LJS
Literary Journalism Studies
Vol. 4, No. 2, Fall 2012

The Journal of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

Baltimore's fabled marble rowhouse steps, featured here in "Wash Day" (1945) by Baltimore photographer A. Aubrey Bodine. In her article "Love Letters to Baltimore," Stacy Spaulding argues that newspaper columns featuring such Baltimore icons should be seen as "urban community narrative." *Wash Day" © Jennifer B. Bodine • Courtesy of www.aaubreybodine.com Image ID # 25-011 A. Aubrey Bodine began working for The Baltimore Sun in 1920 and became regarded as one of the finest pictorial photographers of the twentieth century. More than 4,000 images from his fifty-year career are available at www.aaubreybodine.com.*

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Website: www.literaryjournalismstudies.org

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

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

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

Literary Journalism Studies

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Literary Journalism Studies
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Member of the
Council of Editors of Learned Journals

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

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES invites submission of original scholarly 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.

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Note from the Editor…

Narrative Literary Journalism's Resistance to the Big Idea

What I continue to find fascinating about a narrative literary journalism is its capacity, a capacity I believe is inherent, to resist coming to closure,[1] and specifically the kind of ideological closure that subscribes to the BIG IDEA. This is what I detected in Juan Pérez González's thoughtful, probing account in this issue of examples of a narrative literary journalism from Castro's Cuba in the 1980s. Moreover, I see this as part of a continuing pattern in countries long subject to authoritarian rule.

It is not difficult to detect the source of the resistance, although it is easy to overlook it because of its ubiquity. We detect it, for example, in that iconic video of the lone protester standing in front of an army tank in Tiananmen Square in 1989, as media sociologists have noted.[2] To the West, it represented heroic defiance by the individual. To the official Chinese media it represented, according to the spin they put on it, the humane restraint of the People's Liberation Army in not running the protester down. What is key here is "spin." Because beyond the socially constructed spin—official, scholarly, or otherwise—lies the individual "spin," as reader-response theory tells us, in which there always exists the possibility of a reader's individual and distinctive interpretation of, as well as resistance to, prevailing social constructions: Imagine the tank driver thinking, *I don't want to run over this guy*. Maybe there's a little truth to both positions, and the result is a kind of ethical complexity more suited to being explored in a literary journalism.

When I was younger and traveling through Prague during the communist period, I couldn't help but notice on the famous Charles Bridge over the Moldau the statues of saints Barbara, Margaret, and Elizabeth. What left an impression on me was that despite their being begrimed in black in that badly soot-polluted city, and despite the fact that this was an officially atheistic country, the city made it a point of carefully cleaning and painting the saints' carved inscriptions in gold leaf. One wonders if it was possibly a subtle form of resistance to the political BIG IDEA. Because why, in the end, would the communists want to care for such statues that represented a resistance to their IDEA? And in a failed society, what were the dangers posed by such statues committed to the religious life? What individual interpretations, amid food and energy shortages as the Soviet-dominated empire declined, could be drawn from and attached to these vestiges of an earlier era that the Czechs memorialized by painting the chiseled identities in gold leaf? After the religious experience had been

banished to the ideological wilderness during the communist period, could the Underground Man or Woman, as a protest against an existential banality imposed by the State in the name of the BIG IDEA, begin to wonder what the State found so threatening? And personally take up the threat as an act of protest, and, more importantly, self-efficacy? One can turn to religion for many reasons, the bad and the good.

In a sense, the evidence of the world around them is what a few literary journalists—those committed to a journalism as storytelling—turned to in Castro's Cuba in the 1980s, at least as I see it. Because they detected in the details that not all was well in the workers' and peasants' paradise as prescribed by the BIG IDEA smoking a Cohiba. That evidence, or what Mikhail Bakhtin characterizes as "inconclusive present-day reality," one "open-ended" and "fluid" to interpretation,[3] offers itself as a puzzle to be sorted out by the interpreting imagination of the literary journalist and by extension the reader's imagination focused on the suggestive possibilities of the details, not on the constricting construct of the BIG IDEA. And if journalists, literary or otherwise, were not concerned with pensions, government-subsidized apartments, and whatever else the state promised if only they promised to be good *apparatchiki*, then they were free to pick up on the disparity between the public relations and the reality.

I remember detecting this in Kiev in 1991. No sooner had I landed there than my host took me to a government butcher shop—literally through the back door in a back alley. To be slaughtered? Instead, a friend awaited him with a side of ribs for a *shashlik*, or barbecue, he and others were preparing for me at their dacha in the countryside. My host paid in *valuta*, hard currency, and we took off for the dacha in his little Lada, arriving to drink *samogon*—moonshine—made from sugar beets, eat Ukrainian barbecue, only for me (and others) to wake up the next morning with a puking, wretching stomach, and a headache feeling like the weight of a hundred-pound anvil on the collapsing brow of my forehead. So I recall the aesthetics of my experience.

But that my host could so casually walk in the back door of a government butcher shop and get his *shashlik,* this at a time when government butcher shops and all food shops were reported to have shortages by a Western media shooting video of endless food lines at the front doors of the shops, was important for revealing one thing: the disparity between the public relations of the BIG IDEA and the reality of the people's paradise. The BIG IDEA was socially and morally bankrupt. The BIG IDEA had become irrelevant.

The literary in a narrative literary journalism fundamentally challenges the BIG IDEAS precisely because of the commitment to the inconclusive, open-ended, and fluid present-day reality of the particular, the distinctive, that in its open-endedness offers itself to individual interpretations that can trump social constructions. It recalls, once again, Sartre's observation that in the face of totalitarian oppression, one may be forced by the pain of the torturer to say "*oui*" to his demands, "Yes, I did it," but that in the privacy of one's unspoken consciousness one can always say "*non*."[4] In that albeit severely limited range of personal motion and action, one has nonetheless asserted oneself in an efficacious and ultimately dignifying gesture. And so resistance extends outward according to the demands of the moment—some of them of course survival moments that require restraint.

What is uncanny is, as I indicated at the beginning, how much this has been detected by scholars elsewhere. The first time I ran into it was in Diana Kuprel's account of the Polish and to some extent Czech traditions of literary reportage, or reportage literature as it is variously called in Europe and elsewhere.[5] As Kuprel notes, Polish readers would read Ryszard Kapuściński's dispatches on the third world as accounts in which they could see a mirror of interpretation held up to their own national experiences. After all, the differences between an authoritarian regime in Africa and an authoritarian government in Poland was one of degree. One can detect the phenomenon of the inconclusive and open-ended present's resistance to the BIG IDEA in the work of Svetlana Alexievich in the declining years of the Soviet Union. In her "Boys in Zinc," she challenges the official Soviet screed that its army was in Afghanistan to promote socialism among the benighted Afghanis.[6] One can detect the resistance as well in the Chinese version, as Charles A. Laughlin and Peiqin Chen, among others, note (indeed, it has been a chorus of others).[7] For example, Liu Binyan went from being a Communist Party darling in China to a pariah never permitted to return home from exile because he pushed the boundaries too far in his personal selection of the details and ultimately interpretation, as a selection must inevitably imply.[8] Sonja Merljak Zdvoc also sees this phenomenon in her native Slovenia during the Tito years of the Yugosolav federation.[9] The issue is straightforward: Detailed *description* reflective more broadly of real-life social conditions—and by this I do not mean abstract descriptions, but rather sensual descriptions of distinctive, one-of-a-kind phenomenon, or the wart on one's nose so to speak—cannot be denied. If people lived without running water, they lived without running water, and a political ideology dedicated in principle to material wellbeing would have difficulty denying that circumstance lest the hypocrisy be *too* self-evident. People, after all, are only so stupid, and when the emperor dawns his new clothes, the people can see through the transparency; they see it for the charade it is.

Now, as I think back about it, I ran into this phenomenon even earlier, in Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* when I was an undergraduate in college.[10] But then there was still earlier William Barrett's *Irrational Man* my senior year in high school[11] . . . Of course we are all exposed to influences differently, we all perceive differently, no matter how slight the differences.

This is what I detected in Pérez's account of literary journalism in Cuba under Castro. Why? Because there is always the potential for resistance in the distinctive details of inconclusive present-day reality that cannot be so conveniently co-opted by the BIG IDEA. Bearing this in mind, it is not too much to suggest that it is this quality that helps to make such a journalism literary, in the sense that it transcends, if even only momentarily, the prescriptions of the BIG IDEA, reminding us once again: It is all in the details, and we ignore them at our peril.

— John C. Hartsock

Notes

1. I first explored the resistance to closure in *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 42.

2. See, for example, David Croteau and William Hoynes, *Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press, 1997), 225–26.

3. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), 39–40.

4. William Barrett, *Irrational Man* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1962), 243.

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

6. Svetlana Alexievich, "Boys in Zinc," trans. Arch Tait, *Granta* (Autumn 1990): 145-61. See, also, John C. Hartsock, "Literary Reportage: The 'Other' Literary Journalism," *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*, xlii (Spring/Summer 2009): 113–34.

7. Charles A. Laughlin, *Chinese Reportage: The Aesthetics of Historical Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 7; Peiqin Chen, "Social Movements and Chinese Literary Reportage," *Literary Journalism across the Globe*, eds. John S. Bak and Bill Reynolds (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 148.

8. Hartsock, *Genre*, 129.

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

10. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground, White Nights, The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* and selections from *The House of the Dead*, trans. Andrew R. MacAndrew (New York: Signet Classics, 1961).

11. Barrett.

Revolution Is Such a Beautiful Word! Literary Journalism in Castro's Cuba

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The predictable discourse of Cuba's communist news media has occasionally been challenged by literary journalists who have offered some surprisingly rich, and politically uncomfortable, interpretations.

There were a few people in Havana, around the end of the 1980s, who knew who Tom Wolfe was. How they had come to know him is difficult to explain. None of the books written by Wolfe until that time had been published in Cuba. Neither *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* nor *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. Neither *The Pump House Gang*, nor *The Right Stuff,* nor, crucially, *The New Journalism*. Yet, some people knew who Tom Wolfe was and were also somewhat knowledgeable about the New Journalism itself. Spanish translations of Wolfe's manifesto had found their way into Castro's Cuba, and some writers, journalists, and university lecturers had read it. Wilfredo Cancio, then a young student at the Faculty of Journalism of the University of Havana, has recalled how he and his classmates got hold around 1987 of a Spanish edition of *The New Journalism* on which they put a cover with the uninviting title *Minutes of the Congress of the Union of Cuban Journalists.*[1] At the time, being in possession of a foreign book was still something most people would wisely not boast about. Contemporary American writers were not the kind of authors the ideologues of the Party would recommend to the younger generation.[2] And literary journalism, those ideologues would have said, was most likely another dangerous foreign creation that had nothing to do with journalism in a socialist society.[3]

Someone in the Party must have changed his or her mind, because a Cuban edition of *The New Journalism* was published in 1991. Almost at the same time, the country's readers were presented with a Cuban edition of Oriana Fallaci's *Interview with History*. Both books instantly became compulsory reading among the Faculty of Journalism of the University of Havana and the Department of Journalism of the University of Oriente in Santiago de Cuba, the only two schools of journalism open in the country at the time. Even though both were abridged versions of the originals, they still had enough power to change the way a new generation of journalists understood the art of writing. Literary journalism is no longer treated with suspicion in Cuba. Quite the contrary, there are frequent calls for journalists to write in a more lively and creative way.[4] But the ideological and institutional structures of the Cuban press stifle the sporadic attempts by a few daring journalists to experiment with new narrative modalities and literary styles. While Cuba's profound social, economic, and cultural crisis provides formidable material for literary and investigative journalism—there are many fine journalists and writers willing to tell the stories of this *fin du régime*—very few, if any, of those stories ever appear in Cuban newspapers or magazines, which Fidel Castro's own friend, Gabriel García Márquez, famously said were "seemingly created to hide rather than show" the country's reality.[5] This article examines the travails of some exemplary Cuban literary journalists; the institutional, political, and ideological obstacles they had to overcome; and the lasting legacy of their work. The examination indicates that literary journalism will not find a space in the Cuban press as it currently exists if its occasional practitioners insist not only in writing beautifully, but also in challenging the Party's preferred interpretation of the country's life—its past and its uncertain future.

The Style of the Revolution

Literary journalism existed in Cuba long before Fidel Castro took power in 1959. During the first half of the twentieth century, Cuba had a vigorous and politically diverse press.[6] Many novelists, essayists, and poets were also reporters, art critics, and columnists in national and local publications.[7] There were numerous examples of narrative literary journalism[8] in Cuban publications during the pre-revolutionary period, between the inauguration of the Republic of Cuba (1902) and Castro's victory. The most remarkable of these is probably Enrique de la Osa's reportages in the celebrated "En Cuba" (In Cuba) section of *Bohemia*, the country's oldest and most influential current affairs magazine. De la Osa, an avant-garde poet in his youth who in his maturity dedicated himself entirely to journalism, reported some of the most sensational stories of his time in a style that was thrillingly melodramatic and

unconcerned with journalistic conventions. More than classic reportages,[9] some of his stories resembled the popular *radionovelas* (radio soaps) of that time, with bigger-than-life characters trapped in intricate plots of corruption, betrayal, and murder.

Castro's revolution interrupted the development of literary and investigative journalism in Cuba.[10] Most of the leading publishers, editors, columnists, and reporters of the pre-1959 press left the country: the journalism of socialist Cuba was therefore born with a cultural deficit that has still not been overcome. The place of some of the country's finest writers, who fled from Castro or broke up with him after a brief dalliance with his regime, was taken by Party cadres and young revolutionaries, who filled with a squalid prose[11] the pages of the scarce newspapers and magazines that continued to run in the 1960s and 1970s. The majority of these early socialist journalists came from the urban working class or from small towns in the countryside and had only a basic or at best incomplete literary education and a very vague, Party propaganda-filtered idea of the world outside Cuba.[12] In the schools of Journalism, professional education was focused on the ideological functions of Communist media, not on technique.[13] But the most important factor preventing the development of literary or investigative journalism in Cuba was the imposition of strict limits on all forms of representation and interpretation of the country's social reality. Castro's infamous dictum "Inside the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing" defined the cultural and informative policy of the new government, and was interpreted and applied arbitrarily by cultural commissars and newspaper editors. Most literary authors, even those who sympathized with Castro's regime, stayed away from State-owned, Party-controlled newspapers and magazines that favored the dry explicitness of propaganda and were hostile to ideological ambiguity and formal experimentation.[14]

As early as 1964, the country's President, the Communist Osvaldo Dorticós, lectured the Union of Cuban Journalists about the need to eliminate "vices of style and work." Dorticós said that it was not licit "with the pretext to avoid a grey, boring, tedious press, to forget fundamental canons of the revolutionary journalism and appeal to cheap sensationalism."[15] Still a decade later, the congress of the Communist Party called the country's journalists to "pay special attention to the development of a legitimate revolutionary and socialist style in the use of different forms and techniques of expression," to avoid "sensationalism, superficiality, the imitation of the decadent trends of the capitalist world," and not to make "any concession to bad taste and vulgarity."[16] Successive congresses of the Union of Cuban Journalists have called for that elusive socialist style of journalism whose practitioners were memo-

rably defined in 1980 by Fidel's younger brother Raúl Castro as "reproducers of ideology."[17] Style, however, is still seen as a means to produce a more politically effective message, not to open the representation of social reality to multiple, even conflicting, interpretations. In January 2012, Raúl Castro, who in 2006 had succeeded Fidel as Cuba's leader, declared that the press had to encourage an "exchange of opinions," but not "in a bourgeois style, full of sensationalism and lies, but with proven objectivity."[18] Style was never the problem: deprived of the possibility to produce their own free interpretation of Cuba's past and present, and harshly penalized every time they did it, neither literary authors nor journalists could have produced journalism of any quality. All journalistic genres and modalities (news, features, interviews, reportages, comments, reviews) were forcefully adapted to the needs or will of the Party and the variable talents and education of the practitioners. Literary and investigative journalism, whenever they appeared, were seen as little more than oddities, and dangerous ones at that.

The Kandy-Kolored Socialism

Cancio's generation, coming of age at the end of the 1980s, had reasons to be moderately optimistic. At the time he was in university, the Cuban press was showing some signs of life. The country's leaders had started a process of timid economic reforms and had called for a more vigorous and open discussion of Cuba's many problems. The political process initiated around 1986 was parallel to the Soviet perestroika and led to an unprecedented debate of what Fidel labelled "mistakes and negative trends." The Cuban "rectification" peaked in the fall of 1990, when most of the country discussed in open assemblies held in workplaces and neighborhoods the manifesto for the IV Congress of the Communist Party. Ordinary citizens demanded more democracy and even questioned the supremacy of the Party. When the Congress finally convened, in the fall of 1991, the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe had fallen, the Soviet Union itself had its days numbered, and Cuba had sunk into a severe economic and political crisis. Any calls for more democracy were shut down, and the press, which had become significantly more critical of many aspects of the country's social life, was reduced once more to an instrument of political propaganda, ideological education, and popular mobilization.

A key moment in that period of relative openness in the Cuban press between 1984 and 1991 was the publication in 1987, in a small monthly magazine called *Somos Jóvenes* (*We are Young*), of a long piece titled "El Caso Sandra" ("The Sandra File"). It appeared unsigned, but it was later established that its author was the young writer Luis Manuel García.[19] The career of

García had been somewhat unorthodox. He had a degree in Geology and had taught Physics and Statistics.[20] He had joined *Somos Jóvenes* in 1984 and had started writing both journalism and fiction. By 1987, he had published three volumes of short stories and was already well known in the circles of young writers and artists in Havana. His unconventional career and his avoidance of formal journalism education in Party-controlled schools might help explain "El Caso Sandra." This was an extremely frank account of the travails of a young prostitute under Castro's socialism. Sandra was the pseudonym of a young woman whose occupation had allegedly disappeared. She was not supposed to exist, much less be featured in a magazine whose aim was the political and moral education of the Cuban youth. García "interrogated her for many hours, accompanied her during her cruising nights in Havana, and invited her to dine" at his house.[21] The result was a fascinating and, for most people, shocking depiction of a zone of the Cuban reality whose existence had never been admitted in public by either Party officials or journalists of the State media. Sandra, a school dropout, had been kicked out of her house by her father, a high ranking Party officer, and survived by sleeping with both Cuban bigwigs and foreign tourists and entrepreneurs. She lived in a world of luxury hotels, drugs, and paid-for sex. García, who belongs to a literary generation that was stylistically closer to the muscular realism of its American contemporaries than to the flamboyant verbosity of classic Cuban writers like Alejo Carpentier or José Lezama Lima, or the magical realism of Latin American greats like Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa, told the story of Sandra without verbal flourishes or didactic moralizing. The story, he remembers, "went through the different episodes of a sad but real life, and rejected any Manichaean interpretation. It did not aim to be sensationalist, and the proof of it was its concise style and the discretion with which I addressed certain topics. But it was somewhat sensational because it uncovered an underworld most people did not know."[22] Sandra appears as a tragic heroine, the unfortunate victim of a dysfunctional family and a hypocritical society. The story begins like this:

> Sandra met her father when she was eleven. From that moment on, a man who had been an unknown became simply a stranger. Though she was the eldest of five children, Sandra had spent half her life with an unmarried aunt, who taught her a philosophy of self-defence. "If a boy hits you, you hit him back with a stick. If you want people to respect you, you have to show them that you are not weak. Look at your mother. She has been waiting on that man for fifteen years, washing his clothes every time he shows up. That's why I live alone. Nobody fucks with me. Remember that". During those eleven years, Sandra lived with her mother for only a few short periods. She was not allowed to play outside and much less play with boys.

> "Because women's place is home, and besides, you have work to do." Since she was seven, Sandra washed the clothes of her brothers and sisters, and since she was nine she started cooking for them, because her mother had got a job somewhere and could not take care of the children. Every time there were rumours that her father might come back home, Sandra knew her place in her parents' bed would be taken, and she would be sent back to her aunt's. Nobody ever explained anything to her. There was no need. At eleven, Sandra already knew too much and had changed schools nine times.
>
> She finally met her father for two reasons: he had been reprimanded by the Party for not caring about his children, and he returned home more or less definitely.[23]

García follows Sandra through the labyrinth of Havana's low ends. Moving scene by scene,[24] García introduces prostitutes, pimps, pornographers, foreign tourists, policemen, and other obscure characters. His reconstruction of Sandra's conversations with some of these characters fully validates Tom Wolfe's belief in the capacity of what he calls "realistic dialogue" to involve the reader "more completely than any other device."[25] This is demonstrated in the following example:

> Three times she was arrested and another three she escaped arrest thanks to the protection of her client, who protested in the name of human rights. . . . It was the same policeman the three times. Once, in the Hotel Nacional, he called her aside and asked: "Why are you doing this? You are young, pretty, smart. You are full of potential. My daughter is your age. You look like her. Why do you do this?" "I have done nothing." "Bullshit." "Look, I know you are after me. . . ." "I am not. I am after what you do." "But I . . ." "Look, I know Candela, Tormenta, La China and the rest, are looking for someone who can help them leave the country, but you . . . You too?" "Not in a million years." "Then, do you realize, damn it, the image you are giving of your own country? You know the saying: you don't shit where you eat? You are shitting where you eat." "Look, officer, I . . ." "I don't want to hear anything else. You better quit, because if I see you again, no matter what you are doing, even if you are having an ice cream, I will arrest you. Or you quit of your own will, or I will make you." Three times he arrested her. She was always released the day after, for lack of evidence. The story of the policeman made her remember a Frenchman who had criticized Cuba and socialism. When she tried to reply, arguing that not everything was bad, and mentioned that there were no beggars in Cuba, and education and health care were free, he laughed at her. "Look who's talking. A Communist whore. You don't sell yourself for rubles or pesos. You sell yourself for dollars. Get it?" She said nothing, but never forgot that night.[26]

It is unclear how much García, who had no formal literary training, knew about the American New Journalism, if he knew anything at all. But his story had the "immediacy," the "concrete reality," the "emotional involvement," the "gripping" or "absorbing quality" that Wolfe claimed the new journalists of the 1960s had begun discovering in realist fiction and were bringing to their own reportages.[27] "El Caso Sandra" was ill-fated, though. The then chief ideologue of the Party, Carlos Aldana, called a meeting with the staff of the magazine. Aldana asked each of the writers what they thought about the story. Only two out of the seventeen writers distanced themselves from Sandra; the others accepted collective responsibility for it. It was the end for the kind of hard-hitting, deep-digging journalism *Somos Jóvenes* had naively attempted to produce. One of the two journalists who rejected responsibility for "El Caso Sandra" was appointed director. García was condemned, rather benignly, to write about distant planets, oddities, and ancient history. As García himself has noted, "Any historical event dated after the European Renaissance was considered too recent, and I wasn't trusted to write about it with the required prudence."[28] He left the country in 1994 and settled in Spain, where he has continued publishing fiction while editing, until very recently, *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana*, the most influential journal of the Cuban exile.

The Eloquence of the Past

By the time Luis Manuel García left *Somos Jóvenes*, another prominent journalist of the 1980s, Leonardo Padura, had also abandoned journalism, though he would never leave Cuba, where he is still living. Padura had made a name for himself writing in the daily newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* (Rebel Youth), the organ of the Communist Youth League. Like García's, Padura's career had been very different from most of his colleagues'. The young Padura had wanted to be a baseball player, but after acknowledging he was not good enough, he decided to start writing. He completed a degree in Latin American literature in the University of Havana, and soon after got a job at *El Caimán Barbudo* (*The Bearded Cayman*), a magazine in which many young writers and artists discussed obscure philosophical matters and also, as much as they could, Cuba's reality. Padura's unusually polished style[29] and his willingness to dig in to subjects the authorities would rather keep out of the press were noticed by the Party: he was deemed to have "ideological problems" and sent to work in *Juventud Rebelde*, where he would be under stricter watch. But his arrival at the newspaper coincided with the start of the political opening of the late 1980s.

Padura found in *Juventud Rebelde* a group of mostly young writers and journalists ready to take advantage of those favorable circumstances. Among

them was Emilio Surí Quesada, who had also worked on *El Caimán Barbudo* and *Somos Jóvenes* and who had served as war correspondent in Nicaragua, Angola, and Western Sahara. By the mid-1980s, Surí had published a volume of poetry, a novel, a biography, and two nonfiction books, both about Nicaragua's Sandinista revolution. Unlike Padura and García, Surí had studied journalism at the University of Havana, but had not completed his degree. His Nicaragua stories paid more attention to the psychological development of the characters than to the intricacies of politics in Central America. He would leave Cuba in 1992, shortly after a piece he had written about the final days of Nicolae Ceausescu had been both praised and instantly banned by Fidel Castro himself.[30]

The other significant literary journalist in *Juventud Rebelde* at the end of the 1980s was Angel Tomás González, who was the editor of the cultural pages. Tomás, a prolific interviewer, would not leave Cuba, but would cease working for the official media in the early 1990s and become the Havana-based correspondent of Madrid's *El Mundo*, a newspaper with a strong anti-Castro stance. These three, Padura, Surí and Tomás, formed a troika that animated the Sunday issue of *Juventud Rebelde* for several years and that is credited with bringing to journalism hundreds of young men and women who had suddenly discovered that something published in a newspaper, even in a Cuban newspaper, could be entertaining and beautifully written.[31]

Of the three, Padura was the most enduring and the one who most successfully adapted his literary ambitions to the format of the reportage. After he left *Juventud Rebelde*, he dedicated himself entirely to fiction and literary research, with great success. He is the only one among the literary and investigative journalists of the 1980s in Cuba whose nonfiction stories were compiled and published, in a volume entitled *El Viaje Más Largo* (*The Longest Trip*). Padura's stories were nothing like "El Caso Sandra," which might help explain his survival in *Juventud Rebelde* and the publication of *El Viaje Más Largo*. Instead of addressing Cuba's problems straight away, Padura adopted a more cautious strategy: he wrote about episodes and characters of the past, which somehow shed light on the country's present misfortune. One of his most memorable pieces was "Yarini, el Rey: vida, pasión y muerte del más célebre proxeneta de Cuba" ("Yarini, the King: the life and death of Cuba's most celebrated pimp"), the profile of a famous character of early twentieth-century Havana, Alberto Yarini, who had controlled the business of prostitution in the city and whose youth, beauty, and premature death at the hands of a rival gang transformed him into a legend. Unlike García's "El Caso Sandra," which forced Cubans to admit prostitution still existed, Padura's story went to great lengths to emphasize that Yarini's world was in the long-forgotten past. How-

ever, Padura's recollection of life in San Isidro in the beginning of the century was full of romantic nostalgia for a time when there was a bar on every street corner where prostitutes, pimps, businessmen, and high-flying politicians mingled during endless nights of sex and power games. Yarini's San Isidro was, in Padura's words, the "national centre of happiness and shame."[32] In contrast, 1988's San Isidro was a slum where, although there were still prostitutes, there were hardly any bars in which people could drink their boredom down. For all the misery of the past, it still sounded more exciting than the dull present. Padura's reconstruction of the assassination of Yarini shows unmistakably the influence of Gabriel García Márquez's fast-paced storytelling, his penchant for detail, and his ability to manipulate narrative time:

> When the clock struck five to eight, Yarini entered the house in number 60 San Isidro, where Elena Morales and Celia Marín received their clients. Four minutes was all that it took for Yarini to have a chat with Elena and Celia, drink the last cup of coffee of his life, and laugh at a joke of Pepito Basterrechea.

And:

> Rosa Martínez, the prostitute at number 61, opened her door and stuck her head out when the clock was about to strike one minute to eight. The street was inexplicably empty. She saw two men coming to her. One was wearing a bowler hat. At that moment, Rosa heard someone laughing, and turned her eyes towards the opposite side of the street. Two men were coming out of number 60: Yarini and Basterrechea. . . . Many months later, during the trial in Havana's Justice Court, Rosa Martínez remembered that just when she saw Yarini, she heard steps in the roof and a voice that shouted: "Yarini, I am going to whack you!" Then there were shots. Rosa couldn't see anything more, because at that moment she covered her face.[33]

"El Viaje Más Largo" is also the title of one of the stories included in Padura's book, about the rise and decline of Havana's Chinatown. Like San Isidro, Yarini's fiefdom, Havana's Chinatown was by the end of the 1980s a shadow of its former self. It had once been one of the largest Chinese settlements in the Americas, but after Castro's rise to power, trade in the area collapsed and no further immigrants arrived to replace the ailing founders. Padura's recollection of the history of Chinatown, of its origin and of the years of its prosperity, had the same effect as his Yarini story: it showed the bottomless mediocrity of Cuba's present:

> At the end of the nineteenth century, Chinatown, where around ten-thousand Chinese lived, had become self-sufficient: society clubs, shops of all kind, theatres, casinos, opium houses, newspapers, pharmacies, brothels and funeral houses guaranteed the satisfaction of all needs and appetites.

> Thanks to the intervention of Consuls Lin Liang Yuang and Tan Kim Cho, the Chinese even acquired their own cemetery, where they could lay with their heads pointing towards the east, and also a care house, where they could wait, in rather appalling conditions, the arrival of death.[34]

Most of that world had disappeared by the time Padura wrote his piece. He found in the neighbourhood a few authentic Chinese, including Ung Ing Tah Van, who arrived in Cuba in 1919. Ung Ing Tah Van returned to China once, but discovered nobody remembered him, and went back to Cuba, where he changed his name to Luis. He told Padura his story:

> —Luis, did you ever marry?
>
> —No, a Chinese man can manage alone. But I did have some women, oh yes.
>
> —Did you ever feel lonely?
>
> — Some people have company all their lives and still feel lonely. That's the way it is.
>
> — What do you remember of your country?
>
> — Misery, which forced so many people to emigrate. It's better not to remember, don't you think?[35]

This poignant story of emigration, of people who had to abandon their homes to escape poverty and settled in a new land away from their families, had a profound resonance in 1980s Cuba. Just seven years before the publication of "El Viaje Más Largo" in *Juventud Rebelde*, 125,000 Cubans had abandoned their country during the Mariel Harbour boatlift. Most were escaping the hardships of life in Cuba and the political and social asphyxia of the 1970s. Hundreds of thousands would leave Cuba in the two decades that followed the publication of his story. Padura did not ever write a word suggesting the connection between his characters of the past and his contemporaries, but the real subject of all his pieces is the contrast between the different historical ages of his country: the exciting, though terrible, past and the huge disappointments of the present.

In the Line of Duty

While Padura was writing his reminiscences of a bygone era, Rosa Miriam Elizalde was just a student at the Faculty of Journalism of the University of Havana. There, she must have met Wilfredo Cancio, at the time the latter was reading a well-disguised copy of *The New Journalism*. It is possible Elizalde also read Tom Wolfe's book, or a bit of it, during that time, but, no matter how similar their readings, they would follow very different career

paths. Cancio became a respected cultural commentator and a popular lecturer in the same Faculty from which he graduated. In 1994, he travelled to the US and decided not to return to Cuba. Just before he left his country, he published a report on the state of Cuban journalism, in which he denounced it as "a model of communication based in a scheme of lineal transmission, extremely vertical, and tied to some ingenuous socio functionalism, with a conception of media as mere ideological instruments."[36] He listed the maladies of the Cuban press: "poverty of language, limited sourcing, lack of initiative, scarcity of points of view, very limited specialisation, didacticism, and many other problems that would add a very long etcetera."[37] When Cancio left Cuba, Elizalde was already the deputy director of *Juventud Rebelde*, less than six years after graduating from the University of Havana. By then, Padura had abandoned journalism and was wholly dedicated to fiction. But *Juventud Rebelde* was still enjoying the reputation for good writing gained during those short years at the end of the 1980s, when the works of Padura, Surí, Tomás and other journalists made the Youth Communist League's newspaper stand apart from the bulk of the grey Cuban press.[38]

Juventud Rebelde made the most of its privileged position in the system of Cuban journalism, in which every newspaper has a specific political and communicative function and speaks to a particular segment of the population. The Party's severe, humorless newspaper, *Granma*, took and still takes the lead in political information, playing a semi-normative, agenda-setting role. The newspaper of the Party-controlled unions, *Trabajadores*, is famously dull and didactic.[39] Because *Juventud Rebelde* attempts to engage with a younger reader than does *Granma* or *Trabajadores*, it has been allowed some stylistic liberty and a certain degree of adventurousness in its news coverage. In the early nineties, it employed a number of very young, ambitious, and well-educated journalists, just graduated from the University of Havana, who attempted to write in a way that was most unusual in socialist Cuba. They admired classic Cuban authors like José Martí, Jorge Mañach, and Pablo de la Torriente Brau; they were devotees of Gabriel García Márquez; and some had also read American nonfiction writers like Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, and Gay Talese. The literary ambitions of this generation can be seen in the vocabulary, the syntax, the narrative structures, and the cultural references of journalists like Magda Resik, Eduardo Jiménez, Alina Perera, René Tamayo, Félix López, Dean Luis Reyes, Michel Contreras, and Rosa Miriam Elizalde. Of all these journalists, Elizalde would have the brightest career in Cuba. Most of the others left the newspaper and followed separate routes. Elizalde, after a long tenure as chief editor and then deputy director, also left, and is now the editor of *Cubadebate*, an online publication. She produced in 1996

the masterpiece of this generation of *Juventud Rebelde*, "Flores Desechables" ("Disposable Flowers"), yet another take on the phenomenon of prostitution in Cuba. However, "Flores Desechables" had a very different reception to that suffered by García's "El Caso Sandra." Elizalde's series, published over several months in *Juventud Rebelde*, was almost immediately collected in a book, and her author was showered with awards.

