

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IALJS LITERARY JOURNALISM

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

FALL 2016

THIS TIME OF YEAR IT IS ALWAYS BACK TO BUSINESS *Breathe in and think ahead.*

By Isabel Soares,
Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal)

We are back, not from outer space but from a place when days were big and worries little. We mark time in school years, so we know early fall is the time when we reboot and think ahead. At IALJS thinking ahead means doing what we



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

participate in our annual conferences.

In 2014, much due to the enthusiasm of our then-President, Norman Sims, we established our Student Travel Fund whose purpose is to provide merit-based grants to graduate students who are presenting research at the conference. The grants are a way of helping cover travel expenses, and this year at IALJS-11 we managed to award five grants.

These grants are funded by the generosity of our membership. If you're feeling so inclined and would like to contribute to the Student Travel Fund, please make your donation at <http://ialjs.org/membership/>. As little as \$25 can actually make a difference.

Also in the path of ahead, in an

attempt to improve what we can for our student members, Jael Rincon—a Columbian graduate student studying in Australia who was with us in Porto Alegre—has kindly volunteered to conduct a small survey among our student members in order to find out how IALJS can better serve their needs and aspirations. The results of this survey, which I look forward to, will appear in a forthcoming issue of newsletter. So stay tuned.

Dear students, trust me! There is no better forum for presenting literary journalism-related research than at the annual conferences of IALJS. The association sees itself as a welcoming, inclusive learned society.

And speaking as a former graduate student who has much to thank IALJS for, let me add that I see it as a nurturing association that dotes on its young. I can offer myself as living, breathing proof of that. As a resident of, for all practical purposes, a peripheral country such as Portugal, it was through IALJS and its conferences that I had the chance to meet the Hartsocks, the Simses, the Abrahamsons, the Connerys and all the giants that have so pushed forward the study of literary journalism.

Moreover, it was through IALJS and its conferences that I had the opportunity to interact with fantastic like-minded students and colleagues from all around the world. When you take a look at our Call for Papers for next year's conference, do keep in mind that your submissions are encouraged. Additionally, IALJS has a Student Travel fund to assist in subsidizing student travel to which you can apply after acceptance of your submission. Check the info in the Call that you can find either elsewhere in this newsletter or on the association's web site.

Thinking ahead as we in the Northern Hemisphere start the school year—or, if we live south of the Equator, thinking ahead about what the school year still has to offer—I invite you to consider our Call for Papers, keep calm and carry on the studies of literary journalism.

Até breve! See you soon! ♦

FUTURE IALJS CONFERENCE SITES

The following future IALJS convention venues are confirmed and/or planned:

IALJS-12: University of King's College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 11-13 May 2017.

IALJS-13: Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria, 17-19 May 2018.

IALJS-14: Stony Brook University, U.S.A., 9-11 May 2019.

IALJS-15: University of Copenhagen, Denmark, 21-23 May 2020.

IALJS-16: (tba), U.S.A., 13-15 May 2021.

IALJS-17: South Africa or Sweden, 19-21 May 2022 (pending).

IALJS-18: Brussels, Antwerp or Leuven, Belgium, 11-13 May 2023 (pending).

IALJS-19: Santiago, Chile, 23-25 May 2024 (pending).

IALJS-20: Brock University, St. Catharines, Canada, 15-17 May 2025 (pending).

IALJS-21: Poland, 21-23 May 2026 (pending)

DEADLINE FOR 2017 CONFERENCE SET

Submissions for IALJS-12 at University of King's college in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada in May 2017 are due on **1 December 2016**. See Page 5 inside.

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WWW.IALJS.ORG

2017 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

A city blessed with a rich maritime history and its role as the doorway to Canada.

By Callie Leone, Northwestern University (U.S.A.)

Halifax, formerly or alternatively known as the Halifax Municipal Region (HRM), is a city and associated area located in Nova Scotia, Canada. Located on a prominent Atlantic bay, Halifax is a major port city with deep roots extending back to Scotland and the British Isles. A hub of government, economics,

military, and culture in Canada, Halifax is home to a variety of attractions and scenic views.

HALIFAX PUBLIC GARDENS

Halifax is a city committed to greenery, and visitors need look no further than the Halifax Public Gardens to see why. Considered a national historical site, the gardens

were originally constructed in 1867 and are a living artifact of the Victorian era. The gardens feature various statues, ponds, and a bandstand that hosts occasional musical performances throughout the warmer seasons. The gardens are also inhabited by friendly ducks who can be seen waddling and paddling around. In addition to being a beautiful attraction by themselves, the gardens are located right next to one of the most popular shopping districts in the city.

MARITIME MUSEUM OF THE ATLANTIC

As the second largest port city in Canada after Vancouver, Halifax boasts a rich naval history that cannot be beaten. History buffs and nautical enthusiasts alike can appreciate over thirty thousand artifacts



The museum tells the story of the 1917 Halifax Explosion, when a harbor accident leveled much of the city

at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, in addition to seventy small craft and the CSS *Arcadia*, one of the finest preserved Edwardian-era survey ships. The museum serves as an excellent opportunity to learn about one of the more quiet Western participants in the two World Wars. One of the most interesting events covered by the museum is the Halifax Explosion, the 1917 catastrophe where a French ship bearing highly-volatile explosives crashed

Continued on next page



Literary Journalism

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HALIFAX *Continued from previous page*



into a Norwegian ship at the dock, causing the largest artificial explosion before the detonation of the atomic bombs in World War II.

MUSEUM OF CANADIAN IMMIGRATION AT PIER 21

Halifax has long stood as the Atlantic doorway to Canada. Much like a later Ellis Island, during the mid-twentieth century, Halifax greeted thousands of its own huddled masses yearning to break free through Pier 21. These days, Pier 21, one of the original immigration terminals, is home to the Canadian Museum of Immigration. The award-winning museum boasts several permanent interactive exhibits where visitors can learn firsthand about the creation of Canada's great cultural "mosaic."

HALIFAX CITADEL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

One of the most well-known and prominent locations in Halifax is its Citadel Hill. The large hill was discovered by the British and settled in 1749 as a guardhouse to defend the harbor, one of the first buildings constructed in the area. Today, the Citadel hosts all sorts of activities from ghost tours to battle reenactments, in addition to having one of the finest scenic views in the area. The Citadel is also a point of architectural interest, featuring a pronounced

star shape that was trendy at the time of its construction.

KEITH'S BREWERY

After a long day of visiting one of the most pedestrian-oriented cities in North America, it would only be understandable that one might appreciate sitting down with a cold beer. Fortunately, Halifax is home to Alexander Keith's

Brewery, one of the oldest commercial breweries in North America. Although some of its older lagers are out of commission, this subsidiary of Anheuser-Busch brings its rich history in Halifax to life by featuring tours where visitors can party like it's 1863. The tour features parts of the original brewery, the Keith home, and samples (of course) all delivered in song and dance by guides dressed in period garb. An essential stop for beer enthusiasts, the Brewery is renowned for

its superb India Pale Ale.

"TRAPPED" HALIFAX

For those who are adrenaline junkies, adventure-seekers, or otherwise appreciate oddities, Trapped Halifax is an experience one will be hard-pressed to find anywhere else. Trapped Halifax is the largest "real life escape game" in Canada. Participants (groups of four to six) are put in a labyrinthine obstacle course of sorts and given one hour to use clues and intuition to find the final key needed to escape. A choose-your-own-adventure book blown to full scale, players can choose from a variety of play-scenarios like a pyramid excavation gone awry or a medieval prison. Each game is specially crafted to be an all-immersive experience, complete with storylines and objectives. Although Trapped Halifax is certainly not everyone's cup of tea, for those who feel they missed their calling as a James Bond or Heddy Lamarr, this outing will be sure not to disappoint.

These opportunities are only a small slice of what Halifax has to offer. Other sites worth mentioning include Point Pleasant and Peggy's Cove for scenic views, the popular Neptune Theater, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, and the Halifax Farmer's Market. ♦



LITERARY JOURNALISM:

FROM THE CENTER, FROM THE MARGINS



The Twelfth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS-12)



THURSDAY, MAY 11 – SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2017

**University of King's College
Halifax, Canada**

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

**“Literary Journalism: From the Center, From the Margins”
The Twelfth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS-12)**

**University of King's College
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada**

11-13 May 2017



The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies invites submissions of original research papers, abstracts for research in progress and proposals for panels on Literary Journalism for the IALJS annual convention on 11-13 May 2017. The conference will be held at the University of King's College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

The conference hopes to be a forum for scholarly work of both breadth and depth in the field of literary journalism, and all research methodologies are welcome, as are research on all aspects of literary journalism and/or literary reportage. For the purpose of scholarly delineation, our definition of literary journalism is "journalism as literature" rather than "journalism about literature." The association especially hopes to receive papers related to the general conference theme, "Literary Journalism: From the Center, From the Margins." All submissions must be in English.

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies is a multi-disciplinary learned society whose essential purpose is the encouragement and improvement of scholarly research and education in Literary Journalism. As an association in a relatively recently defined field of academic study, it is our agreed intent to be both explicitly inclusive and warmly supportive of a variety of scholarly approaches.

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

<http://ialjs.org/past-ialjs-conferences/>.

I. GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

Submitted research papers should not exceed 7,500 words, or about 25 double-spaced pages, plus endnotes. Please regard this as an upper limit; shorter papers are certainly welcome. Endnotes and bibliographic citations should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Papers may not be simultaneously submitted to any other conferences. Papers previously published, presented, accepted or under review are ineligible. Only one paper per author will be accepted for presentation in the conference's research sessions, and at least one author for each paper must be at the convention in order to present the paper. If accepted, each paper presenter at a conference Research Session may be allotted no more than 15 minutes. To be considered, please observe the following guidelines:

- (a) **Submission by e-mail attachment in MS Word is required.** No other format or faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted.
- (b) Include one separate title page containing title, author/s, affiliation/s, and the address, phone, fax, and e-mail of the lead author.
- (c) Also include a second title page containing only the paper's title and the paper's abstract. The abstract should be approximately 250 words in length.
- (d) Your name and affiliation should *not* appear anywhere in the paper [this information will only appear on the first title page; see (b) above].

II. GUIDELINES FOR WORK-IN-PROGRESS PRESENTATIONS (ABSTRACTS)

Submitted abstracts for Work-in-Progress Sessions should not exceed 250 words. If accepted, each presenter at a conference Work-in-Progress session may be allotted no more than 10 minutes. To be considered, please observe the following guidelines:

- (a) **Submission by e-mail attachment using MS Word is required.** No other format or faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted.
- (b) Include one separate title page containing title, author/s, affiliation/s, and the address, phone, fax and e-mail of the lead author.
- (c) Also include a second page containing only the work's title and the actual abstract of the work-in-progress. The abstract should be approximately 250 words in length.

III. GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSALS FOR PANELS

- (a) **Submission by e-mail attachment in MS Word is required.** No other format or faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted.
- (b) Panel proposals should contain the panel title, possible participants and their affiliation and e-mail addresses, and a description of the panel's subject. The description should be approximately 250 words in length.
- (c) Panels are encouraged on any topic related to the study, teaching or practice of literary journalism. See <http://ialjs.org/mission-statement/>.

IV. EVALUATION CRITERIA, DEADLINES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

All research paper submissions will be evaluated on originality and importance of topic; literature review; clarity of research purpose; focus; use of original and primary sources and how they support the paper's purpose and conclusions; writing quality and organization; and the degree to which the paper contributes to the study of literary journalism. Similarly, abstracts of works-in-progress and panel proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which they contribute to the study of literary journalism. All submissions will be blind-juried, and submissions from students as well as faculty are encouraged.

Please submit research papers or abstracts of works-in-progress presentations to:

Prof. Josh Roiland, University of Maine, Orono (U.S.A.)
2015 Research Chair; e-mail: <joshua.roiland@maine.edu>

Please submit proposals for panels to:

Prof. Rob Alexander, Brock University (Canada)
IALJS Program Co-Chair; e-mail: <ralexand@brocku.ca>

Deadline for all submissions: No later than 1 December 2016

For more information regarding the conference or the association, please go to <http://www.ialjs.org> or contact:

Prof. Isabel Soares, Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal)
IALJS President; e-mail: <isoares@iscsp.ulisboa.pt>

Prof. Thomas B. Connery, University of St. Thomas (U.S.A.)
IALJS First Vice President; e-mail: <tconnery@stthomas.edu>

Prof. Rob Alexander, Brock University (Canada)
IALJS Second Vice President; e-mail: <ralexander@brocku.ca>

Prof. Bill Reynolds, Ryerson University (Canada)
IALJS Treasurer; e-mail: <reynolds@ryerson.ca>

Prof. David Abrahamson, Northwestern University (U.S.A.)
IALJS Secretary; e-mail: <d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu>

Prof. John S. Bak, Université de Lorraine (France)
Founding IALJS President; e-mail: <john.bak@univ-lorraine.fr>

NOTE: Submissions from students are encouraged, and a competitive Student Travel Fund has been established to assist in funding student travel. Applications will be available upon acceptance of submission.

T H E N E W S L E T T E R O F T H E I A L J S

2017 IALJS CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM 11-13 May 2017 University of King's College School of Journalism, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

1.a. PRE-REGISTRATION FEES (MUST BE POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE 31 MARCH 2017)		Please indicate the applicable amounts:
Current IALJS Member – \$120	(rate for those already having paid their 2017 dues)	
Current IALJS Member retired – \$100	(rate for those already having paid their 2017 dues)	
Student – \$5	(rate for those already having paid their 2017 dues)	
Student – \$30	(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)	
Non-IALJS member – \$170	(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)	
Spouse/Partner – \$50 (This fee is required only if a spouse will be attending scheduled research sessions and/or panels)		
1.b. REGISTRATION FEES POSTMARKED AFTER 31 MARCH 2017 (Note: Meals & special events may not be available to those who register after 31 March 2017)		
Current IALJS Member – \$155	(rate for those already having paid their 2017 dues)	
Current IALJS Member retired – \$135	(rate for those already having paid their 2017 dues)	
Student – \$30	(rate for those already having paid their 2017 dues)	
Student – \$55	(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)	
Non-IALJS member – \$205	(Includes a one-year IALJS membership)	
Spouse/Partner – \$85 (This fee is required only if a spouse will be attending scheduled research sessions and/or panels)		
1.c. ON-SITE REGISTRATION – \$180 for IALJS members, \$230 for non-members (includes a one-year IALJS membership). NOTE: Meals & special events may not be available to those who register on site.		
2. SPECIAL EVENTS: Please indicate the number of meals required next to each item below		
	Number of meals needed:	
	Regular	Vegetarian
Conference Banquet (Friday evening)	Number attending x \$60	
Make registration checks payable to “IALJS”		TOTAL ENCLOSED:
Please return completed form with a check or bank transfer payable to “IALJS” to >>> To register on-line via PayPal, see “Conference Payments” at WWW.IALJS.ORG	BILL REYNOLDS, IALJS Treasurer School of Journalism Ryerson University 350 Victoria St., Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3 CANADA Tel: +01-416-979-5000 x6294 Fax: +01-416-979-5216 reynolds@ryerson.ca	For a reservation at the convention hotel, Lord Nelson Hotel Special IALJS rate, incl. tax (single/double: C\$186, US\$142). To register, mention group ID “35942” when calling +1-800-565-2020, sending an e-mail to ask@lordnelsonhotel.com or visiting https://res.lordnelsonhotel.com/booking/default.aspx?Group=35942
3. REGISTRATION INFO		
Name:		
University		
School, Department		
City, State, Zip, Country		
Phone		
E-mail Address		

MAJOR GOAL ACHIEVED BY OUR JOURNAL: *LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES* IS NOW INDEXED *A three-year process culminates in well-deserved success.*

By Miles Maguire, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh (U.S.A.)

Following a three-year application and review process, *Literary Journalism Studies* was notified in July that it has been accepted for inclusion in Thomson Reuters's Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) of the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection.

