



Andrew Borden, father of Lizzie Borden, slain in his house, Fall River, Massachusetts, U.S.A. Police forensic photograph, 1892. Burns Archive, <https://imgur.com/a/DObvQ>, public domain. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58261794>.

## The Journalist Who Was Always Late: Time and Temporality in Literary Journalism

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**Abstract:** This essay considers the role of time and temporality in literary journalism—and, more specifically, it investigates the temporal phenomenon known as *belatedness*, the common condition of the journalist’s arriving late to a news scene. Along with considering the centrality of time to histories of modern American reporting, this essay also touches upon recent scholarly and theoretical thinking about time, timeliness, and time shifting in modern news writing. Meanwhile, the essay also explores—specifically in relation to the designation known as “slow” or long-form journalism—theoretical thinking about narrative time in nonfiction storytelling. The central interests here are in the stylistic, technical, and material dimensions of time in narrative journalism; the relationship between direct witnessing and retrospective hindsight; and the connections between narrative time and journalistic authority. Along with discussing long-form works by Michael Lewis, William Finnegan, Anne Fadiman, and others, the central text examined here is from Calvin Trillin’s collection, *Killings* (1984), specifically, an essay originally published in his U.S. Journal series in the *New Yorker*.

**Keywords:** narrative journalism – time and journalism – temporality – hindsight – Calvin Trillin

Shots ring out in an alley on a cold winter night, and a body falls on a city pavement. Someone—probably, in fact, anonymously—thinks to call the police, and in due time they roll up in black and white patrol cars. The cops push a few early onlookers back, bend over the body, and then begin to roll out the yellow tape announcing Crime Scene: Do Not Cross. They do so because, as the great American journalist Stephen Crane once wrote in a mock headline: “When Man Falls, a Crowd Gathers.”<sup>1</sup> And imagine, in and through that gathering crowd bobs a stubby, trench-coated man in a floppy hat, smoking a cigar, carrying a big box camera with an enormous flash that rattles the night. He’s elbowing his way to the front, crouching down, capturing the glint of his own flashbulb off the graininess of the pavement: *Snap, flash*—the illumination races down and over the body, filling the alley for a split second, and perhaps allowing a glimpse of the steel-black revolver lying alone, several feet from a lifeless corpse, the gun pointing back at the man much like the camera itself.

Meanwhile, the photographer has parked his retro Chevrolet sedan illegally, on the other side of the street; the car’s trunk is open, and it’s stuffed with photo equipment, raggedy paper bags, loose sheets of paper—and, weirdly, as if sitting up on a pedestal, a heavy-gray typewriter, along with a small stool ready for perching over the car’s bumper. From the photographer’s chatter with the cops, it is clear he’s intercepted their radio calls at his own apartment—a greasy grim place that he has had wired to connect directly to the police dispatcher, so to arrive at the scene as quickly as possible. And yet, through it all, as he’s bobbing around, getting all the angles, the odd man is also cursing under his breath. He’s angry because he arrived too late again. He didn’t want just another crime scene photograph. He wanted to be there as the bullet arrived, *before* the body would fall. Secretly, he’s been harboring a fantasy he calls “psychic photography”: the hope that, someday, as if by magic, he could be present to shoot not the aftermath of a crime, but the moment it originally happened.

As some readers will know, the peculiar man of the scene just described is “Weegee” (Arthur Fellig), a U.S. tabloid photographer who became famous in the 1930s and 1940s. Fellig gave himself his odd trademark-name to remind others of the prophetic powers of a Ouija board, and thus to suture his private fantasy to his public reputation. But the essay that follows will not, alas, be about Weegee, who has received fine scholarly treatment elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Rather, of interest here is the predicament Weegee’s fantasy hoped to redress: the bind of temporal *belatedness*, or the practically inevitable fact that even the most ambitious reporters nevertheless typically arrive after a news event has occurred. This is a condition, in other words, more pervasive in modern

journalism than is often recognized—indeed, it probably affects writers of literary journalism even more deeply than beat reporters like Weegee. Much as Mark Kramer has argued in his oft-cited meditation on the “Breakable Rules” of literary journalism, writers of the long form often seem to be “fated to arrive late.” (“Murderers,” Kramer has pointed out rather laconically, “usually try not to do their work in front of writers.”)<sup>3</sup>

Belatedness, however, is only the ultimate aspect of time and temporality to be explored in the following. There is also a need to consider that many different dimensions and even *meanings* of time impinge upon journalistic practice, and again especially on the forms of narrative or literary journalism sometimes called “slow.” And although a lexical looseness with the customary distinctions of critical practice (narrative, literary, long form, “slow”) may be troubling to some—the approach here will be intentionally eclectic and speculative. The initial argument will move through two distinct phases.<sup>4</sup> It will begin with a discussion of the role of time in general theories of news modernization, and then turn to how some theoretical thinking on time and temporality might shape approaches to long-form literary journalism in particular.<sup>5</sup> This second phase of the exploration will include some of the ways literary journalists signal the shifting time frames in their storytelling: traveling back to the past, dispensing with a linear or chronological storyline, or choosing—in the words of South African novelist J. M. Coetzee—to make “time bend and buckle.”<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, however, the discussion will return to where it began: to how narrative journalists use particular rhetorical devices, reporting routines, and story forms to negotiate the problem of belatedness and the related, risky powers of hindsight.<sup>7</sup> And it is here the discussion will also return to matters more central to scholarly debates in journals such as *LJS*. What, for instance, might attention to temporality and belatedness have to say about the focus on the “inconclusive present” John Hartsock has attributed to the tradition of U.S. literary journalism?<sup>8</sup> Indeed, what would such attention have to say even about the very distinction used above: the one between supposedly “fast” and “slow” journalism? And finally, can considerations of time and temporality be brought more directly into line-to-line analyses of individual long-form texts in a meaningful way? The main vehicle for addressing this last question will be a journalistic essay written by Calvin Trillin for his U.S. Journal series in the *New Yorker* in the 1970s. As it happens, the essay is itself an interesting meditation on time and temporality. The title of Trillin’s piece is—well, I’ll get to the title eventually.