The obsession of Cuban investigative and literary journalists with prostitution is probably caused by the literary possibilities of the subject (multi-layered, tragic characters; fast-paced narrative; sex) and its political and social repercussions. The visible boom in prostitution at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, in the middle of the devastating economic crisis that followed the disappearance of the Communist bloc in Europe, forced the government to address the problem directly. What, in the case of García's story, had been an individual initiative that almost cost him his career, was, in the case of "Flores Desechables," a project co-authored by Elizalde and her party bosses. If "El Caso Sandra" aimed to uncover a world many people had not the slightest idea of, "Flores Desechables" had the obvious intention of being the definitive word on prostitution in Cuba, a sort of Party editorial. García had made a point of not talking to official sources (the police, the official Federation of Cuban Women, the judiciary). This was a clear repudiation of the reliability, honesty, and even relevance of such sources. At the center of "Flores Desechables," however, there is an interview with then Cuba's Attorney General, General Juan Escalona. While García refused to "contextualize" his story, and did not make any references to the history of prostitution in Cuba before Castro (something Padura had done in "Yarini, el Rey"), or to the industry of sex in the world, Elizalde aimed to normalize prostitution by insisting that the rise in the number of *jineteras* (prostitutes) walking up and down Havana's Quinta Avenida was insignificant in comparison to what Cubans had seen before 1959 and what anyone in the world could still see anywhere. Both Padura and Elizalde looked at the past, but history, for the former, was a territory open to exploration and discovery; for the latter, history had already been written, had been closed and transformed into ideology. Padura found in history an indictment of the present, or at least an indication of its incompleteness; Elizalde found a justification, a teleology of the Revolution. While García declined to condemn Sandra, and instead blamed a dysfunctional society for her personal tragedy, Elizalde, along the lines of the official discourse, treated with great severity those involved in the trade of prostitution and accused the foreign media of magnifying Cuba's problems. Elizalde seemingly had the support of the Party, the judiciary, and the police. Her *pièce de résistance* was an interview with a pimp dedicated to providing

young boys to foreign tourists for sex. At the end of the interview, Elizalde claimed the pimp was already in jail: she did not make clear whether she had interviewed him in prison (crucial information to assess the reliability of the source) or denounced him to the police after granting the man confidentiality (therefore opening the door to an endless controversy about the ethics of interviewing).

Nevertheless, there is still literary ambition and merit in "Flores Desechables." Elizalde's long and uneven text includes sections of historic data, question-and-answer interviews, and scenes of the lives of the characters the journalist met during her research. At one point, she follows one prostitute as the woman travels from Havana, where she lives, to her family home in eastern Cuba:

> She arrived at her home in Las Tunas in a taxi paid by a fifty-something Dutchman. Her father was sitting in the garden, in the shadow of a *jagüey*, and did not say a word. He did not even ask what she had been doing since she left home. He carried on smoking, without ever taking his eyes off her. He was wearing the watch she had sent him some weeks before.
>
> Her grandmother did come to greet her as soon as someone shouted *Hildita is here*. After hugging and kissing her and taking her luggage inside, her grandmother told her she was beautiful and that she had not received all the money Hilda had sent her with a man. *Don't send me the money with that jinetero ever again* and Hilda, who had believed her return home could be a happy event, a truce with her past, felt she was about to cry.
>
> *Is it true you are a dancer?* asked a neighbour who couldn't take her eyes off the shoes Hilda was wearing, and who obviously did not swallow the story of her *job* in Havana. *Yes, a Tropicana star*, and Hilda explained that she had to dance with a red-sequin dress and a flowery hat, and that the choreographies were so hard that she finished every night completely exhausted.[40]

"Flores Desechables" concludes, in rather unfortunate agit-prop mode, with a call to Cubans to fight prostitution. "We Cubans do not have to put up with prostitution," Elizalde claims.[41] In the two decades after her call, however, a few other journalists would write about the same subject and found that nothing much had changed.[42]

Conclusion

The works of Luis Manuel García, Leonardo Padura, and Rosa Miriam Elizalde, which appeared in the relatively short period of nine years, between 1987 and 1996, still define the modalities of literary journalism in Communist Cuba, differentiated not by the style or narrative techniques of the authors, but by the triangular relationship between the texts, the social

reality they attempt to describe, and the political actors policing the structures of meaning of the official culture. The main challenge of narrative literary journalism in Cuba is breaking with the strict norms of representation of reality imposed by Fidel Castro and enforced by countless Party apparatchiks in newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, radio and television stations, and film studios. Cuban journalism continues bleeding its talent: in the past decade, many young journalists of great literary potential have left the country and settled abroad, or simply changed jobs.[43]

Still, a few journalists in national and local media have continued trying to write literary reportages about some of Cuba's most intractable problems. Not many have done what Elizalde did: the Party very rarely has commissioned controversial stories. Most have followed Padura's caution and written stories about old events and characters. Among these is Luis Raúl Vázquez, a prolific *Juventud Rebelde* reporter, who has published many stories about dramatic episodes of the revolution and also about the small people of his hometown, Ciego de Ávila. Vázquez himself has attempted to explain the interest of literary journalists in history, referring to the "wealth of conflicts, stories and characters that would tempt any journalist to tell them again as if they were from the present."[44] A very small group has attempted to write stories in the guise of "El Caso Sandra": most of those stories were never published, and in some cases the authors suffered reprimands as harsh as García did before. The young journalist Boris Caro, who co-authored a BA dissertation about literary journalism in 2003, saw how his story about the ordeal of the neighbors of a crumbling building in Havana, written with notable literary flair, was deemed too frank and shelved by the editors of *Granma Internacional*, the international edition of the Party's newspaper. Caro published it in his blog instead. He too would end up leaving the country.

More recently, two journalists with a strong literary vocation have appeared on opposite poles of the Cuban media spectrum. In *Cubadebate*, under Elizalde's editorship, and in his own blog *Crónicas Obscenas* (*Obscene Chronicles*), the very young Carlos Manuel Álvarez, who has not yet finished his journalism degree, writes literary chronicles and essays that often leave his readers puzzled or in awe. In another blog, *Lunes de Post-Revolución* (*Post-Revolution Monday*), Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo, a biochemist who now writes what he calls "essays, opinions, delusions, interviews, features, vile ironies, reports, dreams,"[45] has attracted the ire of the political establishment with his relentless attacks on the vulgarity and hypocrisy of Cuba's social and cultural life. Other independent bloggers of varied literary merits have appeared in recent years, including Yoani Sánchez, a philologist and author of *Generación Y*, the most influential and popular of all Cuban blogs inside or outside the

island and a favorite target of both the State Security, which blocked it for years, and the official media, which has labelled her a CIA-paid mercenary.[46] It is there, online, and outside the increasingly narrow boundaries of the regime's official discourse, where most of whatever literary journalism is written now in Cuba can be found.

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Notes

1. Cancio told this story in a letter to his friend Emilio Ichikawa, under the title "Carta sobre el periodismo cubano y la Prof. Rodríguez Betancourt," which the latter published in his personal blog. See http://eichikawa.com/2010/03/carta-sobre-el-periodismo-cubano-y-la-prof-rodriguez-betancourt.html.

2. There were debates in Cuba about the worth of "capitalist authors" as late as 1988. In an interview that year, the then president of the Union of Cuban Journalists, Julio García Luis, defended the publication of books from non-socialist authors. "If we have a socialist author, if he writes from the experience of the socialist journalist and he expresses that experience up to the modern requirements of journalism, then, welcome! . . . Now, if we do not have a socialist author, then we appeal to capitalist authors, and if he is an experienced author, we publish his book. We should not fear to publish books from capitalist origin. At the end, technique acquires its class content for the way it is used." In 1990, numerous books from American, Latin American, and Western European authors were added to the new syllabus of the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana, and the Faculty quietly got rid of Soviet-inspired textbooks, including hundreds of copies of Lenin's *On the Press*. García is quoted by David Mateo and Pelayo Terry: "*La profesión de los contratiempos. (Acerca de la formación actual de los periodistas y sus perspectivas de desarrollo)"* (BA diss., University of Havana,1988).

3. The New Journalism received a formal rebuke from Soviet academic V. Sokolov in an article published in 1977 in *The Democratic Journalist*, a journal of the now disbanded International Organisation of Journalists. The New Journalism, Sokolov said, was "a socio-literary conception that aims to weaken and then cancel the cognitive and analytical, thus transformative, functions of the press, depriving journalism of its increasingly important social role. This comes very handy to the imperialists, eager to restore their control over the hearts and minds of people." V. Sokolov, "The 'new journalism' – the conception of a social mythology," in *The Democratic Journalist*, 7-8 and 9 (1977).

4. The president of the Union of Cuban Journalists, Tubal Páez, acknowledged in 2011 that "unfortunately, our stories generally lack elegance, wit, charm, grace, humour and also ideas that [could] fascinate, attract and catch [the reader]." He called on journalists to "get rid of the bureaucratic language that impoverishes both journalism and politics." Quoted by Miguel Torres Barbá, "Frente al espejo: la prensa apuesta por ser más atractiva", in AIN, http://www.tribuna.co.cu/etiquetas/2011/mayo/12/frente.html

5. Gabriel García Márquez, "El oficio de la palabra hablada." in *Juventud Rebelde*, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.juventudrebelde.cu/cuba/2006-08-13/el-oficio-de-la-palabra-hablada/

6. At the end of 1958, there were in Cuba 16 national daily newspapers of different political signs (there are only two today). Juan Marrero, *Prensa sin Retorno* (Pablo de la Torriente, Havana, 1998). In February of 1959, the Ministry of Labour reported 117 companies of "terrestrial newspapers" and 56 of "radio and TV newspapers". Roberto León Enrique, *Última Edición* (Arte y Literatura, Havana, 1975). Fidel Castro himself acknowledged that Cuba had at the time "great resources of communication." Quoted by Ana Núñez Machín, *Pensamiento Revolucionario y medios de difusión masiva* (Editora Política, Havana, 1983).

7. "On a basic level, journalism has provided writers with an income," says Richard Keeble. That was particularly true of pre- 1959 Cuba, with a relatively small reading public and an underdeveloped publishing industry. Richard Keeble, "On journalism, creativity and imagination," in *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*, ed. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler (London: Routledge, 2007), 5.

8. Like John Hartsock in *A History of American Literary Journalism*, every time I refer in this paper to "literary journalism," I mean "narrative literary journalism," since the works I discuss "are fundamentally narrative rather than discursive." Hartsock lists reasons to characterize this form as "literary," which, for the purposes of this paper, I accept: "One is that such a form borrows techniques often associated with the realist novel and short story, thus giving such texts a literary context . . . Second, there has long been a critical consciousness that such texts have the potential for being literary . . . At the heart of the issue is the perception. . . that a work is 'literary' as opposed to its being some kind of demonstrably transcendent 'literature.' Third, such texts are literary in the sense that as social allegories they eschew a rhetorical literalness for a figurativeness or literary resonance reflected in a

host of interpretive possibilities . . . as well as in the full range of more traditional figures of speech and the techniques associated with the traditional fictional novel." John C. Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 11-12.

9. Cuban journalists make a clear distinction between reportage and run-of-the-mill news stories: the former is longer, deeper, is usually not breaking news (although it can contain important revelations), and shows more vividly the author's personal style. Professor Miriam Rodríguez Betancourt, of the Faculty of Communication of the University of Havana, who has taught several generations of Cuban journalists, defines reportage as "a narrative of some literary quality about a topical event or issue, based on a thorough investigation conducted with the aim to provide a bigger picture of that particular subject through analysis and interpretation." Miriam Rodríguez Betancourt, "Tipología del periodismo contemporáneo" (lecture delivered at the International Institute of Journalism "José Martí," Havana, 2001).

10. Discussing the case of Günther Wallraff, who "is viewed more as an investigative journalist" than a literary one, Bernhard Poerksen says that "investigative journalism and New Journalism need not be mutually exclusive." Not only that, narrative literary journalism and investigative journalism are closely related: both produce a complex, out-of-the-ordinary, challenging view of the social reality, and, at least in Cuba, suffer the consequences of doing it. Most of the great works of narrative literary journalism, such as the ones discussed in this paper, are also remarkable feats of journalistic research, obviously not a coincidence. See Bernhard Poerksen, "The Milieu of a Magazine: *Tempo* as an Exponent of German New Journalism," in *Literary Journalism Studies* 1 (2010): 28.

11. The antagonism between good writing and ideological orthodoxy would soon become evident in the journalism of socialist Cuba. Acknowledging the problem, the third Congress of the Union of Cuban Journalists, in 1974, declared: "Good writing comes from thinking and acting rightly. If those three things cannot be together, we'd rather renounce to good writing." Politburo member Armando Hart congratulated Cuban journalists for "having cleansed themselves of the bad habits of bourgeois journalism" and for having adopted a more "synthetic and direct" style. Quoted in Juan Marrero, "Tercer Congreso 1974: compromiso de los periodistas y la prensa cubana con el socialismo," Cubaperiodistas, el sitio de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.cubaperiodistas.cu/libro_congresos/cap04.html .

12. In 1979, twenty years after Castro's rise to power, a census of the Union of Cuban Journalists reported that only 36.5 percent of the country's journalists had a university degree. Antonio Medina and Adiala González, "Formación y superación en el periodismo actual" (BA diss., University of Havana, 1985), 39, 42.

13. "The Cuban journalist is an ideological worker and is firmly committed to the international objectives of socialism," Politburo member Armando Hart told delegates to the Congress of the Union of Cuban Journalists in 1974. Quoted in Marrero, ibid.

14. Some notable books of nonfiction narrative appeared in Cuba after 1959, including Miguel Barnet's *Biografía de un Cimarrón* (1966), Enrique Cirules's *Conversación con el último americano* (1973) and *El Imperio de La Habana* (1993), Norberto Fuentes's *Hemingway in Cuba* (1985), and Jaime Sarusky's *Los fantasmas de Omaja* (1986). All these books have something in common: they examine the pre revolutionary past and carefully avoid the country's present. Discussing Barnet's *Cimarrón* as part of the Latin American "testimonio," Pablo Calvi noticed its symbolic value: the history of a former slave who lived long enough to join the Cuban revolution is seen as 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." See Pablo Calvi, "Latin America's Own 'New Journalism,'" in *Literary Journalism Studies* 2 (2011): 63. This paper does not discuss long-form nonfiction, focusing instead on stories published in the press.

15. Osvaldo Dorticós, "Constitución de la UPEC," in *Diez Años de la UPEC* (Havana: UPEC, 1974), 12.

16. "Resolución sobre los medios de difusión masiva," in *Memorias del Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Havana: DOR, 1976), 308.

17. Raúl Castro, "Discurso en la clausura del IV Congreso de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba," in Memorias del IV Congreso de la Unión de Periodistas de Cuba (Havana: Editora Política, 1980), 245.

18. Raúl Castro, "El rumbo ya ha sido trazado," in Cubadebate, accessed July 2012, http://www.cubadebate.cu/opinion/2012/01/29/discurso-de-raul-castro-en-la-primera-conferencia-nacional-del-pcc/

19. Note: The texts of Luis Manuel García, Leonardo Padura, and Rosa Miriam Elizalde in this article have been translated by the author article from the original in Spanish.

20. García's career is, actually, typical of literary journalists outside Cuba. Of the nineteen American literary journalists profiled in Robert S. Boynton's *The New New Journalism*, only, oddly, Gay Talese majored in journalism in college. Robert S. Boyton, *The New New Journalism: Conversations with America's Best Non Fiction Writers on Their Craft* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005).

21. Luis Manuel García, "El Caso del Caso Sandra," in Habaneceres de Luis Manuel García, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.cubaencuentro.com/luis-manuel-garcia/blogs/habaneceres/habanerias/el-caso-del-caso-sandra.

22. García, "El Caso del Caso Sandra."

23. Luis Manuel García, "El Caso Sandra," in *La Palabra Audaz: selección de lecturas de periodismo de investigación en Cuba*, ed. Amaury E. del Valle and Lázaro Bacallao Pino. (Havana: Pablo de la Torriente, 2006), 195.

24. Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* (London: Picador, 1975), 46.

25. Ibid.

26. García, "El Caso Sandra," 199.

27. Wolfe, *The New Journalism*, 46.

28. García, "El Caso del Caso Sandra."

29. "In the 1980s," Padura would later explain, "the state controlled all the

cultural activity, it was a decade of social realism. We were opposed to that kind of literature so we tried to find another way to reflect what was going on." He largely succeeded, both in fiction and nonfiction. Padura's detective novels would go on to be compared with those of Dashiell Hammett and Paul Auster. See Duncan Campbell, "The Hammet of Havana," in *The Guardian*, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/sep/12/cuba.crimebooks?INTCMP=SRCH and James Parker, "Fiction Chronicle," in *The New York Times*, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/17/books/review/17PARKERC.html?pagewanted=1

30. Or so Surí claims, in "Los últimos días de Ceaucescu," published in Baracutey Cubano, accessed August 19, 2010, http://baracuteycubano.blogspot.com/2006/08/muerte-del-mito-castrista-los-ltimos.html.

31. *Juventud Rebelde*'s reputation during these years as the most propitious vehicle for literary journalism was greatly benefited by Gabriel García Márquez's immensely popular Sunday column, which ran until the early 1990s.

32. "Yarini, el Rey: vida, pasión y muerte del más célebre proxeneta de Cuba." Courtesy of Leonardo Padura.

33. Ibid.

34. Leonardo Padura, "El Viaje Más Largo," in *La Palabra Audaz: selección de lecturas de periodismo de investigación en Cuba*, ed. Amaury E. del Valle and Lázaro Bacallao Pino (Havana: Pablo de la Torriente, 2006), 183.

35. Ibid, 184.

36. Wilfredo Cancio Isla, "El periodismo en Cuba," in Sala de Prensa, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.saladeprensa.org/art06.htm.

37. Ibid.

38. Even Fidel Castro noticed. Talking to *Juventud Rebelde*'s journalists in 1999, he praised the newspaper's style: "You write excellent stories. . . you know how to use words. . . you write beautifully." Juan Marrero, "Séptimo Congreso 1999. Periodistas e ideas justas para el mundo", in Cubaperiodistas.cu, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.saladeprensa.org/art06.htm.

39. *Trabajadores*'s function, one of its reporters recently wrote, is "as an instrument to orientate [the masses], and explain and analyse problems and deficiencies everywhere, to help find a solution." Alina Martínez Triay, "What we are lacking," in *Trabajadores*, accessed September 2012, http://www.trabajadores.cu/news/20120527/259864-lo-que-nos-falta.

40. Rosa Miriam Elizalde, "Flores Desechables," *La Palabra Audaz: selección de lecturas de periodismo de investigación en Cuba*, ed. Amaury E. del Valle and Lázaro Bacallao Pino (Havana: Pablo de la Torriente, 2006), 237.

41. Elizalde, 258.

42. For example, Amir Valle in his *Habana Babilonia* (Havana Babylon), a book that circulated in Cuba via email or in flash memories, and was finally published in 2006 in Argentina, Colombia, and the United States.

43. Between 1991 and 2000, around 250 students completed a B.A. in Journalism or Social Communication at the Faculty of Communication of the

University of Havana. In 2004, while writing his Ph.D. thesis, the author of this article found that more than half of those young journalists had left either Cuba or journalism, often both. From the class of 1995, his own, fewer than ten, out of forty, still work as journalists in Cuba. About half of the others are abroad. See Juan Orlando Pérez González, "The Son of the Scribe: The Professional Ideology of the Young Cuban Journalists" (PhD diss, University of Westminster, London, 2005).

44. Luis Raúl Vázquez Muñoz, "Periodismo Histórico: la criatura que quiere vestirse," in Sala de Prensa, accessed August 19, 2010, http://www.saladeprensa.org/art765.htm.

45. Claudia Cadelo, "Cuba: Interview with Blogger Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo," in Global Voices, accessed January 2012, http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/03/23/cuba-interview-with-blogger-orlando-luis-pardo-lazo/.

46. Esteban Collazo, "Yoani Sánchez: la bloguera de la CIA", in Cambios en Cuba, accessed January 2012, http://cambiosencuba.blogspot.com/2009/12/yoani-sanchez-la-bloguera-de-la-cia.html.

Myles of Writing: Brian O'Nolan's Newspaper Columns

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The Irish columnist Brian O'Nolan, a.k.a. Flann O'Brien and Myles na gCopaleen, used a deceptively humorous touch to give the Irish people an accurate look at themselves.

Despite the pastoral images given by movies such as John Ford's *The Quiet Man*, Ireland throughout the twentieth century was a place of varied, sometimes conflicting, identities. Having secured de facto independence in 1922 and official independence in 1949, Ireland wrestled with problems of identity in a variety of ways. It tried to reconcile its agrarian values with the fact that many decisions were made in urban settings. It struggled to establish a post-colonial "Irish" identity while in fact retaining British cultural values and norms. Despite the Irish reputation for lightheartedness, there was a deadly earnestness on the part of the new republic's founding fathers that permeated Irish society. An ascendant, and triumphalist, Roman Catholic Church oversaw an ethos that gave precedence to a Catholic agenda while maintaining token acceptance of the fading Protestant Ascendancy. (*The Quiet Man* did reflect this last part.)

The Republic of Ireland was so entranced with its own purity—sexual, ethnic, and cultural—that it isolated itself from the rest of the world, maintaining an attitude of saintliness that allowed it to cast a sanctimonious eye on a world degenerating into sexual license, while at the same time promoting an idea of Irishness that meant Gaelic lineage as well as Catholicism, and maintaining an agrarian identity (imposed by city dwellers) while the rest of the western world was busy industrializing. This might seem consonant with the criticism by William Butler Yeats of those who "fumble in a greasy till" in

his poem "September 1913,"[1] but the leaders of the new Ireland had little in common with Yeats.

An ardent nationalism took many forms, including ostentatious rejection of anything (even sports) that smacked of Britishness, official (if not genuine) embracing of the Irish language,[2] and a resurrection of ancient myths as the basis for a new national consciousness.

While there was a multitude of voices perpetuating a national cacophony, one voice tried to help the Irish really be a people by finding the humor in everyday life; tried to help them see what was funny and what was not; tried to help them gain a real appreciation of how a nation-state can take its place among the nations of the world, not as a military power, but as a mature entity, a grown-up among grown-ups, fully worthy of a seat in the drawing room of modern society, but capable of relaxing and enjoying a truly funny joke.

The voice was that of Brian O'Nolan,[3] a man who would take on a variety of personae, including the pen names of Flann O'Brien and Myles na gCopaleen. Most important for our purpose here he was a newspaper columnist. But he was also a novelist, gadfly, drinking companion to many of Ireland's other literati, and possibly a victim of his own success. Even though his novels are experiencing a resurgence in interest among the literati, it was his columns—for better or worse—that captured the "first draft" of Ireland's national—and cultural—aspirations, often with a profoundly wicked sense of humor for revealing the soft cultural underbelly. That is my focus here.

Brian O'Nolan was born in County Tyrone in 1911 into a bilingual (Irish and English) family; his father was a civil servant. As a boy, Brian did not receive formal education until he was twelve, partly because the father's job caused several relocations. In 1929 O'Nolan entered University College, Dublin, and Ireland's capital city would be the base of operations for O'Nolan for the rest of his life. His college career started two years after the Fianna Fáil party, led by icon Eamon de Valera, ended its boycott of participation in government, and well after James Joyce had moved to the Continent.

O'Nolan was thus part of a generation of writers who came of age after the political struggles with England had subsided and for whom political separation was not an overarching concern, although memory of the struggle was still fresh in the minds of many people. Because of O'Nolan's family background, the historical setting, and the fact that he was one of the few Irish artists who did not move to England or North America for any length of time, his column writing would display a thoroughgoing Irish feeling, and in particular a Dublin feeling, while exhibiting a cosmopolitan ethos.

Those unfamiliar with Irish history may not recognize them, but O'Nolan uses many historical or cultural references. In 1929 the Irish government

passed a very Catholic-driven Censorship of Publications Act that banned literature that could be viewed as obscene or that promoted contraception.[4] O'Nolan also used Brother Barnabas to parody the Celtic Twilight movement, the effort by Yeats and Lady Gregory et al. a quarter-century earlier to mine Irish myth for contemporary drama. Actually, he was parodying those people who drew bogus inspiration from the myths and folklore more than he was mocking Yeats and Lady Gregory. Anthony Cronin maintains that O'Nolan was indifferent to Yeats.[5] O'Nolan accomplished this by talking about Brother Barnabas's ancestry in terms of hazy, exotic origins. His forebears were Russian (half-caste Jewish) but not Russian bears; they came from a place where democracy, ladies, a square deal for the working man, universal literacy, and other anomalies were unknown. The biggest threat to the regime was from the hedge schools (another reference to Irish lore—hedge schools brought education to many Irish children when it was still forbidden by British law; they were so named because classes had to be held behind hedges or in other places of concealment). Brother Barnabas comes to Dublin and joins the Gaelic League, changing his name to the Irish version, *An Bráthair Barnabas*. He practices his Irish-language lessons on tram tops in Donnybrook on a wet Thursday in order to "bridge the disparity between a shoddy foreign machined suiting [foreign goods mass produced rather than handmade in Ireland] and a Gaelic Ireland, free and united." He goes on to compare Caitlín Ní h-Uallacháin (a female identity used by poets to signify Ireland) to the female figures of Britannia and the sowing girl of Gaul, even if Caitlín had to resort to homely homespun corsets to mold her figure and had to change her name or resort to aliases such as Róisín Dubh (Dark [haired] Roseen) and Niamh Chinn Oir (Neev of the Golden Head [hair]).

In 1934, O'Nolan, along with several friends, started a monthly publication, *Blather*, billed as "The only paper exclusively devoted to the interests of clay-pigeon shooting in Ireland." In the inaugural issue (it lasted five months), the editor states brazenly that *Blather* has no principles of honor or shame.

> Our objects are the fostering of graft and corruption in public life, the furtherance of cant and hypocrisy, the encouragement of humbug and hysteria, the glorification of greed and gombeenism.[6]

Once again, despite the apparent badinage, there is a serious purpose at work in the passage, but one requiring explanation, including the distinctly Irish "gombeenism": What O'Brien is doing is utilizing inversion to show that the very evils *Blather* would supposedly further are those that O'Nolan sees as pervasive in contemporary Irish life, damaging the rebuilding nation; they

were the ones that he would like most to expose and, more important, eradicate. The only clay pigeons that would be shot in *Blather* were those of cant, hypocrisy, humbug, hysteria, greed, and finally gombeenism, which refers to a particular form of usury in Ireland.[7] In trying to help the country realize the society that it could be, rather than one preached by patriots and antiquarians, O'Nolan enthusiastically utilized such satirical techniques as inversion and magnification, raising nonsense to ridiculous, and ridiculously heroic, heights.

In addition to his blatant attempts at demystification, O'Nolan resorted to subtle references to slogans and symbols that had become enshrined in the Irish national consciousness and are reflected in the following examples: "motley" (a reference to Yeats's poem "Easter, 1916" in which the poet suggested that before the Rising the leaders were simply fools); "an empty formula" (a reference to de Valera's dealing with the problem of an oath of allegiance to the British crown in order to join the government); "No man can set bounds to the onward march of a great paper" (a reference to Charles Stewart Parnell, the "uncrowned king" of Ireland who brought Ireland to the brink of self-government); a question of "tillage or ranching" (a reference to an issue that bedeviled landlords and tenants in Ireland in the nineteenth century); and Blazes O'Blather (a reference to a character from Joyce's *Ulysses* but with a different surname, indicating what Blazes will offer), who takes over from Brother Barnabas as Ireland's sage and would-be savior. O'Nolan utilizes magnification, referred to as gigantism in such works as Joyce's "Cyclops" episode in *Ulysses*, which is the national tendency in Ireland to magnify indigenous things beyond the bounds of reality.[8]

In 1935 O'Nolan took a civil service job in the department of local government, and his journalistic work took a hiatus. In 1939, Longmans Green & Co. in London published O'Nolan's novel *At Swim-Two-Birds*, written under the pen name of Flann O'Brien, which includes O'Nolan's own chaotic rendering of Irish myth and folklore, among other things. The book was a commercial failure, possibly because World War II prevented marketing it, and another novel, *The Third Policeman*, written a year later, was not able to find a publisher. Today, those two are must-reads among scholars of O'Nolan and indeed of Irish literature.

In 1940, after he wrote a series of letters to the *Irish Times* under a variety of names in which he criticized not only the newspaper but his own criticisms of it, O'Nolan was invited to write a regular column, and it was then that he started to become nationally renowned. The invitation came from R. M. Smyllie, the editor of the *Irish Times*, who was trying to broaden the base of a publication that heretofore was confined primarily to an Anglo-Irish reader-

ship. The name of the column was "Cruiskeen Lawn," from the Irish *Cruiscín Lán*, meaning "Full Jug" or "Little Brimming Jug." The columnist was identified as Myles na gCopaleen, in accordance with Irish-language grammar and spelling conventions, but eventually O'Nolan changed it to Myles na Gopaleen, a phonetic rendering of the original version. Even here O'Nolan is playing around, mixing Irish spelling (the gC, for example) with phonetic English spelling (the -een endings and Lawn, for example).

The name Myles na gCopaleen was taken from that of a comic stage-Irish character (usually a liar, thief, and moonshine distiller) in the plays of Dion Boucicault, and was a character that originated in Gerald Griffin's novel, *The Collegians*. Myles na gCopalín can be translated from Irish to mean "Myles of the Little Horses," although O'Brien delighted in quibbling over the meaning, saying that it meant "Myles of the Ponies" and arguing that the autonomy of the pony must not be subjugated to the imperialism of the horse,[9] another satirical dig by O'Brien at Ireland's self-conscious attempts to emerge from England's shadow.

The column was to appear three times a week, but O'Nolan would sometimes write more frequently and, later, sometimes less frequently. C*ruiskeen Lawn* first appeared in the Irish language, or mixtures of Irish and English, although within a few years it was written exclusively in English. Myles expounded on many subjects, and one treatment, or mistreatment, was seldom enough for any subject. Over the years, O'Nolan would return to topics he had written about earlier, always alert for new possibilities. The title of the column, which implies that it will deal with many subjects, came from a seventeenth-century folk song that praises drinking and therefore promises a sense of intoxicated variety. *Cruiskeen Lawn* dealt with many of the same topics treated in *Comhthrom Féinne* and *Blather*, but, as with both of those, an apparently humorous treatment was in fact a brilliant satire, containing an earnest look at many of Ireland's problems. As time went on, Myles even dealt with international issues, but always there was the satirist's treatment.

Cruiskeen Lawn introduced a host of characters, and, as with his earlier efforts, all of the personae are inventions of O'Brien's. One such character is The Brother, a know-it-all and busybody who has a ready (and specious) answer for each of Ireland's problems. He knows how to surround his subject with mystery and obfuscation, which gives his words an illusion of gravity. For example, when The Brother's landlady is sick, The Brother, who has no use for doctors, takes charge of the situation—"took command as quick as you'd order a pint"—and observes every propriety because he is "a very strict man for doing things the right way, you know, although he's not a married man himself"[10] (a thinly veiled gibe at Ireland's sexual mores being dictated

by celibate priests, and being adhered to so slavishly by the faithful). The Brother can never leave Dublin during The Emergency (World War II) because the government may call him in for consultation, and he is versed in such arcana as the fact that the French never get to eat breakfast because they are too absorbed in art.

O'Brien's readers laughed at The Brother, but the character is much more than simply a comic invention; O'Brien sees him as typical of much that plagues Ireland. As John Ryan, a contemporary and friend of O'Brien, noted:

> This "Brother" is the archetypal Liffeysider. He is Dublin absolute and of the nadir. Like any true city-slicker, he is a know-all. Naturally he is also a hob-lawyer, pub-philosopher and letter-to-the-editor writer on all civic matters. He is very quick with the repartee. Essentially humourless, he is the catalyst for an unending sequence of comic implosions that are centred upon his person. His many alarming encounters with the English language leave the latter bloody and, if not unbowed, less game for the next bout . . . Myles rounds off the man, gives him flesh and bones, in short presents him in three dimensions and immortalizes him.[11]

This character who is presented in three dimensions and immortalized is the archetypal hero of the new, refashioned Ireland in which O'Nolan found himself, much to his dismay. He displays the narrow-mindedness and backbiting associated with small towns in the economic, cultural, and political capital of the Republic of Ireland. When compared to mythic heroes Cúchulainn or Fionn Mac Cumhail, whose deeds were mighty and whose legends continue, The Brother looks quite pale. He is in fact capable of no great feats of any kind; his importance is in his own mind only. The Brother never makes an appearance; his exploits are related by the narrator to an unfortunate listener at the bus stop, in a reversal of the Irish story-telling tradition by which listeners eagerly sit around a fire while a storyteller regales them with tales of heroes from times past. The inescapable suspicion is that the speaker is actually The Brother, adding weight to his story by putting it in the third person; therefore, in addition to the inversion of the heroic tradition, Myles offers a modern rendering of its comic possibilities. When heroes such as Cúchulainn prepared for battle, they recited their accomplishments from previous encounters, both to frighten their enemies and encourage themselves. The Brother merely becomes more of a blowhard as he continues to talk, regaling listeners with his bottomless well of erroneous information. Further, if Cúchulainn would have boasted of his exploits just before battle, he never would have told stories about himself once the events were over; those tales were related by awe-struck observers. The only personage awe-struck by The Brother's feats is himself, and his feats hardly rank on the level of Cúchulainn

defending Ulster from the Connachtmen. Reflecting modern Ireland's pedestrianism, The Brother functions as a satiric shadow not only of the heroic tradition but also of the bardic tradition that required the *seanchaí*—which is a traditional Irish storyteller and historian[12]—to speak to listeners of heroic deeds worth remembering. The only thing worth remembering about The Brother is his inexhaustible doltishness. The Brother's information is nothing more than idle chatter or gossip, and yet O'Brien is showing that such useless talk, which purports to free the listener from quotidian concerns, only achieves the opposite effect and, in so doing, closes off the outside world, the world of creativity. In this, then, The Brother resembles Ireland, shutting out real intelligence in favor of gossip and self-glorification.

In addition to Myles, there is his father, Sir Myles na gCopaleen (the da), who celebrated his eighty-seventh birthday with congratulations from some of the notorious uncrowned heads[13] of Europe in what is another reference to Parnell. Sir Myles is reckoned to be the fifty-seventh of the oldest baronetcy in the country, and his wife Lady na gCopaleen comes from a very distinguished family, the Shaughrans of Limerick. The name of Lady na gCopaleen's family comes from a play by Boucicault, *The Shaughran*, meaning "The Wanderer" from the Irish word *seachranaí*.[14] Just as the pseudo-mists-of-time ancestry in the earlier incarnation of Myles parodies nostalgia for an era that never was, which is one risk of the Celtic Twilight, this latest claim of heraldry lampoons the modern Irish who claim royal ancestry no matter how humble their circumstances. It is yet one more reminder from O'Brien, ostensibly humorous on the surface but deadly serious underneath, which the refashioned Ireland needed to shake itself free of tenuous, and spurious, claims to ancient glory and look toward shaping its future glory.