"This is a huge leap in the life of *LJS*," said



LJS JOURNAL
MILESTONE

Isabel Soares, president of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies. "With this news, *LJS* will now be on the radar of a lot more people who are interested in literary journalism."

"We are delighted that

Thomson Reuters has recognized the talent, industry, and perseverance the authors and editors, past and present, have put on display semi-annually for the past eight years, and has elevated *LJS* to this perch of recognition as a valuable organ of journalism scholarship," said journal editor-in-chief Bill Reynolds.

Thomson Reuters's suite of indexes are generally regarded as the gold standard of citation indexes. Acceptance in ESCI is a step toward inclusion in Thomson Reuters's flagship indexes, the Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) and the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI). "On this side of the world a journal is more valued as a journal if it is indexed," Soares said.

"Here in Europe, academe is very interested in indexation, which means it is rather important for young scholars, people wanting a promotion or tenure, to publish in indexed journals." She noted that European universities and research centers are "ranked and funded" according to how much their scholars publish in indexed journals. Even

doctoral candidates may have trouble advancing their dissertations for review if they have not published in a venue included in WoS.

Citation indexes are databases that, as the name implies, keep track of bibliographic citations and in that way can be used to show how published scholarship is connected. An index allows scholars to assess the impact of their work while also making it easier for them to conduct comprehensive literature searches and to trace out the development of ideas.

Being included in a
global index
demonstrates the recognition
of literary journalism
as a critical field of study

LJS will begin appearing in the ESCI with this year's content, said Pedro Vieira, an editor with Thomson Reuters. "The journal's indexed content and citations will accrue; be discoverable by many in WoS; and used in any eventual decision to transition coverage from ESCI to one or more of the Core Collection's principal citation indexes," he said.

Only half a dozen journalism journals are currently included in WoS, an indication of how selective the index is. "*LJS*'s inclusion in citation indices like WoS demonstrates the academic community's recognition of literary journalism/reportage as a critical field of study, which has been a goal of IALJS since its inception," said John Bak, the founding president of the association. "This validates the work of the association



and its members and will add momentum to our efforts to encourage scholarly research and education in literary journalism."

The process of getting into WoS began in 2012 at IALJS-7, when attendees at the Toronto conference asked the editorial staff to explore the issue. *LJS* had recently won approval for inclusion in the Ebsco and Modern Language Association databases. Initially the odds seemed daunting, as WoS editors said they review 3,500 journals per year and accept only about 10 percent into the main indexes. Acceptance is based on an evaluation that covers four general areas: basic publishing standards, editorial content, international focus and citation analysis.

After reviewing these criteria, *LJS* editors determined that they needed to make only limited changes, such as requiring authors to provide fuller abstracts for their articles and ensuring that article titles were appropriately descriptive. WoS began evaluating *LJS* with the spring issue of 2013. The journal will be eligible for full re-evaluation in July 2018 for possible inclusion in the arts and humanities or social science indexes.

By the end of this year, WoS is expected to be under new ownership as Thomson Reuters has announced plans to sell its intellectual property and science division for \$3.55 billion to private equity interests. The new owners are likely to break up the operation, but few changes are foreseen for WoS, which is viewed as a well-established and highly profitable business. ♦

IALJS SESSIONS AT AEJMC CONFERENCE IN MINNEAPOLIS

A two-panel workshop program focuses on literary journalism in the digital age.

By Lisa A. Phillips, State University of New York at New Paltz (U.S.A.)



Narrative is said to be in a renaissance in journalism and indeed in all forms of media. But literary journalism can seem embattled in a media landscape in which publishers track not only page views, but also the scroll point where readers' attention drifts elsewhere. In "Literary Journalism in the Digital Age: Readers, Students, Society," a two-panel workshop session organized by IALJS at the Association for Education

in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) conference in Minneapolis, MN, presenters illuminated the challenges and possibilities of literary journalism in world of multi-platform storytelling, new publishing models and global interconnectedness. "Literary Journalism in the Classroom: Expanding Opportunities," the first panel of the August 7, 2016 session, was moderated by Joshua Roiland of the University of Maine, Orono. Nancy L. Roberts of the University at Albany and Brian Gabriel of Concordia University presented the results of interviews with editors of several digital publications on the role of long-form and opportu-

nities for new writers. Though students often think that "online means short," Roberts said, editors welcome longer stories, particularly to engage millennial readers well accustomed to "scrolling for story." New writers shouldn't be shy about jumping into the fray. "If it's good writing, it's something editors would welcome," Gabriel said.

Michael Berryhill of Texas Southern University emphasized the importance of teaching storytelling in the digital age, particularly to students

Publications
are turning to "artisanal
entrepreneurship"
to fund the higher costs of
literary journalism

steeped in essay form. "We have to explain that we're writing a story, not an opinion piece," he said. Angela Wilson of Savannah State University emphasized the importance of teaching another fundamental: ethics. "Sometimes students feel they can take out the facts to make the story stronger," she said. "I teach them that they don't have to jeopardize ethics for content."

Jacqueline Marino of Kent State University and Susan Jacobson of Florida International University described what their students learned from doing eye-tracking and semi-structured interview research on readers of long-form multimedia journalism. Marino's stu-

dents watched a red ring indicating the readers' gaze plot move across the story as they read and thought it was "cool" to see what parts of the story attracted the most attention. Text and video got the most "fixations." Jacobson found that readers avoid multimedia elements that require them to click away from the main screen of the story. This information helps students recognize the importance of responsive design in their multimedia projects, Jacobson said.

Moderated by David Abrahamson of Northwestern University, the second panel, "Emerging Aspects of Literary Journalism," focused on research. David Dowling of the University of Iowa examined several publications in the United States and Europe that shunned cut rate on-line advertising out of the belief that "slow journalism should command a price commensurate with the painstaking process" of reporting and writing. These outlets instead relied on subscriptions, micropayments, crowdfunding and other "artisanal entrepreneurial" approaches.

Amy Mattson Lauters of Minnesota State University, Mankato discussed blogs that exemplified the professional possibilities of independent storytelling on the web. She highlighted the careers of writers Julie Powell and Ree Drummond, who parlayed their independent blogs into more prominent platforms in publishing, television and film. "You can start out self-publishing for free and then turn it into a commercial success," she said.

Josh Roiland focused on Dexter Filkins's *The Forever War* as an example of transnational literary journalism, a genre that evades the tendency to see foreign news as "other" and therefore less important. "Transnational journalism does not privilege one journalism over another," he said. "It helps readers consider alternative and even antagonistic points of view."

Next year's AEJMC conference will be held in Chicago on August 9-12, 2017; please mark your calendar. ♦





Roehampton University-Sacred Heart (RUSH) PhD Studentships

Thanks to generous funding from the Society of the Sacred Heart, three fully-funded, full-time PhD studentships are available for new overseas students, starting 1st October 2017. The studentships are for the support of three candidates with a strong academic record and the potential for academic excellence at doctoral level. Preference will be given to candidates from lower or middle income countries*. Successful candidates will demonstrate a commitment to contributing to their home community through their planned research project or area of study, and through their future career plans. In order to meet these aims, suitable projects may be, for example, in education, human rights, theology/philosophy, other topics relevant to justice, community service, environmental development, but this is only an indicative list; no disciplinary areas are excluded, and specific projects and intentions will be assessed in relation to the broad criterion of making a contribution to the student's home community.

Application stage 1: Prior to submitting a full application, candidates should contact a potential academic supervisor at Roehampton (see www.roehampton.ac.uk) to discuss their project ideas.

Application stage 2: Applications (see details below) should be submitted to pgresearch@roehampton.ac.uk. Deadline: Monday 5th December 2016

Full application requirements:

1. A completed PhD application form and other standard application documents - see: <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Courses/Graduate-School/Application-Packs/>
2. A covering letter outlining why the candidate is interested in studying for a PhD, why they are applying to Roehampton, how their project and future career plans will contribute to their home community, and confirming all nationalities held by the candidate (max. 500 words)

Criteria: In addition to the standard requirements for PhD study at Roehampton (see <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Courses/Graduate-School/Degrees/>) criteria are:

- Academic excellence – record to date and potential
- Nationality and domicile (candidates must declare all nationalities held; preference will be given to those who are solely citizens of and domiciled in lower-middle income countries*)
- Commitment to contributing to the student's home community
- Fit of proposed project to the research environment at Roehampton and available supervisory expertise

Interviews: Interviews for short-listed candidates will be held by telephone/Skype in the second half of January 2017

Studentships comprise: Fees at overseas rates
Stipend at Research Council UK rates, currently £16,057 (tax-free)
Contribution to research project costs

Conditions of award: Studentships are for 3 years, subject to annual assessments of satisfactory progress

University of Roehampton:

The University of Roehampton, which celebrates 150 years of involvement in higher education in 2016, is set on the edge of beautiful parkland in south-west London. It is the most research intensive modern university in the UK (REF 2014) and has an excellent research track record in all its 10 academic departments

Other information: Further details and information on the areas of research expertise and interests of our academic staff, research centres, groups and events etc. are available on the university website: <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk>. For specific information on being a research student at Roehampton see the Graduate School website: <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Courses/Graduate-School/>. For further information, please contact: GraduateSchool@roehampton.ac.uk

Call for Abstracts:

Literary Journalism and Latin American Wars: Revolutions, Retributions, Resignations

Edited by Mateus Yuri Passos, Aleksandra Wiktorowska and Margarita Navarro Pérez

Publisher: Éditions PUN – Université de Lorraine

Publication date: Fall 2018

Due date for abstracts of proposed articles: 15 October 2016

Due date for final articles: 1 March 2017

This book, the third in the ReportAGES series published with the Université de Lorraine, examines various forms of Latin American literary journalism that helped shift the paradigm of documentary representation in war reporting. When Gabriel García Márquez died in April 2014, the world of letters lost one its most talented novelists and influential journalists of the 20th century. Like Márquez, many Latin American authors resorted to literary journalism to capture their countries' civil wars, revolutions or pogroms. Latin American literary journalism has been thus rarely separated from Latin American politics throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Dictatorships – the most notorious being perhaps Chile's Pinochet – civil wars and colonial wars all inspired the work of literary journalists who wrote knowing that reprisals would inevitably follow the publication of their work. The poet Heberto Padilla was imprisoned in 1971, and Rodolfo Walsh was assassinated by an Argentinean militia in 1977. Faced with such realities, Latin American authors had to be deceptive to get their stories published and read.

Latin American literary journalism was also unavoidably influenced by an imported/ exported European *reportage* tradition, as well as by America's "New Journalism" of the 1960s and 70s. While Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson and Joan Didion were exploring the consequences counterculture had on an imploding America (with Didion later turning to Latin America in *Salvador*), Latin American authors were still largely trying to find a voice to express the struggles experienced by their peoples. Even though literary journalism on all three continents had traditions that predate the 1960s, it is safe to say that the genre came of age at this time, and Latin America's interactions with Europe and the United States played an important role in the making of its own brand of literary journalism, by whatever name it was called, *periodismo narrativo*, *jornalismo literário* or *periodismo literario*. The journalistic influences from Europe and the U.S. raise an incalculable number of questions regarding the essence of Latin American literary journalism to which this conference hopes to provide answers.

The book also reproduces extracts from each of the various primary sources with the goal of extending the canon of literary journalism. The extract (500 words or so) can be presented in its original language, but an English translation must be provided (along with all permissions to republish the extract). Accompanying these extracts are brief contextual glosses that situate that text within its national literary and journalistic traditions, as well as an article of detailed analysis (around 7,000 words) that interpolates the aesthetics of war reporting in the text that the extract comes from. The book will provide present and future readers with examples of literary war journalism that have been widely neglected over the past century but also to capture what is particular or unique about the extracts in their day and to consider how they speak to us today.

Proposed articles (as well as their abstracts) can be written in English, Spanish or Portuguese and sent to John S. Bak (john.bak@univ-lorraine.fr).

A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE ON OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

We asked students for ways to improve—and received some wonderful answers.

By Jael Rincón, RMIT University (Australia)

When I attended the International Conference of Literary Journalism Studies in 2016 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, it was my first conference organized by the Literary Journalism Association. As a Ph.D. student the conference was a hugely rewarding academic and personal experience. I met wonderful scholars and students whose concerns and curiosity on the topic opened a worthy discussion about the past, present and future of literary journalism studies.



STUDENT SURVEY

Porto Alegre embraced the conference with gusto; the city itself is a green lung with many parks and places to go for a walk. On my first night in Porto Alegre (“Happy Port”), I went out to recognize the neighborhood. While having dinner at a tiny restaurant I met two elderly couples that kindly described the life in this city and in Brazil. They were kind-hearted and helpful people.

The Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul held the conference in its School of Communication. Our hosts were very helpful. The university facilities were great. The opening night at the Science Museum was fascinating. The museum was amusing as well as the self-described “the teenagers in black”—the local students helping with the conference, who were caring and welcoming all the time. The opening night was a great chance to gather with the locals and challenge my Portuguese language skills.

The conference was a good opportunity to meet Ph.D. students from many parts of the world. On the first day of the conference we met the conference organizers and some of us (Ph.D. students) were awarded with the student travel grant that the conference has started

allocating for students this year. I was one of the privileged ones who were given a travel grant, a grant that allowed me to be part of this event.

The conference offered me insight into how to enrich my own research. In addition it allowed me to conceptualize it and understand how my research would have an impact and contribute to literary journalism studies. After the conference I had a lot more confidence, pride, and enthusiasm for exploring my own research interests. I have boosted my research skills

and feel endowed for my career ventures.

I conducted a short survey involving the students who participated in the conference. I’m glad to communicate the positive response I found. The student travel grant has been overwhelmingly praised. It has helped the students be able to afford the trip.

I hope these answers help inform the association. I look forward to seeing you at the IALJS-12 conference in 2017 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. ♦

The survey was sent to 9 grad student participants at the IALJS-11 conference. We hope the data may help to improve future conferences.

1. Was IALJS-11 your first IALJS conference?

Answered 8
Skipped 1

Yes (7)
No (1)

2. Tell us about the conference:

Answered 7
Skipped 2

How would you rate the keynote?

Excellent (3)
Very Good (3)
Good (1)
Fair 0
Poor 0

How would you rate the paper sessions?

Excellent (2)
Very Good (4)
Good (1)
Fair 0
Poor 0

How would you rate the work-in-progress session?

Excellent (2)
Very Good (3)
Good (2)
Fair 0
Poor 0

How would you rate the themes of session?

Excellent (2)
Very Good (4)
Good (1)
Fair 0
Poor 0

How would you rate the reception?

Excellent (2)
Very Good (3)
Good (1)
Fair (1)
Poor 0

How would you rate the conference dinner?

Excellent (5)
Very Good (2)
Good 0
Fair 0
Poor 0

How would you rate the conference in general?

Excellent (3)
Very Good (3)
Good (1)
Fair 0
Poor 0

3. What can we do to improve the IALJS Conference?

Answered 5
Skipped 4

1. More time and adequate spaces for social interaction between sessions, since they were very long and one after another there was not much time to talk between. Maybe also include tea/coffee?
2. It would be nice to have free water and coffee at hand (behind the conference rooms) all the time. This is a custom at many conferences and it makes sense.

3. May be providing the abstract of each presentation before we see them, or at least allow us to read it online or through email so we can be more informed about each presentation and subject analysis.

4. Keep more panel languages in the Conference but with simultaneous translation in order to all people can understand the entire panel.

5. Location

4. What initiatives can be implemented to encourage students to attend the IALJS Conference?

Answered 5
Skipped 4

1. If you mean graduate students presenting papers, I would announce there would be some travel grants (I was not aware at the beginning). If you mean as public, the host university could make more publicity among their students.

2. Free participation

3. The student fund is already a great idea, but it will always be difficult to have students from different countries. I am always surprised that there aren't many students from the countries where the conference is being held.

4. More travel grants to student and PhD student

5. Mobility grants

5. Is there any panel/theme that you would like to see at the next IALJS Conference?

Answered 5
Skipped 4

1. Translating literary journalism works into English, a workshop on creative non-fiction or a panel on writing literary journalism, maybe invite journalist to talk about their fieldwork experiences.

