



The World Trade Center on 9/11 shortly after the North Tower collapsed.
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Research Review . . .

Recent Trends and Topics in Literary Journalism Scholarship

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This survey of literary journalism scholarship published in print during 2017 is intended as a guide to recent trends and topics in the field rather than a comprehensive listing of all research and commentary. The publication descriptions that follow focus primarily on peer-reviewed journals and books. Some works may have appeared online before print publication.

BOOKS

Historical Development

Joanne Shattock's edited volume *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth Century Britain*¹ is a welcome addition to the conversation about the development of literary journalism. The premise of the volume is that an understanding of the evolving role of the press in Britain during the nineteenth century and the contemporaneous debates about the relationship between literature and journalism tells us much about that century's history. Of the book's four sections, the last section's six chapters are devoted to individual writers and are of particular value for scholars of literary journalism. Two chapters are devoted to the journalism of Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, both of whom are often identified with literary journalism. The remaining four chapters focus on writers less frequently discussed, and include Harriet Martineau and Margaret Oliphant, whose journalism engaged contemporary social issues and led to their later fiction writing. Of special note is Graham Law's chapter on Wilkie Collins, which looks at what Law terms Collins's

“personalised journalism” which commingles fact and fiction to help create a “new mode,” which is recognizable as a form of literary journalism.²

L. Ashley Squires expressly focuses one chapter in her book, *Healing the Nation: Literature, Progress, and Christian Science*,³ on literary journalism. Overall, Squires seeks to look at the religion of Christian Science in relation to U.S. literary culture and describes her methodology as “using literary studies as a lens for examining the cultural impact of Christian Science.”⁴ To that end, she outlines the many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers who engaged with Christian Science, negatively and positively, and focuses especially on those writers who were also journalists. Her fourth chapter, “All the News Worth Reading: Literary Journalism and the *Christian Science Monitor*,” takes up the biography of Mary Baker Eddy, Christian Science’s founder,⁵ that *McClure’s* published in fourteen installments in 1907 and 1908. Squires considers more thoroughly than has appeared elsewhere the role that literary journalists Willa Cather and Ida Tarbell likely played in the development and presentation of the *McClure’s* articles. Squires also contrasts the journalistic approach of *McClure’s* with that of the *Christian Science Monitor*, which saw itself as moving away from storytelling to more objective and “nonsensational” journalism.⁶

In *Writing the 9/11 Decade: Reportage and the Evolution of the Novel*,⁷ Charlie Lee-Potter, a British journalist and university instructor, investigates the relationship between journalism responding to a traumatic event in real time—in this case, the destruction of New York’s World Trade Center—and the fiction written later that focuses on the same event. While *Writing the 9/11 Decade* is concerned primarily with fiction, what makes this text of special interest to scholars of literary journalism is Lee-Potter’s focus on how not only memory, but also the changing socio-political environment affect representation and assessment of a traumatic event. By analyzing the journalism of writers such as Richard Ford and Ian McEwan, who were called on to offer responses immediately after the fall of the Twin Towers, and their later fictional responses, Lee-Potter shows how the “consolation myth” that largely overwhelmed news reporting, became more nuanced, reflective, even critical, with the passage of time.⁸ Of particular interest is Lee-Potter’s fourth chapter, “The Long View,” in which she looks at the work of several Pakistani writers and how they have sought to escape the “imprisoning grip of the traumatized present, so often the territory of the journalist,” to create “fictions” that are “deliberately provocative.”⁹ Yet, as one of her writers, Mohsin Hamid, explains, one way to do that is through literary journalism: He describes his own work as increasingly a conflation of fiction and nonfiction, a “hybrid . . . with neither journalism nor fiction taking precedence.”¹⁰