#### Four Aspects of Time

It will surprise no one that scholars have tended to take time and temporality in journalism for granted, in part because is a tendency to see everyday reporting as enveloped in the present moment. Media scholars even begin the act of *defining* the news, often, by invoking the professional journalistic premium on the “now,” particularly as it is expressed in the trade’s reporting routines: for instance, in the importance of deadlines and datelines, of direct eye-witnessing, of offering—at an even more accelerated pace, with the rise of digital media—immediate coverage. Speed, as Barbie Zelizer has astutely observed, has largely become a stand-in for time as such.<sup>9</sup> In the nineteenth century—whether in the U.S. penny press, in the *National Police Gazette*, or in Pulitzer’s and Hearst’s newspapers—crime news was the principal beneficiary of the news’ rationalization, a *speed up* usually with a direct correlation to increased sensationalism. Setting up shop in police station houses or criminal courts, reporters soon found their daily diet habitually became (as one journalist, Vance Thompson, put it) “the fall of man,” and that “fall” was recorded quickly.<sup>10</sup> As Weegee’s example suggests, the metropolitan or crime beat has remained the primary apprenticeship ground for learning the core lesson about reporting generally: of being “in the right place at the right time and filing the story before anyone else does.”<sup>11</sup>

Such proclamations about the importance of the *now* commonly begin by emphasizing the larger impact of modernization. Whether they turn to E. P. Thompson or Benedict Anderson or David Harvey, journalism historians characteristically cite the modern hegemony of regimented, measured time and clock consciousness both within the journalism trade and without. Although this modern transformation is attributed to various social factors, historical accounts usually emphasize that the communications revolution created a modern subject who was propelled “ever forward in time” by the news’s constant “replenishment of ‘new’ information.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, many scholars have pointed to modernity’s signature compression of time and space, even (as Karl Marx famously had it) the latter’s annihilation in the industrial era.<sup>13</sup> New communication technologies—the telegraph, the photograph, the telephone—are thus pivotal to this broader story about journalism’s rise to professional stature. Fittingly, then, in Robert Manhoff and Michael Schudson’s path-breaking volume, *Reading the News*, the “5 W’s” table of contents assigned the “When” chapter to Schudson, the author of one of the more influential histories of modern journalism’s rise in the U.S.<sup>14</sup>

Schudson’s thinking in *Reading the News* deserves an extended revisit, however, because it shows that scholarly discussions of time in journalism have been both more nuanced, and more ambivalent, than the too-quick

summary above might suggest. At one level, the *now* was certainly Schudson’s keynote. “Getting the news fast and, ideally, getting it *first* is of passionate interest to journalists,” he wrote, using his own present tense,<sup>15</sup> and “time,” he went on to declare, is the very “scaffolding on which [news] stories are hung.”<sup>16</sup> As Schudson suggested, that’s why news is praised when it is called “timely.”<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Schudson singled out the modern conflation of time with the *now*, largely to criticize it. For instance, he complained about the always declining supply of in-depth, investigative reporting, or the lack of historical perspective in the news, or the misreporting that resulted from the quick-trigger, stopwatch mentality of the trade. He used the preoccupation with the *now*, moreover, to argue that the prevailing focus on scoops, eye-witnessing, and rapid production actually disguises the quite prosaic character of newsgathering. Although pundits and moviemakers still prefer to conjure up the reporter racing to the newsroom, the crackle of the telegraph wires, the slamming down of the city desk’s telephone—the true situation, as Schudson put it rather glumly, is that “the representatives of one bureaucracy [are] picking up prefabricated news . . . from representatives of another bureaucracy.”<sup>18</sup> As a result of the stopwatch mentality, the “more the media emphasize the immediacy of news, the more subject journalists are to manipulation by public officials.”<sup>19</sup> Especially when reporters settle into routines keyed to the rhythms of government releases and election cycles, Schudson suggests, the situation was quite liable to affirm the status quo.<sup>20</sup>

Naturally, scholars have extended and modified these ideas since Schudson’s writing. Lately, for example, it has been argued that the ever-accelerating pace of digital and online news production often positions non-Western, local, or supposedly primitive cultures as static temporal zones, somehow outside history. As Geoffrey Craig has argued, we need to be more aware of modernity’s “*differential* temporalities.”<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, what has been striking is how often these critiques have seemed to do little to dethrone the notion that the present tense is what matters most. Ironically, even Susan Greenberg’s invaluable 2007 postulation of long-form reportage as a “slow” journalism might have risked perpetuating this way of thinking by positing the cheap and the fast as the prevailing norm she was out to critique.<sup>22</sup>

Importantly, however, Schudson himself had explored a few strategies to find the way out of this fast/slow binary. For example, when he turned to how journalists actually *wrote* their stories, he saw that the relationship of time to everyday news storytelling was far more complex than simply a hegemonic present imposed by the news’ rate of production. Reporters, for instance, implicitly drew upon other ways to calibrate time when they framed a story. Journalists might make reference to historical periods, or implicitly

call up biographical notions of the lifespan; they might refer to generational transitions, or position their political news within the political time frames such as the “postwar world.”<sup>23</sup> News stories anticipated the future by suggesting emerging trends or policies. Moreover, Schudson delved not just into how stories measured time, he looked at the discourses in which time was represented. For instance, he argued that though headlines and datelines do typically speak in a present tense,<sup>24</sup> news stories themselves are actually often written in the past tense. Anticipating future scholarly work on serial news reading, he also wrote that time could be broken down into benchmarks in a developing news story, as new revelations necessarily push past versions of events aside<sup>25</sup>—a point I’ll come back to in the discussion of Calvin Trillin. And then there was the curious difference between the time frame evoked by a report and the consumer’s actual reading time. Readapting an old joke about how a print journalist would define Thursday (the punch line: it’s the first word in a news story appearing on Friday), Schudson observed that the traditional print dateline may itself refer to something happening “today,” even though we may be reading on the following one.<sup>26</sup>

Quite recently, in fact, this implicit broaching of temporal fluctuation within a single news text has received further scholarly exploration. For example, scholars examining the narrative structure of daily and serial news have suggested that everyday reports commonly invoke clusters or layers of temporality. Israeli scholars Motti Neiger and Keren Tenenboim-Weinblatt, for instance, have recently shown that news stories refer to distant or mid-range pasts or immediate and foreseeable futures, often shuffled or rearranged depending on the interpretive framework a reporter uses. What Tenenboim-Weinblatt calls “counting time”—subdividing, tracking, and even diverting the news plot into fillers that speak of change *over* time—provides readers both with retrospective place-holders and ritualized reassurance about the continuing relevance of the original news story. Other researchers have written about how the site of consumption can alter the rate of news reading or viewing; still others have explored the relationship between time and the processes of collective memory, the periodization of official or unofficial history, and so on.<sup>27</sup>

