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Edited by Marcus O'Donnell

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Editor's Note

Journalism and World Making Moments

In my original call for papers for this special issue on Narrative Journalism I suggested: "Today's newspapers and magazines present an array of different news and feature styles that have taken journalism away from the traditional inverted pyramid approach that is still the mainstay of most journalism courses".

This prompted one spirited email exchange with an academic who took umbrage at what she regarded as the untested assumptions in that statement. "How do you know this?" she asked. "I hope proposals tackle your assumptions as well as your topic!"

Thirty-five years after Tom Woolfe's "New Journalism" manifesto, the idea that there might be something new happening in journalism, or that perhaps our approach to journalism education may not be new enough, still has the power to rankle.

Certainly a number of the papers gathered here provide a context for that original statement and begin to provide some research data that helps to clarify the extent of the "narrative turn" in journalism and journalism education.

Jane Johnston's analysis of a small sample of Australian newspapers shows that the inverted pyramid is still very much at the heart of these newspapers' story telling styles. However she does identify a strong set of other narrative voices at play, particularly in broadsheet publications. And Molly Blair provides some evidence from the education perspective. Her survey of Australian journalism schools show that very few are teaching narrative journalism in any concerted way but that there is surprisingly little resistance to creative non-fiction techniques being introduced into the journalism education curriculum. Many senior journalism educators believe these techniques could benefit their students but the bogeys of time, resources and to some extent expertise are cited as reasons for creative non-fiction's current absence from most journalism curricula.

This is important research that marks one of the few non-US empirical studies of literary styles in current newspaper journalism and one of the only extended accounts of attitudes to the teaching of literary journalism in university-based journalism education courses.

Janine Little and Michael Sankey look at narrative from a different perspective. For them and their colleagues at rural newspaper group APN the narrative approach to news is not a problem, it is a solution to the issue of reader engagement. Little and Sankey describe an educational approach that they have trialled in both a journalism undergraduate subject and a professional development program that takes narrative writing as the forgotten heart of news writing. Significantly they show the connection between getting students to write news narratives and reflective narratives about their own learning processes.

Bill Reynolds shows that even for very experienced practitioners of long form magazine journalism learning to write, or rather discovering the story – the real story – is at the heart of the literary journalism process. William Langewiesche, whose book length study of life during the reconstruction of New York's ground zero is

one of the subjects of Reynolds' analysis, says: "I'm not smart enough to stare at my navel and write. I have to go out into the world". Immersion journalism is a key strategy for contemporary literary journalists but as Reynolds points out this is about more than "hanging-out": "At a certain point in the immersion process, something clicks. A eureka moment occurs and the writer understands the depth of his story. At this stage, he declares: It is really about something else". The writer is looking both for a concrete story – the classic ingredients of scene, anecdote and dialogue – but they are also looking for a metaphor for a deep way of confronting and understanding the world.

Jan Whitt argues in her contribution to this issue that this larger story that is found in both fiction and non-fiction novels is one of the main reasons to teach novels as part of a journalism degree. She writes that journalism education must be about more than merely the teaching of from. It must also be about the "awakening of social conscience". The novelists and journalists that she recommends all "sought to transform the world in which they lived by challenging readers to explore new ideas and values". Interestingly and fortuitously in the non-themed section of this issue Shu-Ling Chen Berggreen and Robert Peaslee make a similar case for the use of film in journalism education.

Historically literary journalism has been about world making moments. This is clearly seen in Scott Dunn's account of Rolling Stone's coverage of the 1972 U.S. election and in Monica Fontana's analysis of Brazilian journalist Caco Barcellos' work on drugs and crime in Rio's Dona Marta favela. And in an innovative use of Alberto Melucci's social networking theory, Anja Zinke argues that the broader social domain as well as the more intimate social spaces of friendships and literary connections were the crucible for the birth of the new in new journalism.

Sue Joseph brings a special dimension to this issue. She presents a narrative and exegesis that is part of a recently completed PhD. Her moving story of Russell Sykes and his struggles to come to terms with the fact that he was born as a product of his mother's gang rape is an account of a world making moment of a different kind. Joseph presents us not only with a poignant story but a model of both narrative as journalism and narrative as research.

Siobhan McHugh also brings the practitioner's voice to this issue with her critical reflections on interviewing as "aerobic" listening – a terrific phrase that I have been quoting to my students ever since I read McHugh's submission. Like Joseph she is concerned with the issue of intimacy and how we do justice to the encounters that we have as journalists. She contrasts her experience of asking the "hard questions" with her commitment to empathy as a key requirement of good journalism: an exercise that requires an energetic engagement with both the person and the process of the interview.

Nancy Hamilton in a reflection on teaching for creativity agrees that it is engagement, with our world, our own inner lives and with others, that is critical in assisting students to go beyond the mastery of good technique towards creative and insightful writing.

These ideas, of story as process, narrative as discovery and journalism as engagement and change agent, are not new. As Grant Hannis points out in his essay on Daniel

Defoe's journalism, not only did the great English writer use a set of common literary techniques that many journalists still find useful today he is also a writer who was fond of writing about writing. But to truly focus on process, discovery, engagement and change as the heart of journalistic practice is to step beyond the world of the objectivity debate and the strictures of formal writing styles such as the inverted pyramid.

As educators we are constantly balancing the need to make our graduates work ready for the grimy world of daily news journalism and our desire to make our courses creative and transformative experiences. The literary journalist's movement towards the moment of insight – the moment in which as Bill Reynolds says, their experiences and their story become a "metaphor for the world" – is of course a perfect metaphor for the educational process. And the literary journalist's mode of moving towards that insight through engagement with the world is at the heart of all truly transformative pedagogy.

In this sense literary or narrative journalism – both the process and the content – have much to teach us as both journalists and educators. And this is reason enough to battle against the demons of time and resources to ensure that it is given a stronger and more enduring place in all journalism education courses.

– Marcus O'Donnell, Editor

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Turning the inverted pyramid upside down: how Australian print media is learning to love the narrative

Jane Johnston
Griffith University, Australia

Abstract

Print journalism has long embraced the inverted pyramid, that writing style which emerged in the latter part of the 19th century. While still a popular option, other styles are moving in to share the space at the front of the daily newspaper. This paper will present the findings of a pilot study of narrative writing in two Australian daily papers. Over a period of one month during April-May 2007, the style of news in the front pages of *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* was analysed to determine how much were written in the inverted pyramid and how much were in narrative format or a mix of styles. The research also examines *The Australian's* 'Inside Story' a regular feature which includes elements of literary journalism, bringing together a strong narrative style with a serious investigation in the news pages of the weekend, and occasionally weekday, paper. This analysis features insights from the writers, editors and creators of 'Inside Story', which has been running for almost a decade. Finally, the paper provides a brief overview of some undergraduate journalism and media text books in Australia to determine the dominant paradigms in university journalism curriculum and how these might have changed in recent years. It suggests why narrative news might be a popular option for the future as newspapers are repositioned within the expanding sea of media options.

Introduction

Let's begin at the end: Associated Press features editor Bruce DeSilva does. In his article in defence of strong endings in news writing DeSilva notes that the need to cut from the bottom of a news story – inherently important in the days of stories sent by telegraph – is gone. "But most newspaper stories dribble pitifully to an end. This is the enduring legacy of the inverted pyramid – a form that makes good endings impossible" (2007: 116). He argues that the inverted pyramid never had anything to do with writing or readers of news, but about speedy transmission over the telegraph and easy editing by typographers who had to set the stories in lead type. Both reasons are now many years behind us (2007).

So, is the inverted pyramid an outdated paradigm? And what is the current best practice in the Australian media environment? This paper seeks to provide some answers through a short literature review and a one-month study of two Australian daily newspapers – *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* -- to determine the proportion of the inverted pyramid format in the news pages and the extent to which these papers have incorporated a more narrative style of news writing into their news pages. The study also briefly analyses *The Australian*'s 'Inside Story' series run usually, but not exclusively, on Saturdays. The series, on first observation, is written in a narrative style, more consistent with the feature section of a newspaper yet it appears in the news section of the paper. This study aims to provide a profile of Inside Story.

Literature Review

Ricketson notes that literary or narrative journalism is more common in magazines than newspapers; and in the United States and the United Kingdom than in Australia (2004). While this is not a comparative study, it does set out to investigate the observation that narrative journalism is not widespread in Australian newspapers. Though it is generally accepted that journalists are storytellers, there appears to be few, if any, empirical studies about what writing styles journalists currently employ in mainstream Australian newspapers.

In the Australian literature, the inverted pyramid has been one of the main paradigms for teaching and describing how to report and write news (Conley, 1997; White, 1996; Granato, 1991). While still very much presented as a primary option for news writing, there has been a move in recent text editions to suggest a choice between this style and a more narrative approach. Take for example, Bruce Grundy's *So you want to be a journalist?* published in 2007. He suggests an "out-of-the-pyramid" style of writing in which the would-be journalist can "escape the inverted pyramid" for news as well as features. Indeed, he challenges the writer to get out of their comfort zone without the recipe or formula of the inverted pyramid (2007: 75).

We can follow the changing environment from Conley's 1997 version of the news writing text *The Daily Miracle* to Conley and Lamble's 2006 version of the same title, with the addition of the following point in the chapter on "upside-down pyramids":

> The structural strategy is not as predominant as it once was. With the broadcast media having captured much of the day's breaking news, newspapers are more likely to encourage reporters to write in narrative, story-telling formats than once was the case. (Conley and Lamble, 2006: 125)

Nevertheless, they argue that the standard news form still presents news in a logical sequence and they cite several texts from the 1990's to support the inverted pyramid's dominance. Conley and Lamble also choose to deal with the inverted pyramid in a separate chapter to feature writing, suggesting inherent differences. In contrast, Grundy deals with narrative writing as a whole, rather than separating news and features (2007: 79).

In her public relations text *Media Relations: Issues and Strategies*, Johnston identifies a trend: "while the inverted pyramid remains the most popular style of [news] writing, it is clear that other styles have moved in to share the space" (2007: 73). She cites a growing tendency to incorporate a more conversational and narrative approach to news and attributes this to a merging of news and features and the role of the column in bridging the two types.

Other reasons to move away from the inverted pyramid in newspapers include changes to the consumption habits of media users: that is, newspapers are losing audience to other media such as magazines, TV and the internet. Thus there is a need to engage more with the reader. While not touted as a panacea for regaining readership, it has been argued that narrative journalism or longer form journalism might assist with the task of regaining the reader from other media which "notoriously pilfer audiences from the pleasures of print" (Weisstuch, 2001). On this point, Director of the Nieman Program on Narrative Journalism Lisa Birks asked the following:

> What are newspapers going to do to get their readers back? … Everybody loves a story. Newspapers are the ones to revive narrative and draw people with it. You don't just get the facts shoved down your throat with the spoonful of narrative as a hook at the beginning. Anecdotally, we're finding that excellence in narrative not only brings people back to newspapers, but makes them loyal readers and encourages them to trust the writer. (in Weisstuch, 2001)

Other literature tends to draw a clear distinction between 'soft' and 'hard' news, suggesting that soft news can, and does, incorporate a more narrative style, while hard news is locked into the more traditional inverted pyramid style. For example, Fulton argues (2005) that hard news is conventionally located in the first few pages of the newspaper and has the largest amount of column inches devoted to it, where as soft news stories are not (necessarily) specific to a particular day, but provide background, human interest or light relief. "Soft news stories appear to be more obviously structured as narratives, with many of the features of fictional narratives" (2005: 226). She further argues that hard news is characterised by three things: third-person narrative, a high proportion of empirical information and definitive language, whereas soft news is marked by more engaged narration and personal experiences (2005: 233).

In addition, she argues that in conventional news the opening, or lead should include a point of closure, thus when the point of closure comes toward the end of the news story it should not be classed as a news story but rather an opinion piece, commentary or review (2005: 236). Ricketson, in his text *Writing Feature Stories* (2004) is quite specific in his approach. "Stories written to the inverted pyramid formula are known in the industry as hard news" (2004: 3). This study seeks to investigate this distinction and determine if hard news is, or can be, successfully reported in a more narrative style.

Narrative and news – is there a dissonance?

Wake (2006) argues the term 'narrative' is often closely identified with the writing of novels but he also notes that far from being confined to the novel and other forms of art – such as drama, poetry and film – the narrative can be found in how we construct history, politics, race, religion, identity and time. "All of these things, regardless of their respective claims to truth, might be understood as stories that both explain and construct the ways in which the world is understood" (2006: 14). Bell supports this, noting that "journalists do not write articles. They write stories. A story has structure, direction, point, viewpoint" (1991: 147). In its simplest analysis then, all news, including the inverted pyramid might be defined as 'narrative'. Indeed, a simple definition of a narrative is "a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space" (Bordwell and Thompson in Gillespie, 2006: 81). Of course, these elements are important in all news stories – something happened at this place at this time because of this event/conflict/occasion. However, we might expect a traditional narrative to have a beginning, middle and end (Gillespie, 2006). So, at this point we can see a deviation by the inverted pyramid because, as DeSilva notes above, in this structure the end just falls away and does not hold any resolution. Rather, it is expendable and can be cut for whatever reason.

All of the above elements are meant to create meaning in the story, which according to Franklin (2007), the inverted pyramid does not do. He argues that this style is devoid of meaning. He notes that journalists are trained *not* to insert meaning into news stories. "Journalism as we currently know it is relentlessly cognitive. We use facts; we prove things. Journalism has very little to do with meaning … But we mistake meaning for opinion" (2007: 109). On a basic level though, we might reject Franklin's argument on the basis that the inverted pyramid's inherent simplicity gives it meaning. Its simple, clean writing is largely without ambiguity. Perhaps a stronger argument would be that inverted pyramid journalism suggests only **a single layer of meaning**. Other forms of writing may bring in subsequent layers of meaning. Franklin (2007) notes three layers in story telling: the top layer is what actually happens (factual, as in the inverted pyramid); the next layer brings together the story character's and the reader's feelings (emotional); the final layer provides a rhythm and a universal theme.

At the extreme end of the inverted pyramid scale is the simplest of stories; the brief. DeSilva, in his rejection of the inverted pyramid structure argues that "the only appropriate use for the inverted pyramid today is briefs, but old habits die hard" (2007: 117). Bell supports this by arguing that the minimal, well-formed news text is indeed a one-sentence story (1991:174) or indeed – a brief. He goes on to note that the lead is a story in microcosm. "The lead-as-complete-story consists minimally of

the actors, action and place which constitute a single text. Attribution, abstract, time and the supplementary categories of follow-up, commentary and background are unnecessary" (Bell, 1991: 174). To some extent we might argue that this applies in radio where news stories are less than one minute, or sometimes less than 30 seconds (Dunn, 2005). The lack of context or background in radio news keeps it short but as Dunn argues there is still a narrative structure at work because in radio it is usually in the second sentence that the story begins to unfold (2005: 206).

The simplicity of news briefs, or indeed the inverted pyramid in its longer format is highlighted by Clark (2006) in translating the simple 5Ws and H into a narrative formula. In his analysis:

> Who becomes character;
>
> What becomes action;
>
> Where becomes setting;
>
> When becomes chronology;
>
> Why becomes motive;
>
> How becomes narrative.

Where 'what' might be the more likely lead start in an inverted pyramid news story, using less words and punctuation and getting to the point more quickly, the 'who', 'where' or 'when' might be a likely lead start in a narrative because it is not the purpose of the lead to 'get to the point' quickly. This issue is taken up below in the discussion on Inside Story.

