Old Place*, 130.

[33] Norman Mailer, "Sixth Advertisement for myself," in *Advertisements for Myself* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959), 335.

[34] Norman Mailer, "The White Negro," in *Advertisements for Myself*, 348, 357, 341. Mailer makes explicit his view that blacks are psychopathic, claiming that it is "no accident that psychopathy is most prevalent with the Negro" immediately before explaining how hatred imposed from the outside and then internalized forces blacks into a "moral wilderness."

[35] Mailer, "The White Negro," 341.

[36] Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night* (1968; repr., New York: Signet, 1968), 134.

[37] Norman Mailer, "The Psychology of Astronauts," *Life*, 14 November 1969, 26.

[38] Norman Mailer, "A Dream of the Future's Face," *Life*, 9 January 1970, 130.

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[56] Murray, *South to a Very Old Place*, 172.
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The Chudnovsky Case: How Literary Journalism Can Open the "Black Box" of Science

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Literary journalism offers an important way for explaining the complexity of the scientific world to a lay audience.

In Bruno Latour's *Science in Action*, the French sociologist of science examines *The Soul of a New Machine* by literary journalist Tracy Kidder, exploring how it makes comprehensible the complexities of science to the lay reader. It is not difficult to see why Kidder provided an exemplar. Because for Latour, one way—and to him a better way—to understand science, as well as discuss it, is to understand how it is "made," e.g., its methods, the evolution of a theory across the years, the negotiations to gather funds for research, in other words, to focus on the various parts and processes that go into its making:

> In spite of the rich, confusing, ambiguous and fascinating picture that is thus revealed, surprisingly few people have penetrated from the outside the inner workings of science and technology, and then got out of it to explain to the outsider how it all works. . . . Other people talk about science, its solidity, its foundation, its development or its dangers; unfortunately, almost none of them are interested in science in the making. They shy away from the disorderly mixture revealed by science in action and prefer the orderly pattern of scientific method and rationality.[1]

The statement, with its emphasis on the "making" of science, is useful for analyzing the following:

> David dialed a mail-order house in Nevada that here will be called Searchlight Computers. He said loudly, in a thick Russian accent, "Hi, Searchlight. I need a fifteen-forty controller. . . . No! No! No! I don't need anything else! Just the controller! Just a naked unit! Naked! How much you charge?. . . Two hundred and fifty-seven dollars?"
>
> Gregory glanced at his brother and shrugged. "Eh."
>
> "Look, Searchlight, can you ship it to me Federal Express? For tomorrow morning. How much?. . . Thirty-nine dollars for Fed Ex? Come on! What about afternoon delivery? . . . Twenty-nine dollars before 3 p.m.? Relax. What is your name?. . . Bob. Fine. O.K. So it's two hundred and fifty-seven dollars plus twenty-nine dollars for Federal Express?"
>
> "Twenty-nine dollars for Fed Ex!" Gregory burst out. "It should be fifteen." . . .
>
> "I'm going to call A.K.," he said. "Hi, A.K., this is David Chudnovsky, calling from New York. A.K., I need another controller, like the one you sent. Can you send it today Fed Ex?. . . How much you charge?. . . Naked! I want a naked unit! Not in a shoebox, nothing!"
>
> A rhythmic clicking sound came from one of the disk drives. Gregory remarked to me, "We are calculating pi right now."
>
> "Do you want my MasterCard? Look, it's really imperative that I get my unit tomorrow. A.K., please, I really need my unit bad." David hung up the telephone and sighed. "This is what has happened to a pure mathematician."[2]

The excerpt shows a revealing scene of the purchase of components for the supercomputer "m zero," constructed by the Chudnovsky brothers. By means of partial dialogue, we follow what David Chudnovsky says on the telephone and his brother Gregory's commentaries. In other words, the author shows the reader how the equipment was attained and the preoccupations involved: the Chudnovskys were urging for the quick delivery of the unit, but were short of money; alternative plans and bargaining were frequent and necessary survival measures to them, which ultimately reveal the making of science.

In line with Latour, our hypothesis is that the use of narrative resources to describe research and development processes constitutes a journalistic model that, while dissonant from the conventional, mainstream models of journalism, is one that operates under distinct principles that make science more accessible to the layperson. For that reason it should be encouraged. Indeed, the issue is urgent, given that we live in an ever-evolving world made more complex by science. If the worlds of science and the layperson are to

understand one another, then literary journalism provides an exceptionally promising means for doing so.

Based on the Latourian contraposition between science as a metaphorically inaccessible "black box" as opposed to an accessible science-in-the-making—i.e., a never-ending process whose conclusions are socially influenced and non-definitive—we discuss in this examination the role of literary journalism as a means for the public communication of science by analyzing two articles that were published in the *New Yorker* magazine, "The Mountains of Pi" and "Capturing the Unicorn," both written by Richard Preston, author of the excerpt cited above.

We will do so by examining, first, the challenges posed by explaining science to the lay reader, and then how the reader is engaged by the literary that takes place in the humanizing of the scientific processes, the subjects, and the reporter.

Of all human occupations, scientific research and technological development are among those that are undoubtedly the least accessible to the layperson—either because of a large gap between human culture, art included, and the so-called hard sciences, as pointed out by C. P. Snow,[3] or because its products and postulations are presented to the public deprived from vestiges of its construction.

Under the banner of a "science culture," there is a set of educational and communication practices that seek to reintegrate science into the public's common culture in the hope that it will become less alien. But as Jean Marc Lévy-Leblond points out, such efforts will be insufficient as long as non-scientists are still treated as disengaged lay people, who, as part of common practice, are just supplied with scientific information but not treated as recipients with an equal credibility level to confront science or try to have influence over it.[4] According to a "deficit model," the main objective of such a reintegration would be a kind of literacy by providing the public with an array of accessible knowledge, which would help them in understanding and accepting scientific lore.[5] Such a model also assumes that journalists involved in its activities are translators of science to the public, adapting its difficult language to a more palatable and even humorous one, instead of reporting scientific objectives and achievements.

More usually journalism loses its investigative logic by "extending the red carpet . . . under the feet of the scientist."[6] In a reverential way, the scientist—or astronaut, physician, engineer—is presented as the voice of lore, an unquestionable information source, not as a social agent whose affirmations and positions must be contested, verified, and compared to those of other individuals, as Silvio Funtowicz and Jerome Ravetz suggest

is necessary.[7] There are cases in which there is a high degree of uncertainty on the part of the reading public in relation to the methods of science, or where the non-scientific community is involved in a direct or indirect way because of its interests or the consequences of the research—e.g., genetic engineering, plant improvement, or environment-changing research. Thus, for these critics science should integrate into its reviews an "extended peer community," composed by both scientists and interested laypeople, that would have influence over scientific decisions—an attitude that journalists may also emulate in their reporting.

Among the communication models ranked by Jane Gregory and Steve Miller,[8] we understand that literary journalism is at least half way between the top-down diffusion model (in which at the top the authority of a scientist's voice is transmitted directly down to the "lay" public at the bottom, who are presumably unaware of scientific facts), and the web model (in which communicators and scientists interact in a complex and inter-referential way). Nearer to the web model, literary journalism may use digressions in time and space, and present non-academic knowledge or non-predominant points of view as counterpoints or even as the main voice of a text. Thus, literary journalism presents a change in what the news values of reporting science and technology have so often been, and would more fully engage scientific sources who are treated like characters with whom the lay reader may identify himself, experiencing their challenges, losses, and triumphs. Thus, facts from the life stories of scientists and non-scientists involved or affected by the research become more important than those involving simply end results of their work in what Gregory and Miller characterize as scientific "facticity":

> 'Facticity' is a good news value for science. Simply from the point of view of news style, news stories require six facts: who, what, where, when, why and how. Science can usually supply these. A good story needs facts; readers enjoy facts—but they have to be facts that are meaningful, or relevant, or consonant.[9]

Scientific facts, then, that are not meaningful, relevant, or consonant are only cold, inaccessible facts—or the inscrutable "black box" of science. This is where the "literary" comes in.

The richly textured rhetoric of stories like those of Preston are yet to be seen in our country, Brazil. Cristina Santos and Simone Bortoliero[10] have noted that science news in Brazil is focused on "immediate aspects,"[11] confirming Warren Burkett's point that journalism "prefers established facts" to science-in-the-making.[12] Having adopted a positivist-empiricist line of thought, the media and more specifically journalism in the conventional

model perpetuate and engage in the so-called "results mythology."[13] Results mythology means that science lore—as well as science journalism—places the emphasis on the end results, and not on *how,* or the process by which the scientist got there: who were the people who've done the work, their background, the steps they took, their difficulties and challenges, their competitors, the experiments that did not work, politics, and policy, etc. The problem, of course, is that the results mythology interferes with the explanation of scientific information. A number of problems derive from the results mythology. To speak of research, development, and innovation under the exclusive point of view of the scientific end product, the image of the reduced, impenetrable science arises: if there is no information on how it came to be, science, as Latour understands it, is still inaccessible.

Brazilian reporters have paradigms that came from the North American model based on the news lead and inverted pyramid structure, which emerged by the end of the nineteenth century influenced by the rise of the scientific spirit and the belief in scientific objectivity. The notion according to which journalism, because it is believed to be inherently scientific,[14] has the mission of investigating and presenting "truth" in an independent and neutral manner, ostensibly based on the empiricist method, makes science seem inherently a certification of such a truth. In news and features that have science as a main theme and focus, the problem deepens as the affirmations and actions of a scientific rhetoric are transferred to the public in a one-way direction. Because it is one way, such accounts are rarely contested or debated by the lay reader, giving birth to "science advertising,"[15] instead of an engaging humanizing view that journalism should emphasize.

By thinking of literary journalism as a communication model that differs from conventional, mainstream journalism, we can evaluate the conditions that it offers for the public communication of science and confirm if those are in fact improved in a narrative form. We may assume that the literary quality of the text is reflected not only in metaphors and poetic writing, but also in an expanded register of reality in which can be found, for example, dialogue, flashbacks, digressions—which cumulatively are called the "expansion" principle.[16] Such techniques are useful when writing on science, as they help to unveil the background of scientists and their research. To Franco Moretti,[17] such "filling" instruments[18] were the greatest contribution to literature by nineteenth-century realism, the movement that helped so much to bring the illusion of ordinary life to literary composition.

Because narrative is potentially so many layered, other factors can also be detected in the overall process of humanization that show the sources

as human beings who have their own triumphs and defeats, delights and anxieties, just by being depicted as characters who perform actions in a narrative frame—which Tom Wolfe[19] summarizes as constituted by the use of dialogue, scene-by-scene construction (the sequence of the scenes would constitute a plot), points of view, and description of "status details." These elements, he continues, come from social realism—whose novelty was to employ them in the portrayal of real people-based characters. Yet, they are at least as old as Homer's epics. The plot itself, as though it could follow many different paths, is fundamentally structured in the presentation of characters and the scenes,[20] some complication which would add tension to the narrative, a climax that would show the highest point of the complication, and then its resolution, which leads to the ending of the story. In other words, we are discussing the basic tropes and tools of telling a story whose purpose is to provide illumination for the audience, an ambition, once again, as old as the shamans who told stories around the fire in the pre-history of the Amazonian jungles, among other places. These, we would suggest, would also include the simultaneous occurrence or coincidence of events, the stakes at risk and competition, failures, the enjoyable moments, and parallel facts of the scientific enterprise involved in both stories. The result is a multilayered complexity long used by the storyteller to mimic the nature of reality, as opposed to the simplistic and reductionist style of conventional factual or objective journalism.

To understand that kind of complexity, this analysis will examine three kinds of humanizing—the attempt to share the experiences of other subjectivities—according to rhetorical techniques associated with literary realism. These are humanization of scientific processes, humanization of the characters, and the humanization of the reporter. It should be emphasized, however, that these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, they are often found intertwined to make for a complex—and literary—reading.

THE CHUDNOVSKYS

Both articles analyzed here, "The Mountains of Pi" and "Capturing the Unicorn," were published in the American magazine *The New Yorker*, respectively on March 2, 1992, and April 11, 2005. They complement each other by dealing with the same characters, Russian mathematicians David and Gregory Chudnovsky. In the first piece, author Preston profiles the Chudnovsky brothers, who have constructed the supercomputer m zero for the purpose of calculating the number π up to two billion digits. The article examines such factors as the mathematical and computational search for the biggest precision of π, and the relationship of the number with humankind throughout history. Moreover, and important to the purposes of this

examination, the article explores the difficult process of construction and maintenance of the computer, and at the same time, the mathematicians not only as scientists but also as human beings.

"Capturing the Unicorn" functions as a sequel to "The Mountains of Pi." In it, Preston tells us how the Chudnovsky brothers, now working at the Institute for Mathematics and Advanced Supercomputing (IMAS), Polytechnic University of New York, apply computational mathematics in order to resolve problems in the digitalization of a set of Medieval tapestries for the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art; there remains the focus on humanization, while narrating the context and the stages of the capture and digital restoration of the images.

It should be noted that the procedures for the humanization of science and scientists are more present in "The Mountains of Pi," presented as a profile of the Chudnovsky mathematicians, while "Capturing the Unicorn" focuses on the description of the processes for the recovery of the tapestries. Nonetheless, the same kinds of humanizing strategies are at work in each.

The reason Preston's works are consonant to the current moment of literary journalism is that like much of literary journalism they explore what mainstream conventional journalism generally does not. While the latter routinely reports on politics, sports, and even science as reflected in the traditional top-down diffusion model, the Chudnovskys's research would hardly find prominence in newspapers, according to conventional news values: the calculation of π, or even the digital work on the Unicorn tapestries, does not offer direct, easily communicated results to society according to conventional models of journalism that require concise and specific prescriptions for writing. The result, all too often, is a simple and simplistic rhetoric inadequate to the task of revealing the complexities of science to the lay reader.

The narrative model presents a powerful rhetorical resource that may produce what Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer[21] describe as a "virtual testimony," i.e., a depiction which "by means of a detailed description of equipment and experimental results, allowed its readers to imagine the experiences lived and to become themselves virtual witnesses of it."[22] This agrees with Latour's statement that "to put the academic paper aside and go to a laboratory equals abandoning an armory of rhetorical resources and go for a set of new [rhetorical] resources planned with the objective to offer to literature a more powerful instrument: visual exposition."[23] Thus, the actions depicted are no longer situated in an alien dimension, an Olympus of lore. The scientist becomes a common, even banal, person, whose procedures of work and way of life are revealed by the reporter. This was the premise behind the New Journalism to Tom Wolfe, "that rather elementary and

joyous ambition to show the reader *real life*—'Come here! Look! This is the way people live these days! There are the things they do!'"[24]. Or, as Norman Sims notes:

> Reporting on the lives of people at work, in love, going about the normal rounds of life, they confirm that the crucial moments of everyday life contain great drama and substance. Rather than hanging around the edges of powerful institutions, literary journalists attempt to penetrate the cultures that make institutions work.[25]

The "powerful institution" here is the inaccessible black box of science. By humanizing, what we mean, then, is the achieving through such linguistic illusion a virtual testimony in which readers imaginatively feel they participate, or which they participate in vicariously. Alan Trachtenberg called it "an exchange of subjectivities"[26] in his discussion of the literary journalism of the American writer Stephen Crane in which the reporter and reader understand someone else's subjectivity as if they were trading places with them.

HUMANIZING SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

To achieve a virtual testimony on scientific process in the Preston stories, two of literary journalism's main resources, scene and dialogue, are utilized. By using them, the reader can vicariously watch researchers in action, interacting with themselves or with the reporter/narrator, in order to testify to the process of making science. For example:

> Gregory Volfovich Chudnovsky recently built a supercomputer in his apartment from mail-order parts. Gregory Chudnovsky is a number theorist. His apartment is situated near the top floor of a run-down building on the West Side of Manhattan, in a neighborhood near Columbia University. Not long ago, a human corpse was found dumped at the end of the block. The world's most powerful supercomputers include the Cray Y-MP C90, the Thinking Machines CM-5, the Hitachi S-820/80, the nCube, the Fujitsu parallel machine, the Kendall Square Research parallel machine, the nec SX-3, the Touchstone Delta, and Gregory Chudnovsky's apartment. The apartment seems to be a kind of container for the supercomputer at least as much as it is a container for people.[27]

This is the opening to "The Mountains of Pi." Aside from the obvious exposition of the main subject (the construction of the computer m zero), it contains perhaps more importantly a descriptive picture of the apartment where the computer was constructed, and a description of violence in the surrounding New York neighborhood that provides a backdrop for the Chudnovskys's science in the making. The violence serves as ironic counterpoint to the high technology world of the subject. Similarly, the parts

bought via FedEx, discussed earlier, provide further ironic counterpoint to the sophisticated scientific nature of the subject. Such ironies are important because they reveal just how lo-tech the making of science can be, or how ironically banal and even macabre are the surroundings in which such science takes place. Thus we begin to detect the accumulation of literary layers.

Such contrasts, mingling complexity with ordinary everyday experiences readers can expect to be knowledgeable about, continue:

> "And we have to build our machine because we have—"
>
> "No money," Gregory said. "When people let us use their computer, it's always done as a kindness." He grinned and pinched his finger and thumb together. "They say, 'You can use it as long as nobody complains.'"[28]

Throughout the narrative, intellectual and technological sophistication will always be in ironic counterpoint to the limited circumstances of the Chudnovskys. This is the stage where "science-in-the-making" is enacted, or human endeavor as process.

Similarly, science-in-the-making by means of *descriptive process* is detected in "Capturing the Unicorn": Before introducing the Chudnovskys in the narrative, Preston describes the work of the Metropolitan Museum of Art employees who attempt to photographically digitalize the images of the medieval tapestries, which portray the capture of a unicorn, only later to find that the images show a distorted tapestry. The result is that the Chudnovsky brothers are asked if they could find a solution by means of computation and applied mathematics:

> To make a digital image of the Unicorn tapestries was one of the most difficult assignments that [the manager of the photography studio at the Met, Barbara] Bridgers had ever had. She put together a team to do it, bringing in two consultants, Scott Geffert and Howard Goldstein, and two of the Met's photographers, Joseph Coscia, Jr., and Oi-Cheong Lee. They built a giant metal scaffolding inside the wet lab, and mounted on it a Leica digital camera, which looked down at the floor. The photographers were forbidden to touch the tapestries; Kathrin Colburn and her team laid each one [of the tapestries] down, underneath the scaffold, on a plastic sheet. Then the photographers began shooting. The camera had a narrow view; it could photograph only one three-by-three-foot section of tapestry at a time. The photographers took overlapping pictures, moving the camera on skateboard wheels on the scaffolding. Each photograph was a tile that would be used to make a complete, seamless mosaic of each tapestry.[29]

Such a narrative discloses, as narratives must, stages of the work the reader can follow as "science-in-the-making." It notes the potential risks, such as importance of not touching the fragile tapestries. Readers vicariously

become a part of those risks—following, for example, the progress of the skateboard wheels to which a Leica camera [the camera itself adding still another resonant layer considering that Leicas are widely regarded as some of the most sophisticated cameras in the world] is attached, and thus they follow the drama of the story. The reader also understands the importance of taking pictures of smaller "tiles" for the purpose of getting better photographic resolution.

Another method used in the disclosure of humanized science is when David Chudnovsky loses a bag of CDs containing digital images of one of the tapestries. In other words, readers become part of a crisis stage—or developmental action—in the narrative.

> David took the subway back to Brooklyn, stopping off at a supermarket to buy some fruit. In the lab, he put down his things, and Gregory began going through them. "Where are the rest of the CDs?" he asked David. One of the Metropolitan Museum bags was missing.
>
> "My God! I left it on the subway," David said.
>
> Half the Unicorn tapestries could have been anywhere on the B.M.T. They began frantically calling the subway's lost and found. "Naturally, there was no answer," Gregory recalled.
>
> David retraced his route. He found the Met bag sitting under the lettuce bin at the supermarket. Apart from being slightly misted, the CDs were O.K.[30]

Thus, one can point out that contingency, of which it can be expected that all human beings have had the occasion to experience, can also play a role—in this case a very dramatic role—for science-in-the-making. We are watching, then, a scientific researcher who is imperfect and incautious just as all human beings can be imperfect and incautious. As Latour notes, "to understand what facts and machines are is equal to understanding who people are. One who is able to describe the controlling elements that had been gathered will understand the groups that are controlled."[31] This is what readers can relate to because to understand the factors that impose limits on the development of scientific activities allows for understanding why they happen in certain ways.

HUMANIZING THE SCIENTIST

If one of the main barriers between the scientific sphere and common culture is the distant image that "lay" people have of researchers,[32] it is necessary to challenge the mythology that somehow scientists are supermen. It is certainly suggested in the example above about the lost CDs because it reveals how David, while looking at lettuce, is absentminded. In other words, it can be accomplished by focusing on scientists as people of complex

composition, thus opening another type of black box and disclosing who such men are, how they behave among themselves and their families, if they have illnesses, glories, dishonors, what cheers them up or infuriates them, if they have altruistic or egoistic interests; in other words, what makes them complex humans to which readers—who are also complex humans—can relate? Again, this recalls Wolfe's and Sims's prescriptions for invoking social realism. Such is the case with Gregory Chudnovsky in the following character description:

> Gregory Chudnovsky is thirty-nine years old, and he has a spare frame and a bony, handsome face. He has a long beard, streaked with gray, and dark, unruly hair, a wide forehead, and wide-spaced brown eyes. He walks in a slow, dragging shuffle, leaning on a bentwood cane, while his brother, David, typically holds him under one arm, to prevent him from toppling over. He has severe myasthenia gravis, an auto-immune disorder of the muscles. The symptoms, in his case, are muscular weakness and difficulty in breathing. "I have to lie in bed most of the time," Gregory once told me. . . . He spends his days sitting or lying on a bed heaped with pillows, in a bedroom down the hall from the room that houses the supercomputer.[33]

In describing the characters, we have characterization of the kind so often associated with traditional fiction except that it is not fiction; the reader has an image of Gregory Chudnovsky—a virtual testimony—and can take notice of the ironic contrast between his scientific sophistication and his relation with his immediate environment. The environment reveals more about him when he is in the presence of his daughter.

> Gregory Chudnovsky was half lying on the couch, in his stocking feet, his body extended, facing the figure of Melancholy [Albrecht Dürer's engraving]. His shoes, which were tucked inside surgical booties, had been left on the floor. He wore jeans and a soft leather jacket, and he seemed relaxed. Christine and Marian, who is five, were there. Marian was chattering and running around the lab happily. The effect of the child circling over her father's swirling equations was slightly vertiginous.[34]

The incongruity of the five-year-old child with the remote and sophisticated scientist is, of course, ironic, if not paradoxical. But it's an incongruity that must humanize the scientist. After all, he is also a parent, and that is something much of an adult population can relate to.

