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Nancy L. Roberts, Book Review Editor

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Martha Gellhorn, November 1, 1940 (Associated Press)

Timely and Timeless Words

Yours, for Probably Always . . . Martha Gellhorn's Letters of Love and War 1930–1949 by Janet Somerville. Richmond Hill, Canada: Firefly Books, 2019. Photographs. Timeline. Selected Further Reading. Letter Citations. Notes. Index. Hardcover, 528 pp., USD\$40.

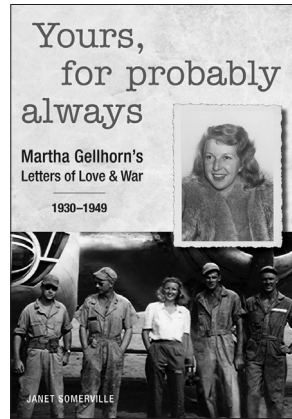
Reviewed by Isabelle Meuret, Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

“I do not believe that Fascism can destroy democracy, I think democracy can only destroy itself.”

— Martha Gellhorn, in a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt (1939)

Long gone are the days when Martha Gellhorn was showcased as the wife of some famous great American novelist. Thanks to the copious scholarship attached to her name these last decades and the careful attention paid to her literary and journalistic production, the intrepid war correspondent is now acknowledged as a full-fledged and distinguished writer. While several biographies have documented her personal and professional trajectories, in particular Caroline Moorehead's *Gellhorn: A Twentieth-Century Life* (2003), the entertainment business has also contributed to glorifying this U.S. heroine, albeit through the slightly extravagant feature film *Hemingway and Gellhorn* (2012) by Philip Kaufman. In times when women's accomplishments are increasingly and justly receiving long-awaited and eagerly expected consideration, *Yours, for Probably Always: Martha Gellhorn's Letters of Love & War 1930–1949* is understandably a welcome and appreciable addition to existing knowledge. While this volume is not the first to present Gellhorn's correspondence—Moorehead's *Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn* (2006) already disclosed before-unseen material—Janet Somerville's tour de force rests on her being granted access to Gellhorn's restricted papers, photos, journals, and correspondence, unpublished to this day.

Somerville, a Canadian literature specialist, set about the daunting task of sifting through Gellhorn's archives, a treasure chest held at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University. The book itself, an impressively hefty and elegant volume of letters, also contains two beautifully arranged inserts featuring vintage photographs of Gellhorn, her relatives, and friends, as well as reproductions of authentic missives, telegrams, and official documents, among which is a note signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself, and an emotion-laden visitor's pass to the Dachau concentration camp, wherefrom Gellhorn bore witness to the ultimate



horror. Unquestionably, the added value of Somerville's impressive curation of documents resides in its meticulous selection and arrangement, augmented with her own occasional comments and additions to the letters, journal entries, and diary notes of Gellhorn. Pondering over *Yours, for Probably Always*, more specifically with a view to its contribution to literary journalism studies, two elements stand out. First, Gellhorn showed unabated enthusiasm for and absolute dedication to her journalistic occupation and literary craft. Second, the timelessness and timeliness of her words, as they appear in letters spanning two decades, is astounding, given the particularly volatile moments in which we are living.

Gellhorn was undeniably proud of being a war correspondent; her determination to get the job done was her top priority and "obligation as a citizen" (413). This preoccupation is constantly present in her letters, which imply critical acumen and professional flair. Such commitment required a strong work ethic and constant introspection. She shared equal concern for the editors at *Collier's*, for her sources on the field, and for readers at home. That she went to great lengths to obtain firsthand information is clear from her letters and notes. If her reportages from the War in Spain published in *Collier's* bespeak her unwavering engagement in the coverage of the conflict, they also reflect the specific angle she was encouraged to develop, that is, stories of human interest. Her letters confirm this passion for people but, most importantly, they reveal the huge amount of reporting she did, behind the scenes, collecting information on the field and interacting with notable sources. Her scrupulous and methodical approach to her assignments shatters the simplistic image of Gellhorn as a reckless journalist willing to go to the war with the boys but telling stories that were peripheral to the actual military stakes. They confirm that her courage was immense; the risks she took are inferred from the moving letters she prepared for loved ones, never expedited, in case she died.

Gellhorn threw herself wholeheartedly in her journalistic ventures, but she was also a creative writer at heart. In a letter from Cuba, dated July 10, 1942, she confessed to Eleanor Roosevelt:

I would rather be a journalist than anything except a first-rate writer. The writing of books is hard and lonely work and you are never sure for a minute that you have done the thing you planned and hoped to do. Journalism is hard and exhausting and marvelously exciting and always rewarding and you know exactly what kind of job you are doing, every minute. (352)

Gellhorn drew a line between her two activities, hence her concern about a realistic story of lynching she had written, of which she was no actual witness (135–36); and her reviewers were sometimes confused as to her reporting of true events (274). Is this dabbling with both reportage and fiction the reason why her then-French lover, Bertrand de Jouvenel, declared her journalism "unprintable," but trusted she would eventually "achieve the reputation of a Rimbaud" (98)? Allen Grover, from *Time* magazine, penned prescient lines: "I should one day publish your collected letters. They're magnificent prose" (110). Eleanor Roosevelt deemed that *A Stricken Field* (1940), a novel based on Czechoslovakia on the brink of war, enabled Gellhorn "to say certain things that [she] could not have said if [she] were simply

reporting what [she] had seen and heard” (272). Gellhorn, who felt “on occasion very mildly pleased with [her] articles” (401), cut her teeth on writing, flexing her muscles, “doing five finger exercises. . . . If you see something, you write it, to give the exact emotion to someone who did not see it” (285). She was also an avid reader of Koestler and Waugh, among others.

Besides these considerations relative to Gellhorn’s journalistic and literary aspirations, her words, as noted above, are timely and timeless, to such an extent that reading her today proves a disturbing experience. Her commitment to social justice while documenting poverty during the Great Depression, her concern for the vulnerability of war victims, as well as her outright partisan advocacy journalism, strike a particular chord today, when nationalism and racism are alarmingly on the rise worldwide. Gellhorn’s reflections do not necessarily offer a visionary take on the future, as her letters discuss events that spanned the 1930s and ’40s, two decades tainted by the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, but they ominously resonate with the current global political climate and should therefore be read as a healthy, albeit baneful, remembrance of things past. By way of illustration, Gellhorn wrote in a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, dated October 19, 1938, “I hate cowardice and I hate brutality and I hate lies. And of these three, maybe the lies are worst. Now Hitler has set the standard for the world, and truth is rarer than radium” (219). These comments were enlightened by her presence in Europe, where she observed first-hand the plight of Czechoslovakia and Spain, and then a whole continent adrift, blighted by Nazism.

While Gellhorn’s correspondence is strident with social and political criticism, it is also instructive regarding gender-related matters. The #MeToo groundswell was undoubtedly a long-awaited and game-changing upheaval. However, as a watershed movement, it has also occasionally swept under the carpet instances where women actually stood their ground, outwitted, and surpassed their male rivals, or situations where male colleagues and partners were their best allies and brothers-in-arms. Gellhorn’s letters acknowledge her irreconcilable enmities as much as her steadfast loyalties. They complexify gender relations in the interwar period and resist victimhood by repeatedly indicating that, for all the disappointments and deceptions she endured, Gellhorn was also often encouraged, praised, and trusted by male counterparts, mentors, and advisors. From the most abject and unfair ordeals she emerged with increased stature and command, not seeking revenge. She gained resilience and resourcefulness in the face of adversity. Arguably, her tongue-in-cheek admissions (after two abortions) that “[b]eing fertile is a great handicap” (54), or that she embraced her “future career as a *femme de ménage littéraire* [literary maid] with positive gratitude” (55), or that her father once claimed “blondes only work under compulsion” (66), should remain anecdotal.

More important is her recognition that she did not fit in a world that had limited expectations for women. That she “committed mortal sin” by opting for a life on her own terms was par-for-the-course “gossip” (60) in her native St. Louis. However, such parochialism did not spoil the genuine affection she felt for and received from her parents. Again, her admission that “I am somewhat the enemy of feminine . . . except

in a strictly limited field of personal relations” (299) shows that Gellhorn was capable of nuance and aware of the many human intricacies. Appreciably, Gellhorn’s letters instantiate her attachment and admiration to her mother and to Eleanor Roosevelt, both dedicated and trailblazing activists. The numerous exchanges with the latter are telling of the support the president’s spouse offered to Gellhorn and, conversely, the high esteem in which the writer held the indefatigable Mrs. Roosevelt. From these two women Gellhorn learned to be confrontational when the circumstances dictated. In a letter sent to Colonel Lawrence, on June 24, 1944, Gellhorn recalled that “General Eisenhower stated that men and women correspondents would be treated alike and would be afforded equal opportunities to fulfill their assignments.” Yet eighteen days after the landing, “women correspondents are still unable to cover the war” (412). Her tone then became peremptory:

There are nineteen women correspondents accredited; of these I know that at least six have had active war reporting experience, and at least two (of whom I happen to be one) have been war correspondents for seven years . . .