National/Regional Studies

Two new books focus on regional issues with national implications in the United States. A new addition to the Routledge Research in Journalism Series, *News of Baltimore: Race, Rage and the City*,¹¹ takes a look at coverage of the 2015 arrest of Baltimore resident Freddie Gray, who fell into a coma while riding in a police van and then died a week later from spinal cord injuries. This fourteen-chapter volume, edited by Linda Steiner and Silvio Waisbord, uses that incident as a jumping-off point for considering “journalism’s responsibility to cover state institutions that avoid scrutiny, neighborhoods or communities that may not be the preferred audiences for media management, and questions about who has the authority, credibility and the power to tell stories and to be heard,”¹² all longstanding concerns addressed by practitioners and scholars of literary journalism. The volume has a number of chapters of interest, including two on social media: one on its role specifically in the Freddie Gray incident, and a second on the Black Lives Matter movement generally. Another chapter focuses on the need for a sociological approach to covering events such as Gray’s arrest and its aftermath. Other chapters are ultimately aimed at “offer[ing] guidance for covering urban problems” that suggest an ethnographic, immersive, and empathetic approach.¹³ Especially notable is Sarah J. Jackson’s chapter, “The Black Press and Baltimore: The Continuing Importance of African American Journalism During Urban Uprisings.” Jackson found that in the local coverage of the Freddie Gray story it was the Black press, using literary journalistic approaches to reporting, that produced stories giving a more comprehensive as well as more intimate picture of the event and its context than did the mainstream press.¹⁴ And it is precisely that kind of reporting that the volume holds out as a model for covering such matters.

Another critique of journalism practices emerges in Michael Clay Carey’s *The News Untold: Community Journalism and the Failure to Confront Poverty in Appalachia*.¹⁵ Carey looks at three economically distressed communities in Appalachia—given the pseudonyms Greenburg, Priorsville, and Deer Creek—where the local media have failed to cover each community’s poverty. In particular, Carey focuses on the failure to represent the voices of the poor in local reporting, which, he argues, ensures that conditions remain unchanged. The author is calling for a “broader, more inclusive depiction of Appalachia,”¹⁶ beginning in local reporting and moving to national stories. The attitudinal change that he proposes needs to happen is the news outlet going from objective reporter to “concerned friend of the community,”¹⁷ which has implications for how journalists both gather and report their stories. In his call for identifying with the “other” through this process, Carey invokes John Hartsock’s descriptions in *A History of American Literary Journalism of*

the impetus underlying much of the work produced in the genre during the twentieth century.

Digital Technology

The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism Studies, edited by Bob Franklin and Scott A. Eldridge II, in its fifty-seven chapters touches on a number of topics related to literary journalism studies—ethnography, community, and hyperlocal journalism; the possibility of objectivity in real-time online reporting; and how best to tell stories using digital tools.¹⁸ As in literary journalism studies, ongoing matters such as the field's boundaries and the ethical implications of digital work receive focused attention. One chapter expressly addresses literary journalism: In "Longform Narrative Journalism: 'Snowfall' and Beyond,"¹⁹ authors David Dowling and Travis Vogan look at "snowfalling" as a marketing strategy, whereby advertising and content are aligned, rather than functioning entirely independently, to convince readers to spend more time on the site.²⁰

Individual Author Study

An especially noteworthy study of an individual writer that appeared in 2017 is Joan Ramon Resina's *Josep Pla: Seeing the World in the Form of Articles*.²¹ Pla was a prodigious, twentieth-century Catalan writer whose work has only in the last few years been translated into English. His *Collected Works*, published before his death, numbered thirty-eight volumes, and the work he produced, Resina argues, needs to be understood as literary journalism. To place Pla in the context of literary journalism, Resina explores the history of journalism and its relationship to literature while engaging with the critical debates about literary journalism that have evolved over the last two decades. Pla tackled a range of subjects in his journalism, which Resina's book gathers in chapters with such lyrical titles as "Of Women and Days," "Shipwrecks with Monsters," and "Remembering the Region." Overall, Resina's goal is to place Pla among such literary journalism icons as Ryszard Kapuściński, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, and George Orwell, arguing that Pla's enormous oeuvre "is significant as a paradigm of the epochal shift towards a re-evaluation of journalism as literature . . ." ²²

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

Individual Author Studies

The year 2017 was one in which scholars took time to look closely at the work of a number of journalist-authors.

In his *Literary Journalism Studies* article, "Writing Men on the Margins:

Joseph Mitchell, Masculinity, and the Flâneur," Peter Ferry looks at *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell, using the lens of masculinity studies and emphasizing the ways in which Mitchell embodies the philosophy and practices of a flâneur.²³

Ted Conover's movement through different realms of writing—journalism, ethnography, and memoir—is the subject of Patrick Walters's article, "Ted Conover and the Origins of Immersion in Literary Journalism," also published in *Literary Journalism Studies*. Walters argues that Conover is redefining immersion journalism in the progression of his work.²⁴

George Warrington Steevens, a popular British journalist of the nineteenth century, is the subject of Andrew Griffiths's *Literary Journalism Studies* study, "Literary Journalism and Empire: George Warrington Steevens in Africa, 1898–1900." Griffiths describes the role Steevens's vivid writing played in furthering British imperialism, in contrast to the more typical role of literary journalism in challenging oppression.²⁵