Moreover, Preston discloses some of the family dynamics. With an ill brother, an aged mother, and the supercomputer, we find that all require special care and constant maintenance: "David spends his days

in Gregory's apartment, taking care of his brother, their mother, and m zero."[35] The equivalent might be Einstein taking care of his mother when she was ill, feeding her chicken soup perhaps while she had a cold, an image one does not normally associate with such an esteemed scientist.

In another example, "Gregory's bedroom is filled with paper; it contains at least a ton of paper. He calls the place his junk yard. The room faces east, and would be full of sunlight in the morning if he ever raised the shades, but he keeps them lowered, because light hurts his eyes."[36] The example serves two purposes. First, it reveals the vulnerability of the scientist because of his eye problems. Second, the room's description provides Wolfean status detail because scientific activity results in accumulations of seemingly endless volumes of paper. The "junk yard" metaphor is still another reflection of the man Gregory Chudnovsky.

We also see a rapprochement between "m zero" and Gregory Chudnovsky in which both, as characters, share some things in common: To remain relatively healthy, both must be kept in a closed environment and, due to financial limitations, not an acclimatized one, but a hot, sultry, dark, claustrophobic one:

> Waste heat permeates Gregory's apartment, and the room that contains m zero climbs to a hundred degrees Fahrenheit in summer. The brothers keep the apartment's lights turned off as much as possible. If they switched on too many lights while m zero was running, they might blow the apartment's wiring. Gregory can't breathe city air without developing lung trouble, so he keeps the apartment's windows closed all the time, with air-conditioners running in them during the summer, but that doesn't seem to reduce the heat, and as the temperature rises inside the apartment the place can smell of cooking circuit boards, a sign that m zero is not well . . . . The building superintendent doesn't know that the Chudnovsky brothers have been using a supercomputer in Gregory's apartment, and the brothers haven't expressed an eagerness to tell him.[37]

Not only do the brothers not tell the building superintendent, they hide from him that m zero is installed there because the supercomputer's demand for energy could pose a wiring risk. Thus the ethically suspect behavior reveals just how all too human they are. After all, how many people have not engaged in such lapses in the interests of what they believed was a more important cause? Such an awareness that science and scientists's acts might bring social risks is something any reader can relate to. After all, who has never experienced a power outage?

Such details also reveal the scientists's passion for what they do. And passion, of course, is a human impulse: "To them, numbers are more

beautiful, more nearly perfect, possibly more complicated, and arguably more real than anything in the world of physical matter."[38] From there can be deduced the absence of a necessity for finding practical purposes in research; what moves them on is not only scientific curiosity but more broadly human curiosity. Who has never had a passion in life that was not "more beautiful, more nearly perfect, possibly more complicated, and arguably more real" than anything else, whether a member of the opposite sex, a child's love for a kitten or puppy, or an old man's passion for playing chess, or restoring antique cars, or feeding pigeons?

As noted, even technology—the result of human ambition, passion, and sometimes hubris—is humanized, or personified, and personification is an ancient literary strategy at least as old as the Greek poet Homer when he described the "rosy fingers of dawn" that generations of university students had to study in *The Odyssey*. M zero is personified in the following: "Once again, pi has demonstrated its ability to give a supercomputer a heart attack."[39] It runs the risk of ill health like its master Gregory, and, as noted earlier, it is part of the family. Treating it as a character—personifying it—has humanized it in such a way that it is less complex for the reader to understand. The heart attack metaphor makes it less "frightful," equalizing it to humans in regards to human fragility.

Pi, which exists only as an abstraction, is personified as well. As Gregory Chudnovsky observes, Pi looks "monstrous" to him, and he characterizes as "gibberish" the results of its calculation. "We know absolutely *nothing* about pi," he declared from his bed. "What the hell does it mean? The definition of pi is really very simple—it's just the ratio of the circumference to the diameter—but the complexity of the sequence it spits out in digits is really unbelievable. We have a sequence of digits that looks like gibberish."[40] And it is of course humans who engage in the nonsensical language of gibberish. Moreover, because the creature is monstrous, Gregory sees the science he is producing as something frightful. This raises the question: Won't lay readers also feel that haunting feeling before what is still inexplicable? Herein is what joins Gregory and readers. π is an incognita for *both* readers and scientists: by identifying ourselves with them and sharing their amazement, a further mutual humanization is achieved.

THE HUMANIZATION OF THE REPORTER

In both articles, Preston is not a mere narrator-observer, but a participant in the subjects's lives, whose presence instigates and makes them react to it. For example:

> Gregory said, "Our knowledge of pi was barely in the millions of digits—"

> "We need many billions of digits," David said. "Even a billion digits is a drop in the bucket. Would you like a Coca-Cola?" He went into the kitchen and there was a horrible crash. "Never mind, I broke a glass," he called. "Look, it's not a problem." He came out of the kitchen carrying a glass of Coca-Cola on a tray, with a paper napkin under the glass, and as he handed it to me he urged me to hold it tightly, because if a Coca-Cola spilled into—He didn't want to think about it; it would set back the project by months.[41]

Instead of "editing" the dialogue and giving it an uninterrupted logical sequence—discussion concerning the need of calculating π with more and more digits—Preston shows us how being offered a soda to himself intervenes with the interview and modifies the scenery and its characters. In effect, we see again ironic contrast as the almighty and "monstrous" mathematical equation π has to compete with Coca-Cola and a glass breaking for the attention of the reader. Symbolically, the almighty and the monstrous have been reduced to a commonplace, a banality that anyone can understand. And this, all because of the unintended intervention described by the narrator.

Another example of Preston's involvement is presented in "Capturing the Unicorn" when he takes his family to the Chudnovskys's laboratory at IMAS. Everyone there must wear boots in order not to damage the floor; besides the risk of intervening in the environment if the rules are not followed, there is the involvement of the reporter with his sources because their respective families are visiting each other.

Certainly one of the most effective instances of the humanization of the reporter is when the roles are reversed and Preston finds himself the interviewee. This comes as close to a true "exchange of subjectivities," again as Trachtenberg characterized it, as one can expect:

> I asked the brothers when they planned to build their supercomputer.
>
> They burst out laughing. "You are sitting inside it!" David roared.
>
> "Tell us how a supercomputer should look," Gregory said.
>
> I started to describe a Cray to the brothers.
>
> David turned to his brother and said, "The interviewer answers our questions. It's Pirandello! The interviewer becomes a person in the story." David turned to me and said, "The problem is, you should change your thinking. If I were to put inside this Cray a chopped-meat machine, you wouldn't know it was a meat chopper."[42]

As observed by David Chudnovsky, we have a Pirandellic moment here: Just as characters that leave paper-life to assume an independent role in

Six Characters in Search of an Author, by Luigi Pirandello, here the observer's opinions are disclosed and contested by the interviewed. Acting as a character also subject to verification and review, Preston turns his journalistic discourse into an acknowledgment of his own imperfect humanity. Fundamentally, he is non-authoritarian, and the subjects of the article, the author, and vicariously the readers, are all engaged in a discussion as equals, thus making this a communal or shared narrative.

Moreover, at the end of "Capturing the Unicorn," Preston revisits the Unicorn tapestries at the museum. Here, once again, the journalist participates, and in doing so the reader who has come to accept Preston as part of the story becomes part of it, too. They become, in effect, co-equals. In this instance, Preston expresses his admiration for the original fabric tapestries, considering them more interesting and emotionally provocative in three-dimensional form than in the digital version, even though the original was reproduced inch by inch. His is, then, a return journey from the lofty considerations of science to the phenomenal or material world with which the lay reader is more familiar:

> One day, I went to see the Unicorn tapestries in the physical universe, as distinct from the universe of numbers. It was a quiet winter afternoon at the Cloisters. The gallery where the tapestries hang was almost deserted. When I looked at them, each flower and plant, each animal, each human face took on a character of its own. The tapestries were full of velvety pools and shimmering surfaces, alive with color and detail. In the fence that surrounds the captive unicorn, tarnished silver, mixed with gold, gleamed in the grain of the wood. In comparison, the digital images, good and accurate as they were, had seemed flat. They had not captured the translucent landscape of the Unicorn tapestries, as the weft threads dive around the warp, or the way they seemed to open into a world beyond the walls of the room.[43]

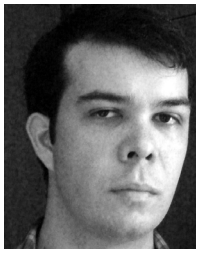
What we see is a Benjaminian rejection of the technically reproduced artwork. Just like the German critic and philosopher associated with the Frankfurt School, Walter Benjamin, Preston here attributes some "aura" to the original artwork, which its mediatized, 2-D version could not reproduce. In the context of science reportage, what we see is an important counter voice: In spite of the high technology in cameras and computers, there is a set of tapestries whose materiality constitutes a non-substitutable presence. The reporter also shows that even if he writes mainly on science and technology he does not want to depict them as having an ontologically miraculous or totalitarian power, or for that matter an epistemologically totalizing power,

holding sway over society and culture. In effect, he wants to assure the lay reader that the "black box" of science remains open to examination.

CONCLUSION

Our hypothesis is that the main goal of literary journalism about science is to depict science-in-the-making.[44] Latour notes that by knowing the formative processes that arrive at scientific facts, even "lay" people can discuss such complex subjects. Therefore, by telling a story in this manner one can open the "black boxes" by means of exhibiting the work and negotiation processes. In effect, Preston allows the readers to engage in their own critique. By presenting himself as both an inquiring journalist and as a character in his own story where he is actively participating and involved with the sources, he does not impose a scientific "truth." Rather, it's up to the readers to decide how true the science is.

Nor does Preston objectify the scientists as inaccessible. Rather, they all share in the imperfections and contingencies of life. The literary factor in Preston's works places the readers as guests invited to enter the Chudnovskys's home, to visit their mother, to enter the room and meet the personified m zero. The readers can see the activity of research and development—scientists in action, the making of science, along with the people who surround them and other social aspects with which they are associated—as well as the human condition of the portrayed characters. Thus, like any good literature, there is a philosophical dimension here when we consider the broader implications. But more to the point of this paper, the reader of these kinds of articles may be more apt to understand better the nature of science, and to make use of more instruments to evaluate it, to support it, or to contest it when he or she has finally been permitted to enter the "black box" that for so long denied entry.



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How Literary Journalism Can Inform Bioethics

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Bioethics scholars can benefit from using literary journalism to explore moral problems in medicine, just as they use other genres.

There is a striking difference in how literature and journalism are each regarded within bioethics, an interdisciplinary field devoted to the study of ethical issues in clinical medicine and biomedical research. On the one hand, bioethics has largely embraced literature for its important contributions to ethical discourse. For example, many scholars in the field advocate the use of novels, plays, and short stories to teach ethics in medical schools. Kathryn Montgomery, a professor of medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University, is among those who have argued that literature plays a vital role in illuminating the moral complexities of contemporary health care. In a 2001 essay, she observed, "Literature has always been an important part of ethical discourse, and the discourse of medical ethics is no exception. Short stories, novels, poems, plays, autobiographies, and films vividly represent illness, disability, and dying and thus pose many of the questions addressed by ethics and public policy."[1] There is also growing recognition within bioethics that studying the narrative techniques used in literature can help bioethics scholars develop their own narrative skills. As a result, literature has garnered a fair measure of appreciation within bioethics, both as a rich source of ethical material and as a model for effective and engaged storytelling.

Journalism, however, is regarded in a very different light. Much of the bioethics discourse on journalism has been characterized by skepticism,

criticism, even disdain. Peter Simonson, a professor of communication and rhetoric at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has observed that a pattern of discourse within bioethics has served to "symbolically distance" scholars in the field from what is often referred to simply as "the media."[2] Simonson spent time as a visiting scholar at the leading independent bioethics center in the United States, the Hastings Center in Garrison, New York. Afterward, in an essay published in the *Hastings Center Report*, he noted, "There is dissatisfaction with the media within the field of bioethics. While talking to the news media is part of the job for many scholarly bioethicists, there is much grumbling about it."[3] The grumbling is not hard to find. Among bioethicists's standard criticisms of journalists are that they oversimplify complex issues, favor "sound bites" over well-reasoned arguments, misquote sources, take comments out of context, sensationalize, and omit important factual information. These concerns have prompted some scholars in the field to question whether it is even possible to engage with journalists in ways that are both useful and morally justifiable.[4] Thus, the bioethics discourse has drawn a sharp distinction between literature on the one hand and journalism on the other: while literature illuminates and enlightens, journalism obscures and misleads. Literature merits scholarly respect; journalism does not. Literature is worth studying for its moral content and narrative techniques; journalism offers little in terms of content or craft that bioethics scholars might find useful or instructive.

In her essay on literature and medical ethics, Montgomery made an important point about fiction, poetry, drama, and autobiographical essays. These literary texts, she wrote, explore human predicaments related to illness and dying "not because they are central to medical ethics but because illness, disability, and death are part of the human condition that imaginative writing exists to explore."[5] My aim in this essay is to extend that idea by pointing out that illness, disability, and death are part of the human condition that *journalistic* writing also exists to explore. My argument is that bioethics scholars should expand their notion of literature to include works of literary journalism that also offer insight into the challenges confronting patients, families, doctors, and nurses in the twenty-first century. Part of the work that needs to be done is to convince scholars who hold widely divergent attitudes toward literature and journalism that the two are not as different from each other as they may seem. Novels, short stories, and plays may appear to have little in common with newspaper articles, radio talk shows, and television news broadcasts. But, as we know, the boundary between literature and journalism is not always so clearly drawn. This, of course, is the case with literary journalism, which combines the storytelling techniques associated with fiction writing with the journalist's aim to represent real

people and events. Classic book-length works in this genre, such as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Jonathan Harr's *A Civil Action*, and Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief*, have been enormously successful with both general readers and critics, who sometimes mistake these nonfiction books for novels.

Yet, despite its literary quality, writing of this kind has received little attention to date from scholars who have tried to emphasize the connections between literary writing and ethical discourse. When bioethics scholars, for example, discuss the importance of literature to their field, what they are mainly talking about are works of fiction: short stories, novels, plays, and films. Numerous essays in bioethics journals and books have focused on specific works of fiction, including George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*, Anton Chekhov's short stories, novels by Walker Percy and Henry James, Margaret Edson's play *Wit*, and Akira Kurosawa's film *Ikiru*.[6]

Many bioethics scholars have embraced the notion that works such as these offer evocative and complex "case studies" that can assist doctors, nurses, and students training for these professions in learning to work through moral problems. William Carlos Williams's well-known short story "The Use of Force," for example, has been widely used in medical schools in the United States to explore how doctors respond when faced with a patient who refuses treatment. Some bioethics scholars have willingly acknowledged that ethics cases drawn from literature are sometimes better than the cases written by bioethicists themselves. Carl Elliott, a philosopher in the Center for Bioethics at the University of Minnesota, offered this point of view in his book *A Philosophical Disease: Bioethics, Culture, and Identity*. "Novels, plays and films can be as good or better than real cases," he observed, "for the mere reason that novelists, playwrights and film makers are better at telling stories than philosophers, lawyers and doctors."[7]

Sometimes doctors are also good at telling stories, of course, and when bioethics scholars turn their attention to nonfiction it is usually to the work of physicians who are also well-known writers, including Richard Selzer, Oliver Sacks, Sherwin Nuland, Jerome Groopman, and Atul Gawande.[8] There is also an occasional mention of nonfiction work by writers who are not physicians, such as poet Audre Lorde's illness memoir *The Cancer Journals*. But missing from the discussion has been recognition that professional journalists might also produce work that is worthy of scholarly consideration.

An Overlooked Genre

Although journalism, in general, has not received much careful analysis within bioethics, literary journalism in particular has been largely ignored. The genre seems to have fallen into a gap between bioethics's interest in literature and its critique of the news media. There is irony in

this because literary journalism may offer one of the most hopeful sites for bioethicists to engage with journalism in ways that are meaningful and productive rather than irritating and distressing. One reason is that this form of journalism stands as a distinct alternative to the standard models of mainstream journalism that many bioethicists find so frustrating and inadequate. In fact, literary journalists often share the same concerns as bioethicists about "sound-bite journalism" driven by the constraints of tight deadlines and rigid news-writing conventions; they are trying to do journalism in a different way. For example, writers in this genre often try to immerse themselves in their subjects's lives and explore the full complexity of the issues and situations they face. Therefore, when literary journalists seek to interact with bioethicists, it is not likely to be for the purpose of extracting a sound bite that can be plugged into a story but rather to deepen the journalist's own understanding—and the reader's—about a complicated issue. If bioethics has a stake in raising the level of public discourse on ethical issues in science and medicine, scholars in the field need to recognize that literary journalism offers important opportunities for that to occur.

An additional reason that bioethics scholars would benefit from taking literary journalism more seriously is that writing in this genre could provide useful data for their own field. Through immersion reporting, literary journalists often witness—and write about—intimate interactions between patients and their families and health care providers. Journalists spend months, even years, immersing themselves in their subjects's daily lives, in an effort, as Mark Kramer has written, "to comprehend subjects at a level Henry James termed 'felt life'—the frank, unidealized level that includes individual difference, frailty, tenderness, nastiness, vanity, generosity, pomposity, humility, all in proper proportion."[9] Bioethicists, however, typically do not immerse themselves in patients's lives; it is not among their methods. In fact, their direct contact with patients may be quite limited in comparison to journalists whose immersion reporting puts them not only at the patient's hospital bedside, but also in patients's homes, in their communities, and among their family members and friends. Many bioethics scholars have turned to literary fiction as one strategy for developing deeper insight into how people feel and behave when they or their loved ones experience illness, disability, and death. But some of the texts they have chosen for this purpose have inherent limitations. For all that nineteenth-century novels offer, for example, they cannot represent what it is like to be a patient or doctor in the twenty-first century. But literary journalism can. Journalists tell stories about real people, actual experiences, in specific contexts. Surely some of these stories are worthy of examination and reflection within bioethics.

In the next section, I briefly discuss three books of literary journalism that deal directly with bioethics concerns. These are books that scholars in bioethics, and in related fields such as medicine, nursing, and public health, are likely to be familiar with, and perhaps even to have read. But they are not likely to recognize these books as all belonging to the genre of literary journalism.

Three Books for Bioethics

Among contemporary book-length works of literary journalism that have taken up issues related to medical ethics and practice, one of the most well known is Anne Fadiman's book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures,* published in 1997. Fadiman's book tells the story of a "collision" in the 1980s between a Hmong family, the Lees, who had recently arrived in the United States from Laos, and doctors at a hospital in California who tried to treat the Lees's young daughter, Lia, for recurring seizures. Lia's parents believed that when she was three years old her soul was so frightened by the sound of a door slamming that it fled her body and became lost. Lia's parents, Fadiman wrote, "recognized the resulting symptoms as *qang dab peg,* which means 'the spirit catches you and you fall down.'"[10] But her doctors diagnosed her condition as epilepsy, which began a series of conflicts with Lia's parents over the nature of her illness and its appropriate treatment. As Fadiman's book describes, Lia's doctors treated her illness the best they could, but they spent little time trying to understand the Lees's perspective on their daughter's condition.

Fadiman spent eight years researching and writing *The Spirit Catches You,* during which time she burrowed into the Lees's daily lives. One result of this long immersion was that Fadiman formed a deep attachment to the Lee family. In a public lecture at the University of Minnesota in 2009, more than a decade after her book was published, she said she still remained in regular contact with the Lees, who continued to care for Lia at home.[11]

Fadiman's account of cross-cultural misunderstanding won the National Book Critics Circle Award for general nonfiction in 1998 and has received significant attention within schools of medicine, nursing, public health, and social work. The book is widely assigned in courses on cross-cultural medicine and medical ethics, and has been required reading for first-year students at several medical schools.[12] So, although the bioethics discourse on literature has focused mainly on fiction and physician-authored essays and memoirs, one of the most important literary texts used in academic health centers's curricula in recent years has actually been the work of a journalist.

Another book that has been widely read and discussed in medical and health circles is Tracy Kidder's *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World,* published in 2003. Kidder's book offers an intimate portrait of Paul Farmer, a physician and medical anthropologist who cofounded the international nonprofit organization Partners in Health, which is dedicated to improving health care for poor people in the developing world. Kidder's book describes the trajectory of Farmer's life, from growing up in a large family that lived at times in a trailer park, on a bus, and on a boat that lacked running water, to graduating from Harvard Medical School and opening a clinic in rural Haiti. Farmer has become an influential figure in global public health, particularly in the effort to combat HIV and multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. Like Fadiman, Kidder spent a considerable amount of time with his subject in order to write *Mountains Beyond Mountains.* This included long periods spent observing Farmer with patients at his clinic in Haiti, on rounds at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and on trips to Russia, Cuba, France, and Peru. In the end, Farmer comes across as charismatic, complex, and intensely committed to treating the sickest patients in the world's poorest nations. The reader is left to wonder what health care might be like if more medical professionals embraced Farmer's philosophy of focusing energy and resources on patients with the greatest needs.

A third book of literary journalism, one that has recently attracted significant interest from both general readers and scholars, is *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, authored by Rebecca Skloot and published in 2010. Skloot's book weaves several overlapping stories into a seamless narrative that one reviewer, a cell biologist writing in *The Journal of Clinical Investigations*, has described as "an unforgettable story that reads like a novel."[13] Among the stories the book recounts is the short life of Henrietta Lacks, an African-American woman born in 1920 and raised on the same tobacco farm in Virginia that her ancestors had worked as slaves. Lacks dropped out of school in sixth grade to work in the fields and gave birth to her first child at the age of fourteen. She died seventeen years later, from an aggressive form of cervical cancer, in the "colored ward" of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Before she died, however, doctors took tissue samples from her cervix, without her consent, and placed them in a Petri dish. These extraordinary cells, known as "HeLa" cells, were the first human cells to survive and multiply in culture. The cells proved so hardy, in fact, that medical researchers have used them in thousands of studies throughout the past sixty years, making them one of the most important, and lucrative, cell lines in the history of biomedical research. However, Lacks's own children,

growing up in Baltimore, had no idea their mother's tissue had been taken and used for research. Much of Skloot's book is devoted to the story of the Lacks children and how their lives were affected first by their mother's death and then by discovering years later that her cells had been transformed into a valuable commodity without their knowledge and without any financial compensation provided to the family.