Speaking for myself, I have tried to be allowed to do the work I was sent to England to do and I have been unable to do it. I have reported war in Spain, Finland, China and Italy, and now I find myself plainly unable to continue my work in this theatre, for no reason that I can discover than that I am a woman. Being a professional journalist, I do not find this an adequate reason for being barred. The position in which I now am is that I cannot provide my magazine, and three million American readers, with the sort of information and explanation which I am sent here to obtain . . .

I must explain to my editor why I am not permitted to complete my mission here, and I trust that you will provide me with an official explanation which I can in turn send on to him. Naturally, since he has a very great obligation to the American public, he will protest this discrimination through channels in Washington. (412–13)

Gellhorn thus pushed her case with a view to doing her duty, not as a “need to beg, as a favor,” but “for the right to serve as eyes for millions of people in America who are desperately in need of seeing, but cannot see for themselves” (413). This episode follows her fatal dispute with Hemingway, which resulted in their definitive separation. It is a known fact that he cut her short by stealing her job from *Collier’s*, sabotaging her plans to cover the war, pure and simple, out of vainglory. Somerville provides evidence of the nightmarish situation in which Gellhorn ended up having to soldier on and embark on an endless voyage onboard a vessel loaded with explosives (397). However, this no-return tipping point in Gellhorn and Hemingway’s relationship, no matter how repulsive and revolting, cannot efface the ties that bound them for seven years. Their correspondence is understandably quite central in Somerville’s book, due to the many letters included, but it is unfortunately one-sided, as Gellhorn burned almost all of Hemingway’s letters (only two survive). Although the rejection and deception are clear, mutual respect and appreciation, as well as tender complicity and passionate promises, exude from most letters. As Somerville notes, the palette of their own “idiosyncratic diction” is incredibly touching, a testament to their “cherished intimacy” (344).

Gellhorn was certainly an impetuous, engaging, and qualified journalist, but her personality was ambiguous. While self-assured and ambitious, she also lacked confidence and shared her fear of being a “profiteer” (385), conscious of her privilege to be married to Hemingway, and infinitely indebted to the Roosevelts for their backing and connections. While serious and caustic in her reports, she was also affectionate and hilarious. “Gellhorn, the first of her class to sin, the last to legalize,” she wrote self-mockingly, or later, “What a shitty business: Who invented marriage since it fails?” (302, 418). And while she proved genial and gregarious, her musings on loneliness and abandonment tell a distinctly different story (410, 419). Yet Gellhorn was unapologetic: “feeling myself to be floating uncertainly somewhere between the sexes—I opt for what seems to me the more interesting of the two” (444). This honest take on gender fluidity is another lesson we take from this groundbreaking journalist. It is striking that, whether writing from the frontline, in the fire of action, or from her provincial hometown, Gellhorn’s words indicate a similar engagement, critical eye, and evenness of temper. Her stepson’s foreword to the volume echoes this equanimity, and points to the quality attention granted to all those who were blessed and privileged to receive her letters.

Yours, for Probably Always is certainly not restricted to a literary journalism audience and is accessible to a wider readership. Somerville embarked on a titanic project and fulfilled her grand enterprise with gusto. Nevertheless, despite the impressive collection of material and the laudable care brought to its organization, there remain a few gray areas in terms of methodology. While the bulk of the correspondence is between Gellhorn and her mother Edna, Eleanor Roosevelt, her partners and friends (Cam Becket, de Jouvenel, H. G. Wells, Hemingway, etc.), it is unclear how the actual curating was made. Somerville frames and complements each chapter with useful indications to help readers navigate the volume, but the criteria to select the letters, or passages thereof, or the reasons why so few diary notes are published in full, are not addressed. Scholars might miss such vital information to make sense of the blind spots in Gellhorn’s papers. Also, while the architecture of the volume corresponds to the years 1930–49, substantial information that exceeds these two decades is crammed into the last part of the book. This paradoxically gives new momentum, but it also comes either too late or too soon, and slightly unbalances the whole edifice. It feels as if the author was itching to say so much more but had not anticipated the whole picture, or a possible sequel.

I first read *Yours, for Probably Always* with a view to identify how the volume would illuminate our knowledge of Gellhorn’s life and times, already well furnished with biographies, critical chapters, and articles. Undeniably, Somerville’s impressive work on the writer’s archives contributes to the scholarship on Gellhorn. Having said that, I confess that I was tempted more than once to put down my academic glasses to take in Gellhorn’s words as they were, imagining the pleasure and emotion she and her addressees must have felt when they received those missives that had traveled for so long, and from so far away. The volume makes us wistful of such correspondence, obviously handwritten in beautiful cursive script or typed on solemn headed notepaper, literally an extension of Gellhorn’s persona, and of her kith and kin. Each piece

tells something about her mood, the place and time at which she penned those messages. We cannot help but regret and wax nostalgic about the corporeality, temporality, and spatiality of yesteryear correspondence, to which we held on physically in the absence of those we loved, admired, cherished. The remains of days when taking long looks at the world was a possibility, despite the atrocities of the times. A sharp contrast to today's vitriolic text and Twitter invectives that cause so much blast but blessedly never last.

To finish on a positive and galvanizing note, which is also to bring to Somerville's credit—her sagacity to find gems in Gellhorn's massive correspondence—I suggest getting back to the latter's wise words, albeit she insisted "one should be a writer, and not a lecturer" (188). Indeed, in times of clicktivism and armchair engagement, Gellhorn's journalistic ethics transpires from her personal and professional contract, that is to be "where the trouble is" (352). In a letter dated fall 1939, sent from New York City, Gellhorn wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt a caveat that resonates like a mantra not just for journalists, but for all of us who, on a daily basis, struggle with ideas and juggle with words: "But the thing that distresses me the most is this: do you think any people have a right to a moral attitude which they will not back with action, or have they a right to convictions without courage, or have they a right to speeches and writing and radio the while they complacently eat their national dinners and absolve their consciences with words" (235). Gellhorn shied away from sermonizing or pontificating, but her letters, while never sententious, make clear how strongly she felt about her journalism and hoped it would inspire radical imagination and direct action. Surely, we have to thank Somerville for getting us reacquainted with Martha Gellhorn.

Behind the Mountains, Dying, Alone

Now and at the Hour of Our Death

by Susana Moreira Marques. Translated by Julia Sanches. London: And Other Stories, 2015. Paperback, 128 pp., USD \$13.95.

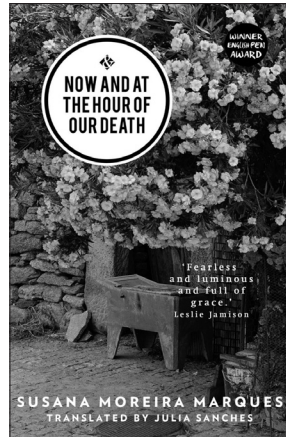
First published as *Agora e na hora da nossa morte* in 2012 by Edições Tinta da China, Lisbon, Portugal.

Reviewed by Rita Amorim, Universidade de Lisboa, ISCSP, Centro de Administração e Políticas Públicas, Portugal, and Raquel Baltazar, Universidade de Lisboa, ISCSP, Centro de Administração e Políticas Públicas, Portugal

What genre, one may ask? A mix of lyric reportage, essay, interview, travel diary/notebook, and poetry, *Now and at the Hour of Our Death* does not fit into any defined genre. Some of its features, however—nonfiction with factual descriptions or real events, meditations, and interviews—lead us to believe it to be a Portuguese variety of literary journalism. Filled with detail in a style that avoids cliché and easy emotion, in a style recognizable to literary journalism scholars, it documents a life-changing physical and emotional journey for the author that leaves no reader indifferent or remaining the same: “It was easier to get here than it will be to leave” (16).

Susana Moreira Marques, a Lisbon-based journalist for *Público* and *Jornal de Negócios*, who has also worked for the BBC World Service in London, reveals the true skill of immersion as she moves to a remote, scarcely populated rural area in northwest Portugal, on and off for five months, to accompany a palliative care team and document the experience of life on the death rail or being at its bedside. Leaving all judgment outside, she becomes a villager, a resident, sitting in hot, uncomfortable, or unpleasant places, to just listen. Her book records detailed and intimate confessions of oncologic outpatients.