So far, however, this discussion has been largely about three aspects of time: *production* time, imposed by deadlines and publication schedules; *representational* time, or the external markers referred to (anniversaries of battles or national holidays, for example); and journalism’s *discursive* conventions about time, the clusters or time shifts signaled, for instance, by verb tenses or the counting time described above. However, recent theorizing can also lead into a fourth, overlapping domain of time: that of *narrative* temporality, or

the elusive processes whereby a reader is led to feel as if he or she experiences time’s passage in a given text. In long-form journalism especially, writers typically deploy rhetorical clues that invite readers to feel as if they are re-experiencing a temporal event rather than just reading about it. Entire sections of a journalistic text, for example, can create a sense of slowing down or—in Mikhail Bakhtin’s term—a “thickening” of temporality.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, narrative temporality may be especially pertinent to the fast/slow binary itself, since it raises the question of how, exactly, production time or even narrative length might be calibrated to the actual pace experienced while reading. (Bakhtin’s notion, it should be said, doesn’t refer merely to “rate” or a slowing—but as he puts it, how “time . . . takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise [how] space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history.”)<sup>29</sup>

Narrative temporality may therefore add texture, for instance, to Hartssock’s proposition that a persisting signature of literary journalism has been its invocation of an as-yet “inconclusive” present, another concept that presumes the primacy of the now.<sup>30</sup> It would appear readers do commonly default to the *now* when they read news stories—and indeed, they are often asked to feel that this *present* is still open-ended, as Hartssock argues. Nevertheless, inside a text, a reader’s sense of time can also be broken up, stopped, or elongated; moreover, a reader may be directed variously to think about where the journalist him- or herself stood in time *in relation to* the time frame of the event itself. (A narrative, that is, might create an account of its own production time, by recounting the reporter’s legwork.) Moreover, such temporal signals are often critical to the control (or lack of it) that a reader may feel over the events being portrayed. For instance, he or she may feel helplessness or sympathy or a sense of loss—as time’s passage takes on weight or importance as it slips away, or moves too fast, or conversely proceeds slowly and painfully. Inside a text, transfigurations of time can work at variable speeds, slowing any given text and speeding it up.

Collaterally, time is not always moving in a single direction—as, for instance, when we conceive of a narrative *flashback* as a transport backwards in time. Rather, as William Dowling has written in his exegesis of the ideas central to French philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative*, we are just as likely to experience a “double temporality”<sup>31</sup> in what we read. That is, as Ricoeur sees it, there is commonly a dialectical interplay of *two* main movements of narrative time, one propelling the reader forward with the action, and a counter-flow that attaches importance or meaning to that forward movement while looking back in time (often, belatedly).<sup>32</sup> As Dowling has explained, this often-simultaneous interplay of forward-and-backward look-

ing narrative time is crucial to Ricoeur's sense of how stories construct shared communal meanings between authors and readers.<sup>33</sup> This was an idea Ricoeur drew, in part, from anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz: the premise that symbolic meanings are not simply conjured up by the storyteller alone. Rather, such meanings are typically forged in common with what readers learn or intuit along the path of reading.<sup>34</sup> (Perhaps this is why anthropologists jokingly refer to what *they* do as slow journalism.) As such, reciprocity may serve to actively suture the seams of cultural understanding between journalist and reader. If so, Ricoeur's model certainly applies to journalism's sense of its public role: The meaning of an event is not merely reported or described in the present tense, but forged in concert with one's reading public, often over time.<sup>35</sup>

Or, one might say, Ricoeur's model reinforces the idea that journalistic authority does not lie just with capturing the now. Indeed, it is all too easy to overplay the story of modernization's invisible hand on journalism's relationship to time. Few would dispute that technological changes in capturing and delivering the news have expanded exponentially over the centuries; to be sure, the undeniable feel of truth or authenticity in eyewitness testimony derives from its immediacy, its emotional richness, and its testimonial power. The news often seems to capture, as the U.S. publisher Henry Luce might say, a moment in *Time*. (Puns about time or "the times" are of course legion in newspaper and magazine mastheads.) Nevertheless, as Zelizer has argued in another context, we should not simply equate journalistic authority with direct witnessing.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, even photography (or, in another Luce coinage, in-the-moment *Looking*) can retain associations of subjectivity and partial viewing.<sup>37</sup> Much like a seemingly indisputable confession, or an apparently rock-solid police line-up identification, eye-witnessing can prove to be entirely mistaken, self-interested, misleading, or all of the above. Which is also why, in the journalism trade, being on the scene is thought best balanced via the rituals of objectivity, fact-checking, or double-sourcing—and, speaking in a temporal vocabulary, by retrospect. Or, by what Zelizer, drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha, has called enacting a "double time."<sup>38</sup> In forms of slow journalism, these two core perspectives in time become mutually interdependent—the authority of each not surviving, at least for very long, without the contribution of the other.<sup>39</sup>

### Literary Journalists Negotiate Time

It's time, however, to get down to specific long-form journalists, and to how they orchestrate matters of temporality in their texts. At the very least, paying attention to different varieties of time might expand scholarly discussions

of stylistic technique. As writers of fiction do, nonfiction writers use temporal shifts to create immediacy, to recreate the *lost time* of being enclosed or isolated, or to suggest the feeling of disorientation that can accompany movement across borders or through different historical eras. For example, in *Travels with Herodotus*, as Magdalena Horodecka has demonstrated, Ryszard Kapuściński inverts the standard modes of autobiographical time and archaic history to create a hermeneutic dialogue with his Greek counterpart.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, immersive writers like Suki Kim try to create the feeling of time's disappearance when, going undercover in North Korea, she finds herself cut off from the events of the outside world.<sup>41</sup> John Edgar Wideman, in turn, weaves Eastern and Western notions of time, different generational decades, and different eras of African American history into his memoir *Brothers and Keepers*. Working collaboratively with his imprisoned brother, Wideman refashions Zelizer's double time into a powerful call and response narrative that captures the *doing time* of prison and the sorrowful retrospect of *times* the brothers have both shared and lost.<sup>42</sup>

Such a rapid-tempo list, however, should not be taken to suggest that the manipulation of time is *only* a matter of style or theme. On the contrary, temporal considerations connect to the ethical and interpretive concerns journalists bring to their stories. How time is rendered, for example, connects to choices about whose voices will be represented—even to choices concerning point of view. Michael Lewis, for instance, commonly shuffles temporal frameworks in his books so as to trouble the comforting privilege of hindsight his subjects lacked in real time.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, John Hersey's decision to use what literary critics typically call a "restricted third person" point of view in *Hiroshima* obviously reflects an attempt to control retrospect.<sup>44</sup> He attempts to limit the intrusion of what was later known about the Atom Bomb and emphasize, instead, mainly what his Japanese (and Jesuit) informants knew and did not know. "At the time," Hersey announces at the end of his very first paragraph—the time he freezes at the start of every section, at first—"none of them knew anything"<sup>45</sup>; the bomb survivors initially believe, for instance, that they have been doused in gasoline, "or some combustible gas, or a big cluster of incendiaries, or the work of parachutists."<sup>46</sup> Strategically leaking in parenthetical asides—the smell his characters detect is actually "(ionization . . . given off by the bomb's fission),"<sup>47</sup> for example—Hersey gradually lets the horrors of his scene accumulate, his own hindsight providing hints and small correctives that add to the tension in time.