Skloot, a science journalist who has taught creative writing and journalism at several universities, spent more than a decade researching and writing the book. Among the most extraordinary aspects of her work was her determination to forge relationships with Henrietta Lacks's grown children, who, for good reason, had become suspicious of people coming around asking questions about their mother. Skloot formed a particularly close bond with Henrietta's only surviving daughter, Deborah, who was a baby when her mother died and whose lifelong struggles are described with great empathy. In addition, Skloot has directly linked the story of Henrietta Lacks, her children, and her "immortal" cells to the history of bioethics as a movement that emerged largely in response to public concerns about the exploitation of human subjects in medical research.

All three of these books offer important contributions to public discourse about ethics in medicine. They are also powerful narratives that incorporate the "shared characteristics" of literary journalism summarized by Norman Sims as "immersion reporting, complicated structures, character development, symbolism, voice, a focus on ordinary people . . . and accuracy."[14] But books such as these are not the only form in which literary journalism can be found. In the next section, I discuss two examples of long-form narratives published by newspapers that also provide insight into important aspects of patients's lives, their experiences of illness and medical treatment, and the difficult dilemmas they encounter.

Newspaper Narratives

In recent years a number of major daily newspapers around the country have devoted significant space within their pages and on their websites to publishing long-form narratives, sometimes as multi-part series that run over a period of several days or even weeks. A notable example is a series called "Through Hell and High Water," which appeared in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in May 2006. Published in twenty-two daily chapters, the series offered a detailed account of the horrific experiences that patients and medical staff endured at two New Orleans hospitals—one public, one private—after the hospitals lost power during Hurricane Katrina.[15]

Among the themes that newspaper narratives have examined is the difficult decision making that often confronts very sick patients and their

families. A case in point is a series the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* published in November 2006. The four-part narrative focused on Dakota Bihn, a six-year-old girl with Tay-Sachs disease, which is a rare genetic disorder that affects the central nervous system.[16] As the series describes, a neurologist at the Cleveland Clinic who diagnosed Dakota's illness told her parents there was no effective treatment and that Dakota would likely not live past the age of fifteen. Dakota's parents, unwilling to accept such a prognosis, found a prominent hematologist at Duke University Medical Center who offered to perform an experimental treatment on their daughter, an umbilical cord-blood transplant. Dakota's neurologist recommended against the transplant due to lack of evidence that it would be effective and because the complications, he told her parents, were likely to be painful. Nonetheless, Dakota's parents decided she would undergo the procedure.

One aspect of this series that is particularly important from a bioethics standpoint is that it offers a vivid portrait of parental desperation. When the Bihns were told their young daughter had a fatal illness with no known cure, that information overrode any other factor in their decision to try an experimental treatment. But as the series shows, the Bihns's optimism before the transplant turned to anguish and frustration soon afterward, as they watched their daughter's condition deteriorate rather than improve. Here is the beginning of part one in the series:

> Julie Bihn watched helplessly as her 6-year-old daughter, Dakota, lay in her hospital bed, repeatedly digging her nails deep into her skin. Dakota was covered head to toe with a rash that triggered an unbearable itch. It was the latest side effect to erupt from an unorthodox treatment for her fatal disease.
>
> Three months earlier, the kindergartner had been skipping down the halls of Falls-Lenox Primary School, her pink "Dora the Explorer" backpack and her long, blond pigtails bouncing, giggling with friends and repeating funny lines from the movie "Ice Age." Now, Julie couldn't remember the last time she had seen her daughter's blue eyes open.[17]

By centering the story on the parents's point of view and their love for their daughter, this narrative works on an emotional level to explain how parents can be convinced to try an unproven treatment for their seriously ill child, even when most doctors would advise against it. It would be difficult to find a topic more relevant to bioethics than the profound difficulties involved in weighing the risks and benefits of an experimental treatment, particularly for one's own child.

A second aspect of this series worth noting is that it illustrates how the informed consent process—considered a critical step before any medical

treatment—can become all but meaningless in situations where parents are so desperate they choose to ignore potential downsides. Part three in the series reconstructs how the informed consent process worked (or rather *didn't* work) for Dakota's parents:

> Ken and Julie were eager to get Dakota's transplant started when a nurse asked them to sign the consent form.
>
> Informed consent is an important part of any medical procedure. There's no reality check like seeing the hard road ahead spelled out in black and white.
>
> Dakota's consent form was nine pages. The cord-blood transplant is a treatment plan for an inherited metabolic disorder, the form said. Tay-Sachs wasn't specifically mentioned. [Ken] said he skimmed the rest, signed it and handed it to Julie.
>
> She said she signed it without reading any of it.[18]

But it wasn't long before Ken and Julie began to wonder if they had made the right decision. Two days after the transplant, Dakota "was vomiting blood nonstop and couldn't get out of bed." Fifty days later, she could no longer eat or walk and could hardly speak. She had lost her hair and was covered in a painful rash, both side effects of the treatment. Six months after the transplant, Dakota was in so much pain she would not let even her mother hold her. Finally, a year after the transplant, Dakota turned a corner and became well enough to live at home again. But her parents had dramatically lowered their expectations about her long-term prognosis and her mother expressed doubts about whether, all things considered, they had made the right decision.[19]

Reporter Diana Keogh spent eleven months researching and writing the series. This is a length of time not often afforded newspapers journalists, but it allowed Keogh to immerse herself in the Bihns's daily lives and to capture scenes that deepen the reader's understanding of the decisions made by Dakota's parents.

A similar example is a six-part narrative published by the *Boston Globe* in 1999.[20] The series tells the story of a young couple, Greg Fairchild and Tierney Temple-Fairchild, who found out from an ultrasound test and amniocentesis that the baby they were expecting had a severe heart defect as well as Down syndrome. The couple agonized over whether to terminate the pregnancy, which some friends and family members urged them to do. As the story explains, the results of prenatal screening can sometimes present a profound dilemma for prospective parents:

> Most disorders tested for today—including Down syndrome, muscular

> dystrophy, and cystic fibrosis—cannot be corrected. That means the most common question prompted by distressing prenatal test results is not, "How can we fix it?" It is: "Should this pregnancy continue?"
>
> Those questions are growing rapidly for countless couples who, like Tierney and Greg, would consider abortion under certain circumstances.[21]

In this case, the parents ultimately decided to continue the pregnancy, which resulted in the birth of their daughter, Naia. But it was not an easy decision. Tierney and Greg went back and forth several times about what to do. In this scene, when they finally made their decision, they had already talked through all of the factors involved:

> But when there are no more words left to say, it doesn't add up to abortion. They look at each other and know they have decided: They will have this baby.
>
> They call it a leap of faith.
>
> "If I had to terminate, I could bring myself to do it," Tierney tells Greg through tears. "But to terminate in a circumstance where I was afraid of taking on a challenge, I just don't think I could live with the repercussions it would have on my life. On our life together.
>
> "Why wouldn't I allow God to take this pregnancy where it needs to go? And if my baby is going to die in heart surgery, my baby is going to die in heart surgery. My dad might say, 'Tierney, why do you have to go through that, or why does your baby have to go through that pain?' But I have to trust."[22]

Reporter Mitchell Zuckoff later expanded the series into a book, called *Choosing Naia: A Family's Journey,* published in 2002.

Newspaper narrative series about illness and medical treatment, birth and death, are not altogether rare. Some even win awards. The first Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing, awarded in 1979, went to Jon D. Franklin at the old Baltimore *Evening Sun* for a story called "Mrs. Kelly's Monster," which described a high-risk surgery to remove a tumor from a woman's brain.[23] More recently, Tom Hallman, Jr., at *The Oregonian* won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing in 2001 for "The Boy Behind the Mask," a four-part series about a teenage boy named Sam who was born with a congenital disfigurement and chose to undergo surgery that would give him a more normal face.[24] The series was later expanded and published in book form. Despite such recognition, even the most compelling newspaper stories about real people's actual experiences of illness, disability, and death have gone unmentioned, and probably for the most part unnoticed, within bioethics. If this continues, it will be a significant missed opportunity for a field that attempts to understand moral issues within their specific context.

Establishing New Connections

When literature and journalism are conceptualized as two distinct categories that are poles apart, it is not hard to understand how literary journalism often gets overlooked within the academy. Literary scholars can comfortably assume that any writing that qualifies as "journalism" must be outside the scope of their concern, while scholars who critique the news media can focus their attention on more obvious targets, such as network television news programs. But literary journalism cannot remain a blind spot for bioethics, if for no other reason that because this form of writing can be just as illuminating about the human condition as literary fiction. If we acquire moral knowledge from stories written by novelists and playwrights, as literary scholars have claimed, this should be no less true of stories about real people written by literary journalists.

Recently, there have been hopeful signs that bioethics may be shifting toward greater awareness and appreciation of literary journalism. One sign is the warm response to Rebecca Skloot's book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. One place this response can be seen is a recent issue of the *Hastings Center Report*. For its July/August 2010 issue, the journal asked several writers in the field to contribute an essay "on a book or books exploring bioethics through story."[25] Three of the four essays published discussed only works of fiction: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go,* Anthony Trollope's *Doctor Thorne*, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and three novels by Jodi Picoult. However, one essay examined a work of nonfiction: Skloot's *Immortal Life*. The author of the essay, physician John D. Lantos, compared Skloot's book to Richard Powers's 2009 novel *Generosity: An Enhancement* about a young Algerian woman who escapes the brutality in her home country and becomes a remarkably well-adjusted college student in the United States. The woman's emotional resilience draws the interest of a scientist who is trying to find the genetic basis for happiness. Significantly, Lantos asserted that the two books—Skloot's *Immortal Life* and Powers's *Generosity*—share important themes:

> Both books—the true story and the novel—are about unassuming innocents who fall into the clutches of biomedical researchers…. Both books weave together stories about deprivation and poverty with stories about science as the ultimate redemption story of our age…. Both struggle with the fundamental bioethical questions of the genomic age—whether we will be able to unlock the secrets of cancer, cystic fibrosis, or happiness without destroying ourselves in the process.[26]

The same issue of the *Hastings Center Report* also included a review of Skloot's book that called it "a luminous, transfiguring, and true story of a

journalist's quest to learn about the woman whose cancerous cervical tissue became HeLa, the first line of immortal human cells."[27] Similarly positive reviews have appeared in recent issues of journals such as *Health Affairs,* the *Journal of Clinical Investigation,* and *Issues in Science and Technology*, which may indicate that Skloot's book has broken through and achieved a level of interest and admiration rarely bestowed on works of literary journalism. For that reason, the book could offer a timely bridge for creating new connections between bioethics and this form of journalism.

An additional opportunity may be found in the recently published writings of a philosopher and bioethics scholar, Carl Elliott, of the University of Minnesota. *The New Yorker* magazine has published two articles by Elliott in the past two years, both of which employ narrative techniques typically found in literary journalism, including scene setting, dialogue, and the distinctive voice of a narrator.[28] Although other scholars in the field of bioethics have yet to follow Elliott's lead, more could decide to incorporate the techniques and methods of literary journalism into their own writing in an effort to reach a broader audience.

An additional sign that there may be expanding opportunities to develop connections between literary journalism and bioethics is that some scholars in bioethics seem to be reassessing their stance toward journalism and the media. James Lindemann Nelson, a philosopher at Michigan State University who works primarily in bioethics, observed more than a decade ago that bioethicists who tend to disparage journalism actually lack empirical information on which to judge whether engaging with the press is practically useful or morally legitimate. He wrote,

> We don't know who pays attention to what bioethicists say in the press, what they understand by what they hear, and how such encounters affect people's thinking, either about the specific issue in question, or about broader matters, such as how to reason about ethical issues in general, or which forms of authority are appropriate in moral discussion and which are not.[29]

Picking up on this theme, Tod Chambers, a professor of medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University, recently called for "expanded media literacy for bioethicists."[30] If there is movement in this direction within bioethics, hopefully scholars in the field will recognize that literary journalism offers significant opportunities for more productive engagement with journalists and journalism scholars, including even collaboration. Scholars of literary journalism, from their perspective, might try to look for such cross-disciplinary opportunities as well.

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Latin America's Own "New Journalism"

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Latin American narrative journalism during the 1950s–1970s developed for very different reasons from the Anglo–American "New Journalism" of the period.

During a period of approximately twenty years, from about 1955 to 1975, one can detect in Latin and Anglo America two parallel literary journalisms that emerged as powerful and efficient ways to register the vertiginous social, political, and economic transformations taking place on both sides of the Río Grande. Among the more notable authors of such work in the United States have been, of course, Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, and Norman Mailer. Among those in Latin America have been Gabriel García Márquez, Rodolfo Walsh, and Miguel Barnet. Both groups produced some of the most compelling narrative nonfiction in their respective languages, and were in the avant garde of the nonfiction movement worldwide at this time.

But even though they all resorted to similar techniques and devices of the kind we associate with literary journalism (scenic construction, full dialogue transcription, and a unified point of view, for example), the political and cultural contexts in which they wrote their stories were very different, which in turn resulted in differences in the nature and scope of their narrative projects. In that vein, the divide between democracy and authoritarianism north and south of the Río Grande can explain some of the narrative and

reportorial choices made by these authors who are regarded as among the most representative and distinguished writers of the form.

Cultural and Social Similarities

It would be an understatement to say that the 1960s witnessed cultural, social, and political extremes in the United States. That is because these were alternatively the suburban years and the Vietnam War years, as well as the years of counterculture and the years of the rise of Barry Goldwater conservatism. At some publications in the United States, the 1960s were also the time for a "new journalism" in reaction against print journalism as conventionally practiced. The causes of the New Journalism were many, not the least those momentous changes and events of the 1960s. Society developed a need, as John Hollowell has said, for narratives more "closely attuned to the altered nature of reality in America than the conventional realistic novel."[1] Similarly, the growth of broadcasting also changed the equation, when first radio and then television became the media of choice to satisfy the increasing demand for breaking news. Moreover, this was a time of increasing literacy as reflected in rising college enrollment and book publication,[2] the result a more knowledgeable public eager to gain access to alternative forms of written journalism that could better explain the vertiginous events around them. A consequence of these various factors, then, was the narrative journalism known as the New Journalism,[3] the genre adopted during this period by Mailer, Capote, and Wolfe in the attempt to account for the new social realities.

Similarly, the 1950s–1970s in Latin America were also years of change, significant among them political. As Arturo Valenzuela, citing David Scott Palmer, notes: "between 1930 and 1980, the thirty-seven countries that make up Latin America underwent 277 changes of government, 104 of which (or 37.5 percent) took place via military coup."[4] Under authoritarian rule most of these countries underwent either severe censorship, or a substantial restriction of their freedom of speech.[5]

At the same time, many of the positive advances witnessed in the United States were also happening in Latin America, moving at exponential speed. Between 1961 and 1970 the number of Latin Americans reading newspapers, and owning radio receivers and television sets tripled. During those years, the theoretical and political interest of Latin American governments in building and improving the mass media also grew exponentially as these knowledge networks fostered literacy and economic development. One result is that between 1960 and 1970 the illiteracy rate declined among those in the region aged fifteen to nineteen years of age from 25 percent to 16.6 percent. College

enrollment similarly grew. Between 1960 and 1975, according to UNESCO, higher education enrollment in Argentina grew from 11.3 percent to 28 percent; in Cuba from 3 percent to 9 percent; in Colombia from 1.7 percent to 8.4 percent; and in Peru from 3.6 percent to 22.8 percent. By 1979, Rama and Tedesco noted: "[enrollment] has been so large that a crisis developed in the functions traditionally assigned to the university by the social system."[6]

The growth in college enrollment, literacy levels, and media exposure resulted in the development of a critical mass of new readers who would encourage and benefit from the Latin American literary boom that included new literary and journalistic forms.[7]

But such changes, while somewhat equivalent to those happening in the United States, were part of a very particular social, political, and cultural context; a context that shaped Latin America's narrative journalism in a very unique way.

Emergence of a Program to Develop a New Social Literature

If the Vietnam War was one salient point in the constitution of the Anglo-American New Journalism, the Cuban Revolution in 1959 had at least an equivalent if not larger role in the development and institutionalization of an existing tradition of Latin American literary journalism.[8] A militant nonfiction in Latin America can be traced back at least to 1845, when Argentine writer and politician Domingo Sarmiento wrote his masterpiece, *Facundo.*[9] Since then, the genre has evolved into many different forms, including that of the *testimonio,* which bears some similarities to what today we call literary or narrative journalism. Starting in the 1950s it would evolve on different political lines as reflected in the work of two of our canonical writers, Gabriel García Márquez in his *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor,* and Rodolfo Walsh in his *Operación Masacre,* both of which will be examined more closely later. Works such as these provided, in turn, models that would be elevated after the Cuban Revolution and throughout Latin America as exemplars. The direct result of the revolution was the systematization and consolidation of the *political testimonio,* a literary genre in Latin American circles that has a clear example in Miguel Barnet's *Cimarrón*, published in 1966, which will also be examined later.

Such a systemization and consolidation was the project of Casa de las Américas. Through this official organization—and its award—the Cuban government aimed at rewarding different artistic expressions no matter how experimental, insomuch as they "depicted the Latin American problems."[10] Already a few months after the revolution, both the Cuban government and Casa de las Américas had become important nodes of intercommunication between European and Hispano-American writers:

> Through the bimonthly *Revista of the Casa de las Americas* which was founded in 1960, congresses, literary prizes, printings of the works of the younger novelists less known internationally, and printings of critical collections, a valuable continental, ideological coherence and revolutionary literary expectations evolved. Furthermore, this example of cultural openness influenced other magazines (*Marcha* in Montevideo, *Primera Plana* in Buenos Aires, *Siempre* in Mexico, *El Nacional* in Caracas), and publishing houses on the continent, which adopted the same systems of interrelation and information"[11]

Such a cultural milieu would influence the evolution of *testimonio*. Casa de las Américas promoted and gave cohesiveness to a series of until then uncoordinated efforts towards the development of a purely Latin American literature; a literature mainly anchored in a social reality, popular and broadly distributed through cheap editions, newspapers, and magazines; a literature whose narratives referred to, were written by, or were directly related to the middle and lower classes. This programmatic effort linked in most cases to liberal and progressive movements in the region, was sealed in the definition of testimonial literature produced by the Instituto Cubano de Literatura y Lingüística (the Cuban Institute of Literature and Linguistics):

> Testimonial literature must document some aspect of Latin American or Caribbean reality from a direct source. A direct source is understood as knowledge of the facts by their author and his or her compilation of narratives or evidence obtained from the individuals involved or qualified witnesses. In both cases reliable documentation, written or graphic, is indispensable. The form is at the author's discretion. But literary quality is also indispensable. . . . In testimonial literature the biography of one or many subjects of research must be placed within a social context, be tightly connected to it, typify a collective phenomenon, a class phenomenon, an epoch, a process (a dynamic) or a non-process (a stagnation, an arrest) of the society as a whole, or of a characteristic group or stratum, insomuch as this phenomenon is current, actual, in the Latin American agenda.[12]

At a time when many governments in the region undertook efforts to foster scientific and artistic depiction, description, and analysis of the national realities as a priority in order to assess Latin America's potential for development, testimonial narratives were key to crystallizing these efforts throughout the continent, while re-politicizing the literary practice.

Latin American writers, journalists, and intellectuals such as Argentines Julio Cortázar, Rodolfo Walsh, and Juan Gelman; Uruguayan Mario Benedetti; Colombian Gabriel García Márquez; Mexican Carlos Fuentes; Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa; Cubans Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Barnet and Guillermo Cabrera Infante; but also many Europeans such as the French Régis Debray, Roger Callois, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir; the

German Günter Grass; and the Italian Italo Calvino; among many others, all interacted and voiced their opinions about the role of literature, intellectuals, testimonial narratives, and politics through Casa de las Américas, especially in the early years after the Cuban Revolution.[13] And although a good number of them parted ways with the forum in the early 1970s after the radicalization of the Castro regime—in particular after the jailing of poet Heberto Padilla in 1971—the institute and the award have remained a beacon for Latin American writers until today.[14]

The prize was first awarded in 1960 (in 2010 it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary), although initially the category for *testimonio* was not included. But because of the award the influence of Casa de las Américas spread among Latin American intellectuals. "For the young back then, and this is still current nowadays, such distinction operated as a springboard to public and supra-regional life," noted Chilean author Antonio Skármeta.[15]

In 1970 Casa de las Américas incorporated *testimonio* as an award category and *testimonio* was finally institutionalized. That year, too, Guatemalan writer Manuel Galich suggested Walsh as the head of the nonfiction evaluation committee. Walsh, an Argentine journalist and writer, and already among the most respected on the continent since the publication of his nonfiction work *Operación Masacre* in 1957, immediately accepted the proposal, and continued to contribute to Casa de las Américas until his assassination in 1977. "This is the first legitimation act for an extremely effective means for popular communication," wrote Walsh in his acceptance letter.[16]

The incorporation of this award category provided a Latin American answer to the controversial question about the role of intellectuals in politically loaded times, a question that had festered ever since it was raised in *Les Temps Modernes* by Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus almost twenty years before.[17]

Nonfiction as a Non-programmatic Institution in the U.S.

Narrative journalism had long occupied a tenuous place in American literary and journalistic culture. That is reflected in the fact that it wasn't until 1962 that Columbia University's Pulitzer Prize committee included the General Nonfiction category for a book. While not all general nonfiction is necessarily narrative or literary journalism, nonetheless examples have been awarded the prize.[18] Similarly, the National Book Award, a prize "by writers to writers," which is sponsored by members of the publishing industry, was inaugurated in 1950, but its nonfiction category wasn't incorporated until 1984.[19] And again, not all of the awardees can be considered literary journalism.