Distinctions between 'news as information' and 'news as narrative', and 'news affiliated with literary style', are certainly not new in journalism discourse. Campbell talks of a notion of a "higher journalism" in England in the 1850s and the identification of "a new journalism" in the 1880s as invoking superior and more reflective journalism affiliated to literature (2000: 5) (Interestingly, this distinction uses the term 'new journalism' commonly associated with Tom Wolfe 100 years later). In the USA, Schudson notes that reporters told narrative stories in chronological order until the end of the 19th century and the summary lead became standard by 1910 (in Bell: 173). This is confirmed by Errico, whose study of American newspapers between 1860 and 1910 debunked the notion that the inverted pyramid emerged out of the American Civil War and an unreliable telegraph system, suggesting that it was due to "new social trends at the turn of the century" (Ericca, 1996: 6). The division between facts and story was made by Mead in 1926 in claiming professionalism of journalism (in Fulton, 2007) and by the 1970's Tom Wolfe wrote the famous *New Journalism* as the precursor for moving out of the confines of the inverted pyramid style, spearheading a new style for the time by incorporating techniques of the novel into journalistic writing.

This study investigates these distinctions and differences in current writing styles in Australian newspapers. It provides illustrations and examples of contemporary practice in Australian newspapers by looking at the first section of two daily,

broadsheet newspapers over a one-month period and it aims to provide foundations for further quantitative and qualitative research into narrative journalism in Australia.

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to determine what structure was being used within the news sections of daily metropolitan news papers.

Research questions that drove the study were:

> What percentage of news stories in the news pages employed an inverted pyramid style of writing and what percentage employed a narrative style?
>
> Was there a clear distinction between these styles or are hybrid styles emerging in the news pages?
>
> What stories would typically be written in a narrative style?

One part of the study was an analysis of *The Australian's* 'Inside Story'. Because this feature appears regularly in the news section of the paper, but breaks from the inverted pyramid approach, it was identified from the outset as being 'different' and hence requiring special treatment. To this end, it was treated as a case study and several additional research questions were formed:

> What were the driving forces behind the development of Inside Story?
>
> What structures were most commonly used?
>
> What narrative tools were used?

The study looked at the writing styles in the news pages of *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* over a one month period. This period extended from Saturday 15 April 2007 to Friday 14 May 2007, inclusive of Monday – Saturday each week. Once the study was proposed, newspapers from this period were purchased and this locked in the time frame. The two papers were chosen because of the inclusion of Inside Story in *The Australian* and hence its centrality to that aspect of the study. *The Sydney Morning Herald* was chosen to provide possible contrast, both papers being broadsheet, but also to include representation by both of Australia's daily newspaper owners, News Ltd and Fairfax respectively.

Categories for the content analysis were kept simple. Stories were categorised as one of the following: Inverted pyramid, Colour/Feature, Comment/Column. The three categories were defined according to the following criteria:

Inverted pyramid: began with a summary lead, making the story content clear in the first few paragraphs, with attribution within the first three pars and the story written in descending order of importance in a relatively formal but simple style.

Colour/feature: began with a non-summary or feature lead, did not get to the main point of the story for several paragraphs, employing either colloquial or informal word choices or a narrative/story-telling style.

Column/comment: indicated by head-shot or by-line of columnist or commentator, written in first-person or in obvious commentary style.

For the purposes of this study, the sample was restricted to the front section of the paper, traditionally the news section, because its purpose was to investigate what writing styles were employed in the news section of the paper only. This section is known to include the 'hard' and breaking news because of its proximity to the front of the paper and the choice of writing styles was of particular interest in the study.

Thus, the total number of news stories in the front section of the paper was counted, with the exception of pages which were clearly identified as feature pages, gossip, letters or opinion. Excluded sections in *The Australian* were: Arts, Letters and Opinion; in *The Sydney Morning Herald* were: Timelines (obituaries), Stay in Touch (gossip), Letters and Opinion, Arts & Entertainment, Insight, Eco, Film guide and Television. These omitted sections, while in the first part of the newspaper, were written in specific styles, feature, commentary or gossip style, and were clearly marked by page banners. As a result, the total pages analysed was made up of news and world news only. Sections were typically between 7-17 pages in *The Australian* and 9-24 pages in *The Sydney Morning Herald,* with *The Herald* including more excluded sections due to its compartmentalising of stories under named banners and also having many more pages of full advertising in the first part of the paper.

In addition, a case study analysis of 'Inside Story' was undertaken. This included a content analysis of Inside Stories which appeared in the sample period plus email interviews with editorial staff on *The Australian* (both current and former) to provide background to the series.

Findings

A total of 2435 stories were analysed over the month-long sample period. The findings show that the inverted pyramid is the most used style of news structure in the news section of both papers. While *The Australian* is the highest user of this style, with 84.5% of stories using it, *The Herald* is also a high user with 76% of stories written in this style. On average 81% of stories are written in this style, representing four in five stories using the inverted pyramid for both soft and hard news. The use of the inverted pyramid is consistently high: that is, on any given day at least 28 inverted pyramid stories in *The Australian* (representing 82%) and 27 inverted pyramid stories in *The Herald* (representing 76%) may be found.

Within the news section, *The Herald* incorporates a far greater number of colour/feature stories into its news pages. More than one in five stories use a colour or feature structure. *The Australian,* by contrast, uses this style for only one in 10 stories. Relative to the overall news story output, *The Herald* produces more than double the number of colour/feature stories than *The Australian*. The use of colour/feature structure is not consistent across all days, especially in *The Australian*: the lowest incidence of this style in *The Australian* is one story (or 3% of the total stories for the day) and the highest is 12 stories (or 20% of the total stories for the day). In *The Herald* the lowest is five (or 15% of the total stories for the day) and the highest is 21 (or 38% of the total stories for the day).

While the number of comment/column pieces were incidental to the findings, they nevertheless warrant some analysis as part of the overall news content. They are more commonly used in *The Australian* news pages than *The Herald,* making up 5% of *The Australian* news pages, but only 2% of *The Herald*. When coupled with the colour/feature stories this means that 15.5% of *The Australian* and 24% of *The Herald* use a non inverted pyramid style in their news pages.

Table 1

Story Type	The Australian		Sydney Morning Herald		Total	
Inverted pyramid	**(1164)**	**84.5%**	**(808)**	**76%**	**(1972)**	**81%**
Lowest daily incidence	(28)	82%	(27)	76%		
Highest daily incidence	(65)	88%	(41)	75%		
Colour/Feature	**(*146)**	**10.5%**	**(235)**	**22%**	**(381)**	**16%**
Lowest daily incidence	(1)	3%	(5)	15%		
Highest daily incidence	(12)	20%	(21)	38%		
Column/Comment	**(66)**	**5%**	**(16)**	**2%**	**(72)**	**3%**
Lowest daily incidence	(0)	0%	(0)	0%		
Highest daily incidence	(19)	24%	(4)	7%		
Total Stories	**(1376)**	**100%**	**(1059)**	**100%**	**(2435)**	**100%**

The table represents all news counted in *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* in the sample period. *Includes three 'Inside Story' features within the one-month period. Bracketed number denotes number of stories counted.

Analysis and trends of colour/feature stories

Of the 22% of stories in *The Herald* and 10.5% of stories in *The Australian* which represent the colour/feature story output certain trends were apparent, particularly relating to content. These trends are discussed below, with story date, publication, headline and lead cited as illustrations.

In both newspapers, world news included a relatively high instance of colour/feature stories. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the coverage of the Virginia Tech massacre and following the French election. The following examples illustrate this:

> 18 April, *The Australian*
>
> 'Normal Looking Kid' spreads death in class
>
> It was just after 7.15am when gunshots broke through the crisp air at Virginia Tech's west Amber Johnston Dormitory.
>
> 19 April, *The Australian*
>
> The lines loaded with evil and hate

> To some it might have simply been creative expression, but the screenplays by 23 year old Cho Seung-Lui can now be seen as portals of evil intent. “I hate him. Must kill Dick. Must kill Dick. Dick must die”.
>
> 8 May, *The Australian*
>
> Femme’s fatal gender vote plea
>
> The ‘Sakozyettes’ assembled in the women’s toilets at the concert hall where their hero Nicolas Sarkozy delivered his victory speech were ruthless in their post-electoral demolition of Segolene Royal. “Oh yes, she is quite pretty but she has no charm,” croaked the Joan Collins botoxed-lookalike as she sucked on another cigarette.
>
> 23 April, *The Herald*
>
> French fantasies turn to voter reality
>
> The hooded youth on the Champs-Elysees launches a crumpled drink can towards a rubbish bin. Welcome to Paris under President Nicolas Sarkozy, a country that is clean, correct, crime-free and controlled.

Other stories from *The Times, The Guardian, The Washington Post* and *Associated Press* printed in the world news pages also used narrative structures on a broad range of topics. Further study of world news might indicate if this is consistent with a trend.

The literature had indicated that ‘hard’ news would be more likely to employ inverted pyramid and ‘soft’ news, a more narrative structure. While this was true of much of the news analysed, there were significant exceptions. Many court stories were written in longer formats using a narrative style. This might come as no surprise when we consider that major court stories begin with a summary opening and end with a summary closing, thus providing the full story for a journalist to reconstruct into a narrative structure. This type of story often employed the use of chronology to provide a time frame reference, often using several key time frames to ground the story and lead the reader through. Other stories simply described the courtroom. For example:

> 8 May, *The Australian*
>
> Gangland killer jailed for 35 years
>
> He greeted the courtroom with a goofy grin, as if he was proud of his own notoriety.

The use of time was a key element in the stories that were written in the narrative style in many stories, not just court stories. The following leads illustrate this:

> 19 April, *The Australian*
>
> Kevin savours his Macarena moment
>
> It was two minutes past nine o’clock, and Kevin Rudd wasn’t where he was supposed to be, which was on the set of Mornings with Kerri-Ann at the Nine Network Studios in Sydney.

7 May, *The Herald*

Town rises from its watery grave as lake dries up

In 1949 the people of Adaminaby gathered beside the Eucumbene River to watch an explosion officially launch the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

11 May, *The Herald*

Leader never lived up to rhetoric

It seems an age ago now -- certainly longer than 10 years – that a youthful Tony Blair addressed his adoring Labor supporters at the Festival Hall in London on the morning of his election victory.

In *The Australian,* stories in the narrative style often concluded with a pointer to the Arts section later in the paper. In this way, a short news story would serve to highlight a longer, full feature in the Arts section, still employing a more narrative style. For example:

28 April, *The Australian*

New Chief censor had eyes wide shut

The new chief censor, Donald McDonald, once responded so dramatically to a film he had seen that he made a 'public embarrassment' of himself.

The writer goes on to explain that the film was Bambi and, in paragraph 4, she announces McDonald's new position in more detail. The story then provides a 'pointer' to the Arts section later in the paper.

This style is also consistent with an approach used by *The Herald*. Stories written in a narrative style in *The Herald* sometimes employed what might be classed as a 'drop' lead, where a personal story is written in narrative style in the first few paragraphs, leading to a summary paragraph later in the story, usually paragraph five or six, announcing the news point. For the purposes of this sample, these stories were categorised as colour/feature because they provided a strong narrative for at least the first part of the story. The following two examples illustrate this:

16 April, *The Herald*

City takes to polo: it's extreme, sport

Polo is a tough sport that has long been played by city clickers and rival folks.

The story continues to describe polo and then announces in the fourth paragraph: In a first yesterday, Australia took on Chile at the Windsor Polo Club.

16 April, *The Herald*

School to fight rule that short changes disabled pupils.

Bernadette Mullumbuk desperately wants to be like other 12 year –olds.

The story continues to describe this disabled student and then announces how the Catholic-run school is preparing a complaint for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.

A more abridged version of this style, and one that was counted in the inverted pyramid tally, was what might be known as a hybrid version of the inverted pyramid or an 'unconventional inverted pyramid' (UIP) as represented in Table 2, below. This style incorporated a non-summary lead, in feature style, but reverted in the second or third paragraph to the inverted pyramid approach. This approach also often incorporated a more informal style of writing than strict inverted pyramid structure. This would seem to indicate either a merging of styles or a conscious attempt at freeing up the inverted pyramid to be more conversational and reader-friendly. For the purposes of this sample, these stories were categorised as inverted pyramid because there was limited deviation from the inverted pyramid. For example:

> 26 April, *The Australian*:
>
> Brain is no ticket to bucks
>
> A great mind does not always make for a great bank balance, according to research that suggests the richest people no cleverer than the rest of us.

This article continues in an inverted pyramid approach but uses "our" and "us' in first person references. It is also worth noting that it is from *The Times*, reinforcing the point made earlier that international news is sometimes more flexible in its structure.

Table 2

Story Type	The Australian		Sydney Morning Herald		Total	
Traditional inverted pyramid	**(1105)**	**94%**	**(784)**	**97%**	**(1889)**	**95%**
Unconventional inverted pyramid	(59)	6%	(24)	3%	(83)	5%
Total inverted pyramid	(1164)	100%	(808)	100%	(1972)	100%

Shows the number of total number of inverted pyramid stories and the number of inverted pyramid stories with a more unconventional lead.

The UIP and 'drop' lead style are significant because of their hybrid nature. Most analysis of news structure categorises style as either inverted pyramid OR narrative; news OR feature. In fact, these categories indicate that there are hybrid styles emerging, with varied elements of style and structure. Further in-depth analysis of these styles might provide greater detail about their prevalence and make-up.

'Inside Story'

One of the best examples of a narrative approach to news writing lies in *The Australian'*s 'Inside Story'. This is a combination of a news investigation and a feature story usually begun on page 1 and spilling into the later pages of the paper. In the sample period there were three Inside Stories: in the weekend edition of 14-15 April, in Thursday 26 April and the weekend of 5-6 May. This analysis draws from

these three stories plus interviews with various current and former staff who have been involved with 'Inside Story' in *The Australian*.

Former News Ltd editor in chief David Armstrong (now with the *Bangkok Post*) is credited with beginning the series 'Inside Story' in the 1990s, however Armstrong credits others with its inspiration and origins. He notes:

> *The Australian* always used the more narrative, features style of reporting in its news pages, but only when that style suited the story. A reporter called Jane Perlez (now a senior writer on the *New York Times*) used it to great effect in the late 60s and early 70s. I used it myself, following Jane's example. (2007)

Armstrong points out the development of the series and the rationale behind the style of writing:

> I decided a great word with which to begin such a narrative news story was "When". It was an immediate signal that you were telling a story about the news, not just doing a straight who-what-when-where-how report. Frank Devine, editor in the later 1980s, used it on the front page from time to time. Frank had a lot of American experience and liked to have a story which "spilled" or "jumped" (the American term) from the front page into the paper. (2007)

He further credits former editor Alan Farrelly with the development of the precursor to the series in the early to mid 1980s, referring to what he calls: 'Farrelly's Akubra yarns'. Armstrong notes: 'he made it a regular practice to publish picture stories about life in rural Australia on the front page of *The Weekend Australian'* (2007).

These remained a feature of the front-page of the paper until about 1990 when they were dropped in favour of the largely urban readership: 'Nevertheless, like "Inside Story", they were a feature of *The Weekend Australian* for many years' (Armstrong, 2007).

Armstrong notes that 'Inside Story' was developed as 'a regular home for this style of reporting in about 1999' and points out that he is not aware of a similar series anywhere else in the world.

The Australian's Queensland bureau chief Andrew Fraser, a regular contributor to 'Inside Story', explains that the series is not a specialist round. The 'recipe' for 'Inside Story' is not prescriptive, rather it develops from individual reporters' investigations. "Sometimes you get an absolutely fascinating story that doesn't quite cut it as news," explains Fraser (2007). In Fraser's case, stories are most likely to develop out of his two rounds: sport and finance. He notes that 'Inside Story' requires a specific emphasis on style and structure:

> You set out to write it differently for an 'Inside Story'. In the first couple of pars you set a strong picture, outline a specific incident at a specific time. Main thing you've got to do is set the scene … (2007)

'Inside Story' usually begins on page 1 and, as Armstrong noted above, spills to an inside page. While there were three examples of 'Inside Story' in the sample period, two occurred in this way and one was run in its entirety on page 7. Interestingly, only

two of the three ran in *Weekend Australians,* with the third running on Thursday 26 May.