Juan J. Rodriguez Barrera in *Science & Society* examines the way Langston Hughes self-censored earlier newspaper reporting in his 1956 autobiography, *I Wonder as I Wander*. Rodriguez Barrera cites the strong anti-Communist agenda/regime of the time as one of the factors affecting the author.²⁶

The legacy of U.S. reporter-correspondent John Reed's coverage of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia is the subject of an essay by James Rodgers in *British Journalism Review*. Rodgers argues that Reed's work remains a useful example for foreign correspondents of today.²⁷

Samantha Peko and Michael S. Sweeney revisit the undercover journalism of Nell Nelson in their *American Journalism* article, "Nell Nelson's Undercover Reporting." Nelson was a stunt girl reporter who in the late 1880s produced narratives that attracted attention to unfair U.S. labor practices and demonstrated the ability of women to work as reporters.²⁸

Mauricio D. Aguilera-Linde, writing in the *Complutense Journal of English Studies*, examines U.S. Spanish Civil War correspondent Martha Gellhorn's "Zoo in Madrid." The essay raises questions about Gellhorn's role as a war correspondent and her method of reportage.²⁹

National/Regional Studies

Three studies were identified that focus on regional and national issues in Europe and the Middle East.

In *International Humanities Studies*, Bassam Yousef Ibrahim Banat and Khitam Ajarma explore the glorification of the suicide martyr in Palestinian culture. They describe literary journalism as one of the venues for projecting both anger and defiance, contributing to this phenomenon.³⁰

Elizabeth Amann, writing in *Confluencia: Revista Hispanica de Cultura*

y *Literatura*, describes a Spanish version of the flâneur, as a journalist taking advantage of the streetcar in Madrid to visit different parts of the city and comment on what can be observed on the inside and the outside.³¹

In *Journalism [Theory, Practice, and Criticism]*, Kobie van Krieken and José Sanders examine the ways in which narrative journalism has been framed among readers and practitioners in the Netherlands. Based on their case study, the authors argue that narrative journalism has been positioned as a pinnacle achievement but at the risk of eroding traditional standards.³²

Historical Development

In *Literary Journalism Studies*, Jonathan D. Fitzgerald traces the origins of literary journalism into the sentimental era of the first half of the nineteenth century and highlights the special role played by women writers in the United States.³³

Thomas R. Schmidt, also writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, looks at how the *Washington Post* introduced the magazine-style techniques of the New Journalists into daily newspapers, beginning in the 1960s. Schmidt focuses in the study on the paper's Style section and describes its role in expanding the use of narrative journalism in U.S. newspapers.³⁴

The way poetry affected journalism in the nineteenth century is examined by F. Elizabeth Gray in *Journalism Studies*, highlighting the fact that poems often appeared in U.S. newspapers alongside factual accounts of the same events. She argues that poetry played a role in changing the conceptualization of journalism.³⁵

Also writing in *Journalism Studies*, Michael Fuhlhage, Donald L. Shaw, Lynette Holman, and Sun Young Lee explore the roles books play in setting the political agenda. Their study starts with Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and ends with Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation*.³⁶

Digital Technology

In *Explorations of Media Ecology*, Ellen Rose uses a Foucauldian genealogy to consider the digital production of narrative over the last three decades. Her article considers the contrasting perspectives of programmers, authors, and scholars.³⁷

Fiona Giles and Georgia Hitch, writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, adopt the concept of the "narra-descriptive" text to explore and analyze the implications of digital technology for the form, using a three-stage typology.³⁸

David O. Dowling analyzes the aesthetic evolution of digital literary journalism over the last few years. Writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, Dowling describes a movement toward adapting content for mobile devices and developing techniques for increased user engagement, which in turn are expanding

the reach of and increasing the demand for narrative long-form journalism.³⁹

Writing in *New Literary History*, Aarthi Vadde explores the impact of digital publishing practices on the field of contemporary literature. The article focuses on the ways amateur creativity and professional production can intersect and reshape traditional categories and roles.⁴⁰

Sarah Jones, in *Journal of Media Practice*, looks at the way virtual reality is giving a new meaning to the idea of immersion journalism. She uses focus group studies to identify the types of narrative used and their impact in 360-degree journalism films that are viewed using headsets.⁴¹

Ethics

Bunty Avieson and Willa McDonald contributed an article to *Media International Australia* that uses standpoint theory to examine the work of three undercover print journalists. The authors argue that this theory, with its emphasis on looking at society from the perspectives of marginalized people, provides an ethical framework for reporting on the disadvantaged.⁴²

