

Note from the Editor . . .



In his 2007 book, *True Stories*, Norman Sims lamented the complexity of chasing down the origin story for literary journalism in nineteenth-century United States. “Tracing the history of literary journalism backward from the twentieth century into the 1800s,” he wrote, “I find that it vanishes into a maze of local publications” (43). Further, Sims declared that while it may have been easy to lose oneself in such a maze of local stories and facts, it was also the case that “[t]he core of nineteenth-century literary journalism can be found in a simple, widespread prose device used in the newspapers—the sketch. . . . It permitted newspaper reporters to be writers, playing with voice and perspective and challenging readers to evaluate the text” (44).

In this issue’s lead research essay, “Nineteenth-Century Women Writers and the Sentimental Roots of Literary Journalism,” Jonathan Fitzgerald of Northeastern University takes up the challenge of going further back than the sketch. He wants us to land at an earlier origin period for literary journalism, one when the line between sentimentalism and realism was not well defined. (This was true of sketches, too, of course, as they were not necessarily written strictly according to the facts. Rather, the priority was to entertain the reader.) Fitzgerald’s idea, which he sets up to show in his essay, is that in an earlier era of nineteenth-century writing—when journalism and fiction writing were a fair distance from being professionalized into Journalism and English departments—it was women writing in the sentimental mode who were pushing toward what we have come to know as literary journalism. Fascinating, important stuff.

Also fascinating is “The Orgy Next Door,” a timely examination of two texts written by Gay Talese, *Thy Neighbor’s Wife* (1981) and *The Voyeur’s Motel* (2016) by Julie Wheelwright of University College London. Wheelwright originally had focused on the former book, but when controversy began to swirl around Talese’s methodology for his latest work, it was inevitable that her critique of the literary journalist’s ethical stance when dealing with topics of a sexual nature needed to be expanded. When reporting on experiences of a sexual nature, normal issues for the literary journalist—the ongoing, developing relationship between the author and subject, for instance, become that much more heightened. Wheelwright explores the limits a literary journalist might place on personal professional behavior when observing sexual practices, or reporting on sexual activity, or on one’s own sexual activity (or not),

especially in consideration of what constitutes building a vicarious experience for readers.

Our third essay discusses the work of another major American literary journalist, but from a fairly unusual angle. In "Writing Men on the Margins," Peter Ferry of University of Stavanger, Norway dissects the work of *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell through the lens masculinity studies. Ferry concentrates on three crucial Mitchell texts—"The Old House at Home" (1939), "The Mohawks in High Steel" (1949), and "Mr. Hunter's Grave" (1956)—in his discussion of homosocial relations of men on the margins of society, that is, immigrants, Indigenous people, and African Americans. The recasting of Mitchell as the flâneur, a wandering investigator of subcultures in New York City, allows us to better absorb the importance of his role in elucidating the changing role of masculinity in the twentieth century.

In our continuing series of essays about the frontier of digital literary journalism, Australians Fiona Giles of the University of Sydney and Georgia Hitch of the Australian Broadcasting Company review several examples of long-form multimedia storytelling to explore what properties of a journalistic presentation are required in multimedia format for it to be seen as a work of literary journalism. Employing John Hartsock's ideal of the narra-descriptive text, Giles and Hitch propose three categories of narrative-based multimedia—multimedia-enhanced literary journalism, integrated multimedia feature, and interactive multimedia—noting that only one of this trio truly leverages the digital realm to produce multimedia literary journalism.

As is our custom, we are pleased to present in text form the keynote address from our most recent annual conference, which was held at University of King's College, Halifax, Canada, this past May. Portugal's Alice Trindade discusses the internationality of literary journalism, especially the Portuguese version and its ties to both Spanish and English literary journalism—writing histories that have, at certain points over the past centuries, intertwined and influenced one other.

Finally, the format of our Scholar-Practitioner Q+A this issue is a little curious (but quite charming). "Searching for the Perfect Title" is a variation on the theme of a scholar interviewing a practitioner about his or her work. Instead, David Abrahamson and Alison Pelczar of Northwestern University enlisted six literary journalists from the United States and Canada to write about how they came to choose their book titles. Amy Wilentz, Ted Conover, Deborah Campbell, Pamela Newkirk, Michael Norman, and Madeleine Blais have provided us with varied responses: from needing a title to begin a book, to listening the Mom's suggestions, to remembering the exact moment in

space and time in the physical world when the lightning bolt carrying the title struck, to even withholding from the interviewers a discarded title because, well, it may come in handy next time.