The story which ran on 5-6 May, on page 7, dealt with the culmination of an Australian Federal Police (AFP) investigation about donations to the 2004 Tsunami being used to fund Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, with the following headline and lead:.

> How Tsunami cash bankrolled Tigers
>
> As the Tamil faithful filed past the open coffin of their community leader Thillai Jeyakumar in Melbourne last month, Australian Federal Police could only look on and shake their heads in amazement.

The story, about a month-long investigation includes the 'new news' in paragraphs six and 13 with the announcement first of the month-long investigation (para 6) and the AFP charging two Melbourne men (para 13).

We can apply some of the key ideas from the earlier literature to analyse the story. First, Clark's list of character, action, setting, chronology, motive and narrative:

> Who becomes character – these are members of the Tamil Tigers and the AFP. Secondary characters are the Australian public who donated to Tsunami relief;
>
> What becomes action – the investigation into the channelling of funds includes suspense;
>
> Where becomes setting – the funeral, complete with 'open coffin', provides a strong setting for the story;
>
> When becomes chronology – the time begins a month ago (highly unusual for a news story) and progresses through the month-long investigation;
>
> Why becomes motive – the AFP conducted the investigation to track the channelling of funds from Tsunami relief into the secessionist movement in Sri Lanka;
>
> How becomes narrative – the investigation unfolds in the story as initially the AFP are powerless, developing into the investigation, culminating in the charges.

In addition, there are three levels to this story, consistent with those described by Franklin (2007) in his discussion of narrative style:

> Factual -- the investigation and subsequent charging by the AFP;
>
> Emotional -- the use of Tsunami funds for guerrilla warfare, and;
>
> Universal -- justice prevails.

These frameworks allow us to understand the layers of this story and its relative complexity, when compared with a simpler inverted pyramid structure.

Conclusions

This sample of news indicates that narrative news structures do have a significant place in these two broadsheet Australian daily newspapers. While the findings clearly showed that the inverted pyramid was the preferred style for the majority of stories in these papers, there was nevertheless a strong representation of alternate styles of writing. The *Sydney Morning Herald* had a higher percentage of stories using the narrative style than *The Australian*, but *The Australian* nevertheless used a narrative style of writing, particularly in world news and in arts stories that pointed to the later Arts section.

The 'Inside Story' series provided a strong example of narrative news. The sample of this series was very small however, with only three Inside Stories over the one-month period. Further investigation into this series over a longer period might provide more detail about its use of narrative devices. Nevertheless, the first-hand accounts indicate the importance of the series in *The Australian* and its commitment to this narrative approach to news that began in the 1960s. It also provides encouragement to investigative journalism in Australian newspapers.

The findings did not show an exclusive use of narrative writing for soft news or inverted pyramid for hard news. Coverage, particularly of courts in *The Herald,* was structured in a more narrative style. Similarly world news (French election) and breaking news (Virginia Tech massacre) were often written in a narrative style.

The use of a narrative style in world news appeared to be quite high and, while outside the scope of this study, might also warrant further investigation

The findings indicate that the categories of inverted pyramid and narrative are not mutually exclusive. Hybrid forms of style and structure are apparent in the 'drop' lead story, notably in *The Herald*, and the unconventional inverted pyramid (UIP) that varies from strict adherence to the inverted pyramid summary lead and formal language. This is consistent with the idea of the merging of news and features noted by Johnston above, both throughout the paper and within individual story structures.

Finally, the findings indicate that the move to present a range of writing styles in current journalism and communications text books is reflective of the range of writing styles in these two papers. The inverted pyramid, once the mainstay of the news section of newspapers and news writing courses, is now considered only one choice, alongside more creative, less structured narrative styles, informed by elements of fiction writing and more consistent with feature style. What might be identified as an increased readability of stories and engagement with the reader could well be a response to declining newspaper readerships which are demanding more entertainment and less straight information in their news diets, especially in the competitive and expanding media environment.

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Uncovering the place of creative non-fiction in Australian journalism departments

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Abstract

This article reviews the results of a census of Australian tertiary journalism programs that sought to gauge opinions about creative non-fiction and its value within a journalism department. The census revealed the academy's support for creative non-fiction as a way to encourage innovations in print media, improve graduates' employability and the quality of journalism. The survey also exposed a number of concerns about creative non-fiction's inclusion in journalism education. These included creative non-fiction's use in industry, restraints on resources, and problems with students' capabilities.

Introduction

This article reports on a census of Australian tertiary journalism programs. The questionnaire asked the heads of journalism departments to assess various aspects of the teaching of traditional journalism and creative non-fiction in their departments. The survey was part of a larger study (Blair, 2007) that looked into the place of creative non-fiction in the tertiary journalism curriculum. The research aimed to discover the current place of creative non-fiction in journalism education and evaluate its future in a discipline that must constantly develop to keep up with the ever-changing face of modern media. The responses revealed not only what journalism students were being taught, but the opinions of senior academics on creative non-fiction and journalism education.

The term 'creative non-fiction' was chosen, rather than 'narrative journalism', 'literary journalism', or another moniker, as it was considered more inclusive than other terms. The 'creative' part of 'creative non-fiction' acknowledges the emphasis on creativity in the genre, its use of fiction writing techniques, and its links to art. The 'non-fiction' part of the term acknowledges that this is a genre of writing that is not fiction; instead it sticks to the facts in an attempt to tell the truth (Gutkind, 2000). Other terms, such as those which include the word 'journalism', tend to be inclusive only of journalistic publication styles – such as literary journalism and feature writing – but exclusive of other styles – such as the literary essay and memoir (Roorbach, 2001).

The study worked from the following definition of creative non-fiction:

> Creative non-fiction is a genre of artistic writing which uses fiction writing techniques to tell true stories which engage readers. These techniques include the use of theme, action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, character development, and the inclusion of the writer's point of view. Writers of creative non-fiction strive to produce works of high quality which reach the emotional truth of the story and utilise creative structures. (Blair, 2007)

It also worked with a typology that distinguished between genre, techniques and publishing styles. This is represented in Figure 1.

Methodology

The journalism departments surveyed were chosen using a document provided by the Journalism Education Association which lists all university departments with practical journalism training (as opposed to general media degrees which may only touch on some of the theory of journalism). Twenty universities were surveyed via email, with a 100 percent response rate. While there were 20 universities surveyed, there were 22 respondents. The extra two respondents were necessary because the differences between the Gold Coast and Brisbane campuses of Griffith University and the undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the University of South Australia meant that they had to be surveyed individually.

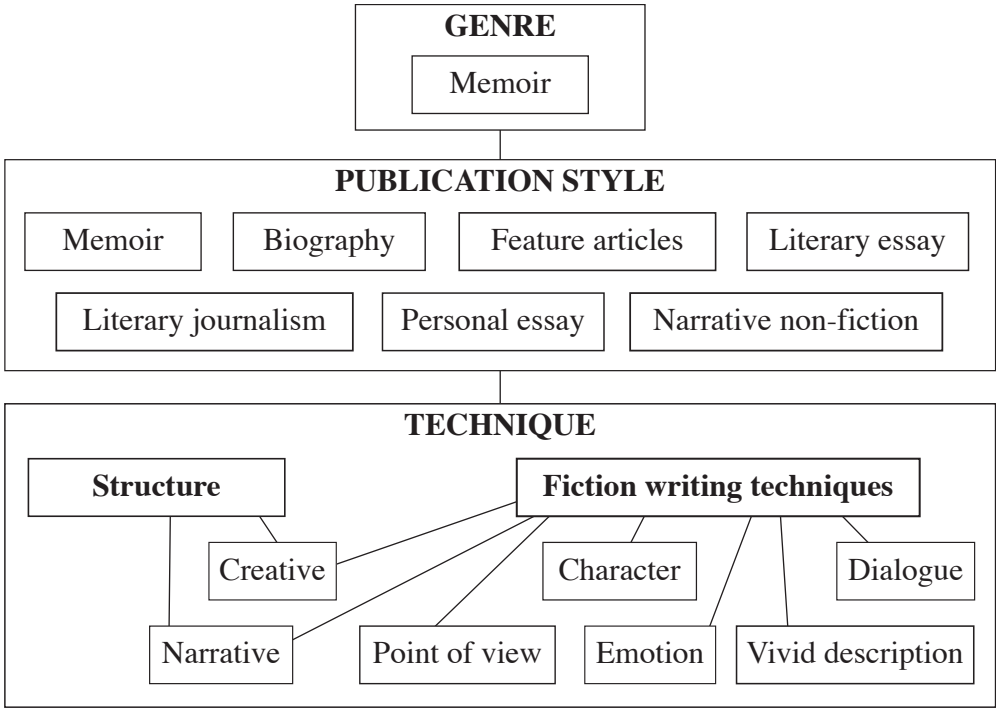
The questionnaire included both forced response and open-ended questions in which the heads of journalism departments (or their nominated representatives) were asked

to assess the place of creative non-fiction in their departments. It also asked for their opinions of creative non-fiction, its techniques and publishing styles.

No formal definition of creative non-fiction was provided to the respondents, as the researcher did not want to unduly influence their responses. However the survey distinguished between 'traditional' journalism writing techniques such as the inverted pyramid, news voice and hard news style, and the teaching of creative nonfiction techniques such as the use of action oriented scenes, dialogue, evocative description, characterisation, and point of view.

The following section summarises the key results while the second part of this paper discusses some of the qualitative elements of this survey.

Figure 1



Questionnaire results

Table one provides a context for the survey by reporting on what 'traditional styles' are currently taught in journalism schools. These styles were listed as 'traditional', as they would have been taught in journalism courses long before the term 'creative non-fiction' came into popular use in the 1990s (Blair, 2007).

Table 1

At your institution which of the following styles of 'traditional' journalism are taught for at least one hour per year?		
	Yes (n)	Yes (%)
Hard news writing	21	95.5
TV News writing	22	100
Radio writing	21	95.5
New media writing	22	100
Feature writing	21	95.5
Literary journalism	14	63.6
Other	8	36.4

The only two styles of writing in the list offered by all universities were television news writing and new media writing. However it is interesting to note that literary journalism is so widely taught. This indicates some level of openness to at least one of the styles of creative non-fiction.

This is further supported by Table 2 which reports on the creative non-fiction techniques taught by these departments. As can be seen, every creative non-fiction technique identified by the researcher was taught in at least 13 of the 22 schools.

Table 2

At your institution which of the following styles of 'traditional' journalism are taught for at least one hour per year?		
	Yes (n)	Yes (%)
Narrative structure	15	68.2
Characterisation	15	68.2
Literary language	14	63.6
Dialogue	13	59.1
Action oriented scenes	13	59.1
Evocative description	18	81.8
Use of writer's point of view	18	81.8
Theme	16	72.7
Other	5	22.7

Of the five respondents who ticked 'Other', four mentioned techniques that fall under the researcher's definition of creative non-fiction.

The researcher expected 'theme' to be one of the most selected areas, as it is an integral part of feature writing (a publishing style taught at all but one university). While 73 percent of departments taught theme, this was not the most widely taught technique. The use of evocative description and writer's point of view (both 82 percent) were the most selected options.

Although creative non-fiction techniques are widely taught, the spread of publication styles is more limited. Table 3 shows that all but one journalism department teaches feature articles and that literary journalism and narrative non-fiction are also widely

taught. However, other styles are not well represented in Australian journalism curricula.

Table 3

At your institution which of the following publication styles are offered as part of the journalism curriculum?		
	Yes (n)	Yes (%)
Literary journalism	15	68.2
Memoir	5	22.7
Biography	8	36.4
Literary essay	6	27.3
Narrative non-fiction	14	63.6
Feature articles	21	95.5
Other	2	9.1

The next two questions asked respondents to rank the importance of traditional' writing techniques and creative non-fiction writing from one to 10 (where 10 is very important and one is not important at all).

The majority of respondents (21 out of 22) ranked traditional journalism techniques between eight and 10. These responses were expected as the styles listed under this heading (the inverted pyramid structure, paraphrasing for attribution, news voice etc) provide the foundation for tertiary journalism education. The responses for creative non-fiction techniques were much more varied.

Responses ranged from two to 10, with an average response of six. The averages show that most journalism department heads see traditional techniques (an average of nine) as more important than creative non-fiction (an average of six). This result was expected, however, what was not, was that six respondents out of 22 (27 percent) stated that creative non-fiction techniques were as, or even more, important than traditional techniques.

In spite of the somewhat ambivalent response to the ranking of creative non-fiction techniques, when asked if they thought it worthwhile for journalism students to learn creative non-fiction techniques all but two respondents answered 'yes'. Surprisingly when asked a similar question about the worth of learning creative non-fiction publishing styles the response was even higher with all but one respondent answering 'yes'.

The reasons why the respondents thought creative non-fiction publishing styles were worthwhile for journalism students were that the genre created a wide knowledge base for students and it was useful as an elective and as a postgraduate offering. The reasons why it was not thought to be worthwhile were because there is not enough room in the journalism curriculum and the genre is too confusing for students. The reasons given for the worth of teaching creative non-fiction techniques included the way the genre expands students' understanding of writing, improving journalism's quality, and the benefits of storytelling. The reasons why the techniques were not thought worthwhile were that they were taught by other departments and that the techniques were too ambitious for students.

Table 4 summarises the respondents' opinions of creative non-fiction. While this was a qualitative question, the responses were categorised by the researcher as either positive or negative opinions of creative non-fiction. The results were overwhelmingly positive with 82 percent categorised this way and only 18 percent categorised as negative.

Table 4

Respondents opinions of creative non-fiction		
	N	%
Negative	4	18.2
Positive	18	81.8

The positive responses included those respondents (11 out of 22) who stated it was a valuable genre and those who thought it was valuable, but only for advanced students/writers. Negative responses (four out of 22) showed some respondents were not interested in the genre, thought it was unappealing, pretentious, or could be confusing for students.

Qualitative results and key findings

Some of the survey's most interesting findings were discovered in the responses to the qualitative questions. Here respondents voiced positive and negative views of creative non-fiction and of journalism students, examined the problems of time, resources and additions to the curriculum, and the viability of creative non-fiction in the workplace.

1. The popularity of certain publication styles

The survey confirmed what the researcher had suspected about the popularity of creative non-fiction publication styles – that among academics the feature article is the most popular style and that memoir is the least popular.

The reasons behind the popularity of feature articles (95 percent of respondents answered this style was taught in their program) are clear. This publication style has long been accepted by the journalism community and its place in every daily newspaper cements features as a popular style. Features are also seen as viable for students to learn as they have the opportunity to sell them, or write them in a staff position, early in their careers, particularly if they work for a magazine.

The next most selected style was literary journalism (68 percent). This result could be explained because of the style's extensive history, its popularity (particularly during many of the respondents' youth in the 1960's and '70's) and acceptance in the journalism world. The term uses the word 'journalism' and is found in many popular journalism text books (for example Conley 1997; Ricketson 2004; Garrison 2004). The reason for the relative popularity of narrative non-fiction (64 percent) may be its nature as an expansive style: as long as a piece is written as a 'story' and is non-fiction, it falls under this term.

Unsurprisingly, the more literary and controversial styles of memoir (23 percent), literary essay (27 percent), and biography (36 percent) were significantly less popular than the other styles. The least popular of all – memoir – has also received the most criticism for being prone to bending the truth (Freedman, 2006, p. 50).

Memoir's poor reputation stems from some notably fraudulent books, such as *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey (famous for being praised then reviled by Oprah Winfrey) and Vivian Gornick's *Fierce Attachments* which she revealed contained fictional scenes (Freedman, 2006, pp. 50-51). While some authors think there is some grey area in memoir, the prevailing theory amongst creative non-fiction academics, many eminent authors, and (judging by the uproar surrounding Frey's deception) the public, is that if composite characters are created, or scenes are made up, it is no longer memoir, it is fiction (Brien, 2004; Forche & Gerard, 2001; Skloot, 2004). Readers will accept the failings of memory, but not outright fabrication.