One of the most significant differences between Anglo and Latin

American narrative nonfiction, then, was that in the United States no single entity developed the institutional authority to delimit the boundaries of nonfiction, or had the clout to set general guidelines for the genre. More broadly, in the words of Nick Nuttall, there was a lack of "cultural consensus" at the time as reflected in the controversy that swirled around whether the New Journalism could be journalism, much less literature. Not even during the New Journalism's peak of popularity, perhaps best reflected in the publication of Tom Wolfe's manifesto "The New Journalism" in 1973, was there consensus on what the principles of this literary form were.[20]

This—again in the words of Nick Nuttall—"taxonomical uncertainty," in the Anglo-American tradition, which has led to a substantial number of exegetical efforts to disentangle the nature of the genre, has at the same time nurtured the plurality of forms and efforts by leaving the field open to experimentation with reportorial and narrative techniques. In contrast, the Latin American nonfiction tradition, especially after the programmatic definition offered by the Cuban Institute of Literature and Linguistics in 1970, and the admission of the Casa de las Américas nonfiction award as a stepping stone for this type of narrative in the region, has arguably not enjoyed the same levels of openness and freedom.[21]

The Authorial Stance

But another perhaps more important difference between these two forms is authorial stance. In North American narrative nonfiction, authors, protagonists, narrators, and observers tend to converge in one central figure. And, although many authors prefer the third person as a way to avoid questions in regards to the factuality of their reportage, these accounts also display clear signs and markers of the voice of a distinctive narrator-author. This can be detected in three examples by our canonical American authors: *In Cold Blood* by Capote, *Armies of the Night* by Mailer, and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* by Wolfe. Even the absence of the "I" in their works is, as Ronald Weber pointed out, "a matter of appearance," since the presence of the writer was distinctly reflected in the recreation of events through the writer's selection and arrangement of the material.[22] So even though Truman Capote wrote *In Cold Blood* in the third person, his subjectivity is reflected in the details he selected. Moreover, he gave credit to the first-person approach:

> Ordinarily, the reporter has to use himself as a character, an eye-witness observer to retain credibility. But I felt that it was essential to the seemingly detached tone of that book [*In Cold Blood*] that the author should be absent.[23]

Perhaps an inflection point between Capote's third-person voice and first-person-centered narratives was Mailer's "strictly personal approach"—as he defined it—in *The Armies of the Night,* which is about the 1967 protest march at the Pentagon. Because the subtitle—*History as a Novel. The Novel as History*—invokes the "novel," it serves as a kind of indirect homage to Capote's nonfiction. But Mailer did not directly resort to the first person, either, opting for a more unconventional approach. "He used the unusual device of becoming a character in the story but not the 'I' character. Mailer is the protagonist produced by Mailer the omniscient narrator."[24]

Even though Mailer opted for the third person in *Armies of the Night*, he acknowledged that a novelistic first-person approach was in order when some level of intimacy was required; or, to put it in his own words, when the writer needed to *correct* some of the inaccuracies generated by the imperfect tools used to record and write "History."[25] The focus on the self was not, in that sense, just a way to show Mailer's involvement and participation in the protest against the Vietnam War, but also and especially a way to help the readers learn about the march through the author's own eyes, feelings, and particularly through his own biases. By entering into Mailer's point of view, the readers of his nonfiction would also gain access to a vantage point to watch the march.

Thus, through direct observation and personal narrative methods, both Mailer and Capote seemed to fuse, at the highest level, "the roles of observer and maker."[26]

Another case of subjective reporting is, without a doubt, Wolfe's 1968 *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, which trails the activities of novelist Ken Kesey and a group of followers known as the Merry Pranksters through their psychedelic journey across the United States. Wolfe uses the first person throughout a substantial part of his book, but he opts for the third person in some instances during the central part of the account in which he did not directly take part in the Pranksters's activities.[27]

Moreover, one of the most distinctive devices that Wolfe used to convey a sense of personal authenticity was "a kind of stream of consciousness that attempts to recreate from within the mental atmosphere of people and events"[28] Although at times very effective, this device has made critics like Weber himself question Wolfe's reportorial factuality. The device, intended to expand on, and reveal the characters's psyche and emotions, ended up creating a centripetal force around the narrative "I." "It is Wolfe's frantic imagination as affected by Kesey and Pranksters [sic] that is the book's most attractive feature."[29]

In that sense, and although some of the best American New Journalism

followed Capote's lead using the third person viewpoint, nonetheless, those efforts—along with, of course, those utilizing the more conventional "I"—clearly placed the emphasis on personal narrative even if the "I" was unstated, thus emphasizing the authorial stance in accounting for an actual event.

This point could be easily connected to one of the most curious effects of these narratives in American culture during the 1960s. While focusing on the personality of the narrator-character, nonfiction novels turned their authors into instant media stars. Through their participant-observer role, new journalists also became the spokespersons for the peculiar events they had witnessed and written about.[30] The "star reporter" status turned these journalists into the avant garde, the guides and gurus of a generation "through regions of contemporary hell."[31]

Latin America's Distance from the Personal Voice

None of this could have happened to Latin American nonfiction authors for at least two reasons: the first, contextual, the second, clearly, ideological. And it is in this second aspect that we will be able to detect Casa de las Americas's imprint on the genre.

First, and perhaps all too obviously, the United States enjoyed throughout the twentieth century a democratic stability that Latin America lacked. While there may have been historical parallels Latin America had to endure major disruptions to the basic democratic order on a scale that the United States did not experience. After all, the United States has never experienced a coup resulting in a dictatorship. If these political upheavals had an impact on the region's fictional narratives (as authors like Sarlo, Larsen, and Masiello have noted) they had an even larger impact on documentary and political forms like *testimonio*.[32]

Second, Latin American nonfiction was imbued from the start with a Progressive teleology. It was a central mandate of the genre to focus on the objects of reportage, and not on the reporters, in order to contribute to social advancement on different fronts. Authors, and sometimes even the protagonists of these narratives, assumed a secondary role, subordinated to class and national interests. In that sense, the main characters of Latin American nonfiction tended to fulfill a symbolic function, and their narratives were very much allegorical. An example of the social-political role that nonfiction had in Latin America was shown by García Márquez's publicized decision in 1974 not to write any more fiction so long as General Augusto Pinochet ruled Chile.[33] Thus García Márquez expressed a connection between nonfiction and political compromise that for a long time had been a common understanding for Latin American writers.

In terms of the authorial stance of Latin American writers in their narrative nonfiction, neither García Márquez, nor Walsh and Barnet became characters in their stories—much less the central figures. And when they actually did play a role, their intervention was generally limited to a few marginal, para-textual references, incorporated sometimes decades after publication, as even a casual review of their work will reveal.

Contributing to this relative lack of authorial presence is the fact that much Latin American nonfiction during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was written in concealment. Often at the time of either reporting or publication, Latin American authors were prosecuted, silenced, ostracized, exiled, and even abducted and killed by the military governments in the region. One could reasonably speculate that such systematic persecution was a valid reason for the lack of an explicit authorial stance in their nonfiction.

The result is that most Latin American nonfiction written during those years followed the omniscient narrator approach, creating a privileged but distant narrative figure separated from the real physical author. This buffer or safety zone between the narrator and the author on the one hand, and between the author and the object of his or her narration on the other, added to the para-textual concealment of the authorial figure. The result has been a significant structural difference between Latin American and Anglo-American nonfiction.

Latin American Nonfiction and the Concealed Narrator

When in 1955 the future Nobel laureate García Márquez wrote *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*, originally a consecutive fourteen-day series of installments in the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*, his life was immediately under threat from the Colombian military government of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. The threat "would almost cost my life," wrote García Márquez, in a prologue added to the story when it was first published as a book in 1970.[34]

The piece, written in the first person from the point of view of twenty-year-old-sailor Luis Alejandro Velasco, and originally signed by Velasco as author, told the story of how the young man survived ten days adrift in the Caribbean Sea. The Colombian government had originally blamed a tropical storm for an incident involving one of its vessels and the death of several sailors. But García Márquez' piece unveiled an official coverup of the events surrounding the wreckage, and put the government in an embarrassing spotlight. The deaths of seven sailors and Velasco's ten days adrift had, in fact, been caused by overweight contraband poorly distributed and inadequately lashed down on the deck, plus a number of other questionable practices customary for the Colombian navy of the day.

As García Márquez recalled in the 1987 prologue to the book version, "the dictatorship took heat and orchestrated a series of drastic retaliations which would end a few months later with the closing of the newspaper."[35] A few months after being the object of blackmail attempts and several threats on his life, the author was in exile in Paris.[36]

Like García Márquez' story, Walsh's 1957 *Operación Masacre* can also be read as a literary journalistic proof of the corruption and violence of the military governments in the region. Walsh's has been characterized as possibly one of the most authentic examples of "documentary narrative" in Latin America.[37] In the words of famed Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama, *Operación Masacre* was "the first political testimony in Latin America."[38]

In *Operación Masacre* Walsh investigated the summary execution of a group of Peronist sympathizers in an open field fifty kilometers south of Buenos Aires in June of 1956. After martial law was declared, the Argentine federal police captured a group of men that had supposedly been plotting against the regime of General Francisco Lonardi to reinstate deposed democratic president Juan Perón. Without a trial, the group was transported to the field and executed, but approximately a half dozen men either escaped in the dark or survived the executioners's volley of shots. Under the imminent threat created by an increasingly inquisitive and violent sequel of military dictatorships, Walsh identified, located, and interviewed the survivors, consulted an array of institutional and media sources, and pieced all the evidence together. Finally, he published the evidence of the illegal executions. The account appeared first between January and June 1957 as a series of articles in the magazines *Revolución Nacional* and *Mayoría*. The completed project appeared as a book in 1958, with subsequent editions until its fourth and last in 1972.

In the 1972 prologue to *Operación Masacre* written a few years before his death, Walsh gave an account of what his life was like during the investigation that led to his masterpiece.

> The long night of June 9th comes back to me, for the second time it takes me away from the 'supple, tranquil seasons.' Now, for almost a year I won't think of anything else, I will abandon my house and my job, I will be called Francisco Freyre, I will carry a false ID under that name, a friend will lend me a house in Tigre, during two months I will live in a freezing shack in Merlo, I will carry a gun, and at every moment the figures in that drama will come back to me obsessively: Livraga, covered in blood, walking along that unending alley through which he escaped death, and the other guy who saved himself by running across the fields, dodging the bullets, and the others who saved themselves without him knowing, and those who did not make it at all.[39]

On March 25, 1977, a military task force finally caught up with Walsh and gunned him down in La Plata.

When the first article of the series appeared in *Revolución Nacional,* a small magazine which, in Walsh's own words, was a "trembling bunch of yellow sheets of paper," it was unsigned: "[The story] comes out unsigned, with a terrible layout, with the titles changed, but it finally comes out" said Walsh in 1972.[40] This is an indication of Walsh's need to remain anonymous, to stay under the radar of the military regime.

In the 1972 prologue to the book, Walsh alluded—without naming him—to Luis Cerrutti Costa, the only editor who agreed to publish the piece under a suggestive headline: "I was summarily executed as well."[41] About him, Walsh wrote: ". . . I find a man who will dare publish it. Trembling and sweating, because he is no movie hero, but simply a man who dares, and that is much more than a movie hero."[42] In the account he also recalled the passivity and indifference with which the story was received by the mainstream media, and the sense of journalistic urgency that, despite all that indifference, made him carry along with the research and publication of the piece.

> I thought I was running a race against time. That any minute a newspaper was going to send a dozen reporters and photographers [to cover the story] just like in the movies. . . . After twelve years you can check out the newspapers of that time and this story did not exist for them at all.[43]

As David Foster argues, reporting in repressive societies creates a number of hurdles not only in terms of the investigative process that nonfiction requires, but also and especially in terms of the "authorial stance towards one's material."[44] Both García Márquez's and Walsh's examples demonstrate the extent to which a politically repressive environment can condition not only the making but also the fabric of a nonfiction narrative, and they both present the basic structural and narrative characteristics that the Instituto Cubano de Literatura y Lingüística would use a few years later to elaborate its definition of *testimonio*.

The Intrinsically Aesthetic Purpose

There is no doubt that *Operación Masacre* and *Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* both, at least in their structural externals, bear a strong resemblance to the Anglo American New Journalism. However, in terms of their motivation, it would be difficult to prove that these narratives were written for *intrinsically aesthetic purposes*. Both García Márquez's and Walsh's stories have an unambiguous political undertone given the historical context. They both transpire a sense of journalistic urgency, and humane disgust for the aberrations committed by the authoritarian regimes in their countries. In

that sense, both authors in their narratives express deep political concern for the dilemmas rooted in Latin America's political instability, and they both display a moral vision that aims towards democratic restoration in the region.

This anti-authoritarian undertone not only gives these stories a clear ethical imprint, but also makes them politically motivated, much more so than those motivated solely by aesthetic considerations and perceptions. At the same time, as Walsh observed during an interview with Argentine novelist Ricardo Piglia in January 1973: "[E]vidently, political denouncement translated into the art of the novel becomes innocuous. It doesn't bother anyone at all, meaning that it becomes sacralized as art."[45] During the exchange, Walsh argued against the traditional fictional novel—which he defined as an obsolete bourgeois form—in favor of more politically influenced narratives such as *testimonio*, which he thought were more in tune with Latin American reality.

It is clear that Barnet's *Cimarrón* (*The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*) aimed in that political direction. Published in 1966 by the Instituto de Etnología y Folklore (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore) in Havana, the book had a clear political subtext: "the documentation of both the authentic folk culture of Cuba that the revolution sought to recover, and the deplorable human conditions that justify the revolution and its subsequent programs."[46] The book is written in the first person in the voice of 104-year-old Esteban Montejo, a slave during the Spanish colonial period who hurled a stone at a slave driver and then fled into the mountains to live in isolation—and safety. The narrative tells the story of how Montejo came back to civilization to become a wage-earning peon, and finally, due to the dismal condition of life under capitalism, joined the Cuban Revolution, of which—mainly thanks to Barnet—he became a symbol.

Barnet was aware of the impact that Montejo's story would have on the political image of the Cuban revolution. In a preface to the book, included in its 1987 edition, Barnet cited American anthropologist Oscar Lewis, author of the groundbreaking testimonial book *The Children of Sánchez*: "I think that I have proven that the lives of those men who belong to what Oscar Lewis called the culture of poverty don't always lack the will of being, or of a historical conscience. And when they are anchored in the feelings of marginality, the flames of those lives show us the path to the future."[47] Through the reconstruction of Montejo's troubles and tribulations, Barnet made an attempt to draw the portrait of a whole class and, eventually, of a whole nation, as well as the path for its liberation through the communist revolution.

Montejo's narrative became a literary benchmark in Castro's Cuba, and, moreover, a part of the literary canon of the Cuban revolution, immediately gaining acclaim as a cornerstone for Latin American testimonial literature. The framing of Montejo's story as an autobiography (and, again, originally signed by Montejo as the coauthor) put in parallel the lives of the slaves in the Spanish colony and the lives of the working classes under capitalism. But also, and by contrast, it projected into the future the qualities and possibilities of a life under the new communist regime.[48] The dual political-artistic nature of the work was noted by English writer Graham Greene in the prologue to the book's first edition: "There wasn't a book like this before, and it is quite improbable it will be repeated."[49] Of course, what Greene was detecting was in fact the crystallization of an already established literary trend that had started in Latin America almost a decade before, one that resulted in *testimonio* finally being institutionalized. As Foster also notes:

> Montejo's symbolic status as a rebel against the institution of slavery, his participation in the struggle for Cuban independence, his membership in the Cuban Socialist Party, and, above all, his representations of the solidarity first of the black ethnic minority all attests to values promoted by the official mythopoesis of the Castro government.[50]

In order to develop the twofold nature of his nonfiction—political and aesthetic—Barnet resorted to a particular strategy: he positioned himself as a mere scribe of Montejo's story, giving "voice to the voiceless" slave. The absence of Barnet as a narrator in *Cimarrón* also created a rather seamless interplay between autobiographical documentary and social narrative, reflecting yet another dimension to the Latin American genre, one that at least this writer is not aware of in Anglo American narrative nonfiction.

Like García Márquez and Walsh, Barnet chose his subject not only for his particularities, but mainly for its emblematic qualities. *Cimarrón* aimed at describing a common Cuban experience or, in Barnet's own words, it aimed at becoming a "sounding board for the collective memory of my country."[51] In a similar vein, many Latin American narrative nonfictions sought to describe those communal experiences, delineating and projecting through allegorical resonances the historical-dialectical development of the Latin American State. This narrative direction, in part a byproduct of the intellectual debate conducted through *Casa de las Américas* greatly differed from the seeming "atypicality" or individualism of the characters and stories portrayed by American narrative nonfiction dedicated, at least in appearance, to art for art's sake.

The political context created a shared communal setting for Latin American nonfiction. It was the backdrop for a collective experience that

had to be rebuilt, restored, and reincorporated into the official records. The nonfiction novel in Latin America emerged precisely as the means to recreate a political memory that had been challenged, silenced, annulled, and often times deleted from the official records by authoritarian governments.

The recreation of this memory couldn't possibly stay separated from politics, and this is in part the reason why literature and political action were so profoundly interconnected in the region during those years. But however strong, this relationship still had its limits. As Barnet wrote in his 1987 prologue to *Cimarrón*, nonfiction narratives couldn't generally offer much more than a synthesis of some of the aspects of the Latin American problem. "Social solutions—he added—are the mandatory duty of politicians."[52]

The Matrix of Proximity

As noted, a particularity of Anglo American narrative nonfiction is that he writer is personally invested in the events he is narrating. And this personal investment is most efficiently displayed in an individual authorial voice, whether in third person or first person. James Agee, in his *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, describes the author's personal participation in the following:

> George Gudger is a man, et cetera. But obviously, in the effort to tell of him (by example) as truthfully as I can, I am limited. I know him only so far as I know him, and only in those terms in which I know him; and that depends as fully on who I am as on who he is.[53]

While Agee wrote his own work in the first person, what he said could also be said of those American authors who chose the third person: The physical, temporal, and personal contiguity between the author and the events he narrates, his subjects and stories, creates a kind of *metonymical* narrative axis. Or, in other words, the authors gain authority, knowledge, and command over their topics and subjects due to their proximity to them.[54] By such proximity, they can say: *I see this, I am here, I know this*. In that vein, the Anglo American tradition of narrative nonfiction becomes an experiential record of the particularities of time and space, as seen, suffered, and enjoyed by its direct witnesses.

In the Latin American nonfiction tradition, although some components remain the same as in the Anglo American, the narrative matrix is substantially different. As marginal counterbalances of an official, hegemonic narrative, these texts strive from the outset to show themselves free from subjectivity as much as possible. The clearest example is Walsh's *Operación Masacre*, where the *impersonal dominance* the narrator exerts over the different points of view

makes them converge univocally in one conclusion: the government has committed a crime against its citizens.

In that sense, it would be accurate to say that Latin American nonfiction writers operate under a premise of maintaining the appearance of a lack of contiguity between their personal experiences and the topics they write about. And even when they sometimes resort to the first person, their narratives gravitate back towards a politically *metaphorical* axis, using their factual stories on an allegorical level. They say: *this story actually happened, but from the outset this is its meaning in the present context*. Latin American nonfiction thus works as an allegorical account of the present through the narration of past or remote events.

Of course, the fact that the construction of nonfiction narratives in the Anglo American tradition gravitates around a metonymical axis does not prevent their achieving metaphorical status. But these metaphors always arise from the author's proximity to the subject and the event. And the reverse can be valid for Latin American literary journalism narratives, which can and does seek out metonymy, but a metonymy foreordained to gravitate around a metaphorical axis, meaning an intentional allegory.

Conclusion

Despite similarities between Anglo American and Latin American nonfiction, there remain a number of structural differences rooted in the origins of the two narrative forms. Of course both resort to similar literary techniques, as noted at the outset. However, there is a general contextual and ideological substrata that creates structural disparities between both traditions.

Because of the forum firmly established in *Casa de las Américas*, and because in Latin America the sphere of culture and the sphere of politics are not so clearly separated, narrative nonfiction in the region has had a political-programmatic quality that Anglo-American nonfiction has lacked. Institutionalized and legitimized by progressive and socialist governments, and especially by the Cuban Revolution, Latin American testimonial literature has consolidated, especially since the late 1950s and until the early 1980s, its political finality, and could not be analyzed in solely artistic terms. To do so would fail to acknowledge the cultural place it occupies in the Latin American experience. In that direction, it could also be argued that in Latin America narrative nonfiction was born in a context of a strong governmental push towards modernization, and since its inception has developed ancillary to and supporting of politics. As authoritarian governments spread across the continent, the efforts to develop this form of nonfiction were often persecuted, thus assuring its politicization. It was due to the authoritarian

advent that testimonial narratives could only turn in a more politically metaphorical direction.

Latin American nonfiction, therefore, oscillates between the "official story" of the regime, which is a false account, and the seemingly "fictionalized" account of a story that contradicts the official statements in unveiling a different "truth" of what happened. It stands to reason that as long as they remain marginal, Latin American narrative nonfiction accounts were tolerated by the authoritarian power. But when these stories started to gain popularity, and their power to negate the official narratives increases, both the stories and their authors started to suffer persecution. Such nonfiction narrativists in Latin America then had to resort, again, to more overtly allegorical accounts in order to portray current social conditions without unduly exposing themselves to persecution.

Moreover, if Latin American nonfiction can be characterized as a form parallel and supporting of politics, Anglo American nonfiction could be characterized as subject to the needs and pressures of the market. The New Journalism in the United States was the result of multiple vertiginous changes in society, and the subsequent need to track and narrate these changes in a new way. As Hollowell notes in his analysis of Capote's *In Cold Blood*, such nonfiction still claimed to be an artistic form, with the appearance of a seemingly intrinsic artistic motivation.[55]

Testimonial literature, on the other hand, has been from its inception, and especially since the 1950s, a moral-political literary form with a very limited teleology: Just like the contraband that caused the damage to the ship and the loss of life in García Márquez's story, one of the central values of these narrative types in Latin America, these journalistic "contraband truths" in the words of David William Foster, was to contribute towards the wrecking of the authoritarian state in Latin America.

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Endnotes

[1] John Hollowell, *Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 14–15.

[2] David Abrahamson, *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Post War Periodical* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1996), 11–17.

[3] Following multiple authors who have attempted to define narrative nonfiction or literary journalism, and differentiate it from other forms of nonfiction such as memoirs, ethnographies, history and certain forms of essay, we will consider literary journalism as a type of referential narrative prose whose protagonists, characters, and situations have documented existence in the real world; whose focus is generally a current event; a narrative that develops an authorial voice and pays especial attention to style, and whose main purpose is both literary and referential. Of course, this is only a point of departure, a working definition that will help me better understand the differences between literary journalism as it exists in the United States and in Latin America. For some of these ideas see Mas'ud Zavarzadeh. *The Mythopoetic Reality: The Postwar Nonfiction American Novel* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 50–67; John Hollowell, *Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 21–47, Ronald Weber, *The Literature of Fact* (Ohio University Press: Athens, 1980), 1–4; and Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007) 1–24.