Moreira Marques goes all the way to death and back, almost a near-death experience, as she witnesses the ordeals of three groups of people: patients suffering and/or dying from terminal illnesses, such as cancer; family members looking after them; and dedicated professionals taking care of them. People fit into two categories—those who are departing or those who remain—and this is a story about their love, their sharing, their affections. Going from one village to another and entering many houses, she watches, listens, and registers the daily lives of real people aware that they or their loved ones are inevitably heading to their end. She takes note of their deep, intimate feelings, emotions, and thoughts in the most severe, lonely, and slow hours of despair as they acknowledge grief and come to terms with death, trying to make it a part of life.



Death, of course, which remains a taboo in Western cultures, awaits us all from the moment we are born. Here it is portrayed as a natural part of our existence from which there is no escape. Life and death go hand in hand and intersect each other. In a tough but tender manner, Moreira Marques demonstrates that writer and reader alike, quite like everyone depicted in her book, has no hope of being ready for death, least of all, if it entails suffering. The process of dying and the grief attached to it is viewed through the sentimental and compassionate eyes of a woman. The author is a sensitive woman who reveals the workings of the minds of the dying, in their words and in the words of their beloved ones, while simultaneously sharing her own feelings through several meditations. The author enters others' intimacy, reacting to what she hears, sees, and feels, taking the reader with her.

Now and at the Hour of Our Death is an intense, enriching book about contrasts. The indignity of death is played out against the backdrop of the beautiful northern Portuguese landscape. The old local population suffers through its final days while young immigrants struggle through winter and summer. A book about the changing of times and the social and cultural world in which they live, the poor living conditions of isolated populations are highlighted through the book's focus on end-of-life issues. Indeed, not only are the older people dying, the rural way of life—even the concept of remote poor communities—is fading away. It is a portrait of a dying, isolated corner of an aged Portugal hit by desertification. The population of Trás-os-Montes (behind the mountains) is aging as young people have been leaving to find jobs in the urban areas or in other countries. The author raises awareness of the ill elderly who are left behind to die alone, and the anonymous medical professionals, true unsung heroes, who minimize their patients' suffering and give them some dignity.

A title is never chosen at random. Portugal is traditionally and predominantly Christian, a religion where death and suffering are accepted naturally as a part of life. *Now and at the Hour of Our Death*, the last sentence of the *Hail Mary* prayer shows that, for these terminally ill patients, now and the hour of our death are the same. When the seriousness of their condition is detected, they begin dying, and the issue of faith is questioned. "But what is frightening is not the thought of the unknown: it is the thought that there may not be an unknown, only an end" (17). Our senses are awakened by this moving book of quotes and observations that is divided into two parts: Travel Notes about Death, a collection of fragmented notes, anecdotes, thoughts, emotions; and Portraits, which are interview transcripts and short case studies.

No ordinary reading experience, the book might be a life-changing experience for the reader, who, once finished, will have now also faced death. There is life and death in the dying and in the surviving, inside and outside the book. The reader becomes more aware that life should be lived more fully, because the memories of these people do not necessarily die with them. The sad, empty, and hollow journey from life to death is counterbalanced by the joy, hope, and beauty of celebrating life. There is a moral lesson, to live and love, fully: "life changes completely from one day to the next, and that's when you realize that there's no use fighting wars, there's no use getting annoyed—life's too short—and it changed my way of thinking, my way of being" (56).

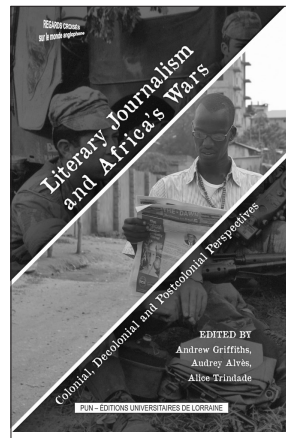
Looking at Africa's Wars

Literary Journalism and Africa's Wars: Colonial, Decolonial and Postcolonial Perspectives
 Edited by Andrew Griffiths, Audrey Alvès, and Alice Trindade. ReportAGES Series,
 Vol. 2. Nancy, France: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 2018. Illustrations. Notes.
 Works Cited. Paperback, 247 pp., 15€.

Reviewed by Marta Soares, Universidade de Lisboa, ISCSP, Centro de Administração e Políticas Públicas, Portugal

“War is either a failure to communicate or the most direct expression possible.”
 Charles Bernstein, “War Stories” (2003)

The second volume of the ReportAGES series, this collection of essays presents examples of literary journalism from Europe (England, France, Poland, Portugal, and Spain) and the United States that cover several wars and conflicts of (de)colonization which took place in Africa from the 1860s to the 1990s. The primary sources selected, as well as the essays exploring them, are culturally, linguistically, and politically complex in their different ways of looking at Africa's wars, pondering the impact of literary journalism on war reporting in different countries while allowing us to observe how discourses about Africa have changed over time.



With a thoughtful introduction by John S. Bak and Andrew Griffiths, the book comprises eight chapters, each providing an extract from a literary journalistic source focusing on a specific war, followed by a brief (yet comprehensive) contextual gloss and a scholarly essay. The primary sources contain a diversity of voices and perspectives—some of them comparatively unknown—that draw on different traditions and authors who represent them. While the original excerpts are presented both in their native language and in English, the essays are multilingual, ranging from English to French and Portuguese. Besides reflecting the diversity of ReportAGES, which is a research project that combines the efforts of several international partners, the inclusion of different languages reflects an editorial effort to “engage with the greatest possible diversity of perspectives,” as Griffiths writes in the introduction (4). Though granting diversity and coherence to the volume, this multilingualism hinders access to some of the essays, which limits somewhat the possibilities of a fruitful dialogue between readers and scholars.

Starting from war reportage, *Literary Journalism and Africa's Wars* stands at the crossroads of history, journalism, and literature, addressing from multiple angles the

complex intersections between war, language, and power. Indeed, several primary sources take a critical stance on the political and cultural structures of their time, questioning the logic of the dominant colonial discourse pervading them by exposing the asymmetries it creates and supports. Chapter 1, for instance, focuses on Henry Morton Stanley, a Welsh-American explorer, writer, and journalist, who, after being sent in 1868 by the *New York Herald* to cover a British campaign to release European hostages in Abyssinia, voiced his disapproval of the attitude of British officials with regards to having African servants. As Andrew Griffiths observes in his essay, Stanley was very critical of the sense of entitlement displayed by the British, defining “himself in opposition to this privileged Other” (32). Chapter 5 illustrates the critical positioning against dominant structures that Frederick Forsyth and Kurt Vonnegut took in their writings on the Nigerian Civil War (1967–70), condemning the policy followed by the United Kingdom and the United States in this conflict. As highlighted by Cristopher Griffin in his comparative analysis, though coming from different backgrounds, these authors had a similar style, using techniques of literary journalism, namely the clear presence of a “point of view,” to convey a personal perspective that criticized British and U.S. policies in Biafra, hence exemplifying the use of “literary journalism as a medium of resistance in a conflict that marked both authors profoundly” (142).

Still in the realm of power and language, while certain texts project an authorial voice that condemns the dominant structures of their time, other writings illustrate how this voice can be muffled by the political power through mechanisms of control such as censorship. Focusing on the Spanish-Moroccan War, chapters 2 and 3 present different strategies of working around censorship, showing photography and literature as an alternative way of telling the truth about the horrors of war that were meant to be hidden from Spanish readers. While Juan Galindo and Antonio Naranjo explore how *La Unión Ilustrada*, a graphic magazine founded in 1909, resorted to “literary photojournalism” in a way that countered its neutral editorial line, José Maneiro’s comparative reading of three different perspectives on the Rif War (1920–27)—those of José Díaz Fernández, Ramón J. Sender, and Arturo Barea Ogazón—emphasizes how literature stood as an alternative to censored journalism by conveying a more accurate portrait of the violence and cruelty of war.

Censorship is also tackled in chapter 4, addressing the early days of the Angolan wars and their coverage in the Portuguese newspaper *Diário de Notícias*. After providing a detailed historical background of this conflict, Alice Trindade discusses the control exerted on mainstream press at the time, forced by censorship to convey the official discourse of *Estado Novo*. By looking more specifically at writings by Martinho Simões, Trindade argues that, as a consequence of such pressures, new strategies of representing war—stylistically aligned with literary journalism—emerged, namely the use of cinematic imagery from movies on World War II, which were familiar to the Portuguese audience, to represent a foreign reality in a way that was both apolitical (thus safe) and closer to the reader’s understanding.