2. Students' capabilities

There would be few academics or writers of creative non-fiction who would say that it is a simple genre to master. Creative non-fiction's techniques are advanced and (as James Frey found out) the genre expects a high level of journalistic ethics. However statements by some academics in this survey that the genre is completely beyond the reach of journalism students are surprising. Their views were that students are:

- Unable to understand that they must be as truthful with creative non-fiction as they are with inverted pyramid stories.
- Incapable of understanding the difference between creative non-fiction and hard news.
- Not competent enough to use the techniques of creative non-fiction to produce the publishing styles of the genre.

One respondent's comments were fairly representative of this group:

> Most students have considerable difficulty in mastering traditional news writing techniques. Adding creative non-fiction techniques is generally confusing for many students, and reduces their ability to master traditional techniques.

However the researcher's experience with teaching creative non-fiction is that students are not confused by creative non-fiction techniques. They are certainly challenged by the genre, but they are able to decide when to use the inverted pyramid and a traditional news voice, and when the writer's point of view and theme-based structure is more appropriate. They also understand that if they are writing any sort of non-fiction — whether its hard news or a narrative story of their grandmother's journey to Australia — they make nothing up.

The views of these respondents clearly diverge from their colleagues from other departments such as creative writing, English, and film and television, who ask their students to write complex short stories, poetry, short films and even feature films and documentaries. All these forms use many of the same techniques as creative non-fiction, such as narrative structure, characterisation, literary language, dialogue, action oriented scenes and theme. The academics in creative writing and film and

television departments expect their undergraduate students to learn, practice and use these techniques to produce the publication styles of their respective genres. These students are also expected to know the difference between poetry and novels, or literary essays and short stories, or romance and horror, or documentary and short films, or feature films and video clips etc. These departments also ask their students to understand and incorporate the differences between fiction and non-fiction styles in their work.

3. The pressure of time

In reply to a variety of questions, the respondents explained that there was a lack of time to teach the traditional range of skills to journalism students, and that creative non-fiction was a burden not all universities could afford to carry.

One respondent explained the limited constraints of a standard bachelor degree this way:

> It is challenging enough to adequately cover the essentials of traditional journalism in a three-year undergrad degree (or less for post-grad students). Adding creative non-fiction would put pressure on other areas of the curriculum, and create potential for confusion among students.

Another respondent spoke directly to the demands on time in university courses. When asked if it was worthwhile introducing a single subject devoted to creative non-fiction writing techniques into the journalism curriculum he stated that it was not possible to add additional techniques into units taught by his department as they were too busy covering and practising what he described as the traditional "more commonly published" and broadcast forms of journalism. He explained that adding creative non-fiction techniques to these units would cause complexity, distraction and over-work for the other courses and it would not do the techniques justice:

> Lit journalism needs time to explore and BREAK boundaries, rather than the exacting discipline of keeping within them (as per news writing, for instance).

While it is clear from his comments that this respondent appreciates the style of literary journalism, it is also evident that he can find no room for it in his current offerings. Instead, he has asked for a separate subject so the time necessary to examine all its techniques can be devoted to it.

Another respondent also spoke to the time constraints suffered by some universities, opting for a single subject for creative non-fiction:

> Obviously the option you suggest is worthwhile, however Australian universities are operating within constraints of numbers of students and teaching resources. For some it may be more appropriate to contain within another subject or make it an individual project choice.

She explained the issue, however, with the clarification that at her institution she expects students interested in creative non-fiction techniques to take electives from the writing and cultural studies degree or from the ideas and concepts in the journalism feature writing subject. Another respondent made similar suggestions of

coupling creative non-fiction with feature writing or proposing that students take classes from the writing major, as a way to deal with time constraints.

This concern about time is often related to a lack of resources: if a department had more money it could employ more staff who would then have more time to teach a wider variety of subjects. As the interest in creative non-fiction is increasing it would be worth ascertaining if subjects in the genre could be money spinners for journalism departments, aiding in the curriculum limitations so many universities clearly experience. Perhaps this is a topic worth further research.

4. Which department should teach creative non-fiction?

One of the core issues surrounding the teaching of creative non-fiction is where the genre fits in universities. For some universities, to the chagrin of many creative non-fiction professionals, the genre is taught in creative writing or English departments rather than in the journalism curriculum (Gutkind, 2004, p. 1).

According to five respondents, creative non-fiction techniques have almost no place in a journalism department – instead it should be left to creative writing departments. As one respondent noted:

> Writing, which includes the creative elements, can be taken as the other major or minor. It is offered in a different faculty as part of the English dept., which has a good (creative) writing program. However, we have no objection to the mix and match. Quite a number of students chose to do it. This is why we are concentrating in our courses on what you call traditional journalism. The other ways of writing are covered elsewhere… I think it sits comfortably in the writing program (which is a good one — has produced already one Vogel prize winner).

In a previous answer, this respondent had said that the genre's publication styles widened journalism students' skill base, so this response was a little unexpected. Perhaps this respondent appreciates that creative non-fiction opens a wider number of career doors for journalism students but these options should be at the students' request, rather than as core requirements. What is clear though, is that the respondent did not believe it was the journalism department's role to provide these options for students. Instead they could be provided by other departments.

Other respondent comments included:

> We aim to produce journalists not writers in a general sense.
>
> It may properly belong in a creative writing course, rather than journalist.
>
> I do not think that they are yet essential to our journalism students and those who are so inclined are able to teach these as electives within our creative writing courses.

Though few of the responses can be categorised as negative opinions of creative non-fiction, they do represent a feeling in the academic community that creative non-fiction is not journalism. At the time of the survey there were are no journalism departments in the USA that housed creative non-fiction (Gutkind, 2004), and the

only Australian journalism department that has a subject with creative non-fiction in its name is Bond University. However, while five respondents indicated creative non-fiction did not have a place in journalism education, there was more than double that number that directly referred to creative non-fiction as journalism (a result discussed below).

5. Importance of storytelling

In reply to a number of questions, and on a number of topics, six respondents referred to the changing face of journalism and the changing interests of readers. To this end the journalism department's role in teaching students the importance of storytelling was raised.

The issue of storytelling was broached by one respondent who stated that,

> Journalism needs to be about telling stories, and using whatever techniques are appropriate.

Another respondent raised the matter of reader enjoyment:

> Because it is all part of telling stories... any literary devices should be used to encourage people to read... and to enjoy the activity.

This was reiterated by another respondent who wrote:

> One of the fundamental tenets of journalism has always been entertainment. Increasingly this is being pushed to the fore. I believe that creative non-fiction techniques will be important if future generations of journalists, particularly those working in the print media, hope to compete with their electronic counterparts.

These responses present a different view of journalism and contrast with the more traditional view that journalism should be taught through the hard news approach and creativity is best left to creative writing departments.

6. Industry requirements: no need for creative non-fiction

For any discipline that seeks to produce job-ready graduates, industry-relevant education is vitally important. Journalism academics have long argued over the balance between theory and practice in the curriculum and now, it seems, over the usefulness of creative non-fiction for journalism students (Herbert, 1997, p. 12).

Eight respondents raised the fear that creative non-fiction would not aid students in their careers. This is in direct opposition to the 10 respondents reviewed in the section below who discussed the increasing opportunities presented by the genre's techniques and publication styles.

Two respondents had previously voiced their problems with creative non-fiction because of the constraints of the university setting, but the survey also revealed that they doubted the practicality of the genre's techniques. One stated: "… most students are seeking employment in mainstream journalism, where the techniques of creative

non-fiction are not widely used." The other agreed: "Given that there is minimal employment demand for students able to use creative non-fiction writing techniques, and given that most students want employment in journalism, it is logical to focus on traditional techniques."

Another respondent went further questioning the genre's ability to be accepted in mainstream newspapers: "A lot of creative non-fiction is unpublishable and self-indulgent, attributes that would not be tolerated in most newsrooms." While another respondent explained that at his university the course was focused on preparing students for the workforce, rather than training them in more theoretical or experimental aspects of journalism, "Because this is what the industry tells us they want their journalism graduates to have. They are less interested in literary journalism because they claim that style is left to more experienced journalists."

7. Industry requirements: increasing need for creative non-fiction

In spite of these concerns expressed by one group of journalism eductors a number of their colleagues expressed a great deal of enthusiasm for the opportunities creative non-fiction offers graduates. Six respondents spoke directly to these prospects

One respondent stated that while traditional journalism skills are vital "… there is much more interpretative reporting today." He also explained the financial opportunities of creative non-fiction techniques "… as, firstly, devices for use in their other writing and, secondly, means of writing and income in their own right."

Another respondent summed up this attitude well:

> I believe journalists need a grounding in traditional journalism techniques and in the first phase of their studies the focus should be on developing these skills. However, given the changing nature of journalism, and particular the tendency towards larger magazine and feature sections, journalism students should also be able to experiment with creative non-fiction.

One of his colleagues went on to point out that creative non-fiction provides a bridge between traditional and future demands of journalism. This idea is also raised in the literature, where the future of the newspaper is suggested to be tied to a reinvigoration of storytelling (Cunningham, 2003, p. 8).

One respondent went further than the rest of the respondents stating creative non-fiction is more important than traditional journalism techniques. He asserted this was due to a shift towards more creative styles in the media, though not necessarily literary ones:

> Traditional techniques are no longer attractive to audiences. Writing is no longer the major form of journalism. We need to recognise the visual nature of journalism; the various ways of constructing stories which do not involve writing, and to position ourselves for the future where all these trends will be even more evident.

These responses (and others like them) are encouraging for the future of creative non-fiction. More respondents back the industry viability of the genre than were

concerned that it is not work-place relevant, and those who were positive about creative non-fiction also tied its relevance into the changing trends in readership. It seems for these respondents, that creative non-fiction is not a risky radical style, but instead it is a mainstream, if not advanced, choice for students.

8. Creative non-fiction as a form of journalism

While there are many different points of view when it comes to the way creative non-fiction should be taught, it is also clear that a number of respondents see creative non-fiction as a form of journalism.

In response to a question about issues of ethics and the truth 12 respondents (55 percent) explained their responses as if creative non-fiction and journalism belonged to the same genre of writing. One respondent referred to both genres as non-fiction, but more encouragingly for the future of creative non-fiction in journalism education, 10 respondents (46 percent) referred to both genres as journalism.

One respondent who was not an emphatic supporter of creative non-fiction categorised creative non-fiction as both a "style of journalism" and a "genre of journalism" in response to two questions. Another respondent called creative non-fiction, "a difficult form of journalism to pull off well" while a colleague stated that creative non-fiction "has a place in the broad spectrum of journalistic writing."

The respondents listed above, and others who called creative non-fiction journalism, disagreed on many of the issues surrounding creative non-fiction and the differences between it and traditional journalism. For example while one lauded the new opportunities for journalism graduates in the ever-growing world of creative non-fiction, another stated there were few employment opportunities for students versed in the genre. Yet despite these enormous differences, it is interesting that they see creative non-fiction as a form of journalism (even if they're not all sure it is as important a form as hard news). It is also worth noting that none of these respondents stated that creative non-fiction should be taught by another department reinforcing their position on the close relationship between creative non-fiction and journalism.

Conclusion

Journalism has always adapted to keep up with changes in society and in technology. Journalism education has followed suit. Universities today offer a wide range of courses in computer assisted reporting, multimedia reporting, and other 'new' media opportunities. What the survey has shown is that the importance of quality writing has not been forgotten.

Australian universities are offering teaching in a wide range of creative non-fiction techniques and publication styles and, it seems, if funding increases or the interest in creative non-fiction rises, departments may find they are given the resources they need to expand teaching in this area.

In the USA, where many of our media and educational trends begin, there is a movement to develop creative non-fiction – to include narrative in the newspaper. It is hoped this injection of creative prose will reinvigorate, if not save, newspaper

sales. One small example of this move is an initiative by the Associated Press. In 2005 the AP announced a new service for its subscribers – an optional lead. While, in the past, subscribers were offered only a "straight" lead – a traditional 4 Ws and H style – for each story, they now have a choice. As AP Managing Editor Mike Silverman explained: "The other will be the optional, an alternative approach that attempts to draw in the reader through imagery, narrative devices, perspective or other creative means," (2005). In other words, the AP now offers a small piece of creative non-fiction to their subscriber newspapers.

Perhaps Australian media will follow these trends and as the call for graduates who can write creatively increases so will our need to teach these skills. Outlets other than traditional hard news media must also be considered. Australians are the world's most passionate magazine buyers and with titles like *The Monthly, Vogue, Marie Claire* and *FHM* regularly featuring creative non-fiction it is clear there is work to be had (Circulation, 2005).

In the book world non-fiction titles now outsell fiction. In Australia in the 2002-3 year 24 million non-fiction books were sold while only 10.6 million fiction titles left the shelves; that's a difference of 13.4 million. In 2003-4 the gap had increased to 19.2 million copies (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, 2004, 2005). While not all undergraduates will be leaving university to write and publish their first memoir, teaching students the skills they need to write a book offers them this opportunity and it is one that many students are interested in taking up.

It seems academics, and the universities which fund them, need to have faith in journalism students, in their abilities and in their impact on the future of the news media. They are the next generation of journalists, of writers of books, magazine articles, and newspaper and online stories. We owe it to them to make sure they are as equipped as they can be for the changing world they enter.

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Rolling Stone's Coverage of the 1972 U.S. Presidential Election: A Case Study of Narrative Political Journalism

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Abstract

This paper examines *Rolling Stone* magazine's first extensive foray into political journalism during the presidential race between George McGovern and Richard Nixon. It examines the ways in which the magazine's reporters, especially Hunter S. Thompson and Timothy Crouse, used the techniques of narrative journalism to perform the relatively traditional journalistic task of covering an election. The *Rolling Stone* reporters' portrayals of their contemporaries in the mainstream press receive particular attention. This reportage represents one of the earliest and most comprehensive uses of the narrative approach to political journalism. It also represents an early example of "meta-coverage," identified by several scholars as the current tendency of media to focus coverage of politics on themselves and other media rather than on the campaign itself.

In late 1971, the staff of *Rolling Stone* magazine held a retreat at the Esalen Institute in California to discuss the possibility of covering the 1972 presidential election (Whitmer 1993:187). Since its founding in 1967, the magazine had built its reputation on innovative coverage of popular music, as well as coverage of, in the words of founder Jann Wenner, "the things and attitudes the music embraces." (1967:2). From its base in San Francisco, the center of the late-1960s counter-culture, *Rolling Stone* was quickly becoming the authoritative music publication for the baby boomer generation. (Draper 1990). Political coverage, in the most general sense, was not foreign to the magazine. Articles about such issues as drug laws and racism had appeared in the magazine from the first issue. However, *Rolling Stone* had never reported on elections in any significant depth, and many members of the staff were hesitant to devote the resources necessary to offer full-scale coverage of a nation-wide election.

Ultimately, *Rolling Stone* decided the investment was worth it, and the resulting coverage elevated the magazine to a new level of visibility. Additionally, the magazine's coverage, primarily provided by reporters Hunter S. Thompson and Timothy Crouse, has proven influential in both popular and scholarly analyses of political journalism. The purpose of this paper is to examine how *Rolling Stone's* coverage of the 1972 presidential election fits in with, and critically engaged, the coverage of the election by reporters from more traditional media outlets and to assess the pedagogical merits of the magazine's reporting for teaching narrative journalism. These aims will be achieved via a close examination of all articles about the election appearing in *Rolling Stone* from late 1971 through late 1972. These articles were collected by manually reviewing microfilm of each issue. Additionally, the published version of Thompson's letters (Thompson 2000) from that time period will be examined in order to give context to magazine articles.