2. Make clearer the terminology connected with literary-journalism

3. I have been thinking about the panel about how nonfiction or literary journalism has been used to talk honestly (although in a subtle way) about the societies during the regimes or periods when talking openly has not been allowed (for example in socialist countries).

4. What place must Literary Journalism take in Modern Times?

5. Visual literary journalism

6. Did you identify any collaborations/connection to your research during the IALJS Conference?

Answered 9
Skipped 0

Yes (9)

No (0)

7. Would you like to collaborate with the IALJS Newsletter?

Answered 9
Skipped 0

Yes (9)

No (0)

8. How well does the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies consider the interests of students?

Answered 9
Skipped 0

Extremely well (2)

Very well (4)

Moderately well (3)

Slightly well (0)

Not at all well (0)

9. What year of your Ph.D. are you in?

First year (0)

Second year (4)

Third year (5)

MICHAEL HERR, 1940-2016: A HOMAGE

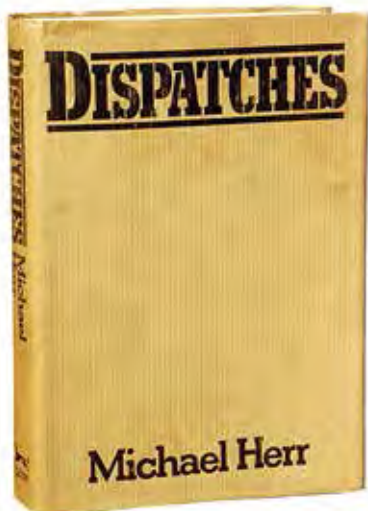
An exploration of the work of one of the masters of literary journalism.

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



on his experience as a journalist in Vietnam. It became the basis for an expansion and *Dispatches* was released in 1977.

Herr was no ordinary journalist, and that is why we remember him. Com-



ments by other writers about him are almost legion, such as Hunter S. Thompson's observation, "Michael Herr's *Dispatches* puts all the rest of us in the shade." That is no small praise from the king of Gonzo. And John le Carré observed, "The best book I have ever read on men and war in our time." But the more eloquent testimonials come from those who survived the Vietnam conflict. Of the initial *Esquire* article, "Hell Sucks," Michael Goodell, who had been a chaplain's combat assistant in Vietnam, wrote that it "is the most accurate account of this insane war that

Herr was seeking another
kind of
accuracy, or perhaps better,
a fidelity to the
aesthetics of experience

I have ever read."

What made Herr's accounts of Vietnam so "accurate"? It was not necessarily accuracy in the conventional sense of factual accuracy. After all, Herr acknowledged that there were errors of fact. But, he insisted, "Everything in *Dispatches* happened for me, even if it didn't necessarily happen to me." And here he echoes a similar sentiment by Joan Didion, who observed of her New Journalism that it was her attempt to "remember what it was to be me."

Herr's accuracy, as such, was of a different nature. As he observed in *Dispatches*, "The press got all the facts (more or less), it got too many of them. But it never found a way to report meaningfully about death, which of course was really what it was all about." Herr was seeking then another kind of accuracy, or perhaps better, a fidelity to the aesthetics of experience that could convey the horrific, grizzly nature of the conflict.

To be sure, there are discomfiting

descriptions of death and destruction—American soldiers who kept collections of Vietnamese ears, for example, cut off the bodies of those they killed.

But Herr understood, at whatever level of aesthetic consciousness, that descriptions of the horrific alone are not enough because most of us have (gratefully) not had the opportunity to collect the ears of our victims. Instead, throughout the book one can detect Herr's ability to weave into such scenes the kind of aesthetics of conventional everyday experience that most Americans at the time would have some kind of familiarity with. Thus, he locates readers amid that with which they are familiar, while at the same time juxtaposing it with the unfamiliar—the discomfiting nature of death and destruction. The result is a rupture of the conventions of how we so often complacently see the world, or at least saw the world back then.

For example, there is the parody of the American family photo album, that relic (like the typewriter) of the pre-digital age. While for many Americans it was a collection of pictures of families masquerading happy smiles at holiday gatherings, for Marines they were collections of the grizzly, such as a "severed head shot" of a Viet Cong, the severed head resting on the chest of its former body. There are the underlying vulnerabilities of the secular mythologies—for example, the hollow, inflated heroism of a



Continued on next page

MICHAEL HERR *Continued from previous page*

soldier who killed a Viet Cong and liberated a prisoner, only to be told by his major that he killed fourteen Vietcong and liberated six prisoners. For that, the soldier received a medal. And then there is the parody of the Beatles song, "Magical Mystery Tour," which was an anthem for the counter culture in the 1960s. It was sung by grunts, Marines, at the battle of Khe San, one of the most hellish battles of the war: "The Magical Mystery Tour is coming to take you away . . . Coming to take you away, dying to take you away," "coming" replacing the "dying" in the kind of gallows humor soldiers at war engage in to keep their sanity. Such is what the magical mystery tour of the psychedelic 1960s had become. Or there is the soldier who kept an

oatmeal cookie baked by his wife wrapped for safe keeping in foil and plastic and three pair of socks. Would it have been much different from the oatmeal cookie his mother wrapped in foil ten or fifteen years earlier and packed in his Howdy Doody lunchbox, so that he could eat it with his Eisenhower-era 2-cent carton of subsidized whole milk that a certain generation can recall?

This is part of the secret to the power of Herr's literary journalism. It is reflected in a sensitivity that integrated the aesthetics of everyday horrific experience with the aesthetics of our everyday banal experience. The result is his distinct brand of disruptive surrealism from which we can still learn. ♦

TEACHING TIPS *Continued from Page 42*

Any concern I had about the nature of these articles, however, dissolved over the course of the semester. In good literary journalism, just like all good literature, the innocuous can carry tremendous depth. All I had to do was encourage my students to be sensitive to the many subtle ways in which writers address political or ethical issues.

Our class discussion of John McPhee's "Travels in Georgia" is case in point. A surface reading of this piece might summarize it as the narrative of a backwoods road trip with two southern eccentrics. The initial response from my students registered between mild boredom and extreme dislike. Some of them were truly nonplussed. It's too long, they said. There's too much detail. And we're not interested in eco-narratives.

In due time they did dig deeper. A few students pointed to the political message communicated by the demonstration of human impact on nature. Another noticed how the interaction between

McPhee's quixotic protagonists and the other Georgia locals revealed a nuanced take on the nature of race and class in the developing south. Under-appreciation of the subject matter may have in fact compelled my students to turn more quickly to narrative structure as a source of contemplation. And this is, in the end, arguably the most compelling reason to read "Travels in Georgia" in a classroom.

McPhee's unpopular text generated one of the liveliest and longest class discussions of the semester. Students later told me that training themselves to read past their surface interest in content, for structure and for theme, greatly enriched their understanding of what a writer can accomplish with reported material. This comment has been my greatest takeaway from working with a limited syllabus, and the lesson learned is one I hope to apply in all future classes: There is great value in looking beyond content, for both students and instructors. ♦

CONFERENCE ON LITERARY JOURNALISM IN TIMES OF CRISIS AND TRANSITION

A conference entitled "Literary Journalism in Times of Crisis and Transition (1870-1970)" will be held at the University of Warwick on 26 November 2016. The one-day interdisciplinary conference to investigate the role played by literary journalism in capturing historical and social changes on a global scale over the time span of a century, from the 1870s to the 1970s. Literary journalism, also known as 'narrative journalism', is a form of creative nonfiction that draws on the research methods of journalism and the storytelling techniques and literary style of narrative. Throughout its history, it has been shaped as a genre by transnational and cross-cultural influences, and it has assumed as many variations as the countries and printing traditions in which it has blossomed.

The 1870s witnessed events that had a far-reaching impact on the course of history to follow and defined narrative journalism throughout the late 19th century in Europe and beyond. As readers and journalists alike seek to make sense of their individual role and place in a continuously transforming historical reality, narrative nonfiction can be seen as an attempt to answer such concerns. The struggle assumes a character of urgency as the turn of the century nears, while the accompanying technological innovations of the Second Industrial revolution reshape the perception of time and space. Having radically transformed the communication system, these developments pave the way for a variety of new formal and conceptual journalistic approaches: industrialized journalism; New Journalism (1890s); photo-journalism; published interviews; the rise of the figures of news agency reporters and foreign correspondents. The two World Wars, the post-war economic booms across Europe and beyond, the rise of mass consumerism, social reforms, and, last but not least, the radical cultural changes of the mid-20th century, all offer a fertile ground for the development of narrative nonfiction. The conference will limit the time span of the analysis to the 1970s, considering that the arrival of television as a primary player in the domain of media and communication arguably relayed print literary journalism as a reporting style with its long-standing tradition, at least temporarily, into the background. IALJS's own Susan Greenberg from the University of Roehampton, London will be one of the conference keynoters. For more information, please contact Sara Boezio at <S.Boezio@warwick.ac.uk>.

Mapping the Magazine 4 (MtM4) Conference

12-14 December 2016

Department of Media and Communications
University of Sydney

"Mapping the Magazine" is a series of conferences established by Tim Holmes of the Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC). Three conferences have run so far—in 2011, 2007 and 2005. The fourth Mapping the Magazine conference will be held at the University of Sydney, Department of Media and Communications, from 12-14 Dec. 2016

As in the past, the conference aims to create an intimate meeting of magazine scholars from many disciplines (Media and Communications, Journalism, Gender and Cultural Studies, Sociology, Linguistics, English, History, Visual Communications...) who are interested in exploring the current state of magazine research and possibly developing collaborative research projects. The conference is open to all scholars working in the broad field of magazine research. Contributors could, however, consider the following topics:

- the place of print in the ecology of magazine publishing
- the concept of 'magazine media'
- business models and distribution
- "wrapping" (using Snapchat/Facebook Instant Articles/Medium etc. to wrap around original material)
- temporality and magazines
- alternative magazines
- the future of magazine publishing
- the 'field' of magazine studies
- magazine journalism
- magazine education
- gender in magazines – and beyond gender

Papers will be delivered sequentially over the three days, not concurrently in separate streams. Conference delegates are asked to commit to attending all papers. **There will be no registration fees.** The organisers are planning to edit a special issue of a journal based on selected papers from the conference.

A website will be developed shortly. Any enquiries should be directed to Megan Le Masurier at [<meco.MtM4conference@sydney.edu.au>](mailto:meco.MtM4conference@sydney.edu.au). The Organizing committee includes Megan Le Masurier (University of Sydney), Fiona Giles (University of Sydney), , Rebecca Johinke (University of Sydney); Tim Holmes (Cardiff University)

LITERARY JOURNALISM IN GREECE

Winning the fight to overcome a past “second class” label.

By Maria Petrucchi, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

As elsewhere, journalism and literature in Greece have overlapped since the early days of the press, creating a bond that was strengthened by the mass media of the early twentieth century. Through the publication of short stories, literary serials, reviews of various



AROUND
THE
WORLD

kinds, translations, celebratory pieces, historical articles, travel reportage, investigative journalism and war reporting, Greek writers found an extensive creative space in which to make themselves known—as well as a source of economic gain—and made a substantive contribution to the development of quality information and the

consequent raising of the cultural level of the country.

During a 1935 meeting of the Ένωσις Συντακτώ Ελλάδος (the Greek Association of Journalists), the authoritative voice of Petros Xaris declared that “our best literati, poets and writers, have

worked for years, and are working even now for our daily newspapers; some of the best pages of their works have been written on the desks of our newsrooms.

The press has enriched the baggage of their life experience, has supported them materially, made them known to the public...and the writers have learned to form their thoughts quickly, with simple words, have learned clean and comprehensible expression. ... Palamas [Kostis Palamas (1859-1947), a Greek poet and a central figure of modern

We have
emphasized the effective
bond and mutual
exchange between literary writers
and newspapers

Greek literature] one of the 85 on this list, affirms: ‘I am a journalist, I do not deny it, nor can I forget my roots.’”

Over time, V. Koraxais, E. Vlakou, D. Pournaras, equally prestigious figures of the Greek press, have, in turn, emphasized the effective bond and mutual exchange between literary writers and newspapers. In contrast to many other European media cultures, in Greece this bond is alive and fruitful today, albeit with a clearer demarcation between the two



professions. In an article from 2008, Spiros Kouzinopoulos, the general director of the Macedonian Press Agency, declared that: “It is indisputable that the relationship between journalism and literature, especially in our country, started with the birth of the press and has continued up to now at a regular pace.”

Nevertheless, literary journalism in Greece still has not shaken off the onerous label of being ‘δευτερο πράγμα’ (second-class), and it is no coincidence that the journalistic work of nonfiction narrators of proven reputation such as Alexandros Papadiamantis, Emanouil Roidis and Nikos Kazantzakis is essentially ignored.

The reasons for this insensitivity on the part of both literary critics and the Hellenic academic world might be prejudices common in many cultures.

First of all, the work of a reporter is viewed as the result of a “different” activity, separated from the more noble field of literature. A second factor is the dependence of journalists on the approval of their publishers—themselves bound, most particularly in Greece between the two world wars, to political powers. This attitude has been difficult to eradicate. Currently only a few research papers and critical essays dedicated to the subject exist, which is both a problem and an opportunity for those such as myself who have decided to venture into literary journalism as a field of study.

I hope that in the future my doctoral research on the journalistic output of Nikos Kazantzakis will not only prove valuable to others but I also hope it will but will also promote greater attention to literary journalism in Greece. ♦



LITERARY JOURNALISM, AUTHORS AND LITERATURE: A STUDY ON PERCEPTION, PROTAGONIST AND PLOT

Examining the literary aspects of literary journalism.

By Manuel João de Carvalho Coutinho, Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal)

From both its extensive narrative point of view and its profound journalistic approach, literary journalism has always had a lot to offer to its readers. The way the story is told, the chosen format to approach a certain subject and the potential behind the literary techniques used; all of it contributes to the variety and reach of



RESEARCH ESSAY

this literary and journalistic *genre, form* or, as John S. Bak considered, *discipline*.¹ The overall result gives way to a strong and demanding journalism, instilled with a profound narrative voice.

When reading literary journalism, how-

ever, the reader might be confronted with conflicting thoughts concerning both the veracity and acuity of said work. Could it all be true or did the reporter dramatize his narrative? Did he change some of the facts? This thought would not be something unheard of, nor would it be wrongly founded. In fact, as Norman Sims quite simply puts it, when considering literary journalism: "(...) we are tempted to ask if this is *really* non-fiction or if the author has invented some of the dialogue and details that make ordinary characters seem more noble or real."² Such a momentary thought could have a much bigger impact if it is actually confirmed. Unfortunately, some journalists have indeed adulterated their original stories to, in their point of view, reach wider audiences by changing certain facts into something they consider greater and more appealing. The result should nei-

ther be considered as literary journalism or journalism at all, since both genres define themselves as factual, precise and relevant (with the narrative voice and presence playing a larger role in the first case, rather than the second).

When first confronted with literary journalism, however, I was neither intrigued by the veracity of the story, nor was I conflicted with the potential idea that some of the facts might have been slightly changed. My initial thought was: *Where is the writer taking me?* This idea

It was literature, with
its historical
potential for grandeur and
breathtaking results,
but it was also journalism

probably came from being used to reading and studying literature, both fiction and non-fiction. Because of it, I was neither aware nor challenged by the concept of something that was said to be both literature and journalism; or, as Pedro Rosa Mendes puts it, a narrative that is: "(...) an engagement with reality with a novelist's eye but with a journalist's discipline."³ As an avid reader and an academic I was used to reading literature that was admittedly conceived through the mind and eyes of the writer, either entirely fictional or based in true events, and then put into words as accurately as possible as the limitations of writing abilities allowed. Literary journalism, however, seemed to be something else: it was literature, with its historical potential for grandeur and breathtaking results; but it was also journalism, with its sharpness and strict connection with truth and reality, with no room for fictionalized moments even if it could supposedly en-

hance the narrative in any way. The result had to be something different than most literature although, at first sight, there were no clear differences to be seen. Taking this into account, I came upon a question that I felt the urge to answer, since it could enlighten me towards the study and further comprehension of this genre, which was: What is *literary* about literary journalism?