[4] David Scott Palmer, "Peru: Collectively Defending Democracy in the Western Hemisphere" in Tom Farer, ed. *Beyond Sovereignty: Collectively Defending Democracy in the Americas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 258; quoted in Arturo Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (October 2004): 5. In the online version of this paper, a corrections section indicates that Valenzuela incorrectly stated the number of countries included in the sample in David Scott Palmer's study. These countries were twenty instead of thirty–seven. "Due to an editorial oversight, Arturo Valenzuela's article 'Presidencies Interrupted' (October 2004) incorrectly stated the number of countries included in the sample in David Scott Palmer's study on military coups in Latin America from 1930 to 1980 (p. 5). The correct number is 20." In *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (October 2004): 183.

[5] Although there are not definite numbers about the books that were censored during the period in Latin America, there are some striking hints of how censorship operated in different countries in the region. According to Francine Masiello, in Argentina there were at least 242 rock songs that were banned from the airwaves. "In consequence, musicians had to exert a tight control over the metaphoric shiftings in their lyrics." Francine Masiello, "La Argentina durante el Proceso: las Múltiples Resistencias de la Cultura," in *Ficción y Política. La Narrativa Argentina durante el Proceso Militar* (Buenos Aires: Alianza, 1987), 11–29.

[6] For these numbers see UNESCO, *Mass Media in the Developing Countries: A Unesco Report to the United Nations* (1961), 24–28; John McNelly, "Mass Communication and the Climate for Modernization in Latin America," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*,

8.3 (July 1966): 345–57; Germán Rama and Juan Carlos Tedesco, "Education and Development in Latin America (1950–1975)," *International Review of Education*, 25, no. 2/3, (Jubilee Number, 1979): 187–211.

[7] Roberto Ferro, "La literatura en el banquillo. Walsh y la fuerza del testimonio." In *Historia Crítica de la Literatura Argentina,* ed. by Noé Jitrik and Susana Cella (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1999), 125–45.

[8] Like any comparison, this one is arbitrary, although it can be justified. It is true that, for instance, the Civil Rights Movement was also a hallmark of the 1960s in the United States. However, it could easily be argued that it was the Vietnam War—and its multiple consequences—that originated the most relevant literary journalism in America during the 1960s (Norman Mailer's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Armies of the Night*, and Michael Herr's *Dispatches* are just two examples). The second term of the comparison has left out Argentina's Revolución Libertadora of 1955 and the Chilean coup, equally important for the development of nonfiction in Latin America. These events, however, didn't have the relevance of the Cuban Revolution on the consolidation of nonfiction in the region, primarily because it was Casa de las Américas, an institution created by the revolutionary Cuban government, that formalized *testimonio* and revitalized the interest in nonfiction throughout Latin America.

[9] A narrative work of the most unorthodox nonfiction, *Facundo* is the first major piece in the convoluted puzzle of Latin American literature, and has been described by Aníbal González as the cornerstone of Latin American journalism and by Roberto González Echevarría as "the most important book written by a Latin American in any discipline or genre." See Aníbal González, *Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 41; Roberto González Echevarría, "*Facundo*: An Introduction." In Domingo Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 1–15.

[10] *Diccionario de la Literatura Cubana* s.v. "Testimonio." (1984), 1904–05.

[11] Janina Montero, "Observations on the Hispanic American Novel and Its Public," *Latin American Literary Review*, 6, no. 11 (Fall–Winter, 1977): 6–7.

[12] See note 10 above. The word *testimonio* in Spanish means to bear truthful witness, as John Beverley explains in *Testimonio on the Politics of Truth*. And although its unofficial slogan "to give a voice to the voiceless" is sometimes used to define the genre in the United States, this idea is more metaphorical than literal. The narrators or main characters of *testimonio* are not, by definition, illiterates who require the intervention of a scribe to put their words in paper. As Beverley also explains, *testimonial* narratives are geared to "adequately represent" different types of "alternative social subjects." The question of alternativity (who *is* alternative and who *isn't*) can only be answered considering the political context. Translation of this fragment is mine. Also see John Beverley, *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 3.

[13] Carlos Montaner, "The Cuban Revolution and Its Acolytes," *Society* 31, no. 5 (July 1994): 74–79.

[14] See Neil Larsen, "The 'Boom' Novel and the Cold War in Latin America," *Modern Fiction Studies* 38, no. 3 (Autumn, 1992): 771–83. The similarities between testimonial literature and the reportage tradition of the international proletarian writer's movement are sometimes striking, but that examination is beyond the focus of this article.

[15] Ana Ramb, "Premio Casa de las Américas, 50 años de Luz." *Eco Alternativo,* http://www.redeco.com.ar/nv/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2608&Itemid=143 (2009): 2.

[16] Ibid., 3.

[17] The Cultural Congress in 1968 "would devote many sessions to the role of the intellectual, stressing the need to heal the breach between the cultural avantgarde and the revolutionary vanguard." Jean Franco, "From Modernization to Resistance: Latin American Literature 1959–1976," *Latin American Perspectives* 5, no. 1, Culture in the Age of Mass Media (Winter, 1978): 77–97.

[18] Two examples of Pulitzer Prize winning narrative journalism are Norman Mailer's 1967 *Armies of the Night* and Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson's 1989 *And Their Children After Them*. However, the majority of the prizes were conferred to essayistic books like Douglas R. Hofstadter's 1980's *Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, or historical-essayistic such as Richard Rhodes's 1988 *The Making of the Atomic Bomb.* See Pulitzer Prizes, General Nonfiction, <http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/General-Nonfiction>.

[19] National Book Award official web page:<http://www.nationalbook.org/aboutus_history.html>.

[20] "When Truman Capote first considered eliding these genres by writing a nonfiction novel, there was no 'cultural consensus' he could call on and, therefore, no pre-existing criteria to guide him in relation to form, style or subject matter. To that extent, as noted by Tom Wolfe, Capote was a pioneer." Nick Nuttall, "Cold–blooded Journalism," in *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*, ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler (London: Routledge), 131–43. Also see Hollowell: "Although Wolfe dates the beginnings of the new journalism in the sixties, fictional techniques are apparent in the magazine articles of the forties and fifties" (36–37).

[21] For the notion of "taxonomical uncertainty," see Nuttall, 131.

[22] The absence of an "I" created what Weber defined as the "recording angel" effect (73–88).

[23] Truman Capote, *Music for Chameleons* (New York: Random House, 1980), xv–xvi.

[24] Nuttall, 138–39.

[25] "More than one historian has found a way through chains of false fact. No, the difficulty is that the history is interior—no documents can give sufficient intimation: the novel must replace history at precisely that point where experience is sufficiently emotional, spiritual, psychical, moral, existential, or supernatural to expose the fact that the historian in pursuing the experience would be obliged to quit the clearly demarcated limits of historic inquiry." See Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel. The Novel as History* (New York: Signet Books, 1968), 284.

[26] Weber, 50.

[27] Weber, 98–99.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Weber, 101. Zavarzadeh describes the "centrifugal energies of reality and the centripetal forces of fiction" to define the tension at the core of the nonfiction novel. 226.

[30] Hollowell, 49–62.

[31] Hollowell, 15, 48–62.

[32] "Confronted with a reality that was difficult to grasp, because many of its meanings remained hidden, there was an oblique attempt (and not only because of censorship) of the literary field to place itself in a meaningful connection with the present, and to start trying to make sense of a chaotic mass of experiences separated from their collective meaning." Beatriz Sarlo, "Política, Ideología y Figuración Literaria," *Ficción y Política: La Narrativa Argentina durante el Proceso Militar* (Buenos Aires: Alianza, 1987), 30–59, translation from Spanish is mine. Neil Larsen, "The 'Boom' Novel and the Cold War in Latin America," *Modern Fiction Studies* 38.3 (Autumn, 1992): 776–77; Francine Masiello, "La Argentina durante el Proceso: Las Múltiples Resistencias de la Cultura," *Ficción y Política. La Narrativa Argentina durante el Proceso Militar* (Buenos Aires: Alianza, 1987), 11–29.

[33] Gerald Martin, "On Dictatorship and Rhetoric in Latin American Writing: A Counter–Proposal," *Latin American Research Review* 17, no. 3 (1982): 217.

[34] Gabriel García Márquez, *Relato de un náufrago* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1987), 8. Translation from Spanish is mine.

[35] Ibid., 7–13

[36] Ibid., 12.

[37] David W. Foster, "Latin American Documentary Narrative" *PMLA* 99, no. 1 (January 1984): 42–55.

[38] "Published almost ten years before Truman Capote's much touted 'nonfictional novel' *In Cold Blood*, *Operación Masacre* anticipates the techniques credited to Capote." In Foster, 42–43.

[39] Rodolfo Walsh, *Operación Masacre* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de La Flor, 1972), 11–12. Translations from *Operación Masacre* are mine.

[40] Walsh, 13–14

[41] From the Spanish "Yo también fui fusilado." Translation is mine. Roberto Ferro, "La literatura en el banquillo. Walsh y la fuerza del testimonio." In *Historia Crítica de la Literatura Argentina,* ed. Noé Jitrik and Susana Cella (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1999), 130–31.

[42] Walsh, 13.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Foster, 42–43.

[45] Ricardo Piglia, "Rodolfo Walsh," *Grandes Entrevistas de la Historia Argentina,* ed. Saítta Silvia and Luis Alberto Romero (Buenos Aires: Punto de Lectura, 1998), 392–405. Translation from Spanish is mine.

[46] Foster, 51.

[47] Miguel Barnet, *Cimarrón* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Sol, 1966), 214–15. Translation from Spanish is mine.

[48] The book was first published under the name *Biografía de un Cimarrón,* or *Biography of a Runaway Slave* in 1966. Its title later mutated into *Autobiografía de un Cimarrón* or, *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*, and finally to *Cimarrón*. These mutations speak in part of the evolution in the perception of testimonial narratives in Cuba and Latin America, and were the consequence of the broader debate about the documental possibilities open to nonfiction. I may refer to this topic in future articles.

[49] Barnet, 210. Translation from Spanish is mine.

[50] Foster, 51–52.

[51] Barnet, 212–15. Translation from Spanish is mine.

[52] Ibid., 214.

[53] James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1960), 211.

[54] For a detailed explanation of the different semiotic displacements involved in a metaphor and a metonymy I draw from Eliseo Verón, *La sémiosis sociale. Fragments d'une théorie de la discursivité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1988). Verón compares with succinct clarity Saussure's, Peirce's and Frege's theories of sign, and their notions of metaphorical and metonymical constructions..

[55] Hollowell, 83.

Some parting thoughts
from our former president . . .

A Narrative of Collegial Discovery on some Conceptual Essentials[1]

David Abrahamson
Northwestern University, U.S.A.

David Abrahamson, the outgoing preesident of the IALJS, recalls how collegial circumstances resulted in a set of conceptual essentials for teaching the practice of literary journalism.

As I think back on my two-year term as president of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, I recall fondly having the opportunity to work with so many wonderful people in helping to develop this much-needed learned society. It has certainly been one of the highlights of my career in the academy, and for me there has been a very real sense of accomplishment. While I generally do not advertise my age, there is the feeling at my current time of life of the realization of much good fortune and many wonderful riches. Yet it is always a bit of a surprise when, just as you think you have ascended to the summit of accomplishment—when hubris suggests that you have done it all—that you discover something new. Or perhaps rediscover something you may once have known. In effect, you become a student again. It was while serving as president of this wonderful organization that I found myself for all practical purposes returning to the classroom to (re)learn anew. With your permission, I would like to share that experience with you, if for no other reason than it reminds us that, even when we are full professors, there is always something new to learn, and in fact which may have long been there waiting for us to appreciate its full significance.

Bearing all of this in mind, then, I would suggest that few would argue with the proposition that literary journalism is a category of journalistic endeavor which aspires to go beyond the rendering of facts to explore other realms. In the words of one of its most accomplished practitioners, Ron Rosenbaum, "It isn't about literary flourishes or literary references. At its best literary journalism asks the same questions that literature asks: about human nature and its place in the cosmos."[2] One of the discipline's founding scholars, Norman Sims of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, has written that "the term literary journalism . . . designate[s] works that share qualities such as immersion research, personal voice, elaborate structures and accuracy."[3] Moreover, John Carey, emeritus professor of English Literature at Oxford, has noted that one aspect that makes it so valuable is that, because it is a form of journalism, it "reaches millions untouched by literature [and so] . . . it has an incredibly greater potential."[4]

Over the last twenty years, the academy's engagement with literary journalism has increased substantially. Scholars such as the aforementioned, as well as others such as Thomas B. Connery, John C. Hartsock, and Richard Keeble, have made important strides in exploring the genre.[5] In the view of many, a canon has been generally agreed upon, and most of the definitional issues have been dealt with—if not completely settled, then at least made somewhat less vexatious.

For me, however, there had long been a remaining problematic area, one that had not been studied in a way that I found applicable either to my own scholarship or to my teaching. What I am referring to here is some kind of analytical construct or perhaps a set of analytical components with which literary journalism might be both interpreted and taught. There have, of course, been thoughtful efforts by journalism scholars in this regard: Marcia Prior-Miller at Iowa State University has produced an interesting bibliometric taxonomy, and Douglas Whynott of Emerson College has explored the nature of structure in fine detail.[6] The work of both has been commendable, but to my mind there is an underlying reliance on a form of reductionism with which I have never been comfortable. Not that it is *reductio ad absurdum* by any means, but rather I find it simply too fine-grained in its resolution to encompass the larger kind of questions that might usefully be asked.

What I have been looking for is some kind of schema with which to think both critically and pedagogically about literary journalism. And so in my mind's eye, I have come to imagine a set of interpretive "tools" which would prove valuable not only to me but also to my journalism students, and it is this that I hope other journalism instructors might usefully reflect on.

But first, I have a story to tell:

"It was a dark and stormy night." No, in fact it was a clear and sunny afternoon in Evanston, Illinois when I first read an e-mail from a former colleague and dear friend, Michael Norman, a professor of journalism and mass communication at New York University. If the name sounds familiar, it is probably because Michael's most recent work of narrative nonfiction, *Tears in the Darkness*, spent two or three months on *The New York Times* best-seller list in 2009.[7] Michael's e-mail read:

> I have need of suggestions for maddening internal reasons. I have to kill my signature course in nonfiction language and teach a graduate writing workshop next year. In the first semester the students will be getting the basics of reporting for long-form, plus some high-level grammar, also a sampling of the traditional forms, and some very basic research methods. In the past, the second semester of the course took all this stuff and just sent the students out into the field for fourteen weeks of assignments. Not me. Not with a chance to actually teach students something about literary journalism. So I have come up with a very simple paradigm. I'm calling it "Six Secrets: The Absolute Essentials of Great Storytelling."
>
> Why six? Because in a fourteen-week semester, as you know, one only has twelve effective weeks. I want to spend two weeks on each concept. The first week will be a seminar wherein we read a few pieces that illustrate the concept and I attempt to codify some of its aspects. Then I give them an assignment which we will spend the entire second week work-shopping. Hence, six secrets. My only problem is: What are the six?
>
> I am going to start with "Description," but I am having trouble codifying the other five essentials. I have thought about having them do something with people, also about creating a sequence of action. Maybe an exercise in "Reporting History."
>
> As you can see I am spinning. Then there is the other problem: Finding key readings to illustrate the six concepts. So any advice would be greatly appreciated. Thanks in advance for helping me noodle this.
>
> Regards, Michael.

Imagine, if you will, receiving such a correspondence from a deeply admired friend. Beyond the unavoidable but admittedly ego-driven sense of challenge, there was also the hopeful possibility that I might clarify my *own* thinking on the subject, an outcome which I was certain would be useful to me because I teach similar courses. There was also another element to Michael's message that excited me: I was not the only addressee. The salutation on the e-mail—I hope less than half in jest—read "*Praeceptors Honorifici*."[8] You will note Michael's use of the plural, which was correct in this instance because the second addressee was a mutual friend, the aforementioned and widely respected Professor Norm Sims. "Ah, the plot thickens," the storyteller might

say. Astrophysicists might call this the "Three Body Problem." Professor Sims is one of the founders of literary journalism as a field of academic study. He has produced seminal scholarship on the topic for twenty-five years, as well as assisting generations of younger researchers to find their place in the field. A man of notable intellectual generosity, my friend Norm was certain to respond to Michael's inquiry. But more on that later.

I found myself inspired by Michael's note. And so, veils lifted, and my own answer to the "six secrets" question came to me over the course of a few days of reflection. The six elements I think journalists need to know are, at least on the surface, deceptively simple: character, setting, plot, theme, voice, and structure.

For those who may be nonplussed, some background: I have a master's degree in journalism, in addition to my other degrees (a bachelor's in history and a doctorate in American Civilization). The significance of my master's is that I was trained as a hands-on journalist and spent many fruitful years so occupied. This is important to understand when considering the path of my learning curve in arriving at the above, and I hope it is something other journalists and teachers of journalism might benefit from. As a further aside, and an important one, it is clearly worth noting that my answer cannot be regarded as truly original. For me it may have been something of a new discovery. Or perhaps it is a rediscovery of something that I had long forgotten. I honestly cannot remember. That is because such constructs have long been employed in English departments in the study and teaching of fiction[9]; moreover, a number of books that focus on the art of storytelling address the same question.[10] Nevertheless, I must confess that my answer to the six-secrets question was new to me—which may be evidence of my own intellectual naiveté, as well as how far removed the study of journalism has become from the study of literature.

The result of my reflection as a renewed student were these six analytical implements—character, setting, plot, theme, voice, and structure—which anyone contemplating literary journalism might usefully bring to bear. I envision it as a toolbox of categorizations which might prove of value in the divergent acts of writing, reading, and teaching. The six elements of analysis are generally not taught in the traditional journalism curriculum, and one can only conjecture on the historical reasons why this is so. This is critical to bear in mind for those of us, like me, who were originally trained as professional journalists: These are work-a-day tools that, while perhaps taken for granted in other sectors of the academy, have gone largely ignored in the teaching of journalism praxis. Most important for me is that they are tools that nonetheless provide a means for both the conceptualization and analysis of most literary journalism.

A brief bit of explication might prove helpful for those who like me did not learn this when we were diligently internalizing the Five Ws and the inverted pyramid of traditional journalism.

• Character: The people in the story. They can either be fully realized, three-dimensional personalities, complete with inner lives. Or they might be ciphers or members of a group defined only by a collective noun, as, for instance, in many of Tom Wolfe's sub-cultural explorations.[11] It depends, of course, on the story.

• Setting: This is not only where the story takes place, but also encompasses the realm of the piece's descriptive efforts. In some tales the setting is of paramount importance, and the piece's descriptions are executed in fine detail. Think, for example, of much of the work of the *The New Yorker*'s Lillian Ross, with her jeweler's eye for the perfect descriptive facet.[12] In other pieces, just the opposite is true. It is as if the story unfolds in the mind of the author and possesses no sense of place. Such pieces are, in effect, deracinated of any physical location or descriptive attribute.

• Plot: This is the answer to the question, What happened? Plot equals action, and this often has an important role in defining the architecture of the story's narrative arc. Since action perforce occurs in a chronological continuum, plot also helps specify both the order in which things happened, as well as the order in which action or events are revealed to the reader—which is not necessarily the same thing.

• Theme: The piece's thesis or central argument, theme is the "moral of the story," what the work is *really* about. In my experience, journalism students often find this a problematical concept. Marinated in a misleading belief in objectivity and rigorously trained in early reportorial classes to uncover "facts," many students have difficulty dealing with thematic aspects in their own work. In the professional socialization, they have, in effect, been taught to abhor a premise, no matter how impossible this may actually be. As a result, they often feel uncomfortable at first blush with the concept of theme or even the validity of a central authorial assertion.

• Voice: There are two aspects here. One is the style in which the piece is written—"the sand and lime of language," in the wonderful words of Louis Chevalier, with which the prose is constructed.[13] The second aspect relates to the author's choice of narrator. One way to think of narrator is to think of it as the voice speaking into

the reader's ear as he or she reads the piece. Narrators can come in a number forms. They can be omniscient or naive, reliable or deceiving, a transparent voice or a character in the story. Or, as in much of Ernest Hemingway's nonfiction, even the hero of the tale.[14]

• Structure: The actual architecture of the piece, structure may in some instances be the most important analytical tool of all. By way of analogy, for many writers of many pieces, deciding on matters of structure before the actual writing is similar to the black-and-white value drawing many artists do before embarking on the finished painting. Knowing the size, shape, order, and transitions between the story's major elements can often be the key to the successful mastery of the tale. Nicholas Lemann, dean of Columbia University's School of Journalism and a frequent *New Yorker* contributor, often uses structure with telling effect in his literary journalism. For example, in a *New Yorker* piece entitled "The Kids in the Conference Room" on the culture of the management consultancy McKinsey, known for its presumed omniscience, it is only at the end of the piece that the reader realizes that the article itself has been written, somewhat slyly, in the arrogant format of a McKinsey report.[15] An additional instance of Lemann's skill with structure is his book, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*, which—in five parts covering four decades after World War II—moves from Clarksdale, Mississippi to Chicago to Washington, D.C, then back to Chicago and finally returning once again to the Mississippi Delta.[16]

Another interesting point here is that often pieces are not purely linear with regard to time. Not only can the narrative move backward—via flashbacks—as well as forward, but it also can proceed at different rates of speed. This being the case, I have often thought that the phrase "narrative arc" misleadingly suggests a perfect parabolic path. I admit that it is merely a matter of personal preference, but, because it allows for backward loops and segments of acceleration and deceleration, I find "narrative trajectory" a more accurate description. A perfect example of this non-linearity is Tracy Kidder's recent book, *Strength in What Remains*.[17] It covers 15 years in the life of a young Burundian fleeing the horrors of his country's *genocidaires* to his life as refugee in New York City to his graduation from medical school. The narrative, however, moves forward, backward and even sideways in time, always with the seamlessness that has long characterized much of Kidder's work.

Character, setting, plot, theme, voice, and structure. Every undergraduate who takes an introduction to literature course must learn some version of these, even if memory might dim with the passage of the years.

And so, like an innocent who first experiences the magnitude of the cosmos in the stars of the evening sky, I wrote to Michael. In response to his request for published pieces to illustrate the six "secrets," I provided the following articles. None, I confess, are by non-American authors, but I count on you to forgive my provincialism.