This way, Trindade points out, literary journalism played an important role in recreating a vision of Africa for a non-African audience, bridging the epistemic gap

between Europe and the so-called “dark continent.” The use of language to bridge this gap is also addressed in chapter 8, where Ivan Gros analyzes several articles from *Le Monde* that cover wars in Africa from 1948 to the present time, and argues that French journalists created “metaphors of invention” so that readers could “see the invisible and make sense of the unintelligible” (208). In addition to granting access to the unfamiliar, these metaphors of invention also allowed verbalizing the extreme experience of war, an issue that is very much present in other texts. In chapter 6, for instance, Aleksandra Wiktorowska examines five different works by the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński, written about several wars and conflicts in Africa, in order to illustrate how the author’s style became increasingly personal and autobiographical when translating the lived experience of war into words, merging different areas (history, journalism, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology) in what Wiktorowska calls “integrating reportage.” The use of individual testimony to verbalize the violence of war is also observed in chapter 7, that focuses on Philip Gourevitch’s account of the Rwanda Massacre in 1994. While exploring the way literary journalism uses history and transforms it into a verbal representation of extreme events, Juan Domingues looks at Gourevitch’s incorporation of the voices of those who survived the massacre, weaving a personal, impactful, and multivocal testimony that guides the author in telling these events.

As a whole, this volume outlines the academic field of literary journalism by clearly demarcating it (i.e., arguing why specific texts fit into this category) and by projecting a rich constellation of writers and scholars (Norman Sims, Tom Wolfe, among others) capable of upholding it. In fact, there is a systematic theoretical framing of literary journalism in the essays, presenting several definitions and different traditions (European and North American), pinpointing its style and constitutive aspects, and examining how its liminal position blurs the lines between objectivity and subjectivity, journalistic accuracy, and authorial voice.

Though a solid framing of literary journalism is provided, theoretical aspects related to colonialism and postcolonialism could have been further explored in dialogue with the primary sources. The issues rightfully raised by Griffiths in the introduction, namely the problematic of representing the Other, the fine line between “giving voice to” and “speaking for,” among others, could have been furthered in some of the essays, especially where the work of seminal authors such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said is mentioned but not compellingly aligned with the primary texts.

To conclude, the volume fully meets the goals set by ReportAGES, as it offers an overview of literary journalism on an international scale while exploring how it affects our understanding of war and its manifold impacts in personal and political terms. In a specifically academic scope, this collection is well suited for its target audience (students and scholars interested in literary journalism and war reportage), given the diversity of the primary sources, the depth of the historical and theoretical background that supports the analyses in the essays, and the different research methodologies put forth. In the wider context of war reportage, this collection lets us ponder the relationship between war and language, touching upon “the collective memory of what it means to be human—or inhuman,” as Bak writes in the introduc-

tion (ix). In a way, war reporting shows humanity at its worst, in its ability to make war, and at its best, in its ability to endure and make language, which somehow echoes Toni Morrison's well-known statement at her Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, in 1993: "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives."

Truth-Telling in the Unsettling Present

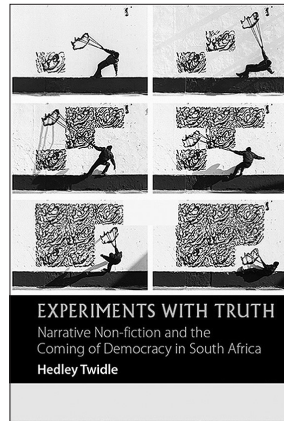
Experiments with Truth: Narrative Non-fiction and the Coming of Democracy in South Africa by Hedley Twidle. Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2019. Footnotes. Bibliography. Index. Hardback, 250 pp., USD\$99.

Reviewed by Anthea Garman, Rhodes University, South Africa

Hedley Twidle's *Experiments with Truth*, which he offers as the first book-length response to democratic South Africa's boom in nonfiction, is an intellectually ambitious and exciting work. Up until this point, those of us teaching, critiquing, and researching the country's recent prolific production of nonfiction texts have had to rely on a special issue of *Safundi: the Journal of South African and American Studies*, titled "Beyond Rivalry: Literature/History, Fiction/Non-fiction," edited by Rita Barnard (volume 13, numbers 1 and 2, 2012); as well as book reviews in the media and the occasional master's or doctoral thesis to aid our thinking. Twidle has written a challenging, multi-faceted, and dense work, which takes a new and surprising approach to the matter.

Twidle quickly dispenses with the fiction/nonfiction boundary and declares that he is going to work across the "modalities of truth-telling" (to lift his description of the intentions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 4). He also declares his interest in compelling and risk-taking writing which has manifested itself—particularly in the post-apartheid period—in three genres of "non-fictive impulses": (1) literary journalism, testimonial narrative, and reportage; (2) the critical essay (which contains personal and political histories); and (3) life writing in its many forms and registers (3).

Twidle explains his method for the book (which is to read some surprising mixes of authors and texts against and with each other) as rooted in three "intellectual formations" (8). The first is literary studies, and it is in this section that he not only helpfully explicates the "non" in nonfiction but also states his disdain for the term (it's like talking about other clothes as "non-socks," he says) and his intention not to be caught up in the "problem of rivalry" (8) that the terms fiction and nonfiction set up between creativity and documentary. The second is historiographical, the writing on and archiving of the past. In particular, he is interested in how the ways of telling (and therefore the settled knowledge) of the colonial, apartheid past that South Africa has had, affects truth-telling today. This he returns to again as a refrain across the book, both because he is alert to the many ways denial of uncomfortable truth operates but because he is also conscious of the strong possibility that the past might also be "in-



appropriate, unpredictable or unusable” for the needs of the present (13). The third root is critical and postcolonial theory, which means that his sense of the present—its authors’ situations and its writings—is how unsettled, how fraught, how complex it is to come to terms with (often literally). Twidle pairs the non in nonfiction with the non in nonwhite and immediately shows how the use of the non is also a negation, an unwillingness to give up the normative, to let others speak their own truth from their own positions and in modes not easily recognizable.

Another strong rationale for writing this book is that Twidle is convinced of the amazing *encounter* (a word that runs through the book) readers can have with writing. This sense of the magic that can happen through encounter leads him to go back to some texts (like Sol Plaatje’s *Native Life in South Africa*, and the *Drum* writers), not for the purpose of finding an originary story for the nonfiction output and trajectory of this country’s recent writing, but to show that encounters with authors and their texts know neither time nor genre nor other boundary in their ability to startle and arrest. So the surprising texts he puts together in this book presumably have had that power of encounter for him, and across his chapters he shows how these texts encounter—and illuminate or cast shadows on each other. Also, behind that word’s positive use is the specter of colonial encounter, which haunts the South African past and present and therefore all its cultural outputs.

Having established that this book is not interested in an encyclopedic overview of the South African situation, and having also declared his politics (that the present is a tricky era in deed and word, that the past is not to be trusted as a source of help), Twidle then sets about testing other components beloved of the nonfiction theorist. It must be said that he makes no apology for rooting this work in the moment of writing—which is the disillusioned, frustrated, 25-years-after-the-demise-of-apartheid period, when almost every South African, black or white, sees no easy way out of a democracy that promised so much and delivered so little.

In chapter 2 he takes on the easy, simple, beautiful stories told of struggle and heroism against apartheid by choosing as his vehicle a protagonist Demetrios Tsafendas, the man who assassinated apartheid architect Hendrik Verwoerd. Tsafendas’s chroniclers have treated him as mad, as a drifter, as a person with no real intention or presence, who somehow perpetrated a murder. Yet this man struck a blow at the heart of the apartheid machine. Only recently are different stories emerging that give meaning to Tsafendas’s life and act. But they sit uneasily alongside stories such as Mandela’s soaring and lyrical autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*. Twidle uses the telling of Tsafendas’s story to introduce meaninglessness as a trope in some of the stories of the past.

He then turns to the pivotal historical moment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (which functioned in the early years of the new democracy). Here he looks at the stories of confession, failure, betrayal, and recognition of wrong. He is particularly interested in the irresolution of the commission’s work, the aftereffects of living now with a sense of messy, unfinished business, and in this third chapter he probes stories that chronicle admissions of guilt and wrongdoing that never satisfy because either the confession is too shoddy and self-serving to be believed or too

well-crafted to be believed. He also takes on apartheid security agents' destruction of documents, which continues to bedevil the present by making all sorts of truth unknowable.