In *Literary Journalism Studies*, Julie Wheelwright examines the ethical issues that arise when a literary journalist, in this case Gay Talese, reports on sexual behavior. She considers an early work by Talese and a later, more problematic example, in her study of his books, *Thy Neighbor's Wife* and *The Voyeur's Motel*.⁴³

Practice

Christopher P. Wilson describes how two journalists use contrasting forms of narrative, what he calls Dickensian and modernist, to cover the topic of foster care. Writing in *College Literature*, he discusses critical reaction as well as the relationships formed between reporter and subject.⁴⁴

In *Journalism [Theory, Practice, and Criticism]*, Geoffrey Baym argues that hybridity has come to define contemporary broadcast journalism. In particular, he holds up the example of hybrid public affairs narratives, which, though fictional, can play a journalistic role in highlighting socio-political issues.⁴⁵

Isabel Soares, in *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas*, examines the ways in which literary journalism and sociology intersect on the basis of methodology when dealing with urban problems. Content and discourse analyses are used to explore the way that some literary journalists helped shape the understanding and depiction of social problems.⁴⁶

Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Ryan J. Thomas examine the question of whether transparency boosts credibility. In a study published in *Newspaper Research Journal*, their findings from an online experiment show that nontransparent articles are viewed as more credible than transparent ones.⁴⁷

In a *Journalism Practice* article, Lauri Haapanen reports a study of the

use of monologization, that is, monologues, as a technique for journalists to control the contents of an article while still separating facts from personal opinions. The study is based on a comparison of the recorded and printed versions of interviews.⁴⁸

Based on a content analysis of three internationally read, U.S.-based newspapers from 1988 to 2013, Miki Tanikawa shows that publishers have moved away from event-centered news to put greater emphasis on interpretation and analysis with broad implications for journalism theory and practice. This research on the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *International Herald Tribune* [now the *International New York Times*] appears in *International Journal of Communication*.⁴⁹

Scott R. Maier, Paul Slovic, and Marcus Mayorga demonstrate that conventional news accounts lack the necessary elements to engage audiences when reporting on mass suffering. Their study applies psychological principles to the practice of reporting and appears in *Journalism [Theory, Practice, and Criticism]*.⁵⁰

Robert E. Gutsche Jr. and Erica Salkin, also writing in *Journalism [Theory, Practice, and Criticism]*, explore the way that evil is depicted in news. They focus on the 2006 Amish schoolhouse shooting in Pennsylvania.⁵¹

Kenan Koçak's article in the *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* seeks to define comics journalism, linking the form to the New Journalism in the United States.⁵²

Teaching

The challenge of assessing student creativity is addressed by Jeffrey S. Smith in *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. He explores the question of rubric design with the goal of communicating expectations and providing feedback.⁵³

Writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, Brian Gabriel and Elyse Amend investigate the emerging canon of literary journalism texts and show its limitations of gender, geography, and language. The work is based on an analysis of reading lists submitted by members of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies.⁵⁴

Anne Kirstine Hermann's research, published in *Journalism Studies*, explores the value of teaching ethnography and other social science techniques to journalism students. She proposes this approach as a way to resolve the gap between journalism and social science research as well as to prepare students to make the most of the current emphasis on narrative.⁵⁵

Finally, writing in *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, Giselle A. Auger, Zeynep Tanes-Ehle, and Charlie Gee report on a study of a multi-

platform course that required students to work in traditional and emerging forms of reporting. The researchers concluded that the convergence approach strengthened both the technological ability of the students as well as the traditional skills of interviewing and story construction.⁵⁶