THE CORE ELEMENTS

While attending creative writing classes a student is often taught some tips and advices on how to create and improve different types of narratives. In one of those classes I was told that when creating and writing a story we should be able to describe it as simple as possible, using something close to the following sentence: "This is the story of *x*, and how he wanted *y*, but to get it he must first successfully confront *w*." At first sight, it seems pretty straightforward and easy to understand. Such an idea could even be transcribed as: $x > w = y$; or as $x < w \neq y$ (if *x* cannot successfully reach *y*). Understanding and identifying this in most literature was neither a realization nor excellent advice for a student and an amateur writer such as myself, but it definitely gave a certain insight on how stories function as a whole by simplifying them to their core.

Indeed there is a protagonist that wishes for something but must first overcome an obstacle or a series of obstacles, which he might or might not be able to succeed in doing (sometimes, even when he succeeds the protagonist might even perish before meeting his fortune). When the obstacle is finally confronted we, the readers, are normally met with the narrative *climax*, the moment we have all been waiting for. This simple structure can be seen in many stories, like the myth of Gilgamesh's search for immortality, but first having to overcome perilous challenges; or through the classical adventures of Robin-

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PERCEPTION *Continued from previous page*

son Crusoe, trying to create a comfortable existence against the adversities of living on a forsaken island; or even in the example of Luke Skywalker, who only by confronting Darth Vader and the Emperor can be set on his path to save the galaxy. All of this contributes to understanding different narratives for we, the readers, are taken on a journey which hopefully engages us to feel that we too are fighting alongside the protagonist, overcoming challenges together. We can even see something close to this in most non-fictional works, both captivating and engaging us through this simple structure.

This realization comes from the core element that classically forms literature, that is, its relationship with plot. But such an encompassing idea that seems to be so central even in modern storytelling actually comes from literature's long history, sharing its origins with tradition and legend. When considering Hercules' tale, for example, John Sutherland explains that: "What is significant is that the story moves from beginning to end (...). It has a plot, there is an opening situation (...) a complication (...) and a resolution (...). The fight in which the hero has to outsmart his much stronger opponent (...). The myth, like every Bond film, has a happy ending. In simple and complicated ways, we find that kind of plotting everywhere in narrative literature."⁴ It is by moving within the story that we have a compelling narrative and when we decide to immerse ourselves more and more, we begin to take the journey with the characters. We suffer with them and we judge them on their poor and/or wise decisions. But we do so, from a certain point of view, not necessarily by how fascinating the individuals and protagonists are, at least not from the start, but we actually do it because of how we perceive their actions.⁵ The individuals alone are not the story; it is their adventures and misadventures that captivate us. It is the way they interact with what is in front of them, overcoming challenges through their wits and courage, and changing their personalities along the way

(hopefully learning something useful in the end). All of this is only made possible, by moving forward within the narrative plot, which forms and transforms stories.

By being able to figure out how the plot's complexity intertwines and develops, one is often able to find an apparent familiarity within different stories, even being able to pinpoint identical characters and plot points, as Lord Raglan did when connecting the Oedipus tale with that of so many other myths and folk stories.⁶ In all of them there are always cer-

We discover new stories,
not only for how
well they may be written, but
also for how
the writer can trick us

tain and constant elements, like the main characters and their counterparts. Some of them are there for us to relate to and others are there so we scorn and loathe. The protagonist, the main character, is typically perceived in most literature as someone we can aspire to, although some stories depict a different type of protagonist which we might even end up disliking. By over simplification of who the lead tends to be in literature, we can quickly see that there are different types of protagonists. The lead can fit the role of: the hero (Frodo Baggins, for example, from *The Lord of The Rings*), the villain (which can change his ways as the story progresses, like Mr. Scruge from *A Christmas Carol*), the anti-hero (like Llewellyn Moss from *No Country from Old Men*) or even none of the above, a protagonist with no interesting attributes at all (like Gustav Aschenbach from *Death in Venice*). And either the protagonists remain as such until the end of the story, or they

meet some redeeming moment where they change their perspective on life. We see the lead as following something close to one of these roles because we understand stories as being told by one of these patterns. All of these allow us to reach a comfortable place through similarity and familiarity.

But concerning familiarity in literature, either fictional or not, it should be noted that recognizing patterns in stories doesn't necessarily take the *enthusiasm* or *enjoyment*, or even the sense of wonder that comes with storytelling. We are compelled to discover and learn new stories, not only for how well we consider it to be written and constructed, but also for how the writer and storyteller can trick us, both through unpredictability and by the choices made to echo his imagination. It is by twerking and reinventing these techniques that one is able to connect with stories. As John Sutherland puts it, literature is: "(...) a collection of unique combinations of twenty-six small black marks on a white surface (...) literature is the human mind at the very height of its ability to express and interpret the world around us. (...) it enlarges our minds and sensibilities to the point where we can better handle complexity (...). It makes us more human."⁷

It is by considering said familiarities and constructions that one should inquiry about the *structure* and *literary nature* of literary journalism. We should start by characterizing this genre through a simple and relevant spectrum for us to further deconstruct and investigate. That being said, the following definition by Mark Kramer seems to be a good fit for the purposes of this study: "Literary Journalism couples cold fact and personal event, in the author's humane company (...). The process moves readers, and writers, toward realization, compassion, and in the best of cases, wisdom."⁸ When reading this one cannot stop but find some similarities with the previous quote by Sutherland. The fact is that Kramer's assertion is not far from truth, indeed the process of

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PERCEPTION *Continued from previous page*

moving readers is what characterizes the literary core of this genre, through its *factual storytelling* and *humane company* of the author. And, furthermore, the presence of both elements help separate this genre from conventional journalism where one is often connecting with stories delivered as information, rather than information told as stories and *provided by* an author



LISA POLLAK

with a voice, a keen eye and literary precision, which can frequently be found and is what defines most literary journalism works. As said by Lisa Pollak, Pulitzer Winner of 1996, the voice of a journalist who chooses

to be storyteller comes from a recognition and a desire to work on: "(...) stories that are actually stories, not information."⁹

That being said, although the narrative voice of literary journalism is both a force to be reckoned with and it is constantly the subject of study and analysis; the fact is that understanding its *journalistic structure* is no less important. We can definitely see this genre as being part of what Alex S. Jones called the *iron core of journalism*¹⁰. As he explains, this central and core part of journalism is both defined as *explanatory* (which means it is a product of much investigation and expertise) and *accountable* (which means that the result tends to hold those in power accountable). There we end up finding what we call *investigative reporting*. We should add that at the center of journalism's core we can definitely place literary journalism, given its intense journalistic approach to news which helps shape a more informed and conscious society. Which, overall, is why this genre can both be considered a powerful part of literature, for its precise and inquisitive non-fictional and narrative approach to reality, and, at the same time, an important part of journalism, since it's constructed around and within its professional principles and ethics.

It is precisely because of this,

however, that one should further enquire into this genre concerning its narrative structure. If literary journalism can be defined as literature, or at least it seems to share part of its definition, then we are probably able to find a *plot* that can fit its structure, as we did earlier when considering literature. And, if plot's existence naturally serves the purpose of the author's intentions to take the reader into a journey – or at least it does so in literature – then what purpose does *plot* end up serving in journalism? Is there a journey? Where is

Plot is something that
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its complexity
through pattern-recognition

the literary journalist taking us, the reader?

**PLOT AND PROTAGONISTS
AND HOW WE SEE STORIES**

At this point, we can establish plot as something close to the guidelines that conduct and organize action within a narrative. But plot as a whole does not necessarily have to be understood as something static or immovable like it was nothing more than a set of unquestionable rules for writers. In fact, literature is not necessarily written with a plot in mind. We would not be far from truth if we considered that most writers do not have a well-constructed plot on their minds when they start or even finish writing a story, fictional or not. However, plot is something that we can find in most literature, effectively simplifying its complexity through pattern-recognition. James Scott Bell, for example, describes plot in most novels as being constructed around a series of principles

he calls LOCK. These principles are: *Lead*, *Objective*, *Confrontation*, and *Knockout*. The author explains them quite simply as: *Lead*, which is "(...) someone we have to watch throughout the course of the novel;" *Objective*, which "(...) generates forward motion and keeps the Lead from just sitting around. An Objective can take either two forms: to *get* something or to *get away* from something;" *Confrontation*, which is there so the reader can "(...) fret about the Lead, keeping and intense emotional involvement all the way through (...);" and, finally, *Knockout* which is there "(...) to take your Lead through the journey toward the objective, and then send the opposition to the mat."¹¹ Taking this into consideration, can we see such a system or even something similar in literary journalism?

Indeed, if we take into account some examples, we quickly find a way to identify the LOCK system in many literary journalism works. For example, in Gabriel García Márquez's *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* the lead is definitely the lost sailor; the objective is figuring out how he strives for survival in high sea; the confrontation is both with keeping his sanity whilst also trying to figure out a way to quench his thirst and famine on his continuous struggle to stay alive; and, finally, the knockout is how after overcoming everything he ends up finding his way home against all odds. In Gay Talese's *Frank Sinatra has a Cold*, the system is less obvious but it's still there, in one way or another: the lead is Frank Sinatra, both the man and the myth; the objective is to have access to his profile, moving slowly through his secluded life and routine; the confrontation can be seen, whimsically, as his cold although that would not make justice to the piece as a whole, therefore the confrontation should be seen as Sinatra's interactions with mundane events and achievements; and the knockout is the way such an intriguing and mystical figure can be both normal and extraordinary at the same time.

This system, however, meets

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a challenge when we consider further nonfictional works, like Norman Mailer's *The Fight* or Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. In both journalistic examples we can easily be confused by the apparent absence or distortion that arises when bearing in mind some of the LOCK elements. This results in a seeming lack of order, because there are clear structural and literary questions that are hard to answer. For example: Who *is* the lead? In *The Fight* we could say that Muhammad Ali is the lead, in fact he is featured on the cover of most modern reprints. Still, the fact is that the book is constructed as an impartial and journalistic approach to a story of two fighters, where supposedly we are not meant to feel compelled to prefer one over the other. It is clear that Mailer spends more time with Ali and most times seems to prefer him over George Foreman; but both fighters are equally described with verbosity and admiration till the end. That being said, can the lead be Norman Mailer? He describes himself in the third-person and from a certain perspective he can definitely fit the role of the lead. So, is he the lead? Can he even be the lead? On the other hand, in Hunter's narratives we quickly feel forced to see him as the lead and, as he takes the role of the *unlikable and unlikely hero*, we are both thrilled and afraid to follow him. But if the author can be the lead in a journalistic work, where does that leave us, the readers? For example, if we see Mailer as the lead, are we naturally encouraged to create affection for him, as both a character and an individual? Will we read more of his literary journalism works for our interest in the stories behind them or are we simply doing it for our appreciation and admiration for the author's persona?

These ideas are not necessarily misplaced or even a foreign concept to a common reader. In fact, if we like and appreciate a writer we are more likely to feel drawn to read some of his other works, even if his subjects have no apparent interest to us in the first place. But if we wish to read more from a journalist

because we felt compelled by his characteristics as a lead, are we then *returning to him* because of the way he tells stories or because we like him as the protagonist of those stories? Are we reading *the* story or are we reading the writer *within* the story? And, furthermore, do we want the story to also give us relevant information or do we want the protagonists' adventures, regardless of the importance and acuity of the facts gathered and the events behind the story? In a way, are we reading literary journalism because of *the accuracy of the*

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information or are we reading it because of *the quality of its narrative*? These problems pose further challenges and the concept of lead, amongst other classical plot elements, seems to need further clarifications.

THE PROTAGONIST AND THE JOURNEY

On a 2014 interview, journalist and non-fiction writer Michael Lewis was asked about the characters behind his new book *Flash Boys* (2014), a true tale on trading and equity markets. While talking about the protagonist of this true tale Lewis ends up calling him "the main character" of the narrative and, immediately following, proceeded to call him "the hero."¹² Although Michael Lewis's work is not the subject of analysis here, his claim in this interview—for lack of a better word—ought to be put into questioning. We should, first and foremost, acknowledge that there is nothing wrong in seeing the main character of a story as a

hero; we often do so upon reading a novel, even when the protagonist actually has nothing heroic about him. Furthermore, when considering literature or cinema we end up tossing the word *hero* with a certain ease, since there are no real consequences in doing so, nor should there be. Which makes Lewis' assertion not that significant; perhaps he even did it unintentionally or without giving much thought to it. However, we can agree that a non-fiction writer that tries to convene a true and close as possible depiction of reality should not bluntly pass this type of judgment. But if and when he actually does, then what does it mean on the overall accuracy and impartiality of its writing? Do we not wonder if maybe the writer *took a side* on his story and that therefore his writing goes towards a certain *idea* or *message* that he hopes to convene, like he had something close to a *secret agenda* behind his writing? If so, maybe the author was not completely true to his story. Maybe he decided to only show the facts that support his point of view. That being said should or can an author, as both a journalist and a non-fiction writer, see the object of his investigation as a *hero*? And if he does, then what *technical* and *ethical* problems might arise in doing so? We should analyze this episode beyond Michael's journalistic career and persona, since he is not subject of this investigation and, therefore, we must focus our attention on the implications of the word *hero*, used either on a non-fictional or journalistic context.

Earlier in this investigation, when considering literary journalism, a question was presented: *Where is the writer taking me, the reader*? Well, let us now consider the possibility that the writer, in this case a journalist, calls the lead of his story a *hero*; perhaps he even does it only in retrospect. Does that mean that I am meant to conclude that he expects the reader to see that character as such, whilst taking us slowly but surely towards that *assertion*? To further analyze this possibility,

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MEDIA RELEASE – HYBRID PUBLISHERS

OCTOBER 2016

'Celebrating the rich literary landscape of Australian creative nonfiction'

***Behind the Text:
Candid conversations with Australian
creative nonfiction writers***

Sue Joseph

Behind the Text is a celebration of the often forgotten genre of creative nonfiction. Paired with Joseph's rich descriptions of person and place, this collection of candid interviews brings together some of the best Australian authors, covering everything from traumatic wartime journalism and burning national issues to Middle Eastern spices. In this definitive work, eleven influential authors explore their writing process, ethical dilemmas and connection to the capacious genre. As the first collection of its kind, this work brings Australian creative nonfiction into the literary spotlight.

***About the author:** Sue Joseph has been a journalist for more than thirty-five years, working both in Australia and the UK. She began working as an academic, teaching print journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney, in 1997. She has published three other books: *She's My Wife; He's Just Sex*, *The Literary Journalist* and *Degrees of Detachment: An Ethical Investigation*, and *Speaking Secrets*, which focuses on literary journalism and ethics. Joseph now teaches across both the undergraduate and postgraduate programs at University of Technology Sydney, in the print journalism and writing subjects.

'Sue Joseph's fine writing and her magnificent ability to bring the colour, the textures and voice(s) of life into text make her another great Australian creative nonfiction writer.'

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– Matthew Ricketson, Professor, University of Canberra and President of the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia



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we should first take into account what the dictionary defines as a *hero*: “1. a person (...) who is admired by many people for doing something brave or good; 2. the main (...) character in a story, novel, film/ movie etc. 3. a person (...) that you admire because of a particular quality or skill that they have.”¹³ Considering this, we can agree that many subjects of nonfiction are naturally seen and called heroes. But what are the repercussions to the story’s reliability if a non-fictional author, a journalist for that matter, sees them as such? Will there be no inclination to change some events, or at least present them in such an order that happens to enhance or justify the reason why we should see and consider the protagonist as something close to a *hero*? And even if the author has no *direct* intentions of making the reader reach such a conclusion, how can we be sure that he will not *indirectly* bring us there?