Meanwhile, William Finnegan often uses the past present tense in recounting his journeys into the *Cold New World* of the criminalized American poor. In other words, instead of saying an informant "took me to" a movie,

Finnegan writes that “he takes me” there.<sup>48</sup> But Finnegan does that both to create a sense of immediacy and to avoid implying he had interpretive omniscience in real time. For instance, recounting an exchange with a New Haven mother worrying over her two sons—one a drug dealer named Terry, the other a disturbingly hyperactive toddler named Buddy—Finnegan writes this:

“Terry’s problem is, he’s lazy,” she goes on. “Buddy loves to work. He always got to be doing something. But Terry, he’s not like that.”

Angelica is right about Buddy, at least, who is now swinging his paint roller wildly in an effort to dislodge her . . . from the paint cans. “More Paint! More paint!” Buddy has been pleading for more paint for an hour now. I’ve tried to suggest to Angelica and [her boyfriend] that he really could use some more paint, but I, too, am ignored. . . .

. . . I’m reluctant to sit in judgment on Angelica’s maternal performance. The state can do that. . . . Angelica has not come stomping uninvited into *my* life and, on the basis of a few conversations with my family, presumed to judge my performance as a son or a spouse or a citizen.<sup>49</sup>

Finnegan avoids, that is, something all too conventional these days: making retrospect seem as if it is the journalist’s own uncanny wisdom and foresight.<sup>50</sup>

How time is represented is also intimately connected to the interpretive paradigms that journalists appropriate from other fields. For example, in *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*,<sup>51</sup> Anne Fadiman shifts her storytelling about a Hmong family between the lenses of anthropology and history, a process that entails radical shifts in how temporality interacts with her interpretations. Verb tenses track these shifts. In the anthropological mode that begins her book, Fadiman’s subject-family is seen through the temporally static lens of ethnographic description: The “Hmong” “are” or “do” what they have always done.<sup>52</sup> But when Fadiman later turns to tracing that family through the lens of history, these same static cultural norms are irrevocably put in motion by the experience of mass transnational migration and war. “Every Hmong refugee has an exodus story,” she now writes, “. . . Most Hmong walked. Some travelled in small extended-family bands, others in convoys of up to 8,000 people.”<sup>53</sup> And she’s not done shifting time. When Fadiman moves into psychological analysis of that family’s members, time reverts to a case study mode that isolates emotionally pivotal events in time, and allows Hmong characters to testify as individuals. (“‘I am very stupid,’ says the family’s mother, ‘. . . too many sad things have happened to me and my brain is not good any more’ ”<sup>54</sup>). When Fadiman shifts into a memoir mode, we are in her own personal time frame as she begins to recount when

she actually arrived on scene, met her Hmong family, and breaks through. “I was to spend hundreds of hours in this apartment,”<sup>55</sup> she writes, introducing her *modus operandi* not in her preface or prologue, but a third of the way into her book, while projecting forward in time.

Therefore, temporality should not be viewed only as a theme or stylistic effect of narrative journalism. Rather, it is directly connected to the tactical, material, and ethical decisions that journalists face in ways that fiction writers often do not. The writer’s heady power of mastering time, or again the power to impose hindsight, might be more constrained in narrative journalism than in fiction.<sup>56</sup> While literary critics, for instance, commonly seek out formalist notions of parallelism, foreshadowing, or even closure within works of narrative journalism, practicing journalists know all too well that the timespans of actual lives may not be so orderly, just as *journalistic* free-indirect discourse is, well—not quite as free.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, unlike fiction writers, journalists cannot simply locate themselves in time where they will: On the contrary, where they stood in time relative to the event, even where in time they were when they wrote the story, is often crucially related, again, to the authority readers are liable to grant them.<sup>58</sup>

This is also why thinking more about belatedness might be instructive. In the general sense, belatedness is a word used in English to capture the sense of arriving too late; older meanings, the *Oxford English Dictionary* reports, even connect to the sense of being left out after dark.<sup>59</sup> Belatedness can thus, obviously, carry a connotation of regret, having missed out, or of not having been somewhere when needed. However, the most promising meanings of belatedness are those that provide insight into the tensions between the fluid *flex*-time of narrative temporality and the *real*-time, news-production conditions in which journalistic texts operate, such as deadlines, the rhythms of court cases, and so on.<sup>60</sup> Yesterday’s *now*, and its importance, has a habit not only of becoming impossible to witness, but being made irrelevant or irrecoverable, in effect slipping out of one’s hands. In the simplest sense, journalists are beings who are bound by time: both in terms of the production timetables they are subject to and the actual location in time they occupy. As a result, they often develop routines and writing strategies to manage or redress their all-too-customary belatedness.

In fact, few better examples exist than the routines devised by Calvin Trillin for his various *New Yorker* essays, including the U.S. Journal series that focused on (as his recently reissued 1984 book title put it) *Killings*: accidental deaths, suicides, and murders in small towns and cities beyond his Manhattan home. Trillin has said that he commonly began these essays in New York with a tip culled from out-of-town newspapers; then he would venture out, much

like a travelling salesman in a rental car, with a typewriter lugged around into motel rooms while trying to follow, or catch up on, a local criminal trial.<sup>61</sup> Trillin likened those trials to “illumination devices,” he said, “switched on by sudden death”<sup>62</sup>: They cast intense and immediate light, going right to the heart of local cultures and their conflicts. He would also talk to citizens, of course, including gathering up the rumors they would tell him. Meanwhile, Trillin said he would devote one week to visiting his towns, one to drafting his essay, and one to working on revisions. (He admitted, in fact, that he had often confined his town visits to a single week so as to leave time for the other two tasks.) Gradually, in turn, his essays would reflect that itinerary. That is, they would typically begin with what, initially, the locality only perceived dimly, or would only venture guesses about, through rumor or hearsay—including facts that might *not* actually be revealed by the ensuing criminal trials. And thus at its core, Trillin’s art involved a repurposing of local news stories and local talk through retrospection, creating essays that often contained a sequential set of nested installments strung along his narrative line.