For Character, the agreed gold standard has long been the *New Yorker* profile, and so I chose two from the magazine by Larissa Macfarquhar: one on the intellectual provocateur Stanley Fish and another on Hollywood *über*-producer Brian Glazer.[18] In addition, I added a lovely profile of Ernest Hemingway's former boat captain by Stephen Kinzer of the *New York Times*.[19]

The narrative form of foreign correspondence often seems particularly suited for the foregrounding of setting. To that end, I chose two pieces by Chris Chivers of the *Times*. One was a short piece for the paper written after spending a night with a small group of Marines in Zagarit, Iraq.[20] The second, written for *Esquire* magazine, is, I believe, the definitive story of the horrific hostage events in Beslan, North Ossetia in 2004.[21]

For plot, I chose a piece by Dan Baum. Written for the *New Yorker*, the title is "Deluged."[22] The story deftly weaves two threads of action: the generally mendacious behavior of the New Orleans Police Department during Hurricane Katrina, and their hostile tracking of Baum as a reporter investigating the storm's aftermath.

To my mind, few writers today have a surer command of theme than Joann Wypijewski, a long-time former staffer at the *Nation* magazine. My personal choice was two examples of her extraordinary long-form thematic gifts: from *The Nation*, "GE Brings Bad Things to Life,"[23] and from *Harper's*, "A Boy's Life."[24] In the latter piece, a retelling of the story of Matthew Shepard, the author was able to interview at length both the two assailants and their girlfriends. In a thematic *tour de force*, Wypijweski presents an argument for the possibility that Shepard was killed—crucified, actually—not because his assailants thought he was gay, but rather because they were fearful that *they* might be gay.

For voice, I went to two extremes. Lillian Ross, a fixture at *The New Yorker* since 1948 and still a staff writer there today, is a master of the transparent narrator. Moreover, she has a wonderful ear for language and eye for gesture. I chose her "Shit-Kickers of Madison Avenue," a set piece of fly-on-the-

wall observations of privileged New York City high schoolers.[25] My other selection was Scott Anderson's "Prisoners of War" from *Harper's*, an honest yet chilling personal reflection on the lure of war reporting.[26]

Bil Gilbert's "Mirror of My Mood" from *Sports Illustrated* in the mid-1970s was my choice to demonstrate structure.[27] The story operates on two planes: one that tells the tale of the author's relationship—in truth, a love story—with his dog Dain; the other, about the historic relationship between humans and dogs over the last five millennia. The story moves effortlessly forward and backward in time, and there are occasions where the narrative is set aside in the interest of exposition. Of special note are the transitions between sections; some are so deftly handled that the reader can be two or three sentences into a new section before being aware that they have left the preceding one.

In any event, I sent these thoughts, along with the above examples, to Michael. And copied Norm Sims. Gentleman that he is, Norm copied me with his answer to Michael, which read, in part:

> Michael, I teach something similar to your storytelling course. As you suggest, describing the setting would be one element. Characterization is another, because these are characters, not people. A third is the action, the narrative, the arc, including the dialogue . . . whatever you call it. On top of those elements, I teach them how to digress from the narrative and return, which might correspond to what you're calling exposition, although I prefer the term digression. (John McPhee described it to me this way once: You're on a canoe trip in the Boundary Waters lakes of northern Minnesota. It's evening. Out on the lake you hear a loon. That's a perfect moment for a digression about loons, but when you're done, you return to the lake.) Structure is another element that you don't often see in a story, but it's doing work nevertheless. And the last element I teach is voice, but that's probably the hardest to teach. So I've come up with six, but there are of course other elements of storytelling and of literary journalism. Best, Norm.

With all these e-mails crisscrossing in the ether, I waited for whatever replies would be forthcoming. Norm's was the first to arrive. The chivalrous sort that he is, he wrote: "Impressive list of readings. I may borrow a couple. We seem to think alike on this subject!" The last sentence, just read, ended with an exclamation point—one which I choose to interpret as *celebratory* rather than an indication of *surprise*. In my reply back to Norm, I wrote: "Thanks for the kind words. And, yes, I was amazed—and gratified—to see how much our responses to Michael overlapped."

The circle was closed with a concluding note from Michael to both Norm and me: "My Goodness, Gentlemen,' he wrote. "I don't know a lot,

but thank Zeus, I know people who do. Fabulous suggestions. Twixt the two of you, I can now write the syllabus. Bon Mots, Michael."

End of story.

So we were like a group of boys staring up at the night sky and discovering, in our innocence, the wondrous magnitude of the narrative cosmos. But perhaps the tale just told reveals more than just academic naiveté. I believe it does, and I hope that you, dear reader, agree. For one thing, we must always remind ourselves that we are *always* students. For another, the tale speaks to the disciplinary blinders we sometimes do not realize that we wear. When the journalism academy was in its formative stages a century ago, its well-meaning professors, pathfinders really, set out to establish the rules of journalism. Not literature but journalism. The mission, however, implied an exclusion, and in doing so those early pioneers may have lost sight of something our colleagues in literature take for granted. After all, in the end we are talking about a rhetorical enterprise that presents many different faces. Even more humbling, I find that all of these elements were developed and recognized in classical Greek drama—Euripedes, Aeschylus, Sophocles, as well as Aristotle and his *Poetics*.

In sum, the theme of this essay is twofold. It is the story of a collegial search over what may be old ground for some. But it is also a search for and the serendipitous finding of a set of tools as old as antiquity—and, at the same time, a tale of a return to a state of studenthood. The six tools can be employed to think about literary journalism: character, setting, plot, theme, voice, and structure. Or, if you, like me, have a preference for mnemonics, "Can Sublime Prose Transform Vexatious Siblings." In any event, it is my hope that they are tools the journalism academy might benefit from if—as I also hope—we are to have a journalism that is richer in texture and deeper in insight in its exploration of the human condition.

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Endnotes

[1] This essay is intended, at least in part, to serve as a coda to the author's recently concluded term as the president of this journal's parent organization. It is adapted from a lecture presented at the School of Journalism at the University of Lincoln, Lincoln, U.K. in May 2010. The author would like to express his gratitude to his University of Lincoln hosts, Professors Richard Keeble and John Tulloch.

[2] Ron Rosenbaum, in an interview with Tim Cavanaugh, *Feed* magazine: <http://www.feedmag.com/re/re196_master2.html>. Accessed 1 September 2003.

[3] "Norman Sims, "Producing an Effect: Literary Journalists and a Personal Connection to History," presented at the European Society for the Study of English Biennial Conference, Turin, Italy, 25 August 2010.

[4] John Carey, ed., *The Faber Book of Reportage* (London: Faber, 1987), xxxviii.

[5] See Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008) and Norman Sims, ed., *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008, reprint); Thomas S. Connery, ed. *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: A Guide to an Emerging Genre* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 1992); John C. Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000); and Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler, eds., *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter* (London: Routledge, 2007).

[6] Marcia Prior-Miller, "Research Review: Issues in Magazine Typology," *Electronic Journal of Communication/La Revue Electronique de Communication* 4: 2–4 (December 1994); and Douglas Whynott, "Observations on Nonfiction Book Structures," *Literary Journalism*, 2, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 12–18.

[7] Michael Norman and Elizabeth Norman, *Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

[8] Translation from Latin: "Honored Teachers."

[9] For examples of teaching texts on the subject ranging from the 1930s to this year, see John T. Frederick, *A Handbook of Short Story Writing* (New York: F.C. Crofts, 1936); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) and Michael Meyer, *The Bedford Introduction to Literature: Reading, Thinking, Writing* (10th ed.; New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2010).

[10] See Jon Franklin, *Writing for Story* (New York: Penguin, 1994), and Mark Kramer. *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University* (New York: Plume/Penguin, 2007).

[11] For two worthy examples of Wolfe's master of the technique, see *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Picador/Macmillan, 2009), and *The Right Stuff* (New York: Picador/Macmillan, 2008).

[12] For a useful anthology of some of Lillian Ross's best pieces, see *Reporting Back: Notes on Journalism* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2002).

[13] Louis Chevalier, *The Assassination of Paris*, trans. David P. Jordan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[14] For heroic narrators, few writers in my view have surpassed Hemingway. The

best collection of his journalism can be found in William White, ed., *Byline: Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970).

[15] Nicholas Lemann, "The Kids in the Conference Room," *New Yorker*, 18 October 1999.

[16] Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

[17] Tracy Kidder, *Strength in What Remains* (New York: Random House, 2009).

[18] Larissa Macfarquhar, "The Dean's List," *New Yorker*, 11 June 2001, and Larissa Macfarquhar, "The Producer," *New Yorker*, 15 October 2001. [NOTE: All of the examples mentioned from this point forward in this text can be downloaded from the following link: <http://www.davidabrahamson.com/www/Readings/10-05_Toolbox/>]

[19] Stephen Kinzer, "The Old Man Who Loved the Sea, and Papa," *New York Times*, 29 January 2002.

[20] C.J. Chivers, "Marines Get the News from an Iraqi Host: Rumsfeld's Out. Who's Rumsfeld?" *New York Times*, 10 November 2006.

[21] C.J. Chivers, "The School," *Esquire*, June 2005.

[22] Dan Baum, "Deluged," *New Yorker*, 9 January 2006.

[23] Joann Wypijewski, "GE Brings Bad Things to Life," *Nation*, 12 February 2001.

[24] Joann Wypijewski, "A Boy's Life," *Harper's*, September 1999.

[25] Lillian Ross, "Shit-Kickers of Madison Avenue," *New Yorker*, 20 February 1995.

[26] Scott Anderson, "Prisoners of War," *Harper's*, January 1997.

[27] Bil Gilbert, "Mirror of My Mood," *Sports Illustrated*, 24 March 1975.

Book reviews . . .

Thomas B. Connery
Book Review Editor

The French, and Polish Literary Journalism

La Fin d'Innocence: La Pologne Face à Son Passé Juif by Jean-Yves Potel. Paris

La Vie Est Un Reportage: Anthologie du Reportage Littéraire Polonais edited by Margot Carlier. Montriche

Reviewed by Susan Greenberg 98

Pat Tillman, Truth and the War Machine

Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman by Jon Krakauer

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In Slovenia, Literary Journalism Goes Local

Pot na Orient (Road to the Orient) by Ervin Hladnik Milharčič

Reviewed by Sonja Merljak Zdovc 105

Literary Journalism, the Shorter Version

Bylines: Writings from the American South 1963 to 1997 by Joseph B. Cumming, Jr.

Reviewed by Sam G. Riley 108

After the Horror, the Story

Strength in What Remains: A Journey of Remembrance and Forgiveness by Tracy Kidder

Reviewed by Leonora Flis 111

Appropriation as the New Truth Value

Reality Hunger: A Manifesto by David Shields

Reviewed by Doug Underwood 114

The Art of Feature Writing Explained

The Bigger Picture: Elements of Feature Writing edited by Ivor Shapiro

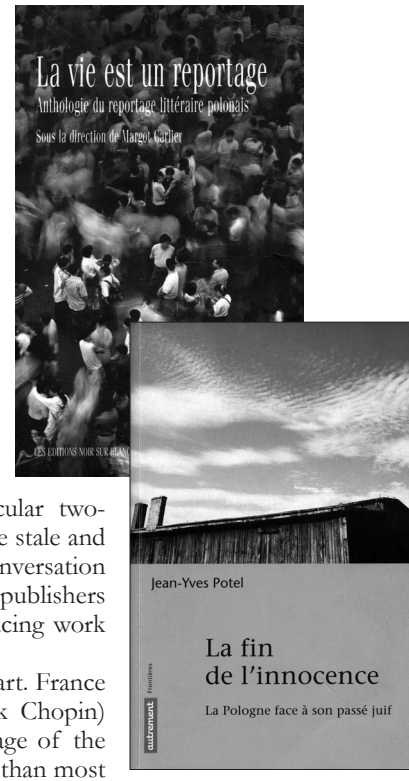
by Jane Johnston 117

The French, and Polish Literary Journalism

La Fin d'Innocence: La Pologne Face à Son Passé Juif
by Jean-Yves Potel. Paris: Autrement Frontieres, 2009. Paperback, 284 pages, €22.

La Vie Est Un Reportage: Anthologie du Reportage Littéraire Polonais
edited by Margot Carlier. Montricher: Les Editions Noir sur Blanc, 2005. Paperback, 264 pages, €20.

Reviewed by Susan Greenberg, Roehampton University, U.K.



There are many reasons why it makes sense to have a conversation about literary journalism in English. But if one is committed to making that conversation an international one, the problem of how to access the many authors unavailable in translation remains. To fill the gaps, we need correspondents to report on developments in the field.

At first, Poland does not seem in great need of such mediation. The presence of large expatriate communities in the United States and interest in a strategically important country has ensured a sizeable literature. Furthermore, the name of at least one Polish literary journalist, Ryszard Kapuściński, has entered the English-language canon. But this particular two-way discussion, like any other, can become stale and predictable. Why not eavesdrop on the conversation taking place in other languages, where publishers have a much stronger tradition of producing work in translation?

The French press is a good place to start. France has longstanding ties with Poland (think Chopin) and still invests a good deal in its coverage of the region. One of the writers who did more than most is Jean-Yves Potel. His on-the-spot experiences during the birth of Solidarity in 1980 resulted in a book of reportage.[1] Since then his interests, explored in several books and a series of articles in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, widened to include the whole of central Europe and the Balkans, but Poland remained his first love.

From 2001 to 2005 Potel served as the French cultural attaché to Warsaw and it was in that role that he was able to note, and foster, the country's efforts to reckon with its past. Like all the countries of the region, Poland had become frozen in time; the ideological demands of one-party Communism and the need to maintain a rictus grin of approval for Soviet rule made it impossible to process the collective memories of the twentieth century, encompassing precarious independence, war

and occupation. In the process, Poland remained fixed in the role of eternal victim,[2] unable to acknowledge responsibility for its own actions; particularly a long record of anti-Semitism, and at least partial collaboration with Germany in the Jewish holocaust.

In the English-language conversation about Poland, it is the latter topic which has dominated, often following predictable lines: Poland is a courageous opponent of foreign oppression, and its accusers are blackening its name; or it is a culture with an unchanging hatred of Jews, and anyone reporting signs of change is naïve or misguided. Potel picks a delicate path through this terrain, remaining open but critical. After summarizing in cogent detail the history of Polish-Jewish relations and the controversies surrounding it, he takes the reader across the country to see and hear—in real time, over a period of several years—the conversations and events that led to a series of increasingly innovative commemorative actions.[3] The detail makes the difference: in one example, the story of how a memorial to commemorate the wartime transport of Jews from Lodz was proposed, agreed and built within eighteen months, shows the contingency of change and the accumulated importance of small acts by many individuals. Journalists sometimes take center stage; a chapter about the village of Jedwabne, where officials had tried to cover up a wartime massacre of Jews by Polish locals, was inspired by the work of reporter Anna Bikont and includes her account of how she discovered the story.

The result is a rich mix of analysis and felt detail that captures the unease that still exists, as well as a real sense of movement. It is the story of how a new generation discovered its past and acted to integrate it into the present; a Polish version of Germany's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. No one can declare that anti-Semitism in Poland is gone, and Potel does not try. But after this account, no one can claim that a serious attempt has not now been made.

Bikont is just one of a whole new generation of literary journalists in Poland, and the second book reviewed here brings its work to a wider audience. In the foreword the critic, translator and editor Margot Carlier makes the case for a "Polish school of reportage" that has become a popular and significant branch of the country's literature, winning prestigious prizes and inspiring a regular following.

The aim of the collection is to show the range and diversity of the Polish school, in both subject matter and writing style. To demonstrate continuity, Carlier presents the 12 stories in reverse chronology and includes older pieces from the three "greats"—Marian Brandys, writing just after the war, Ryszard Kapuściński and Hanna Krall. The last two are described as the "father and mother of modern reportage" (10), responsible for inspiring a whole new generation of writers in the country. Besides Kapuściński, who died in 2007, Krall is the only writer in this book who is easily obtainable in English[4] and it is a comment by her that inspires the book's title: "I don't really know where journalism ends and literature begins. More precisely, where reportage ends. Because I am a reporter. Reportage is for me a way of describing the world." Carlier adds: "Isn't that the aim of all writers; the principal challenge of literature in general" (11)?

If there is a Polish school the questions arise: "Why this genre?" and "Why this country?" Carlier is not the first to point to the effect of communist censorship, which provided writers with years of practice in the literary game of disguising universal meanings in the detail of the text. In Poland, she says, "Since it was forbidden to criticize the system overall, it was necessary to turn towards the

destinies of individuals." In addition, one could add, repression creates outsiders, and being an outsider on some level is a prime qualification for literature.

However, while other countries experienced the same conditions, their writers responded with different strategies, favoring fiction and drama. Carlier does not address this issue specifically, but notes another development in Poland that appears to have made all the difference. After the fall of one-party rule in 1990, the independent newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* invited Krall to launch a special new section on reportage. Then Malgorza Szejnert, "who has been able to gather around her young writers of talent" (12), further developed the section. Literary journalism, like any form, needs recognition and rewards to thrive, and in Poland it received that.

Carlier's descriptions of the qualities present in the selection will strike an echo for anyone familiar with literary journalism in other countries and contexts, although the editor herself does not make the broader connection. "In Poland, the reporter is often considered as a real writer [and occupies] a particular place, between eyewitness and creator" (10), she says, adding later, "Here, creation is an integral part of documentation" (13). Creation is defined as the skilled use of narrative prose, built around a character, place, or event, often structured with plot-like precision, with the writer sometimes in the center of events. Whatever the subject, the writers "always elevate the human aspect of the situation, insisting on the particular, individual motivations of each person" (13). Another quality that she sees as characteristic of the Polish school is "a certain predilection for places and events that appear banal, but which reveal shadows … that only an attentive observer knows how to perceive."

For this reviewer, four stories remained the most haunting. In Mariusz Szczygiel**'s** "Reality" (2001), a daughter discovers nearly 800 notebooks when her mother dies. Every day since 1943, Janina Turek had recorded every act in a compressed, captain's-log style. By the time of her death she had played bridge 1,500 times; received 10,868 presents; made 6,257 telephone calls; and on 23,397 occasions she had bumped into someone by accident and had said "Hello." There are no confidences, no expressions of like and dislike. On the return of her husband from Auschwitz, Janina had simply written: "Unexpected visit by Czeslaw Turek" (39). The daughter, Eva, was shocked by the apparent coldness, and even more so by the evidence of trauma that the notebooks's mere existence appeared to provide. In a search for explanations, the author discovers that this trauma was partly personal and partly public—when the notes start, Cracow is under Nazi occupation and Janina's husband has just been arrested. There are also more general reasons why people keep diaries; the therapeutic effect of writing things down; a bid to capture fleeting time, and the impulse to make one's life part of humanity. But in the end, we will never know the reasons why this woman kept a diary in this manner; the minds of other people always remain unknowable.

In "The Crossing of the Oder-Neisse" (1998), Wlodzimierz Nowak provides a classic narrative, told from multiple points of view and full of telling detail, characterization, sense of place, and action. His subject is the large-scale human trafficking across Poland's eastern border that started as soon as Poland became part of the promised land of Europe. At the time of writing, about three million people had tried to make the crossing there; by now, the number must be many times higher. The public is forbidden to walk along the river that marks the frontier,

but the landscape is hard to police and a local smuggler has a well-rehearsed excuse, saying with a wink: "Our cow is attracted by the water in the river; we have to keep an eye on her" (91). Even when the would-be immigrants are caught, the legal system cannot keep ahead; in one courtroom scene, we witness the struggle to find a suitable translator for an Afghan family.

Another story, "How I Rescued Emilia de Calabre from Her Evil Mistress" by Irena Morawska (1997), is rich with suspense. The author gets a telephone call at the newspaper from a woman who has not heard from her sister in months. As she follows the evidence, we learn that the girl is being held in a form of domestic slavery, in Italy, by a woman from her hometown. And she is not the first victim of this monstrous character, drawn with such detail and psychological astuteness that the reader begins to experience the abuse directly. As always, the past is interwoven with the present. The woman was the product of a forbidden dalliance between a local girl and an occupying German soldier, and from birth her compatriots have visited on her the sins of the father, making the world a very cruel place. One understands, even if one does not excuse.

In "The Seventeenth Ball" (1988), Krall—once described as having such a spare style, she makes even Hemingway seem garrulous—writes from the first-person point of view of a magician pressed into standing for election for the Young Communists. His party meetings are a big success; as soon as the political agenda is finished, he takes out his tricks and entertains the crowd. When anti-party revolt comes in 1980, he is not a target. Instead he performs for the strikers in the Gdansk docks. The quest that brings real meaning to his life is a bid to break a magician's record by using not fifteen but sixteen balls for a particular trick. Looking back, he remembers: "At the moment when one realizes one's dream, one is astonished; one even has difficulty believing that one has succeeded. Finally, one accepts it and starts again to dream . . . of the 17th ball" (236).

As William Faulkner famously wrote: "The past is not dead. In fact, it is not even past." But it is one thing to be alive to the influence and meaning of the past, and another to be its prisoner. Both of these books show how literary journalism provides a means to discover this past, in a way that creates some freedom to shape the present and future for oneself.

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[1] Potel, Jean-Yves, *Scenes de Greves en Pologne* (Paris: Stock, 1981). An English translation, *The Summer Before the Frost: Solidarity in Poland* was published the following year by Pluto Press. A new edition of the French original by Noir sur Blanc appeared in 2006.

[2] Victimhood was real enough, of course. Vladimir Putin's thoughtful response after the plane crash in April 2010 that killed Polish president Lech Kaczyński and other Polish notables, on their way to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Soviet massacre at Katyn, is thought to have gone some way to restoring relations between the two countries. Kaczynski had represented the arch-nationalist strand in Polish politics but obituaries noted the distance that even he had moved from that stance by the time of his death, shaped by a public discourse with a greater tolerance of complexity.

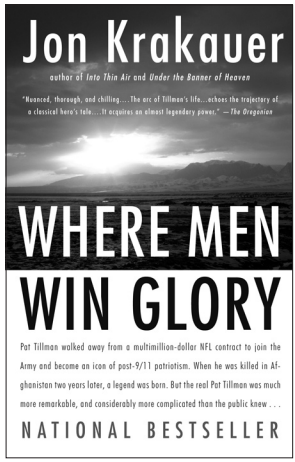
[3] For those wishing to pursue the subject in more depth, the author also provides a chronology, index and bibliography.

[4] For example, *The Woman from Hamburg, and Other True Stories* (New York: Other Press, 2006). Krall, recipient of many international awards, has been translated into fifteen languages.