After Sir Myles died, his body was exhumed following a dispute over a clause in his will stipulating the bequest of an art collection to the National Gallery. This passage satirizes the controversy surrounding the Municipal Gallery's rejection of a donation by Lady Gregory's nephew Hugh Lane, who was Anglo-Irish, because some people expressed doubt about his motives; Yeats wrote several poems excoriating those who would reject the offer and disparage Lane's motivation and sincerity.[15] The na gCopaleen dispute was settled, more or less, when the exhumation revealed that Sir Myles was still alive, thus giving us mock heroic immortality (Christian as well as Irish); he returned to civil life but not without several situations that are awkward to say the least: believing herself to be a widow, Lady na gCopaleen remarried, hastily, we might add, and to wastrel cousin Sir Hosis na gCopaleen, whose brandy bills were so high that the good lady applied to the court for an annulment of the marriage. As if all that is not messy enough, Sir Myles ap-

plied for a declaration that he is immune from the jurisdiction of the court, having died.[16] Thus, societal propriety is raised to a mythic/heroic, and thus ludicrous, level.

The anthology was published at a time of change in development of *Cruiskeen Lawn* but still during the time of the Censorship Act, which put a crimp on book publishing and thus allowed newspapers to become very influential in affecting public opinion. By this time, O'Brien had come to realize that, because newspapers were readily available, there was an immediate contact between columnist and reader that helped charge his comments on the situation of Ireland, as he intermingled journalistic style with his own imagination.[17] O'Brien found a means of expression that makes use of the two conflicting approaches, serious journalism and utterly free-form creativity, and he made it not merely a mixture of styles but his own style, in a way that drew fully on the artistic potential of both.

One series in the anthology had Myles describing his efforts as a playwright. Not only do his plays cause riots (so that Myles raises himself to the quasi-mythical status of John M. Synge) but they are lousy plays, Myles proclaims, almost proudly. This is Ireland, however, so Myles can revel in his own failure as an assurance of his own greatness. In this voice, Myles does more than speak for Ireland: Myles becomes Ireland.

In one column, Myles mentioned that he had been invited to become a member of WAAMA, the Irish Writers, Actors, Artists, Musicians Association and a real life organization in Ireland, and that he has bought a few minor novelists "at five bob a skull" to nominate him for presidency of the organization. He has prepared a few humble words of acceptance, but to his shock he sees the "wretched intellectuals" break up into groups from which he can hear such phrases as "never sober," "literary corner-boy" and much worse. His nomination dies before it gains any momentum.[18] This apparently self-depreciating passage is another that carries deeper meaning, as O'Nolan takes the model story of the discovery of the hero and turns it on its head. Instead of such mythic Irish heroes as Cúchulainn or Fionn, who proved their worth with their prowess in battle and were easily recognized as heroes, O'Nolan/Myles presents a would-be hero who must resort to bribery just to get his name offered for election, and then watches helplessly as his nomination is unceremoniously rejected, listening to the disparaging remarks others make about him. Victorians saw heroes such as Cúchulainn and Fionn rising to the occasion when their talents were needed in times of turmoil. Myles was fully prepared to take his heroic position, just as Ireland's literary/artistic movement needed a leader, only to be rebuffed by the very people who should have recognized him as their savior. By poking fun at himself, O'Nolan satirizes

and deflates the entire structure of belief that in times of crisis a hero would inevitably arise to restore order—and that every barstool philosopher with an idea could pose as a leader—while at the same time (and more important in terms of his satire) he strikes at the belief that the emerging Irish national and literary identity could be articulated in one monolithic voice.

This passage also carries several autobiographical elements. When O'Nolan was at UCD, he campaigned for election as Auditor of the Literary and Historical Society and lost to Vivion de Valera, Eamon's son. The younger de Valera's victory can be attributed to his name as well as to the fact that what little political writing O'Nolan did was either humorous or ironic, not the kind of treatment that would receive a warm reception in a country laboring to take itself seriously as an independent nation, Gaelic and free.[19]

Myles wrote in a later column that the presidency of WAAMA went to Irish author Seán O'Faolain, an act that caused Myles to speculate that Diarmuid MacMurrough may not have been the worst miscreant in Irish history, another mixing of the legendary and, in O'Nolan's case, the autobiographical, as we will see shortly. Important here is that Myles compares a historical figure, Diarmuid MacMurrough, who is reviled to this day for asking the English king to intervene in an Irish matter, thus inviting the English serpent into the Irish bosom, to his own situation of losing out on the leadership of an esoteric arts organization. Myles is so angered by the choice of president that he engineers a "split" and forms his own rival group, issuing a call for adherents. Thus, Myles renders his own version of the kind of rivalry that carries an aura of glory and nobility in mythology but that in reality—such as the split over Parnell's involvement in a divorce, the partition of Ireland, or the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty disagreement that caused the Irish Civil War—only looks petty and sordid: sour grapes as mythological trope, a trope that defined Ireland as O'Nolan saw it.

The autobiographical element comes into play because O'Nolan really did harbor a personal dislike of O'Faolain, who founded WAAMA. Although O'Faolain, as founding editor of the monthly journal *The Bell*, had as his expressed purpose the provoking of intelligent debate about the social conditions (including the state of literature) in contemporary Ireland, O'Nolan considered O'Faolain to be doing just the opposite—obscuring free thought and encouraging the insularity O'Faolain had pledged to destroy by placing a great deal of emphasis on Irish tradition as the basis of criticism. Steven Curran writes that *The Bell* demonstrated what O'Nolan saw as O'Faolain's flawed critical practices, and Curran cites a letter from O'Nolan to a friend in which he writes that when it came to the subject of art O'Faolain was "the most unspeakable boob possible."[20]

Séamus Deane has observed that in his columns O'Nolan adapted, as everyday conversation, the language and formulae of the Irish civil service, thereby emphasizing the surrealist element that exists in life, inscribed and embedded by bureaucratic conventions. O'Nolan has thus transformed the questionnaire into a gutter literary form and infuses his work with stock words and phrases such as "class" ("a member of the author class," "choosing his boot, the buttoned class") and "party" ("a party by the name of Bagenal") that dampen the limitless variety of life by reducing all its elements into neatly categorized items. The characters of the columns have the same blend of qualities as these mock-specifications; they are predictable and yet strange, thus making them both familiar and alienated. Everyday speech becomes a mimicry of bureaucratese.[21] O'Nolan therefore combines Irish private life, which, despite all the posturing of cultural revivalists, was unconsciously affected by English culture, and the public—civil service—life, one that was intentionally modeled on English forms, into what is the standard of normal Irish life.

By means of the column then, O'Nolan clearly was offering a view of Ireland in light of its political and cultural capital, Dublin, a capital city that retained a small-town ambience of narrow-mindedness expressed via gossip and rumor. Although characters such as The Brother may be Liffeysiders (urban, specifically Dublin, dwellers), they typify much of what O'Nolan saw as simultaneously afflicting and embodying Ireland as a whole.

With modest international and wider local acclaim, O'Nolan's life should have been good. But in 1953 he lost his civil service job after a change in government brought in new superiors who were less tolerant of the columnist's treatment of the government as well as of O'Nolan's increasingly bad attendance at work. The final straw came when the *Irish Times* published a picture of him to accompany a satirical piece he wrote. This destroyed the polite conceit that *Cruiskeen Lawn* was written by several people and that there was no proof that government employee Brian O'Nolan was one of them.

The loss of income was significant because O'Nolan had provided varying degrees of financial support to his eleven siblings after the premature death of their father. He had married Evelyn McDonnell in 1948, and the couple lived in several different homes in suburban Dublin. (They had no children.)

His columns had been scrutinized for libel, scurrility, and double meanings almost from the beginning; some columns were edited heavily and some were rejected outright. In the 1940s the *Irish Times* was sued for libel when, based on several papers given at the Institute of Advanced Studies (which had been founded by deValera), Myles quipped that the Institute was trying to prove that there were two St. Patricks and no God. The case was settled

out of court, with the Irish Times paying £100.[22] Further, he was paid only for columns that appeared in print. Rejections and arguments increased as columns became more polemical.[23] There was another problem. O'Nolan was a heavy drinker and, regardless of content, over time he became less reliable about delivering columns. In 1960, after an acrimonious period, he left the *Irish Times*.

There is no doubt O'Nolan's troubles were caused or exacerbated by his heavy drinking. Cronin writes that O'Nolan drank so heavily that his day virtually ended at 3 in the afternoon and he was in bed by later afternoon, other than a few exceptions when he was out at night.[24]

After an eleven-month hiatus, O'Nolan returned to the *Irish Times*, reaching an agreement that a newly appointed managing director would be the only editor of the columns. This arrangement worked well, but to many readers the columns had changed. This could be in part because de Valera had resigned as *Taoiseach* (prime minister) in 1959 to become president, a ceremonial position. The new *Taoiseach* was Seán Lemass, who embarked on an ambitious program to industrialize Ireland and lessen its isolationism, so that even though Ireland was still backward in many ways it was taking steps to modernize. Cronin theorizes that the new Ireland had less fundamental appeal to O'Nolan as a source of humor; regardless, Myles appeared angrier, but his columns did not display the same mix of anger and affection that a satirist needs.[25] And he still wasn't making much money from it.

In 1941, soon after *Cruiskeen Lawn* first appeared, O'Nolan wrote a novel in the Irish language, *An Béal Bocht* (*The Poor Mouth*), with Myles na gCopaleen listed as the author. The book was a blistering satire of Irish Revivalists who had no true understanding or appreciation of the Irish language or Irish culture,[26] something O'Nolan treated occasionally in his columns, and it was written so as to be inaccessible to any but the most fluent speakers. It too is regarded today as a masterpiece (at least by those who appreciate the satire), although it failed to bring in much money because O'Nolan didn't write an English-language version and refused to authorize anyone to publish a translation.

In 1960 London publisher MacGibbon and Kee reissued *At Swim-Two-Birds* to modest success. Encouraged by this, O'Nolan wrote two novels published by McGibbon and Kee, *The Hard Life: An Exegesis of Squalor* in 1961 and *The Dalkey Archive* in 1964. Cronin calls *Hard Life* a small masterpiece,[27] and *Dalkey Archive* "a traditional novel, rather flatulently composed" (in which) "the writing was far below the standard its acerbic author had . . . set for himself."[28] *Dalkey Archive* was made into a play by Hugh Leonard, *The Saints Go Cycling In*, and O'Nolan was delighted with both the adaptation

and with its commercial success.[29] O'Nolan had written two plays, *Faustus Kelly* and *The Insect Play*, in 1943. He wrote sporadically for Raidio Teilifís Éireann, Ireland's national television and radio station, in the 1950s. He left a novel, *Slattery's Sago Saga*, unfinished, mostly because his poor health was sapping his energy.

O'Nolan had suffered from much ill health, associated with his drinking, and in 1965 he learned that he had cancer in his sinus/throat area. He spent much of the last half year of his life in bed, at home, or in a hospital, but continued writing the column. He died on April 1, 1966.

After his death his literary legacy would live on. His wife had *The Third Policeman* published in 1967, and in 1973 Patrick C. Power wrote an English translation of *An Béal Bocht*, authorized by Evelyn O'Nolan and published as *The Poor Mouth* by Flann O'Brien. These have helped ensure O'Nolan's reputation.Yet, in a way it can be difficult to assess Brian O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien/Myles na Gopaleen as columnist. *At Swim-Two-Birds*, *The Third Policeman*, and *An Béal Bocht* were not huge commercial or critical successes in their own day, but today they, and to a lesser extent *The Hard Life*, are highly regarded and provide abundant fodder for academic study and doctoral dissertations (mine included). Writing in the "New Fiction Forum" of the *Boston Review*, Roger Boylan declares that O'Nolan's work is "becoming about as cherished as avant-garde literature can ever expect to be, and not just among the cognoscenti. Flann O'Brien is chic. University courses in his writings proliferate."[30] Today, O'Nolan could live comfortably off the royalties of those novels, as well as of the anthologies of his newspaper columns.

Cruiskeen Lawn, the collected columns, has been more problematic to evaluate, however. Certainly it is lauded as a source of humor, although knee-slapping humor was not O'Nolan's primary objective. There would be little argument with R.F. Foster's observation that O'Nolan was "uniquely successful in persuading the Irish that they took themselves too seriously,"[31] but the prevailing sense among many critics seems to be that the newspaper column was something less than what O'Nolan the writer was capable of producing.

Cronin, who in addition to being a broadcaster, columnist, critic, editor, novelist, and poet, was a confidant of O'Nolan's, writes of "contemporary Dublin's currency of dismissal," of O'Nolan, and of "early, unfulfilled brilliance,"[32] but Cronin seems to be subscribing to that evaluation himself when he writes, "The penalty of journalism . . . is that it gives its author a certain amount of warranted creative satisfaction."[33]

Declan Kiberd, who uses the word "brilliance" to describe *At Swim-Two-Birds*, *The Third Policeman*, and *An Béal Bocht*, addresses the question of whether, had Myles na gCopaleen never existed, the genius of Flann O'Brien

would have flowered in other masterpieces. Kiberd offers a tentative yes, with the caveat that the person to blame is not Myles na gCopaleen (i.e., the novelist) but Myles na Gopaleen (i.e., the newspaper columnist), because the column offered the quick success and easy laughs that hold a deadly attraction for the Irish artist.[34]

Hugh Kenner weighs in with this devastating question: "Was it the drink was his ruin, or was it the column? For ruin is the word. So much promise has seldom produced so little."[35] The newspaper column, as far as Kenner was concerned, "used him up."[36]

Even Boylan, who lavishes praise upon O'Nolan, writes, near the end of his article, that while O'Nolan was enjoying repute for the column, "he no longer sought the heights of literary achievement."[37]

The lack of literary respect for the columns could also be reflected in the comment offered by Anne Clune, who wrote the entry on O'Nolan for the *Dictionary of Irish Literature*: "There was a slow deterioration in standards over the years, and certainly the best work was produced before 1945."[38] The time period offered by Clune encompasses the three major novels and the beginning of the newspaper column, and allows a reader to infer that the quality of most of the columns was inferior.

Finally, Joseph O'Connor, while unabashedly declaring a fondness for both O'Nolan's writing and the Myles persona, expresses grave misgivings about the newspaper columns. He states that Myles saw himself as a protector of the English language, but in doing so was

> answering a question that nobody was asking and raising other questions in the process. Why would a genius able to do so much with words settle for so little? What did he get from stamping on fleas when he could have created dragons? No Irish writer of his era was funnier, but so what? It breaks my heart that he wasted so much time.[39]

O'Connor calls *The Best of Myles*, the collection of *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns, "the chronicle of failure foretold" and adds, "[W]hen you're mainly using your typewriter to generate disposable amusement, the clever trash starts to seep back up your fingers and into your soul."[40] And this is in a piece by a self-identified fan of O'Nolan.

But then there are the scholars who wholeheartedly insist on the literary merits of the columns, rejecting those who would smugly dismiss literary discourse because of the slightest whiff of journalese; ergo, it didn't have the literary pedigree, according to the snobbery of the effete litterateur. Richard Fallis calls the material a "brilliant series of essays" and adds that "All of O'Nolan's work could be described as a series of brilliant farragoes of distinctly Irish experience."[41] Moreover, the view that *Cruiskeen Lawn* at best provided

highbrow entertainment and at worst sabotaged O'Nolan's creative genius has been challenged by Jon Day. In his "Cuttings from *Cruiskeen Lawn*: Bibliographical Issues in the Republication of Myles na Gopaleen's Journalism," Day offers a vigorous argument that *Cruiskeen Lawn* was itself worthy of the term "literature," but has suffered because critics have attempted to make the column conform to the novels and also because today the columns are grouped thematically in anthologies, rather than appearing in the order in which O'Nolan wrote them.[42] Day cites Joseph Brooker's *Flann O'Brien*,[43] in which Brooker has contributed a paper, "Myles' Tones."

It is likely that *Cruiskeen Lawn* will continue to risk being viewed skeptically by some academics who are suspicious of any writing that is not footnoted or that has popular appeal. However, the fact that Day's article appears in a book derived from the proceedings of an international symposium held at O'Nolan's alma mater in 2006 to mark the fortieth anniversary of his death, and, further, that international conferences to honor the centenary of his birth were held in Dublin, Vienna, and Australia in 2011 all attest to his stature as a literary figure.[44] He continues to be remembered and valued, and it is quite reasonable to expect that, regardless of the "literary" merit assigned to his *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns, his stature derived at least in part from his columns is likely to grow in the future.

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Notes

1. W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner/Simon & Shuster, 1996), 108.

2. Although the name "Gaelic" is often used for the language, strictly speaking it is incorrect, and "Irish" is the preferred term. Gaelic comes from the Irish-language word for the language, "*Gaeilge*," and can refer to both the language and the people—the Gael were "us," the Gall (stranger, foreigner) were "them." Today, "Gaelic" meaning language refers primarily to Scottish Gaelic, which became a separate language in the sixteenth century. In Ireland, "Gaelic" can refer to lineage or heritage.

3. The family name is itself a story. Brian O'Nolan's father Michael was known by the surnames Nolan, O'Nolan and the Irish-language version Ó Nualláin (Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien*, London: Paladin/Grafton, 1990), 4.

4. Almost every Irish writer of note, other than Joyce, ironically, ran afoul of this Act. To O'Nolan's disappointment, his novel *The Hard Life* didn't make the list. Anyone interested in trenchant, if biting, comments on the Act can consult J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912–1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 158–59, or Julia Carlson, *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer* (Athens, Ga,: University of Georgia Press,1990).,

5. Anthony Cronin. *No Laughing Matter* (London: Paladin, 1990), 63–64.

6. Myles na Gopaleen (Flann O'Brien), *The Best of Myles* (New York: Penguin, 1975), 96–97.

7. The word "gombeen" is a heavily freighted one in Ireland. It refers to money-lenders who are Irish (as opposed to English) and who thus take advantage of their own people. It comes from the Irish word gaimbín, meaning "bit, additional bit, (exorbitant) interest." (Niall Ó Dónaill, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, Baile Átha Cliath: Richview Browne & Nolan, 1977) s.v.

8. Anthony Cronin, *Heritage Now* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982), 203.

9. Stephen Jones, *A Flann O'Brien Reader* (New York: Viking, 1978), 171. Jones also notes that a "ball of malt" (glass of whisky) was served in a pony glass.

10. *The Best of Myles*, 41–42.

11. John Ryan, *Remembering How We Stood* (New York: Taplinger, 1975), 129.

12. The word comes from the Irish *seanchaí*, "custodian of tradition, historian; reciter of ancient lore, traditional story-teller." Ó Dónaill, s.v. It is often written in English as "shanachie."

13. *The Best of Myles*, 154.

14. Keith Hopper, *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist* (Cork University Press, 1995), gives the definition of shaughran as "fool,"30. Ó Dónaill translates seachrán as "wandering, straying; aberration, error, delusion; derangement, distraction," s.v.

15. R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life* , (Oxford University Press, 1997), 478–82. Foster notes that the issue was not as clear-cut as Yeats believed and that the advent of Home Rule exacerbated the contentious feelings of participants.

16. *The Best of Myles*, 158–62.

17. Steven Curran, "`No, This Is Not From *The Bell*': Brian O'Nolan's 1943 *Cruiskeen Lawn* Anthology." *Eire-Ireland* 23 , no. 2 (Spring 1997): 79–92.

18. *The Best of Myles*, 15.
19. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 70–71.
20. Curran, 82–86.
21. Seamus Deane, *Strange Country* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 150–60.
22. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter* 193–94.
23. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 194.
24. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 241.
25. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 258.
26. O'Nolan's brother Ciarán denies the book was a satire, calling it instead "a piece of natural exuberance—fun for the sake of fun…" Ciarán Ó Nualláin, *The Early Years of Brian O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien/Myles na gCopaleen*, trans. Róisín Ní Nualláin, (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1998), 107.
27. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 233.
28. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 248.
29. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 268.
30. Roger Boylan, "We Laughed, We Cried," *Boston Review*, July/August 2008, 39.
31. R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 518, footnote.
32. Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 180.
33. Anthony Cronin, *Dead as Doornails* (Dublin: Lilliput, 199), 117.
34. Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 512.
35. Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 255.
36. Kenner, *A Colder Eye*, 257.
37. Boylan, "We Laughed, We Cried," 44.
38. Anne Clune, "Brian O'Nolan, *Dictionary of Irish Literature* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 989.
39. Joseph O'Connor. "Laughter in the Graveyard." *The Dublin Review*, 44: Autumn 2011, 31.
40. Ibid.
41. Richard Fallis, *The Irish Renaissance* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1977), 218.
42. Jon Day, "Cuttings from *Cruiskeen Lawn*: Bibliographical Issues in the Republication of Myles na Gopaleen's Journalism," in *"Is It About a Bicycle?": Flann O'Brien in the Twenty-First Century* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2011), 33.
43. Joseph Brooker, *Flann O'Brien* (Tavistock, U.K.: Northcote House, 2005).
44. "100 Myles: The International Flann O'Brien Centenary Conference" University of Vienna, July 2011; "Flann O'Brien Centenary Conference" Trinity College Dublin, October 2011; "Flann O'Brien and Modernism Conference" University of New South Wales, November 2011. In addition, "The Contemporary: An International Conference on Literature and the Arts" at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore in June 2011 featured a colloquium on Flann O'Brien's work.

"Love Letters to Baltimore": Civic Memory, Citizenship, and Urban Community Narrative

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Newspaper columns offer a unique perspective on civic life, as this examination of the work of two Baltimore newsmen reveals.

My affair with the city of Baltimore became out-in-the-open, I don't care who knows about it LOVE in the autumn of 1977, when, at the tender age of 19, I began writing about my hometown for publication.

In the decades since, as AC/DC so gently put it, "I've been around the world. . . . I've seen a million girls." Yet to this day, a half-step slower and thirty years wiser, my obsession with and devotion to the Jewel of the Patapsco remains the longest intimate relationship of my life. My beloved—Crabtown in all its shame and glory—is the hard-headed, kind-hearted lover with whom I am in a constant state of reconciliation. It's the romance that has survived all others.

'Til death, my sad and gorgeous baby, do us part.

— Rafael Alvarez, A Love Letter to Baltimore[1]

Just as it is important to recognize the "different national manifestations"[2] of literary journalism, this study argues for investigation of the little-noted regional varieties as well. This paper focuses on the five published books by former *Baltimore Sun* journalists Michael Olesker and Rafael Alvarez, three

of which are compilations of their newspaper work. In works such as *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore* and *Hometown Boy*, these writers document city life, history, culture, and identity. I argue this body of work represents a contemporary, non-fictional descendent of the "narrative of community" genre of literature, a strain I propose calling "urban community narrative." Furthermore, I argue that such urban community narratives are important sites of civic memory—explaining the city's traditions; profiling its citizens, politicians, heroes, and villains; honoring artifacts; passing along oral anecdotes; celebrating shared values and mourning shared tragedies. These narratives give "voice to the drama of civic life,"[3] and value "the equivalent of material folk culture,"[4] illustrating the role narrative journalism can play in the city-citizen connection.

This essay first describes the theoretical framework of this study—the link between city, citizenship, and public memory—and then describes a collection of work by Rafael Alvarez and Michael Olesker that includes the books *Hometown Boy*, *Storyteller*, *Michael Olesker's Baltimore*, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore* and *The Colts' Baltimore: A City and Its Love Affair in the 1950s*. In an effort to "break down the wall that divides scholars from writers"[5] and learn from writers, this study draws on interviews with Olesker and Alvarez[6] to explore the connections between this body of narrative journalism and a genre of literary fiction known as narrative of community. This study concludes by discussing the use of an urban lens in literary journalism analysis.

Citizenship, Memory, and Narrative

The city has long been analyzed as the center of citizenship, a concept that dates to Aristotelian political theory.[7] Today most people tend to associate citizenship with nationality, though the concept of global citizenship is becoming increasingly popular. World and national governments, however, are too large and inaccessible to be responsive to citizen demands or to encourage citizen involvement. "This is why anyone who wishes to revive (responsible) citizenship must look to the city,"[8] wrote political theorist Richard Dagger, whose conceptualization of the relationship between city, citizenship and civic memory is central to this study.

In his 1981 essay "Metropolis, Memory and Citizenship," Dagger blamed the "sorry state of contemporary citizenship" on the size, political fragmentation, and mobility of modern cities. These "enemies" of citizenship, as he called them, contribute to a loss of civic memory, which he defined as "a shared recollection of a city's past, of its accomplishments and failures, which both reflects and generates a sense of civic identity."[9] According to Dagger, the loss of such memory diminishes the potential for citizenship:

> What memory is to the self, civic memory is to the city. Civic memory is creative in the sense that it helps constitute the city—to give it shape and meaning in the mind of its residents. It is through the recollections of its people, in other words, that a city comes to be something more than a bewildering agglomeration of streets and buildings and nameless faces. Their memories give it its working identity, and this identity enables them to take the part of the citizen. Another way to put this is to say that civic memory points us backward and forward both, to the future as well as the past, thus providing the direction necessary to (ethical) citizenship.[10]

Understanding a city's story fosters feelings of community attachment, allowing citizens to see themselves as part of something meaningful and long lasting.[11] As a mediator of such stories, journalism has been recognized as playing a key role in creating, maintaining, and curating collective memory, as the work of journalism historians such as Janice Hume and Carolyn Kitch has demonstrated.[12] Journalism has also been central to conceptualizations of ethical or responsible citizenship. In the view of Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, such citizenship included reading the news in order to engage in public debate.[13]

This study identifies the presence of civic memory in the works of narrative journalists Michael Olesker and Rafael Alvarez. Narratives—the stories we tell about ourselves—are ideal for transmitting social knowledge, as Charlotte Linde observed. Such narratives consist of accounts of events and an evaluation of their moral meanings.[14] J. Rappaport proposed three dominant narrative typologies: cultural narratives, personal stories, and community narratives. These community narratives "are descriptive and historical accounts of life in a particular community, which are accessible to community members. Community narratives are identified through consistent themes present in the personal stories expressed by individual community members."[15] The presence of these themes indicates common experiences and a shared community identity.[16] Recent scholarship has shown that community narratives, whether urban dance performances in San Francisco, folk festivals in Canada, or reading programs focused on regional writers, have been used to pass along civic history and create community identity.[17] Indeed, "the beginning of narrative intelligibility signals the beginning of community,"[18] as the works of Michael Olesker and Rafael Alvarez demonstrate.

Love Letters to Baltimore

Rafael Alvarez never dreamed of becoming a reporter. Yet he worked in *The Baltimore Sun's* newsroom from 1978 to 2001, a span of twenty three years, working sports, cops, obits, general assignment, city features and rewrite. "It happened and I am glad of it," he wrote. "I learned to write on the

City Desk, was given the freedom to wander the city on company time and had license to walk into strangers' homes to see what hung on their walls and stewed in their pots."[19] The two books examined here, *Hometown Boy* (1999) and *Storyteller* (2001), represent what he called "Ralphie's greatest hits,"[20] some of his best newspaper work. And while the books offer a mixture of readings—*Storyteller* includes a number of his fictional short stories and both books contain several on-the-road type features and profiles of blues musicians—the heart of this work resides in the white, ethnic, working-class neighborhoods Alvarez knows best, "Baltimore's immigrant holy land—Highlandtown, Broadway and Canton,"[21] and Greektown, where he lives today in the house once owned by his grandparents. This work distinguished Alvarez as a sort of newsroom "folklorist," [22] He asserts: "I memorialized what I cared about, and I cared about it because it was my own personal history. No one had to point me in that direction."[23]

The books include profiles and obituaries of Baltimore's characters and legends, "flawed and beautiful eccentrics who didn't waste a breath aiming for fame;"[24] local landmarks such as the basketball-court size neon Domino Sugar sign, the "incandescent soul of a city;"[25] and traditions, from the neighborhood pleasure clubs to the ritual cleaning of the city's rowhouse[26] stairs, "tiny marble altars to hard work upon which thousands knelt with scrub brush in hand."[27] Evident throughout is a community identity based on faith, hard work, good times, and shared values, as exemplified in the familiarity of the city's rowhouse bars: "most of the people who frequent Sis's [basement bar in South Baltimore] consider each other family—both good eggs and bad apples—and regard South Baltimore as a village where the neighborhood's dead are as familiar as those who still drop in for a cold one."[28]

Amid the celebration of cultural landmarks and community identity, Alvarez mourned the passing of the old city amid changes caused by deindustrialization, urban renewal, and the death of an older generation of residents. Much of Alvarez's journalism in these books was published during an era of staggering job losses that hit working-class Baltimoreans particularly hard,[29] while the city received national acclaim for Mayor (and later Governor) William Donald Schaefer's urban renewal efforts, which included building downtown hotels, a ball park, inner harbor shopping, a convention center, and a modern tourist industry.[30] Alvarez's writing demonstrated that such gains came at a cost to the community's collective identity. For example, the Domino Sugar sign is a symbol "of a city built not on pleasure—as the modern waterfront's marinas might suggest—but the kind of hard work that takes place in the refinery whose product the sign represents."[31] He extolled the last bread baker in Little Italy, the last corner butcher, and the death of the dean

of the arabbers.[32] He mourned the demolition of buildings, including Memorial Stadium, the original home of the Colts and Orioles; the Jewish meat and poultry shops along East Lombard Street, where "if history is measured in racks of meat butchered to order . . . then something more than bricks came down when the row houses were razed"[33]; and the paid-for ethnic-owned Canton row homes taken by the city for a highway that was never built. In this case, the land became the site of high-priced homes for a new gentry: "That lingering sense of betrayal . . . has made for a splintered Canton, a neighborhood split between fixed incomes and big incomes, the lifestyles of the old working class and the new professional class—between people who won't ever forget what happened to their friends and relatives in the 1960s, and the new residents who don't even know there was a neighborhood before they came."[34]

The cityscape is central even to essays about his family. In the opening story of *Hometown Boy*, Alvarez mourned the death of his father's mother in a story that opens with this line: "The year after my grandmother died I went looking for the spirit of Christmas on Eastern Avenue."[35] The story is followed by another about his mother's mother and her days as a bean snipper in the canneries that lined Canton. For this story, Alvarez knocked on row house doors to find the women who—like his Polish grandmother—had also worked in the waterfront packing houses:

> As a kid who hankered to play with the hoodles[36] on weekends and get in their games, I didn't pay much mind to the sour-faced women who stared at us out their front windows when the ball bounced up against their storm doors. Back then I didn't know them, I didn't know how hard and how long they had worked to say with pride that their house was their own: little row houses paid for in sweat by women who put spinach in cans. . . . Now I know.[37]

As a narrative journalist, Alvarez is a subjective participant observer of urban life. Readers see the city through the eyes of a working journalist and "hometown boy" searching for—and preserving—the municipal soul. This perspective is also evident in the work of Michael Olesker. Olesker began his career as an intern on the *Baltimore News-American*'s sports desk in 1967 and worked his way to investigative reporter where he investigated corruption in the courts, sheriff's office, police department, and prisons. He became a columnist in 1976 and three years later moved to *The Sun* where he continued writing columns until 2006. From 1983 to 2002 he was also a commentator for WJZ-TV's Eyewitness News.

In the columns reprinted in the book *Michael Olesker's Baltimore*, Olesker portrayed daily city life as "tribal ritual, an affirmation of the value of urban

living."[38] Published between 1976 and 1995, these human-interest columns include both profiles of politicians such as the forlorn portrait of Mayor William Donald Schaefer, who pouted instead of celebrating when *Esquire* called him "The Best Mayor in America,"[39] and descriptions of daily life such as public-housing "high-rise living" in "The Other Baltimore," where "the great renaissance of the city is only a rumor."[40] One aspect of these columns is Olesker's ability to collect colorful anecdotes through interviews that are not only telling, but distinctly Baltimorean. Consider this short example, a quote from a club owner regarding a scandal on The Block, the city's red-light district, involving a man who solicited prostitutes and racked up over $6,700 in credit card debt. Said the club owner: "In the first place . . . we don't allow prostitution here. And, in the second place, we never take credit cards for it."[41]

Much as an oral historian or folklorist might, Olesker collected these anecdotes and stories, the "family tales told around kitchen tables,"[42] and wove them into larger book-length narratives, cultural and social histories of the city. In *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore* (2001), Olesker addressed the dilemmas of ethnicity and race in municipal life through a social history that spans the twentieth century—from immigration in the early 1900s to mid-century civil rights to the contemporary experiences of Latino/a immigrants today. In *The Colts' Baltimore* (2008), he celebrated the city's popular culture and its obsession with the Baltimore Colts.

In *Journeys*, Olesker created an auto-ethnographic portrait of the city's ethnic and racial history drawing from his own family stories and extensive interviews with news sources, citizens, politicians, and classmates. Throughout the book, Olesker likened the Latino/a immigrant experience to that of the city's Jewish, African American, and ethnic white residents who had struggled in the past with assimilation, or as he called it, "the eternal American conflict."[43] This struggle is presented in the context of the Baltimore's cityscape and historical landmarks, as well as its social and cultural past and present. Using this lens, Olesker gave new meaning to everyday events, such as the baseball games that former Baltimore County Executive and Greek-American Ted Venetoulis remembered from his childhood:

> The athletic teams helped him fit in, but the process only went so far. It was one thing for a Greek kid and a Polish kid to toss a ball around Patterson Park. America thus becomes the ballgame. But black people were in some other country. The public schools were still segregated, and so were plenty of restaurants and movie theaters and swimming pools. In the public parks, there were separate pools and separate tennis courts. Downtown Baltimore department stores allowed blacks to buy clothing, but they couldn't

> try anything on for size before buying. Pale skin would not touch material first touched by dark skin. In such an atmosphere, ballgames played by kids became important. They were expeditionary ventures.[44]

Olesker explained the roots of the city's ethnic neighborhoods and how they began to come apart as whites integrated into these areas, though religious and racial barriers were slower to break down. As part of the first generation of Baltimore school children to be integrated in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Olesker depicted a brief moment of racial mixing in the city's schools before white flight effectively re-segregated the city's classrooms. He used his own experience in the *News-American* newsroom as to describe the 1968 riots, and the experiences of his classmates to explain the city's racial history. Ultimately, the book poses a compelling question: as we continue to redefine racial, ethnic, and social barriers today, are we losing the memory and heritage that defines our identity?