Notes

- ¹ Shattock, *Journalism and the Periodical Press*.
- ² Law, "Wilkie Collins and the Discovery of an 'Unknown Public'," in *Journalism and the Periodical Press*, ed. Shattock, 340.
- ³ Squires, "All the News Worth Reading: Literary Journalism and the *Christian Science Monitor*," in *Healing the Nation: Literature, Progress, and Christian Science*, 118–56.
- ⁴ Squires, 8.
- ⁵ Squires, "All the News Worth Reading," 118–56.
- ⁶ Squires, 149–51, 125.
- ⁷ Lee-Potter, *Writing the 9/11 Decade*.
- ⁸ Lee-Potter, 5.
- ⁹ Lee-Potter, "The Long View," in *Writing the 9/11 Decade*, 151–88, 151.
- ¹⁰ Lee-Potter, 152.
- ¹¹ Steiner and Waisbord, *News of Baltimore*.
- ¹² Steiner and Waisbord, 2.
- ¹³ Steiner and Waisbord, 2.
- ¹⁴ Jackson, "The Black Press and Baltimore," in *News of Baltimore*, ed. Steiner and Waisbord, 139–57; 148–49.
- ¹⁵ Carey, *The News Untold*.
- ¹⁶ Carey, 7.
- ¹⁷ Carey, 7 (emphasis in the original).
- ¹⁸ Franklin and Eldridge, *The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism*.
- ¹⁹ Dowling and Vogan, "Longform Narrative Journalism: 'Snowfall' and Beyond," in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism Studies*, ed. Franklin and Eldridge, 478–86.
- ²⁰ Dowling and Vogan, 479.
- ²¹ Resina, *Josep Pla: Seeing the World in the Form of Articles*.
- ²² Resina, 19.
- ²³ Ferry, "Writing Men on the Margins," 52–73.
- ²⁴ Walters, "Ted Conover and the Origins of Immersion in Literary Journalism," 8–33.
- ²⁵ Griffiths, "Literary Journalism and Empire," 60–81.
- ²⁶ Rodriguez Barrera, "Tightrope of Words," 172–96.
- ²⁷ Rogers, "This First Draft of History Lasts," 48–52.
- ²⁸ Peko and Sweeney, "Nell Nelson's Undercover Reporting," 448–69.

- ²⁹ Aguilera-Linde, "Martha Gellhorn's 'Zoo in Madrid'," 143–58.
- ³⁰ Banat and Ajarma, "Palestinian Culture and the Glorification of Suicide Martyr (Istishhady)," 44–60.
- ³¹ Amann, "Tram *Flânerie*: Streetcar Impressions of Nineteenth-century Madrid," 167–77.
- ³² Van Krieken and Sanders, "Framing Narrative Journalism as a New Genre," 1364–80.
- ³³ Fitzgerald, "Nineteenth-century Women Writers and the Sentimental Roots of Literary Journalism," 8–27.
- ³⁴ Schmidt, "Pioneer of Style: How the *Washington Post* Adopted Literary Journalism," 34–59.
- ³⁵ Gray, "Journalism and Poetry in the Nineteenth Century: Calls to Action," 807–25.
- ³⁶ Fuhlhage, Shaw, Holman, and Lee, "Blowing Embers: An Exploration," 1593–612.
- ³⁷ Rose, "A Genealogy of Computer-generated Narrative," 7–20.
- ³⁸ Giles and Hitch, "Multimedia Features as 'Narra-descriptive' Texts," 74–91.
- ³⁹ Dowling, "Toward a New Aesthetic of Digital Literary Journalism," 100–116.
- ⁴⁰ Vadde, "Amateur Creativity: Contemporary Literature and the Digital Publishing Scene," 27–51.
- ⁴¹ Jones, "Disrupting the Narrative: Immersive Journalism in Virtual Reality," 171–85.
- ⁴² Avieson and McDonald, "Dangerous Liaisons: Undercover Journalism," 137–50.
- ⁴³ Wheelwright, "The Orgy Next Door: An Exploration of Ethical Relationships," 28–51.
- ⁴⁴ Wilson, "Orphans of Our Reading," 58–87.
- ⁴⁵ Baym, "Journalism and the Hybrid Condition," 11–26.
- ⁴⁶ Soares, "At the Intersection of Risk," 63–80.
- ⁴⁷ Tandoc and Thomas, "Readers Value Objectivity over Transparency," 32–45.
- ⁴⁸ Haapanen, "Monologisation as a Quoting Practice," 820–39.
- ⁴⁹ Tanikawa, "What Is News? What Is the Newspaper?" 3519–40.
- ⁵⁰ Maier, Slovic, and Mayorga, "Reader Reaction to News of Mass Suffering," 1011–29.
- ⁵¹ Gutsche and Salkin, "Behold the Monster," 994–1010.
- ⁵² Koçak, "Comics Journalism: Towards a Definition," 173–99.
- ⁵³ Smith, "Assessing Creativity: Creating a Rubric," 24–36.
- ⁵⁴ Gabrial and Amend, "The Ammo for the Canon," 82–99.
- ⁵⁵ Hermann, "J-school Ethnography: Mending the Gap," 228–46.
- ⁵⁶ Auger, Tanes-Ehle, and Gee, "A Phenomenological Study of Student Experiences," 212–27.

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