The best bits of the book are the ones where Twidle turns a sharp eye on techniques and tropes that have become commonplace in literature and literary journalism, such as the unreliable narrator. It's one thing for a reader to know that the narrator is signaling his or her unreliability, but what if that narrator is also unreliably unreliable, Twidle asks, giving examples of authors who are situated in compromising ways in relation to their stories and subjects. He spends a chapter focusing on the three early books of the much-awarded and feted Jonny Steinberg, which chronicle a farm murder in a rural area, the gang system in South Africa's jails, and the case of young men who will not test for HIV because of the stigma attached to the disease. Twidle shows that Steinberg's "I" position shifts from autobiographic to journalistic across his texts in a somewhat unstable and questionable way. He shows that Steinberg's *contracts* with his subjects, the individuals he makes the focus of his deep, sustained inquiries, are also unstable, often ending with the subject unhappy with the resulting text. He also unpacks the various kinds of evidence authors use to convince their readers of the value of the stories they are telling. While many authors are drawn to those complex spaces where great gaping holes in archival knowledge and memory are ripe for creative speculation, Twidle shows also just how these holes make truth-telling so risky a game. This may sound as though Twidle is judging bad storytelling by weighing it up against the checklist for good nonfiction. This is not the case. Twidle is emphasizing how the situation in South Africa, with its bizarre past and unsatisfying present, makes the apprehension of the truth difficult to render, and also for writers to claim to have rendered it. The result is the risky texts that are at once compelling and allow for an encounter, but which are also unstable and of this time of instability.

This unpacking of the intimate and terrible context-texts relationship of South Africa is the intellectual contribution of this book. Twidle has offered a way of seeing storytelling, truth-telling, and being here at this moment that has not been realized quite in this way before. The book culminates in a chapter that brings us into the #Feesmustfall, #Rhodesmustfall present, and speculates about how nonfiction is going to find its way into the future with a new generation of storytellers who have developed a brand of resistance to the present that is a powerful break with ways of telling that have become familiar for this genre. It is clear from this chapter that this unsettling present moment infects the whole book and drives the inquiry into the usefulness of the past, the positionalities of the authors who have reached the highest echelons of the nonfiction publishing industry, and the kinds of stories that to date have been told in a multiplicity of ways.

Twidle has called his book (after Gandhi) "experiments with truth," and it is clear that it is not just Twidle who is experimenting but all South African writers—fiction and nonfiction—who are trying to grasp for truth in a strange and challenging land.

Two Centuries of Latin America's Revolutionary Dialogue

Latin American Adventures in Literary Journalism

by Pablo Calvi. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019. Hardcover, 276 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. USD\$45.

Reviewed by Sue Joseph, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

This colorful book, both in cover design and content, is as enlightening as it is revealing, and well nestled within the Pittsburgh University Press series, *Illuminations: Cultural Formations of the Americas*. The publisher's website describes the series as having its genesis in a Walter Benjamin notion, defining illumination as "that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to someone singled out by history at a moment of danger." And danger is certainly woven throughout the literary history presented here—indeed, perhaps initiating and shaping it. It is at this intersection of "danger" and literary journalism that Pablo Calvi demonstrates the growth of a particular canon as inevitable for democratic and republican freedoms—a far more colorful, organic, and imperative origin than the erstwhile privilege within which most other Western canons evolved. Playing out in Latin America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a more palpable and vibrant demonstration of the roles of democracy and market capitalism on the evolution of differentiated evocations of worldwide journalism.

Latin America is huge: thirty-three countries and fifteen dependencies stretching from the United States–Mexico border to the tip of South America. Including parts of the Caribbean, it covers about thirteen percent of earth's land surface, much lying within the Southern Hemisphere. According to the United Nations, there are 653 million people living in Latin America. In reality, Latin America refers to all those countries in the region once claimed as part of the Spanish, Portuguese, or French empires—colonized and, in many regions, oppressed. And in the context of this book, that is important. For what predominates as an overarching theme of this text is these nations' struggle for independence and the links of this struggle to journalism and literary journalism, harnessed for political, cultural, social, historical, and geographical freedoms. Indeed, Calvi tags this struggle as a "revolutionary dialogue" (9) that underpins the success of multiple battles for democracy and independence within the region. Calvi writes of the text's provenance: "In its inception, this book was conceived as an attempt to understand the role of journalism—literary journalism in



particular—in the historical processes that gave rise to the idea of Latin America and its nations” (4). As an elegantly written and rational mapping of political and literary histories of the regions throughout a 130-year span, he succeeds.

The text covers the emergence and importance of journalism and literary journalism from the 1840s to the end of the Cuban Revolution in 1958, and through the Cold War to the 1960s. It is divided into three sections, bookended by an incisive, scholarly introduction (3–15) and conclusion (226–29). There are wide-ranging footnotes throughout the chapters, with a comprehensive notes section (231–49) and extensive bibliography (251–68). But it is Calvi’s carefully crafted narrative, weaving together the words and aspirations, achievements, and leadership of eight extraordinary Latin American writers that makes a substantial, and important contribution to Western-leaning knowledge of literary journalism. The writers Calvi discusses here are: Francisco Bilbao, Domingo Sarmiento, and José Martí (Part 1, In-Forming the New Publics); Juan José de Soiza Reilly, Roberto Alt, and Jorge Luis Borges (Part 2, Leveling the Playing Field); and Rodolfo Walsh and Gabriel García Márquez (Part 3, Bottom-Up Journalism).

The book begins with an 1844 trial in Santiago, twenty-six years after Chile gained independence from Spain. After 300 years of Spanish colonial rule, the trial centered on a thirty-four-page “tirade against Spain’s religious monarchy, along with its morals, uses, and the ideas it had infused into Chilean society during colonial times” (19–20). This “tirade” was written by a young Chilean journalist, Francisco Bilbao, and began what Calvi calls “one of the most talked about events in the sub-continent” (19). Bilbao was tried for blasphemy, immorality, and sedition. In his article, published in *El Crepúsculo*, he writes: “. . . see that multitude of old men and Spaniards who flood the camp, and tell me if you do not see the pulse of ancient Spain come back to life” (26). News of the contents of his article and trial “spread like wildfire” in the region and Bilbao became a “celebrity, a modern romantic martyr and hero, and the first victim of political censorship in postcolonial Chile” (31). Disruptions and protests against the government escalated. Calvi writes that Bilbao’s defense and public reaction to his trial were “the first public acts in support of a liberal Latin American press, the first moves toward the affirmation of freedom of speech.” He argues these were also the first steps toward strengthening “democracy and a free market society in the region” (33), as the civic response and reaction to Bilbao’s treatment was not what was expected by the ruling conservative class.

The chapter on Argentinian Domingo Sarmiento is steeped in a history of Latin America pertinent to the growth of the region’s press. Sarmiento’s role in establishing periodicals (some short-lived), his political writings, and his rise to power as the seventh president of Argentina (1868–74), are the stuff of legend. Regarded as an intellectual, his capacity to travel and compare other countries and continents to the *caudillo* (military or political leaders) and their power, which he despised in his own country, drove him to lobby for the modernization of the train, postal, and education systems throughout the region. During his various exiles in Chile, he wrote the famed *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (1845), regarded then (and today) as a foundational literary journalism text. More than most, Sarmiento understood the power

of the press, and through his editorships and writings, worked ceaselessly to garner readership to enlighten and inform. He used hyperbole and exaggeration throughout his texts in a bid to create a political following, but Calvi explains that these two literary techniques should be understood “not only as purely narrative devices but also . . . as mechanisms that connect Sarmiento’s nonfiction with his extraliterary goals. . . . Sarmiento knew that aspiration drives behavior” (47–48). A powerful and influential man, Sarmiento’s legacy was tarnished by “his consistent degradation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the racist undercurrent in his work” (67), a behavioral motif common contemporaneously in other colonial parts of the world.

The final chapter in Part 1 focuses on Cuban journalist and poet José Martí, regarded a Cuban national hero for his writings and his ceaseless mission toward Cuban self-government. Martí targeted Spanish colonial regulation and was ever wary of U.S. expansionism in the region. Travelling widely, Martí was “not strictly a reporter but rather a foreign correspondent . . . in more than one way, Martí was using the news” (73) to make his audience politically aware. Much of his work was direct translation, mostly not attributed, of articles from the U.S. newspapers; these “have become a sore point” for many “purists” (75). Caring more for the political and social impact of his words, Martí embellished, enhanced, condensed, and appropriated his translations. Calvi writes that Martí’s “value of authenticity was neither precious nor rigid, and he seemed to subordinate it to his need for effectiveness and efficiency of message” (75).

Part 2 centers on Argentinian writers Juan José de Soiza Reilly, Roberto Arlt, and Jorge Luis Borges. Soiza Reilly, born to a Portuguese father and an Irish mother, became “one of the first best-selling mass journalists in Latin America” (111). Coming from a relatively poor background, first in Uruguay, then Buenos Aires, his writing is even more astounding for cultivating an expanding middle-class. He “professionalized his literary journalism, perfecting genres such as the interview and *crónica* to a point where they became new forms of mass literature” (112). It was near the turn of the century, and Argentina was positioned, through its rich resources, to enter the global trade market. It was also a time when the “political press model” was giving way to “a modern, information-based press” (115). This in turn led to the growing popularity of mass magazines such as *Caras y Caretas*. Soiza Reilly made a name for himself by “revealing the dark side of Buenos Aires’s modernity . . . for the first time in Latin America, a journalist used the mass media as a lens through which to see the world” (128). And interestingly, in 1909, Soiza Reilly in an interview talks about journalism as an “art . . . an art that has its heroes and victims . . . I am talking . . . about literary journalism” (143).