> Today we move around. When the old ethnic enclaves began to come apart after the war, it was sometimes a gift. It helped us get past ancient suspicions of each other that were based mainly on distance and self-imposed ignorance. . . . Things got a little blurry. It was harder to stereotype an entire category of strangers once they had married into your family. And then came the new concern: Were we losing our sense of heritage in the process, willfully cutting ourselves off from our uniqueness in a desire to fit in, to make things smoother all around, and forgetting the ingredients that make us who we are?[45]

Implicit in the book is one answer: the ingredients of who we were and are—both nationally and ethnically—can be found in our municipal story.

While *Journeys* examines the city's ethnic and racial experiences, *The Colts' Baltimore* recounts the 1958 NFL championship, the first game to go into sudden-death overtime and the so-called "greatest game ever played."[46] Again, Olesker is a subjective participant observer, weaving his childhood memories and experiences as a reporter into a larger narrative to create a comprehensive cultural history of Baltimore in the 1950s. The book explored the pop culture from the *Buddy Deane Show*[47] and the Hilltop Diner[48] to Gussie's downbeat, where the bookmakers met on Monday nights to settle up after the games. The book also examined the city's relationship to New York, the source of its "municipal inferiority complex."[49] Olesker observed:

> It wasn't just a football game; it was a reminder of our entire lives. New York had the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building as its great landmarks. Baltimore had the Bromo Seltzer tower. New York had Mickey Mantle in center field. Baltimore had Willie Tasby, who played one overcast afternoon in his stocking feet because he feared his spikes might attract

> lightning. . . . New York not only had the baseball Yankees, who won every year—they had the football Giants, the glamour team of the National Football League. They were different from the Colts. [Quarterback Johnny] Unitas had put in his time at the steel mill, and [Defensive End Gino] Marchetti had set pins at a bowling alley. The Giants' Frank Gifford was cutting movie deals.[50]

But the soul of the book is the football: the retelling of the 1958 game and the relationship between the fans and the players, the men who embraced a "city hungry for something to hold it together."[51] Olesker interviewed Art Donovan, Lenny Moore, and Raymond Berry, among others, and attended the funeral for Johnny Unitas. The famous Colts quarterback, himself the son of Lithuanian immigrants, particularly captured the city's adoration: "He gave the city its identity. Maybe we were just rowhouses and marble steps and assembly lines, but we also had this guy throwing footballs across the horizon and doing it in our name. Maybe we weren't much—but nobody thought Unitas was much, either, when they first saw him."[52] And in an era when many football teams still had not integrated, this team of blacks and whites came to symbolize ethnic and racial cooperation across the city: "We had stepped out of the shadows of our separateness and found ourselves having the time of our lives together. And the moment stayed with us forever."[53]

Though the book was published twenty four years after the team left town, "even the team's kidnapping to Indianapolis one snowy night in March 1984 couldn't dim the memory"[54] of these players. "Other cities got on with their histories," he wrote. "Baltimore was left to consider its past. We nurtured our memories. . . . The names, and the stories, took root. The men who might have slipped from memory became the saintly figures who never deserted us."[55] In spite of their absence, the Colts remained Baltimore's "great secular religion."[56] And after all, what is citizenship if not a secular religion of shared cultural devotions, rituals, and values?

Readers familiar with other Baltimore literary journalism, such as David Simon's *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* (1991) or *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood* (1998), will not find the same kind of intense fiction-like narrative in this body of work. These works combine reporting and memoir with the commentary of the journalist as a participant in—and observer of—city life. Specifically, Olesker's and Alvarez's books of newspaper work offer urban sketches, with Olesker's book-length works providing more comprehensive auto-ethnographic cultural and social histories.

These works are further limited by their geographic focus. The south and east—home to Baltimore's white, ethnic, immigrant working class—are well

represented. The Jewish experience is also explained, from the community's origins surrounding the old meat and poultry shops along East Lombard Street through its northwest migration. Missing in this narrative is west Baltimore, majority black neighborhoods in a majority black city.[57] This is not to imply that blacks are absent in Olesker's and Alvarez's work. *Journeys*, in fact, does an especially admirable job of addressing the black experience during the civil rights era, and both *Journeys* and *The Colts' Baltimore* describe in detail the racial experiences of the Baltimore Colts. But black neighborhoods are not as prominently featured in these works as white neighborhoods.

Readers should also take into account Olesker's resignation from *The Sun* in 2006 amid allegations of plagiarism.[58] The resignation took place on the eve of the Baltimore *City Paper's* publication of an article that alleged Olesker's columns plagiarized articles from *The Washington Post*, *New York Times,* and *The Sun*,[59] although *The Washington Post* reported that "in some cases this was routine information."[60] Reported Howard Kurtz:

> Tom Rosenstiel of the Project for Excellence in Journalism said that "this does not seem like a clear-cut case" of plagiarism, since most of the examples involve "background factual material rather than descriptive narrative that is in the author's voice," and that Olesker's language was "not identical." He said it is "not uncommon practice to take background material from clippings."[61]

Though some felt Olesker seemed to be "mailing it in"[62] during his last years as a *Sun* columnist, colleagues such as David Simon and *Washington Post* columnist Marc Fisher defended him as having used "boilerplate" material.[63] "It wasn't as if he was stealing anyone's thoughts, just some routine journalese language," said Fisher in a Washingtonpost.com online chat. "I too fail to see this as a nuclear event. Sadly, we live in a time of Zero Tolerance and Gotcha Schadenfreude, and it's that climate that axed Olesker far more than any particular misdeeds of his own."[64] Simon questioned the political climate of the charges, noting that Olesker was "a voice that one of our political leaders wanted gone."[65] In 2004, Gov. Robert Ehrlich had banned state employees from speaking to two *Sun* reporters, including Olesker. *The Sun* sued on First Amendment grounds, but a judge dismissed the lawsuit in 2005.[66] Simon wondered at *The Sun's* insistence that Olesker resign before an internal review was completed and even before the *City Paper* published the allegations.[67]

Despite these considerations, the works examined here communicate the civic memory and identity that characterize Baltimore. Much of Olesker's and Alvarez's work is preoccupied with capturing "the rituals and cultural ties and belief systems, and the sense of sacrifice made generations earlier, sometimes on the other side of an ocean, to get to this place and time."[68] According to

Olesker, such stories serve up philosophy in a way that can be understood—and repeated to others. "It's much easier to remember an anecdote than it is a philosophy," he said.[69] These stories also give us a sense of shared identity, he said:

> They validate the fact that we have something in common. They are a binding experience—a binding and a bonding experience. They tell us that we are a part of the same community. By sharing not only the initial experience, but the retelling of the story, they become our common history. They become our experience. And they remind us that we have things in common, that we've been through stuff together.[70]

Thus, these community narratives together form an important site of civic remembrance that preserves memory, explains identity, and outlines an important role that narrative journalism can play in civic life.

Defining the Urban Community Narrative Genre

In his essay, "A Narrative of Collegial Discovery on Some Conceptual Essentials," David Abrahamson provides a useful set of basic literary tools with which to reflect on a body of work: character, setting, plot, theme, voice and structure.[71] Plot and structure vary here. Alvarez's and Olesker's newspaper columns represent a loose collection of sketches, while Olesker's *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore* and *The Colts' Baltimore* create comprehensive historical narratives. In each, however, setting is paramount. Every other facet of these stories—character, plot, and theme, for example—is defined by the emphasis on setting. Setting defines characters. They may be politicians or residents, heroes or villains, but each is connected to the heart of the city. Setting influences theme throughout by focusing on distinct Baltimore traditions, culture, identity, and history. Setting also intimately defines the authors' voices. Both are subjective, drawing on experiences acquired not just as reporters, but also during years growing up and living in the city. Both authors are committed to urban life.[72] Both have witnessed the transitions in the city—including the postwar boom, deindustrialization, and contemporary urban renewal. And both are participant observers who are intimately connected to the city: "We both love Baltimore like a parent loves a homely child," Olesker said. "Sometimes we feel like nobody else loves her, so we're gonna."[73]

But where do these works fit in the landscape of literary journalism? In *The Art of Fact,* Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda provide a useful typology of literary journalism genres. The most likely home for these works, a genre the authors call "tales of the city,"[74] is defined as "human-interest story as a social parable."[75] The authors trace this genre from Victorian reporters Charles Dickens, Henry Mayhew and W.T. Stead through the twentieth century's Morris Markey and Ben Hecht to contemporary writers such as Jimmy Bres-

lin and Rick Bragg. The examples provided by Kerrane and Yagoda—Stead's "If Christ Came to Chicago" and Mayhew's "Watercress Girl," for example—certainly resonate with the columns written by both Alvarez and Olesker on crime, children, homelessness, and other urban woes.[76]

Yet Olesker's and Alvarez's emphasis on community identity also reflects the qualities of a genre of fiction called "narrative of community" identified by Sandra A. Zagarell. Narrative of community is rooted in the nineteenth century fiction of middle-class female writers like Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), known for her short stories, novels, and sketches such as *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896). Jewett's work portrayed daily life as she found it in the seaports and fishing communities of Maine, narrated by a participant observer in the community. Jewett and other writers of this genre focus on "details of local life as integral parts of the semiotic systems of the community, and readers are urged to recognize local language and activities like washing and gardening as both absolutely ordinary and as expressions of community history and values."[77]

Zagarell observed that while much of western literature is focused on the search for self, narrative of community is focused on the interdependency of the community and its residents.[78] Writers such as Jewett saw collective memory as vital to community preservation, and this is an intrinsic feature in the narrative of community genre.[79] These authors believed in the "restorative power"[80] of community narrative and its ability to "reconnect the present with the common culture of the past."[81] Jewett and other narrative of community authors "give literary expression to a community they imagine to have characterized the preindustrial era. The genre thus represents a coherent response to the social, economic, cultural and demographic changes caused by industrialism, urbanization, and the spread of capitalism."[82]

There are marked differences between the narrative of community genre and the body of work examined here. Most notable is that Alvarez's and Olesker's work is nonfiction and not as woman-centered or rooted in women's culture as narrative of community.[83] And yet, there are common themes as well. Both demonstrate an allegiance to a particular way of life and to the working class. Both witnessed the devastating effects of de/industrialization. And both value shared history and identity as unifying forces, a narrative rarely seen in contemporary news media: "A lot of people don't hold [Baltimore] close to their hearts because they don't understand it," Olesker said. "And they don't understand it because they've lived by myth and rumor and hysterical television news reporting that has painted a picture of the city that is a picture of dysfunction and danger. And that's not the full city."[84]

Though rooted in the nineteenth century, the narrative of community

genre grew significantly broader in the twentieth century, Zagarell wrote. An emerging characteristic of the genre today is the creation of political or cultural community as an author's main objective.[85] Modern examples include *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison. Traces of narrative of community are also present in Charles Dickens' portrayals of urban life and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, a book whose central character was a participant-observer newspaper reporter. This provides more points of resonance between the narrative of community and the works of Alvarez and Olesker, even beyond the fact that both narrate their work from the standpoint of reporter and resident. *Winesburg* was one of the literary works that influenced Alvarez's writing: "*Winesburg* was yet another example for me of how storytelling as journalism could use the tools of the short story in the spirit of Twain's 'the tale,' " Alvarez said. "At some point I had an epiphany that a newspaper was just a platform, that if you could persuade or earn an editor's trust to publish whatever you gave them, then a newspaper could be as malleable as your talent could dictate."[86] The narratives Alvarez chose to tell reinforce a cultural community through collective memory, an indicator of the narrative of community genre.

It could be argued that it is inappropriate to identify these works of journalism with a fictional genre. However scholars have recognized journalists as storytellers[87] and called attention to the narrative qualities of news[88] and its potential for myth[89] and folklore.[90] According to Zagarell, the relationship between genre and text is a fluid one, therefore classifications are not necessarily exclusive "Individual literary works participate in genres rather than belong to them, and a number of genres are often present in a given work," she asserts. "Narrative of community should be understood as a generative principle present in, and in some cases constituting the generic center of, a number of extended prose narratives."[91] Yet reality boundaries,[92] the borders between journalism and fiction, are of crucial concern to journalists and scholars: "Nonfiction means NO FICTION!" Gay Talese reminded one audience of college students.[93] But while journalism must be rooted in fact to be journalism, this should not exclude subjectivity, asserted Norman Sims: "Literary journalism speaks to the nature of our phenomenal reality *in spite* of the fact that our interpretations are inevitably subjective and personal."[94]

Though subjective, Olesker's and Alvarez's works are clearly rooted in fact. Because these works document civic memory and define community identity, they resonate with the narrative of community genre. For this reason, I propose calling these works "urban community narrative." Such a label honors the urban focus and journalistic nature of the material without erasing its connections to the narrative of community genre. As observed in the work

of Michael Olesker and Rafael Alvarez, I propose defining urban community narrative as a genre of literary journalism that filters one or more elements of story—such as character, plot, theme, voice or structure—through the lens of setting with the explicit intent or implicit effect of creating civic memory and/or identity that preserves, creates, or reinforces urban community.

The Urban Lens

In his *Esquire* profile of Baltimore Mayor William Donald Schaefer, a piece that also might be classified as urban community narrative, journalist Richard Ben Cramer observed: "The best mayor keeps the city-citizen link scaled down, so everybody can feel it."[95] That is precisely the effect of urban community narrative—allowing each resident to feel a connection to the city's past, which, as Dagger theorized, fosters attachment and forestalls a loss of civic memory. The definition of urban community narrative offered here is a step toward greater clarity on literary journalism's role in civic life, a question posed by John J. Pauly in his 2011 keynote address to the IAJLS.[96] Of the works presented in this analysis, Olesker's *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore* particularly demonstrates that narrative journalism "as a mode of understanding, is capable of portraying the life of groups . . . with as much subtlety as it does individual characters and interpersonal relations."[97] Furthermore, Olesker's understanding of civic memory as the "the family tales told around kitchen tables"[98] and the "philosophy"[99] of civic life facilitates narrative journalism's role in preserving and transmitting the social and cultural knowledge necessary for citizenship.

The identification of this genre poses interesting questions for future research: Is this narrative strain found in other communities? Is it found regionally, and with what similarities and differences? Which community stories are included and excluded from these narratives and why?[100] Which urban narratives compete for space within regional or national narratives, and which are excluded and why? Do such literary narratives tend to be conceptualized solely by journalists? Is there any evidence that the civic memory captured by urban community narrative fosters citizenship in the wake of the increased size, mobility and political fragmentation of today's cities, as Dagger theorized? What are the parallel tools of global citizenship narratives?

Such questions lead to further observations on the body of work examined here. For example, how do journalistic media make use of these narratives? Alvarez asserts that most of his work appeared not on the news pages, but on the op-ed pages:

> I could only get the stuff I truly cared about, journalism that aspired to literature, on the op-ed page and the Perspective pages, often after putting in

> 40 hours on the city desk in rewrite. It was still the last days of first-person journalism being heavily frowned upon. I was not a columnist in the classic sense of the newspaper word in that I cared less for government or politics. But I wanted to filter life in Baltimore or anywhere else I happened to be through my evolving sensibilities. . . . The bulk of which have proved—hooray for Ralphie—enduring in ways the scandal du jour that management wet their pants over every week would not.[101]

The locally-oriented pages of the working-class *Evening Sun* were apparently more receptive to such pieces than *The Sun*. Mike Bowler, editor of the *Evening Sun's* op-ed page, took pride in providing a space for essayists, op-ed obituaries, and even local poets, creating a community space absent in *The Sun's* own op-ed pages. "It was so great to be against the morning *Sun*, which was dry and lordly and would give half the page to Henry Kissinger and that kind of s[tuff]. Mine was really local," Bowler said. "*The Sun* then, and I think still now, though maybe it's loosened up a little bit, was a pretty stodgy newspaper, afraid to take chances with people's writing. You were sort of pressed into a straight jacket, standard newspaper lingo and writing and style and Ralph didn't have any of that. He was refreshingly different."[102] Within the theoretical conceptualization of urban community narrative offered here, these comments suggest that local narratives can not only create and reinforce readers' attachments to community and their roles as citizens, but can also privilege the paper's position as a mediator in the city-citizen connection.

The question of what is missing from these narratives also yields insight. Regarding the omission of the city's black-dominated west side, Alvarez explained:

> I used to go to [Sun metro editor Tom Linthicum] often and say "you need someone to do on the west side what I'm doing on the east side." I always felt guilty a little bit. It's like ignoring half of the city. It's geographically bigger, the houses are bigger, the architecture cooler. Why was west Baltimore ceded to The Wire instead of the Richard Wrights of Poplar Grove?[103]

Though a "truthful fiction"[104] rooted in the literary journalism of David Simon,[105] *The Wire* is nevertheless still fiction. And though set in west Baltimore, it was filmed largely on the east side of the city.[106] Yet this reference to the television show raises the possibility for interesting comparisons: what was the nature of collective memory and identity on the west side, and what type of citizenship did this memory and identity foster? Such questions are partially addressed in Simon's *The Corner*, but a fuller examination is likely to be compelling given the stark differences between the experiences of black and white citizens in Baltimore. It is indeed unfortunate that *The Sun* did

not nurture a west-side counterpart to Olesker and Alvarez. To account for this loss, an examination of black urban community narrative in Baltimore should look to the reporting of the *Afro-American* and other nonfiction narrative such as biography and memoir. An analysis of works such as *The Beautiful Struggle* by Ta'Nehisi Coates[107] would likely yield rich comparisons regarding collective memory, identity and conceptualizations of citizenship.

Though some may say the Baltimore stories represented here are "all folklore, old anecdotes that Baltimoreans have heard to the point of screaming,"[108] this is not likely to be the case as foreign-born populations continue to increase and as city officials attempt to stem the decades-long population decline in the city.[109] In fact, world population data demonstrate that an urban focus is timely and warranted. For the first time in world history over half of the world's population lives in urban centers, some 50.5 percent in 2010.[110] According to the United Nations Population Fund, the urban population will grow to 4.9 billion by 2030, while the world's rural population will continue to decrease. All future population growth will occur in towns and cities, with most of this growth occurring in developing countries.[111] As urban populations swell, what happens to collective memory and identity? How is citizenship affected? And, an issue of interest to the audience of this journal: what role can nonfiction literary narrative play in preserving collective memory and identity in increasingly diverse communities?

The definition of urban community narrative offered here is intended to be expansive, not exclusive. As Zagarell observed, literature participates in genres rather than belongs to them. This paper does not intend to characterize all of the narrative journalism found in Baltimore or all of the narrative journalism produced by Olesker and Alvarez as urban community narrative. And though love of city motivated the work of Alvarez and Olesker, it is not a prerequisite for urban community narrative. The identification of other motivations such as poverty or disenfranchisement would enrich the comparisons possible within this genre of narrative nonfiction. The core characteristic identified by this paper is the use of urban community narrative as civic memory and identity, and the potential of that narrative to enhance citizenship in increasingly populated, challenged, diverse, and disconnected cities. After all, "newspaper stories don't just occur in communities, they shape communities."[112]

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Notes

1. Rafael Alvarez, "A Love Letter to Baltimore," *Urbanite*, February 1, 2008, http://www.urbanitebaltimore.com/baltimore/a-love-letter-to-baltimore/Content?oid=1247661.

2. Norman Sims, "The Problem and the Promise of Literary Journalism Studies," *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 9.

3. John J. Pauly, "Literary Journalism and the Drama of Civic Life: Keynote address, IALJS, Brussels, Belgium May 13, 2011," *Literary Journalism Studies* 3, no. 2 (2011): 75.

4. Nancy L. Roberts, "Firing the Canon: the Historical Search for Literary Journalism's Missing Links," keynote speech, annual convention of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, Toronto, Canada (2012).

5. Sims, "The Problem and the Promise of Literary Journalism Studies."

6. In the spirit of full disclosure, it should be noted that the author regularlyattends the meetings of the Aging Newspaperman's Club of Baltimore, a weekly lunch established by Olesker and Alvarez "in an effort to keep the stories we love best alive and not just in books." Rafael Alvarez, email to author, August 19, 2011. On the Aging Newspaperman's Club, see: Rafael Alvarez, "The Aging Newspapermen of Baltimore," *ValleyTimesOnline.com*, September, 2011. Reproduced at http://alvarezfiction.com/newspaper.html.

7. Wayne H. Ambler, "Aristotle's Understanding of the Naturalness of the City," *The Review of Politics* 47, no. 2 (1985): 163–85; Robert Mayhew, "Part and Whole in Aristotle's Political Philosophy," *The Journal of Ethics* 1, no. 4 (1997): 325–40. Sanja Ivic, "The Postmodern Liberal Concept of Citizenship," *At the Interface / Probing the Boundaries* 74(2011): 3–18. One line of modern political inquiry has debated the appropriateness of the city-state as the basic unit of governance and investigated the effect of population size on citizen involvement. Robert A. Dahl, "The City in the Future of Democracy," *The American Political Science Review* 61, no. 4 (1967): 953–70; Claude S. Fischer, "The City and Political Psychology," *The American Political Science Review* 69, no. 2 (1975): 559–71; J. Eric Oliver, "City Size and Civic Involvement in Metropolitan America," *The American Political Sci-*

ence Review 94, no. 2 (2000): 361–73. Scholars today continue to connect political theory to the study of cities, such as: Susan Bickford, "Constructing Inequality: City Spaces and the Architecture of Citizenship," *Political Theory* 28, no. 3 (2000): 355–76.

8. Richard Dagger, "Metropolis, Memory, and Citizenship," *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 4 (1981): 720.

9. Dagger, 729.

10. Ibid.

11. Dagger, 730.

12. Janice Hume, "Press, Published History, and Regional Lore Shaping the Public Memory of a Revolutionary War Heroine," *Journalism History* 30, no. 4 (2005): 200–09; Janice Hume and Noah Arceneaux, "Public Memory, Cultural Legacy, and Press Coverageof the Juneteenth Revival," *Journalism History* 34, no. 3 (2008): 155–62; Janice Hume and Amber Roessner, "Surviving Sherman's March: Press, Public memory and Georgia's Salvanation Mythology," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2009): 119–37; Karen Miller Russell, Janice Hume, and Karen Sichler, "Libbie Custer's 'Last Stand': Image Restorantion, the Press, and Public Memory," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (2007): 582–99; Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 2 (1995): 214–39; Carolyn Kitch, "'A Death in the American Family': Myth, Memory, and National Values in the Media Mourning of John f. Kennedy JR," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2002): 294–309; Carolyn Kitch, "Anniversary Journalism, Collective Memory, and the Cultural Authority to Tell the Story of the American Past," *Journal of Popular Culture* 36, no. 1 (2002): 44–67; Jill A. Edy, "Journalistic Uses of Collective Memory," *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 2 (1999): 71–85; Carolyn Kitch, "Twentieth-Century Tales: Newsmagazines and American Memory," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 1, no. 2 (1999): 119–55.

13. Christopher J. Schroll, "Theorizing the flip side of civic journalism: Democratic citizenship and ethical readership," *Communication Theory* 9, no. 3 (1999): 321.

14. Charlotte Linde, "Narrative and Social Tacit Knowledge," *Journal of Knowledge Management* 5, no. 2 (2001): 160–71.

15. J. Rappaport, "Community Narratives and Personal Stories: An Introduction to Five Studies of Cross Level Relationships," (Unpublished manuscript1994). Discussed in Mark S. Salzer, "Narrative approach to assessing interactions between society, community, and person," *Journal of Community Psychology* 26, no. 6 (1998): 569–80.

16. Ibid.

17. Katrinka Somdahl-Sands, "Citizenship, Civic Memory and Urban Performance: Mission Wall Dances," *Space and Polity* 12, no. 3 (2008): 329–52; Antonia Smith, "'Cement for the Canadian Mosaic': Performing Canadian Citizenship in the Work of John Murray Gibbon," *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Perspectives* 1, no. 1 (2007): 37–60; Elaine Yontz and Kathleen De la Peña McCook,

"Community, Identity, and Literature," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2004): 292–93.

18. Kenneth I. Gergen, "Narrative, Moral Idenitty and Historical Consciousness: a Social Constructionist Account," in *Identitat und historishces Bewusstsein* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), http://www.swarthmore.edu/Documents/faculty/gergen/Narrative_Moral_Identity_and_Historical_Consciousness.pdf.

19. Rafael Alvarez, *Hometown Boy: The Hoodle Patrol and Other Curiosities of Baltimore* (The Baltimore Sun, 1999), ix.

20. Rafael Alvarez, interview with author, June 27, 2011.

21. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 5.

22. Alvarez, interview with author, January 21, 2012.

23. Alvarez, interview with author, August 22, 2011.

24. Rafael Alvarez, *Storyteller* (Baltimore: The Baltimore Sun, 2001), 82.

25.Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 43.

26. In Baltimore-ese: a townhouse. Baltimore's rowhouses are known for the marble stairs that lead to the front door.

27. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 48.

28. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 58.

29. Baltimore lost 22,792 jobs between 1980 and 1985 and a fifth of its overall population (including more than half of its white population) between 1962 and 1987. David Harvey, "A View from Federal Hill," in *The Baltimore Book*, ed. Linda Shopes Elizabeth Fee, Linda Zeidman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 236. Peter Szanton, "Baltimore 2000: A Choice of Futures," (Baltimore: Morris Goldseker Foundation of Maryland, 1986). Quoted in Harvey, "A View from Federal Hill," 238.

30. See: Richard Ben Cramer, "Can the Best Mayor Win?," *Esquire*, October, 1984, 52–72.

31. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 43–44.

32. An arabber is a street merchant who sells fruit and produce out of a horse-drawn cart. Though rare, a few still work the streets of Baltimore.

33. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 282.

34. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 276.

35. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 2.

36. In Baltimore-ese: hoodlums.

37. Alvarez, *Hometown Boy*: 8.

38. Michael Olesker, *Michael Olesker's Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 175.

39. Olesker, *Michael Olesker's Baltimore*: 69.

40. Olesker, *Michael Olesker's Baltimore*: 93.

41. Olesker, *Michael Olesker's Baltimore*: 132.

42. Olesker, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 345.

43. Olesker, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore*: 15.

44. Olesker, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore*: 83.

45. Olesker, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore*: 191.

46. According to journalist Frank Deford: "Actually, in chronicling the game for *Sports Illustrated*, Tex Maule's headline called it merely 'The Best Game,' but people wouldn't settle for that. Soon it was 'the greatest.' And it is yet." Frank Deford, "Everything on the Line," *Sports Illustrated*, July 17, 2007, http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2007/writers/best_game/06/12/deford.best/.

47. The show resembled *American Bandstand* and provided the basis for John Waters' 1988 movie *Hairspray*.

48. The Hilltop was a prominent fixture in Baltimore's diner culture and the basis for the 1982 Barry Levinson film *Diner*.

49. Michael Olesker, *The Colts' Baltimore: A City and Its Love Affair in the 1950s* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 5.

50. Olesker, *The Colts' Baltimore*: 182, 86.

51. Olesker, *The Colts' Baltimore*: 84.

52. Olesker, *The Colts' Baltimore*: 87–88.

53. Olesker, *The Colts' Baltimore*: 218.

54. Olesker, *The Colts' Baltimore*: 18.

55. Olesker, *The Colts' Baltimore*: 19.

56. Olesker, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore*: 149.

57. In 1970, 46 percent of Baltimore City residents were black. That percentage increased to 54.8 percent in 1980. "Historical Census for Baltimore City," Government Public Library of Johns Hopkins University, http://webapps.jhu.edu/census/.

58.This was after the 2001 publication of *Journeys* and before the 2008 publication of *The Colts' Baltimore*.

59. Gadi Dechter, "Sincere Flattery?," *City Paper*, January 4, 2006, http://www2.citypaper.com/news/story.asp?id=11319, http://www2.citypaper.com/news/story.asp?id=11319.

60. Howard Kurtz, "Sun Columnist Dismissed; Attribution Issues Cited," *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/04/AR2006010402179.html.

61. Kurtz, "Sun Columnist Dismissed; Attribution Issues Cited."

62. Said an anonymous reader in a Washingtonpost.com online chat: "He seemed to be mailing it in, which could explain why he got lazy and pinched other people's writings." "Potomac Confidential: Washington's Hour of Talk Power," *Washingtonpost.com*, January 22, 2006.

63. David Simon, "Michael Olesker is a Plagiarist? Who Isn't?," *City Paper*, January 18, 2006, http://www2.citypaper.com/story.asp?id=11362, http://www2.citypaper.com/story.asp?id=11362.

64. "Potomac Confidential: Washington's Hour of Talk Power."

65. Simon, "Michael Olesker Is a Plagiarist? Who Isn't?"

66. Paul McLeary, "Judge Upholds Gag on State Flacks," *Columbia Journalism Review*, February 15, 2005, http://www.cjr.org/politics/judge_upholds_gag_on_state_fla.php.

67. Simon, "Michael Olesker Is a Plagiarist? Who Isn't?"

68. Olesker, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore*: 345.

69. Olesker, interview with author, August 8, 2011.

70. Olesker, interview with author, July 19, 2011.

71. David Abrahamson, "A Narrative of Collegial Discovery on some Conceptual Essentials," *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (2010): 89–90.

72. Olesker: "Some of the biggest fights I had at *The Sun* were with editors that said to me that I wasn't writing enough about the suburbs. My feeling was that the suburbs were doing fine. The city was a daily struggle to keep things together. That's where life was, where ideas were, where people from different backgrounds were trying to work things out in what we think of as the American melting pot. And that means the world to me. To me the melting pot is the heart of it all and that's what cities are. If we don't learn to work that out, that's when communities fall apart." Interview with author, July 19, 2011.

73. Ibid.

74. Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda, *The Art of Fact* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 17.

75. Ibid.

76. See Olesker, *Michael Olesker's Baltimore*: p. 119–64; Alvarez, *Storyteller*: 211–28.

77. Sandra A. Zagarell, "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 13, no. 3 (1988): 503.

78. Zagarell, "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre," 519.

79. Ibid.

80. Zagarell, "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre," 514.

81. Ibid.

82. Zagarell, "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre," 499.

83. See Zagarell, "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre," 510.

84. Olesker, interview with author, 19 July 2011.

85. Zagarell, "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre," 527.

86. Alvarez, interview with author. 8 Aug. 2011.

87. For example: Robert Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories," *Daedalus* 104, no. 2 (1975): 175–94; Steve Barkin, "Journalist as Storyteller: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," *American Journalism* 1, no. 2 (1984): 27–33.

88. For example: Charles Marsh, "Deeper Than the Fictional Model," *Journalism Studies* 11, no. 3 (2010): 295–310.

89. Elizabeth S. Bird and Robert W. Dardenne, "Myth, Chronicle and Story: Exploring the Narrative Qualities of News," in *Social Meanings of News*, ed. Dan Berkowitz (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997), 333–50; Jack Lule, *Daily News, Eternal Stories: The Mythological Role of Journalism*, The Guilford communication series (New York: Guilford Press, 2001); Kitch, "'A Death in the American Family': Myth, Memory, and National Values in the Media Mourning of John f. Kennedy JR."

90. This includes both the media's use of folklore tales and the use of true anecdotal narratives that are also valued by folklorists: R. Frank, "Folklore in a

hurry: The community experience narrative in newspaper coverage of the Loma Prieta earthquake," *Journal of American Folklore* 116, no. 460 (2003): 159–75; John T. Flanagan, "Folklore in the Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 35(1958): 205–11; Paulette D. Kilmer, "'Madstones,' Clever Toads, and Killer Tarantulas (Fairy-Tale Briefs in Wild West Newspapers)," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (2001): 816–35.

91. Zagarell, "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre," 502.

92. See: Sims, "The Problem and the Promise of Literary Journalism Studies," 11.

93. Sims, "The Problem and the Promise of Literary Journalism Studies," 14.

94. Sims, "The Problem and the Promise of Literary Journalism Studies," 15.

95. Cramer, "Can the Best Mayor Win?," 62.

96. Pauly, 74.

97. Pauly, 82.

98. Olesker, *Journeys to the Heart of Baltimore*: 345.

99. Olesker, interview with author, August 8, 2011.

100. For example, Alvarez in explaining why *The Sun* never cultivated a reporter on the west side to do what he was doing on the east side: "You could make an argument that west Baltimore is simply not as stereotypically Baltimore as east Baltimore. I don't know if that's a result of racism or if it's a result of the lack of a laureate to sing its praises. When people think of 'Bawlmer,' [the pronunciation of Baltimore in Baltimore-ese] they almost always think of the Highlandtown and east Baltimore stereotypes. The fact that the waterfront is in downtown east Baltimore is part of that. The fact is that west Baltimore is not part of that." Alvarez, interview with author, August 22, 2011.

101. Alvarez, interview with author, June 30, 2011.

102. Mike Bowler, interview with author, July 18, 2011.

103. Alvarez, interview with author, June 30, 2011.

104. This phrase comes from Finnish journalist Esa Kero's description of his narrative nonfiction. Maria Lassila-Merisalo, "Exploring the Reality Boundary of Esa Kero," *Literary Journalism Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010): 39.

105. In addition to his years of reporting for *The Sun*: David Simon, *Homicide: A year on the Killing Streets* (New York: Holt, 1991); David Simon and Edward Burns, *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood* (New York: Broadway, 1998).

106. Gadi Dechter, "Wish You Weren't Here: A Guided Tour of The Wire's East Baltimore," *City Paper*, May 24, 2006, http://www2.citypaper.com/bob/story.asp?id=11846.

107. Ta'Nehisi Coates, *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2009).

108. C. Fraser Smith, William Donald Schaefer: A Political Biography (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), x.

109. Julie Scharper, "Mayor's Goal: 10,000 Families in 10 Years," The Baltimore Sun, December 6, 2010, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2011-12-06/news/bs-md-ci-srb-looks-ahead-20111202_1_mayor-stephanie-rawlings-blake-property-

tax-rate-half-century-of-population-decline.

110. CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html. Date accessed: August 18, 2011.

111. United Nations Population Fund, "State of the World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth," (2007), 6.