In short, belatedness is quite simply the structural premise of many of the *Killings* essays. Trillin’s *New Yorker* readers, likewise, are necessarily put in a position of catching up themselves, asked to go back over local news archives and local opinion and thus re-experience what the local citizens had. The result is a story that typically unfolds, as if producing serial installments *inside* a single essay through a sequential refinement of the original story. The narrative arc of Trillin’s *New Yorker* essays therefore create not only Ricouer’s and Zelizer’s double time, but what some narrative theorists have called *double directedness*: a reconstruction of local knowledge revised by cosmopolitan skepticism; they recast what has already happened at the local level with a more metropolitan eye.<sup>63</sup> However, Trillin is usually careful not to jump prematurely to ironic hindsight. Rather he preserves, for the narrative effect of tension, the processes of his reporting: Usually, his footprints remain in the sand of the text. Thus, much like the interplay Zelizer describes, Trillin reproduces, for his national audience of the *New Yorker*, a feeling of intimacy that is counterpointed at a distance both geographic and temporal.

### How Trillin Manipulates Time

But here I should slow down, one final time, by turning to the specific Trillin essay in mind. The structure of this specific Trillin essay works much in the way described above: by reconstructing the events leading up to a tragic death and criminal trial. Specifically, Trillin’s essay recounts the death of a young teenage girl named FaNee Cooper who, having grown up in a place called Halls Crossroads—a rural hill community outside Knoxville,

Tennessee—rebels from her parents’ evangelical middle-class world. Young and sensitive, prone to bleak meditations, ironic and self-critical, she spirals into a tougher crowd. Increasingly desperate concerning her whereabouts, FaNee’s parents in turn begin to seek help from her school and local community to track her movements until, in the horrid, penultimate phase of Trillin’s essay, FaNee dies tragically while being chased down, over winding mountain roads, by a car driven by her own father. Trillin may well have readapted his essay from Associated Press reports of FaNee’s death and the ensuing trial<sup>64</sup>—but in any event, in a familiar way, the essay begins with FaNee’s background, builds to a climax at her death, and then offers a brief dénouement discussing the trials that follow. It is a relatively conventional Freytag pyramid of a plot.<sup>65</sup>

If, however, we focus on Trillin’s manipulation of time, his essay starts to seem far less conventional. Here are its first lines:

Until she was sixteen, FaNee Cooper was what her parents sometimes called an ideal child. “You’d never have to correct her,” FaNee’s mother has said. In sixth grade, FaNee won a spelling contest. She played the piano and the flute. She seemed to believe what she heard every Sunday at the Beaver Dam Baptist Church about good and evil and the hereafter. FaNee was not an outgoing child. Even as a baby, she was uncomfortable when she was held and cuddled.<sup>66</sup>

Here Trillin begins with a rather abrupt, nearly mid-point temporal marker: “Until she was sixteen.” However, he then follows up this clause with a vague, nebulous past tense: “FaNee Cooper was what her parents sometimes called an ideal child,” a doubly qualified assertion that only raises the question of what has not been said. Then, Trillin turns time on its head again, by switching to a hard-to-follow “non-continuous” past tense, as in her mother “has said” (in other words, an attribution that could have come from any moment in time).

What follows actually hops through the years of FaNee’s childhood almost at random. Indeed, Trillin’s plot line—which might otherwise seem simply a chronological story propelling FaNee Cooper forward to her death—actually hopscotches all around her childhood. And as a result, Trillin’s constant shifts in time make the “when” of FaNee’s supposed *fall* much harder to locate or reason out. And he’s not done bending time even when he gets to the dramatic climax of his story. There, Trillin will shift gears again, moving into Bakhtin’s thickening of narrative temporality. That is, right when the action might be thought to be speeding up—after all, it’s a description of a car chase—Trillin actually slows down, starting on the very day of FaNee’s death, itemizing the movements she makes, step by step. At the end of this penultimate downshift, Trillin then slows down his narrative clock even further, into a slow-motion

time, as FaNee's father Leo Cooper watches her car turning over and over in the air, followed by: "I thought it was an eternity before I could find her body."<sup>67</sup> For FaNee's father, we might say, conventional clock time has become what some call trauma's frozen or forever time, lived over and over again.<sup>68</sup>

As if that were not enough, Trillin also deploys several complicated effects to build the antithetical forces of double temporality. Trillin's protagonist and his readers are simultaneously pulled forward in time, as if against their will. To accentuate this pull forward, he also grants FaNee Cooper the eerie power of premonition, of seeing forward into her own fate but having no power over it: As if she has her own Ouija board, she even writes a poem a week before the accident, suggesting she's going to die without knowing why.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, Trillin, the self-effacing "deadline poet"<sup>70</sup> himself, crystallizes a temporal marker into a poetic refrain, a phrase repeated throughout the essay: FaNee starts saying everything is "too late," or "it's just too late"<sup>71</sup> without ever clarifying what the "it" is.

Of course, this all creates a mood of fatality. But the poignancy of these events is better understood through the belatedness with which they are viewed. The reader may recognize, for instance, that Trillin himself has somehow gotten access to FaNee's private materials, principally a diary, "written in a remarkably neat hand"<sup>72</sup> that contains FaNee's premonitions. Like FaNee's parents, he has gathered up the evidence with hindsight, but even he, writing in his now, can do little with it to change or explain events. Simultaneously, Trillin allows the belatedness of his own position to resonate with the intentionally nebulous denotations of his book's title, *Killings*, which (much like a refrain itself) begins to assert itself within this particular essay. That is, as the essay begins, readers may be unsure about *how* FaNee will meet her death—suicide, accident, murder—even if they suspect she will. But rather than moving towards clarification, Trillin leads his readers to feel that FaNee's *killing* could be interpreted under any one of those three labels. Indeed, the narrative voice refrains from invoking the insight that Trillin's hindsight would seem to have offered him. FaNee thus becomes as removed from readers as she is from the people who begin to testify about her: Readers realize, perhaps, they are out of time too. Again, as FaNee says, "It's too late."<sup>73</sup>

These in-text effects of belatedness also might refer back to Trillin's professional routine. That is, the time gap between FaNee's death and the moment the essay was originally produced has clearly forced Trillin to rely on attribution, or the testimony of persons who actually did witness these sad events. And as such, he only discovers the limits of that reliance.<sup>74</sup> For one thing, it means that Trillin was forced to work through the incomplete knowledge of the community surrounding FaNee—through the half-knowledge of her par-

ents, especially. As if to acknowledge that bind, Trillin begins to introduce a wry repurposing of the evangelical discourse that FaNee's parents themselves have used, even though obviously that vocabulary had failed to forestall her fate. When she had been discovered smoking cigarettes at age thirteen, her parents no longer saw her as their "perfect" angel. (Sadly, FaNee had begun to use some of that vocabulary herself—writing, for instance, about demons and serpents attacking her sanity.<sup>75</sup> It is as if Trillin admits resorting to the very attributions he cannot agree with, often by making them seem even more unreliable than they were originally. He reports, for instance, FaNee's former-cheerleader and high school principal parents saying that "They thought [FaNee] might [merely] be self-conscious" about the combination "of braces and glasses,"<sup>76</sup> or that, in FaNee's high school, the self-proclaimed "Jocks" will "talk about having a really good . . . witness" at church.<sup>77</sup> FaNee's story needs a witness, but it seems not to have any.