This paper looks beyond the formal literary elements of Thompson's writings to examine how he saw himself as a reporter and how he positioned himself in relation to other reporters. It also looks at Crouse's observations of the press in more depth than previous scholars, who have cited Crouse in passing, with only short quotations, if any at all.

The present study analyzes the role Thompson, Crouse, and other *Rolling Stone* writers saw themselves playing in the election's coverage. The paper will begin with an analysis of *Rolling Stone's* criticisms of traditional media before progressing through signs of their solidarity with traditional media. The paper will conclude with recommendations for journalism educators who wish to use *Rolling Stone's* coverage of the 1972 election as a pedagogical tool for understanding narrative journalism and the relationship between non-traditional and traditional media in political reporting.

Previous Research

Thompson supplied coverage of the election in most of the bi-weekly issues of *Rolling Stone* during 1972. Crouse began the year covering George McGovern's campaign for the Democratic nomination. As McGovern surprised observers by becoming the Democratic nominee, Thompson befriended the South Dakota senator and became a fixture on the campaign trail (McKeen 1991). Crouse did not file as many articles, partly because of disagreements with Wenner, who wanted Thompson

to do most of the reporting (Draper 1990). However, Crouse would later use his reporting for *Rolling Stone* as the basis for his massively influential book about political reporters, *The Boys on the Bus* (1973/2003).

Thus far, scholarly research has done little to analyze the role Thompson and Crouse's reporting played in the history of political journalism. Thompson's work has mostly been analyzed as literature rather than journalism. Thompson was one of a group of writers in the 1960s and '70s who used literary conventions to write about non-fictional events, establishing a hybrid form known as "literary journalism," "narrative journalism," or "new journalism" (Chance and McKeen 2001; Wolfe 1973). Although his political reporting has received less critical attention than his more literary works like *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971), his book based on his *Rolling Stone* coverage (Thompson 1973/1983) has been the subject of a few scholarly articles (Bruce-Novoa 1979; Hellmann 1979). These authors analyzed Thompson's use of formal literary elements such as stream of consciousness and hyperbole to comment on American society in ways that would not be possible in traditional journalism.

Crouse's work has not been widely elevated to the status of great literature. However, his book on the election has widely been cited as a significant influence on academic thought about the nature of political journalism.[1] A number of writers have cited Crouse to lend support to normative arguments about the dangers of a media system in which reporters from various outlets rely on each other for information rather than reporting the news independently (for example, Bray 1974; Grossman and Rourke 1976; Swanson 1997). All of these works used Crouse's book in roughly the same way: to support the assertion that American political journalists tend to run in packs, copying each others' work and rarely thinking independently.

In addition to its use in normative arguments, Crouse's book shows up frequently in literature reviews of social scientific studies of the interrelationship between media. One of the earliest such uses was by McCombs and Shaw (1976), who cited Crouse's observations as justification for incorporating intermedia influences into their theory of agenda setting. Scholars have since cited Crouse in a wide variety of studies on the media's role in politics. Despite the fact that Crouse's coverage of the 1972 election was clearly journalistic in nature, many of these studies have treated it as if it was an empirical research study. Some have explicitly called Crouse's book a "study" (Dyer and Nayman 1977, p. 443; Rothenbuhler 1996, p. 126), referred to his "findings" (Kristiansen, Fowlie, and Spencer 1982, p. 641), and called him a "scholar" (Merolla, Ramos, and Zechmeister 2007, p.35). Kendall (2005) framed an ethnographic study of political journalists in a presidential campaign as a replication of Crouse's work. Even when such explicit language was not used, most of these studies have cited Crouse alongside more rigorous academic studies without acknowledging that his work is journalistic rather than scientific (for exceptions, see Martindale 1984; Ostroff and Sandell 1989). This reinterpretation of Crouse's reporting as an academic case study is an indication both of the quality of his work and the dearth of previous academic research on the formation of media messages that existed in 1972.

While scholars have focused their attention of Thompson as a literary figure and Crouse as a quasi-social-scientist, no in-depth analysis has been done that treats the writers on their own terms, as journalists. Considering Thompson's stature as a major figure in American journalism history and Crouse's influence on both journalistic

practice and academic research, more research is needed on their coverage of the 1972 election, the most ambitious and in-depth reporting either writer ever did. This paper aims to begin that process.

Criticism of Traditional Media: Pack Journalism

Much of *Rolling Stone's* coverage of the election made it clear that the magazine's reporters saw their work as distinct from the political reporting provided by most American newspapers, magazines, and broadcast stations. *Rolling Stone* expressed this distinction by criticizing mainstream reporters' tendency toward pack journalism and showing how their reporters diverged from that tendency. They also criticized and problematized traditional journalistic norms, especially objectivity.

One of the longest-lasting criticisms of the media provided by Rolling Stone was Crouse's accusation that reporters engaged in "pack journalism." Political reporters generally followed one candidate for long stretches of time, even for an entire election cycle. All of the reporters following the same candidate eventually formed a pack, meaning that,

> trapped on one bus, they eat, drink, gamble and trade information with the same bunch of colleagues week after week, and soon all their stories begin to sound the same. All the stories come from the same handout, the same pool report, or the same speech by the candidate, and the 'pack' dynamic insures that almost all the reporters will take the same approach to the story. (Crouse 1972c, p. 48)

According to Crouse, the independent newsgathering function of reporters was being supplanted by a communal reliance on official sources and conventional wisdom.

Although he did not use the term "pack journalism," Thompson noted the same phenomenon when he described what a "downer" it was to return from reporting trips and try to catch up on the political coverage in the major newspapers. He described the redundancy he found in the newspapers, as "the Post will have a story about Muskie making a speech in Iowa. The Star will say the same thing, and the Journal will say nothing at all." He described his longing for the occasional story that differed from the norm, such as when

> "the Times might have enough room on the jump page to include a line or two that says something like: 'When he finished his speech, Muskie burst into tears and seized his campaign manager by the side of the neck. They grappled briefly, but the struggle was kicked apart by an oriental woman who seemed to be in control. (Thompson 1972c, p. 12; 1983, p. 92).

Crouse illustrated the process of pack journalism with an anecdote about the press corps covering a debate between Democratic primary candidates George McGovern and Hubert Humphrey. In this case, Associated Press reporter Walter Mears's "way with a lead makes him a leader of the pack." The debate ended and Mears lamented, "How can they stop? They didn't come to a lead yet." Almost immediately, reporters from other news outlets approached Mears asking, "Walter, Walter, what's our lead?" Mears eventually decided to lead with McGovern and Humphrey's statements that neither would consider making conservative Democrat George Wallace his vice-

presidential running mate. This worked as a lead because "it meant he could get both Humphrey and McGovern into the first paragraph, both stating a position that they hadn't flatly declared before then." Meanwhile, reporters from The *New York Times* went with a lead "saying the debate was inconclusive" and promptly received a call from an editor asking why they had not led with the candidates' statements about Wallace like the AP had. In this case, The *New York Times* convinced their editors to keep their original lead, but in the end "half the men in the press room," including reporters for NBC and CBS, followed Mears and led their stories with the quotes about Wallace (Crouse 1972c, p. 50).

One of the clearest examples of pack journalism was cited by both Crouse and Thompson. During the Democratic convention, the McGovern campaign purposely lost a parliamentary vote to avoid addressing a procedural issue that would have come up had they won the vote by a slim margin.[2] Thompson argued that "less than a dozen of the five thousand 'media' sleuths accredited to the convention knew exactly what was happening, at the time" (1972b, p. 35). He then quoted McGovern strategist Rick Stearns as saying that *New York Times* reporter Johnny Apple filed a story calling the vote a victory for McGovern, but Apple's editor, Abe Rosenthal, refused to run the story because legendary reporter Walter Cronkite had reported on television network CBS that the vote was a major defeat for McGovern. According to this report, Apple, who bragged to Crouse, "Nobody [at The *New York Times*] has as much authority as I do. I can do virtually any story I want to do" (1972c, p. 52), was overruled by his editor because his story conflicted with the version of events provided by the widely-respected Cronkite.[3]

Crouse saw pack journalism as just as much of a "downer" as Thompson did. He described it as "a condition that causes much of American political journalism to be shallow, obvious, pointless and boring beyond description." He argued that the pack mentality deterred reporters from seeking out interesting or revealing information about the candidates because it created an expectation that their reporting must match the reporting of others. To support this proposition, Crouse quoted former *Newsweek* reporter Karl Fleming, "who was rumored to be a formidable critic of pack journalism." Fleming told Crouse that when a reporter tried to break from the pack,

> the first goddam thing that happens is, they pick up the phone and call this guy and say, 'Hey, if this is such a hot story, how come AP or The Washington Post doesn't have it?' … The editors don't want scoops. Their abiding interest is in making sure that nobody else has got anything that they don't have – not getting something that nobody else has. (Crouse 1972c, pp. 48-49).

In addition to the control campaigns exercised over the information that got to the press, Thompson noted an element of self-censorship among reporters. In discussing Edmund Muskie's failing primary campaign, Thompson reported, "In recent weeks the truth has been so painful that some journalists have gone out of their way to give the poor bastards a break and not flay them in print any more than absolutely necessary" (1972f, p. 32). Crouse noted that the tendency to self-censor was especially strong among reporters for wire services. Wire reporters were compelled to write stories that were "bland, dry, and overly cautious" because "the larger the audience, the more inoffensive and inconclusive the article must be." Because of this institutional expectation, "many of the wire guys are repositories of information they can never convey." Crouse specifically singled out Pye Chamberlain, a reporter for

United Press International, who "can tell you about a prominent congressman's battle to overcome his addiction to speed, or about Humphrey's habit of popping 25 One-A-Day vitamins with a shot of bourbon when he needs some fast energy. But Pye can't tell his audience" (1972c, pp. 49-50).

To Crouse and Thompson, pack journalism was a dangerous practice that cheapened political reporting. The *Rolling Stone* reporters sought to avoid this approach to journalism so they could provide an alternative voice.

Rolling Stone Breaks from the Pack

In the Introduction to his book on the 1972 election, Thompson contrasted his approach to covering the election with the approach taken by most reporters. He noted that reporters "wind up knowing a lot of things [they] can't print, or which [they] can only say without even hinting at where they came from." By contrast, Thompson recollected, "I was determined to avoid this kind of trap. Unlike most other correspondents, I could afford to burn all my bridges behind me – because I was only there for a year, and the last thing I cared about was establishing long-term connections on Capitol Hill" (1983, pp. 17-18). To the extent that pack journalism was a reaction to institutional needs, such as source protection and competition between media outlets, Thompson believed that his status outside of traditional media institutions would protect him from the pack mentality.

The *Rolling Stone* reporters demonstrated their belief that they were immune from the temptation to engage in pack journalism by explicitly reporting things that other journalists kept to themselves. On one occasion before the California primary, Thompson received unsubstantiated information involving

> a very strange tale about Hubert Humphrey keeping a private plane on standby at a nearby landing strip, ready to take off at any moment for Vegas and return the same night with a big bag of cash, which would then be rushed to Humphrey headquarters at the Beverly Hilton and used to finance a bare-knuckle media blitz against McGovern during the last days of the campaign.

Thompson attempted to get confirmation for the story from McGovern campaign director Frank Mankiewicz and got the reply, "Listen, you could cause us a lot of trouble printing a thing like that. [The Humphrey campaign would] know where it came from, and they'd jerk our man [inside the Humphrey campaign] right out" (1972a, pp. 39-40; 1983, pp. 229-230).

Thompson did not kill the story as Mankiewicz requested. Instead, he printed a complete account of first hearing the rumor at a strip club, his cryptic exchange with Mankiewicz, his subsequent debate with himself over whether or not to print the story, and Mankiewicz's ultimately successful appeal for him to delay printing the story until after the California primary. While other journalists may have felt obliged to ignore the story in order to maintain good relations with the McGovern campaign, Thompson felt no such obligation. In fact, he used Mankiewicz's attempt to stop the story as his only corroborating evidence for its accuracy. He never verified with any certainty that Humphrey had a plan to fly to Vegas before printing the story, nor did he ever report that he had such evidence. He simply reported that Mankiewicz was

uncomfortable talking about the story and asked that it not be printed, then he let the readers draw their own conclusions.[4]

Like Thompson, Crouse showed his lack of journalistic decorum by reporting news that was not necessarily on the record. When Humphrey gave a speech to his supporters at the Democratic convention and closed the speech to the press, Crouse reported on it by listening to the crowd reaction from down the hall and getting a second-hand account on the content from a Humphrey supporter (1972a, p. 40). In his first post-election story, Crouse reported that in the days before the election McGovern told a *Newsweek* correspondent, presumably off the record, that a speech he had just given was a "heap of shit." Although Crouse's reports may not have been as sensational as Thompson's Humphrey story, he was able, in a way that many reporters were not, to present what he believed was "the real McGovern" (1972b, p. 24).

Problematizing Objectivity

In addition to identifying the trend toward pack journalism and providing off-the-record coverage of the campaign, the *Rolling Stone* reporters used their coverage of the press to highlight the shortcomings of journalistic norms such as objectivity. Thompson argued against the very possibility of objectivity, saying,

> The only thing I ever saw that came close to Objective Journalism was a closed-circuit TV setup that watched shoplifters in the General Store at Woody Creek, Colorado … So much for Objective Journalism. Don't bother to look for it here – not under any byline of mine; or anyone else I can think of. With the possible exception of things like box scores, race results, and stock market tabulations, there is no such thing as Objective Journalism. The phrase itself is a pompous contradiction in terms (1972e; 1983, p. 48).

Thompson also expressed his disdain for the norm of objectivity through his unabashed bias toward McGovern. In his first *Rolling Stone* article of 1972, he called McGovern "the only candidate in either party worth voting for" and lamented that the candidate was "hung in a frustrated limbo created mainly by the gross cynicism of the Washington Press Corps" (1972d, p. 6; 1983, p. 33). Thompson admitted that 1972 was "the first time I'd voted for a major party candidate since [John F. Kennedy in] 1960" (Thompson 1973a, p. 529) and that McGovern was

> one of the few men who've run for President of the United States in this century who really understands what a fantastic monument to all the best instincts of the human race this country might have been, if we could have just kept it out of the hands of greedy little hustlers like Richard Nixon (1972g, p. 30).

Clearly, Thompson was on McGovern's side through the primaries and general election.

In addition to avoiding a strict standard of objectivity for themselves, Thompson and, especially, Crouse showed that objectivity was a rarely practiced ideal among mainstream journalists. These preferences may not have always been as ideological as Thompson's preference for McGovern, but they existed for a variety of pragmatic

reasons. For example, Crouse discussed why journalists generally preferred the candidates they were assigned to cover, especially in the primaries. He explained,

> If you ride the Winner's Bus you have a shot at the White House assignment, which is the biggest plum in political journalism ... Even if you miss the White House, you can always write a book about a losing presidential nominee; but nobody wants to read a book about a losing presidential hopeful. So the correspondents do not like to dwell on signs that their Winner is losing any more than a soup manufacturer likes to admit there is botulism in the vichyssoise (1972c, p. 50).

Additionally, Crouse documented how journalists developed personal feelings toward candidates. For example, as Humphrey was preparing to bow out of the race, Crouse observed, "The Press did not actually hate Humphrey, it was more that they felt sorry for him, and since they don't like to feel sorry for anyone, the wished that he would go away." (1972a, p. 40). In the final days of the campaign, Crouse reported that "the traveling reporters, who like all cynical people were also deeply sentimental, felt terrible for the McG[overn] staffers whom they had come to love." On the day after the election, McGovern addressed the press on his airplane, saying, "What we extend to you is the kiss of brotherhood, and good-bye until we meet again." The unnamed reporter sitting next to Crouse replied, "That is one of the classiest men I have ever seen" (1972b, p. 24). Although it is not clear from Crouse's *Rolling Stone* reporting that all of the reporters covering McGovern chose to vote for him, it is clear that they generally developed a strong affection for him.