That being said, we should note that the fact that some might *call* the subject of their investigation a hero, or even undeniably *admire* them, should not be seen as a *big* ethical problem or even something unheard of. Literary journalist Leila Guerriero, for example, did it brilliantly in some of her works and it enriched her narrative. We can see it in the profiles of both the poet Nicanor Parra – “He is a man, but he could be a dragon (...)” – and also on the portrayal of the dancer Rodolfo González Alcántara – “That is the first time I see Rodolfo (...). And what I see leaves me speechless...”¹⁴ But when we are reading things like this and we are reminded that it is a journalistic work, can we then not perceive such individuals through an exaggerated spotlight, where we are *forced* to admire and/or appreciate them, leaving no room for our deliberate interpretations? Are we being directed towards an assertion, a closed conceptualization even before we, the readers, pass judgement as individuals while we confidently read a free and impartial press in hopes of being correctly and unbiasedly informed? Or are the feelings, misconceptions and ideas of the literary journalist part of the experi-

ence? If we reconsider the question once more – *Where is the writer taking me?* – we can immediately think that we are being taken or guided towards a *verdict*, a final assertion if you will, instead of being directed towards an *awareness of a reality* (which might or might not result in said assertion). And perhaps only by the end, after we came in contact with a story and all its details will we, now informed, pass judgment and reach our verdict upon that which we are now aware.

Let us consider these implications

There is a risk in literary
journalism that
the news becomes
the journalist
investigating an event

further. If there is a real danger of feeling like we are being guided towards a *forced* sense of admiration or disdain for the lead of a literary journalism story, then where does that take us when the lead of a story is the *journalist himself*? What if he makes a mistake or does something unethical?¹⁵ Although this clearly does not represent the majority of literary journalists, the problem is still there: do we necessarily accept every idea, path, decision or action took by the author; or is there any room for us to disagree and freely create an informed opinion? Consider the following: when reading *Operation Massacre*, by Rodolfo Walsh, one cannot help but feel a certain concern towards the writer. Although not necessarily the lead, we end up feeling so much through his voice while going back and forth in his investigations. This is more obvious on some parts rather than others, like the introduction, prologue and epilogue (which were not widely avail-

able on the original work, but were added later). In the end, it is only natural that we feel a certain admiration for the writer. Are we then not at risk of confusing the main purpose of his work? Is there a possibility that the story is also the *mind and ideas* behind the author? Is there no risk in literary journalism that the news *becomes the journalist* investigating an event, instead of the *information about the event* he is investigating?

If this is not obvious in Walsh’s work, it actually takes wider proportions in other literary journalists. When reading Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild*, for example, we are intimately close with both the subject of investigation (the story of Christopher McCandless) and the author’s assertions and interpretations. It is almost like we have access to a detective’s work, following his suspicions as he solves a mystery. This can be seen as a way to *fill in the gaps*, since the author was investigating the story behind a dead person and cluing us in on his life by connecting the dots. But when finishing the book one cannot stop but feel that the journalist was also part of the story or, at least, he *chose* to be by putting himself as a more present figure in his own narrative. In a way, when analyzing the author’s voice, it is almost like he wants to give something to the reader, something beyond the story, perhaps some of his thoughts and personality. This idea is not at all misplaced if we consider what Krakauer said about his reportorial stance, when asked about it on the book *The New New Journalism*: “I try hard to be fair and objective, but if I care enough about a subject to write about it, I tend to have an agenda. There is almost always a case I’m trying to make, although I usually prefer to present it indirectly rather than bear readers over the head with it.”¹⁶

This quote by Krakauer almost brings this investigation to a full circle because if we consider the implications of such an idea, we then understand that some literary journalists are indeed trying

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to take the reader *towards* a point of view, their point of view for that matter. To make the reader reach an idea, just like a novelist would do. It would seem that sometimes there is a hidden purpose behind some literary journalism works; just like there is one behind most literature, which facilitates the readers journey and hopefully helps deliver that which the writer is trying to convene. If that is the case in literary journalism, then will the writer give us enough room to doubt him or is his narrative narrow, directing us only towards his perception and agenda? Are we being informed through a detailed story or are being told how we should think and feel?

DECONSTRUCTING
PERCEPTION

When first considering the main subject of this investigation, the goal was set towards a further understanding of literature's place in literary journalism. The path chosen to clarify this subject was through revising literary journalism's correlation with its narrative structure; which was done by considering its connection with what we classically perceive as *plot* in literature. To achieve this, plot was then deconstructed and analyzed from different theories. Firstly, through a simple phrase – which was transcribed as $x > w = y$; or as $x < w \neq y$ – and then by the LOCK system, theorized by James Scott Bell, which considered plot as something typically based on four elements: *Lead* (which is the protagonist, portrayed before as x), *Objective* (which is reaching something or someone, depicted here as y), *Confrontation* (which is the moment x clashes with w which is stopping him from getting y) and the *Knockout* (which is basically the climax, normally reserved to the confrontation moment, either $>$, $<$; or it's reserved for the end of the narrative, either $=$ or \neq , making it worth remembering for the reader). This conceptualization and simplification of literature brought us to analyze and consider the *lead* in literary journalism, which only by reaching and understanding him could we then reach both the concept of *objective*

and *confrontation*.

However, theorizing the lead in this journalistic genre proved to be something difficult to achieve, since its existence seemed to offer a possible *conflict of interest* in the purpose of the resulting narrative. This problem deepened when the author himself, or at least his ideas and misconceptions, were considered as a *possible lead*. If this proved to be correct then the result could be far from a true account of reality and, in fact, it would be closer to a *point of view of reality surrounded by ideology*. Which,

By laying bare his or her
prejudices, anxieties
or thought processes the
reporter gives us
something firmer and truer

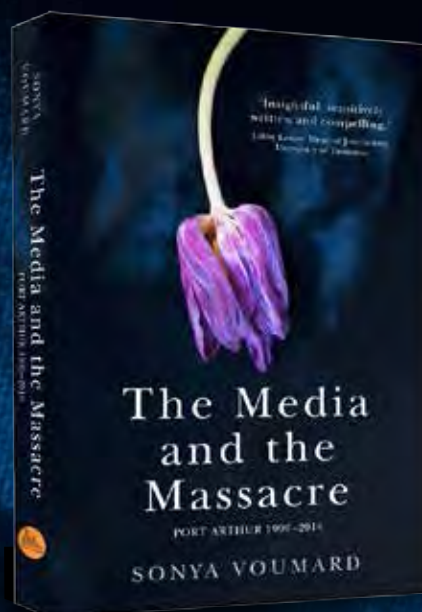
in that case, the writer would effectively be informing whilst also directing the reader towards something close to a *secret agenda*. Such a possibility seemed to suggest that, because of this, literary journalism should not be seen as just a *non-fictional story*, but in fact would be closer to a journalist's tale as being part of the *subject of a non-fictional story*. This brought us to this point where we are now going to consider these observations and suggestions, to further validate or not the implications of such a perception of literary journalism as a whole.

First of all, one should contemplate the suggested possibility that literary journalism seems to be guided by and towards a belief; that is, the belief behind the writer's mind and intentions. Such a thought seems to be validated in one way or another, although it would seem that this assertion is both right and wrong. As was shown here, the voice of a literary

journalist can and does sometimes overexpose itself on a narrative. That being said, we should contemplate the prospect that perhaps it is because of this *over-exposition* that we can conceive the way stories are told in literary journalism, both truly and thoughtfully. In fact, let us consider the following by Norman Sims, since it might open this investigation towards a different outlook: "The liveliness of literary journalism (...) comes from combining this personal engagement with perspectives from sociology and anthropology, memoir writing, fiction, history and standard reporting. (...) Literary journalists are boundary crossers in search of a deeper perspective on our lives and times."¹⁷ Taking this into consideration, could we then reach this *deeper perspective* without the author's engagement and persona? If this much is true, then it would seem that only by understanding this *border crossing*, can we then further comprehend this type of writing.

As Ben Yagoda explains, the potential and possibilities behind literary journalism arise: "By stepping out from the shadows and laying bare his or her prejudices, anxieties, or thought processes the reporter gives us something firmer and truer to hold on to as we come to our own conclusions."¹⁸ This means that the perception that the journalist is *guiding us* towards an assertion can and should be comprehended as *strength*, instead of a *weakness*. But what if the message behind his work is something more than the elements that form a story? What if in literary journalism the *journalist is the message*, by making his voice heard loud and clear over the events narrated? Can we reach a conclusion then if the reporters mind becomes *larger* than the story itself, knocking over our deductions in the process? Ben Yagoda reaffirms this possibility, admitting that: "There is a distinct possibility for abuse here: the reporter's forgetting that he is not the story, just a mean to it. (...) a means to construct a multidimensional and memo-

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The Media and the Massacre:
Port Arthur 1996-2016
Sonya Voumard
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‘Insightful, sensitively written and compelling.’

Libby Lester, Head of Journalism, University of Tasmania

Sonya Voumard's *The Media and the Massacre* is a chilling portrayal of journalism, betrayal, and storytelling surrounding the 1996 Port Arthur massacre. Inspired, in part, by renowned American author Janet Malcolm's famously controversial work *The Journalist and the Murderer*, Voumard's elegant new work of literary non-fiction examines the fascinating theme of 'the writer's treachery'. The author brings to bear her own journalistic experiences, ideas and practices in a riveting inquiry into her profession that is part memoir and part ethical investigation.

One of her case studies is the 2009 book *Born or Bred?* by two prominent journalists—Robert Wainwright and Paola Totaro—about the perpetrator of the Port Arthur massacre, Martin Bryant, and his mother Carleen Bryant. Carleen received an undisclosed legal settlement, over the best-selling book's use of her personal manuscript.

In the lead-up to the 20th anniversary of the Port Arthur massacre, *The Media and the Massacre* explores the nature of journalistic intent and many of the wider moral and social issues of the storytelling surrounding the events and their place in our cultural memory.

‘An unflinching dissection of the relationships between journalists and their subjects – a compelling exposé of journalistic culture.’

John Dale, author of *Huckstepp*



Sonya Voumard is a journalist, author and academic whose work has been widely published in major Australian newspapers, magazines and literary journals. Her first novel *Political Animals*, published in 2008, was inspired by her time as a political correspondent for the Age in Canberra. She has lectured for many years in creative non-fiction and journalism at UTS where she recently graduated with a Doctorate of Creative Arts, which explored the ethics of storytelling. Her most recent works have appeared in Griffith Review and Meanjin. She lives in Sydney.

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orable character (...) the narrative presence has unquestionably given to journalism more than it has taken away."¹⁹ If literary journalism can give its readers a closer and deeper look into reality, then it should be able to break journalistic and literary conventions to serve a narrative purpose (as long as facts and professional ethics are continuously ensured).²⁰

That being said, can we conceive the possibility that literary journalism indeed *does not* follow literary partners; and, therefore, that suggesting a conception and identification of plot or lead could indeed be both inadequate and or misleading? Such a possibility seems to be not far from truth. In fact, it would seem that there is no *clear* objective, confrontation or even knockout power in this journalistic genre as a whole (at least not according to the principles behind the LOCK system); even the lead seems like it is a lost and uncertain concept. What does this mean overall? Well, maybe we should consider the possibility that there is in fact *no plot* in literary journalism, or at least not in the sense that we can find one as we do in most literature. If we suggest plot as a theoretical conception with the purpose of giving a *sense of closure* to a reader, to make him feel engaged in something that originally he had no interest in at all; then plot would serve no purpose in literary journalism for there is no clear need for such things. We could say that the main objective in any journalistic endeavor is to *inform*, to make someone aware of a continuously ever-changing reality. Paradoxically, the main purpose of plot is to ultimately give way to an ending, so that the reader can feel *connected* and *accomplished* after engaging himself with a story. Literature characters tend to live *happily ever after*: we have an adventure with them and then we close the book. After reading something we now know everything we are allowed to know, at least until another book is published.

In literary journalism, however, such a sense of closure is neither possible nor advisable, for there will always be *further* reality to investigate and work on.

We are never truly and fully informed. In a sense, one would not be wrong to consider that a journalist's work is *never done*, while a writer's work can and does indeed come to an end. The subjects of literary journalism and journalism in general are always part of an *unfinished story*. There will always be more to be known, more facts to acquire and more stories to tell. Which means that plot can serve no true purpose because there can be no true *objective* or *knockout* power; there is, or at least there should be, no way to explain

By traversing the classical frontiers
that define journalistic
structure, literary journalism
achieves a
closer depiction of reality

reality in such broad terms as $x > w = y$. Literary journalism is written both by a writer and a journalist, while still being a single individual who naturally has ideas and convictions and it is by admitting this that the result can be a true transcription of real events and real life. Since it is through traversing and meddling with the classical frontiers that define journalistic structure that literary journalism hopes to achieve an even closer depiction of reality. And, for that reason, the result is naturally much closer to reality than non-fiction in general; much closer, one should add, than conventional journalism could ever be. *Where is the writer taking me?* He is taking me towards the facts and truth behind a story, and he is doing so through his persona and writing abilities in hopes of providing us with a closer and more humane look upon reality.

Consider this: if one is reading an individual looking at reality through

and in spite of his own ideologies and misconceptions, are we then not steered forcibly towards his own point view? The fact is that we too are always influenced by our own beliefs and misunderstandings, since we cannot perceive reality in a *non-influenced* point of view. *We* are always there when *we* see something, just like the reporter is always there when he is reporting. Therefore literary journalism is then naturally dependent and co-dependent on the views and voice of the author, bringing us closer to reality with the company of a personal and anthropological voice and mind that evidently has thoughts and ideas. Can there be literature with no writer in it? The author's awareness and persona is always part of literature and literary journalism is no exception in this matter. This happens because this genre is not created with a strict regimen in mind or conceptualized through simple rules that ensure a typical and conventional result; like the inverted pyramid, for example, instilled and forced upon in hopes to castrate creativity and impose a simple and utterly structured result, with no voice or identity. As it is with all literature, literary journalism is no exception in the matter of its intentions *to tell a story*, a non-fictional story one should add, through the voice, mind and eyes of both an individual and a storyteller.

It is by admitting this that we can understand that plot, in this genre, is not necessarily something thought out and used as a way to *convene an end*. Plot, in literary journalism, is there so we can be taken on a journey, so we can follow the path laid before us by the writer; so that we are allowed to relive the story, just as the author sees fit. By telling true stories with a journalistic point of view, but with a novelist's eye (as pointed out by Pedro Rosa Mendes), it is only natural that the resulting narrative is both challenging and rewarding, providing the reader with a different perspective on the true stories told.

This, it would seem, is what is

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literary in literary journalism: the urge to tell a story – a true story, for that matter – which is, at the same, information; given to us through the eyes and mind of a writer and a journalist, providing its readers with a voice of thought, description and rationalization. ♦

ENDNOTES

¹When considering literary journalism, one should take into account the thesis presented by John S. Bak, where he argues that we should stop addressing it as a genre or a form, and should start calling it as a discipline. By doing so, we are both situating it between literature and journalism, while also allowing it to reach a more solid and deserving disciplinary status. As seen in: John S. Bak, "Introduction," in *Literary Journalism Across the Globe*, eds. Bak, John S. and Bill Reynolds. (United States of America: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 18-19.

²Norman Sims. "The Art of Literary Journalism," in *Literary Journalism*, ed. by Norman Sims and Mark Kramer. (United States of America: Ballantine Press, 1995), 18. ³Taken from one of the introductory quotes which opens the book: *Literary Journalism Across the Globe*, edited by John S. Bak, and Bill Reynolds.

⁴John Sutherland. *A Little History of Literature*. (Great Britain: Yale University Press, 2013), 9.

⁵The idea presented of action and plot as being the key part of a narrative – instead of its main characters – is based on a passage of *Poetics* by Aristotle, where the author considers the six most important elements of a story found on a play. Concerning "tragedy" as a type of narrative, he says that we should perceive it not as: "(...) an imitation of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery. (...) Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions—what we do—that we are happy or the reverse. In a play accordingly they do not act in order to portray the Characters; they include the Characters for the sake of the action. So that it is the action in it, i.e. its Fable or Plot, that is the end and purpose of the tragedy; and the end is everywhere the chief thing. Besides this, a tragedy is impossible without action, but there may be one without Character." Aristotle, *Poetics*, 6 (II)/ 1450a(15-25). Last modified October 1, 2004. Accessed November 20, 2015. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6763/6763-h/6763-h.htm>.