Faced with such weak rationalizations, the reader might insist, variously, that FaNee's self-attributed "lateness" referred to a sense of having sinned or *fallen*, or having passed a crossroads of some kind, or having become pregnant (that is, being *late*). Yet the half-attributions in Trillin's prose also work to remind the reader that, in the rural domain of Halls Crossroads, such a center of meaning may not have been recoverable. As FaNee Cooper moves forward in her time, escaping her parents, she also moves out into a kind of unstable void, a place that Trillin says "has no center"<sup>78</sup> despite all those evangelical claims of community cohesion. Even the criminal and civil trials that follow do not end up probing (in Trillin's telling) FaNee's motives for running away, and they clearly whitewash Leo Cooper's own complicity in her death. Using the trademark local vocabulary, the courts affirm that Leo Cooper had merely "done what any daddy worth his salt would have done."<sup>79</sup> And thus, the cost of Trillin's belatedness is only doubled: undermined both by the fragmented record of FaNee's death and by the inadequacy of the local discourse—communities that, as a journalist, Trillin might have re-crafted to explain her crisis.

Trillin's predicament becomes even more visible if we go back in time to the scene where Leo Cooper chases FaNee as she tries to escape in a car driven by her boyfriend, Charlie Stevens. In its earliest phases, the sequences leading up to the car chase have been presented in a thickened narrative time, as if Trillin means to transport the reader back in time. Trillin's lines have the aura of realism, of being there, of eye-witnessing:

At a fork, Cooper thought he had lost the Pinto. He started to go right, and then saw what seemed to be a spark from Stevens's dragging muffler off to the left, in the darkness. Cooper took the left fork, down Salem Church Road. He went down a hill, and then up a long, curving hill to a crest,

where he saw the Stevens car ahead. "I saw the car airborne. Up in the air," he later testified. "It was up in the air. And then it completely rolled over one more time. It started to make another flip forward, and just as it started to flip to the other side it flipped back this way, and my daughter's body came out."<sup>80</sup>

This is tough stuff, to be sure: enthralling, grim, perhaps another body in a crime scene. But in the chase sequences, the reader should also notice that only with the belated arrival of Trillin's temporal attribution of "he later testified"<sup>81</sup> does it become apparent that this testimony is derived from a courtroom, from none other than Leo Cooper himself, thinking back in time. But that is precisely what, of course, creates the rub: FaNee Cooper's father, now revealed as the *source* for the transporting scene, is on trial for *causing* FaNee's death. Zelizer's point about the uncertainty of ocular proof and eye-witnessing is certainly relevant here: The very immediacy, emotional saturation, and slow time of Leo's testimony are also what make it so suspect. Ultimately, it is possible to come to think of Trillin himself as FaNee's *doppelgänger* in journalistic time: If local headlines have plunged him back in time, she has moved forward *into* those headlines. And, in a way, now, out of them, as if beyond human time itself.

Oh, and here is the title of the Trillin essay I've been describing: "It's Just Too Late."

### Conclusion

Sitting alone while reading this essay, in whatever moment in time, some of my own readers may protest that, after all, the title of a long-form journalistic work is something encountered at the start of reading—not, that is, so belatedly. A title, one thinks, is the writer's first move, an opening gambit, telling us where the story is going.

Instead, following Ricoeur, perhaps it can be said: A title is also something that accompanies us as we are propelled forward in narrative time. Trillin uses both his titles (essay and book) in this way: As refrains we might repeat to ourselves, even as they alter in importance over the course of narrative time. A title's meanings are sequentially layered and transformed by narrative retrospect. Only when the reader arrives at the end time of a long-form work may this broader function of the title seem completed.<sup>82</sup> Or, perhaps, in some forms of slow journalism, *not* completed at all: left partial, slightly out of reach, because of the belatedness of journalistic practice. In some ways, Leo Cooper's dilemma is Trillin's, as it is the reader's: "Even if Leo Cooper continues to think about that night for the rest of his life, there are questions he can never answer."<sup>83</sup>

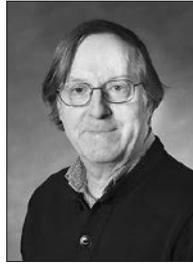
Admittedly, the issues about time and belatedness explored in "It's Just

Too Late" may be idiosyncratic to Trillin himself; not every work of narrative journalism is quite as self-reflexive as this one. For one thing, Trillin's apparent desire to leave a sense of incompleteness within the FaNee Cooper story will not satisfy every reader; some might say that the real-time constraint Trillin had allotted himself (his three-week routine) itself imposed limits on the depth of his inquiry. Indeed, in book versions of these *New Yorker* essays, Trillin typically felt the need to append updates on trials, verdicts, and their aftermath, as if more could always be said. Moreover, retrospect necessarily creates its own simplifications and distortions. In Trillin's case, belatedness forced him to rely on witness-attribution that created a double bind: trying to create a transport in time, but using rationalizations offered up by the very agents that caused the facts of a story to disappear or be distorted.<sup>84</sup> Nor is Trillin's occasional resorting to cosmopolitan irony always satisfying. There are elements in "Always Late," that turn Trillin's small town into a locale frozen in time, outside history, as if Halls Crossroads will always be what it was.<sup>85</sup>

However, even these limitations turn us back to belatedness, and considerations that may often be in play even in the seemingly luxurious, slow time of the narrative journalist. On the one hand, freed from deadlines and the stopwatch mentality, narrative journalists are indeed free to explore many different modes of temporality, many of which push back against the pressures of the now, offer ways to reinterpret headline events, and complicate the conventional notions of authority that say only eye-witnessing counts. And yet, Trillin's predicament also illustrates why belatedness matters: As *journalists*, none of these experiments in temporality float free of the real-time parameters around the text—matters shaping the text's production, qualifying its imaginary transports in time, and even suffusing its claims to *being there* and making a difference. Not all forms of time, *pace* Coetzee, can be made to bend at the journalist's will. Paradoxically, the moments when Trillin's story is most slow, engaging, and transporting are perhaps also the ones when it is most shadowed by its predicament of being too late.