112. Frank, 163.

Building Bridges between Literary Journalism and Alternative Ethnographic Forms: Opportunities and Challenges

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Literary journalism bears much in common with autoethnography and public ethnography, thus offering opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

In the inaugural issue of this journal, Norman Sims argued that in order to develop a robust discipline of literary journalism studies, we must draw broadly from a range of other fields to inform a theory of literary journalism. This was essential, he said, in order to cement the young discipline's position within the academy as a legitimate, valuable area of study and to create a space in which to examine the genre on its own terms, rather than as a subset of literary studies, journalism, or mass communication.[1] But it is not enough simply to take from other disciplines to shore up our own. If we seek to build a truly interdisciplinary field while earning credibility from other parts of the academy, it is equally necessary to seek out areas of common interest. We must build bridges between our corner of the academy and other disciplines. We must demonstrate clearly the importance and validity of the work we do and study and what skills and knowledge we can contribute to the larger project of contemporary qualitative research.

The goal of this essay is to build one plank on such a bridge. On the one side is literary journalism, a subset of narrative nonfiction and long-form journalism whose identifying characteristics include "immersion reporting, accuracy, symbolic representation, complicated structures and voice."[2] On

the other side is ethnography, known for participant observation, thick description, and verifiable data.[3] As Janet Cramer and Michael McDevitt suggested in an earlier call to incorporate conventional ethnographic methods into journalism, including literary journalism specifically, there is considerable potential for an ethnographic approach to reveal a broader range of social realities and viewpoints in mainstream journalism, particularly those that are marginalized and often invisible.[4] This call goes a step further and envisions a two-way exchange of techniques and best practices between ethnographers and literary journalists with the goal of encouraging greater public interest and engagement. In particular, this paper charts the considerable similarities between literary journalism and two of the increasingly popular so-called "alternative" forms of ethnography: autoethnography and public ethnography. Although they have different origins, both types of writing—one journalistic, one academic—are based on in-depth qualitative research, emphasize lived experienced, and apply the techniques of literature (e.g., narrative arc, character development, rich description, subjectivity, point of view, and emotionality) to nonfiction in order to make the material as engaging as possible for a general, non-academic audience. This being so, I argue that it is time for greater collaboration between ethnographers, literary journalists, and literary journalism scholars, not merely as a means of exchanging their theoretical and critical frameworks, but to exchange best practices in the field and in the classroom as well. To be clear, the goal is not to conflate literary journalism with ethnography, for they are different types of research, but rather to enrich disciplines with similar goals, techniques, and products through collaboration and exchange.

The Evolution Of Ethnography

As Karen O'Reilly explains, ethnography developed from British social anthropology, American cultural anthropology, and the Chicago School of sociology. It is a mostly qualitative methodology that develops theories through long-term fieldwork that involves "direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives and (cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, and asking questions. . . ."[5] Perhaps most importantly, it is an area of study "focused on describing and understanding social life from the perspective of the people who take part in it."[6] Its founding principle was to try to understand social groups from the inside out, requiring a long-term commitment from the researcher who would embed himself or herself within a population and seek to earn its members' trust in order to study them. As such, ethnographies are richly detailed, mostly written accounts of the daily lives of particular groups of people from which

broader themes are developed, much like literary journalism. In fact, the two disciplines share many similarities. Of Mark Kramer's eight (breakable) rules that provide a working definition for literary journalism, ethnography arguably meets at least half of them.[7] First, like literary journalists, ethnographers undertake immersive, long-term research of their subjects. In addition to conducting background research and formal interviews and sometimes even surveys, ethnographers must conduct participant-observation research, the purpose of which, according to O'Reilly's paraphrase of Bronislaw Malinowski, is twofold: "to understand things from the 'native's' point of view and to blend into the setting so as to disturb it as little as possible."[8] This is the same type of research that Sims refers to as "hanging around access"; the chance to become the proverbial fly on the wall, "the permission to watch the conduct of ordinary life."[9] Second, ethnographers, like literary journalists, are expected to be clear with their readers as to the veracity of their research and the source for their data. Even if they use pseudonyms for their subjects, as is often the case to protect their privacy, ethnographers are expected to make this clear to readers and explain their reasoning. Thus, a commitment to verifiable reportage and transparency is a key similarity for both groups of researchers. Third, ethnographers tend to focus their research on ordinary people, going about their everyday lives, much as literary journalists do. As Kramer points out, "Routine needn't mean humdrum. Most anyone's life, discovered in depth and from a compassionate perspective, is interesting."[10] Fourth, one could argue that, just like literary journalists, ethnographers write in a plain, spare style, as Kramer suggests. Certainly, what constitutes "clear" writing differs between the two groups, given that ethnographers are writing for an audience of academics while literary journalists are writing for a more general audience, but both groups value clarity in their work and the importance of keeping one's audience in mind when attempting to tell a coherent story.[11] As shown, ethnography and literary journalism have many similarities; indeed, American literary journalist Ted Conover's first book, *Rolling Nowhere,* was the result of his having leftover material from his anthropology thesis, which was an ethnography of railway hoboes.[12] It should come as no surprise, then, that given those basic commonalities, forms of so-called alternative ethnography emerged over the past twenty-five years in response to the postmodern turn and the crisis of representation in the social sciences. At the heart of this crisis were concerns about

> the politics of location (how researchers position themselves in relation to participants), the politics of interpretation (how lived experience is transformed into research data), and the politics of publication (how research is disseminated to various audiences).[13]

In essence, the crisis reflected a growing awareness among many researchers about social privilege, power, and the validity of the "objective" standpoint in qualitative research. Some researchers questioned whether it was appropriate or even ethical for elite scholars to provide supposedly definitive interpretations of their subjects' lives and experiences, particularly when those research participants were often members of marginalized populations. Others spoke of a mounting concern that "objective" research was simply not possible, especially for researchers who had embedded themselves within a community and become part of it. This thinking called into question some of the crucial tenets of conventional ethnography and called for a type of social science that Pauline Marie Rosenau describes as becoming

> a more subjective and humble enterprise as truth gives way to tentativeness. Confidence in emotion replaces efforts at impartial observation. Relativism is preferred to objectivity, fragmentation to totalization.[14]

These concerns, then, spurred demand for an adapted form of ethnography that was more subjective, reflexive, and narrative, as well as a space to describe and consider one's research and data as one interpretation among many other worthy and valid interpretations that shift depending on one's background and point of view.

That some anthropologists and ethnographers wanted to work with a more reflexive and narrative form was not altogether surprising given their long history with personal writing. But it is a troubled history, as Barbara Tedlock notes:

> [T]he public revelation of participatory details of the fieldwork experience is still considered embarrassingly unprofessional by some ethnographers. It is as though fieldwork were supposed to give us two totally independent things: reportable significant knowledge and unreportable mysticism and high adventure. If we were to be so foolish as to make the mistake of combining these elements, it would somehow seriously discredit our entire endeavor.[15]

The result of this thinking was that ethnographic work published in scholarly fora were scrubbed of personal feelings and narrative anecdotes, while those same fieldwork anecdotes were published separately for general audiences, often under a pseudonym or later in researchers' careers as popular memoirs with more of a narrative arc.[16] Still, some ethnographers sought ways to create more holistic representations of their work and experiences in the field that would retain professional credibility but still be of interest to an audience of academics and general readers alike, as will become clear. All of these concerns led to the creation of alternative forms of ethnography, includ-

ing autoethnography and public ethnography, both of which aim to be more personal, narrative, and publicly engaged types of research and have striking similarities to literary journalism in both practice and product.

Autoethnography: Research Becomes Personal

Autoethnography emphasizes a literary approach to the writing of ethnographic research. Carolyn Ellis, one of the form's major proponents, defines it as

> research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. Autoethnographic forms feature concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot.[17]

In its attempts to be more engaging, evocative, and plot-driven than most academic writing, autoethnography employs characterization, the use of dialogue, and rich description and details, much the same way literary journalism does. Additionally, Ellis argues that autoethnography should forego literature reviews and any in-depth theoretical discussion to focus instead on evocative storytelling that foregrounds the researcher's experiences, saying that autoethnography should "tell [a] story and let the sociological analysis occur conversationally."[18] In this way, the emphasis of autoethnography is to create an emotional connection with the reader through story as opposed to providing a formal, analytical argument.

Although it is a fairly new form, autoethnographies have already been published in a broad range of journals in fields such as sociology, political science, education, and women's and gender studies. Given its relative youth, it comes as no surprise that there is a considerable range of works that are considered autoethnographic, ranging from highly personal pieces, in which the researcher revisits an experience from his or her own life and explores it as a literary memoirist might do, to more formal accounts in which the researcher is present as a narrator to lead the reader through his or her fieldwork experiences, turning some research participants into main characters. Likewise, there are significant disagreements about what an autoethnography should or should not include. For example, Leon Anderson eschews Ellis's notion of impressionistic, evocative autoethnography for what he calls analytic autoethnography.[19] He argues that in order for the form to be considered a legitimate type of research-based scholarship, it needs to include analysis and be engaged in theory development, not merely storytelling or self-reflection. Ellis rejects this notion, arguing that it unfairly privileges analysis over storytelling in terms of providing meaning to readers.[20] Despite such differences, Ellis says that the autoethnographic form is still in its infancy and is something that

will, and should, evolve and change over time to the needs and demands of both researchers and audiences; as such, she says it should not be confined to a narrow definition of what it should or should not be just yet. Overall, though, its similarities with literary journalism are clear: its focus on plot and character; the use of a reflexive, personal voice; and a literary style that forgoes many of the formalities of academic writing in order to be more evocative and engaging for a range of readers.

Public Ethnography: Politicized Research For A Lay Audience

Public ethnography is similar to autoethnography in that it is a relatively new type of ethnography, but one that is growing steadily.[21] It is also situated "in a broader paradigmatic shift in ethnography towards reflexive, sensuous, interpretive, narrative, arts-informed, and more-than-representational qualitative research."[22] It differs from autoethnography in that it foregrounds the need for public engagement, as its name suggests. By definition, it is a critical and politically engaged type of research that seeks to address issues of current importance and transmit its findings, like autoethnography, to the public-at-large as opposed to other academics. As such, its findings must be written and/or presented in such a way as to make them readily understood by a lay audience. There are many different types of research projects that qualify as public ethnography. As Carol A. Bailey explains, a project can be considered public ethnography if it meets the following criteria:

> (1) its primary means of collecting data is in-depth field research, (2) it is motivated by a desire to reduce social injustice, (3) it critiques the structures and social processes that promote inequality, (4) it includes active participation of the scholar in the fight against repressive conditions, and (5) its desired audience extends beyond academic circles to include some facet of the public at large.[23]

Thus, public ethnographers employ the methods of traditional ethnography but emphasize the need for research that is critically engaged and publicly accessible.

The degree to which public ethnography should be politicized is a contested matter within the field. Herbert J. Gans, for instance, takes a less critical approach than Bailey, saying that sociology is the discipline that

> most often goes backstage to report on how 'society' and its principal institutions work—and ethnographers head backstage almost automatically. Being backstage they can also study when society fails to work and why, and they can identify the forces and agents of malfunction and malfeasance.[24]

Regardless of how its practitioners define the scope of their political en-

gagement and criticism, the field itself is rooted in exploring contemporary issues of public concern, much like journalism. Likewise, it rejects the notion that such work can be completed in an objective way; instead, public ethnographers opt for an engaged, reflexive point of view in their work, much like literary journalists. As Phillip Vannini and Vanessa Milne explain,

> [E]thnographers work differently from most other researchers in virtue of other qualities of their research, such as its ability to portray people, places, and times in vividly descriptive detail, and its emphasis on the researcher's immediate and direct involvement with, participation in, and experience of the lifeworld object of study."[25]

While there are clearly similarities to autoethnography, there are differences as well. Unlike autoethnographers, who often center their stories on themselves, public ethnographers are present in their narratives but are not the main characters. Although they make a point to explain their subject positions (e.g., why they are interested in a given research subject and their personal connection to it), they do not generally *become* the story on which they report. Generally, public ethnographies tend to resemble formal academic research more than nonfiction narratives: they often include literature reviews and theoretical analysis, but try to explain them in plain language, with varying degrees of success. So, while an autoethnographer's work might closely resemble the work of a memoirist, the public ethnographer's work more closely resembles that of a long-form nonfiction writer's, who expresses a researched, reasoned point of view in a piece that is about an issue of interest to him or her but not about him or her specifically.

Alternative Ethnographic Forms And Literary Journalism: Opportunities And Challenges

The similarities among literary journalism and autoethnography and public ethnography present a unique opportunity to enrich all three through collaboration and the exchange of best practices in the field and the classroom. Although interdisciplinary collaboration can be challenging, anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes has demonstrated how it is possible for conventional academics to work with long-form investigative journalists (if not literary journalists specifically). She did fieldwork on the global trafficking in human organs with investigative journalists at *The New York Times* and Canada's *National Post,* as well as with others in Brazil, Turkey, and the Philippines—not as a source or informant but as a collaborator. She did so in order to reach a wider audience than she was used to finding in peer-reviewed journals. "Collaboration with investigative reporters is not always easy and can be distressing," she explains, adding

> However, the more I collaborated with skilled national and international reporters and documentary filmmakers, the more I am impressed with their thoughtfulness, thoroughness, dedication to accuracy and their own very different ethical and political sensibilities. In teaching graduate seminars on genocide, the writings of anthropologists often pale beside the work of political journalists like Philip Gourevitch (1998), Mark Daner (1994) and Alma Guillermoprieto (1994). A little professional humility would go a long way to foster the potential for collaboration drawing on the strengths and skills of each.[26]

Not all ethnographers express the same enthusiasm for working with journalists as research partners. According to Vannini and Milne, for example, "[P]ublic ethnography can offer more depth than news and documentary journalism can. Its in-depth treatment of issues can aid in explanation and understanding—something which journalism often has neither the means nor the interest in providing."[27] Gans takes a more measured approach. While he notes that ethnographers have much to learn from journalists, who are trained in how to make their material relevant, he suggests that one of their starting points be journalists' errors:

> Ethnography can also become relevant by explaining phenomena and events journalists have only described, and by correcting or debunking journalistic concepts and findings, particularly when journalists perpetuate inaccurate conventional wisdoms or unjustifiable stereotypes.[28]

Still, it should be seen as encouraging that there are already some scholars working in ethnography who, as the evidence shows, are doing work that is similar to that of literary journalists. Clearly, potential for some sort of collaboration exists. As such, it would be useful for literary journalism scholars to try to identify those ethnographers and start reaching out to them and building bridges across their respective disciplines. One way to nurture such relationships may be to create a bibliography of works of literary journalism that would appeal to their interests as a way of demonstrating how similar their work is.

For ethnographers who may not wish to conduct research with literary journalists, there are many opportunities for collaboration in the classroom with scholars of literary journalism. Most importantly, literary journalism scholars who teach writing could offer their expertise to ethnography students in helping them reshape and fine-tune their work for wider audiences, which is a primary concern for autoethnographers and public ethnographers. Gans, for instance, recommends that more sociology students be taught how to write in a clear, non-academic way that will endear their work to lay readers, trade publishers, and reviewers.[29] Who better to teach such skills than liter-

ary journalism scholars? They could also teach social science students how to become engaged in current events and pinpoint what will engage a general audience and how to create a long-form piece of research that feels like a must-read, tied directly to concerns of the day. Likewise, ethnographers would likely have much to teach journalism students about qualitative interviewing and long-term fieldwork, methodological uniformity, participant observation techniques, and the ethics involved in such work.

While such interdisciplinary collaboration is a worthwhile endeavor, it comes with challenges for literary journalists and literary journalism scholars as well as ethnographers. For instance, the writing quality of many autoethnographies and public ethnographies will be of concern to most literary journalists and literary journalism scholars. Ethnographers' writing style often feels more labored than literary, and despite these writers' best efforts to create vivid, engaging scenes and narratives, they are often mired in dense theory and methodological descriptions. For example, although Ellis has a spare, clear writing style by academic standards, her autoethnographic writing and scenes are often overloaded with details that would likely seem insignificant to a general or casual reader, such as in this description of the first day of class:

> I stop and, while I wait for students to quiet down, I take in the disheveled conference room. Beige, high-backed, swivel chairs fight for space. Napkins and bags of chips left from the graduate student reception overflow the institutional, brown, metal, trash can, while half-empty, two-liter, Diet Coke bottles clutter the tops of cabinets. The disorder disrupts what would otherwise be an attractive and calming space—long, oak conference table, wider in the middle than the ends; soft, comfortable pillow chairs on rollers; a wall of windows featuring views of campus trees and clouds, and glimpses of the top of the Busch Gardens roller coaster, if you look long and hard enough. My long, purple, blue, and red titanium earrings jingle, reminding me to concentrate on what I'm saying to the students now listening attentively.[30]

Similarly, Ellis works hard to include dialogue in her writing, just as literary journalists do. But it often feels like filler because it does little to propel the narrative, such as in this scene in which she greets a student, Valerie, at her home:

> "Want to see what we've done to our house?" She nods and follows me through our reconstructed bedroom and three bathrooms, and the new screened-in porch we've added. I tell her stories about my never-ending experience of contractor hell. Then I pour coffee and we go upstairs to the library.
>
> Valerie is nonplussed when the dogs enter and bark at her. "Hi babies,"

> she coos, and Ande takes Valerie's tone as an invitation to jump on her lap and lick her face. Valerie chuckles. "They know when there's a dog person around. Sweet puppy. OK, settle down now. I don't want to have to clean these glasses again."[31]

And while Vannini has a clear, readable style in his public ethnography works about ferry passengers, his writing tends toward clichéd descriptions such as a "10,000 tonne spanking-new ferry" and "a cornucopia of hip java lounges and toasty-warm bakeries."[32] Like Ellis, his attempts to include dialogue in his work feel strained and add little to the narrative:

> "Didn't you say we parked by the Orca sign?" whines Ruth as she huffs and puffs her way up the stairs, back to the upper car deck. "I thought it was a whale of some kind. Or maybe a seal," Paul hollers as he slaloms around the flood of bodies walking in the opposite direction.[33]

It is also clear that academics continue to grapple with how best to address the uneasy tension between storytelling and academic analysis. Autoethnographer Kimberly J. Lau attempts this by dividing her pages into two columns and telling three narratives simultaneously.[34] In the right-hand column is a memoir written in an appealing, literary style that examines the author's relationship with her family as well as her memories and feelings about addressing her bifurcated Asian-American identity in professional settings. The narrative that runs in the top half of the left-hand column is the essay's primary argument about how the author negotiates her multicultural Asian identity in the United States. The third narrative, which appears in the bottom half of the left-hand column, is an overview of several articles that inspired the essay and, in particular, its multi-lensed approach. Lau's aim in employing three distinct narrative threads is an attempt not to privilege one kind of writing over another, and while it is not entirely successful since it is impossible to read three texts side-by-side at once, it is an interesting attempt and a clear example of academics' tension in letting narratives and literary writing speak for themselves. So, while they try to follow Ellis's advice and give preference to storytelling and narrative over formal writing and analysis, they often fall short and end up including a great deal of literature reviews and theorizing that would interest few general readers (see also Slattery[35], Spry[36], and Walford[37]). Likewise, even those ethnographers whose writing may come close to the style expected of literary journalism often spend too much time describing their theoretical backgrounds and methodology, as does Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower, who admits that he is trying to "tread a fine line between the *analytic* and the *evocative* registers of autoethnography."[38]

Clearly, challenges remain in bridging the divide between ethnography and literary journalism, but these are challenges that can be overcome and de-

serve to be tackled because of what we stand to gain from such collaboration in terms of enriching our own young field and building our credibility among other qualitative researchers within the academy. Such collaborations would also provide literary journalism scholars the opportunity to highlight their expertise when it comes to the creation and analysis of high-quality narrative nonfiction, including literary journalism, as well as to stake a claim to it. As previously mentioned, narrative-driven research that is accessible and engaging to a lay audience is increasingly popular and sought after in the social sciences. Thus, it behooves literary journalists and literary journalism scholars to move beyond simply creating a space for their work within the academy to staking out their disciplinary turf before it may be claimed by others. This may be a bigger threat than it seems—consider the following statement from Gans, writing about how other disciplines, including anthropology, are taking over the traditional work and research areas of his field:

> [I]n some respects, sociology's most powerful competition comes from journalistic ethnographers, notably book writers, who may not have ever taken a sociology course but are trained or self-trained in fieldwork and intensive interviewing. They are also trained to be topical and to focus on subjects and issues that currently interest the educated and sometimes also the general public.[39]

This need not be an isolationist exercise—indeed, we stand to gain more credibility for our discipline and our work by reaching out to those in the academy who may conduct similar research in order to demonstrate our areas of expertise, such as those in the fields of autoethnography and public ethnography. By actively seeking out collaborative interdisciplinary opportunities, we stand to enhance the depth and breadth of literary journalism studies and build a reputation of expertise across the academy in disseminating knowledge to the public-at-large through engaging literary journalism.

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Notes

1. Norman Sims, "The Problem and the Promise of Literary Journalism Studies," *Literary Journalism Studies* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 7-16.

2. Norman Sims, "The Art of Literary Journalism," in *Literary Journalism: A Collection of the Best American Nonfiction*, ed. Norman Sims and Mark Kramer (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 5.

3. Karen O'Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2009), 9.

4. Janet Cramer and Michael McDevitt, "Ethnographic Journalism," in *Qualitative Research in Journalism: Taking It to the Streets*, ed Sharon Hartin Iorio (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associations, Publishers, 2004).

5. O'Reilly, 9.

6. Phillip Vannini and Laura Milne, "Public Ethnography as Innovative Learning: An In-Depth Statement," last accessed May 1, 2012, http://www.publicethnography.net/projects/public-ethnography-innovative-learning-depth-statement.

7. Mark Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," in *Literary Journalism: A Collection of the Best American Nonfiction*, ed. Norman Sims and Mark Kramer (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 21-34.

8. Qtd. in O'Reilly, 150.

9. Sims, "The Art of Literary Journalism," 6.

10. Kramer, 27.

11. O'Reilly, 228.

12. Sims, "The Art of Literary Journalism," 12.

13. Gesa E. Kirsch, *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The Politics of Location, Interpretation, and Publication* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), x.

14. Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 8.

15. Barbara Tedlock, "From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 47, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 71-72.

16. Ibid.

17. Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA.: AltaMira Press, 2004) xix.

18. Ibid., 20.

19. Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (August 2006): 373-95.

20. Carolyn S. Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, "Analyzing Analytic Autoethnography: An Autopsy," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (August 2006): 429-49.

21. To wit, Canada now has a federally funded research chair in public ethnography, which suggests the degree to which government funders consider the importance of academics doing a better job of tackling real-world, contemporary issues and transmitting their results to the public-at-large.

22. Vannini and Milne.

23. Carol A. Bailey, "Public Ethnography," in *Handbook of Emergent Methods,* ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 266.

24. Herbert J. Gans, "Public Ethnography; Ethnography as Public Sociology," *Qualitative Sociology* 33, no. 1 (March 2010): 99.

25. Vannini and Milne.

26. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Making Anthropology Public," *Anthropology Today* 25, no. 4 (August 2009): 1.

27. Vannini and Milne.

28. Gans, 100.

29. Ibid., 103.

30. Ellis, 2004, 1.

31. Ellis, 2004, 292.

32. Phillip Vannini, Lindsay Vogan, and Jonathan Taggart, "Disembarking: How Ferry Travellers Get Off Their Rocks," last accessed August 21, 2012, http://ferrytales.innovativeethnographies.net/content/art-disembarking

33. Ibid.

34. Kimberly J. Lau, "This Text Which is Not One: Dialectics of Self and Culture in Experimental Autoethnography," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, nos. 2-3 (May-December 2002): 243-59.

35. Patrick Slattery, "The Educational Researcher as Artist Working Within," *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 3 (June 2001): 370-98.

36. Tami Spry, "Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis," *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 6 (December 2001): 706-32.

37. Geoffrey Walford, "Finding the Limits: Autoethnography and Being an Oxford University Proctor," *Qualitative Research* 4, no. 3 (December 2004): 403-17.

38. Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower, "Waltzing Matilda: An Autoethnography of a Father's Stillbirth," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41, no. 4 (August 2012): 463.

39. Gans, 99.

Firing the Canon: The Historical Search for Literary Journalism's Missing Links

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Keynote address, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies, Toronto, Canada, May 2012

The Case for Studying Material Culture

What could an ancient timber, a shard of china, gravestones, musical instruments, cuts of meat, furniture, and even refuse dumps possibly have to tell us about unearthing overlooked mines of literary journalism in the United States? Much more than one at first might think. To begin with, in these artifacts of early American life, these "small things forgotten," as the anthropologist and historical archaeologist James Deetz has told us in his fascinating book by the same name, lie clues to the culture of both colonial New England's English settlers and the black African Americans who lived among them.[1] These common, everyday artifacts unearthed at Plymouth, Massachusetts and elsewhere in America give eloquent voice to people who did not have the economic and educational wherewithal to leave behind elite records in the way of great music, visual art, and writing. Instead, they produced common material objects—cultural remains, as Deetz calls them—that are of incalculable value when decoded by historical archaeologists.[2] These materials, when complemented by available data from probate, property, and tax records; land deeds, court records, birth and death records; church records, diaries, and other documents, reveal how these colonial Americans lived daily life, including their ideas about design and space and even, we would have to say, their world view.

One of Deetz's most compelling findings deals with the archaeological and architectural remains of Parting Ways, a humble, late eighteenth-century settlement near Plymouth established by a freed slave who had fought in the Revolution, Cato Howe. Parting Ways' material culture (i.e., post molds and ceramics from the Turner-Burr house) reveals a strikingly West African understanding of space and design, in marked contrast to that of the neighboring white settlements. The archaeology of such African American settlements has illuminated our picture of black history in ways that written records alone cannot. Deetz concludes: "The archaeology tells us that in spite of their lowly station in life," [these African American settlers with West African roots] were the bearers of a lifestyle, distinctively their own, neither recognized nor understood by their chroniclers.[3]

Similarly, the work of folklorist Henry Glassie and others have figured importantly in the establishment of a rich tradition of scholarship on material culture that reveals certain heretofore hidden and significant aspects of American cultural history.[4]

The Link to Literary Journalism Studies

Many instructive parallels can be drawn to literary journalism studies, if we will just ponder several leading questions. First, we need to be mindful of the elite sources of literary journalism that have already attracted full-bore scholarly analysis: books printed by recognized publishers and magazines and newspapers such as The New Yorker, Texas Monthly, and The New York Times. Yes, we've discovered and will continue to find major writers of literary journalism published in these pages, but we shouldn't overlook other, less elite sources—where we may find not the "usual suspects" (Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, et al.) but others with original visions of literary journalism and the requisite abilities to realize them. Who knows how our historical understanding of literary journalism might evolve, when we uncover such voices and study them?

So, the leading question is this: for literary journalism, what's the equivalent of material folk culture? Here I mean "equivalent" in the sense of being an overlooked, commonplace source that's considered "functional" or "utilitarian," rather than an "intentional" work of art (such as elite art, music, and writing). Some of these comparatively "functional" potential sources of literary journalism are: household magazines and newspapers; letters, memoirs, and diaries; epistolary journalism; religious tracts; travel writing; and social movement, muckraking, and African American periodicals. I'll discuss each of these in turn.

Uncovering the Work of Women Literary Journalists: Magazines

Note that a number of these potential sources will lead us to discover the work of women writers. Do women write literary journalism? It's not surprising that this question is still asked, considering that Tom Wolfe included only two women (Joan Didion and Barbara Goldsmith) in his book The New Journalism. This classic 1973 work helped to define the genre of literary journalism as a mainly male province, as Jan Whitt points out.[5] So the question of whether women write literary journalism is still posed, and the answer may depend on where we're looking. One neglected source is an entire realm of publications scholars have basically bypassed: women's magazines, as Amy Mattson Lauters has argued so convincingly in her book, *The Rediscovered Writings of Rose Wilder Lane: Literary Journalist.*[6] Here she presents Lane (1886–1968) as a literary journalist, noting that Lane's literary journalism has been largely overlooked because she wrote it for "women's magazines that have historically been devalued as media forms" (including *Woman's Day, Good Housekeeping,* and *Ladies Home Journal*) as well as *Cosmopolitan, Sunset, The San Francisco Bulletin*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African American newspaper.

And recent research reveals that still other women's magazines, more specialized because they deal wholly with farm life, are also repositories of literary journalism by women that deserves more than a cursory reading. Lauters demonstrates this in her book-length study of such magazines as *The Farmer's Wife, Farm Wife News*, and *Country Woman.*[7]

Not to be forgotten are the "literary ladies," as Sherilyn Cox Bennion calls the women literary magazine editors of the nineteenth-century American West. Their efforts at periodicals such as the Golden Era (1852), The Overland Monthly, and The Californian, nurtured not just poetry and fiction, but literary nonfiction narrative that is well worth further exploration.[8]

Women's Letters, Diaries, and Journals; Epistolary Journalism

Women "published very little" in the first half of the eighteenth century, according to Elaine Showalter, a literary historian. They were certainly writing—"letters, diaries, journals, and religious tracts,"— but these were mainly private communications. Owing to societal norms and prejudice, publication paths were less open to them. When they did publish, it was much more likely to be in newspapers rather than books.[9] And often, this content took the form of letters, such as the many that the brilliant Margaret Fuller (1810–1850) contributed to Horace Greeley's New York Tribune. Greeley hired Fuller in 1844 and sent her to Europe in the summer of 1846 as probably the first woman foreign correspondent; "between then and January

1850 she wrote 37 dispatches for the New York Tribune from Great Britain, France, and Italy."[10] Probably her very best were the war correspondence dispatches she sent to the Tribune after the 1849 Italian Revolution.[11] Fuller's writing as editor of The Dial, the Transcendentalists' influential journal, is also fertile literary journalism ground.

Katrina J. Quinn has recently brought to our attention the genre of epistolary journalism, a largely unstudied form of literary journalistic narrative, in nineteenth-century American newspapers.[12] While not all epistolary journalism is necessarily literary journalism, she cautions, certainly some letters written by journalists and published in the newspaper qualify as literary journalism—among them, travel letters written to illuminate a specific destination, not unlike the "thick description" prescribed by Clifford Geertz more than a century later.[13]

Do unpublished letters "qualify" as "literary journalism"? Certainly letters have yielded untold volumes of literary work, and many of these works could be considered to be a form of journalism. Indeed, letters were the first journalistic forms in Europe. And they continued to be a means to communicate news until being displaced to a considerable degree, in our age, by email. For example, for a very long time, letters were the only sources of news between those living on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge Mountains and those living on the western side, as Hazel Dicken-Garcia writes in her book To Western Woods. Here is an excerpt from one such letter, written in 1792 by Mary Howard in Kentucky to John Breckinridge in Virginia before he moved his family to Kentucky: "It gives me most sincere pleasure every time I visit Cousin Betsy to see your Noble seat which is vastly preferable to any I ever saw on James river. I ride to an eminence on which I expect you'll build. I there alight and has [*sic*] many a pleasing interview with you and my dear Polly[:] Indeed, I cannot leave the solitary spot without shedding a tear and wishing it real."[14] Similar claims about the important role of letters as a form of journalistic communication could be made about other regions of the United States.

Other examples are the letters Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) wrote about her nursing experiences during the Civil War, first published in The Boston Commonwealth (starting in May 1863). Through the voice of her comic character, Tribulation Periwinkle, Alcott details the challenges of caring for wounded soldiers, the reality of which contrasts starkly with popular, heroic images of the war.[15] For instance, she writes: "One funereal lady came to try her powers as a nurse; but, a brief conversation eliciting the facts that she fainted at the sight of blood, was afraid to watch alone, couldn't possibly take care of delirious persons, was nervous about infections, and unable to

bear much fatigue, she was mildly dismissed. I hope she found her sphere, but fancy a comfortable bandbox on a high shelf would best meet the requirements of her case."[16] Nurse Periwinkle (Alcott) attends many deaths, but none is more memorable than that of John, a beloved young soldier dying far from home and mother. "I sat down by him," writes Alcott, "wiped the drops from his forehead, stirred the air about him with a slow wave of a fan, and waited to help him die. He stood in sore need of help—and I could do so little; for, as the doctor had foretold, the strong body rebelled against death, and fought every inch of the way, forcing him to draw each breath with a spasm, and clench his hands with an imploring look, as if he asked, 'How long must I endure this, and be still!'"[17]

Women's letters present a particularly rich lode of material with literary journalism potential. While historically, both men and women wrote letters, epistolary journalism was a more common (and often the sole literary) outlet for women. Many anthologies of letters have been recently published and of course the possibilities for original, archival research are practically limitless.[18] Increasingly, historical institutions are digitizing their collections of letters to make them available online. For instance, the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Research Center has digitized letters "that were written between 1850 and 1970 both *by* immigrants and *to* immigrants in languages other than English." See http://ihrc.umn.edu/research/dil/index.html.

Others require online subscription, such as Manuscript Women's Letters and Diaries from the American Antiquarian Society, which spans the years 1750 to 1950 and includes one hundred thousand pages of "the personal writings of women of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries." Some are famous, such as Annie Sullivan (describing how she taught Helen Keller) and Ellen Tucker Emerson (Ralph Waldo Emerson's daughter), writing about Concord, Massachusetts life during the Civil War, while many more of the letter writers are obscure. See http://alexanderstreet.com/products/manuscript-womens-letters-and-diaries-american-antiquarian-society.