Roberto Arlt was also born to immigrant parents, his father Polish and his mother Italian. Born in Buenos Aires, he wrote novels and a semi-autobiographical work, was a staff writer for the evening *Crítica*, as well as author of a stream of columns between 1928 and 1942 for *El Mundo*, the Buenos Aires daily. “Arlt was,” Calvi writes, “in more ways than one, a cultural reformer and an infiltrator” (146) . . . “[His] effort was like a taxonomist, and through literary journalism he succeeded in painting modern Buenos Aires in its unique and strange colors” (147). And like Arlt,

Jorge Luis Borges became *best* known for his novels but worked as a journalist for many years when “the boom of the new press and the popularity of the tabloids gave [him] room for literary experimentation, at a time when the avant-gardes used journalism as a medium” (147). Using “irony, contextual interpretation, antiphrasis, and humor,” Borges “built complicity with his readers” using them as a “sounding board” (147). Here Calvi explains that while Arlt studied the city and its people in all walks of life, Borges gave his readership a view of the world, but together, “the journalists of the new mass press contributed to turning the writer’s adventure into an adventure *with* readers by sharing one of the rarest experiences in the new urban world: intimacy. Intimacy helped bring a previously top-down approach to literature—educating the public—to eye level . . . integrating the public into the democratic game” (147, emphasis in the original).

In Part 3, Calvi turns to authors Rodolfo Walsh and Gabriel García Márquez. In a precursor to the twenty-first century’s *fake news* trope, Walsh writes of “an avalanche of information garbage” emanating from wire services in the 1950s and ’60s—twice announcing the death of then-Cuban guerrilla leader Fidel Castro, for example. Cuban revolutionaries realized that “information balance” (182) was key at this time, and so Prensa Latina, the first Latin American News Agency was born, its home base, Havana. García Márquez wrote from Colombia and Rodolfo Walsh from Argentina. A portion of this chapter—the circumstances of Walsh’s cracking a CIA code that implicitly played a role in the CIA’s failed 1961 military invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs—reads like a good crime/war thriller. This chapter also discusses “testimonial literature” (186), citing Walsh’s text *Operación Masacre* (1957; *Operation Masacre*, English translation, 2013) and García Márquez’s *Relato de un Náufrago* (1970; *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*, English translation, 1986), as exemplars of literary journalism. Both texts originally appeared as installments and, Calvi argues, have “strong links between Latin American and the Anglo-American literary journalism traditions” (186).

One observation here is the dearth, or rather, non-existence of written female (and non-binary) voices in Latin America throughout this time. In his introduction, Calvi tells us that this lack of female voice cannot be ignored but “should be accounted for as one of the main conditions imposed by the period it describes and attempts to understand” (4). And, in his conclusion, Calvi describes the field as “predominantly male and white” (228), and this as an “intellectual chauvinism” (229). He remedies this with mention of contemporary female and non-binary journalists in the late twentieth, early twenty-first centuries: Elena Poniatowska (Mexico), the late Pedro Lemebel (Chile), Leila Guerriero (Argentina), and Gabriela Wiener (Peru)—sounding a warning to scholars to accept and critique these writings equitably. And, in a footnote, Calvi writes: “Mahieux (2011) has recently incorporated female authors and nonbinary approaches into the list of *cronistas*.” Mahieux cites Alfonsina Storni and Salvador Novo as, according to Calvi, “two interesting voices who, by their sheer existence, expand the scope of the period, though they certainly do not challenge its most dominant aspects as a whole” (249n1).

Latin America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was like a con-

glomeration of perfect storms raging through its land mass: rebellion against colonial rule, oppression, and conservatism; subsequent attempts to dismantle the colonial model and integrate modernity; seeking autonomy, republicanism, and democracy, sometimes with success, only to revert to authoritarianism and despotism again; reaching for market capitalism; and ubiquitous Indigenous issues, mostly poorly and brutally mismanaged, similar to other First Nations around the world. The region was in a state of flux and a veritable battleground at times. But Calvi argues that beating at its heart was the growth of the journalistic voice as a source of information and influence. Particularly pertaining to literary journalism throughout these centuries, Calvi writes of a canon different from the growth of Anglo-American canons. He writes of a different practice, of a different technique, of a different cultural understanding of literary journalism:

Due to institutional instability . . . but also to literary tradition and literary history . . . it has evolved as an allegorical account of the present—a narrative form that could either be read as richly riddled with political undercurrents or interpreted plainly as a novelized historical record. . . . Justice, truth, freedom, and the public good have been . . . some of the forces behind literary journalism in Latin America, either floating on the narrative surface of its texts or palpitating beneath the heavy waves of rhetoric and a—more or less—oblique approach to facts. (228)

The allusion to a “novelized historical account” seems a considered and early version of contemporary discussions and debates within the Anglo-American field—the softening of boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, particularly within the literary journalism sub-genre of memoir.

Written vividly, this deeply researched text of meta-literary journalism acts as a bridge, or rather, an invitation, for practitioners, scholars, and students to shrug off the Anglo-American-centric impetus of studies in this field and mine the rich and courageous historical writings from their Latin American antecedents. There is much to learn from canons of other languages, and here Calvi presents a gift, an analytical and hybrid text, rigorous in its research and robust in its arguments, enticing us to wander beyond the comfort of our own cultures and ease.

Fact or Fiction? Researchers Examine Our Shared Concern

The Oxford Handbook of the Science of Science Communication

edited by Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Dan Kahan, and Dietram A. Scheufele. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Hardcover, 512 pp., Index. USD\$170.

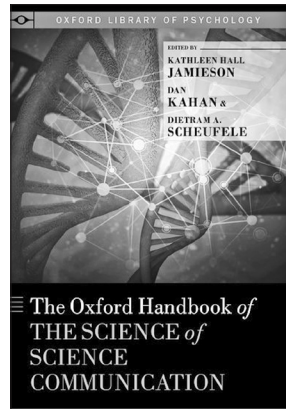
Reviewed by Matthew Roby and Susan E. Swanberg, University of Arizona, United States

Because the ability to discern fact from fiction in a multitude of public spheres is more important than ever, practitioners and scholars of literary journalism might wish to examine *The Oxford Handbook of the Science of Science Communication*, a cross-disciplinary collection of essays offering well-reasoned explanations for our susceptibility to misinformation. While the *Handbook* focuses on science communicators and the complex task of explaining science to the public, many of the collection's essays contain take-home lessons equally important to literary journalists—especially as more science and nature writers adopt the techniques of literary journalism to communicate science to their audiences.

Literary journalism, according to John C. Hartsock, combines the telling of true stories with “the aesthetics of experience.” Whether the storyteller portrays a famine camp in Sudan, describes custom car culture, or recounts the aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing, literary journalism uses techniques traditionally associated with fiction writing, including immersion in the story being told, scene-by-scene construction, and dialogue.

Although reliance upon techniques used by fiction writers might suggest that literary journalism plays fast and loose with the truth, Mark Kramer has written that practicing this form of narrative nonfiction requires that those who call themselves (or whom others call) literary journalists “get reality as straight as they can manage, and not make it up” (25).

In “The Legend on the License,” John Hersey—in the earnest but vexed tone he assumed on occasion—set forth one of literary journalism's most important canons: that journalists (New or not) must tell the truth. Some tricks of the fiction trade were acceptable, such as describing a scene in vivid detail or deftly adding a measure of dialogue, but others were not, including adding any kind of invented facts or stretching the truth for the sake of “art” (*Yale Review* 75, no. 2, 1986, 214). But Hersey himself sometimes blurred the truth as he did by creating a composite character from forty-



three different war veterans in his story, “Joe Is Home Now,” although he explained what he did and why.

Science and nature writers must also avoid stretching the truth. Rich description of the habits and habitat of a charismatic-but-threatened animal and authentic dialogue between two field scientists are acceptable, but the moment the writer exaggerates or embroiders, credibility as a translator of science is lost.

Lost credibility on the part of the writer is not the only reason for communication failures, however. Sometimes audience characteristics—such as people’s beliefs or biases—prevent the message from being received. This is where the *Handbook* can help science and nature writers in particular understand why it is so difficult to reach a skeptical or misinformed audience.