Pat Tillman, Truth and the War Machine

Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman
by Jon Krakauer, New York: Anchor, 2010, Paperback, 450 pages, $15.95.

Reviewed by Robert Alexander, Brock University, Canada



Nothing comes easy in Jon Krakauer's books, at least nothing worth having. Whether trekking alone into the Alaskan wilderness with little more than a ten-pound bag of rice, a .22, and a stack of books, or standing in the mind-altering thin air of the final approach to the summit of Mount Everest, or even, of accepting the no less dizzying responsibility of living outside the strict authority of the patriarchs of the Mormon Fundamentalist Church, Krakauer's most remarkable subjects consistently shun ease with a passionate idealism that imbues them with a mythic wonder but also frequently kills them.

Difficulty in Krakauer's books, however, is never valued so much in itself as it is for the truths it may reveal. That principle is basic to narrative art, and Krakauer has always been a fine storyteller. But it's also true of journalism and, throughout his career, Krakauer has proven himself a first-rate reporter, adept at chipping away the errors and lies which tend to accrete around the extreme sorts of events, characters, and phenomena to which he is attracted. He noted the debilitating effects of such misconceptions in his first book, *Eiger Dreams*, where, in his account of his attempt at one of the world's most challenging ascents, he remarked, "The problem with climbing the North Face of the Eiger is that in addition to getting up 6,000 vertical feet of crumbling limestone and black ice, one must climb over some formidable mythology" (*Eiger Dreams*, Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2009, 1).

In each of his subsequent books, Krakauer has sought to dispel such errors where he finds them: in *Into the Wild* (1996), for example, he provided not only a gripping account of the life of Chris McCandless, but also a painstakingly researched hypothesis concerning the precise cause of his death. For *Into Thin Air* (1997), and its later "Postscript," he reviews source accounts and other data to sort through the various levels of culpability in the disastrous 1996 ascent of Everest in which he was involved and in which eight climbers died, four from his own team. In *Under the Banner of Heaven* (2003), he confronts the doctrine of a strain of American fundamentalism, contextualizing the brutal 1984 slaying of a young Utah mother and her baby by offering a sweeping historical account suggesting not the deviancy of the crime but rather its consistency with the patterns of violence that have shadowed the Mormon Church since its inception. With his most recent book, *Where Men Win Glory*, Krakauer tackles another hallowed figure as he tells the story of the life and death of Pat Tillman. In this case, though, Krakauer takes it as his task to separate the actual hero from the myth.

Tillman was the star strong safety of the National Football League's Arizona Cardinals until, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, he gave up his $3.6 million contract to serve as an infantryman in the U.S. Army. Two years after enlisting, and one year after a brief tour of duty in Iran, he was killed in action in eastern Afghanistan. What made this sad event ignominious, however, were the concerted efforts of the U.S. military and the White House to exploit Tillman's death as a public relations blessing while simultaneously concealing the fact that he had been killed by friendly fire.

The contrast in this book between the cynical actions of deceitful government and military officials and the idealistic but clear-sighted conduct of Tillman himself is striking. Immediately recognizable as a classic Krakauer subject, Tillman is represented as a bold, intellectually curious, highly principled non-conformist who consistently pushed beyond the limits not only of convention but also of his own considerable accomplishments. Difficulty is often a teacher in Krakauer, and Tillman valued every challenge—even those at which he might fail—for the possibility it offered him to learn something about himself and, in so doing, to improve himself. As with many of Krakauer's characters, one senses that the particular activity on which Tillman chose to focus—football—was only one of any number of ways in which his passion for restless self-testing might have expressed itself. In his journal (like McCandless, he was a journal keeper and an eloquent one at that), Tillman wrote, "Passion is what makes life interesting, what ignites our soul, drives our curiosity, fuels our love and carries our friendships, stimulates our intellect, and pushes our limits" (177–78). It's also, in Krakauer's world, an emotional force that stares down fear and is recognizable in his most memorable subjects: *Into the Wild*'s McCandless comes to mind, as do the various climbers from *Into Thin Air* and *Eiger Dreams*, and perhaps even *Under The Banner of Heaven*'s Joseph Smith who in 1830 founded the Mormon Church. Susan Orlean has remarked that passion is a crucial quality in any subject worthy of the literary journalist's attention ("A Passion for Writing," Mark Kramer and Wendy Call, eds., *Telling True Stories*, New York: Plume, 2007, 284–87). But she also notes that it's vital to the writer as well, and Krakauer is an author in whose achievements, both as a mountaineer and most certainly as a literary journalist, passion abounds.

Although Tillman is clearly recognizable as the sort of passionate subject we expect to find in Krakauer's books, *Where Men Win Glory* also continues a trajectory that has become increasingly evident in his work. Krakauer has always provided a clear sense of the landscapes in which his stories unfold and against which his characters frequently pit their energies. With *Under the Banner of Heaven*, however (and probably at least as far back as *Into the Wild*), he began to add to those topographies the no less real environment of social relations which both produces his characters and with which they often find themselves in conflict. As that human environment has gained prominence in his work, a new category of character has crept into view: individuals whose preference for received (or revealed) truths over difficult, uncertain ones, and whose predilection for deceiving not only themselves but also others, marks them as the antithesis of Krakauer's sometimes flawed but ultimately honorable protagonists.

This social orientation is evident in Krakauer's attempt to explain McCandless's puzzling character by offering him to us in the context of his family. It is apparent as well in the attention he pays to the personalities of Everest guides Rob Hall and

Scott Fischer—in the context of the economics of chartered climbing expeditions that promote expertise in steering relatively inexperienced climbers to the summits of some of the world's most dangerous mountains—and the role they play in the disastrous Everest climb. This greater depth of field emerges most obviously, however, in *Under the Banner of Heaven*, where Krakauer finds the motivation for an unthinkable double murder in the history of the Mormon Church and the mythic narratives by which its members are encouraged to uncritically abide.

With *Where Men Win Glory*, such malicious bad faith and allegiance to duplicity are located not in the extreme margins of North American religious faith but rather in the corridors of power in Washington, where it manifests itself in a host of government and military officials who opportunistically conjured a false but mythic vision of Tillman and his death in support of a presidency and a war in the midst of some of its darkest days. As Krakauer points out, Tillman's death came during a disastrous month for American forces in Iraq and at a time when the Bush administration, six months from the 2004 presidential election, was in desperate need of an image boost. When Tillman was shot by a member of his own platoon on April 22, 2004, certain figures within the government seized the moment, concealing the basic facts of his death from his family and the nation, while crafting a message that trumpeted the familiar national values of military honor and valor.

Although Krakauer makes it clear there is plenty of incompetence, malfeasance, and blame to go around in this story, he reserves his harshest judgments for now-retired Major General Stanley McChrystal, a man for whom 2010 was not a good year. McChrystal was forced to step down as the top commandeer in Afghanistan after Michael Hastings's unflattering portrait of him appeared in a July issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine. The expanded paperback edition of Krakauer's book was published the same month, and it does little to improve impressions of the general. With 60 pages of new material, much of it gleaned through Freedom of Information Act requests as well as from McChrystal's own testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee in June 2009, McChrystal is shown in Krakauer's book to have played a key role in preparing the "fraudulent" documents which, by ignoring the fratricidal circumstances of Tillman's death, allowed him to be posthumously awarded a Silver Star for valor. Krakauer minces no words in his condemnation of McChrystal: "The available evidence indicates that McChrystal and his subordinates in the Seventy-fifth Ranger Regiment engaged in a coordinated effort to deliberately mislead the family, and high-ranking officials at the White House and Pentagon abetted the deception" (358). (The words "McChrystal and his subordinates" were added for the new edition.)

In its juxtaposition of character and social-political environment, Krakauer's book reminds us of literary journalism's roots in literary naturalism. In his *New York Times* review of *Where Men Win Glory*, Dexter Filkins questioned Krakauer's decision to provide the level of detail he does in his description of Tillman's life prior to enlistment. He has a point, but the lengthy back-story does serve to familiarize the reader with Tillman's character and the forces that shaped it. In so doing, it also compels the dramatic question which underlies the text: What happens when an individual such as Tillman, possessed, as he seemed to be, of those fabled attributes of the American character (e.g., courage, independence, intelligence, honor), submits himself to the governmental and military machinery presumably entrusted

as the steward of those qualities? That machinery, it turns out, is under the control of some individuals far less noble than many of those they command, and the result is predictably tragic and absurd.

At the end of the book, however, Tillman is still standing, with a magnitude and integrity McChrystal, the Bush administration, and the perception managers who sought to spin an official myth out of the distorted facts of his death, have lost. What these men did not see, but what Krakauer shows us, is that Tillman's "heroism," such as it was, was of a depth and complexity more impressive than any fraudulent award citation could hope to approach.

No one in the book sums this theme up better than Jessica Lynch, a former solider whose own capture by the Iraqis in 2003 was embellished by the Pentagon into an awe-inspiring but utterly fabricated story of combat heroism. Called before a House or Representatives committee investigating Tillman's death and its aftermath, Lynch told them, "The truth is always more heroic than the hype" (375). So too, Krakauer's books remind us, is the quest for truth, and, difficult as it might be, that quest remains the formidable but ever-present North Face of literary journalism.

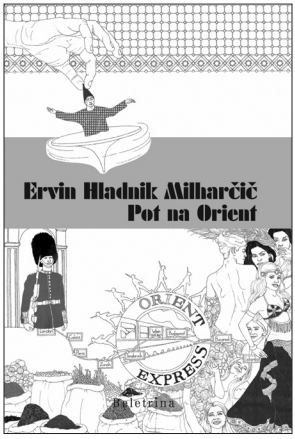
In Slovenia, Literary Journalism Goes Local

Pot na Orient (Road to the Orient)

by Ervin Hladnik Milharčič. Ljubljana: Študentska založba, 2009, Hardcover, 298 pages, €25.

Reviewed by Sonja Merljak Zdovc, University of Primorska, Slovenia

There are a few examples of literary journalism in Slovene language, although most of them have been translations of classic nonfiction texts. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, for instance, was translated into Slovene in 1967. More recently, in 2009, George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and Svetlana Aleksiyevich's *Voices of Chernobyl* were translated. Ryszard Kapuściński has become a household name in Slovenia, and Egon Erwin Kisch a legend.



These writers have inspired more ambitious local journalists to experiment with the form. However, many Slovene readers and journalists have never heard of literary journalism, and those who have are still often confused about the form. Yes, it is interesting to read a good story! But if it is well written, is it still journalism?

To complicate things further, the 'literary' modifier in the phrase literary journalism is seen by some as an excuse to fabricate. Isn't that what fiction does—make up things to reveal the larger Truth?

The confusion is such that in the blurb for *Pot na Orient* the publisher writes, "We get a book which could be placed on the same shelf as those written by the masters of the intersection of literature and journalism; among those masters who only wanted to report what they saw and heard, but en route they inevitably ended up also in fictitious worlds."

Luckily, the author knows a little more about literary journalism than his publisher. A former correspondent from the United States and Middle East, Ervin Hladnik Milharčič knows the difference between fact and fiction, is well aware that great journalism cannot be fabricated, and is familiar with narrative writing in contemporary newspapers and magazines. In fact, he holds narrative in such high esteem that when late in his career he briefly became the editor of the Saturday supplement of *Delo,* the largest Slovene broadsheet—a position similar to the editor of the Sunday papers in America—he cultivated a generation of young writers to file profiles, encouraging them to aim for the level of depth routinely achieved at the *New Yorker*.

One of his first pieces of literary journalism, "Where Fish Approach Swimming from the Sky" (1999)—certainly in the running for best example of Slovene literary journalism to date—pays homage to Joseph Mitchell. It is perhaps no coincidence that he chose Mitchell's Fulton Street Fish Market as the topic for his masterpiece. As a writer, Hladnik Milharčič is not an outside observer like Gay Talese. Nor does he clue in the reader to his rambling internal dialogue like Hunter S. Thompson. Rather, he uses Mitchell's conversational style as well as his favorite subject—local people.

However, Hladnik Milharčič's local is another person's global. As a Middle East correspondent, 1994–2000, he became quite familiar with the Orient, or, to be more precise, the Westerner's idea of "Orient." (Milharčič's idea of Orient is actually the near Orient, extending to present-day Iran, not India, China, and Southeast Asia.) Yet the whole book tells about the author's search for the "true" Orient. What is it? Where is it?

Pot na Orient, Hladnik Milharčič's third book and first collection of narrative, consists of stories previously published in various Slovene newspapers and magazines. He has rewritten some of them, either to add new information or improve style and clarity. The book is divided into four parts and an epilogue. The first, "They All Went to Egypt," is a long narrative about Middle Eastern cuisine in general, and the author's search for the origins of "čevapčiči" (or "kebab" and "luleh" as they are called in Iran), in particular. While searching, he shares historical, cultural, sociological, and geopolitical information, and the narrative runs on many levels. For example, the profile of Claudia Roden, a famous cookbook writer, is also the story of life in Egypt in the 1940s and 1950s.

The second and the third parts, "Nilobus" and "Rock el Kasbah," are collections of short features written mainly when Hladnik Milharčič filed stories from Cairo.

Some are based on his travels to neighboring countries, especially Israel and Palestine. He writes conversationally and matter-of-factly, as well as with wit and humor. Here is a representative example:

> I asked if this warfare wasn't meant to be used in the war against Israel and how he will justify its usage against fellow Palestinians. He became serious.
>
> "With everything it does, Hamas follows the religious principles. In our religion it is not acceptable, haram, to kill thy brother."
>
> The phrase to kill thy brother was not a figure of speech. In many families there are some who belong to Hamas and others who belong to Fatah. The ex-chief of Arafat police in West Bank Džibril Radžub is a Fatah veteran; his brother is the leader of Hamas in their native village Dura near Hebron. "If we wanted to kill blindly, we could have done it a thousand times. There is still a red line that we do not wish to cross. We don't want to go on streets and kill everybody who belongs to Fatah."
>
> He took his breadth in.
>
> "But."
>
> There had to be a "but."
>
> "If you find yourself in a position in which somebody attacks you, you have to defend yourself. You can't ask first who is on the other side of the gun" (203).

In part four, "Instanbul Ekspress," the author travels farther east—still looking for the origins of "čevapčiči"—which takes the reader back to the book's beginning. In this section, the landscape of journalism in Slovenia is changing and he is no longer a correspondent. His latest stories are based on occasional, post-correspondent travels to the Orient, Turkey, and Iran. Eventually, he realizes that "those European dreams of Orient, the same dreams about which Edward Said writes so ironically in *Orientalism*" (273), are nothing more than a fantasy.

Interestingly, the opposite is true. When he asks Barbara Skubic, a translator who lived in the Middle East for many years, how "her Arabs imagine Europe," he gets the following answer: "They (Easterners) see us (Westerners) as lost and lonely; every man is an island. We both have very unfortunate images of each other . . . For some parts of our and some parts of their society this is all true, but this is not all of the society. In fact, we barely know each other" (249). The stories collected in *Pot na Orient* complement the daily reports of on-going conflicts in the region, but also build a bridge between readers and subject (Hartsock, 2000, 141), helping readers to understand why, for instance, locals can bring themselves to support people or groups considered to be terrorists (176–78).

Will Durant once said: "Civilization is a stream with banks . . . the story of civilization is the story of what happened on the banks" (qtd. in Walt Harrington's *Intimate Journalism*, 1997, ix). Hladnik Milharčič's stories are not about the stream filled with blood from people being slaughtered; they're about life on the banks where people build homes, make love, and raise children.

In the epilogue, which acknowledges the people who opened their doors to him, Hladnik Milharčič reveals his credo: "Is all this true? Of course it is. If you go around and look for stories they find you. You walk through private mythologies and continue to wonder. Nothing that comes your way belongs to you in any other

form than in the form of a story that needs to be told. . . . We are storytellers and there is a story to tell. That's it. The story is a piece of journalistic writing as understood by Anglo-Saxon journalism. Either you have seen it for yourself, or it was told to you by someone who was there. There is no other way" (296).

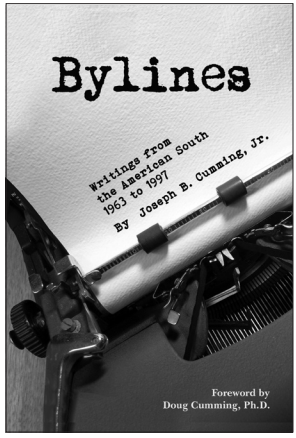
With this closing remark, Hladnik Milharčič provides a brief, yet important theoretical framework to the practical examples collected in the book. *Pot na Orient* thus becomes a tool for those of us trying to affirm the position of literary journalism in Slovenia. It has been difficult at times to explain what literary journalism is about, especially to young journalists who may harbor aspirations to become literary journalists. For them, the writings of the masters from abroad are simply too far away, and their lofty heights seem so unobtainable. Now they can identify with and follow in the footsteps of a local reporter, despite the fact that in Slovenia he, too, is already a legend.

Literary Journalism, the Shorter Version

Bylines: Writings from the American South 1963 to 1997.

by Joseph B. Cumming, Jr., Bloomington, Indiana: Author House, 2010, 247 pages, $24.99.

Reviewed by Sam G. Riley, Virginia Tech, U.S.A.



Joseph Bryan Cumming, Jr. is a prime example of the gentleman journalist. He was born in 1926 into the genteel part of Augusta, Georgia, a small city having an aristocratic element that extends beyond golf. His father was a well-connected lawyer there, and young Joseph grew up having the personal acquaintance of the movers and shakers of the New (and not-so-New) South. His higher education was of the old-fashioned liberal arts variety, in which history and literature assume greater value than mere training to do a job, at Sewanee, The University of the South in Tennessee.

The picture of Mr. Cumming that emerges from reading this delightful book is that of a highly evolved gent, kind and compassionate, a player of old standards on his grand piano, a lover of good writing—especially verse—who might well have followed his father into the law, but who instead gravitated toward a life of journalism. His usual subject

matter was the American South. The people with whom he socialized and others he interviewed for stories or worked alongside during the thirty-four years featured in this collection of his work come very close to being a who's who of the South in that era.

The book owes its dual charm first to the fact that Cumming was an active journalist and writer during the Civil Rights era that so changed the South and dragged it out of its rustic feudalism. Race, he wrote, was an issue that "went far deeper than reason," one that "made men grow pale with outrage, their lips drawn to the color of clay" (35). It was a time when a gulf wider than the Pacific separated opportunities available to the young men of Cumming's social set and similarly youthful black men, whom white Southern boys never met. Second is the undeniably literary style that enlivened his freelance feature writing, his commentary pieces and his column. Like most of us interested in literary journalism, Cumming was drawn strongly to the New Journalism, but his own work was not cut from the same cloth as that of Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, and their fellow writers of long-form narrative articles based on saturation reporting about a single person or topic.

Instead, Cumming's writing was done in short-form and was contributed mainly to a variety of Southern magazines and newspapers, but also surfaced in *Esquire* in that magazine's more literary period. Though short in form, Cumming's work was long in use of literary devices: metaphor, simile, allusion, irony, humorous understatement, involvement of the reader's emotions, and the like. His fondness for verse shows up in the way he so often inserted snippets of it to add an artistic touch and a deeper layer of meaning to accompany his already stylish prose. A selection of three of his poems makes up a small section of this book. There, one will see his deft touch in commenting about the process of aging when he writes that "all these summer years so great in heedless grace, so romping banjo clever, shall be safely lost and free to sneak alive and live forever" (136). What a fine way to describe the odd way the bird of youth flies away, yet in our autumn years, lives on fondly in the form of memories.

Cumming's type of immersion reporting differed from that of the primary demigods of the New Journalism in that he did not devote enormous amounts of time to producing one extremely long article or book, but the twenty-two years he spent reporting on the South for *Newsweek*—serving for eighteen of those years as that magazine's southern bureau chief in Atlanta—provided him with what arguably might be considered an even more profound immersion in the monumental changes-for-the-better taking place in the South during that dramatic and wrenching era. His reporting, however, does not appear in this book, which instead showcases his freelancing and his commentary. In all his writings, his remarks are made with great charm as he reflects on what life had been like for a privileged, though not enormously wealthy young man such as himself, born in a time when everything came easier than it does now for fellows in his situation. He wrote of the time's sense of revelry that felt like an echo of the Roaring Twenties, describing the time of his youth as resembling "a cloud kingdom, unrelated to toiling earth" (13).

Readers of *Bylines* are certain to come away from the book wishing they could

have known Cumming, to have been part of his "enclave of billowing conviviality" (31) filled as it was with visits from fascinating and accomplished people of all sorts and, in Cumming's elegant words, "good talk and the slinksound of ice in gin and tonic" (31). The reader will be treated to Cumming's fond take on his *Newsweek* mentor, Big Bill Emerson; such writers as James Dickey, Pat Conroy, and Anne Rivers Siddons—each of whom he actually knew, not merely knew about; and a whole panoply of the era's heroes, rouges, political luminaries, lettered worthies, and odd characters. This reviewer's favorite piece fondly describes two venerable newspaper columnists who shared an office at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*: Celestine Sibley and Harold Martin (who also wrote features for the *Saturday Evening Post*). Both wrote about people who don't ordinarily make the hard news but who reflect the color and interest of real life, which is something that literary journalists should strive to do. An example Cumming uses is a convicted murderer, rapist, and robber Sibley once wrote about, who shrugged off his heinous crimes saying, "Ain't nobody perfect" (22).

From 1979 to 1985, Cumming wrote his own column for the Sunday book page of the *Journal-Constitution*. The topics his columns addressed ranged widely, from writer Marshall Frady, who had published a book about Southern evangelist Billy Graham and who defied the advice of Strunk and White with his lavish but deft use of adjectives, to cocktail parties as a minor art form, to the two winter months Cumming and his wife spent slogging through every page of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, to the riches of the Atlanta History Center, to the "secret life" of books found in vacation houses.

One of the few examples of Cumming's writing in which he commented negatively about his subject was headlined "Atlanta Magazine Gets the Blahs." This former chamber of commerce periodical turned glossy city magazine, in which Cumming himself had published stories from 1967 to 1969, in his view had become blah by 1980 and was busy becoming even more so. He characterized the magazine's history as having been "by turns, spunky, dull, outrageous, lively, sleek, slick and blah" (155). Its editorial content, he commented, had become driven by the needs of its advertising department. He ended his comments about the magazine by wishing that "some foolish old Warbucks will take a fancy to her, take her off the street and, as they say, make an honest woman of her" (158).