⁶Lord Ragan. "Chapter XVI," in *The Hero: a Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama* (New York: Dover, 1956), 173-185.

⁷Sutherland, *A Little History of Literature*, 6.

⁸Mark Kramer. "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," in *Literary Journalism*, edited by Norman Sims and Mark Kramer, 21-34. (United States of America: Ballantine Press, 1995), 34.

⁹Lisa Pollak. "Lisa Pollak: A great story is about what it means to be human." Last modified February 13, 2015. Accessed November 20, 2015. www.youtube.com/watch?v=YD9d21dPEyo.

¹⁰The subject of the "iron core of journalism" is continually investigated along Alex S. Jones book, but finds a deeper analysis on: Alex S. Jones. "Chapter One: The Iron Core," in *Losing the News*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 1-27.

¹¹The quotes presented on this paragraph were taken from: James Scott Bell, *Plot and Structure* (United States of America: Writer's Digest Books, 2004), 10-13.

¹²Both remarks can be found on the online interview: Michael Lewis. "Author Michael Lewis – Serious Jibber-Jabber with Conan O'Brien." Last modified July 21, 2014. Accessed November 20, 2015. <http://teamcoco.com/video/serious-jibber-jabber-michael-lewis>.

¹³Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 7th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹⁴Both quotes come from: Pablo Calvi. "Leila Guerriero and the Uncertain Narrator." In *Literary Journalism Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 122 and 123 (respectively).

¹⁵On this matter, one cannot stop but remember some of the poor and unethical decisions in: Hunter S. Thompson. "Part Two – Chapter 3: Savage Lucy... 'Teeth like Baseballs, Eyes Like Jellied Fire'" in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. (London: Harper Perennial), 109-119.

¹⁶Robert S. Boynton, *The New New Journalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 166.

¹⁷Norman Sims. "The Art of Literary Journalism," in *Literary Journalism*, 19.

¹⁸Ben Yagoda. "Making Facts Dance," in *The Art of Fact*, ed. Ben Yagoda and Kevin Kerrane, 13-16. (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 16.

¹⁹Yagoda, "Making Facts Dance," in *The Art of Fact*, 16.

²⁰In literary journalism one of the ways to break the conventions that tend to characterize dominant journalistic practices, is by using I. This technique is employed by many authors and, as Alma Guillermoprieto considers, there are many advantages: "I write in the first person a lot. The I in my stories is the reader's proxy. My great ambition is to take readers out of their comfort zones and put them in positions of discomfort. I want them to see and smell and taste and touch and hear the things that I did in their place as the reporter. While out reporting, I stage a little theater in my mind." Alma Guillermoprieto. "Telling the Story, Telling the Truth," in *Telling True Stories*, ed. Mark Kramer and Wendy Call. (United States of America: Penguin Books, 2007), 157.

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PANEL CALL ON WOMEN AND PERIODICAL CULTURE

The following is a call for proposals for a panel sponsored by the Re-search Society for American Periodicals (RSAP) and the Network of American Periodical Studies (NAPS: UK). As a follow-up to successful panels at the recent American Literature Association (ALA) conference in San Francisco on "Woman Thinking: Public Intellectualism in U.S. Periodical Culture," proposals are sought on the topic "Woman Thinking Deuxième Partie : Border Crossing and Public Intellectualism in U.S. Periodical Culture" for the Society for the Study of American Women Writers 2017 conference, to be held 5-8 July 2017 at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France. In keeping with the conference theme of "border crossing(s)," papers that examine American women periodical writers involved in cross-cultural exchanges are particularly welcome. For more information, please contact Sue Currell at <S.Currell@sussex.ac.uk>.

SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT FOR ANTISEMITISM STUDIES

The editor of *Antisemitism Studies* welcomes the submission of manuscripts that will contribute to the scholarly study of antisemitism. The journal will consider articles on specific antisemitic episodes, and their historical significance and impact on society, as well as more thematic and theoretical studies of the phenomenon. Authors may work from any disciplinary perspective, address any cultural, national, or religious context, and study any period of history, including the present. We are particularly interested in articles that appeal to a broad international audience of scholars in the humanities and social sciences. For detailed information on manuscript preparation and to sign up to our email list please visit <<http://antisemitismstudies.com>>. Manuscripts should be submitted via the Indiana University Press website, <<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/ant/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions>>. Book reviews are generally solicited by the editor; however, suggestions for possible book reviews are welcome. For more information about the journal and its editorial requirements, please contact Catherine Chatterley at <antisemitismstudies@icloud.com>.

HOUSTON'S QUIET REVOLUTION

A modern settlement house movement is brewing in Texas.

By Michael Berryhill, Texas Southern University (U.S.A.)

Not far from George Bush International Airport, on Houston's north side, the neighborhood of East Aldine is taking charge of itself. Home to 53,000 people living in 15 square miles, East Aldine is a hole in the donut. Wealthier areas nearby have been annexed by the sprawling city, but this land remains unincorporated. The residential streets are lined with ditches instead of curbs and storm



INVESTIGATIVE
JOURNALISM

sewers, and most households rely on septic tanks and wells. Racially and economically isolated, the neighborhood is 78 percent Hispanic and 12 percent Mexican-American.

Two-thirds speak Spanish

primarily, half lack a high school diploma, and only 7 percent have a college degree. Forty percent of households make less than \$25,000 annually.¹

At its center lies an amenity that is scarce in Houston: 500 acres of public space. Densely wooded Keith-Weiss Park, donated by a philanthropist, is valued by city planners mainly for its role in flood control. The park's detention ponds store water that overflows Halls Bayou after heavy rains, and the city has also built sports fields and a small playground. But that is the end of Houston's involvement in East Aldine. The city wants no part of a fringe neighborhood that would need expensive municipal services - water, sewerage, trash collection, and police and fire protection. Not unless it is rich. (Master-planned Kingwood was annexed over residents' objections despite the fact that

it's twice as far from downtown.)

And yet if the people of East Aldine feel spurned by city government, they don't show it. Rather than waiting for Houston's embrace, they are organizing as a community to meet their own needs. Lately they have been working with Neighborhood Centers Inc., a nonprofit group that has quietly backed Houston's poor for more than a hundred years. Led by director Angela Blanchard, Neighborhood Centers has grown into one of the country's largest nonprofits, with 1200

Neighborhood
Centers
provide core social
services in the
nation's fourth largest city

employees and annual expenditures of \$280 million.

HOUSTON: EL CIVICS

With a budget one-twentieth of the size of Houston government itself, Neighborhood Centers provides core social services in the nation's fourth largest city. Unlike agencies focused on a single mission, Neighborhood Centers addresses multiple needs of the poor, offering education, job training, child care, financial counseling, housing advice, health clinics, and legal guidance. Among the people who need these services the most are Houston's immigrants. It's been a rough year for immigrants in the United States. Donald Trump set the tone last summer when he kicked off his presidential campaign by casually slandering Mexican immigrants as drug runners, rapists, and scabs who should be thrown out of the country; later his target shifted to Muslims. Republican candidates fought

over who most vehemently opposes a path to citizenship (or "amnesty") for undocumented migrants, with Houston's Ted Cruz taking the hardest line.

Locally, the climate is friendlier. Immigrants boost the Houston economy, and business leaders almost unanimously favor immigration reform. Still, the city is segregated by race and income. The census map looks like a broken mirror, with white, black, and Hispanic shards radiating from the center. Immigrants face challenges including unequal access to affordable housing, education, healthcare, and high-paying jobs. What they have going for them is enterprise and ambition. Through Neighborhood Centers, Blanchard has assembled a coalition of business owners, political leaders, churches, and foundations who share her vision of empowering people through community education and shared services. It's a force that Brookings Institution analysts Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley have called a "metropolitan revolution."² They argue that groups like Neighborhood Centers are leading the way with local reforms where large-scale government interventions have failed.

Blanchard's work has brought her to the White House. She travels to conferences and lectures internationally. Neighborhood Centers was profiled in *The New York Times* by David Kirp, a public policy professor at UC Berkeley; and in *CityLab* and *The National Journal*. Yet somehow Blanchard flies under the radar of the Texas news media. Here she is better known to business leaders for her board seat on the Greater Houston Partnership than to the general public. I asked Kirp if anybody else in the country is doing comparable work. No, he said. "You've got to go to Bangladesh to find programs like this."

It's tempting to say that East Aldine is Angela Blanchard's next project, but that would be misleading. *She is East Aldine's next project.* Neighborhood Centers preaches a gospel called appreciative

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inquiry. Instead of barging into a community and telling residents what to fix, Blanchard's organizers listen. They identify local leaders and ask what they can do to help. While many nonprofits talk about bottom-up organizing, this one takes it to another level. "We are so fanatical about treating people with respect," Blanchard said. "It is embedded in the culture. We train on it. We teach other people."

"We go where we're invited" is their creed, and they do not assume that because a neighborhood is failing, so are its residents. People are seen as a resource. "Oil and gas are not the fuel Houston runs on," Blanchard told me. "People are the fuel. People and their aspirations." Those aspirations are the same in cities around the world. People want a home, a decent income, a better future for their children. They want a chance to be part of something larger. "The biggest hunger is to matter, to belong, to contribute," Blanchard said. "To answer the question: 'Is there a place for me in the world?'"

In the United States that question has never been harder to answer. Inequality has risen dangerously since the 1970s and is now the highest since the Gilded Age. Governments at every level fail to provide basic social services, let alone a sense of belonging. As Blanchard told me, the "War on Poverty" became a war on poor neighborhoods, which became a war on poor people. She believes that Houston, with its robust economy, should set an example for the nation. "It's not right that 500,000 people in the region work full time and live at or below poverty," she said. "That's not the number of children living in poverty. That's full-time, working adults."

Neighborhood Centers is trying to help them. A map of its activities includes 67 counties across East Texas: north to Tyler and Longview, south to Corpus Christi, and west to rural counties near Austin. But the bulk of its work takes place in the Houston metro area, comprising eight counties and 6.5 million people. Here it manages twenty-one Head Start facilities

and five charter schools, eleven workforce career offices, twenty senior service centers, and an adult day center for people with dementia.

At the heart of it all are the five "Neighborhood Centers" that give the organization its name. They help community members gain business and computer skills, pass the GED, find jobs, access child care, learn English as a second language, file taxes, study for citizenship exams, and negotiate the complexities of immigration law. Two of the centers have credit

It's the biggest test
yet for an
organization that has achieved
tremendous success
as a social service provider

unions where members can get a loan for a secondhand car (a critical purchase for any Houstonian who wants to work). The centers are clean, welcoming, comfortable places with couches in the waiting areas and books for children to check out.

The next project on the horizon is the East Aldine Town Center, which is more ambitious than anything the organization has attempted. On a 61-acre site, Neighborhood Centers is working with civic partners to build commercial office and retail spaces, a community college branch, an outdoor community theater, a major grocery store, a sheriff's office, and a medical clinic. Green space and walking trails will link pedestrians to Keith-Weiss Park. Construction is expected to begin this fall. It's the biggest test yet for an organization that has achieved tremendous success as a social service provider. Can it be a city-builder at a larger scale?

An entire chapter of *The Metropol-*

itan Revolution is devoted to Neighborhood Centers' work, under the title "Houston: El Civics." The authors present the wonky details of how Blanchard has taken "rigid, compartmentalized, regulation-encrusted funding streams and braid[ed] them together." The lesson is clear. The revolution will not be led by grassroots collectives running on poster paint and sweat equity. It will be led by professional nonprofits that transform private and public dollars into community assets. When that book was researched, Neighborhood Centers had received "grants or contracts from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Treasury and Energy, the City of Houston and more than 500 private foundations, corporations and individuals." The authors reported, "Keeping track of the dollars and the accountability requirements requires some forty separate database systems."³

In 1986, when Blanchard joined Neighborhood Centers as a finance officer, the budget was \$7 million. Two decades ago, when she was promoted to president and CEO, it was \$40 million. Now it is closing in on \$300 million. And as the organization grows, it has become even more focused on its goal of building inclusive communities. "Having a place in the world is much more than the physical, built environment," Blanchard said. "It's not who's *here*, it's who's *welcome here* that defines a neighborhood, a city, a country."

THE \$7 BILLION IMMIGRANT ECONOMY

I'd argue that there is no better place in North America than Houston to pursue a new way of life. While northern cities such as Cleveland and Detroit have contracted, the Houston area is growing phenomenally, from 4.7 million people in 2000 to 6.3 million in 2013.⁴ Much of that growth comes from foreign-born immigrants, who make up 22 percent of the population. (Among major cities, only Los Angeles and

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Miami have a larger share.)⁵

What makes this city a magnet for immigration, both domestic and international, is an abundance of jobs. Nearly all major oil and gas exploration and production companies have headquarters or subsidiaries here, along with hundreds of firms engaged in renewable energy, biodiesel and chemical production, pipeline transportation, global shipping international finance, and small manufacturing. In the first dozen years of the century, the Houston metro led the nation by adding 530,000 jobs.⁶ And despite the decline in oil prices, there is still demand for workers with what are called “middle skills”: carpenters, welders, electricians, plumbers. Not a restaurant meal gets served or a hotel room cleaned without immigrant labor, and most new homes are built by immigrant subcontractors.

And yet despite healthy job growth, Houston’s economic mobility is below average.⁷ Texas ranks near the bottom of states in caring for poor children, the mentally ill, and the disabled.⁸ Eva Deluna, a budget analyst at the nonprofit Center for Public Policy Priorities, said, “Texas is always low in state spending. We do very little, for very few people.”

One of the great mysteries of American politics is that anyone regards immigrants as a drag on public welfare. In truth, nobody moves to Houston for the social safety net, which barely exists. Jobs are the safety net. Stan Marek understands the immigrant dream as well as anybody. His father and uncles emigrated from Czechoslovakia and founded Marek Construction shortly after World War II, and he

worked his way up from union carpenter to owner. Now it’s one of the biggest firms in Houston, but Marek can’t find enough skilled workers. He is an outspoken advocate for immigration reform, on moral as well as economic grounds.

Several years ago his company

documented immigrants in the workforce. Middlemen can charge the main contractor \$18 an hour and pay laborers \$10 an hour, with no health insurance, no retirement or disability benefits, and no workers’ compensation insurance. (Unlike other states, Texas does not require companies to

join the state plan.) Often there is little job training and minimal safety measures. If workers fall off a scaffold because there is no railing, they are taken to emergency rooms for treatment, and the county picks up the tab. If they die in a workplace accident, their families are paid off for as little as \$10,000. Undocumented relatives are afraid to complain.

“It’s a social justice issue,” Marek said. “I’m a Catholic and it’s not right. It’s about safety. It’s criminal, but it happens every day.” He observed that nannies, home care workers, janitors, and others are also misclassified as contractors for low wages and

no benefits. “At some point we’re going to run out of labor,” he said. “We’re not attracting young people into the trades.” Marek is trying to do something about it. He wants people to have careers in construction, not just jobs. His company started a year-long training program that matches new workers with coaches who mentor them in the construction trades.

At a graduation ceremony I attended last year, the audience was served a sit-down dinner of Mexican food, and then 22 young men and women were summoned up front to receive plaques recognizing them as skilled craftspeople. About half of the graduates had Hispanic



AN IMMIGRANT FROM SAN LUIS POTOSI, MEXICO, GRAZES SHEEP AND GOATS ALONG A BAYOU IN EAST AIDINE, TEXAS.
[MICHAEL STRAVATO PHOTO FOR PLACES JOURNAL]

was audited by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Marek had to dismiss workers whose documents didn’t pass muster. “We had a thousand people, and we had all their I-9s in order,” he said, “but we had 150 people whose names didn’t match their Social Security numbers.” He called Houston’s foremost immigration lawyer, Charles Foster, for advice. “He told me, ‘You can go to jail or you can fire them.’”