What potential cache of literary journalism lies in letter writing is suggested by an excerpt that Quinn quotes from a letter by Samuel Bowles, the editor of the Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican (one of thirty-two that he published in his paper during a cross-country trip in 1865). Bowles wrote about crossing over the great Continental Divide: "It was no more than a 'thank-ye-marm' in a New England's winter sleigh ride, yet it separates the various and vast waters of a Continent, and marks the fountains of the two great oceans of the globe. But it was difficult to be long enthusiastic over this infinitesimal point of mud; the night was very cold, and I was sore in unpo-

etical parts from unaccustomed saddles, and I got down from all my high horses, and into my corner of the stage, at the next station."[19]

Another intriguing example is the correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren (1728–1814), a dramatist who wrote in 1779 to her best friend Abigail Adams about the new American nation: "America is a theatre just erected—the drama is here but begun, but while the actors of the old world have run through every species of pride, luxury, venality, and vice—their characters will become less interesting and the western wilds which for ages have been little known, may exhibit those striking traits of wisdom and grandeur, and magnificence, which the Divine oeconomist [sic] may have reserved to crown the closing scene."[20] This sort of communication, in which women exchanged ideas about American political life, is actually quite common during the eighteenth century. Showalter tells us that women copied their letters and read them aloud to their friends; epistolary writing was no small endeavor, but a serious pursuit even when it was only shared among friends.[21]

Just as letters can be a province of literary journalism narrative, so too can be autobiographical writing such as memoir and diaries. In early America, Indian captivity narratives such as Mary Rowlandson's 1682 book about her abduction, A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, were immensely popular. Rowlandson's book, which shows a specificity of detail and observation that we would readily describe today as "journalistic," along with a literary sensibility and style, quickly became a bestseller both here and abroad. It "transcends the historical and cultural circumstances that produced it and by combining stark details, honesty, and exquisite style, brings the experience of war and suffering to a personal and accessible level."[22]

Or consider Mary Boykin Chestnut (1823–1886), whose diary brought to life the Civil War in a decidedly literary way.[23] Many "literary" women like her kept diaries in the nineteenth century, even as they were writing literary works for publication. And many women who wrote nothing else produced diaries. Lillian Schlissel's Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey is a classic source, gathering diaries of women who were among the quarter of a million Americans who crossed the continental United States between 1840 and 1870. Here is an excerpt from the diary of Catherine Haun: "This was the land of the buffalo. One day a herd came in our direction like a great black cloud, a threatening moving mountain, advancing towards us very swiftly and with wild snorts, noses almost to the ground, and tails flying in midair…. they seemed to be innumerable and made a deafening terrible noise."[24]

Tantalizing research prospects lie in the increasing number of online archives. For instance, the Harvard University Open Collections Program:

Women Working, 1800–1930, features digitized diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, and journals. These contain "stories and recollections of women astronomers and doctors, preachers and missionaries, reformers and suffragists, school girls and school teachers, a philanthropist and a "country woman," and, in the publications trade, several authors, an editor, and a book agent." See: http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww/vcsearch.php?cat=diaries.

Religious Tracts and Periodicals

In the early nineteenth century, religious tracts abounded. David Nord has ably demonstrated that it was not the penny press publishers of the 1830s but the earlier evangelical Christian publicists of the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society who created the first actual mass media.[25] To my knowledge, no one has ever investigated what literary journalism might lurk in these millions of pages (many of which were written by women)—or in the innumerable religious newspapers that blanketed the United States throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, such as the Methodist *Christian Advocate* and the *American Messenger,*[26] as well as the *Christian Advocate* (a weekly paper published in New York by the Methodist Episcopal Church, starting in 1826) and the *Christian Recorder* (published by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, since 1852).

Why are these potentially rich sources for literary journalism overlooked? The answer may lie in the longstanding blind eye that many journalists—and by extension, historians of journalism—cast toward religious institutions in general. Too often, scholarship about religion is mistakenly equated with proselytizing. Yet religion is a longstanding, central force with considerable impact on society and has surely inspired works of literary journalism.

Social Movement Periodicals

Social movement periodicals present yet another exciting prospect for literary journalism sleuthing. The old truism that journalism thrives in times of crisis also applies to literary journalism. In their anthology of Thirties American women writers, Charlotte Nekola, and Paula Rabinowitz identify a number of women who wrote reportage, theory, and analysis on behalf of the Depression era's efforts to remake society, among them: Josephine Herbst, Agnes Smedley, Anna Louise Strong, Ella Winter, Tillie Olsen, Meridel LeSueur, and Mary Heaton Vorse, and Dorothy Day.[27]

My own work on U.S. peace advocacy periodicals uncovered a trove of women writers, heretofore largely unrecognized, who wrote passionately and sometimes in a decidedly literary way about their ideas to achieve world peace. One of them is Dorothy Day, whose writing in the *Catholic Worker* newspaper from 1933 to 1980 I have discussed as an example of literary jour-

nalism.[28] These women published their writing in scores of periodicals such as the *American Advocate of Peace, Four Lights, Friends Journal*, the *Circular* and *Oneida Circular, New Harmony Gazette, Pax Christi USA, Peace and Freedom, Shaker Manifesto,* and *The Voice of Peace.* They also wrote many books and mainstream magazine and newspaper articles.

Sometimes, sifting through archival collections is the only way to recover such lost history. At the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, I found records about a number of women who wrote extensively about peace issues—including several books each as well as extensive magazine and newspaper articles—yet these women were nowhere to be found in any of the standard biographical dictionaries, either in their time or ours.[29]

Historically, other social movement periodicals such as the abolitionist press have attracted gifted women writers such as Lydia Maria Child (1802–1880). This multifaceted novelist, journalist, editor, and scholar wrote forty-seven books and tracts including four novels and three collections of short stories. She also wrote innumerable letters and substantial additional fiction and journalism, and the bibliography of her works is still growing as more works, some anonymous, are discovered, according to her biographer Carolyn L. Karcher.[30] Child founded and edited *The Juvenile Miscellany* (1826–1834), a popular children's magazine and also the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (1841–1843), the American Anti-Slavery Society's weekly New York newspaper. (Her book-length collections of her columns from the *Standard*, published in 1843 and 1845, were very popular and offer intriguing literary journalism prospects.[31])

Another accomplished abolitionist journalist was Sara Jane Clarke Lippincott (1823–1904), who wrote under the name of Grace Greenwood for the antislavery newspaper, the *National Era*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* of Philadelphia.[32] Her journalism merits a closer look.

One can't leave the realm of social movement publications without noting the vigorous nineteenth-century woman's rights press that includes the *Revolution* of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the *Lily* of Amelia Bloomer, *Woman's Journal* (Lucy Stone) and the *Una* (Paulina Wright Davis).[33] What literary journalism may lie in these pages?

Travel Writing

Travel writing and foreign correspondence are yet other genres to which some nineteenth-century women contributed, yet they are not usually on our literary journalism radar, at least not before the twentieth century. While Mark Twain's literary journalism travel writing is well known,[34] Francis Preston Blair's wife, Eliza Violet Gist (1794–1877), may have been the very

first American woman travel writer for a newspaper (the *Washington Globe*). According to her husband's biographer, she was truly a co-editor of the *Washington Globe* with Blair, and "assumed responsibility for foreign news, human interest news, and special features, which included short stories, poetry, book reviews, letters from diplomats and foreign travelers, brief anecdotes, riddles, and other similar items."[35] Her travel pieces may offer literary journalism discoveries.

Sara Jane Clarke Lippincott was also a European correspondent for both the abolitionist *National Era* and the *Saturday Evening Post* (1852–1853), and her accounts of foreign cultures may show a distinctive feminine perspective[36] that is worth examining in relation to its literary journalistic qualities (such as trenchant observation and sensory scene-setting).

Katherine Bonner Sherwood (1849–1883) wrote for the *Memphis Avalanche* using the pen name "Sherwood Bonner" in the 1870s. Her travel letters satirized the Boston and Concord intelligentsia, including Louisa May Alcott. She proved herself an astute observer of the American scene during the post-bellum period of rapid cultural and social change and deserves further study as a potential literary journalist.

The most famous travel writer of this period, of course, was a man—Bayard Taylor (1825–1878)—who also may qualify as a literary journalist by virtue of his insightful, participant-observation accounts of far-flung cultures as a correspondent for Horace Greeley's *Tribune* in the 1840s and 1850s.[37]

Muckraking Periodicals

As we move into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we encounter the Progressive Era muckrakers, those crusading journalists who tried to expose wrongdoing from the marketing of quack patent medicines to Standard Oil's unethical monopolistic practices. Surely they should be read again with an eye toward recognizing literary journalism. The passion of writers such as Ray Stannard Baker, Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, and others, in the pages of publications such as *McClure's Magazine, Munsey's, Cosmopolitan,* and *The American Magazine,* to investigate corruption in politics and society deeply, led to writing that we may indeed wish to consider for addition to the corpus of literary journalism.[38]

Historically, scholars of journalism have viewed muckraking and investigative reporting as belonging to a tradition separate from that of literary journalism, as James Aucoin has observed: "They situate bare-knuckled journalistic exposure of corruption, injustice, and maltreatment within historical models of progressive reform. The literature of fact, then, remains a parallel, alternative tradition grounded in journalism-as-story-telling." Muckraking

and literary journalism are seen "as separate, parallel responses to shortcomings in the mainstream media."[39] Yet exciting new work by Cecilia Tichi argues convincingly that muckraking—both the "classic" early twentieth-century Progressive variety, and more contemporary work by writers such as Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal,* 2001; Laurie Garrett (*Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*, 2000, and *The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World out of Balance*, 1994), and Joseph Hallinan (*Going Up the River: Travels in a Prison Nation,* 2001)—can qualify as nonfiction narrative art.[40] Both muckraking and investigative reporting—and literary journalism—share an emphasis on saturation or immersion reporting, verifiable fact, and the use such familiar literary devices as characterization, voice, and symbolic language.

African American Newspapers

Finally, a significant genre of African American literary expression, the newspaper, began before the Civil War as a vehicle for abolitionist opinion. *Freedom's Journal*, begun in 1827 by Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm, set a standard of hewing to African American racial pride while serving news and information targeted to that community. It was followed by Frederick Douglass's *North Star,* and by the end of the Civil War more than forty African American papers had been founded.[41] Eventually, as African Americans settled in cities, they published newspapers for their communities such as the *Chicago Defender*, *Detroit Tribune*, the *Pittsburgh Courier,* and the *Amsterdam News* (New York). In their entirety, the millions of pages published in African American newspapers since the early nineteenth century beg to be scrutinized for the gems of literary journalism hidden there.

Conclusion

This is but a survey of some of the literary journalism equivalents of material folk culture, and what is said here of American culture might also be said of others. Rather than intentional works of art, these equivalents may be more functional and utilitarian in their purpose—but some may still reach that elusive pinnacle of literary journalism, even if seemingly by accident. Just like historical archaeologists, our challenge is to unearth in these "small things forgotten"—these less elite sources from household and farming women's magazines, letters, and religious tracts to travel writing and social movement, muckraking, and African American periodicals—the treasure that lies therein. Our excavations could reveal the ammunition to explode our formulaic approaches, resulting in a different history of literary journalism, one much more nuanced than we know now.

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Notes

1. James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977).

2. As Deetz puts it, "Historical archaeology studies the cultural remains of literate societies that were capable of recording their own history." He further defined historical archaeology as "the archaeology of the spread of European culture throughout the world since the fifteenth century and its impact on indigenous peoples" [*In Small Things Forgotten*, p. 5].

3. Deetz, 153–54.

4. Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968) and *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975); Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Thomas J. Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture: A Research Guide* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 1985).

5. Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1973); Jan Whitt, *Settling the Borderland: Other Voices in Literary Journalism* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2008), 119.

6. Amy Mattson Lauters, *The Rediscovered Writings of Rose Wilder Lane: Literary Journalist* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2007).

7. Lauters, *More Than a Farmer's Wife: Voices of American Farm Women, 1910–1960* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

8. Sherilynn Bennion, *Equal to the Occasion: Women Editors of the Nineteenth-Century West* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1990), 119–31.

9. Elaine Showalter, *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne*

Bradstreet to Annie Proulx (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 15.

10. Giovanna Dell'Orto, *Giving Meanings to the World: The First U.S. Foreign Correspondents, 1838–1859* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 105.

11. Margaret Fuller Ossoli, *At Home and Abroad*, ed. Arthur B. Fuller (New York: The Tribune Association, 1869), 420.

12. "Exploring an Early Version of Literary Journalism: Nineteenth-century Epistolary Journalism," vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 2011), 32–51.

13. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973, 3–30.

14. Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *To Western Woods: The Breckinridge Family Moves to Kentucky in 1793* (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991), 175 [22 July 1792].

15. Showalter, 139.

16. Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches* (Carlisle, MA: Applewood Books, 1991), 91 [originally published: Boston: James Redpath Publishers, 1863], http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/alcott/sketches/sketches.html#86.

17. Alcott, 56.

18.Lisa Grunwald and Stephen J. Adler, eds., *Women's Letters: America from the Revolutionary War to the Present* (New York: Dial Press, 2005).

19. Quinn, 48, quoting Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States, with Speaker Colfax* (Springfield, Mass.: Bowles, 1865), 75.

20. Quoted in Showalter, 17 .

21. Showalter, 18.

22. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, "Introduction" to *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 5.

23. *Mary Chestnut's Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981).

24. Schlissel, 176.

25. David Paul Nord, "The Evangelical Origins of Mass Media in America, 1815–1835," *Journalism Monographs*, No. 88 (1984) (Columbia, S.C.: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication).

26. David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America*, 1790–1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

27. Charlotte Nekola and Paula Rabinowitz, eds., *Writing Red: An Anthology of American Women Writers, 1930–1940* (New York: Feminist Press, 1987); Dee Garrison, *Mary Heaton Vorse: The Life of an American Insurgent* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). Also see: Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 134; James Boylan, "Publicity for the Great Depression: Newspaper Default and Literary Reportage," in *Mass Media between the Wars: Perceptions of Cultural Tension, 1918–1941,* ed. Catherine L. Covert and John D. Stevens (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1984); and William Dow, *Narrating Class in American Fiction* (New York: Palgrave

Macmillan, 2009), on Meridel LeSueur (133–62) and Agnes Smedley (179–85).

28. Nancy L. Roberts, "Dorothy Day" (evaluative essay), in *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*, ed. Thomas B. Connery (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1992), 179–85.

29. For instance: Fannie Fern Phillips Andrews, Florence Brewer Boeckel, Frances Alice Kellor, Dorothy Hewitt Hutchinson.

30. Karcher writes: "New articles of hers keep turning up, not only in hitherto unexamined journals but in those already searched by other scholars. Child also published a large number of articles anonymously or pseudonymously, both in her husband's newspaper, the *Massachusetts Journal* (ca. 1828 until 1832), and during the Civil War, in mainstream political newspapers. Many of these articles remain to be located." Carolyn L. Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 757.

31. Lydia Maria Child, *Letters from New York [First Series].* (New York: C.S. Francis/Boston: James Munroe, 1843; London, Bentley, 1843); Lydia Maria Child, *Letters from New York. Second Serie.* (New York: C.S. Francis/Boston: J.H. Francis, 1845).

32. Dell'Orto, 105–06.

33. Catherine C. Mitchell, "Historiography on the Woman's Rights Press," in *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History: Multicultural Perspectives*, ed. Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reid (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 159–68.

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Kicking the Canon in the Breeches

John Tulloch
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An appreciation of Professor Nancy Roberts's keynote address, "Firing the Canon," IALJS, Toronto, May 2012

If you trust Google, the secret of delivering a successful keynote address is simple. Start with an icebreaking joke and stud your talk with anecdotes. Tell them a story, particularly one with some element of "problem, struggle and solution." Liven up your gathering of burnt-out salarymen with analogies from the sports field. And don't forget those social media friendly quotes—ensure your points can be readily committed to a tweetable 140 characters or a texter's rapid moving thumb. (Plagiarism alert—my heartfelt thanks to those smarties at http://www.heinzmarketing.com/2011/10/six-tips-for-more-successful-keynote-presentations/)

What's missing? At least three ingredients: passion, scholarship . . . and imagination. Professor Nancy Roberts's keynote address in Toronto had all three.

With a smile on her face and fire in her belly, Roberts happily set out to deliver a kick in the pants to a smug tradition of scholarship that has excluded a variety of groups from more than marginal consideration within the body of work construed to be "literary journalism." Did she mean us? She surely did. What were we to make, for example, of the fact that one staple of our reading lists, Tom Wolfe's *New Journalism*, contains just two contributions from women journalists?

It got worse. Roberts succeeded in making most of her audience a mite uncomfortable about what work, and whose, they have disregarded as apt objects of study. And the problem was much more than the exclusion of women, bad enough in itself.

Her grand narrative was the need to recover and properly value what had been lost, forgotten, defeated, regarded as of little worth. Or as W. H. Auden would write:

> History to the defeated
> May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.
> ("Spain," 1937)

But not on Professor Roberts's watch.

Her intellectual starting point was an analogy with the study of material folk culture. She posed the question of what constituted the equivalent of material folk culture for literary journalism—that is, the "overlooked, commonplace source that's considered 'functional' or 'utilitarian,' rather than an 'intentional' work of art" such as painting, or music.

Rather than an "icebreaker" this was an icicle through the carapace of academic self-regard.

One issue, of course, was the term "literary" that we have conspired to yoke to "journalism." Apart from the la-di-da, high status, sacred grove connotations of "literary" and its fuzzy imprecision is the suspicion that the naming of the field may have something to do with conferring some "class" on the macho bohemian rogues (journalistic myth) or commercially driven male drudges (academic myth) who inhabit it.

In other words a PR scam to make the long-form journalism we love a respectable academic subject of study.

Discuss.

Playing the status game involved focusing attention on books from recognised publishers and established periodicals. For Roberts, escaping it demanded the exploration of a whole range of non-elite sources, such as,

> household magazines and newspapers; letters, memoirs, and diaries; epistolary journalism; religious tracts; travel writing; and social movement, muckraking and African American periodicals.

She argued that women's magazines were not regarded as a serious literary form, while specialist magazines (many aimed at women) were also written out of the canon.

Publication itself raised issues of exclusion. What was the status of unpublished writing? Letters? Diaries? Both forms much used by those groups—women, ethnic minorities, working-class people—invisible in the conventional canon.

The place of "epistolatory journalism" is now well established. But Professor Roberts argued strongly for the admission to the canon of *unpublished* letters, diaries and other forms of intimate writing. Quoting examples from

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she suggested that, rather than being regarded simply as an historical source, their literary qualities should be valued, particularly in regard to women writers:

> Women's letters present a particularly rich lode of material with literary journalism potential. While historically, both men and women wrote letters, epistolary journalism was a more common (and often sole literary) outlet for women. Many anthologies of letters have been recently published and of course the possibilities for original, archival research are practically limitless. Increasingly, historical institutions are digitizing their collections of letters to make them available online.

More controversial still was Professor Roberts's argument that huge resources for the study of literary journalism in the US might lurk within the innumerable tracts of nineteenth and twentieth century evangelical Christian organizations and religious newspapers:

> Why are these potentially rich sources for literary journalism overlooked? The answer may lie in the longstanding blind eye that many journalists—and by extension, historians of journalism—cast toward religious institutions in general. Too often, scholarship is mistakenly equated with proselytizing. Yet religion is a longstanding, central force with considerable impact on society and has surely inspired works of literary journalism.

This was a brilliant and combative performance, adept in identifying key areas for continuing scholarly argument. A number of questions clamor for attention.

First, if one needs a canon, what are the criteria for inclusion, beyond personal interest? Her self-evident, admirable relish at the limitless vistas of un-researched tracts, sermons, and emails raised the issue at to whether there were any meaningful criteria for *exclusion*, and any way in which some definable boundaries could be placed to the field.

Second, the status of unpublished letters does raise some intriguing problems. How far can one go in discarding the distinction between published and non-published forms of written communication without reducing the canon to a dead letter? Perhaps this is what it deserves. But does this risk reducing the field to incoherence?

Surely letters are primarily a form of one-to-one, or family-to-family, communication? A form which preceded journalism and out of which journalism grew—the roots of which are readily perceptible in the use of the term "correspondent." Is it pettifogging to argue that they are a fascinating study in their own right but easy in principle to distinguish from journalism? They are not published to an anonymous audience of readers. They do not constitute part of the public sphere. Letters written for publication are, of course, a dif-

ferent matter, as are, for example, the letters sent by paid writers to merchants in medieval Europe about business conditions. Professor Roberts also cites the case of emails. Again, not journalism. But a blog is—just as much as a newspaper column.

Third, the status of tracts and religious newspapers raises more issues. With an enlightenment hat on, this could seem quite a depressing prospect. Surely one great achievement of Victorian journalism was to liberate itself from the form of the propagandizing tract?

Religion has, of course, inspired some memorable works of literary journalism—but more often from the perspective of the questing or skeptical writer rather than the believer. George Orwell and Simone de Beauvoir rather than Hannah More and Billy Graham. Are we to dismiss the issues involved in anchoring journalism to an explicit, organized belief system, to produce what might be argued to be a form of faith advertising? If you take the position that all journalism is driven by ideology anyway, and one should not distinguish between the different forms they take, whether (name your faith) or free-market capitalism, then do we embrace all belief systems as well as established religions, including the collected works of L. Ron Hubbard? How far do we go in saying No to the Enlightenment and its celebration of the free, skeptical intelligence?

Such arguments will run and run. But Professor Roberts's passion, scholarship and commitment was reminiscent in its ardor and combativeness of another engaged scholar, the great English social historian and peace activist, Professor Edward Thompson. He opens his finest work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, with a call for history written "from the bottom up":

> I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'Utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity. Their crafts and traditions may have been dying. Their hostility to the new industrialism may have been backward-looking. Their communitarian ideals may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they lived through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in terms of their own experience; and, if they were casualties of history, they remain, condemned in their own lives, as casualties. (E. P. Thompson, 1963)

What good luck to be a student of Professor Roberts at the University at Albany of the State University of New York! And how fortunate were the delegates at the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies in Toronto on 17 May 2012.

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Some Parting Thoughts from Our Former President . . .

What Will the Future Bring?

Alice Donat Trindade
IALJS president, 2010-2012
CAPP–ISCSP–Technical University Lisbon, Portugal

What does the future hold for literary journalism studies? Literary journalism has become part of the tradition in the spreading of the concept of newsworthiness. Thus it is part of a longer-lasting evolution toward the reduction of information-gaps and knowledge-gaps among the citizens of our world. The question that arises is how does the International Society for Literary Journalism Studies and *Literary Journalism Studies* contribute to literary journalism reaching all corners of the world? And given that literary journalism has been characterized as "slow journalism," is it compatible with instant release of text, image, and sound, along with the growing empowerment of the reception end and with an overflow of messages?

Consider the lessons from history and how our concept of literacy has shifted and changed over time: The Roman Senate and later emperors had relevant news and events of various kinds painted on stone or metal and displayed them in public places. Thus they created the *acta*. The nature of such early public documents, like the acta, or a king's proclamation during the medieval period, was a powerful one, in terms of sender, and the message was to be taken at its word, as it conveyed an official version of facts and anticipated the expected reaction by recipients. Years ago, defenders of the magic bullet theory could have successfully verified it here: because reception outcomes were mandated and no variations in reaction were acceptable because all deviance would be punished. That, of course, does not mean that there were not secret misgivings on the part of receivers who could think for themselves, and therein lies a submerged and unofficial reception theory.

Later, the advent of the printing press allowed efficient and far-reaching publication of news. We know what happened: By the nineteenth century we see the rise of the mass press after three centuries of technical growth, literacy rise, and availability/ability to acquire periodicals. Authors and journalists

were well aware of the fact that they were writing for an audience that was eager and growing: eager to read newspapers and thus get information or entertainment.

This access did not, however, permeate all layers of society equally. A variety of studies focusing on the more recent twentieth century (e.g. Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien, 1970[1]; Genova and Greenberg (1979)[2]; Werthein (2000)[3]; Griswold, McDonnell, and Wright (2005)[4]; Jennifer Jerit (2009)[5]; Stolle and Gidengil (2010)[6]) have examined this knowledge gap. We know that different people access different information, depending on factors such as income, education, gender, social status, and so on. The result is that due not only to technological changes, but also to individual adaptation to new media environments as well, even the very notion of literacy has shifted. [7] Henry Jenkins (2009) views new literacies as a relevant component of participatory culture. These types of literacy involve more than individual skills; in fact they entail social skills such as collaboration and networking.[8] Previous reading cultures involved some social skills, especially those that were necessary for public debate about text and context. In addition to this, our current reading culture involves more than the traditional dual relationships between individual reading and the written piece itself, or the triangle between reader/criticism/work, or even the additional element of the industrial relation that involved the production of the written platform that supported the text. Literacy is now a demanding but also more rewarding quality/social skill that presupposes an active role on the part of the recipient.

Such a brief survey of media history and criticism gives rise then to the fundamental question of how the IALJS and its journal as loci for research and development fit into this unequal panorama that enables information and contents to reach all corners of the world, provided their audiences are able and willing to consume it. In view of such a panorama, literary journalism (as, for that matter, most written production) faces challenges that must be carefully analyzed. Mahmoud Eid and Stephen Ward in an editorial to a special issue of the *Global Media Journal*, entitled "Ethics, new media, and social networks" point to the interaction between new media, technology, and the public.[9] Relevant to this purpose is to inquire into the results of this involvement of technology in the future survival of a type of journalism that has been characterized as 'slow journalism', or 'news that lasts'. Again, can it survive?

Here, methodological tools are paramount. Quantitatively and qualitatively, we know for a fact that literary journalism became more immensely widespread in numbers and variety in different countries throughout the twentieth century, as authors such as John C. Hartsock (2000)[10], Norman

Sims (2007)[11], Sonja Zdvoc (2008)[12], Isabel Soares (2009)[13], Richard Keeble (2007, 2012)[1415] and Bill Reynolds (2009)[16] among many others, have demonstrated in their work on the international variations of this type of journalism. But what the future holds for the association and its journal in the twenty-first century is another question, and one that is not easy to answer.

One approach in the effort to divine that future is to adopt a business method of analysis, i.e., the SWOT model that examines Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Often used for similar purposes but in different contexts, the model addresses two types of issues, internal and external. Internal issues affect an organization and its goals: These are the strengths and weaknesses that need analysis. On the other hand, the external issues that affect an organization and its goals are opportunities and threats. Let us tackle each one individually.

Starting with Strengths: IALJS displays a very strong focus, apparent in its yearly conferences. We have a journal, *Literary Journalism Studies*, published twice a year, and a quarterly newsletter of very high standards. Both publications are freely available online. The membership is composed of some of the most internationally relevant names in the academic field of literary journalism, stemming from a variety of geographic origins. This diversity is likewise portrayed in IALJS officers, all of them highly committed to their various roles and tasks. Due to careful planning and sound economic principles, the financial situation is stable and prospering slowly but steadily. There is a strong and relatively small inner circle in the organization, leading to close cooperation among founding and new members. Moreover, this atmosphere of cohesion and cooperation displays to all newcomers an image of a strong organization based upon trust, respect, openness, and merit. Indeed, these have become our trademarks.

The other internal aspect that needs to be addressed in such analysis is Weaknesses, and there we may find an obvious one, related to our implantation, rather feeble in Asia, and even worse in Africa. Another of the weaknesses is a relatively small membership which, however, can also be a strength because it makes for a more cohesive body. A minus factor, and one that may be closely related to the shift referred to above in platforms for publication, is the high age average of members. Literary journalism appeals strongly to people acculturated in a reading society, willing to spend hours devoted to such a task: Many younger people have been acculturated to a screen culture, with flashes of information quickly being displayed and replaced by others.

In terms of external Opportunities, driven by internal weaknesses, there is still the opportunity to grow, geographically speaking, as scholars and students from Asian and African countries have not yet joined the Association

in large numbers. As a recent and growing association, there are still ample possibilities for growth, and IALJS's ability to absorb new members has been established and will work to its advantage, as this field of studies may be expanded to locations where it may already exist as a publishing practice, but without an international intellectual home to refer to.

Finally, let us consider external Threats: There are those imposed upon all journalism plus the scarcity of platforms for release of literary journalism pieces, eventually leading to a dwindling number of new publications and, therefore, less of a new corpus of work. Pace and sheer volume of news flowing around the world on platforms such as the Internet usually entail very short attention spans for written pieces, and books are being replaced by other platforms such as e or audio books that may be quite useful in some circumstances, but can be platforms that also provide many distractions for the message recipient. We live in a visual culture and if our attention is not focused on printed and electronic writing, but visual graphics, our mental focus may easily stray. Finally, another threat for the time being may be the lack of renewal of membership, one that has not been felt much so far, with a steady growth of members, but which is always a possibility.

To conclude, I noted earlier that the Roman *acta* had a fixed purpose centuries ago, at a time when social behavior was highly regulated and transgression was officially and publicly unacceptable. But the emergence of a literary journalism and an earlier proto-literary journalism, along with other discourses, allowed many readers to handle a growingly complex media reality, one that could still be subject to social regulation but that allowed for wider acceptance of diversity and interpretation. Now, our age of screens displays Mashall McLuhan's principle that the medium is the message and the graphics of the screen have come to dominate. Whether its fleeting visual messages will remain central in the process of mass mediation, and will not collapse into a centripetal movement, is yet to be seen. But if we consider the issues these circumstances raise, IALJS and *Literary Journalism Studies* should hopefully be in a strong position to thrive in the future.

Alice Donat Trindade has published in the areas of American Studies and Literary Journalism. She is a founding member of IALJS, and was the third president of this Association, 2010–2012. Her current research interests focus on the study and development of a Portuguese speaking community of literary journalists.

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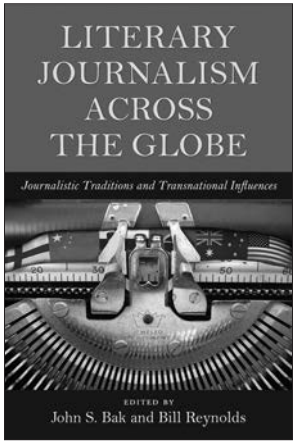
Book reviews . . .

Nancy L. Roberts, Book Review Editor

A Road Map for the World

Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences
Edited by John S. Bak and Bill Reynolds. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011. Paperback, 306 pp., $28.95

Reviewed by Kathy Roberts Forde, University of South Carolina, U.S.A.



Over the past several decades, scholars have built the intellectual base for the academic field of literary journalism. They have cleared a path through a vast wilderness of intelligence and print culture, setting up road signs and gathering the material necessary to build the scholarly houses of literary journalism. Although the great bulk of the resulting scholarship has focused on the American context, studies of other countries' traditions have been appearing with increasing frequency. *Literary Journalism across the Globe* joins this emergent literature as an important contribution that may well shape the discipline for years to come. This intelligently edited collection of sixteen essays provides not only the first scholarly survey of the field of international literary journalism but also a rudimentary map for future scholars to follow, enhance, and refine.

The authors contributing to this volume hail from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, England, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and the United States. Together they document the practices and fortunes of literary journalism and literary reportage in these countries and others, including Russia and countries of the United Kingdom. As John Bak explains in the introduction, the essays explore "how the form has been viewed, read, written, and studied throughout the world" (2), concentrating on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What emerges from this collective effort is the understanding that literary journalism is a generative form of print culture that has been produced around the world across time in diverse cultural, social, and political conditions.

The essays in this book are arranged in three parts. The first, titled "Towards a Theory of International Literary Journalism," is meant to "address several, and solve some, of the problems associated with defining a form that is more culturally bound than literature and more politically sensitive than journalism" (Bak, 7). The second and third parts address the topics suggested in the book's subtitle: "Journalistic Traditions" and "Transnational Influences" respectively. Part II examines traditions of literary journalism in the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, China, Brazil, and Finland. As Bak observes, these essays suggest that "journalists most often turn literary when their nations are at war, be it with others or with themselves" (14). Categorization is often the Achilles' heel of edited volumes as some contributions defy the chosen categories.

Each of the essays in Part III, "Transnational Influences," examines closely "the notion of transnational influence," or so we are told (14). Yet some of these essays focus very little on such influences and more on a particular writer working within or helping to build a national tradition. Readers wishing to chart transnational influences should depend on Bak's thoughtful introduction and their own close readings of the collected essays.

Scholars have long suggested that literary journalism has historical roots in the United States and England. *Literary Journalism across the Globe* now complicates this narrative. As we would expect, a number of authors document the influence of the Anglo-American tradition on other national traditions. Isabel Soares explores the influence of the British *Pall Mall Gazette* on Portuguese journalists in the late nineteenth century and documents the emergence of a Portuguese literary journalism at the *fin de siecle*. Peiqin Chin describes the influence of American writers Edgar Snow and Upton Sinclair on Chinese literary reportage (*baogao wenxue*) in the 1930s and 1940s, a time of social and political turmoil. Chinese literary journalists gained energy from the American New Journalism movement when key works were first translated into Chinese in the late 1980s. Nikki Hessell suggests that the literary journalism of Upton Sinclair and George Orwell inspired the work of Robin Hyde in New Zealand in the 1930s. Maria Lassila-Merisalo discusses the influence of American Hunter S. Thompson's gonzo journalism and the New Journalism movement on Finnish journalism in the 1980s. Sonia Parratt describes how the New Journalism energized literary journalism in Spain and Edvaldo Pereira Lima suggests it did the same in Brazil in the case of the magazine *Realidade*. Willa McDonald tells us that Helen Garner, a contemporary literary journalist in Australia, has been influenced by Janet Malcolm of the *New Yorker*.

While the Anglo-American influence has been important to many national experiences with literary reportage, transnational influences have crisscrossed the globe, sometimes without any reference to the Anglo-American tradition or the English-speaking world. In the lead essay, John C. Hartsock, author of the acclaimed book *A History of American Literary Journalism*, explores the role of the Prague-born Egon Erwin Kisch's literary reportage in the international communist movement following World War 1. Kisch's work travelled in multiple directions, Hartsock writes, influencing not only Joseph North, the editor of the *New Masses*, in the United States, but also writers engaged in proletariat struggle in China. Sonja Merljak Zdovc suggests that Kisch also influenced journalists in communist Slovenia in the 1960s, who used narrative techniques to comment indirectly on the social and political problems of their country, thus "disguising their reportages as fiction" (238). Bill Reynolds describes the influence of Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński on a contemporary group of Canadian literary journalists in Vancouver. In an especially fine-grained critical analysis of Kapuściński's reportage, Soenke Zehle discusses a transnational critique of the reporter's work on Africa as a kind of literary-colonial exploitation and misrepresentation.

Several essays in *Literary Journalism across the Globe* make especially substantive contributions to new knowledge. The first is editor Bak's finely written introduction,

which points out and analyzes points of historical and theoretical connection and rupture as he maps the territory covered in the volume. Bak usefully notes the primacy of war and various political ideologies and systems as transnational historical forces shaping the development of different traditions of literary journalism and reportage around the world. He also suggests several strategies scholars and practitioners should pursue to enrich the field of international literary journalism studies.