It was during this period, beginning when he was in his early fifties, that he put his long years of professional experience to work teaching media and journalism courses at West Georgia College in Carrollton, Georgia. Earlier he had spent a year as a visiting instructor at the University of Georgia, and he had earned a liberal arts master's at Emory University. The final part of his book deals with the joys and frustrations of college teaching—joy taken from the intellectual riches all around any college teacher and frustration from struggling against undergraduates's complacency in a time when sports seem to be a college's most important component. Those of us who also teach—quite possibly including Cumming's son Doug, a professor of journalism at Washington and Lee University, who provided the foreword for this book—can relate to the elder Cumming's wry remark that,

while he liked teaching and was fond of his students, as to those students's grasp of real-world knowledge, they had "two small blank spots—the past and the present" (223)—and many of them seemed determined to keep it that way.

One of Cumming's saltiest pieces of advice was aimed at his male journalism students. Those of us who also teach this subject at a college or university have met ever so many young fellows whose journalistic interest extends not a single inch beyond sports. Not that anything is wrong with sports, to be sure, but Cumming's message is that sports alone is simply not enough. Young fellows who limit their interest to this one topic, he predicts, will become bored, then boring, and probably will be divorced by age thirty-five.

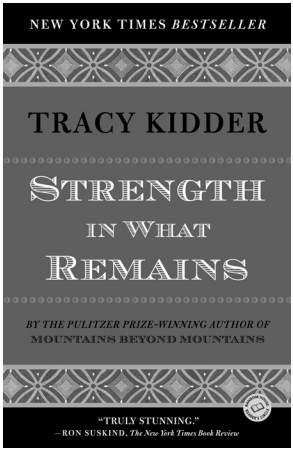
What a delightful man. What a talented writer. How fortunate anyone who has been part of his charmed circle.

After the Horror, the Story

Strength in What Remains: A Journey of Remembrance and Forgiveness

by Tracy Kidder, New York: Random House, 2010, Paperback, 284 pages, $16.

Reviewed by Leonora Flis, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia



When you find yourself in a place beyond horror, you are faced with two options: run or succumb to the horrifying reality. In *Strength in What Remains: A Journey of Remembrance and Forgiveness,* Deogratias Niyizonkiza chooses to run from Burundi, East Africa, where he is a medical student. Just one of many trying to survive civil war and genocide, he flees first to Rwanda. Eventually he arrives in New York City with $200 in his pocket, knowing no one and having no command of English. Central Park and the streets become his new home. Later, after graduating from Columbia University and attending the Harvard School of Public Health, "Deo," as he is known, returns to Burundi. With a network of friends and supporters, he builds, staffs, and establishes the country's first public health clinic.

Deo is the protagonist of Tracy Kidder's latest nonfiction narrative. His journey reads like a novel—or perhaps a work of literary journalism—with a woven narrative

that uses retrospection as its main structural principle. And while the narrative is somewhat fragmented, shifting back and forth across time and place, the design and structure echo the often disjointed nature of memory.

Kidder and his wife are introduced to Deo in 2003 by Paul Farmer, the infectious disease expert and crusader who is the central figure in Kidder's 2003 book, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World.* Deo initially tells some of his story to Kidder's wife, who shares it with the author. As Kidder says later in *Strength*, Deo's story lingered like "the secondhand memory of someone else's memories, as strange and unresolved as the memory of a dream" (150).

Three years later, Kidder sits down with Deo for the first time, about 10 years after Deo fled Burundi and landed in New York. Relying on Deo's memory and the memory of others, Kidder retraces Deo's journey, returning to Burundi with him and then searching out the New York locales where he slept, ate, worked, and studied. He also talks to the people Deo met and knew along the way.

Kidder wants the reader to bear in mind the subjectivity of remembrance, but also the truth of the story. "I didn't embellish anything," Kidder claims in an Amazon.com podcast, "but no one's memory is perfect and I wanted to acknowledge that to the reader." In the first chapter of the book's second section, "Gusimbura," Kidder explains that Deo told him "details of his story gradually, over the next two years," and therefore "the account of the escape suffered here and there from memory's usual additions and subtractions, and there was no direct way to verify a lot of it. . . . But the story was consistent—and sometimes slightly, reassuringly inconsistent—with the facts that I could find."

Kidder is one of our most accomplished literary journalists. He has been writing for more than thirty years, and tends to prefer relative detachment in narration, not in a sense of not immersing himself fully into investigating and experiencing the reality he writes about, but in a sense of minimizing his presence in the narrative. He prefers to give full power of narration to his protagonists. His previous books were mostly written in the third person, but in *Strength in What Remains*, as with the beginning of *Mountains Beyond Mountains,* Kidder opens in the first person with a short introduction that gives us Deo and Kidder traveling to Burundi together in June 2006, thereby naturally acknowledging Kidder's presence in the story as well as the authenticity of the story's telling.

In the first part of the book, titled "Flights," Kidder writes in the third person. He utilizes flashbacks and takes us to the Burundi of Deo's 1970s childhood, as well as to his student years in the early 1990s, when the succession of dreadful massacres involving Hutus and Tutsis starts. The "state-sponsored slaughter" (270) cuts Deo off from his family, turns his world upside down, and sends him fleeing. Then, with an anthropologist's keen eye and a novelist's skilled hand, Kidder portrays Deo's new life in New York City in 1994.

To tell Deo's tale in both Africa and the United States, Kidder couples dialogue with meticulous descriptions of Deo's inner landscapes, at times entering his lead character's mind to describe his innermost fears, and the external reality he knew

and experienced. The depictions of massacres are direct and sharp; the reader is not spared the bloodshed, and we suffer with Deo, as does Kidder: "The rain was heavy. He couldn't stop shivering. He was stumbling along, hugging himself. He saw swarms of flies and smelled putrefaction before he saw the bodies. The thick grass among the banana trees was full of them" (125).

While Kidder's own reactions to the disasters in Deo's homeland are shown in "Gusimbura," where the narrative again switches to first person, the author diminishes his presence and lets Deo feel and think his way through the memories and the actuality he revisits. Similarly, with Kidder's careful telling, we are able to see Deo the delivery boy try to deal with his boss, a malevolent store manager, and watch him make his deliveries on New York's Upper East Side, where he feels too ashamed to accept tips from customers because it seems like begging. He would rather go hungry. For a while, he sleeps in an abandoned tenement in Harlem. Later he finds a better, safer spot and second home in Central Park—both of which we're able to visit, courtesy of Kidder's precise descriptions.

Throughout, Kidder never fails to remind us that Deo is haunted by recollections of bleeding Burundi and his family: "But always memories troubled him … especially on nights when there was a moon. It was automatic: every time he saw the moon, he thought of a moonlit night when he was a little boy, feeling utterly safe because he was with his grandfather Lonjino" (30–31).

The book offers remarkable depth of vision and emotion. Kidder is interested in singular moments and details, which he connects with sheer artistry. Deogratias, whose full first name is a Latin phrase meaning "Thanks be to God," has, as we can see from the very beginning of the story, a special kind of luck; it is as if someone watches over him. On his dramatic journey, he meets a number of incredible people who help him turn his life around. Kidder sketches these "benefactors" and their stories, showing how their lives merged with Deo's. Sharon McKenna, a former nun, stands out because she finds Deo a safe place to stay in New York. Nancy and Charlie Wolf, a kind, educated, idealistic couple from Soho, basically adopt Deo and make it possible for him to enter Columbia and graduate with a degree in biochemistry.

Kidder does not fail to stress the unlikelihood of such a turn of events. He writes: "Improbable as it would have seemed to almost anyone else, the fall of 1995 found Deo entering his freshman year at Columbia University" (99). Yet such opportunity leaves Deo conflicted. He is grateful for his new life, but at the same time torn with guilt, we learn as Kidder takes us into Deo's mind and heart: "But then he thought of his parents trying to rebuild their burned house in Kigutu, of his widowed grandmother in Butanza, of his siblings hiding in the forest. And here he was living off Nancy and Charlie and going to an Ivy League school where he had been mistaken for the son of a king, studying organic chemistry and philosophy. The words that came into his mind were 'useless,' 'selfish,' 'parasite'" (104).

The final chapters reveal the realization of Deo's long-lasting hopes and dreams—the building of a clinic in Burundi. Village Health Works opened in the town of Kigutu in November 2007, the same year Deo became an American citizen. He

keeps going back to Africa, Kidder tells us, not only to greet the patients but also to visit the memorial sites, to remember "that place beyond horror," to take these images with him, and recount the story to the world. Because "stories are for eternity," as Tim O'Brien says in *The Things They Carried*, they are for the time "when there's nothing to remember except the story." And Deo's actually happened.

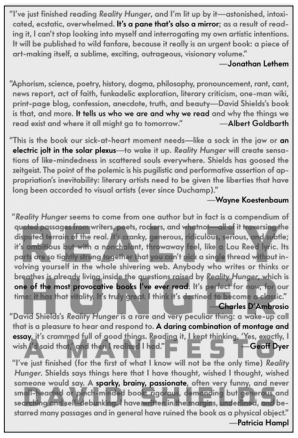
Appropriation as the New Truth Value

Reality Hunger: A Manifesto

by David Shields, New York: Knopf, 2010, Hardcover, 240 pages, $24.95.

Reviewed by Doug Underwood, University of Washington, U.S.A.

There is much in David Shields's *Hunger Reality: A Manifesto* that is likely to annoy the traditional journalist, the more conservative of today's literary journalists, and probably many scholars of literary journalism. In places, Shields—who confesses to once being kicked off the Brown University campus newspaper because "I'd made stuff up" (169–70)—has penned a manifesto that reads more like it might have been produced by Stephen Glass or others of the disgraced recent generation of journalists than it does a serious treatise about the place between fiction and nonfiction, where Shields contends the most important truths of life reside.



However, if one can get past the places where he cavalierly dismisses the truth-telling distinctions deeply felt by many journalists, one will encounter a book with a good deal to say about the authenticity of imaginative literature, the limitations in describing "reality" in much nonfictional writing, and the deeper truths that can be found in books that, as Shields puts it, are about "the real world, with all its hard edges, but the real world fully imagined and fully written, not merely reported" (69).

In order to comprehend Shields's resistance to "generic boundaries" (168) one must unravel the elements of the postmodern funhouse that he has constructed to make his points. The first element is structure. The book amounts to a numbered series of aphorisms, assertions, and personal comments that advocate for the blending of traditional genre categories in many forms of expression—journalism, literature, cinema, photography, music, memoir, reality TV, social media. The second element is the issue of citation. Most of the passages are borrowed, with no attributions or footnotes to distinguish them from Shields's contributions. Only

because he says he was required to do so by his editors does Shields list in truncated form a cited appendix of the many eminent figures that he quotes. Finally, there is the tone of the work. In places, it is celebratory of an insular writer's worldview, name-dropping throughout in giving plaudits to a host of contemporary writers, and superior in its rejection of traditional writing categories. Often Shields, who got his M.F.A. from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop program, judges the value of writing by what "bores" him or what he finds difficult to proceed through—plots and invented characters (175), the reading of a novel that "presents itself unself-consciously as a novel" (71), the "banality" of much nonfiction (40), John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (169, 171), etc. "When I'm constrained within a form, my mind shuts down," Shields writes. "…*This is boring, so I refuse to try very hard*" (70–71).

A key element of the book is his celebration of the value of "collage," which he indicates serves as his justification for appropriating the comments of others. This leads to some of his most problematic statements about the relationship of fact to fiction, such as, "I recognize no difference along the truth continuum between my very autobiographical novels and my frequently fib-filled books of nonfiction" (177). In fact, in sorting through the book's aphorisms, I found myself grateful that his editors made him add some minimal formal attribution. It often turns out that the most eloquent come from his quoted notables; his own often have a glib, flip flavor. For example, here is Picasso: "Art is not truth; art is a lie that enables us is to recognize truth" (32). Here is Shields: "You mix and scratch the shit up to the level your own head is at" (103). Or here is Geoff Dyer: "I like to write stuff that's only an inch from life, from what really happened, but all the art is of course in that inch" (64). Here is Shields: "These categories are plastic. But they aren't. Ah, but they are" (64).

It goes without saying (since that is the design of his project) that much of what Shields has to offer has been said before—including by others important to the field of literary journalism and journalistic literature that he doesn't quote. Mark Twain, for example, captured the tension between "artistic" truth and "factual" truth in his famous quote by Huckleberry Finn about the tactics of the author of *Tom Sawyer* ("he told the truth, mainly"). Ernest Hemingway talked about the "kinetographic fallacy" and opined that fiction allowed him to penetrate to deeper truths of life than conventional journalism ("That is what we are supposed to do when we are at our best—make it all up—but make it up so truly that later it will happen that way"). And Tom Wolfe served as a lightning rod for his comments about the best nonfictional writing having become literarily superior to most contemporary fiction two decades before Shields wrote that "the novel isn't dead," it's just not as "central" to the culture as it once was (22).

Shields's version of this conversation, in fact, seems to be too much a product of the inbred American writing industry and the preoccupations of those who have spent too much time in a campus creative writing culture. Narcissism and solipsism are two terms he describes in positive ways (153–54)—and there is a "the present-is-where-it-is-at" and damn-tradition-and-morality feeling when he writes, "I can

hardly treat the topic (of plagiarism and appropriation) deeply without engaging in it. That would be like writing a book about lying and not being permitted to lie in it" (209), or, "Who owns the words? . . . We do—all of us—though not all of us know it yet. Reality cannot be copyrighted" (209).

So what is one to think about a work that is so proudly derivative and purposively provocative? My advice would be to read the book and to ruminate upon its challenges to the writing and scholarly orthodoxies that can bind journalists, narrative non-fictional writers, and scholars of literary journalism. For me, *Reality Hunger* was a fascinating read because I agree with many of its underlying sentiments. I have made a similar case for fiction built upon a foundation of journalistic fact-gathering, and I have advocated for writing that sits on the boundaries between fact and fiction as being worthy of greater consideration in any discussion of the literary canon.

And yet, as a journalist by background, I am loath to call for doing away with genre distinctions or our expectations that writers be transparent in their writing strategies simply because I can see the value in writing that blends literary categories. I would agree with Shields's point that the line between fiction and nonfiction is "easy to voice but hard to sustain in logic" (65). But I also would suggest that we tread carefully before calling for its elimination simply because we recognize philosophically and intellectually that no human being can ever fully comprehend "reality."

Shields's own writing career has followed an arc that helps to put into context his contentions in *Reality Hunger*—from conventional novels and short stories, to non-narrative short fiction, to book-length social commentary, to free association autobiographical vignettes. In his most recent works, Shields mixes genre forms, such as in *The Thing About Life Is That One Day You'll Be Dead*, which is a pastiche of autobiographical musings, reminiscences about his yarn-spinning father and his experiences of mortality, and discourses about biology's role in the aging process. (He also puts into practice his belief in "collage" in an odd way— for *The Thing About Life*, he cribs passages virtually verbatim from his 1984 novel, *Heroes*, but with autobiographical references substituted for fictional ones.) A writing professor at my own institution, the University of Washington (we have never met), Shields has accumulated a mass of writing grants, literary awards, and favorable reviews.

The trouble with a manifesto is that it depends a great deal upon who is writing it. When entering into any discussion about the intriguing but dangerous zone between fact and fiction, one looks for guideposts that signal that we can trust a writer's insights—the integrity of a George Orwell, the irony of a Twain, the social conscience of a James Agee, the demonstration of the principle in the works of all three that truth in the deepest sense mattered to them more than anything else. When new voices jump in to celebrate the sacking of tradition and the setting aside of professional writing standards, one worries sometimes about the foundation upon which the call for a new creative order rests.

In the end, *Reality Hunger* may best serve as an illustration of the gap that exists between an edgy, postmodern, experimental writing culture and the world of professional journalism, which continues to draw upon the modernism of Enlightenment thought with its faith in the search for real and tangible truths that all can believe in.

Still, *Reality Hunger* is worth a look-see by scholars of literary journalism, if for no other reason than that it may help some among us find additional reasons why we aren't ready to abandon all distinctions between fact and imagination, even as we advocate for writing that straddles the boundaries.

The Art of Feature Writing Explained

The Bigger Picture: Elements of Feature Writing

edited by Ivor Shapiro, Toronto: Emond Montgomery, 2009, Paperback, 325 pages, $42.

Reviewed by Jane Johnston, Bond University, Australia

Like a great feature, this book is a compelling and seamless combination of many parts. Editor Ivor Shapiro, an associate professor of journalism at Ryerson University in Toronto, has brought together the work of twenty feature writing and creative nonfiction luminaries in this tightly constructed but comprehensive feature writing text. The book comprises ten chapters, each concluding with a previously published feature story that illustrates the chapter but is also a stand-alone piece of excellent journalism. Shapiro points out in the preface: "Each of the ten feature articles reprinted in these pages represents a Canadian author's journey and invites us, the readers, along for the ride." Indeed, the features took this Australian reader along for the ride as well. The stories transport you to the farthest points of Canada—from fishing for lobsters in the Magdalen Islands, to outsmarting beavers in Alberta, and to British Columbia and the tragic story of the culled 'Golden Bough'—and stay with you long after reading them. They are well chosen for their impact, poignancy, clarity, and illumination of what Shapiro calls the "bigger picture."

Shapiro's book deals with feature writing, creative nonfiction, literary, and narrative journalism synonymously. While there is some reference to journalism throughout the book, its overwhelming approach is to position feature writing as a broader form of nonfiction, inclusive of literary techniques, with the theme of good storytelling at its core. If we see journalism as existing along a continuum, with news reporting at one end and literary journalism at the other, this book positions feature writing firmly at the literary journalism end. Chapter authors are keen to

differentiate feature writing from straight reporting. For example, David Hayes explains why longer-form journalism is different from straight news reporting, comparing the two to travellers (long-form features) and tourists (straight news). "The tourist experience is superficial and glancing … the traveller developers a deep conversation with her surroundings," he writes, citing *The New New Journalism*. The selected feature articles include strong literary qualities, are longer form, include characterization, scene setting, use of time and sequence, point of view and so on, plus the chapters are inclusive of literary and creative techniques and readings. It also draws on the ideas and suggestions of key literary journalism and creative nonfiction writers throughout the book and includes a list of "essential reading" inclusive of the likes of Robert S. Boynton, Roy Peter Clark, Norman Sims and Mark Kramer, Gay Talese, and Tom Wolfe.

It is, nevertheless, an extremely accessible undergraduate journalism textbook for both feature writing and literary journalism students. The book chapters traverse the usual feature writing textbook topics: Part One, story ideas and how to bounce back from editor's rejections; Part Two, chapters on research, reporting and reconstructing scenes, and interviewing; Part Three, predominantly structure; and Part Four, written by Shapiro, is a single chapter, "Truth and Storytelling: Ethics in Nonfiction," that wraps up the text and, in good feature-writing style, draws the rest of the copy together, focusing on one of the book's key themes, truth. Here, Shapiro confesses: he told a (white) lie in an early feature story and he has never forgiven himself. "Tweaking" the truth, he was told, was common and he succumbed (though it must be noted that his editor requested the "tweak"). "I always—always!—feel a twinge of shame," he now says of the indiscretion. This type of firsthand experience, and insights into the traps along the path of reporting and writing, help to make this book a great read, with personal experiences such as this separating it from the more formularized style of textbook. Shapiro drives home this key theme—"truth trumps narrativity." Other themes he draws out include the "show don't tell" rule, how technique is important but takes second place to accuracy, and the importance of keeping promises to sources.

Like Shapiro, chapter authors bring their own experiences to this book, plus they also draw on the insights of others. This makes each chapter rich with examples and illustrations. Paul Benedetti uses the work of Jon Franklin to explain structure in dramatic nonfiction, and then uses an article by Gay Talese to illustrate how to bring the reader into the story. Sue Ferguson spends two pages outlining how to garner information from sources, explaining the benefits of persuasion, the need for trust and spending time with your sources. She also outlines the importance of online research, but with the caveat, "while the web *is* an amazing tool, it has limited function for journalists." Ferguson cites John Vaillant to reinforce her point: "The good stuff is out in the world … There's no substitute for the power of being there." The result is a book that is brimming with great illustrations and wonderful anecdotes plus good advice from many of the best known in the fields of feature writing, literary journalism, and creative nonfiction.

Ironically, *The Bigger Picture* is almost devoid of pictures—diagrams, tables, or

images, that is. But it doesn't need them. It is so cleverly written that it doesn't require the elaboration or simplification that comes with images: with two exceptions. Susan McClelland's visual structure of the feature story, consisting of a wavy line cut through the centre by a straight line, is the most basic of diagrams, but clever in its simplicity. McClelland explains: "The part of the wave that touches the straight line is known as *grounding*, when you reiterate to your readers, in different words, your topic and theme." The second image is the wonderfully evocative front cover. Here, a small photograph of an urban street scene is intriguing, presenting any number of narrative options: a youth with a Labrador pup are investigating something on the ground, a bike sits against a curb, a television is abandoned on the sidewalk, and red graffiti breaks up the blue exterior wall behind the curb. Set against a glossy black cover, the image of the youth and pup are mirrored elsewhere on the page. This is definitely a pick-me-up cover. (The only other image in the book is a communication triangle in Chapter 1, which warrants no comment or elaboration.)

What is abundant are sidebars, used like sidebars in feature stories, dealing with specific detail and issues that are dealt with in brief. This allows additional topics to be covered without weighing down the overall size of the book. These are presented under the heading, "Glad you asked!" with topics covering everything from essential reading for feature writers and cures for writer's block to working under Canadian media law. Of course, there's also a sidebar on sidebars.

As a book editor and a teacher of feature writing for twenty years, I find this book impressive in many ways. If done well, edited books can bring together the best of all their contributors. In this particular edition, the ten chapter authors represent a massive pool of knowledge about this genre. Each author has an impressive resume of published journalistic works and journalism scholarship. That each feature story included at the end of each chapter is so different, yet each chapter conforms to a uniform style while still maintaining authorial voice, is testimony to the adaptability and versatility of these writers and the clever editing of Shapiro. On the second point—of teaching feature writing—this book is one I would readily adopt. While clearly Canadian in focus its ideas, approaches and knowledge base give it global appeal and usability. Good feature writing is good feature writing and a good book is a good book wherever you are. The structures, writing devices, reporting approaches, ethical framework, and outstanding illustrations of long-form feature writing, inclusive of literary style and techniques, have broad application for teachers of both feature writing and literary journalism. *The Bigger Picture* is likely to do something far more important than teach great feature writing—it will inspire it.

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.

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