Solidarity with the Mainstream Press

Despite their criticisms of other media outlets, in some ways Crouse, Thompson, and other *Rolling Stone* writers acknowledged that, at the most basic level, they were trying to serve the same function as reporters for traditional news outlets. They did this primarily by being self-reflexive about their own journalistic shortcomings and by singling out specific journalists for praise when appropriate.

Thompson, especially, acknowledged his own tendencies to do the same things he criticized other journalists for doing. As noted above, Thompson bragged that he did not need to maintain off-the-record sources and pointed out other journalists tendencies to self-censor the information they received from sources. However, in the course of covering the Muskie campaign, Thompson admitted to the same type of self-censorship. In a meeting with representatives of the Democratic candidates, Chris Hart, a state campaign manager for Muskie, was rumored to have said, "My instructions are that the Senator should never again be put in a situation where he has to think quickly." Thompson recounted that the story was widely disseminated among reporters, who got a good laugh out of it, but never printed or mentioned it on television. At the time, Thompson also decided not to print it. He said, "Muskie was obviously in deep trouble, and Hart had been pretty decent to me … so I figured what the hell? Let it rest" (1972f, p. 32). Of course, Thompson did eventually print the story, along with his explanation of why he decided not to print it initially. However, by the time he printed it Muskie's campaign was effectively over, so the only harm that could come from the story was mild embarrassment for Hart.

Crouse showed his solidarity with the mainstream media by praising journalists that he believed embodied true journalistic ideals. In his signature article, "The Boys on the Bus," Crouse included mostly glowing profiles of Karl Fleming (former *Newsweek* correspondent), Walter Mears (Associated Press), Bruce Morton (CBS), Jim Naughton (*The New York Times*), Dick Stout (*Newsweek*), David Broder and Haynes Johnson (*The Washington Post*), Jules Witcover (*Los Angeles Times*), and Richard Reeves (*New York* magazine). His profile of Johnny Apple, from *The New York Times*, was more ambivalent but still showed a certain amount of respect to the influential reporter who, according to an unnamed political insider, "thinks he's better than the pol[itician]s he writes about" (1972c, p. 52).

In his profiles of these journalists, whom he called "the Heavies" (1972c, p. 52), Crouse noted the ways in which these elite reporters broke from the pack journalism he described previously. Of Broder, for example, Crouse noted, "What separates him from the pack is his incredible detachment, which is not cynical, or even bemused, but scholarly" (1972c, 56). In several cases, Crouse highlighted the ability of these journalists to recognize their own shortcomings. For example, he quoted Witcover's assessment of the press's failings in covering the Muskie campaign:

> I was aware of the organization that McGovern was building up there, and aware that Muskie wasn't doing anything. But I bought the Muskie people's story that they were OK because Muskie had been in and out of the state for 20 years. Muskie intimidated the press. We wanted to have chapter and verse before we went at him (1972c, pp. 56).

Witcover, along with other journalists, appealed to Crouse precisely because they recognized the same problems with their journalism that Crouse and Thompson identified.

Using Thompson and Crouse in the Classroom

Soon after the 1972 election, English Professor Wayne C. Booth (1973) wrote a scathing review of Thompson's coverage in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Booth compared Thompson's reflexive, first-person approach to journalism to

> the freshman essay every writing teacher receives at least once a year: 'Sitting in front of my blank page at 2:30 a.m., with the paper due tomorrow, I am desperate. But suddenly I have an idea. I'll write about how it feels to be sitting in front of my blank page' (p. 12).

Interestingly, it is this characteristic of Thompson's writing that makes it useful for journalism classrooms. Undergraduate students can relate to Thompson's meta-journalistic approach because it allows them to follow the process and explore the world of reporting. They are particularly likely to appreciate Thompson's reporting if they are given a chance to experience Thompson's charismatic persona, perhaps through films like the documentary *Breakfast with Hunter* (Ewing 2003) or Johnny Depp's portrayal in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Gilliam 1998).

Crouse and Thompson's work is also a great starting point for conceptual discussion about the interdependence of media in political reporting. Crouse's "Boys on the Bus" article (1972c), or the book it inspired (2003), is an especially useful

assignment for facilitating such discussions. While textbooks have echoed Crouse's observations (for example, Bennett 2007), there may be no subsequent publication that illustrates the nature of political reporting in a more engaging and compelling way.

Perhaps most importantly, Thompson and Crouse's reporting from the 1972 election illustrates how narrative journalism can be used to cover traditional journalistic subjects. Works of narrative journalism, from *In Cold Blood* (Capote 1965) through *Black Hawk Down* (Bowden 1999), have tended to focus on people and events chosen less for their inherent newsworthiness than for their literary qualities. Topics ripe for literary journalistic treatment are those that warrant only limited attention from mainstream journalists, but that a skilled storyteller can turn in to a compelling narrative that illustrates larger themes. Even *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Thompson 1971) grew out of an extremely routine assignment to cover a motorcycle race, and become one of the ultimate examples of the narrative journalism genre. By contrast, Thompson and Crouse's subject in 1972 was the most newsworthy topic an American journalist can cover: the presidential election. *Rolling Stone's* coverage of the 1972 campaign shows that a journalist can tell an interesting story without sacrificing the responsibility to inform readers about government and public affairs.

Conclusion

Rolling Stone's coverage of the 1972 election resulted in an immediate elevation of the magazine's stature. Early in the campaign, Thompson reported that most of his fellow reporters had never heard of *Rolling Stone*, but by May of 1972, *Newsweek's* Stewart Alsop was favorably quoting the magazine that he called "the organ of the counterculture" (1972, p. 108). Starting with the 1972 election, *Rolling Stone* transitioned from a regional music magazine to a national institution, a transition solidified with its move from San Francisco to New York a few years later. Additionally, Thompson's reputation as a journalist was solidified by his election coverage. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* may be Thompson's literary masterpiece, but at the time *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail* sold more copies (Thompson 1973b). In the long-term, Thompson's election coverage is more often held up as the exemplar of outstanding reporting in the "literary journalism" tradition (see Chance and McKeen 2001).

Rolling Stone's reporting is also important in the history of alternative political journalism. Current alternative news sources, from blogs to *The Daily Show* to *The O'Reilly Factor*, often exhibit an irreverent and self-reflexive style that echoes Thompson and *Rolling Stone's* reporting in 1972. In recent decades, even the most mainstream news outlets have tended toward a sort of "metacoverage" reminiscent of Crouse and Thompson (Esser and D'Angelo 2006). Of course, more research is necessary to determine the extent of this influence, but it is hard to believe that Thompson and Crouse did not play a role in establishing these trends.

This paper has analyzed *Rolling Stone's* coverage of the 1972 presidential election, paying particular attention to the reporters' coverage of their fellow journalists. Its findings are significant for understanding the role the magazine has played in the evolution on political journalism.

Notes

1. A search on the Social Science Citation Index yields nearly 100 scholarly articles that cite Crouse's *The Boys on the Bus*. All of these sources that the author was able to consult cited Crouse in passing as part of a larger normative argument or social scientific theory development. None treated Crouse's work as an object of analysis.
2. For an in-depth explanation of the parliamentary vote and its importance to McGovern's nomination, see Thompson (1972b; 1983, pp. 269-323). According to Perry (1973, p. 171) Thompson was the only reporter to adequately explain the procedure.
3. Apple later told Crouse that the version of the story recounted by Stearns to Thompson was inaccurate; that the story did not run that day for other reasons and that a version of it ran the next day (Crouse 1972c, p. 54). However, he did admit to being outraged when the story did not appear, calling his bosses "a goiter on the body of journalism" and other, less nice, names. Whether the story is true or not, it nicely illustrates the phenomena of pack journalism that Thompson and Crouse ascribed to the press.
4. In a footnote in his book on the campaign, Thompson reported that later in the campaign he finally confirmed that the story was largely true, but that his printing it turned out to be inconsequential, as "it was almost universally dismissed as 'just another one of Thompson's Mackiewicz fables'" (1983, p. 237).
5. McGovern was one of the guests invited to Thompson's private "funeral" following his suicide in 2005, in which Thompson's ashes were shot from a canon, per his wishes (Brinkley 2005).

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“An example to the rest of your scribbling crew”: The influential literary techniques of the Eighteenth-century journalist Daniel Defoe

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Abstract

Daniel Defoe is regarded today as a literary genius who played a crucial role in the invention of the English novel and created the world-famous character Robinson Crusoe. It is less well known that Defoe was also an enthusiastic and influential pioneering journalist. This paper critically assesses the literary techniques Defoe used in his great work of journalism, the Review (1704-1713). Defoe advised his readers how to write clearly and persuasively, and his advice is considered here, illustrated by examples from the Review. Whereas some of the examples clearly exemplify his advice, others show he did not always follow his own exhortations. In particular, although he emphasised the need to write truthful reports, he frequently included fiction in his journalism. Defoe’s techniques included the use of stories, dialogue and bombast - techniques that survive in modern journalism.

Introduction

Daniel Defoe (?1660-1731) holds a pre-eminent place in the history of English literature. He is regarded as one of the creators of modern fiction, with literary historians frequently citing his longer works of fiction, such as *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana,* as proto-novels (for instance, Conrad, 2006:330; Drabble, 2006:268; Head, 2006:289). His most famous creation, Robinson Crusoe, is a hero of world literature, endlessly recycled in adaptations for children and re-imagined for adults, such as Tom Hanks's movie *Castaway* (2000). Crusoe also appears in the writings of authors as diverse as Charles Dickens, Karl Marx, and P.G. Wodehouse.[1] None of Defoe's literary contemporaries can claim such lasting influence or fame.

A prolific writer, Defoe produced hundreds of publications over his lifetime (Richetti, 2005). His voluminous output included prose fiction, poetry, travel books, and practical guides for businesspeople and families. He was also an avid journalist. This paper considers the pioneering literary techniques found in Defoe's journalistic masterpiece, the *Review*, concluding that many of his techniques survive in modern journalism.

As others have noted (Payne, 1947; Boulton, 1965; Backscheider, 1989), Defoe wrote about writing, explaining to his readers how to write clearly and persuasively. His advice guides this paper's discussion, using examples drawn from the *Review.* But before delving into the *Review*'s literary secrets, let us take a moment to understand the journal's context.

Historical and biographical context

The English newspaper industry began in the seventeenth century, initially with the corrantos (single sheets of foreign news) and later with regularly produced domestic newspapers (Stephens, 2007; Clarke, 2004). Direct government control of the newspapers gradually waned over the century, and by 1700 there was comparative press freedom. The newspapers of the time, with circulations ranging into the thousands and sold primarily in England's major cities, included the *Post-Man*, *Post-Boy*, *Flying-Post*, *Daily Courant* and the official *London Gazette*.

It was at this stage that Defoe entered the picture (Novak, 2001; Backscheider, 1989). Born into a Dissenting (that is to say, a non-Anglican Protestant) family, Defoe was educated at a Dissenting academy, and remained a Dissenter all his life. Defoe's education prepared him for a life as a religious minister, but he ultimately decided to pursue a business career. He was a devoted family man, and raised a large family. Throughout his early business career he also produced a string of pamphlets and other publications, but plagued by poor decisions and bad luck, he went bankrupt in 1692.

He was gradually rebuilding his business fortunes when in 1702 he issued *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters*, a pamphlet that parodied High Anglican intolerance. The pamphlet scandalised the establishment, and saw Defoe convicted for seditious libel, imprisoned and pilloried. Defoe's incarceration saw his business interests collapse, and on his release he turned his hand to full-time journalism with

the *Review* (1704-1713), a periodical he wrote virtually single-handedly (Defoe, 1938 edition).

Consisting of a few pages per issue, the *Review* was initially published once a week. It was soon a success, particularly with the London middle class, and had an estimated readership of 2000 to 4000 (Backscheider, 1989:153). Its popularity eventually saw it appearing three times a week. The *Review* was not a newspaper. Instead, it was Defoe's commentary on the political events of the day, particularly on the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) and the Union of Scotland and England (1707), as well as on his other preoccupations, such as economics, history, religion, and social and familial relationships.

The *Review*'s approach was not unique. Other commentary-based journals of the time included Tutchin's *Observator*, and Addison and Steele's *Tatler* and *Spectator* (Herd, 1952). But whereas the life-spans of those publications were often short, Defoe produced the *Review* for nearly 10 years. This was a remarkable feat of authorial stamina, especially as Defoe was frequently out of London engaged in espionage work for the government (including gathering intelligence on English and Scottish public opinion regarding the Union).

The *Review* usually consisted of a leading article followed by a section of smaller items. These smaller items were initially collected under the name of the Scandal Club, a group of tongue-in-cheek moralists invented by Defoe. He invited readers to send questions to the club, which were answered in the *Review*'s pages. So popular was this device that Defoe was soon publishing Scandal Club material in two short-term spin-off publications. Despite this, he later dropped the club, renamed the *Review*'s smaller section MISCELLANEA, and used it to present material similar to that found in the leading article. This may have been because Defoe found it easier when travelling the country to write opinion pieces, rather than receive and answer readers' letters (Secord, 1938). Indeed, Defoe apologised in the *Review* that while travelling he had lost some letters and been tardy in replying to others (4:7). About once a year, Defoe repackaged and reissued the individual issues of the *Review* in volumes.[2]

After closing the *Review*, Defoe continued to produce journalism in a host of other publications. These included work for *Mist's Weekly Journal*; his masterpiece of historical journalism, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, which Defoe purported to be a firsthand account of the 1665 London plague despite having been a young child at the time; and his great three-part travel book, *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*. He also produced his enduring works of great fiction (he was about 60 when he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*).

His family continued to delight him, but he never totally escaped his financial difficulties. He died aged about 70 in a London lodging house, hiding from a creditor. It was a sad end to a remarkable life. His passing did not go unrecorded, with obituaries appearing in several newspapers. A typical one described Defoe as "a great natural genius" and "a person well known for his numerous and various writings" (*The Grub-street Journal*, 29 April 1731:3). Defoe's lasting fame is a testimony to the truth of those sentiments.

The Review's literary techniques

Defoe boasted in the *Review* that he was a schooled and innovative writer: "I am, *without Vanity*, neither ignorant of the Rules of Writing, nor barren of Invention" (4:199).[3] Let us now consider his literary techniques and the journalistic innovations he helped pioneer.

Plainness

One of the hallmarks of Defoe's writing is its clarity and directness. He would later declare in *The Complete English Tradesman*, Defoe's instructional guide for businesspeople, that "easy, plain, and familiar language is the beauty of speech in general, and is the excellency of all writing" (Defoe, 1839 edition:11). In the *Review*, he described the journal's writing style as "explicit, easie, free, and very plain" (*Preface to volume one*:4).

As part of this plainness, Defoe addressed his readers directly, referring to himself variously, for instance, as "I", "me", "the Author", "D.F." or "Mr. Review" (7:449; 9:90; 1:303; *Preface to volume one*:5; 5:317) and to the reader as "you", "the Reader", "Gentlemen" or, when gently mocking his readers, "Madman" (6:333; 3:10; 1:143; 5:317). This helped engender a sense that Defoe was talking directly to his readers.

Defoe's Scandal Club championed plain English. When the *Post-Man* published the words "Dethronization" and "Catholicity", the Scandal Club demanded the newspaper's editor "tell the Society what Country language these were" (1:36). When the *Gazette* reported that an Italian army "met 200 French Horse near Brono, whom they either kill'd or took Prisoners", the club asked the *Gazette*'s editor how many horses the army did in fact take prisoner. As he could give no satisfactory reply, the Scandal Club ordered the editor "receive a Reprimand from the Director of the Club" (1:23).

To help readers of his *A New Family Instructor* develop a plain style of exposition, Defoe advised them to divide their arguments into digestible pieces, bringing "all Things into as short and concise Heads of Dispute as he could" (Defoe, 1727:248). In this way, Defoe explained, the information imparted can be more easily remembered. Such heads of dispute can be found throughout the *Review*. For instance, Defoe informed his readers that the *Review* was seeking to address three points in sequence:

> First, *To treat of the French Greatness*.
> Secondly, *By what means they came to be so Great*.
> Thirdly, *The Influence the Greatness of France has now* (1:185).