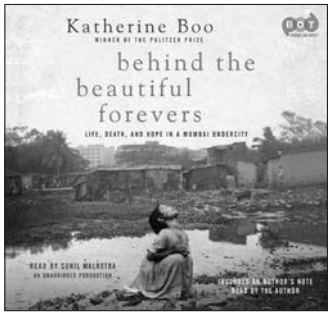
Hartsock's essay makes an especially important contribution to our knowledge of international literary journalism. It is a model of rigorous comparative analysis of European traditions of literary reportage. What's more, it generates not only substantive new knowledge about these traditions but also a template for theorizing about the various modalities and rhetorics of the form. Peiqin Chen offers what may be the first English-language historical analysis of the Chinese tradition of literary reportage from the 1850s through the late twentieth century. She shows how *baogao wenxue* has been used as a tool for social advocacy in periods of social and political dislocation and turbulence. Finally, Clazina Dingemanse and Rutger de Graaf document how the Dutch literary pamphleteering tradition, which began in the sixteenth century and flourished for centuries, influenced the development of a literary journalistic tradition in Dutch newspapers in the nineteenth century. Dingemanse and de Graaf's careful historical study demonstrates how particular genres and features of print culture were appropriated across time as new print genres emerged. This study provides a model that other historians of literary journalism may wish to pursue.

Literary Journalism across the Globe is an important book, a significant scholarly contribution to the field of literary journalism studies.

Mumbai's Under-citizens Partially Explained

Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity
by Katherine Boo. New York: Random House, 2012. Hardcover, 256 pp., $27.

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



It is undoubtedly unfair to judge by its cover a book as thoroughly reported, as gorgeously written, and as modestly presented as Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*. But it's also hard not to forget the image that is there on the dust jacket, an apparently perfect representation of one of Boo's major points, that even crushing poverty and overwhelming squalor cannot extinguish hopes and possibilities.

The cover image is this: a beautiful young girl squatting beside a lake of sewage, her head tilted upward, her eyes shut and a faint smile emerging on her lips as she feels the first drops of a rainstorm. In the midst of this slum, then, the future beckons and a better life may yet emerge. The picture matches well with Boo's subtitle: *Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*.

The photo is, unfortunately, a bit of fakery, as the credits listed on the inside flap make clear: two different images from two different photographers, one of the slum in the background and the other of the girl up front. It is not a photograph so much as a photo illustration, true pictures used to tell a true story, perhaps—or used to create an illusion through juxtaposition and montage.

Like any work of literary journalism, Boo's book invites a suspicion that it has been similarly constructed out of art and artifice. In an author's note she counters such concerns by enumerating the extent of the fact gathering that went into the book: interviews with 168 people to reconstruct a single event; more than 3,000 public records; three and a half years spent in the slum district of Annawadi; and a full range of documentary devices, including "written notes, video recordings, audiotapes, and photographs" (249). She even enlisted slum residents in her reporting, allowing them to use her Flip camera to capture some of the stories retold in the book.

The product of this effort is a narrative both vivid and swift, depicting in painful, desperate detail the economic, political, and moral struggles of a group of people Boo calls "undercitizens" (1). Her focus is primarily on three families: the Waghekars, whose matriarch is intent upon becoming the slumlord of her neighborhood; the Husains, whose oldest son is an expert garbage sorter and the key to their brightening financial prospects; and the Shaikhs, whose hut shares a wall with the Husains'. A dispute about this wall becomes the central incident in Boo's book: the self-immolation of one-legged Fatima Shaikh, a distorted version of which leads to criminal charges, and the pre-trial imprisonment, of three members of the Husain family.

Boo masterfully advances this story, mixing unflinching descriptions of slum conditions and piercing observations about the pervasiveness of the varying forms of corruption that both help to maintain the status quo of suffering and offer the potential for a way out. Her subjects are often unappealing, spiritually impoverished as well as physically repulsive. For many their business is scavenging, picking through dumpsters, along roadsides, and behind fenced-off construction sites for the throwaway items of the global economy, an occupation that brings with it dirt and disease.

But Boo rejects the kind of journalism that contents itself with "poignant snapshots of Indian squalor: the ribby children with flies in their eyes and other emblems of abjectness" (247). She has bigger questions in mind, about what it takes for slum dwellers to escape their environment and about why they don't revolt in the face of extreme inequality.

Boo wisely recognizes her limitations as an outsider and the limitations of writing about these conditions. She makes clear that Annawadi should not be seen as representative of India as a whole and discourages easy explanations. She has taken on a big enough challenge, the necessary first step in fighting poverty, which is to provide a credible account of the sights and smells, of the pains and joys, of the failures and successes in the lives of some of the poorest people on the planet.

Thus it is the Photoshopped cover of her book that causes deeper reflection on the details she has gathered and the way she has assembled them. Photoshop is a powerful tool for creating stronger images, by removing unwanted distractions and smoothing out the ragged edges of reality. A close reading of Boo's text leaves one with the nagging doubts that she has indeed erased a major distraction, namely herself, while shifting attention away from the places where her story could use a fuller explanation of events.

Boo convincingly makes the case that the people living on the bottom rungs of Indian society are held back by, among other things, the ways in which the people in power—politicians, policeman, even aid workers—game the system by demanding bribes and withholding services until they have been compensated. But at two crucial points in her story, this pattern is broken: The system works, and justice prevails.

In one case Abdul Husain, who comes close to being the main "character" in the story, is facing detention as an adult for his alleged role in the death of Fatima Shaikh. A doctor examines the youth and warns that without a hefty payment he will be declared to be of age and sent to a notorious prison. But Abdul protests, no bribe is paid, and the doctor allows the boy to stay in a youth detention facility.

In the other example, the Husains' case is sent through an accelerated court process that the central government has established to speed a balky trial system. Here again things work out for the Husains as the judge throws out the charges against them. At least in Boo's reporting, there was no bribe, no illegal inducement for the judge to do the right thing.

A work of immersion journalism such as this promises a depth of understanding that would not be available through traditional means. But Boo offers no explanation for how the sea of corruption that she has elsewhere described so eloquently parts in these two cases for righteousness to emerge. Was this merely random happenstance?

Or was it a sign that India's society is shaking itself free of ancient ways?

A third possibility is that Boo, who says that she witnessed most of the events in the book, was present on these two occasions, and that the sight of a fair-skinned Western reporter helped to influence the outcome, or at least obviate the need for a payment under the table.

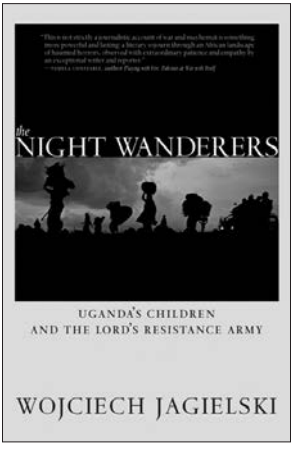
Behind the Beautiful Forevers is a memorable rendering of people living on the margins. It is particularly valuable in showing how their frame of reference is those most like themselves, so that the emotion that guides them is envy toward those with slightly more upward mobility rather than anger toward those whose riches allow them to live at far remove and in vast luxury.

But Boo's story feels incomplete. The title of the book is drawn from a corporate slogan, "Beautiful Forever," that appeared again and again in advertisements along a wall that kept the Annawadi slum out of view. Boo has taken us behind that wall, but she leaves us wondering what else there might have been to see.

Wounds of Death and Loss in Post-colonial Uganda

The Night Wanderers: Uganda's Children and the Lord's Resistance Army
by Wojciech Jagielski, English translation by Antonia Lloyd-Jones. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012. Originally published in Polish, 2009. Paper, 305 pp., $14.21.

Reviewed by Isabel Soares, Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (Technical University, Lisbon), Portugal



"Heart of darkness": This expression, taken from the title of Joseph Conrad's memorable 1902 novella, could not any better characterize the core issue of *The Night Wanderers*. Just as in Conrad's work, coincidently the first to overtly criticize imperialism's rapacity, readers are taken to a vilified Africa, a place of indescribable human agony where no catharsis can redeem or save those who hurt and those who are hurt. Whereas in Conrad's book, Marlowe, the main character and narrator, sets out for the impenetrable, dangerous jungles of Congo in search of Kurtz, a renegade white who has gone astray and brutalized natives, in *Night Wanderers*, Jagielski takes

us to darkest Uganda in search of Joseph Kony, the rebel leader of an army of child soldiers.

The greatest distinction, however, between *Heart of Darkness* and *Night Wanderers* is that the first lets us have the comfort of knowing its story belongs to the realm of fiction, whereas the latter stuns us with its real, unabashed violence. Jagielski can be likened to Marlowe in the sense that both characters are envoys from a Europe morbidly curious to know what horrid secrets lurk in Africa. Both are on a paid assignment and both tell a story: the narrative of their encounter with a strange continent of loss. The description of suffering renders them similar, but Jagielski is a journalist who does not go to Africa to destroy Kony or bring him to justice. Unlike Marlowe, Jagielski only knows his real purpose in Africa after having seen the night wanderers. The sense of the *unheimlich* (the eerily upsetting), shivers down his spine as he watches swarms of children invade every corner of the town of Gulu by nightfall. Suddenly, there are no adults on the streets, only ghostlike children who come to spend the night and claim the town. From then on, Jagielski has a story to tell.

Following its independence from the British Empire and the end of colonial rule in 1962, Uganda's history has been one of tribalism, poverty and the infection of old, unhealed wounds. With no political system that even remotely can be called democratic, Uganda has moved from one dictatorship to another over the last five decades. The tyrannical government of Idi Amin in the 1970s, with its mass killings, is proof of that. The current president and head of state, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, seized power in 1986 after leading the rebellious National Resistance Army and deposing General Tito Okello. Since then, parliament has passed laws to bypass the constitutional two-mandate limit in order to sanction Museveni's stay in power. In February 2011, elections were held and Museveni won with a staggering sixty-eight per cent majority. Civil war has also inflicted a heavy toll on the country, especially in the northern region, where Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) operates through terrorism and guerrilla warfare to terrorize civilian populations and the military alike.

It was against this intricate backdrop of ethnic conflict that Jagielski committed *Night Wanderers* to publication in 2009, the year of its first edition in Poland. In fact, Jagielski shares his Polish nationality with another reputed journalist in African affairs, Ryszard Kapuściński, curiously the same origin as Joseph Conrad's, and *Night Wanderers* was even shortlisted for the 2009 Kapuściński Award. What can be said about Jagielski's and Kapuściński's journalism is that it is literary. It becomes fluent through narrative and alive through scene depiction and character composition. When we read *Night Wanderers* or Kapuscinski's *The Shadow of the Sun* (1998) on his reporting from Africa, we feel as if we are reading a novel. And that is indeed literary journalism's quintessential definition.

In an introductory note, Jagielski sets matters straight by saying that everything in his book is true. From the town of Gulu to Joseph Kony, from the child soldiers to Acholi King Kenneth Banya, nothing and no one is fictionalized. Nevertheless, the leading characters "of Nora, Samuel, and Jackson have been created out of several real people." And here we have the first-person admission of character composites,

which anoints Jagielski's journalism with a characteristic borrowed from literature and which, consequently, leads it to a hybrid place located somewhere in the interstice between what is literary and what is journalistic. Furthermore, since those three characters occupy such prominent positions in the narrative, we, as readers, are forced to think about the extent to which Jagielski engaged in composition. Could he have talked to Nora and Samuel in the way he wrote about these conversations? Who were the child soldiers who shaped Samuel? Can we ever be sure that no imagination pervaded this journalistic report? These are, of course, questions left unanswered—questions that become irrelevant in the face of the narrative, which reads like a punch in the stomach.

The feeling that something is very wrong in Uganda starts hitting us in chapter one, although it is difficult to verbalize what exactly is upsetting us. In the manner of a novelist, Jagielski knows how to create suspense. First, it is a "gray river of children" who invaded Gulu and "loomed out of the darkness, from under the ground like apparitions" (5). Next, it is Jackson, Jagielski's Ugandan journalist friend, telling him that "children are different here" (8). And then there is the army colonel interviewed by Jagielski, who warns him against children:

> If you see them coming out of the bush, please tell your driver to turn back immediately. And if they show up close to you and it's too late to turn around, tell him to keep going at full speed ahead. Under no circumstances should you stop. . . . Please don't forget—it's good advice. . . . With children there's no joking. (11)

Children. What can there possibly be about them to frighten us? They are characterized as ghosts. They are dangerous. They are, in the end, different and difference is unnerving. As a journalist Jagielski searches exhaustively to find out who these children are. But as a novelist he weaves a web of episodes, neither chronologically linear nor always related, to lead readers to realize there are two kinds of children in Uganda, both of which were deprived of childhood. On the one hand, there are those still free from the grip of the LRA, the night wanderers, the children who come into the towns at dusk to find sanctuary: "Their own parents, adults, had sent them on their way. Only like that, by driving the children out of their homes for the night, could they protect them from a deadly danger—from the guerrillas, who, like predatory animals set out at night to hunt down their victims (58)."

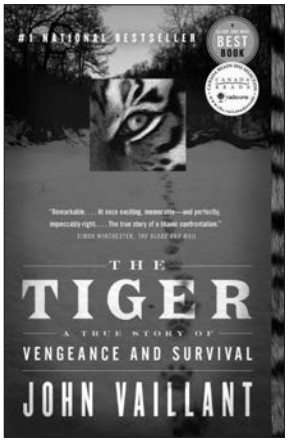
And, on the other, there are the children who have been abducted by the LRA and transformed into bloodthirsty, merciless murderers: "Ideal soldiers because after a time and the right training they regard war as an amusement, a game . . . . They don't feel fear of death—their own or anyone else's—because, by contrast to adults, they never think about it. They're not afraid because they've been through so little, they know so little, and have so little to lose" (55).

In *Night Wanderers*, Jagielski tells us all about these children and the quest for the Kurtz-like Kony. No novel and no conventional journalism could render his story any more real, true or troubling than literary journalism.

The Tiger in the Coal Mine

The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival
by John Vaillant. Vintage Departures, 2011. Paperback, 329 pp., $15.

By Bill Reynolds, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada



Writer John Vaillant met documentary filmmaker Sasha Snow at the Banff Mountain Festival, at Banff, Alberta, Canada, in October 2006. Snow was invited to show his latest film, *Conflict Tiger*, at the film festival there.[1] Never mind the actual documentary (which apparently wowed its audience), the topic itself was riveting: Siberian (or Amur) tigress in Far East forest has beef with certain humans and deliberately tracks, hunts, and kills them.

At that point in his career, Vaillant might have been forgiven for wondering whether he might ever stumble across another book idea as meaty and successful as the one he had about Grant Hadwin. A talented, fearless worker who surveyed roads through difficult terrain, Hadwin loved the forest so much that, after a kind of spiritual emergency, he turned against his own profession. As a protest, he chopped down the one and only "golden spruce," known to the Haida tribe of the Pacific Northwest as the sacred tree K'iid K'yaas. Located on the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii) off the coast of British Columbia, south of Alaska, the centuries-old giant Sitka lacked 80 per cent of its chlorophyll, yet thrived and glowed radiantly whenever rare sunlight happened to fall upon it and highlight it among the remaining old-growth trees.

Vaillant first heard about the golden spruce while on travel assignment for *Outside* magazine in 2002,[2] kayaking around the southern archipelago of the Haida Gwaii. When he heard this strange story of the mythological golden tree that had been chain-sawed by Hadwin four years previous, he was captivated. The subsequent idea for a longer piece passed swiftly through Vaillant's test filter for his nonfiction writing: "I am fascinated by the ongoing collision between human ambition and the natural world. How we manage our collective appetites and ambitions will determine the fate of our children, our species, and much of life on this planet. This, I feel, is the story of our time, and I try to address it in all my writing."[3]

Inspired, the Vancouver-based writer (who grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts but moved to Canada in 1999), read all the newspaper reports he could find about the "unhinged" Hadwin and his rants against "university trained professionals." He decided there must be more to the story than what he could find. There were too many questions left unanswered. Why would a man who loved old-growth forest

kill the region's most spectacular specimen? Was the culprit still alive and, if so, where was he hiding? What were the implications of the tree's "murder" for the Haida, who were devastated by the loss?

For Vaillant, searching for the answers looked like a job for literary journalism. He turned a kayak expedition yarn into a 6,000-word Letter from British Columbia for the *New Yorker*, "The Golden Bough."[4] Editors at W. W. Norton in the United States and Knopf in Canada agreed there must be more to it than that, and encouraged the writer to expand his story by about 74,000 words. The result, *The Golden Spruce* (2005),[5] won numerous awards[6] and catapulted Vaillant to the front rank of nonfiction storytellers.

At the Banff Mountain Festival, meeting Sasha Snow and watching *Conflict Tiger*, Vaillant's book-length story alarm went off again. Not only was Snow's film narrative another compelling example of humankind's most pressing and perhaps ultimate dilemma—how do we keep increasing our number and exploiting the natural world and not destroy everything around us—it was about a tiger. The last book was about a tree, for heaven's sake; this next one could be about the planet's largest cat, the most beautiful, dangerous creature imaginable.

After reading *The Golden Spruce*, Snow generously offered Vaillant whatever help he might need to get him started. Five years later, and a lot more help from a lot of different sources, including fixers and translators and climbing a mountain of reconstructed material to harness a (more or less) crime narrative, *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival*, proves that lightning can be bottled twice for this author. While *The Golden Spruce* was about the Pacific Northwest, about European expansionism and the clear-cutting of North America from east to west, and about literally not seeing the forest for the trees until it's almost entirely gone, *The Tiger* focuses on its Far East equivalent, in particular an area of rugged beauty called the Primorsky Krai (Maritime Territory), informally known as the Primorye, that easternmost part of Russia that thrusts like a tongue into China.

Vaillant's research covers different layers of the story. His preference seems to be for telling a story in John McPhee–process mode. That is, he initiates his book by advancing the narrative with a gripping reconstruction of the first man-eating episode, of beekeeper (and poacher) Vladimir Markov, before executing a breakaway into background and historical analysis. In order to understand the country's current relation to its remaining tiger population, Vaillant believes we need to know how tigers were thought of and dealt with in earlier centuries; how policy shifted once the Communists took over; how the Soviet Union's policy toward nature shifted (from the only good nature is nature eliminated, to the occasional white knight stepping up and saying, softly, so as to not arouse suspicion, let's try to create preserves for these creatures); to the chaos of the post-perestroika period (at least under communism people had work and a life; they didn't have to resort to poaching tigers for unscrupulous Chinese buyers flashing wads of cash); to Moscow's current indifference to the plight of the tiger. Here is a representative example of the kind of illumination Vaillant offers:

> A century ago, many Russians lived this way [constantly scrounging for food in the bush] in the Far East, and most natives did, too. Then, there wasn't an alternative, but the expectations for what life can and should be have changed radically in the past twenty years. Under communism, there was room, albeit strictly controlled, for aspiration, and there was a State guarantee of basic security in terms of education, employment, housing, and food. But most of these assurances disintegrated after perestroika. Replacing them, along with crime, alcoholism, and despondency, were satellite dishes offering multiple channels that allowed you to see just how far behind you really were. Nowadays, in many parts of the world—not just Sobolonye—it is possible to starve while watching television.[7]

The hope is that when the reader is swung back into the story, the narrative has more of a backdrop and therefore is more powerful. And when Vaillant turns back to the story, he does not fool around. Lines such as "Waiting for a tiger to attack is like waiting for a bomb to go off"[8] tend to jolt the reader into action mode. This toggling goes on for 306 pages, concluding with a showdown between tiger and tracker (Yuri Trush).

However, what Vaillant offers in addition is a little different from most process stories. He will not only veer into historical, or environmental, or biological, or botanical territory, he will also provide another aspect many other writers would not bother with (or dare): the mythological, the mystical, the not-real that is nevertheless believed by the locals. His exploration of Haida culture in *The Golden Spruce* was of this nature. His friend and fellow Vancouver literary journalist J. B. MacKinnon has said of him: "In John's case he let those breakaways take him to some pretty wild places in cosmology and myth."[9] And he does so here in *The Tiger*, as he investigates not only the physical brawn of the tiger and its lethal capabilities, but also teases out the psychological hold the Amur has had on locals over the centuries. In the old days, a shaman might have helped a remote community to solve its issues with a certain predator.

The Tiger is great story, but one of the common problems with the process structure in general is that some people just want the narrative. These are the "don't stop and bore us, get to the chorus" types. In other words, with its numerous breakaways the process structure almost by definition creates issues with pacing. When you must take your metaphorical backhoe and scoop large chunks of information into the text (about the country, about the people, thumbnail profiles of main characters, etc.), you run the risk of alienating the reader—and I think this does happen occasionally here (though, fortunately, not fatally). Then there are readers who might already be familiar with botany, say, and don't need a science lesson on trees; or familiar with Russian history, say, and don't need a refresher course. And even if, like me, it's been a while since you've been inside the Russian mindset in literature and appreciate the effort Vaillant has put into his enterprise, some parts of some sections did become a bit of a slog.

Also, Vaillant is an excellent thinker and researcher, and a good writer, but perhaps his editor, whoever he or she was, could have had the good sense to eliminate some clunky phrasing for the final draft, stylistic tics that mar an otherwise fine book. For instance, couldn't we have read "have had an impact on the collective psyche" rather than "have impacted the collective psyche"[10]?

Quibbles aside—and I do mean aside, as the concluding scene, the final confrontation with the tiger, is so terrific the reader is quite literally gobsmacked, and any and all petty carping is instantly forgotten—*The Tiger* is another of Vaillant's excellent examples of modern literary journalism, or what Boynton in 2005 labeled "the new new journalism": stories based on depth of research and near-total immersion.

One question that comes up with this type of story, at least for people who think about literary journalism and its taxonomy, is this: What separates *The Tiger* from various works of popular history by someone such as, say, Simon Winchester? That might take some mulling.

Also, having taught *The Golden Spruce* in literary journalism classes for several years now, upon reading Vaillant's second book I wonder whether I should not switch it up and try *The Tiger*. As mentioned above, it is about, ahem, a tiger, not a tree. Tigers scare students; trees don't. On the other hand, with *The Golden Spruce* I have a number of teaching tools at hand, including Vaillant's *Outside* kayaking story, his query letter to the *New Yorker*, his *New Yorker* piece, and Holling Clancy Holling's *Tree in the Trail*,[11] a children's story about the evolution of the Santa Fe Trail over two centuries, as told through the life of a cottonwood tree, which served as a sort of model for Vaillant's telling of K'iid K'yaas's life story. That's a lot of source material to help students appreciate Vaillant's story structures and ideas and writing, so I'll have to mull that one over, too.

As for Sasha Snow, his good turn in Vaillant's favor back in 2006 has been reciprocated. Inspired by how Vaillant handled the book version of *Conflict Tiger*, Snow's film, *Hadwin's Judgement: The Making of an Environmental Terrorist*, based on Vaillant's first book, is in production.

Notes

1. Snow's film won, among many other awards, the Grand Prize at that year's Banff Film Festival.

2. http://www.outsideonline.com/adventure-travel/north-america/canada/british-columbia/Paddling-in-a-Ghost-World.html (Accessed August 25, 2012).

3. Vaillant's MySpace description of the focus of his work.

4. "The Golden Bough," *New Yorker*, November 4, 2002, 50-58.

5. The full title is *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005). In Canada, *The Golden Spruce* was published under the same subtitle by Knopf Canada, 2005.

6. Vaillant's book won the Governor General's Award for nonfiction and the Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize.

7. John Vaillant, *The Tiger*, 198.

8. *The Tiger*, 267.

9. Bill Reynolds, "The Edge of Canadian Literary Journalism," in Reynolds and John S. Bak (eds.), *Literary Journalism across the Globe* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 73.

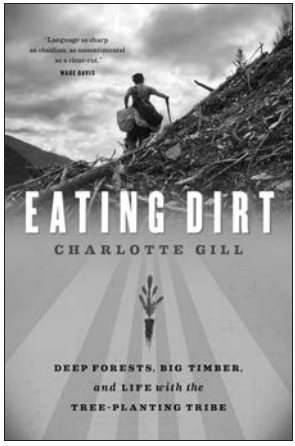
10. *The Tiger*, 29.

11. Holling C. Holling, *Tree in the Trail* (London: Sandpiper, Reprint Edition, 1990). Originally published 1942.

When Creative Nonfiction Falls Short of Literary Journalism

Eating Dirt: Deep Forests, Big Timber, and Life with the Tree-Planting Tribe by Charlotte Gill. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2011. Hardcover, 247 pp., $29.95.

Reviewed by Linda Keefe, Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.



Charlotte Gill's new book, *Eating Dirt,* entices yet fails to meet expectations for one tree-loving literary journalism fan. But reading it brings to mind many International Association for Literary Journalism Studies conference discussions concerning genres—differences or similarities, between creative nonfiction and literary journalism. Gill's subtitle promises nuances of nature, industry, and life. And her twenty-year membership in "the tribe" planting conifers by hand eight months a year across coastal British Columbia qualifies her as a reporter immersed in her subject. Gill's previous success as a fiction writer bodes well for her literary style. The book is inviting and sports a short, active title floating across a strong monochromatic photo. The book also possesses accolades such as: British Columbia's National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction; Winner, 2012 Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize; and a blurb from the *Vancouver Sun* touting it as "a relief to read prose that's so steely-sharp." Chapter one, "The Last Place on Earth," begins in strong form:

> We fall out of bed and into our rags, still crusted with the grime of yesterday. We're earth stained on our thighs and shoulders, and muddy bands circle our waists, like grunge rings on the sides of a bathtub. *Permadirt,* we call it. Disposable clothes, too dirty for the laundry.
>
> The sun comes up with the strength of a dingy light bulb, dousing the landscape in shades of gray. The clouds are bruised and swollen. We stand in a gravel lot, a clearing hacked from the forest. Heavy logging machinery sits dormant all around, skidders and yarders like hulking metallic crabs. The weather sets in as it always does, as soon as we venture outdoors. Our raincoats are glossy with it. The air hisses. Already we feel the drips down the backs of our necks, the dribbles down the thighs of our pants. We're professional tree planters. It's February, and our wheels have barely begun to grind. (1)

Disappointingly, Gill then delivers the next two hundred pages, scene after scene, in similes and metaphors so abundant they too often become distractions. Multiple uses

of "like" or "as" or "similar to" on a single page are followed by additional uses on the next page. Her prose becomes a daunting read instead of a joy. Repeatedly, Gill is dropped off by her crew chief into vast spaces of stumps and tangles. She is continually exhausted and exhausting. Discovering another new wedge of mountain she is assigned to plant, Gill elaborates:

> Here I can see the layers of the old forest floor in cross section. On the bottom there is bedrock, above that a horizon of gray-brown mineral dirt, and on top, like cake frosting, a layer of living earth, which comes in shades of cabernet, rust, and ocher, depending on what's composting inside. Out of this topsoil hang dead roots, spilling like cords of a circuit box torn from a wall. I've got to climb up with my fresh load of trees. I find toeholds on outcroppings of broken rock. I grab fistfuls of roots to haul myself up, and I hope they hold, since the dirt is as loose and slippery as pastry flour. (72)

She introduces her tribesman (who are almost all men), but seldom reveals their personalities, intentions, or emotions. The scenes are filled with mossy, dirty, rainy discomfort. However, we never get to know or care about the characters slogging through them. Why do people come back to this bruising work year after year? What drives them to spend every February through September sweating, shoveling, stooping and setting the seedlings of planned, future forests? Gill offers the reader a possible but timid explanation:

> Forests for the Future. Forests Forever, as the slogans and the T-shirts say. Not a salve or a fix for the planet, not exactly. We gave the trees some small purchase in the world, and they gave us the same in return. (230)

She interjects a bit of tribal humor in a quick piece of dialogue, a caustic matter-of-fact anthropological tease that may explain further:

> Sean has more seniority than anyone, and he has an inexhaustible supply of jokes to prove it. How many tree planters does it take to screw in a light bulb? One. But you'll find five bulbs in the socket. What do you call a tree planter without a girlfriend? Homeless. No one is offended. We're unisex guys, the men of man-days. The work wears us down and lifts us up. Everyone together, equally. (4)

Convinced life is difficult on the slashed slopes, I want more. What do the planters feel or think about in this great vastness of mist-covered landscapes? Gill discloses scant information about her personal relationship with her boyfriend-planter, her other fellow planters or herself. And when she does, it is from a rhetorical distance despite her participatory role:

> Some people prefer to plant trees with a partner—for the company, the shared snacks, and the subliminal comfort of knowing they won't be caught alone with a bear or a sprained ankle. Some people say their minds have too much to gnaw on when they work in silence. I met a guy once who said he quit planting trees after two weeks for precisely this reason, the unbearable emptiness of the field. (83)

She continues with one, rare, self-revealing passage:

> There was something alluring, addictive even, about the job. I liked the feel of loam between my fingers, loved the look of a freshly planted tree bristling up from tamped

> soil. Planting trees was a whole, complete task. You could finish what you started in just a few seconds. You could sow a field in a day. It meant being outside, unprotected from the elements, but at least weather affected everyone equally. Best of all, in a cut block you could erase your old self. You could disappear almost completely. (61)

Failing to build empathy or explore character development, Gill does provide interesting historical, biological, and contextual information about the world's trees and forests. She chronicles wood's importance to the ancients and to us—the modern wood gluttons:

> All over the world, every day of every week, trees are chipped and digested and emitted as paper and cardboard and every kind of tissue product. The pulping liquors are refined into concentrated tree juices for the making of scented oils and lacquers and acetones and turpentine and nail polish and nail polish remover. Tree extracts are poured into shampoo, shaving cream, toothpaste, and all kinds of cosmetics that lather when you rub them against your skin. Wood is spun out into gossamer layers of cellophane and rayon. It's converted to alcohols and plastics, acids and resins. Latex and rubber. Eucalyptus and palm. Tree extracts are squeezed into self-tanning cream and acne gel and anti-aging potions. They're stirred into snack foods like frozen pizzas and microwave popcorn and that most shelf-stable of snack foods, the Twinkie. Wood cellulose is even added as a cheap thickener to mashed potato flakes. Wood is ground down into powder and formed into bowling balls and sporting helmets. Not to mention explosives. With this wood flour and xylose—wood sugar—you could hypothetically bake a tree cake. The world eats up to 3.4 billion cubic meters of wood every year. If you converted this volume to utility poles, you could string telephone wire around the equator more than four thousand times. Half of this amount is used for firewood. (94-95)

Eating Dirt concludes at the completion of one year's planting cycle. The crew is back home; the story is over. Gill's new book may be acclaimed creative non-fiction. It also adds material to an ongoing debate about definitions of genre and a blurry line between creative nonfiction and literary journalism. It falls short of expectations for literary journalism because empathy with the characters or the author (or even the trees) is absent. Story arc, too, seems unimportant. Yet, in its defense, perhaps Gill's literary truth is present in the drudgery, repetition, and painful existence endured by the planters as they try to replenish the naked landscape wrought by an insatiable industrial hunger for timber. Describing the planters' homecoming in the final paragraph of the book, Gill does, indeed, capture my lethargy:

> But after the initial burst of excitement, a wave of fatigue will creep over us. Later in the night we'll drop into beds like stones into water. When we wake up tomorrow we'll be different somehow, just a little bit. A change that yawns into the next day and the next. (244)

Inside a Lab-coat School's Labyrinth

White Coats: Three Journeys through an American Medical School
by Jacqueline Marino. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2012, cloth, 128 pp., $28.95.

Reviewed by Lori Amber Roessner, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, U.S.A.

Stacked on top of junk mail, sundry bills, and a wedding invitation, *White Coats: Three Journeys through an American Medical School* was waiting on my dining room table, a space that hasn't seen a home-cooked meal in years, upon my return from an academic conference this summer. *Darn it*, I thought. *What have I signed up for this time?*

White Coats author Jacqueline Marino would likely refer to me as a gunner, as I have what some people refer to as the curse of conscientiousness. I call it go-getter-itis. I stared at the book's cover, featuring three strategically posed medical students, and then I perused the description in the book jacket. "Is this the journalistic equivalent of *Grey's Anatomy*," I wondered aloud. "God, I hope not."

It's not that I didn't once love ABC's hit television drama, created by sitcom genius Shonda Rhimes. Quite the opposite. When it premiered, I was obsessed with the show—the dialogue, the sex, the scandal—but eventually the storylines grew tired and the show lacked any sense of realism.

The next morning, I decided to Google Marino before I plowed into the book. Under ordinary circumstances, I would wait to find out more about the author until after I've read a book that I'm reviewing. This time, however, I needed to know more about Marino before I could continue. I quickly stumbled upon her website. A few clicks later I breathed a sigh of relief. The last line of her "About" page said what I was hoping to hear: "I am a mom, an avid runner . . . a stockpiler of *New Yorker* magazines and a harsh critic of doctor dramas." Whew. I returned to the book with an open mind.

In April 2005, Marino, an associate editor at *Cleveland Magazine*, approached the higher-ups at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine about chronicling the daily lives and personal challenges of first-year students. Despite the risk that came with giving up all prior review, the dean of one of the nation's top medical schools granted Marino an all-access pass to follow a handful of incoming doctors-to-be during year one of a major curricular overhaul.

Marino's initial foray into narrative journalism became an intensive four-year immersion into medical education and literary reportage. The material she gathered from hundreds of hours of archival research, observations, and interviews appeared serially in the pages of *Cleveland Magazine* from August 2006 until August 2009.

Along the way, she won a number of awards, including a string of honors from the Cleveland Press Club and the Society of Professional Journalists.

The award-winning series, however, proved to be just the beginning of a bigger story. In *White Coats*, Marino offers readers gripping vignettes from the lives of three determined Case Western medical students. This difficult medical-school journey is seen through the lens of starkly dissimilar individuals: the penultimate Millennial, Millie Gentry; the insecure perfectionist, Michael Norton; and Marleny Franco, a second-generation Latina immigrant from an underprivileged background. All three characters share one thing in common, a healthy dose of self-doubt about their ability to conquer medical school. Along the path to becoming the healers they were born to be, they encounter the standard rites of passage: the white-coat ceremony; the cadaver dissections; the wards; the boards; the match ceremony; and, eventually, the culmination of medical school, the hooding at graduation.