As such, it is possible to imagine Trillin saying back to Weegee's fantasy of a present tense one might fully capture, something like the following: Through the ability to bend and buckle time, and transpose hindsight into narrative foresight, a journalist can come to think of his or her storytelling as conquering time, multiplying perspectives, and hopefully forging new meanings with readers. But sometimes the information that journalists gather is not psychic photography at all, and certainly not anything that takes the reader back into the actual past. Indeed, even the quick flash of the news' illumination can leave us feeling that time has already receded, the body has grown cold—and we are merely caught out after dark.<sup>86</sup>

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Crane, “When Man Falls, a Crowd Gathers,” 600–604.

<sup>2</sup> This discussion of Weegee is partly adapted from my digital classroom text, *Reading Narrative Journalism: A Guide for Students* (2018). For a good online sampling of Weegee’s crime photos, go to <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2012/jan/19/weegee-murder-photographs-pictures-new-york>. For an incisive discussion of Weegee’s career, see Orvell, “Weegee’s Voyeurism,” 18–41.

<sup>3</sup> Kramer, “Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists,” *Nieman Storyboard*. Kramer’s essay also appeared in *Literary Journalism*, 21–34, 28.

<sup>4</sup> In other words, leaving aside the obvious fact that the generalizations in the following apply only to print media forms, the goal here is not to define literary journalism’s distinctive temporal practices, or secure the distinctions between notorious labels like “long form,” “literary,” and so on. Rather, my sense is that the diversity of such practices, and the manifold ways of reading we bring to them, usually defies the project of considering such forms as a singular genre. However, I do use *temporality* to refer to the general sense of experiencing or being “in” time, and rely heavily on Susan Greenberg’s rightly influential characterization of “‘slow journalism,’” a term she used to refer to matters of production (e.g., extended writing and research time), to more ethical treatment of journalistic subjects, and to improved verifiability. See Greenberg, “Slow Journalism,” and Greenberg, “Slow Journalism in the Digital Fast Lane,” 381–93.

<sup>5</sup> As Barbie Zelizer recently concluded in a special issue on temporality in *Journalism [Theory, Practice, and Criticism]* (January 2018), this subject is still “in need of further excavation,” 111. See Zelizer, “Epilogue: Timing the Study of News

Temporality,” 111–21.

<sup>6</sup> Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, 204. For Coetzee, famously, “an altered experience of time” is in the very nature of narrative, a “heady” experience for both reader and author, who share in the “bunching” or “skipping” of “clock . . . or calendar time.” It is, he says, the very “heart of” fiction’s “narrative pleasure.” Coetzee, 203–4. See also Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> The notoriously risky imposition of hindsight, for instance, is a commonplace theme in many fields. For a fine discussion of its particularly thorny relation to economics and sports prognostication, see Lewis, *The Undoing Project*.

<sup>8</sup> Hartsock’s argument—which readapts Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories about the early modern novel to describe the American tradition leading to contemporary reportage—was originally posited in *A History of American Literary Journalism*, 49ff., and is most recently expanded upon in his *Literary Journalism and the Aesthetics of Experience*, 28–31, 56–59. A portion of his new study was republished in “The Literature in the Journalism of Nobel Prize Winner Svetlana Alexievich.”

<sup>9</sup> Zelizer, “Epilogue,” 112–13.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, “The Police Reporter,” 283. See also this line of argument in Wilson, *The Labor of Words*, 38.

<sup>11</sup> Schudson, “‘When?’: Deadlines, Datelines, and History,” 79. See discussion of the enduring idea of the “cop shop” as an apprenticeship ground in Wilson, *Cop Knowledge*, 130–68.

<sup>12</sup> Craig, “Reclaiming Slowness in Journalism,” 464; or, more broadly, as Benedict Anderson puts it, the process by which a modern subject moves “calendrically through homogenous, empty time.” Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 539.

<sup>14</sup> Schudson, “‘When?’: Deadline, Datelines, and History,” 79–108; Schudson, *Discovering the News*.

<sup>15</sup> Schudson, “‘When?’: Deadline, Datelines, and History,” 80 (italics in the original).

<sup>16</sup> Schudson, 97.

<sup>17</sup> Schudson, 97.

<sup>18</sup> Schudson, 81.

<sup>19</sup> Schudson, 81.

<sup>20</sup> Schudson, 81. Steve Chibnall has written, for example, that we should probably start calling crime reporters “*police* reporters,” underscoring this dependence. Chibnall, “The Crime Reporter,” 51 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>21</sup> Craig, 463–64 (italics in the original).

<sup>22</sup> Greenberg, “Slow Journalism.” Scholars eager to embrace Greenberg’s term as a genre category might also be reminded how much her emphasis originally fell on matters of marketing and upon ethics in journalism education—not just, that is, to the length of reading time. For more recent discussions of her term, see Le Masurier, “What Is Slow Journalism?” 138–52; Le Masurier, “Slow Journalism: An Introduction to a New Research Paradigm,” 439–47; and Hermann, “The Temporal Tipping Point,” 492–506.