Similarly, Defoe used numbered lists to summarise his arguments. In supporting an English slave-trade company, Defoe presented a four-point argument:

1. That no body can be an Enemy to the *African* Company, but who are so, because they are Enemies to the whole Trade of the Nation.
2. That the Ruine of the *African* trade would have been no small Blow to our General Commerce.
3. That if the Company had been overthrown, the Trade must have been lost.

4. That if the Company had been overthrown, and the Trade lost to us, the *Dutch*, who were next Oars, would have had it (9:89).[4]

Similar numbered lists can be found throughout the *Review* (for instance, 1:333; 2:11; 6:419; 7:451-452).

Story

Defoe argued that as much as possible arguments should be presented in the form of story, to make the arguments "pleasant and diverting" (Defoe, 1727:247). Defoe regarded story-telling as central to his journalism, admitting that "I had rather tell you Ten Stories to no purpose, than omit one that may be useful" (2:369).

Defoe modelled the *Review*'s stories on fables – that is, he drew morals from them – explaining that "The Custom of the Antients in writing Fables, is my very Laudable Pattern for this, and my firm Resolution in all I write is to exalt Vertue, expose Vice, promote Truth, and help Men to serious Reflection" (*Preface to volume one*: 4). For instance, Defoe used a tale to criticise those who spread unfounded stories about the progress of the war. A man decided to frighten his neighbours, so told a blind man to cry out that a house was on fire. The blind man obliged, causing great panic. Defoe said some people may excuse the blind man because he is blind, but "I think the Man ought to be Punish'd as a Criminal, for *a Blind Man ought not to cry Fire*" (2:207). Such stories have an allegorical quality about them, and should not be accepted on face value as being necessarily true, a point I shall return to in a moment.

Many of Defoe's stories are humorous, Defoe using the humour to balance the weightiness of some of his themes. This was the very reason he established the Scandal Club, declaring at the start of the *Review* that "After our Serious Matters are over, we shall at the end of every Paper, Present you with a little Diversion, as any thing occurs to make the World Merry" (1:4). A frequent butt of Defoe's humour was the factual errors in the newspapers. An undertaker complained to the Scandal Club that he had read in the *Post-Boy* and *Flying-Post* that Sir Christopher Musgrave was dead, and so hurried to the deceased's house to offer his services, only to find Sir Christopher very much alive. The club told the undertaker it was his own fault "for believing any thing such People write" (1:188).

His stories also mocked society's hypocrisy, often using ribald humour to underscore his point. Defoe ran advertisements in the *Review*, and one was for a Doctor Harborough, who "Cures all the Degrees and Indispositions in Venereal Persons, by a most easie, safe, and expeditious Method" (1:48). The Scandal Club (1:51-52) received a complaint from a "Learned Gentleman, who was offended at Dr. H------- Advertisement, for the Cure of a Scandalous Distemper" (Defoe playfully alluding to, but not giving, the doctor's name). Unmoved by the complaint, the Scandal Club resolved that "Six Months after the People shall be pleas'd to leave off Whoring, and consequently be out of Danger of this scandalous Disease" the advertisements could cease.

Some of Defoe's most vivid stories featured dialogue. To argue that England's law needs to be more stringently enforced, Defoe told the story of a servant, Jack. He and his master are laying in their beds on a cold winter's night, with the window open. At first, the master politely asks Jack to get up and close the window: "*Jack*, says the

Master; *ay, Master, quoth* Jack; *I believe that Window's open, Jack*, says the Master; *I believe it is, Master*, says *Jack*". After several such fruitless exchanges, the master finally loses his temper: "*Jack, ye Dog, why don't you rise and shut that Window; if I come to you, I'll break your Head, &c. Ay Master*, says *Jack*, *now you speak like a Master*, and up he gets and shuts the Window" (6:331).

Some of Defoe's stories were pure dialogue, presented in the form of questions and answers, such as this exchange between Defoe, as Mr Review, and his reader, Mad Man:

> *Mad Man*. I Want to speak with you, Mr. *Review*
>
> *Rev*. What is your Business, Sir?
>
> *M*. I have a Message to you, and desire a Conference on the Subject-Matter of the last Conference
>
> *Rev*. What is it? Pray, let's know the worst of it. (5:317).

In another *Review* (4:513-517), Defoe claimed to have found "an old Speech, made a long time ago by a noble Peer" which had attached to it a series of questions and answers. Defoe quotes from these questions and answers. This dialogue, including its marked repetition of the word "nothing" and ironic use of the word "noble", was Defoe's satirical commentary on political speeches:

> Q. But what has the noble Peer said?
>
> A. Nothing at all.
>
> Q. But what did the noble Peer think he said?
>
> A. Nothing to the Purpose.
>
> Q. But why did the noble Peer say it then?
>
> A. Because he has been used to do so.
>
> Q. But what did the noble Peer mean?
>
> A. Nothing.
>
> Q. But why did he mean nothing?
>
> A. Because he used to mean nothing. (4:514).

Many a good story includes a cliff-hanger, and Defoe ended some of his tales in mid-stream, promising to return to the story later. When a prostitute complained to the Scandal Club that a client had not paid her, Defoe told half the titillating tale, and then stopped, explaining "the farther hearing of this Matter was referr'd to the next sitting of the Club" (1:64). He would also use teasers, finishing each *Review* by indicating what would appear in the next. After the Scandal Club has finished excoriating the newspapers in one issue, Defoe told his readers: "The Club has had a great deal of trouble about the News Writers…we must give you the trouble of a

few of them in our next" (1:16). Such cliff-hangers and teasers encouraged Defoe's readers to buy the next issue, in order to continue the story.

Letters

Defoe invited his readers to send him letters (for instance, 1:247; 4:7), which he answered in the pages of the *Review*. These letters covered myriad topics, including whether animals think (2:39), the morality of extra-marital affairs (*Supplement No.1*:6), and personal financial management (*The Little Review No.12*:47).

Defoe specifically denied inventing letters for the *Review* (8:333), and doubtless many of the letters Defoe published were genuine. Indeed, he was obliged to publish the overflow in his spin-off journals. However, it was customary at the time for journalists to write their own letters and Defoe is known to have invented letters when writing for other journals (Sutherland, 1971:84; Backscheider, 1989:539-540). So it seems likely that at least some of the letters in the *Review* were written by Defoe himself.

Some of the letters satirised the powerful. One, purportedly from "J.J.", reported the activities of a member of the clergy, "*the P-----n of B----f----ld, led homeward from an Ale-house between two Wenches*", who throws himself face up in the local cemetery and declares of himself: "He is not Dead but Drunk by G-d" (1:138).

Similarly, in the first issue of the *Supplement*, Defoe recounted the actions of an unnamed Justice of the Peace. Having fallen out with an honest shopkeeper, the Justice whipped him. The shopkeeper thereupon "bestow'd a dusting upon him, and fairly thresh'd him to his Heart's content" (*Supplement No. 1*:13). Later, the *Review* ran a letter from an outraged unnamed Justice, who said he recognised himself in the story but that the story was false. As violent as ever, the Justice demanded the *Review* retract the story "*or else,* G---D D---m me, *I will Cut your Author's Ears off*" (1:291). The Scandal Club stood by its story because "the Story must be True; or else, how should his Worship know himself by the Character" (1:291).

One letter, which ran virtually the full length of a *Review*, told an extraordinary tale of villainy. Defoe began by insisting the letter was factual: "every thing has been attested in a Court of Justice already" (3:273) and the letter declared itself a "true History" (3:274). The letter related how a family conspired to have a young woman falsely declared insane and committed to a mental institution, in order to steal her inheritance. She is grossly mistreated at the institution, but eventually saved by some of her ex-neighbours "having providentially gain'd some Hints of her condition" (3:275). The neighbours are painted in quasi-religious terms, with their actions motivated by "meer Charity, and without any Design, but to redeem her" (3:280). The letter-writers are identified only as "*I.* and *P.*" (3:276). Explaining that he had deliberately not named anyone in the story as he is "very willing to Expose the Thing, and spare the People" (3:276), Defoe called for government regulation to prevent such incidents in future.

In another *Review*, Defoe was a little more explicit as to the source of his information, but the provenance is still highly doubtful. Explaining that he has learnt from "Gentlemen who have travel'd in *France*" (1:85) how grievances are settled across the Channel, Defoe gave various examples. In one instance, two French

gentlemen quarrel over a mistress they share. After one beats his colleague with a cane, the local court ruled that the offender be likewise caned "by a Woman of the Meanest and most Infamous Character" (1:87) and the mistress banished. After this, the two men are reconciled - an outcome that Defoe acknowledged his readers would find "Remarkable", indicating perhaps that he suspected they might doubt the story's authenticity (1:87).

Defoe frequently claimed that the *Review*'s reports were truthful. As author of the *Review*, he said "his Pen is lifted in the Service of Truth; and as there shall be nothing but Truth, as near as he is able, in his Paper" (2:253, see also 9:1). Defoe insisted that by speaking truthfully, journalists served future generations: "Ages to come will have cause to Reproach the Men of this Generation, with leaving such Magazines of Scandal and Forgery, and so far Separated from the true Accounts of the same Fact, that they will not be able to know from our Testimony, when they speak Truth, or Report Lies" (8:832). Yet the above stories in letter form seem to have been fabricated: they feature outrageous incidents, broad irony, and no explicit provenance. Although Defoe's cavalier attitude towards the truth may seem surprising today, it would not have seemed unusual to his readers, as the distinctions between rumour, fiction and fact were not regarded as important in his day (Head, 2006:289).

Indeed, Defoe used the same strategies in his fiction. His great novels frequently claim to have been written by the fictional main character and begin with assertions that the books are factual. The title page of *Robinson Crusoe*, for instance, says the book was "*Written by Himself*" and its preface describes the novel as "a just history of fact" (Defoe, 1972 edition:11). Likewise, the title page of *Moll Flanders* declares the book to be "Written *from her own* MEMORANDUMS" and its preface says the book is "her own History" (Defoe, 1971 edition:1). In fact, one letter in the *Review* tells a tale of a man who visits "*a Bawdy-House*", but later discovers the prostitute has stolen from him (2:15). Similar incidents occur in *Moll Flanders* (Defoe, 1971 edition:225-229).

Facts and details

By contrast, when Defoe's reports were true, he was quick to include facts and details to heighten their verisimilitude. When attacking the garbled or incorrect reports in the newspapers, he was careful to give the details as to where he found the reports: "the *Gazette* of *August* the 7th" (1:200), "*Courant, June 23*" (2:193). Similarly, the history lessons he gave his readers - drawn from "a faithful Abridgement of former Authors" (1:2) - were full of facts: "The Death of the Younger Son of the same Earl of *Shrewsbury*, and Brother to the Present Duke, who was kill'd in a Duel by the late Duke of *Grafton*" (1:78). To underscore this accuracy, he published corrections of any factual mistakes he had committed in earlier issues: "*for* Prince Alexander, *read* Constantine; *for* L'Amand Honourable *read* L'Amende Honorable" (1:95).

Likewise, when he recounted events he had witnessed first hand, details abound. When informing his readers that in his travels around England he had seen fields full of corn, he listed the places he visited and the distances involved:

> from *Rockingham*, I enter'd *Leicestershire*, the *North* Side of which, and the *South* Sides of *Darby* and *Nottinghamshire*, being a Tract of 25 Miles broad, and 40 Miles long, is wholly given up to Corn…From *Rockingham* to *Mount-Sorrell*, 14 Miles, from thence to *Nottingham* 16 Miles, and thence to *Darby* 12 Miles (6:327).

Defoe adapted this technique for his novels, using real-world details to enhance the books' sense of reality. When Moll Flanders steals a bundle, for example, she gives precise details of the streets she escapes down:

> I walk'd away, and turning into *Charter-house-Lane*, made off thro' *Charter-house-Yard*, into *Long-Lane*, then cross'd into *Bartholomew-Close*, so into *Little Britain*, and thro' the *Blue-Coat-Hospital* into *Newgate-Street* (Defoe, 1971 edition:239).

Other narrative devices

Defoe used a variety of other narrative devices to heighten the impact of his prose.

One was repetition, asserting: "I had rather say the same thing over twenty times, than once omit, what may this Way be useful" (4:199). When a man complains to the Scandal Club that he has a bad wife (1:184), the club asks him if his wife is:

> A Whore? *Answer*, No
>
> A Thief? ---------- No
>
> A Slutt? ---------- No
>
> A Scold? ---------- No
>
> A Drunkard? ------- No
>
> A Gossip? ---------- No (1:184).

The repetition of "No" to the club's list of potential faults emphasised that the man had nothing to complain about. The repetition also implied that it was the man who was really at fault, and the club resolved that he "go Home, Reform himself, and become a good Husband" (1:184).

Another device frequently used was digression - turning away from the topic at hand to consider another. Defoe used the technique quite explicitly. In one *Review* Defoe informed his readers that, prompted by a letter he had received, he would be "making a small Digression on the Subject Matter of Charity and Poverty" (1:417). He began another *Review* be declaring it would be "a very entire Digression from the Subject I am upon" (6:325). But sometimes he was sly, saying he would not speak of a topic, but doing so anyway. When describing a march undertaken by a German army, he declared "We need not trouble the World with the History of this March" and then proceeded to describe it in detail (1:45, another example is at 1:397). At least one of Defoe's readers disliked this device, writing him a letter complaining that Defoe was "*pretending to write This, but making your Discourse consist as much of That*" (1:143). Citing myriad faults with the *Review*, the complainant concluded

that Defoe should be whipped "*to make you an Example to the rest of your Scribling Crew*" (1:148). This letter-writer was apparently all too real, with an incensed Defoe denouncing the complainant as "a Querulous Pevish Enquirer" (1:145).

Another narrative device Defoe employed was irony. A supporter of England's constitutional monarchy, Defoe used the term "Benefits" ironically when he declared, "If any Man ask me what are the Benefits of Absolute Monarchy to the Subject; I know but two, *Poverty and Subjugation*" (1:62). Rather given to self-pity, Defoe once ironically lamented: "I have the good Fortune to amass infinite Enemies" (7:65).

A deeply religious man, Defoe would use proverbs and biblical aphorisms to make his points. In highlighting the hypocrisy of the Turks calling the Germans unmerciful, Defoe noted, "*When the Fox preaches beware the Geese*" (1:258). Discussing the origins of crime, Defoe noted "*Lead us not into Temptation*" (8:303). To explain why he did respond to newspapers that criticised him, he observed: "*Solomon* directed it long since, *Answer not a Fool in his Folly*" (7:449).

Defoe insisted that good journalism must be based on sound, rational argument, not hectoring or abuse - "Arguments will obtain a greater Force from cool and calm handling, than from furious Words" (8:151) - and, certainly, the *Review* contains plenty of text that coolly recounts the history of, say, France and European affairs. But Defoe's call for rational debate went counter to his training and natural inclination, and he frequently turned his arguments in the *Review* into religious bombast. In his highly religious age, Defoe's style would have found a ready audience. For instance, insisting that the authorities were lax in enforcing the law, he railed:

> Men may deny GOD, insult their Neighbours, break in upon Marriage-Vows, defile the Bed, debauch the Vertuous, delude the Simple, and rage in unrestrain'd Lusts, while the Silent Law puts neither Fetters upon the Crime, nor upon the Criminal (5:266).

Defoe reserved some of his greatest bombast for stock-jobbers (early share brokers), whom he despised. Defoe recounts the genealogy of stockjobbers and their ilk:

> When the Bastards were born, they got Sirnames of their own (*for as for Christian Names they had nothing to do with them*)…They were Female brats, and as they began in Debauchery, they grew up in all the Infections of Commerce, till they became a perfect Contagion in their very Nature, and by their noxious Quality have brought a general Plague or Itch of ---- upon the whole Nation (5:427).