(Spoiler alert ahead.) Along the way, all three students faced many obstacles, some of which were shared (constant apprehension, fatigue, time management issues, and health concerns), and some of which were their own (parenthood, ADHD, and depression). The two biggest challenges proved to be protecting their individuality and properly caring for themselves while navigating Case Western's challenging curriculum. All three were triumphant.

If the litmus test of literary reportage is its ability to provide a glimpse into another world, then Marino succeeds in this work of narrative journalism. For a period of four years, the *Cleveland Magazine* editor-turned-university professor immersed herself in the lives of three Case Western medical students. In addition to the countless hours spent with Case students and faculty for her original series, she added material gleaned from perusing piles of primary and secondary sources in Case archives. The end result is a gripping, yet hopelessly incomplete tale. Marino, of course, freely admits this fact in the author's note. "Only a full immersion," she contends, could provide a "complete history (ix)." To paraphrase the words of French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, a complete history is *always already* unrecoverable.

Marino and her full set of misgivings are on display from this point forward. Her openness, of course, is a welcome relief. She confesses to once being referred to as the "conscience" of the newsroom (1). She provides insight into her "fly-on-the wall style of reporting (3)," her propensity to "observe the present (3)," and to avoid doing "anything that might change the future (3)." But, in the end, she acknowledges the type of circumstance—a student contemplating suicide—that would cause her to ignore these guidelines to alert the dean. In a refreshing manner, she also owns up to her own anxieties—a fear of failing to convey the nuance of her subjects, and missing part of the bigger picture because of her new duties as a professor.

By now you might be asking whether or not Marino's work qualifies as literary journalism. The answer is simple: yes, but of course. If one follows the cue of the British journal *Granta* and considers literary journalism to be "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,"[1] then *White Coats* meets the criteria of literary journalism on all fronts. Marino provides

a vivid description of the grueling journey that medical students must encounter in the modern world of medicine. She does so through a series of vignettes culled from her eyewitness reporting about three aspiring physicians. *White Coats* also meets the criteria of literary journalism under the IALJS hallmark of "journalism as literature." This standard, however, begs a determination of quality.

As Marino would likely tell you, the book falls short on several levels. She lacked the time, money, and resources to provide a more comprehensive account of the journey of a medical student à la Nova's *The Making of a Doctor*. At times, too, some of her characters, most notably Norton, fall flat. It's clear that she connected at a different level with Gentry and, to an extent, Franco. These flaws are only natural, and do not compromise Marino's larger point—which also may be the great irony of medicine, and perhaps even life itself—that the people we depend on to take care of us often do not take care of themselves. They put our health above their own.

The ultimate test of any piece of literature or journalism is the negotiation of cultural truths. If that's the test, then this book passes with flying colors and belongs on the bookshelf of every doctor, nurse, journalist, and scholar. It certainly made this gunner pause and reflect on the common set of struggles anyone in any human-service profession faces—the expectations, the pressures, the anxieties, and the struggle to balance personal needs with those you are trying to serve. In the end, Marino is right. We have to protect our unique selves in order to better take care of others.

Notes

1. John C. Hartsock, "Literary Reportage: The 'Other' Literary Journalism," in John S. Bak and Bill Reynolds, eds., *Literary Journalism across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influence*, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011, 24. See <www.amazon.co.uk/The-Granta-Book-Reportage-Classics/dp/1862078157> (Accessed October 24, 2012

"This is My Story": The Literary Journalism of Trauma

Rosemary Armao examines works of literary reportage or memoir by "insiders"—those who have experienced trauma firsthand, not primarily as reporters but as people whose lives have been caught up in terrifying events—including . . .

Chronicling Trauma: Journalists and Writers on Violence and Loss
by Doug Underwood, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011, cloth, 256 pp., $50;

Trauma Journalism: On Deadline in Harm's Way
by Mark H. Massé, New York: Continuum, 2011, paper, 248 pp., $24.95;

"When They Come for Us"
by Sonali Samarasinghe Wickrematunge, *Nieman Reports*, Winter 2009 www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101963/When-They-Come-for-Us.aspx (Accessed October 23, 2012);

"Reporting the Iraq War: Whose Truth Is Being Told?"
by Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedi, *Nieman Reports*, Winter 2009 <www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101985/Reporting-the-Iraq-War-Whose-Truth-Is-Being-Told.aspx> (Accessed October 23, 2012);

Tell Them I Didn't Cry: A Young Journalist's Story of Joy, Loss, and Survival in Iraq
by Jackie Spinner, New York: Scribner, 2007, paper, 288 pp., $18.99;

"One Violent Crime"
by Bruce Shapiro, *Nation*, April 3, 1995, 437, 445-452;

Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo
by Zlata Filipović, translated with notes by Christina Pribichevich-Zorić, New York: Penguin Books, 1995, paper, 197 pp., $12;

Sarajevo: A War Journal
by Zlatko Dizdarević, New York: Fromm International, 1993, cloth, 193 pp., $19.95;

"Apocalypse in New Orleans"
by Brian Thevenot, *American Journalism Review*, October/November 2005, <www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=3959> (Accessed October 23, 2012);

Curfewed Night: One Kashmiri Journalist's Frontline Account of Life, Love, and War in His Homeland
by Basharat Peer, New York: Scribner, 2010, cloth, 240 pp., $25;

The Bang Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War
by Greg Marinovich and João Silva, New York: Basic Books, 2000, cloth, 320 pp., $26;

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier
by Ishmael Beah, New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2007, cloth, 240 pp., $22;

My War Gone By, I Miss It So
by Anthony Lloyd, Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999, cloth, 336 pp., $25;

Logavina Street: Life and Death in a Sarajevo Neighborhood
By Barbara Demick, New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2012, paper, 272 pp., $16.

Reviewed by Rosemary Armao, University at Albany, State University of New York (USA)

Trauma changes those who witness it and inspires a distinctive journalism that reads more like literature than reporting. The writing is rife with pathos, descriptive scenes, and memorable, fully limned characters. A spate of scholarly articles, at least two book-length examinations in the past year alone, as wells as new training programs being offered to reporters, have spotlighted the role of trauma in inspiring both literary journalism and fiction. Accordingly, this essay will examine works of literary reportage or memoir by "insiders"—those who have experienced trauma firsthand, not primarily as reporters but as people whose lives have been caught up in terrifying events.

In 2011, Doug Underwood in *Chronicling Trauma: Journalists and Writers on Violence and Loss*[1] and Mark H. Massé in *Trauma Journalism: On Deadline in Harm's Way*[2] both looked at the biographies and writing samples of current and historical writers to discover that journalists assigned to wars, crimes, and disasters are often deeply changed by these events. When, as frequently happens, they then move on from literary reporting to writing short stories and novels, "fiction built on a journalistic foundation," as Underwood calls it, this new work reflects their altered attitudes and insights.

Such acuity can come at a heavy price. Much of the scholarship and the newsroom training on coping with trauma, prompted by the groundbreaking Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma based at Columbia University, emphasizes the need to identify, support, and treat journalists who, after assignments involving barbarity and terror, frequently exhibit signs of PTSD, depression, and substance abuse. Many reviewers of the two 2011 trauma journalism books noted—as did BBC correspondent David Loyn looking at Massé's book—that the basic human frailty of war-zone journalists has mostly been overlooked. In his Amazon Editorial Review he wrote: "Perhaps in the future, managing the risks to those who report violence will be routine in newsrooms. This book is a signpost towards that promised land."[3]

Despite such recent heightened awareness and study, one subgenre of literary nonfiction about trauma seems to have been overlooked: the reportage, journals, and memoirs produced by real insiders to these traumatic events—those who are not just eyewitnesses, but actual participants who have been directly thrust into the midst of cataclysm. Researchers who have scoured the psychology and the output of those journalists who parachute into conflicts and then get caught up in what they see

and report on, have neglected those chroniclers who report on catastrophe close-up from within their own communities. These true participant observers—citizens, even children; soldiers; and local journalists—are among the writers whose work will be considered here. These writers are not just empathetic to suffering victims; they are themselves victims. Their own lives and families are being interrupted. They themselves have lost loved ones and property, seen their homelands ripped apart, and had to abandon hopeful plans for the future. They cannot "go home" to someplace safe for a break from the horrors they are covering.

Sri Lankan investigative reporter Sonali Samarasinghe Wickrematunge, whose journalist husband was killed in 2007 during the government's fight to subdue Tamil Tiger separatists, wrote in *Nieman Reports* about what happens when you live a story, not just report on it:

> When it strikes you personally, when you are afraid to sleep in your own bed, when thugs on motorcycles kill your husband then come back for you, when you are compelled to leave your home and family, your work, your country, and your life as you knew it, that's when you realize you cannot give up. You have to do more, you have to speak louder, write bolder. And now, it's personal.
>
> I'm a little wounded but I'm not slain;
>
> I will lay me down for to bleed awhile,
>
> Then I'll rise and fight with you again.
>
> But to rise and fight again, we have to face the trauma of personal responsibility and the guilt that we live while our comrades lay dead. Guilt that we are free while 300,000 men, women and children of the war are interned still in Sri Lankan concentration camps surrounded by barbed wire, not knowing what tomorrow holds.
>
> We have to face emotions we were taught to dismiss . . . .[4]

In another piece in that same *Neiman Reports* issue, Iraqi Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedi talked about the four years he spent working for the *New York Times* during the Iraq war:

> During my work the *Times* when we'd go out to a story, I used to tell the American correspondent, "You know what, you're writing my story. I'm writing my story. When we cover a car bomb, it's my neighborhood." For an American correspondent, it's a story. It's a good story or bad story, it depends on how big the story. Some of the time we said, "We got a report. There's a car bomb. Three were killed, 10 injured. This is not story. We will not cover it." But we get another report, someone called and said, "There's a huge car bomb. One hundred were killed and 300 injured." That's the story. That's the good story. We will write about it. It will be front page.
>
> But it's my story because this bomb, this car went off in my neighborhood. My friends were killed in that accident . . . It's really very difficult to write about yourself, your neighborhood, your family, and your friends in a story because at the end of the day it's a story, it's a business, it's a commercial thing. As a journalist, this is our profession. We are selling stories. But at the end of the day also someone

> should write a story about our story. And someone should contribute it to telling the truth.[5]

Several reasons most likely account for why work by these insiders to trauma has been overlooked. Foremost is that they mostly write in their own language and not English, the tongue of most literary journalism scholars. Translations frequently come years after publication, if at all. Second, until very recently the American and European press dismissed the work of foreign journalists as inferior and unreliable. Not until recent economic problems closed foreign bureaus and reshaped foreign correspondence did Western news outlets begin to rely on native reporters. Before then, native reporters were typically employed as freelancers or fixers who helped Western correspondents find their way around, deal with local customs, conduct interviews with non-English speakers, and provide background and context. Fixers were not given bylines, credit as contributors, or much attention at all until the Iraq War, when it became so deadly for American journalists to leave their bunkers and report that they leaned more heavily than ever on local journalists, who were less likely to be spotted and targeted as Westerners. In her 2006 book, *Tell Them I Didn't Cry*,[6] *Washington Post* war correspondent Jackie Spinner revealed the reliance of top U.S. reporters on the unknown and unsung Iraqis working in their bureau. They conducted interviews, came up with questions, and wrote or edited stories, as she described the bureau's typical operation. Over the past decade of globalization, an unprecedented transfer of knowledge from Western journalists to colleagues in emerging democracies through government-funded media development programs has figured in raising the capacity of foreign journalists, and promulgated Western reporting models and story forms abroad. In other words, the work of foreign journalists is more likely now than ever to hold to Western standards, and thus to be trusted and given attention. Another reason the work of insiders has been overlooked is suspected bias; that is, the writing of people so close to the trouble was thought to be naturally unreliable.

The Dart Center has done much to change that kind of thinking, starting with the writings of founder Bruce Shapiro, an editor for the *Nation* magazine. In 1994, he and friends in a New Haven, Connecticut coffee bar were randomly assaulted by a distressed assailant with a hunting knife. The attacker seriously wounded seven people, including Shapiro, whose diaphragm, spleen, and hand were cut. In his new persona as victim, Shapiro wrote an account, "One Violent Crime," for the *Nation*.[7] He described how his point of view about crime no longer matched anything he was hearing from politicians, other journalists, or even sympathetic friends. He began to see how the press hounded and hurt the wounded in pursuit of a hot story. He saw his friends starting to blame him by wondering what he should have done to stop the attack, as if his being victimized made them feel more exposed. And politicians saw the opportunity to pin on him a labelóìvictimîóan exploitable brand with which they could drum up support for crime-control laws he thought were ineffective and silly. He added:

> What psychologists call post-traumatic stress disorder is, among other things, a profoundly political state in which the world has gone wrong, in which you feel isolated

> from the broader community by the inarticulable extremity of experience. I have spent a lot of time in the past few months thinking about what the world must look like to those who have survived repeated violent attacks, whether children battered in their homes or prisoners beaten or tortured behind bars; as well as those, like rape victims, whose assaults are rarely granted public ratification.[8]

These victims or insiders are worth listening to. Shapiro, for example, saw in the coffee bar attack evidence of how powerful communication is. He and his friends helped each other escape. People on the street touched and soothed. And even his assailant pulled back, Shapiro notes, when he looked him in the eye and pleaded, "Please don't."[9]

That voice of the insider, so different from that of the mere observer, can come through in diaries and journals, classically illustrated by Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl.* In a more recent conflict, another young girl, eleven-year-old Zlata Filipović from Sarajevo, began writing a diary in 1992 during the Bosnian War. She nicknamed her diary "Mimmy" in open imitation of Frank's "Kitty," and began keeping track of a city under siege from her vantage point.

On May 2, 1992, Filipović wrote about a story that journalists also were following, the torching of the magnificent Austro-Hungarian post office in Sarajevo. Filipović wrote:

> The shooting started around noon. Mommy and I moved into the hall. Daddy was in his office, under our apartment, at the time. We told him on the intercom to run quickly to the downstairs lobby where we'd meet him. We brought Ciko [her canary] with us. The gunfire was getting worse, and we couldn't get over the wall to the Bobars', so we ran down to our own cellar.
>
> The cellar is ugly, dark, smelly. Mommy, who's terrified of mice, had two fears to cope with. The three of us were in the same corner as the other day. We listened to the pounding shells, the shooting, the thundering noise overhead. We even heard planes. At one moment I realized that this awful cellar was the only place that could save our lives. Suddenly it started to look almost warm and nice . . . .[10]

Later that night, returning to their apartment, she reported:

> Almost every window in our street was broken. Ours were all right, thank God. I saw the post office in flames. A terrible sight . . . Daddy took a few photos of the post office being devoured by the flames. He said they wouldn't come out because I had been fiddling with something on the camera. I was sorry. The whole apartment smelled of the burning fire. God, and I used to pass by there every day. It had just been done up. It was huge and beautiful, and now it was being swallowed up by the flames. This has been the worst, most awful day in my eleven-year-old life. I hope it will be the only one . . . .[11]

Filipović was touted by her teachers as the Anne Frank of the Bosnian war. She was discovered by the international journalists who swarmed Sarajevo, competing to tell the world about authentic experiences of Europeans coping with the longest siege in modern times. The child's later entries are inordinately consumed with attention to herself rather than to her city, which, while understandable, decreases the appeal of

the eventual book version, *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo*. Nevertheless, the account offers a personal, eyewitness voice whose authenticity is undeniable.

Newspaper editor Zlatko Dizdarević didn't keep a diary, but in 1992 and 1993 he published a column in the newspaper *Oslobojenje* (Freedom) filled with his impressions of what was happening to his Sarajevo. Tellingly, the newspaper that carried the column defiantly put out an edition every day of the war, cutting down to a single page when more paper could not be secured. A Muslim married to a Serbian and a lifelong resident of a place known for multiculturalism, Dizdarević wrote of bombardment and division, and resistance and bravery under duress. During these years a global army of journalists reported the same topics. Some focused on individuals, some of neighborhoods, all attempting to bring home the bleakness, the boredom, and sheer claustrophobia of hiding in a city under intermittent bombardment. But Dizdarević's columns were clearly not about other people. Later re-published as *Sarajevo: A War Journal,* they included intimate anecdotes, jokes, and scenes few outsiders ever captured. He never dropped the journalistic façade of objectivity, but his pieces pulsed with feelings: pride, anguish, anger, hope, and despair.

A fluent English speaker, Dizdarević's writing, even in translation, is moving. For example, in a piece called "*The Long Goodbye*," he wrote:

> That's what this war is, nothing, but a long goodbye. You say goodbye to your illusions and your past, your dreams, your habits, hopes and projects, all things great and small and all the places inseparable from days gone by. You even say goodbye to the simple things that make up a life. But above all, you take your leave from many, many people, who are divided into two entirely separate camps, connected only by the dread that will join them forever: the war.[12]

In a piece about altered lives, he wrote:

> We no longer switch the light on in our apartment, no longer use our dinner dishes, the piles of plastic water buckets in the hallways and under our beds (if we still have a bed) no longer bother us. We've forgotten what it was like to be irritated by a television commercial. We don't get angry at the mailman for coming late, because there no longer is a mailman. We would give anything in the world just to get a bill, no matter how big or how small, because it would mean that someone believes we're still alive and capable of paying.[13]

Writing about the ineffectual United Nations troops in the city, the editor said:

> In a few months, the Blue Helmets, once the darlings of Sarajevo, have become targets of resentment and scorn. They have also come to symbolize international hypocrisy and political dirty dealing. In the beginning, people would approach those boys in the street and shake their hands. They were welcomed with applause in the cafes, people treated them with sympathy, even love. Now those feelings have turned, in some cases, one hundred eighty degrees.[14]

Another writer attempting a literary journalism narrative about the Bosnian War is Aida Cherkez. Nearly twenty years after the end of the conflict, her friends still push her to write a book about the war—if only to spread the gripping stories only they have heard.[15] Cherkez served in the army defending Sarajevo. Then, after learn-

ing English, she turned to war reporting for the Associated Press (she remains AP's Bosnian bureau chief). Her war stories are far removed from the objective, only-the-straight-facts reporting the wire service normally wants. She tells about how the Army didn't really know what to do with women soldiers at the start of the war—so she spends days mixing green chalk with Nivea lotion to make camouflage paint. She tells about how, after one particular telephone argument, she never fights with her mother. Cherkez had shipped her infant son and her mother to safety in Germany. "Remember," her mother tells her during the call, "I took your child out of the war zone. I left mine there." And then there is the story she calls "The Tripod Cow," about the hotel owner who manages to acquire a cow in the middle of the siege, when Sarajevo is without electricity or ice. He wants a surgeon to amputate one of the animal's legs so he can serve his guests dinner and save the rest of the meat.

Another example of this type of intimate news coverage comes from the Haiti News Project, which produced a blog that relayed just such stories from journalists who covered the 7.0 earthquake that shook apart their hometown of Port-au-Prince in 2010, killing tens of thousands. Several U.S. press associations set up the project as a way to help Haitian colleagues grappling with shock, grief, and loss of resources. It solicited equipment and funds to restore destroyed news offices and told stories of reporters such as Simon Wendy, a twenty-two-year-old cultural affairs reporter for *Le Nouvellist*. He stumbled from his shaking newsroom to find his city dissolved to rubble and dead bodies.[16] After a frantic search, he located his girlfriend, who was pinned by the knees but otherwise unhurt in a collapsed building at her university. Convinced she would soon be freed, rescue workers could neither move enough debris nor cut her legs to release her. Wendy tried but could not find the heavy machinery to dig her out. Five days after the quake, he was still optimistic. But the woman with whom he had planned to spend his life succumbed. Wendy, with help from the Haiti News Project, went back to his newspaper to continue covering news, albeit with a new point of view—that of victim.

Similarly, Brian Thevenot, a New Orleans newspaperman who spent time embedded with Louisiana National Guardsmen on combat patrols in Iraq, found covering Hurricane Katrina an entirely different matter. For a week after the 2005 storm and flood, he wrote in "Apocalypse in New Orleans," published in *American Journalism Review* later that year, that colleagues had kept asking him to compare covering a war with the storm:

> The similarities were striking: days that bled one into another, the constant whirr of helicopters, death, the heavy weight of history.
>
> But a week in post-Katrina New Orleans felt like a month in Iraq. Iraq was Iraq. This was home, suddenly plunged into a scene out of *Hotel Rwanda*. We've all run out of adequate descriptors, words we couldn't believe appeared on our screens or notepads even as we wrote them: Armageddon, Bedlam, Chaos, Apocalypse, Hell.[17]

The ex-war correspondent makes a confession. While reporting a story about a Katrina refugee who leads a group of residents in singing gospel songs—they, like her, have just lost everything in the flood— Thevenot puts down his notebook and bursts

into tears. The singer opens her arms and he walks into them for a hug. No longer victim and observer, they are victims together.

In his haunting 2010 book, *Curfewed Night: One Kashmiri Journalist's Frontline Account of Life, Love, and War in his Homeland,* Basharat Peer details the descent of his homeland—caught between India and Pakistan—into violence and war. Peer has both a reporter's skill at noting detail and a poet's ability to compress emotion. Two paragraphs, one from the elegant opening where Peer recalls life before the trouble, the other from the epilogue, are enough to capture his insider's involvement and connection to the trauma he is depicting.

From his beginning chapter:

> I would stand on the steps and watch the tourist buses passing by. The multicolored buses carried visitors from distant cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi; and also many angrez—the word for the British and our only word for Westerners. The angrez were interesting; some had very long hair and some shaved their heads. They rode big motorbikes and times were half naked. We waved at them; they waved back. I had asked a neighbor who worked in a hotel, "Why do the angrez travel and we do not?"
>
> "Because they are angrez and we are not," he had said. But I worked it out. They had to travel to see Kashmir.[18]

And from the epilogue:

> Both Kashmir and I had changed. The heady rebellious Kashmir I had left as a teenager was now a land of brutalized, exhausted, and uncertain people. I was now in my late twenties, already old. The conflict might leave the streets, but it will not leave the soul.[19]

Four young, white South African photographers, who covered their nation's brutal struggle against Apartheid, collaborated on *The Bang Bang Club.* Photojournalists Greg Marinovich and João Silva shared the writing, blending their four stories into one. As the title, their nickname for themselves, indicates, it is partly an adventure book peopled with adrenalized, crazed photojournalists willing to do anything for a great shot. It is also, like other books and articles examined here, a chronicle of horror and an attempt to understand it by those who know it best. Dart Center research indicates that photographers are even more subject to psychological damage from exposure to trauma than reporters, who at least therapeutically write out their experiences daily. At one point, Marinovich asks his black house cleaner what she thinks about zombies, a frequent topic in the media of Africa where belief in shamans and spirits is widespread:

> When I casually interrupted her, showed her the article and rather flippantly asked if she thought zombies actually existed, she finished a pair of trousers before stating matter-of-factly that her granddaughter Mimi was a zombie. I already knew that 13-year-old Mimi had been shot to death in her mother's backyard shack on 13 August 1991—more than a year previously—but I was taken aback to hear that Joyce believe she was a zombie, a thrall to a shebeen queen . . . .

> Over time, she told me the full details of the story, and I gradually came to understand the notion of zombies as a way in which people deal with trauma. Joyce had opened my eyes as no newspaper article ever had and I discovered an entire undercurrent to the violence, where ancient beliefs that I had thought were separate from the modern nature of the political struggle were in fact woven into almost every aspect of it.[20]

The cleaning lady's belief holds even after the whites track down the hideous way the girl died and take Joyce to the morgue to identify and claim her granddaughter's body. Superstitions and dreams convince her that despite the body, Mimi could still come back as a zombie. The photographers are angered by the money and time she wastes on spells and sorcery to accomplish this until they realize that "everyone has their own way of dealing with trauma. Joyce's belief that Mimi was not really dead was not so different from [one's] own belief that God would spare [one's] mother from cancer."[21]

The ultimate insiders may be the soldiers or combatants, who write what they know of trauma. *A Long Way Gone*: *Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* is the 2007 story of Ishmael Beah of Sierra Leone. His childhood ended at twelve, when he fled a rebel attack on his home. Over the next four years, as a recruit of the government army, he stayed high on drugs, killed, and witnessed horrible cruelty. By the time he was liberated, he hated the sound of adult voices telling him what to do. He tells his story without excuse and with convincing detail in plain language:

> When we got to the back of the line, there were four men lying on the ground, their uniforms soaked with blood. One of them lay on his stomach, and his eyes were wide open and still; his insides were spilling onto the ground. I turned away, and my eyes caught the smashed head of another man. Something inside his brain was still pulsating and he was breathing. I felt nauseated. Everything began to spin around me. One of the soldiers was looking at me, chewing something and smiling. He took a drink from his water bottle and threw the remaining water at my face.
>
> "You will get used to it, everybody does eventually," he said.[22]

Anthony Lloyd is a British journalist now, but in 1993, when he moved to Bosnia, the setting for his 1999 book, *My War Gone By, I Miss It So,* he was an ex-British Army platoon commander. His book has been accurately described as powerful, graphic, painful, and elegantly written. It is, like Beah's, an unstinting look at what war really is:

> The corpse seemed to loll up almost of its own accord, a black African with the side plate of his skull missing. The head tilted gently over the edge of shattered glass, there was a slow squelch and the man's brain fell intact onto the road like a shelled egg. As the crowd went quiet for an appalled few seconds a kitten ran out of nowhere and seized the slippery lump of grey. There was a kind of collective groan from everyone there, and the kitten was kicked away by the HVO.
>
> "Man, the guy sure cam a long way to end up as Kit-e-Kat," Corrine remarked as we drove off, giggling horribly at the awfulness of what we had seen. Emotions are so contorted in war. There are labels which brand sentiments according to shade rather than detail, words like "afraid," "revolted," "shocked." Most of the time you do not

> know how you feel in situations, there is no single word to describe the swirling kaleidoscope, so you come out of it and try to cast whatever feelings you had in the right bin—in this case the one marked "horrible"—where they stay clattering and jabbering like lunatics in secure units, imprisoned until the night's darkness paroles them into your dreams.[23]

Bosnia, Sri Lanka, South Africa. As the American Red Cross says in its current ads: "Disasters happen every day, all over the world." Yet, regardless of how exotic the locale or obscure the root causes, the writing of insiders to trauma shares characteristics with literary journalism in general. These same characteristics distinguish these writers' work from that of conventional journalists and other outsiders.

The first of these, evident in nearly every example above, is the expression of powerful emotion. Even those insiders who are journalists do not write about the woes of their homeland dispassionately. Their emotion may be sadness or anger but it is raw. These accounts have a clear point of view, and there is little attempt at playing fair to all sides. They root for the home team. These writers are connected to their subjects. As former *Washington Post* Spinner says, war correspondents are detached:

> It's personal but we're detached from the larger picture. I mean, I can walk through the wreckage of a car bomb and see the body parts spread before me, and I'm touched by it because I'm human and because it's dangerous and it makes me sad. But I'd think there would be a much bigger impact if it were happening to my country, my community, much in the way that people were affected by 9/11.[24]

Second, insider accounts include an arc of time that contrasts the horrific present with a usually idyllic past. Beah and Peer, writing on different continents, both conjure up memories of their grandfathers, complete with dialogue, as they mourn the loss of peace and security. Cherkez tells stories about a very different Sarajevo, where Muslim and Serb children combine efforts to play hooky and pull pranks at the mosque. The time arc also swings further into the future for insiders. Their writing contemplates what will happen next, when the violence eventually ends, can anything like normal life be hoped for? The outsiders stick as exclusively as possible to the newsworthy present.

Related to this, the insiders generally provide better context to the story they tell. The impartial observer accounts bring in only as much background information as necessary to grasp what is going on now. But the insiders find much more about their subject fascinating. For this reason they write stories, not articles, long stories that frequently turn into book-length literary journalism or into Underwood's journalistic fiction.

Insider accounts are full of such literary devices as dramatization, dialogue, scene-setting, and flashbacks (and other manipulations of time). In addition, they are imbued with a strong sense of place, evoked through sensory landmarks. Specific, vivid sensory description—strong smells, sounds, colors, textures, and tastes—are common. Insiders don't just tell readers about their beloved but beleaguered home, they illuminate it.

Also, the insider accounts are filled with minute details that bring writing to life, details news reporting frequently has no room for. Examples of this range from Filipović's mother's fear of mice to the fact that the zombie conversation with the Bang Bang Club's cleaning lady begins as she works over a pair of pants.

Insiders and foreign correspondents can be differentiated another way. Both may strive for the authenticity and story-telling power of what we call literary journalism, but insiders need resort to none of the devices their counterparts must. Barbara Demick of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, laboriously befriended the residents of one street in Sarajevo in order to write insider-like accounts of the siege. This involved hours of sourcing, not to mention learning a new language. Her accounts, along with a 2011 update of the neighbors, have just been published as a book, *Logovina Street*.

Insiders are already immersed in the environment they are reporting about. They know—they may even be related to—the ordinary people the correspondent must hunt down, the sources who can evoke the realities of war or desperation. They are free to select from a wealth of small details that communicate evocatively, without rhetoric or wind, about weighty issues. It is limiting to use only interviews or visits—the usual tools of correspondents—to capture details such as these: What a filled water jug feels like by the time you've lugged it up eight flights in a building where elevators can no longer run; or the buzz of a house in the middle of the night, when the power suddenly comes on and all at once the television, the washing machine, and the vacuum cleaner are running. Early in his ordeal, Beah, the Sierre Leone boy, is being undressed by his captors and some rap tapes fall out of his pocket. Group and song titles, he writes, include Naughty by Nature and LL Cool J's "I Need to Love." The boy mimes the song for the war chief, and includes some of its lyrics in his account. It's a small detail, but he has summed up the controversy and tragedy of boy soldiers in an unforgettable way.

Intimacy with the material is what makes the work of insider observers so moving and intense, sometimes to the point that it is difficult to read. The flip side, of course, is that this way of feeling the story is one reason why these writers are more likely to suffer and why they are most likely to need the kind of coping skills the Dart Center teaches. Susannah Nesmith of the *Miami Herald*, who has covered violence in Colombia and Venezuela and Iraq as well as hurricanes and earthquakes in Florida and Haiti, wrote:

> The local journalists are often in much more danger," says "They have families that might be targeted. And they often don't have a safe 'home' to flee to if need be. I worked with a local journalist in Iraq who had to leave Fallujah, and that was very traumatic for him. I never had to flee a country because I was in personal danger, but just knowing that I could if I had to, and that there was a safe home for me to go to, I think made my experience easier than theirs.[25]

Slovenian journalist Ervin Hladnik Milharčič (born 1954), interviewed by *World Literature Today* for its March-April 2012 edition, described his career this way:

> I became an accidental war reporter. I didn't go to war; the war came to me. It happened in places where I vacationed as a child and worked as a reporter covering boring events of ordinary life, in places like Kosovo or Sarajevo, long before they became objects of international interest. The country fell apart, and I became a foreign correspondent in a country that used to be my own. I don't really know whether this has anything to do with New Journalism . . . ."[26]

It does.

Notes

1. Linda Kay, "Mom and Dad, Suffering and Literary Journalism," review of *Chronicling Trauma: Journalists and Writers on Violence and Loss* by Doug Underwood, *Literary Journalism Studies*, Spring 2012, 137-139.

2. Journalists setting out for conflict or disaster zones may find Massé's book more interesting than may literary journalism scholars. His focus is overwhelmingly American, and he gives nuts-and-bolts information about trauma training and treatment, as well as reforming newsrooms to make them sensitive to the danger for reporters put under stress. He profiles many frontline reporters and disaster situations from Katrina to Columbine, but from the point of view of reporter motivation, techniques, and the effect of such work on reporters' physical and psychological health.

3. David Loyn, <www.amazon.com/Trauma-Journalism-Deadline-Harms-Way/dp/1441184635/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1350940391&sr=8-3&keywords=mark+masse> (Accessed October 22, 2012).

4. Sonali Samarasinghe Wickrematunge, "When They Come for Us," *Nieman Reports*, Winter 2009 <www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101963/When-They-Come-for-Us.aspx> (Accessed October 15, 2012).

5. Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedi, panelist, "Reporting the Iraq War: Whose Truth Is Being Told?" *Nieman Reports*, Winter 2009 <nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101985/Reporting-the-Iraq-War-Whose-Truth-Is-Being-Told.aspx> (Accessed October 15, 2012).

6. Jackie Spinner, *Tell Them I Didn't Cry: A Young Journalist's Story of Joy, Loss, and Survival in Iraq*, New York: Scribner, 2007.

7. Bruce Shapiro, "One Violent Crime," *Nation*, April 3, 1995, 437, 445-452.

8. Shapiro, 451.

9. Personal interview by author, New York, May 2012.

10. Zlata Filipović, Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo, 41.

11. Filipović, 43.

12. Zlatko Dizdarević, *Sarajevo: A War Journal,* 61.

13. Dizdarević, 102.

14. Dizdarević, 48.

15. Personal interviews by author, Sarajevo, June/July, 2012; see: <www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100408/Courage-Emerges-From-the-Work-Journalists-Do.aspx and http://blog.timesunion.com/armao/a-journalist-war-stories/723/>

16. "Love and Loss among the Ruins in Haiti," Haiti News Project, July 26, 2010, <haitinewsproject.wordpress.com> (Accessed October 17, 2012).

17. Brian Thevenot, "Apocalypse in New Orleans," *American Journalism Review*, October/November 2005 <ajr.org/article.asp?id=3959> (Accessed October 15, 2012).

18. Basharat Peer, *Curfewed Night: One Kashmiri Journalist's Frontline Account of Life, Love, and War in His Homeland*, 5.

19. Peer, 217.

20. Greg Marinovich and João Silva, *The Bang Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War*, 85.

21. Marinovich and Silva, 98.

22. Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier,* 100.

23. Anthony Lloyd, *My War Gone By, I Miss It So*, 96-97.

24. Email interview by author, September 16, 2012.

25. Email interview by author, September 17, 2012.

26. Leonora Flis, "Impartiality Has Nothing to Do with Neutrality: A Conversation with Ervin Hladnick Hilharčič," *World Literature Today,* March/April 2012, 40.

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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U.S.A.

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