- <sup>23</sup> Schudson, “‘When’: Deadline, Datelines, and History,” 88.
- <sup>24</sup> Schudson, 89.
- <sup>25</sup> Schudson, 90.
- <sup>26</sup> Schudson, 97.
- <sup>27</sup> See Tennenbaum-Weinblatt, “Counting Time”; Neiger and Tennenbaum-Weinblatt, “Understanding Journalism,” 139–60; Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger, “Temporal Affordances in the News,” 37–55. See also Keightley and Downey, “The Intermediate Time of News Consumption,” 93–110.
- <sup>28</sup> Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” 84.
- <sup>29</sup> Bakhtin, 84.
- <sup>30</sup> See Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism*, 53, 56–57.
- <sup>31</sup> The phrase “double temporality” is Dowling’s, in Ricoeur on *Time and Narrative*, 83.
- <sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 2:103; see also Dowling, *Ricoeur on Time and Narrative*, 83–4; Fleming, “Belatedness: A Theory of the Epic,” 525–34.
- <sup>33</sup> Dowling, *Ricoeur on Time and Narrative*, 2–3.
- <sup>34</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:57–58.
- <sup>35</sup> The argument here draws upon Radway, “Identifying Ideological Seams,” 93–123.
- <sup>36</sup> Zelizer, “On ‘Having Been There,’” 408–28.
- <sup>37</sup> Michael Ayers Trotti has argued, for example, that the technical advance from woodcuts to photography did not necessarily improve the forensic reliability of crime reports. Trotti, “Murder Made Real: The Visual Revolution of the Half-tone,” 379–410.
- <sup>38</sup> Zelizer, “Journalists as Interpretive Communities,” 224; Bhabha, “Dissemination: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” 297.
- <sup>39</sup> The professional associations of objectivity with the processes behind, rather than in the news “product” itself, are legion. See Kovach and Rosensteel, *The Elements of Journalism*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the most common sense of “hindsight,” as “seeing what has happened, and what ought to have been done, after the event; perception gained by looking backward,” and dates only from 1883. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online (Oxford University Press, 2018, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/>), s.v. “hindsight.”
- <sup>40</sup> See Horodecka, “The Hermeneutic Relation between Reporter and Historian,” 118–31.
- <sup>41</sup> Kim, *Without You, There Is No Us*.
- <sup>42</sup> Wideman, *Brothers and Keepers*.
- <sup>43</sup> Lewis, *The Undoing Project*. For a discussion of these narrative strategies, see Wilson, “Michael Lewis and the Business of Sport,” 112–29.
- <sup>44</sup> Hersey, *Hiroshima*.
- <sup>45</sup> Hersey, 4.
- <sup>46</sup> Hersey, 65–66.
- <sup>47</sup> Hersey, 47.
- <sup>48</sup> Finnegan, *Cold New World*, 22.
- <sup>49</sup> Finnegan, 54 (emphasis in original).
- <sup>50</sup> See Finnegan’s discussion of his avoidance of omniscience in Boynton, “William Finnegan,” in *The New New Journalism*, 90.
- <sup>51</sup> Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You*.
- <sup>52</sup> Fadiman writes, for instance, “The Hmong believe that illness can be caused . . .,” 10, or “the Hmong viewed the Chinese as meddlesome and oppressive, . . .” 14.
- <sup>53</sup> Fadiman, 161.
- <sup>54</sup> Fadiman, 103.
- <sup>55</sup> Fadiman, 98.
- <sup>56</sup> Cf. David Shields’s remarks on “the epistemological insecurity” of narration in nonfiction. Shields, entry 389, *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*, 132.
- <sup>57</sup> For a discussion of this tension in relation to the use of free-indirect discourse in more experimental narrative nonfiction, see Wilson, “The Chronicler: George Packer’s *The Unwinding*.”
- <sup>58</sup> Joe Brooker has argued that James Joyce puts his followers in an anxious position of having arrived too late, like “guests wondering whether there’s anything left to drink.” Brooker, “The Fidelity of Theory: James Joyce,” 202.
- <sup>59</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “belatedness.”
- <sup>60</sup> For discussions of belatedness as the deferral of meaning or the delayed arrival of revelation, see Brooker, “The Fidelity of Theory: James Joyce,” 201–21; Keniston, “‘Not Needed, Except as Meaning,’” 658–83; and Ohi, “Belatedness and Style,” 126–46.
- <sup>61</sup> Boe, “An Interview with Calvin Trillin,” 71–88. See also Boynton, “Calvin Trillin,” 379–403.
- <sup>62</sup> Trillin, *Killings*, xv–xvi.
- <sup>63</sup> Pelizzon and West bring together the idea of “double directedness,” from Joseph Valente, “The Novel and the Police (*Gazette*),” 14, with James Phelan’s idea that tabloid readers are both “skeptics” and “believers,” Phelan, “Narratee,” 145. See Pelizzon and West, *Tabloid, Inc.: Crimes, Newspapers, Narratives*, 32, 36. Elsewhere, I have argued that Trillin’s manipulation of this double perspective was crucial to the authority and cultural disposition of the *New Yorker* itself. See Wilson, “A Rumor of Noir,” 1–16.
- <sup>64</sup> See AP story, “Chase Ends in Girl’s Death,” *Victoria [TX] Advocate*, March 9, 1977, 7A.
- <sup>65</sup> *Encyclopedia of Literature*, s.v. “Freytag’s pyramid.”
- <sup>66</sup> Trillin, “It’s Just Too Late,” 133.
- <sup>67</sup> Trillin, 143.
- <sup>68</sup> Many trauma theorists, for example, reason that ruptures in the narration of time typically express a powerlessness in the grip of past events not fully assimilated at the time of their witnessing. See Keniston, “‘Not Needed, Except as Meaning,’” 658–83.
- <sup>69</sup> Trillin, “It’s Just Too Late,” 148.

<sup>70</sup> Trillin, *Deadline Poet*.

<sup>71</sup> Trillin, "It's Just Too Late," 141.

<sup>72</sup> Trillin, 133.

<sup>73</sup> Trillin, 139.

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of the relation of attribution to rumor, see Wilson, "A Rumor of Noir," 4–6, 8, 12.

<sup>75</sup> Trillin, "It's Just Too Late," 134, 137.

<sup>76</sup> Trillin, 135.

<sup>77</sup> Trillin, 137.

<sup>78</sup> Trillin, 136.

<sup>79</sup> Trillin, 145.

<sup>80</sup> Trillin, 143.

<sup>81</sup> Trillin, 143.

<sup>82</sup> As Paul Copley writes in *Narrative*: "Like [Peter] Brooks, [Ricoeur] stresses the importance of the end point of a narrative, arguing that the understanding of successive actions, thoughts and feelings in a narrative is dictated by anticipation of the conclusion, and also, that reaching the conclusion enables a backward glance at the actions that led up to it," 19.

<sup>83</sup> Trillin, "It's Just Too Late," 148.

<sup>84</sup> Journalists are, Trillin has said, "always working in someone else's field of expertise" and explanation, and thus subject to their authority. As quoted in Boynton, "Calvin Trillin," 390.

<sup>85</sup> In reference to the poetry of Dorothy Parker, like Trillin a writer associated with the *New Yorker*, Burstein calls this element "epigrammatic compression"; see Burstein, "A Few Words about Dubuque," 237. Here, as earlier, I am also suggesting a limit on Ricoeur's notion of communal meaning making and re-integration at narrative's end.

<sup>86</sup> For their support, comments, and expertise, the author would like to thank Bill Reynolds, Roberta Maguire, Marcia Prior-Miller, the anonymous readers of *LJS*—and especially Robert Chibka, for time together so well spent.

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