The deficit model of science communication, which suggests that to improve the public understanding of science all we need to do is force feed people more science, is on the ash heap. A group of creative researchers has come together, however, to explore the origins of what editor and author Dan Kahan calls “the science communication problem.” In his essay titled “On the Sources of Ordinary Science Knowledge and Extraordinary Science Ignorance,” Kahan concludes that members of the public readily adopt bad science because they place more value on the beliefs of those with whom they associate or want to associate than on information provided by experts. Thus, if your friends believe that childhood vaccines are bad, you will adopt that belief yourself to go along with the crowd.

Kahan and company’s handbook calls for a scientific approach to understanding and addressing this phenomenon. Kathleen Hall Jamieson—recipient, in April, of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Public Welfare Medal for her nonpartisan work on the importance of evidence-based political discourse and on the science of science communication—recognizes that the same factors that distinguish science, such as self-criticism, transparency, and self-correction, can also subject science to criticism by those who don’t understand the scientific method and its multiple rounds of hypothesis testing.

According to essay contributors Martin Kaplan and Michael Dahlstrom, narratives animate the abstract and illuminate the human experience, deriving power from vivid portrayals of character and environment that captivate audiences. The danger, Kaplan and Dahlstrom caution, is that being transported by an enticing narrative can weaken a reader’s ability to distinguish fact from fiction.

Despite oceans of evidence, established facts and endorsements by authoritative scientific institutions, some scientific messages arouse intense debate. Citing climate change and the childhood vaccination controversy, Kaplan and Dahlstrom highlight how persuasive-but-false narratives have infected the science communication environment. To use a scientific metaphor: water and dust refract, scatter, and bend sunrays passing through earth’s atmosphere, changing their intensity and color from bright white to a rainbow palette. Likewise, scientific information might encounter partisans ready to twist and disseminate what once was “true fact” into an enticing, but misleading narrative.

For many, exposure to science ends with high school graduation, notes William

K. Hallman in his essay. Today there is more science information than anyone could possibly learn in a lifetime. Audiences attempting to digest this deluge often rely on faulty mental models and media cues that can muddle interpretation and make the public vulnerable to misinformation traffickers. And upheaval in the media landscape does not help. Nearly half the population gets its science information from the internet. Mike S. Schäfer notes that science coverage has shifted from legacy formats mediated by print and broadcast journalism to internet-based platforms that fragment the public audience and facilitate a plurality of messages.

Brian Southwell examines how scientists engage with the public on social networks. Science communication via social platforms is challenging as users often exist in isolated, self-reinforcing networks. Because not all science topics have an equal chance of becoming part of the conversation on social media, Southwell calls for more research on how framing influences information sharing.

Matthew Nisbet and Declan Fahy, well-known experts in the field of science communication, suggest that perhaps journalists should be required to develop special expertise along with interviewing, investigative, and storytelling skills before they report on important issues like climate change. Whether organizing an elite cadre of scientist-journalists would cure the problems of climate-change denialism and lack of trust in experts needs further exploration.

Kahan, Scheufele, Jamieson, and many of the other contributors address the science communication problem with an empirically based scientific approach. With one voice, this volume of dense but enlightening essays calls for continued study of the science of science communication along with prioritizing development of practical tools with which the public can distinguish science fact from fiction.

As Kahan notes, we understand a lot about how people come to know science. What we need is a cultural and structural shift that protects the science communication environment from misinformation. This handbook is an excellent resource for those seeking to create such a culture.

Whether you write about science and nature or not, learning about the mindset of your audience and the reasons for that mindset might help you choose the right tools—including the techniques of literary journalism—to reach a reluctant audience. John Hersey did just that when he opened his toolbox and found the ideal plot device, the right voices, and the precise tone to convince his audience of war-weary people that the citizens of Hiroshima were human too.

Brilliant War Journalist / Chaotic Private Life

In Extremis: The Life and Death of the War Correspondent Marie Colvin

by Lindsey Hilsum. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018. Hardcover, 378 pp. Photographs. Index. USD\$28.

Reviewed by David Swick, University of King's College, Canada

Few journalism students long to be copy editors. Nellie Bly, Ida B. Wells, Hunter S. Thompson: most students want to be a ground-breaking, truth-teller famous for being feisty, unorthodox, and brave. Marie Colvin (1956–2012), the most famous war correspondent of our time, had all of these qualities. Vivacious, bright, and fun, she was a rule-breaker, a chance-taker, and a dedicated partier. Colvin is who many journalism students aspire to be.

Colvin's life was filled with paradoxes. For twenty-five years she delicately worked her way in and out of combat zones but was incapable of using technology and had no sense of direction. She wanted to create a secure, loving home for herself, but was unable to make that happen. She lived and vacationed in some of the world's most glamorous cities but felt distinctly at home on the battleground.

In the hands of the wrong biographer Colvin would become a myth. Fortunately, *In Extremis: The Life and Death of the War Correspondent Marie Colvin* is written by Lindsey Hilsum. The international editor for Britain's Channel 4 News, as well as a friend and colleague of Colvin's, Hilsum is clear-eyed and anti-hype. Her first biography is dispassionate, nuanced, and anchored in facts. The writing is clear, precise, and historically sound. At its best it is artful, one literary journalist writing about another, as Hilsum explores the many reasons to admire Colvin and grimmer truths that a mythmaker might choose to ignore. What emerges is the compelling story of a brilliant journalist. It is also a cautionary tale.

Marie Colvin was born into an Irish Catholic family in the safe, quiet town of Oyster Bay, Long Island, a suburb of New York. Her ex-marine father was a high school English teacher, her mother a guidance counselor. Colvin thought Oyster Bay boring, but she did learn to sail. All her life she loved to sail, and the worse the weather the better. She thrilled to the danger and rush.

At Yale she signed up for a writing course with *Hiroshima* author John Hersey. By the end of the first class she had decided that this was the kind of journalism she wanted to do. Her father, who had died shortly before, and with whom she had a conflicted relationship, had had "frustrated dreams of writing." In that first Hersey class, Hilsum says, Colvin, at twenty, "realized she didn't just *want* to become a journalist; she *had* to" (35, emphasis in original).



After stops at United Press International desks in New Jersey, Washington, and Paris, she was ready for riskier challenges. Colvin became a war correspondent, traveling to the Middle East, Timor, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, North Africa, the Balkans, and, finally, Syria.

Literary journalists and literary journalism scholars will note that throughout *In Extremis*, Hilsun brings anecdotes alive with dialogue and sensory details. When Colvin first met Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, Hilsun writes,

The summons came at 3:00 a.m. . . . She noticed that Gaddafi was wearing French cologne. At the end of the interview, during which he said he was ready to hit U.S. targets anywhere in the world and described the conflict between the United States and Libya as being like the Crusades, he put his hand on her thigh and asked if he could see her again, as this if this were a date.

“Why don’t you call me?” Marie said.

A few days later, an aide did just that, and Gaddafi came on the line to say he wanted to speak to her again. This time the meeting was a little weirder, and more menacing. When she arrived at the bunker, a white dress and a pair of little green shoes had been laid out for her on a chair. She refused to put them on, saying they were too small. Gaddafi strolled in, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket. (73–74)

As Colvin gained experience and confidence, her writing evolved to focus on ordinary people, often innocents caught up in ghastly circumstances. In 1999 she wrote, “The human body, when burnt, is reduced to an almost childlike size. It is a horrible piece of knowledge that comes from reporting from Kosovo. In house after house, village after village, I have seen those bodies, so small that it seems they must be those of children, yet they are not” (184).

That same year Colvin was in Timor, in a civilian compound about to be abandoned by the United Nations, with a horrible attack by the Indonesian army looming. “Reporters and mainstream media left with the bulk of international UN staff and the local employees,” Hilsun writes. “As the last truck trundled away, Marie called [her editor] He asked who among the journalists had remained, and she explained that it was just Irena, Minka, and she.

“Where are the men?” Sean asked.

“They’ve gone,” Marie replied and, without missing a beat, added, “I guess they don’t make men like they used to” (192).

Colvin was funny, articulate, and attractive, and people were drawn to her. Yet even while her career star was rising, her personal life was often a shambles. She longed for a home, children, and a loving partner, to return from her escapades to solid family life. Instead she moved through a long series of relationships, almost all of which her friends knew were doomed. She fought bitterly with former and current partners, and she suffered two miscarriages after she was forty. Her last lover, an international playboy, was an especially poor choice.

And so, comes the realization, obvious when it is finally revealed, that Colvin, like so many war correspondents, suffered from PTSD. She was diagnosed in 2004, three years after losing an eye in Sri Lanka. (She wore a special eyepatch with rhine-

stones to parties.) Shrapnel from that grenade attack remained in her face and chest. Her final years were poisoned by nightmares, insomnia, and a failing ability to make good choices. The drinking, always legendary, began to start at breakfast. (The number of pages that mention her drinking come to forty-four, almost one in eight.) Her life was unraveling, leading to a final tragedy.