So Marek let go a tenth of his workers. But they were not deported, he said. They simply went to other construction firms - his competitors - where they worked off the books, classified as subcontractors rather than employees. Subcontracting is the key to keeping un-

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surnames. Marek regards his company as a family, and he wants his employees to feel they are entering a lifelong relationship. Not surprisingly, he also serves on the board of Neighborhood Centers.

Although he identifies as a Republican, Marek voted for Barack Obama in 2012 after he heard Mitt Romney support an immigration policy of self deportation. When Congress failed to act on a reform bill in 2013, Marek hoped for executive action. He strongly supports the Obama initiative known as Deferred Action for Parents of Americans, which would help undocumented parents of American-born children obtain legal status. The executive action could affect as many as 3.6 million of the nation's 11 million undocumented immigrants, but it has been frozen by court order, pending the outcome of a lawsuit filed by Texas and 25 other states. Lawmakers have failed to act on broader reforms, perhaps spooked by former House leader Eric Cantor's primary loss to a Tea Party opponent.⁹

The business case for immigration reform is clear. According to a study by the Greater Houston Partnership, an estimated 132,000 undocumented workers in the area earned \$7 billion in 2008. If they were employed on the books and paid their full share of Social Security, Medicare, unemployment, and federal income taxes, they would have added \$1.4 billion in state and federal revenue.¹⁰ That's not counting the multiplier effects of economic growth. A more recent study estimates that the undocumented workforce generates a net 3.3 million jobs and a net \$33 billion in government revenue statewide.¹¹ Of course, undocumented immigrants pay state and city sales tax at the rate of 8.25 cents on the dollar, and they pay property taxes indirectly through their rent. Some pay income tax, hoping that a clean record with the IRS will help them gain legal status when Congress comes to its senses. Nevertheless, a lot of public money is falling through the cracks. Immigration reform would not only ease legal risks for employers but would provide revenue to cover the social

cost of population growth.

Undocumented workers and their families do place a burden on the health-care system, but it's not drastic. The former head of county hospitals told a reporter, "The undocumented population is a lot healthier than the average citizen of Harris County. They're younger. They're working hard jobs. When they're in our hospitals or clinics, they're not getting paid. So it's not they're coming to this country for health care. They're out there working. Eighty percent of the volume of us undocumented

The undocumented workforce
generates 3.3 million
jobs and a net \$33 billion in
government
revenue statewide

is women and children."¹²

He complained that while anybody can buy home and car insurance, the Affordable Care Act does not allow undocumented people to purchase medical insurance, leaving them with few options for pregnancy and childbirth. Hospitals are further burdened because Texas, along with 21 other Republican-led states, has refused to accept billions of dollars of Medicaid money under the Affordable Care Act. Texas newspaper columnist Dave McNeeley calls Governor Greg Abbott the \$94 billion man, for that's how much money the state is turning down during over the next ten years.¹³

With so many Texan business and union leaders and Republican politicians supporting immigration reform, it's surprising the state hasn't been able to create change at the national level. Houston's Charles Foster, the immigration lawyer Marek consulted, has advised three

presidents (George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama) and presidential candidate Jeb Bush. Foster said he had an immigration reform policy ready to launch early in George W. Bush's first term, but the 9/11 attacks stopped it. By the time Bush was ready to try again, he had made the mistake of trying to privatize Social Security and didn't have enough political muscle to advance a bipartisan bill. Then the recession hit, and the Tea Party backlash prevented congressional action under Obama. After Romney's defeat, the "adults" in the Senate (as Foster called them) drew up a reform bill that would pass the House if only the speaker would put it up for a vote, but that never happened. Reform will have to wait for a new administration.

THE PATH TO ENFRANCHISEMENT

South of the Houston Ship Channel, just beyond the glow of the petrochemical complex, is the working-class suburb of Pasadena. Modest brick houses and neat lawns back up against commercial streets lined with laundromats and Mexican meat markets. The Cleveland-Ripley Neighborhood Center - one of the five flagships for Blanchard's organization - is located next door to a temp agency, across the street from a domestic violence shelter and a large Latino church.

I drove out to Cleveland-Ripley to meet Miguel Hernandez, who showed up in work clothes: a red shirt with metal snaps that bore the Shell logo and yellow reflective strips. He gestured at the building, which serves as a hub for the community. "This is like a one-stop shop," he said. "Learn English, get your GED, find legal advice, register to vote, take citizenship classes."

Hernandez embodies the promise of Neighborhood Centers. When he arrived in Houston as a teenager, he was a penniless laborer who couldn't speak English. Now 47, he has three associate

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degrees and is pursuing a bachelor's. It's not enough to get young people a GED, he said. That's a ticket to flipping burgers. "You've got to get them to the community colleges. With a \$9,000 degree, you can go out and make \$80,000 a year."

He emigrated in 1986 from Zaragoza, Mexico, a small town 60 miles from the border city of Eagle Pass. His parents were teachers, but there was no work for him. So he went to find a job in Texas, following the steps of his grandfather, who had left Mexico during the revolution of 1910 and worked at the Texaco refinery in Port Arthur. "I didn't have any skills," he said. "I didn't speak English. I worked a day here and a day there. But after six months I got on as a laborer with Brown & Root at the Exxon plant in Baytown."

He took night classes in English at Lee Community College and earned a certificate in pipefitting. Later degrees triggered promotions to foreman and manager. In 2006, he got a job at the massive, 1,500-acre Shell plant only a few miles from his home. The company dock is always busy. Something like 2,000 ships a year unload there, he said. He is working on a B.S. in industrial technology at Lamar University in Beaumont. Many classes are online so he doesn't have to drive. "My degree is loaded with management skills," he said. "I analyze data, create a report with data, and search out the waste. We're working on continuous improvement. Every class I take I bring back skills for what I am doing at work."

With his employer's blessing, Hernandez volunteers for the Economic Alliance Houston Port Region. He speaks at student assemblies, proselytizing about the demand for middle-skill workers. Last year he visited twenty middle schools, aiming to get young students interested in science, engineering, and technology at an early age.

"I was surprised that parents and students don't know there are opportunities out here," he said. The decline in oil prices has hurt "upstream" industry jobs like oil drilling, but technical jobs are

still plentiful on the "downstream" end, where oil and gas are turned into final products. As Baby Boomers retire, industry observers anticipate 300,000 openings for mechanics, electricians, pipefitters, welders, process technicians, and other skilled jobs that do not require a four-year college degree.¹⁴ "I tell people if there's one place where you can follow the American dream, this is it," he said.

Hernandez married his wife, Maria, when they were 22, and she, too, worked her way up, from bank teller to

He wants to get kids
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for the good-paying jobs

officer to manager. To help others follow their dreams, they have set up a \$10,000 scholarship at Lee College. "We want to encourage the folks coming behind us," he said. "My goal is to create one [scholarship] every year." He wants to get kids directly into junior colleges, where they can go for the good-paying jobs, the sooner the better. And then he said something that sounded like Angela Blanchard: "If you ask the right question, you can build change. Ask what is working well. You create change just by listening."

**A MODERN SETTLEMENT
HOUSE MOVEMENT**

Many people distrust government solutions in this laissez-faire city, which is perhaps one reason Neighborhood Centers has grown so rapidly. Blanchard shared her theory about how Houston leaders think: "Run like hell in your own lane. Make your institutions effective, profitable,

make sure you deliver. We expect that. We want that."

Neighborhood Centers is funded by a mix of public and private sources and holds itself rigorously accountable for the money it spends. It follows government rules (Head Start alone has 1800 of them, Blanchard said) but does not mistake itself for a bureaucratic agency. With governments at all levels hobbled by narrow mandates and political constraints, there is an opening for this private, entrepreneurial model that emphasizes communication, networking, and leveraging resources.

The organization started small. It was founded in 1907 as the Houston Settlement Association, in a dilapidated neighborhood near the Port of Houston, by a schoolteacher who was alarmed by children's living conditions. During the next half century, the association built three settlement houses across the city to serve immigrants and other disadvantaged people. Always it relied on the work of volunteers as well as paid staff. During the 1960s and '70s, the houses nurtured the careers of black and Latino activists, who became state representatives and city council members and congressional representatives.

Today, the organization's most visible success is a cluster of brightly painted buildings in Gulfton, the dense southwest Houston neighborhood. The Gulfton apartments sprang up in the 1970s to accommodate young people pouring into the area for energy-related jobs. Developers built 5,000 apartments with access to swimming pools and workout rooms, and they promised a fast-paced, single adult lifestyle. When the oil boom ended in the early 1980s, the swinging singles left, and immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and East Asia crowded into the buildings. The newspapers printed lurid stories of gang activity, drug dealing, and prostitution that gave the neighborhood its nickname, the "Gulfton Ghetto."¹⁵

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Blanchard figured there was more to the story. In 2003, her staff began getting to know Gulfton residents and found a neighborhood filled with people who wanted to work and would strive to succeed. She described it as Houston's Ellis Island (although New York's Lower East Side might be a better comparison) and said that immigrants appreciate the population density because it instills a sense of community. They need to see people like themselves.

Neighborhood Centers organizers began their process of appreciative inquiry, talking to residents and looking for community leaders. They discovered a grocery store where immigrants were buying spices their mothers had used back home. The storekeeper would even special-order items that neighbors requested. So, Blanchard said, "We go right to meet this woman. When we meet her, we discover she's done this for everybody. She is the person they go to if they want to find out about Little League and a bus stop. She's the de facto community leader." She is not just selling spices, she is handing out information.

Blanchard continued: "We ask her who else is like her, and she gives us four names. That's how we found the woman in Napoleon Square Apartments who was operating a completely illegal grocery store. Most of the families were lucky to have one car that took the wage earner to work, so you have to put a baby on your hip and walk through some unsavory streets to the neighborhood store. When [this woman] had use of the family car, she drove to a big-box store and bought things that people needed all the time and stocked them in her apartment. What the government would do would be to put her out of business. Institutional folk say, 'Well, it really doesn't matter because a story like that is not scalable, replicable.' I can't even talk about that without using four-letter words. Her store was the exact scale that fit that community's needs. We're not going to tell her what she is doing is breaking the law. We say to her, 'Look, let us help you

make this legit.'"

Before long, the organizers found other enterprising residents. For example, some were selling food that they cooked in home kitchens. "We said, 'Great, let's get you a certificate,'" Blanchard said. "And when we build this community center, we're going to build a commercial kitchen, and you can rent it whenever you want. And if you can't afford to rent it, you can teach a class."

In 2010, the \$20 million Baker-Ripley Center opened in the heart of the Gulfton on the site of an abandoned nursing home. The complex features a child-care center, a tax center, a library, an arts-and-craft center, a clothing re-sale shop, a credit union, a commercial kitchen,

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and a welcome office. Neighborhood Centers also operates both a Head Start school and the Promise School, a state-funded charter school that educates 300 students in grades K-5. Most are the children of immigrants; they speak 18 different languages. When the first graders visit the neighborhood center, they see the pennants of local and regional colleges: Baylor, Rice, A&M, Sam Houston State, and Stephen F. Austin hanging on the walls. The seeds of higher education are planted early.

At the re-sale shop, community members learn basic business skills by conducting inventory, making sales, and running cash registers. At the credit union, families can open savings and checking accounts and get basic loans, circumventing



ANGELA BLANCHARD

the predatory lenders who charge high interest rates. Often the most important loan is one that helps buy a used family car or a commercial vehicle; the credit union has even financed dump trucks. Many workers are paid in cash, and the center helps them get a tax ID Number. The IRS wants your money, one of the officers told me, even if you are not a citizen. By offering free tax help, Neighborhood Centers puts money in the pockets of its members, whose average income is just over \$26,000. The credit union urges people to save their tax refunds. It will pay \$250 to families who keep \$1,000 in savings for a year.

That infrastructure supports people like Santos Valasquez, who told me his life story. Now 28, he left Guatemala for Houston as a teenager. His brother taught him restaurant work. He saved \$1,500 for a course to learn English, and he sends home money to support four brothers and three sisters. He also helps raise two nephews who are in high school near Gulfton. Through the Baker-Ripley Center he has continued his education. He would like to get a business degree and own a restaurant or store. "There's no end to learning," he told me. "I feel so proud of myself. I just want to do the right thing in life."

**"THERE'S A WAY OF LIFE,
AND YOU WANT IT"**

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I sat down with Angela Blanchard last year at a coffee shop in the Third Ward, a historically black neighborhood about two miles from her house. She had walked there to meet me, so I brought up the concern of some self-appointed urban advocates who want to redesign Houston to make it “walkable.”

She laughed: “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to roll my eyes, but everyone is trying to create these precious neighborhoods. I remember being at a conference and someone said the thing we need to do with poor neighborhoods is make them walkable. I thought this was absolutely hilarious. If you’re in a poor neighborhood, your neighborhood is walkable. It might not be a nice walk or a fun walk, but you walk. ... I actually love Houston for its total, messy, sprawling randomness. I get invited to conferences where people talk about Houston with frowns on their faces. People haven’t been able to figure out our city and how to make it smart and precious like other cities that no one can afford to live in. My biggest concern for this city is that it remains a place where you can start at the bottom and work your way up. Where it’s a good city to begin in, and where if you have a dream and water it with hard work, it amounts to something.”

Blanchard grew up in Beaumont, 90 miles east of Houston, in a three bedroom bungalow full of bunk beds. Her parents had eight children by the time they were 30, and the family ran a small print shop in the dining room. Her dad had grown up in an orphanage in Louisiana, and her mother had lived through what Blanchard calls “the very definition of Southern poverty: alcoholism, violence, abuse.” Never having had much parenting themselves, they made it up as they went. “We all grew up together,” Blanchard said. “My mom raised me a little while, and I raised her a little while, and we got through it.

By the time she was a teenager, she wanted out of Beaumont. “My memory is of the little house next to Railroad Avenue and thinking, ‘Is there a way out

of here? Is this it? Is this going to be my view the rest of my life?’” She escaped to Minneapolis-St. Paul, where she worked as a teacher’s aide helping disadvantaged children. She wasn’t sure that she was smart enough to go to college, but her job training required her to write a paper for an education professor at the University of Minnesota. He summoned her to his office and urged her to go to graduate school. She asked him if she didn’t have to get an undergraduate degree first. He said, “You have to go to college *now*.”

Her mother
had lived through the
very definition
of Southern poverty: alcoholism,
violence, abuse

Studying social work at the University of Texas, she discovered the research of Virginia Satir, a therapist who studied family systems and group dynamics: “How when you change one part of a family, it affects another part,” as Blanchard put it. You can see that influence in her work today. During her final year, she ran out of money. Her parents offered to help if she would move back to Beaumont, so she transferred to Lamar University. She decided to switch tracks and get a degree in business. “I had spent a lot of time hearing people saying things were not in the budget,” she said, “and I thought I needed to get to the bottom of how the business side of things gets run.”

For a couple of years she worked at a major accounting firm. She laughs about that job now, but it led to her career at Neighborhood Centers. And her instincts were right. To build a sustainable nonprofit, she had to run it like a business.

That means keeping overhead costs low. Although the five community centers are the heart and soul of the organization, their combined operating budget is less than \$10 million a year. The vast majority of funding - \$263 million, according to the 2013-14 annual report - comes from government grants and goes directly into programs like education and job training. For example, nearly \$190 million comes from the state’s Workforce Development Boards: the public-private boards, made up of government officials and business leaders, that are responsible for allocating state and federal tax money for job training. Workforce grants have been vital to Neighborhood Centers’ success.

“It’s such a flat structure,” said Claudia Vasquez, senior vice president for programs and superintendent of the organization’s schools. “That keeps the costs low. Many times when organizations do what they think they need to be doing - marketing, publicity - they spend a lot of money. We turn the engagement inside out. If we listen to the folks, they do the marketing.”

A former teacher and principal, Vasquez is one of a handful of top executives who manage the Neighborhood Centers. She met Blanchard while working for former mayor Bill White on the Hurricane Ike recovery, and she was immediately impressed by the organization’s lean structure. “We can be big and we can be small,” she said. “We’re efficient. After 108 years, we’ve got it down. Every dollar we raise we try to put it right back into the community.”