As so often, Hilsum offers concise insight. “Marie was easy to love and hard to help,” she says. “Marie reacted to advice on drinking as she did to advice on relationships—she listened, brow furrowed, head to one side, and then ignored it” (275).

Not all was bleak. Colvin stayed close to several girlfriends, some for more than thirty years. She was also close to her youngest sister and stayed in touch with other members of the family.

Martha Gellhorn, another pioneering U.S. female journalist who settled in London, was fueled by anger at warlords, dictators, defense secretaries, and other “monsters” who, if journalists were not watching, “would get away with anything.” Colvin, while a great admirer of Gellhorn, was driven by empathy. She spoke of the importance of bearing witness, especially to the plight of helpless civilians. “Marie never practiced partisan journalism,” Hilsum says, “the kind that adopts a cause and reports only the facts that advance it. Having no ideology, she never flinched from reporting stories that cast a bad light on people for whom she had sympathy. She was simply drawn to the underdog. . . . For her, context mattered, but the experience of individuals in war, whether fighters or victims, was the essence of the story” (185).

Hilsum has said that she worries about contributing to the “myth” of Colvin and the glamorization of war correspondents. Indeed, after the book was published some students on Twitter gushed; in a *Financial Times* article one was quoted thanking Hilsum for “immortalising” Colvin. This says more about the comprehension skills of some youthful readers than it does about the book. Hilsum helps us understand the attraction, the deep seductive power of reporting on war. She also lets us feel and smell and taste how horrifying it actually is. *In Extremis* is inspiring, but it is also sobering and dark.

One final unfortunate decision led to Colvin’s death. She had been smuggled from Lebanon into Syria, to the city of Homs, and then to the neighborhood under siege by the Syrian army. She arrived, wrote a brilliant story, and got out of the neighborhood—which was expecting an all-out assault. Once out, however, she changed her mind. Without telling her editor, family, or boyfriend, she went back. The next day, thanks to an informant, the building was attacked. Colvin and a French photographer were killed running out of the building.

The last photo of Colvin ever taken, Hilsum says,

shows her, back to the camera, wearing her thick black jacket and jeans, hair pulled into a scrunchie. She is writing, the bright white of her notebook a contrast to the dun-colored debris of war in the ruined house around her: dirty, crumbling walls sprout tangled iron rods, pots and pans are scattered, a green blanket lies on the ground next to crumpled, rusting iron sheeting. It’s easy to imagine Marie in her final moments, rushing out of the shattered building in her warm, dark clothes, caught in flight in a freeze-frame, forever pushing forward, notebook in hand. (352)

Going to war zones and reporting first-hand is vital work, crucial to the journalistic mission of shining light in dark places. It can come at a terrible price to its courageous practitioners, one that is only starting to be fully appreciated. Like Gellhorn, Colvin's ashes were scattered in the Thames.

Too often our heroes turn out to be terribly complex people, brilliant and professionally accomplished, but living damaged and unhappy lives. So it is with Marie Colvin. Considered by skilled biographers, heroes come tumbling off their pedestals to shatter at our feet. Shall we blame our heroes? The biographers? It is, after all, we who build the pedestals.

Capturing Lives and Emotion in Plain Language

I'll Be Home: The Writings of Jim McGrath

edited by Darryl McGrath and Howard Healy. Albany: State University of New York Press, Excelsior Editions, 2019. Paperback, 202 pp. Index, USD\$24.95.

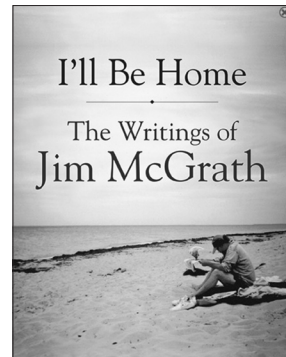
Reviewed by Rosemary Armao, State University of New York at Albany, United States

For some seventeen years until his sudden death from a heart attack in 2013, Jim McGrath wrote nearly daily editorials in the Albany, New York, *Times Union*, my hometown newspaper. Going through this posthumous collection of editorials, opinion columns, fellowship applications, reviews, and essays on an array of topics, international to hyper-local, compiled by two people who loved him, is not at all the same reading experience. The immediacy and relevance that give editorials impact are, of course, missing or diluted in editor's notes.

What remains, however, is the sense of place, a sense of the dignity in the routine, the passion, and compassion, and the storytelling craft of an excellent old-school journalist who knows that words have power and so selects them with care. McGrath was a journalist of the sort that sadly we now see losing jobs and passing into history. This makes his book a potentially valuable model for students of literary journalism.

Newspaper editors tell new investigative reporters to “rake the leaves in a pile,” that is, to pull together multiple small daily stories already published on your topic and then dig into them to pull out the bigger trend or hidden truth. McGrath's widow along with his old newspaper editor have skillfully done such raking. Seen in its entirety instead of in bits, McGrath's body of work reveals thematic threads, consistent styling, and a fixed set of principles that his faithful daily readers likely would not have focused on or even discerned. That makes his book an instructive text for beginners trying to figure out the tricks of persuasive editorial writing. How McGrath did it comes clear here.

He displayed considerable expertise when it came to the topics he wrote most about—politics in New York, especially in its capital city, Albany; gun control; crime; and mistreatment of the less fortunate. But he did not write like an expert; instead, he eschewed jargon, big words, too many long sentences. He knew his readers, like the neighbors or drinking buddies they were, so he used language and topics that made them feel at ease. His tone is homey and conversational too: “If you were, say, too busy in traffic court or in line dutifully paying your parking fines to read about this, here's a quick recap,” he began a background section of an editorial on a ghost ticket



system that allowed favored Albanians to park illegally. “OK, so no jigs just yet. The spirit of the cease-fire and the ongoing peace talks will do for now,” he wrote at the end of a happy editorial in late 1997 when British and Irish leaders met to talk about getting past the Troubles in his ancestral homeland (57).

Without writing extended memoir, McGrath drew from his own life, reared in a middle-class Irish family in Boston, his sensibilities honed in public schools and the Catholic church, as he opined on bad luck, injustice, the bond of community, alcoholism, the tensions of family, loss, and emptiness. That’s misleading—he doesn’t write about issues so much as tells stories about people who have been buffeted by them. He makes you feel their pain, which you can see was more than a little his too.

In a 2001 piece, “A Lesson Taught Too Late,” he wrote about “the ruined life of Phil Caiozzo,” who died after convulsing in the Albany County Jail. “This is what society wanted from Caiozzo, and still wants from the dozens of other alcoholics on the streets of Albany. To stop drinking, and to behave. It’s not easy, not remotely easy. Not for those whose lives have hit the bottom, and not for the fortunate majority living in their midst, getting hit up for spare change and trying to step over them” (88–89).

In “‘No Room for Mercy,’” in 2003, McGrath asked, “Why was Christine Wilhelm, so horribly and so indisputably mentally ill, ever on trial for the horrific drowning of one of her young sons and the attempted drowning of the other?” then wondered what would happen to a paranoid schizophrenic in prison, and if unthinkable crime justified cruel punishment (92).

McGrath also wrote memorably about the Unabomber, a domestic terrorist finally captured in the late 1990s after years of mailing out death threats when his brother, who lived within the *Times Union*’s subscribership, recognized the writing in a demented manifesto the killer sent to media. McGrath argued strenuously against the death penalty in the case. He kept coming back to mercy (85–86).

McGrath was never a star. His career never went beyond a mid-sized daily in a small city in a profession quickly dying out. Some of the best selections in this book are essays written for fellowships he did not end up getting. His life ended suddenly in 2013, at age fifty-six, when he suffered a heart attack while driving after the ambulance taking his asthmatic wife to the hospital. The irony of that left her heart broken. Indeed, sadness permeates this whole work, epitomized by a 1994 piece, “A Road to New Hampshire,” about spending Christmas with siblings, like him, newly orphaned. “We talked a bit, looked at the passing countryside, and listened to some tapes on a tinny-sounding care stereo. Mostly though, we just drove.” This, he wrote, “was a good Christmas too: quiet, peaceful, and delightfully uneventful” (142).

Disappointment turned into a tool in the editorialist’s hands. It led him to tell of the wonder of small things like tulips blooming in downtown Albany’s Washington Park at the end of an upstate New York winter or “good coffee, and something stronger, too, to be had on just about every block” of downtown Albany’s Lark Street (6), about watching the hipsters and barflies and workaday pedestrians on Madison Avenue. It propelled McGrath to stand up for and speak up for what he thought was right, to demand and seek and advocate for solutions. He made his readers empathize—and thus persuaded them.