That flat structure, highly dependent on grants, also means that there are no guarantees from one funding cycle to the next. To keep the public money flowing, Neighborhood Centers has to pass rigorous government audits. And Blanchard hustles for funding every year, supplementing the federal and state grants with gifts from individual and foundations. She would like to build a significant

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endowment, greater than the \$30 million on hand. She read that the Houston Grand Opera exceeded its fundraising goals, and she admitted to being frustrated that community centers do not have the same status as cultural institutions. "We would never think of not endowing Rice or Baylor or [the famous cancer center] M.D. Anderson," she said. "I don't know if I will live to see Neighborhood Centers endowed in that way."

Still, Blanchard said, there are plenty of business leaders in the city who remember what it's like to be poor. They seem to understand Neighborhood Centers better than folks who were born with money. "Houston," she said, "is built for work ... San Francisco is like one-night stand. You had a fling. But Houston is a long-term proposition. I love this city because I got to contribute here. That's a different kind of love. When you feel that you can leave something in a city of yourself, of things you care about, that's pretty strong stuff."

While Blanchard's staff regards her as a visionary, she insists she is not a one-off and she is not a hero. Her principles are embedded in the culture and practices of an organization that may last another hundred years. She doesn't know what the next wave of immigration will bring. Economic migrants, climate refugees, asylum seekers. Hondurans, Indonesians, or Syrians. But she knows they will be looking for a place in the world. She identifies with that struggle because she knows what it's like to build from scratch, with nothing but her imagination and tenacity: "Not done it, not seen it, didn't live it, but believe it's possible, and just work at it every day. And that's the basic immigrant story. That's everybody's story whether you're crossing the tracks or the river or the ocean. You know on the other side there's a way of life, and you want it."

**BREAKING GROUND IN
EAST ALDINE**

The American dream is a shape-shifting thing. Some imagine that it looks like The

Woodlands, a master-planned community a half hour north of Houston on Interstate 45. With big brick homes on standard lots, perfectly situated shopping centers, and broad parkways running past artificial lakes and canals, The Woodlands bills itself as a sanctuary within a native forest. Major corporations have built their headquarters here, and median household income is close to \$100,000. Someday it, too, may be annexed by Houston.

But the American dream is no less strong in East Aldine, with its small

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businesses and trailer parks on ditch-lined streets, bright with bougainvillea and towering hibiscus, shaded by banana trees and other semi-tropical foliage. Two generations of immigrant families live together in starter homes on deep lots. Their long backyards, perfect for soccer games, border tire shops and repair garages. Younger generations leave home, then come back and build bigger houses. There is no zoning here, no deed restrictions. One family parks a taco truck on their lot. They pour a concrete slab and set down tables and chairs, build a roof over the tables, string up Christmas lights. Another family has started a business reselling wood pallets, stacked two stories high in the back. Trucks rumble into the yard of a cement mixing company where a garden sprinkler keeps the dust down. East Aldine may seem chaotic and poor and an unlikely place for the American dream, but it's not.

People who grow up here love

this place. At a community meeting led by Neighborhood Centers, a young man working on his GED declares that he wants to become a certified welder and put down roots. A woman who runs a beauty salon says, "I could have opened my business in The Woodlands, but my heart is here, in the Aldine area. I wanted my business to prosper in the community, with the community."

Dozens of shops line Aldine Mail Route, the four-lane country road that is the main thoroughfare: Taco la Bala, Pizza Patron, Speed X Check Cashing, Flat Tire, Cricket Phone, Cash America, Metro PCS, Title Loan Services, Family Dollar, Scrap Metal, Supermercado with Western Union. Muffler shops, pawn shops, tortillerias, small churches in metal buildings. Car insurance starting at \$29 a month. *No license, no credit check, no bank account, no problem.* Mattresses and beds and children's bicycles stacked in the open air by the side of the road. At Alma Latina Seafood & Taqueria, two dozen people sit for lunch at one long table. The waitresses bring platters with pineapples sliced in half and filled with boiled shrimp. Alma Latina, *Latin soul*. This, too, is the American dream.

The Woodlands is where you buy your way into the dream. You announce your wealth and send your kids to private school and leave the problems of the city for someone else to solve. East Aldine is a place you are born into, or drawn to. You work your way up but not out. The public



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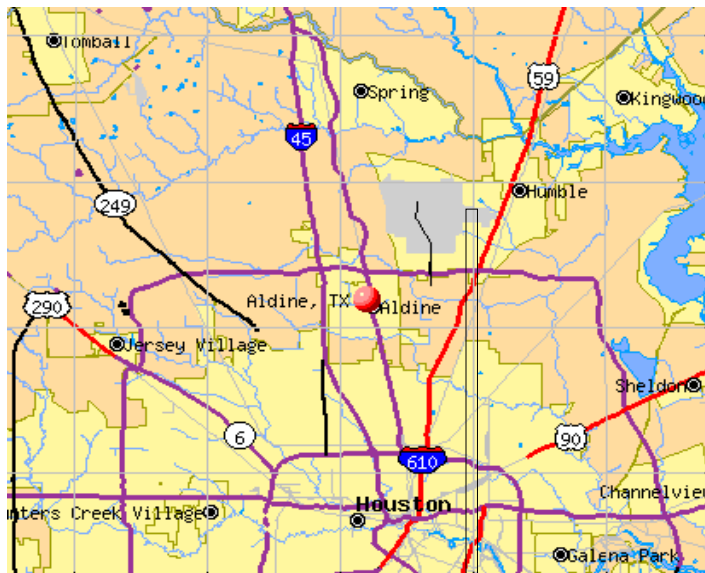
schools are a source of pride and community development. Students graduate and come back to teach. People help themselves and others. Nine volunteers serve on the board of directors of the East Aldine Management District, established in 2001, which is the closest thing to a government here. Funded by a one-cent sales tax, the district operates on an annual budget of \$3.5 million. It works with the county to improve roads, public transportation, and policing. The major focus now is a \$31 million water and sewer master plan, half funded through county, state, and federal agencies. That's a step in the right direction, but the area needs more than \$200 million in water and sewer improvements overall. As a former board member wrote: "If there's ever going to be any improvements here, we're going to have to do it ourselves."¹⁶

When Neighborhood Centers began working with the community in 2013, organizers found a level of enthusiasm they had never seen before. They interviewed residents about what made them proud to live in East Aldine, and they identified a network of community leaders. Out of those conversations came the vision for a town center on the 61-acre

lot on Aldine Mail Route, backing up to the big city park. Neighborhood Centers created a bubble diagram, the *Aldine Voices Report*, that describes the network of ideas that emerged from the two-year process of appreciative inquiry. They've mapped dozens of concepts and relationships, and Blanchard hopes to engage Google engineers to refine the visualization. She doesn't care about ribbon cuttings. She cares about human capital. The fanciest community center in the world means nothing if you don't identify the structural

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relationships that can sustain it.



Neighborhood Centers has committed \$20 million for the East Aldine Town Center, and when I met Blanchard last summer she seemed genuinely worried about meeting the target. But Houston donors came through, even as the oil economy wilted. Now the project is fully funded and on track to break ground this fall. The announcement came in February at a fundraising lun-

cheon attended by 800 people at a downtown hotel. A gigantic screen, nearly as wide as the ballroom, thanked Houston's biggest corporations, banks, and law firms, and prominent philanthropists.

The room buzzed about keynote speaker Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation, which has recently consolidated its grant-making programs to focus on combating inequality. Walker grew up in a shotgun house a few miles down the highway from Angela Blanchard's hometown of Beaumont, and he attended one of the state's first Head Start programs in 1965. With a strong education, he rose out of poverty to lead an institution responsible for half a billion dollars in annual grant-making. That morning he had taken a tour of the Baker-Ripley Center in Gulfton.

Armando Walle, the young state representative from East Aldine, also addressed the donors. He was raised in the neighborhood, the oldest of five children. When he was 13, he said, his father went to prison, and so he had to grow up fast. He graduated from the Aldine school district, attended the University of Houston, and worked for a U.S. Congressman. In 2008 he ran for state representative in the Democratic primary against a longstanding incumbent and out-campaigned him by walking door-to-door.¹⁷ Four years ago, he approached Blanchard with a folder full of maps and data, and he asked her to talk to the people in his district. The conversation hasn't stopped since.

When the new facility opens, East Aldine - that hole in the donut - will have its own center of gravity. Blanchard reminded the audience that the first gift for the East Aldine Town Center came from the community itself, which provided the land on which to build.

Of course, entrenched inequality does not reverse itself overnight. For Houston's transformation to be more than superficial, it will need to encompass the entire region, from Pasadena to Gulfton to

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Aldine, and include all its people: urban and rural, native and immigrant. Is that even possible in a city whose philosophy is “run like hell in your own lane”? What does the American dream look like in this “messy, sprawling, random” place?

It seems like such a simple thing: a city organized around diverse, inclusive neighborhoods, supported by a basic social infrastructure - education, jobs, healthcare - that is accessible to all. In another time or place, the provision of that infrastructure

It has set an example
that could be
followed in other cities where
government
action is constrained

would be understood as a public responsibility, even as the core function of government. But here in Houston, we do things differently. A private organization, funded mostly with public money, has stepped in to fill the gap, and it has set an example that could be followed in other cities where government action is constrained.

Outside the luncheon, thousands of well-dressed people milled about. A conference for the oil and natural gas industry was also being held in the hotel. I overheard one young man on a cell phone, talking about \$50,000 for this, \$350,000 for that, the kind of business deals that people imagine when they think about Houston. But the landscape is shifting here, and activists are making deals on an equally grand scale. Teenagers in Gulfton just talked the Houston City Council into spending \$400,000 to build a skateboarding park. They boosted their campaign by printing and selling T-shirts. “We’re not as stupid

as we look,” one of them told a reporter. Politicians and corporations are learning that the most productive approach to dealing with inequality comes not from the top down but from the bottom up.

As Blanchard says, “The people we need are already here.” ♦

ENDNOTES

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EDITORS’ NOTE

This article first appeared in the February 2016 issue of **PLACEJOURNAL.ORG**, a leading journal of contemporary architecture, landscape and urbanism. Neighborhood Centers Inc. last received funding from The Kresge Foundation in 2009. The foundation, which has supported this series on *Places*, did not participate directly in the commissioning or editing of articles, and was not involved in the decision to focus on Neighborhood Centers.

ABOUT THE SERIES: THE INEQUALITY CHRONICLES

This is the second article in an ongoing series, “The Inequality Chronicles,” supported by The Kresge Foundation. The series begins with articles on Memphis, Houston and Baltimore.

AUTHOR’S BIO

Michael Berryhill is chair of Journalism at Texas Southern University and author of *The Trials of Eroy Brown: The Murder Case that Shook the Texas Prison System*.

ACLA MEETING EXPLORES WORLD BEYOND DISCIPLINES

What if disciplines were organized differently? Or didn’t exist at all? Or existed, but none of us “belonged” to one? What if literary scholars were to go about interdisciplinary work the way scientists do, building large teams from distinct disciplines to produce work with many co-authors? How do other disciplines reach their audiences? What disciplines are crucial partners for comparative literature now, or in the future? The American Comparative Literature Association will host an experimental conference, “ACL(x): Extra-Disciplinarity” at Penn State University, University Park, PA on 22-24 September 2016. The editors of four journals—*ASAP*, *CLS*, *Trafika Europe* and *Verge*—will all be present at the conference and in some cases sponsoring panels. Thanks to the generous support of the ACLA and Penn State University, its Department of Comparative Literature, the School of Languages and Literatures, and the College of Liberal Arts, lodging and most meals for conference presenters will be free. Participants are asked to arrange their own travel. A number of special panels are planned, including “Alternative Literacies at the Nexus of African Literary Studies and African Feminisms,” “Approaching the Arts of the Present,” “Democracy as Cultural Practice” and “Probing the Borders of Literariness.” For more information, please contact either Thomas Beebe <tob@psu.edu>, Caroline Eckhardt <e82@psu.edu> or Jonathan Eburne <jpe11@psu.edu>.

SPECIAL PANEL ON EARLY MODERN TRAVEL WRITING

The South Atlantic Modern Language Association will host a special panel entitled “Utopia/Dystopia in Early Modern Travel Writing” on 4-6 November 2016 at Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, FL. The purpose of the panel is to feature papers on any aspect of early modern travel writing. Research that address accounts of Spanish and French exploration and colonization in Florida will be especially welcome. As will papers that address the conference theme, “Utopia/Dystopia: Whose Paradise Is It?” For more information, please contact Sarah Parker at <sparker6@ju.edu>.



Sept. 2016

Dear IALJS Member and Friends,

I am writing to ask your help in urging qualified and exciting candidates to apply for a tenure-track position in journalism at Boston College. Our growing journalism program is taking shape on a liberal arts model, with students majoring in a discipline of their choice and minoring in journalism. In this open-discipline search we seek candidates with one foot in journalism and the other in academia, plausibly able to achieve tenure in a traditional department and able to work with colleagues in a variety of liberal arts disciplines here at BC. Here is the advertisement for the job, which you may see elsewhere::

Tenure-Track Faculty Position in Journalism, Boston College

Boston College invites applications in an open-discipline search for a tenure-track position that will contribute to our growing journalism program. The appointment, beginning in Fall 2017, is anticipated to be at the level of Assistant Professor; in exceptional cases, a higher-level appointment may be considered. The holder of this position, based in the appropriate home department in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, will help design and lead a new interdisciplinary journalism minor. Preference will be given to candidates with an advanced degree (Ph.D., M.F.A., and equivalents) as well as meaningful experience in journalism, a significant scholarly record, and the capacity to teach and collaborate in a liberal arts curriculum that features several interdisciplinary programs. Submit letter of application, CV, writing sample of no more than 25 pages, and three letters of reference to apply.interfolio.com/37516. Review of applications will begin on October 15, 2016.

Questions: carlo.rotella@bc.edu.

We realize that this may seem like an unusual job description, but, as you well know, scholars and journalists and scholar-journalists are thriving and doing original, creative work in the contact zone formed by the overlap of professions. If you are aware of candidates who might fit this profile in some way, or of other senior colleagues who might know of such candidates, please do forward this email and urge strong applicants to apply.

If you have any questions or suggestions, we would welcome them.

Sincerely,

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TEACHING LITERARY JOURNALISM IN A PRISON

The reward was enriching their understanding of what a writer can accomplish.

By Kate McQueen, University of Illinois (U.S.A.)

My current teaching position is as a literature instructor for a college in prison program affiliated with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The program offers upper division college courses to incarcerated students

at a nearby men's correctional center. This semester I taught a literature course on creative nonfiction, which featured literary journalism as a key genre.

A prison is a unique teaching environment, and it poses different sorts of

challenges than the traditional college classroom. There is a positive side to these

differences. My incarcerated students are sophisticated readers who bring a level of maturity and engagement to class that I have rarely seen in other undergraduates. Just imagine a class in which every session all students come prepared and eager to discuss and write!

The warden said
yes to James
Baldwin but no to Ta-Nehisi
Coates, yes to Susan
Sontag but no to Joan Didion

The challenge I found most taxing is the problem of clearance. At this particular correctional center, student access to learning material is heavily mediated.

Instructors are allowed to teach only from course material that had been submitted and vetted several weeks prior to the start of the semester. Texts are frequently denied without explanation, and my carefully curated reading list was no exception. The warden said yes to James Baldwin but no to Ta-Nehisi Coates. Yes to Susan Sontag but no to Joan Didion. Yes George Orwell and John McPhee but no to John Hersey and Dexter Filkins.

In the end I was left with a course packet seemingly scrubbed of violence, religion, and politics. What made it through clearance were articles on sports, food, family, and the environment. This reader contained nothing but gems of literary journalism, to be sure, but it was hardly a collection that immediately spoke to the interests or life experiences of my students. How many of these men from Chicago's South Side had ever tasted lobster, collected orchids, vacationed in Maine, or watched baseball?

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