Defoe's religiosity was not always so pulpit-thumping. In celebrating the large amount of corn he saw growing in Scotland, he described a pastoral paradise:

> I can look out of my Window, and see the Fields standing full of the Shocks of Corn, the Quantity great, the Sheaves heavy, the Season kindly, and all Hands busie carrying it home…The Country People are chearful and glad-hearted at the Sight of their Corn, the Ministers are on every Occasion giving GOD Thanks for the good Season (6:329-330).

Defoe also used similes and metaphors. Arguing against the view that the Dissenters would eventually overthrow the Church of England, Defoe declared that "I shall begin to argue this from a Simily" (4:620) and so discussed Hamburg, a city surrounded by powerful neighbours. Although the neighbouring states covet Hamburg's riches, none annex the city because each knows this will provoke the others. In the same way, Defoe argued, given the various denominations of Dissenters quarrel among themselves, none would choose a Dissenter as monarch, preferring a moderate Anglican who would best suit all their interests. Elsewhere, Defoe employed a shipping metaphor to show how he had argued for national peace, noting that he had "plac'd Buoys and Marks upon the Dangerous Sands and Shoals, where the Ship of the State may be in danger" (2:209).

Finally, he frequently used personification, such as when he observed "Peace and Trade are old Comrades" (9:90). When Defoe's readers grew bored with his lengthy discussions on the Union and called on him to write on new topics, he chastised them for lusting after "*Novelty*, the Age's *Whore*" (*Preface to volume five*:1). The final two words of the last issue of the *Review* used this device, with Defoe personifying his journal as an actor leaving the stage: "*Exit REVIEW*" (9:214).

Conclusion - Defoe's influence today

As part of his training for the Church Defoe would have learned many of the devices he employed in the *Review*. Plain speaking, instructional stories, and religious bombast were all part of the armoury of any good eighteenth-century preacher. Indeed, at the start of one *Review*, Defoe asked his readers, "will you allow me to preach a little?" (6:341).

This religiosity, allied with Defoe's often antiquated values, may make his journalism appear alien to modern eyes, merely a historical curiosity. Certainly, in looking at Defoe's influence on modern mainstream journalism, we would struggle to detect much, if any, trace of his fire and brimstone, casual relationship with the truth, or explicit use of digression.

But many of his literary techniques are used by the modern journalist. Magazines and newspapers today are frequently separated into departments, with the serious journalism at the front and the more entertainment-focussed material nearer the back, just as Defoe followed his serious political discussions with the Scandal Club material. Newspapers and magazines encourage their readers to buy the next issue by advertising what will be in it, just as Defoe ran his teasers. Newspapers and magazines run letters to the editor and agony-aunt columns, just as Defoe did. Newspapers and magazines run corrections and clarifications, in part to show that they value accuracy, just as Defoe did. Many magazines run sections that reproduce typographical and grammatical errors printed in other publications, just as Defoe did.

Journalists today strive to write clearly, as Defoe did, and to include facts and details to give their reports authority, as Defoe did (when his stories were true). Modern news reports feature bullet-point lists of the main points, much like Defoe's numbered lists. Modern journalism includes the question-and-answer format, often used by Defoe. Fly-on-the-wall feature articles frequently include dialogue, just as Defoe used dialogue to help tell his stories. Feature articles frequently include

case studies to illustrate the general points being made, just as Defoe used stories to illustrate his points. Newspaper columnists and online bloggers harangue their readers on their favourite topics, some invariably complaining that the government is soft on crime or that the news-media audience has a short attention span, just as Defoe did.

Viewed in this light, Defoe's techniques are not so alien to modern eyes after all.

Endnotes

1 For instance, in A Christmas Carol an early breakthrough in Scrooge's rehabilitation occurs when he recalls his childhood joy in reading Robinson Crusoe (Dickens, 1988 edition:31). In Capital, Marx notes that political economists frequently cite Crusoe on his island as an example of a simple economic system. Marx rehearses the argument, sarcastically observing that Crusoe draws up a ledger "like a true-born Briton" (Marx, 1938 edition:48). Indeed, Bertie Wooster, finding himself in a spot of bother in Thank You, Jeeves, recalls Crusoe's practice of setting out a credit and debit ledger of his situation, and does the same (Wodehouse, 2003 edition:158-160).

2 Ultimately, the *Review* stretched to nine volumes. Defoe regarded the *Review* that he wrote in 1712-13 as a new publication, and labelled it volume one accordingly. However, modern scholars typically regard it as volume nine of the original *Review*, and I have followed that convention. Unless otherwise stated, all quotes are from the *Review*, with text citations given as volume:page. Again following scholarly convention, I have treated The *Prefaces* to the *Review*, the *Supplement*s and *The Little Review* as all part of the *Review*, but for ease of reference I have separately identified them in the text citations. Occasionally, Defoe's printer accidentally numbered the *Review*'s pages incorrectly, errors I have silently corrected.

3 Eighteenth-century London was a time when men wore extravagant wigs and frock coats, and engaged in frank exchanges of views. Defoe's writing displays the energy of that age, even down to the way the text looks, so as much as possible Defoe's eighteenth-century typography and spelling are retained here. The long s has been modernised.

4 Although Defoe's frank support for slavery may seem startling to modern eyes, his view was commonplace at the time. Indeed, after saving Friday, without a moment's thought Robinson Crusoe insists the black man call him "Master" (Defoe, 1972 edition:196).

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A metaphor for the world: William Langewiesche, John Vaillant and looking for the story in long-form

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Abstract:

This is a study of two writers and their methods, with a discussion of what makes their superior magazine features so compelling. In long-form narrative, the story is never simply about the story—it is a metaphor for something much larger. The three-part series, "Unbuilding the World Trade Center" (2002 *The Atlantic Monthly*), is straightforward. In the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks on Manhattan, a group of men remove debris from the former World Trade Center site. But it is really about how a democratic society forms out of the ruins, with Langewiesche's story mirroring America's shifting global stature. John Vaillant's *The Golden Spruce* (2005) is a profile of an eco-radical who cut down a one-in-a-billion giant Sitka spruce to protest against a logging company's clear-cut practices in British Columbia. Yet it is really a story about how, when it comes to humanity's relationship with the planet, we cannot see the forest for the trees. For authors of long-form, discovering what the story is really about is the key to compelling long-form narratives.

In long-form narrative, the story is rarely simply about the story—it is usually a metaphor for something much larger. While it is true that the best magazine pieces focus tightly on a theme, or in some cases multiple themes, there is always something else underneath the story. The construction of that additional layer underneath the main story is the main focus of this study of two writers and their methods. Along the way I also hope to identify what makes these superior magazine features so compelling. In both cases examined—William Langewiesche's 75,000-word magazine serial, "American Ground," issued over three consecutive issues of *The Atlantic Monthly*, then published in book form; and John Vaillant's "The Golden Bough," originally published in *The New Yorker*, then expanded to book length as *The Golden Spruce*—the writers discovered, first in the field and then in front of the computer screen sculpting words from the raw material of fact, the true significance and meaning of their stories. They never claimed to know immediately what the story was about; they only knew going in, and their editors knew going in, there had to be a story. As they searched for clues and assessed what they had found, the story began to reveal itself. It is only during this creative, artistic part of the process—the "Just what are we looking at here?" part, or the literary journalism part rather than the reporting and researching part—when their stories come to provide a worldview. For Langewiesche, his stories almost invariably become metaphors for America's place in the world; for Vaillant, his stories tend to be metaphors for flawed human nature.

What kind of writing is this, anyway?

The New Journalism, parajournalism, narrative nonfiction, literary nonfiction, creative nonfiction, literary journalism, narrative journalism, intimate journalism, the New New Journalism, or just plain narrative—the elusiveness of its definition is the first problem of long-form, a type of writing practiced predominantly in the United States and to a lesser degree in other countries. Its history is illustrious, yet remains contentious. Novelist Tom Wolfe, who at one time was a celebrated practitioner of nonfiction, wrote a famous essay called "The New Journalism" (Wolfe and Johnson 1973: 3-52) that introduced a book collecting a number of excellent magazine pieces. Wolfe formulated a theory about what was happening around him, including to him, in the genre.

> It is not very often that one comes across a new style, period. And if a new style were created not via the novel, or the short story, or poetry, but via journalism—I suppose that would seem extraordinary. It was probably that idea—more than any specific devices, such as using scenes and dialogue in "novelistic" fashion—that began to give me very grand ideas about a new journalism. As I saw it, if a new literary style could originate in journalism, then it stood to reason that journalism could aspire to more than mere emulation of those aging giants, the novelists. (Wolfe 1973: 22)

What did this new style contain? For Wolfe, it had at least four sacrosanct attributes. First, the writer had to propel the story employing scenes or descriptions of events so vivid the reader would be swept up in the narrative arc as if watching a film, the pages themselves fading out, then back in again, signaling changes in the story. Second, the writer had to use dialogue—the shortest, clearest way to convey action and character—wherever possible. Third, the writer had to utilize what Wolfe called "point of view," or, essentially, putting the reader inside the heads of characters.

Lastly, a good nonfiction story was made better by piling on a tremendous amount of detail. What a person wore, how she acted, whether she smoked. Was she wearing blue jeans or black? Designer brand or plain old Levi's? Was it an Audrey Hepburn-style white blouse or a ratty Led Zeppelin T-shirt? What kind of cigarette did she smoke? Did she put her lips over the perforations on the Lite cigarette? If a character was described as a teenage girl who wore ripped jeans and puffed frenetically, you had an excellent chance of conveying her socioeconomic plight in a couple of sentences.

Wolfe's theories held up fairly well, although certain commentators like Dwight Macdonald (Weber 1974: 223-33), criticized the self-indulgent style of certain long-form writers—Wolfe himself, for one—in the 1960s and 1970s. The techniques were not new, of course—everyone from Daniel Defoe to Charles Dickens had employed them in one form or another in both fiction and nonfiction writing.

A decade later, Norman Sims compiled a collection of magazine articles and wrote an introduction, "The Literary Journalists" (Sims 1984: 3-25), à la Wolfe. In his discussion of where the New Journalism had gone since it was declared by Wolfe to be the new thing, Sims decided "Literary Journalism" was a more appropriate moniker. Sims then wrote an introduction, "The Art of Literary Journalism" (Sims and Kramer 1995: 1-19) to another collection of magazine writing, co-edited by Mark Kramer. He took stock of the techniques adopted by long-form writing over the previous two decades and outlined other concepts and devices, beyond Wolfe, he believed literary journalists were now employing in abundance.

> In 1984 *The Literary Journalists* broadened the set of characteristics to include immersion reporting, accuracy, voice, structure, responsibility, and symbolic representation. Writers I've spoken with more recently have wanted to add to the list a personal involvement with their materials, and an artistic creativity not often associated with nonfiction. An innovative genre that is still developing, literary journalism resists narrow definitions. (Sims and Kramer 1995: 9)

Sims recalled a conversation with the writer Richard Rhodes, author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*. Rhodes talked to Sims about what Sims termed "symbolic realities." Sims quoted Rhodes as saying, "That's been terribly important to me. The transcendentalist business of the universe showing forth, the sense that there are deep structures behind information, has been central to everything I've done in writing.'" (Sims and Kramer 1995: 22) Sims's symbolic reality might as well be code for metaphor.

Goodbye Twentieth Century, Hello Nineteenth

John Hartsock has argued that, rather than springing from the wild subjectivities of the New Journalism's most florid stylistic exponents (Wolfe and Hunter S. Thompson), long-form writing actually has had a much lengthier history, dating back to the nineteenth century. Techniques of long-form had been developing into a style Lincoln Steffens, city editor of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, called "literary journalism" as far back as the 1890s.

> Steffens … was advocating a narrative literary journalism and in doing so reflected a critical consciousness of this form caught somewhere between literature and journalism. That critical consciousness is one of several factors that help to locate the origins of modern American literary journalism, narrative in nature, as having come of age by the 1890s. (Hartsock 2000: 21)

Over time, long-form magazine writing has gained heft as a literary form, not so easily dismissed as a freewheeling offshoot of more serious journalism, or as just another side effect of the cultural experimentation of the 1960s zeitgeist. Robert Boynton has argued that today's magazine writers have taken immersion research so seriously they have returned to the principles of late nineteenth century long-form.

> In the years since Wolfe's manifesto, a group of writers has been quietly securing a place at the very center of contemporary American literature for reportorially based, narrative-driven, long-form nonfiction. These New New Journalists … use the license to experiment with form earned by the New Journalists of the 1960s and '70s to speak to social and political concerns similar to those of 19th-century writers like Stephen Crane, Jacob A. Riis, and Lincoln Steffens (an earlier generation of New Journalists), synthesizing the best of the two traditions. (Boynton 2005a)

Further, Boynton decided that the new generation of long-form writers concentrates on the mundane rather than the world of the powerful and famous.

> If Wolfe's outlandish scenarios and larger-than-life characters leap from the page, the New New Journalism goes in the opposite direction, drilling into the bedrock of ordinary experience, exploring what Gay Talese calls "the fictional current that flows beneath the stream of reality." In this regard, writers such as John McPhee and Talese—prose poets of the quotidian—are its key figures in the prior generation. In Talese's quest to turn reporting on the ordinary into an art, we find an aspect of the New Journalism enterprise that Wolfe obscured in his manifesto. Both McPhee and Talese emphasize the importance of rigorous reporting on the events and characters of everyday life over turns of bravura in writing style. Reporting on the minutiae of the ordinary—often over a period of years—has become their signature method." (Boynton 2005: xv)

While there is general agreement with Hartsock and Boynton over long-form's provenance, there is room for debate over the emphasis on extraordinary representations of the ordinary, which downplays the scope and breadth of the long-form writer's project. The signature method of immersion reporting—long stretches of time spent with the subject, or doing what the subject does in order to understand it better; in a sense, becoming the subject—can either change the thesis, or, better, unveil the main theme. Emphasizing the excavation of ordinary experience calls into question how exactly to interpret 'ordinary,' which Merriam Webster defines as "the regular or customary condition or course of things," and Oxford as "regular, normal, customary, usual."

Does saturation reporting on a group of engineers coordinating an efficient, yet humane effort to remove the World Trade Center debris count as "drilling through the bedrock of ordinary experience," or is it the story of ordinary people reacting to an extraordinary situation? Hanging out with engineers for five months at Ground Zero

seems to heed Boynton's call to unveil the reality in the prosaic, but the event that triggered Langewiesche's decision to immerse himself in their lives was anything but ordinary. Similarly, would taking a chainsaw to a one-in-a-billion tree on an island in the Pacific Northwest count as an ordinary experience or an extraordinary experience? Most loggers are ordinary people doing their jobs, and most of the Haida on the Queen Charlotte Islands are ordinary people living on their land, but surely the effect the perpetrator, Grant Hadwin, had on them was extraordinary.

Searching For A Theme

In both Langewiesche's *American Ground* and Vaillant's *The Golden Spruce*, we start with simple stories, at least on the surface. What is *American Ground* about? One sentence: Two very large buildings collapse and a cluster of men spend several months on the cleanup. But these are not just any buildings; they are the two largest skyscrapers in Manhattan, ones that some deride as modern towers of Babel. Plus, they did not simply fall down—terrorists flew hijacked airplanes into both buildings. Gas from the planes and paperwork from the offices turned the nexus of international commerce into an unstoppable inferno.

Now it becomes not simply a bunch of guys cleaning up a mess but rather the reaction in the aftermath to an emotion-laden, politically motivated act inspired by a warped reading of a certain religion. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, the governor of New York, the mayor of New York City, the Port Authority Police Department, the New York Police Department, the Fire Department of New York all get involved. And over in the borough of Queens, a little-known branch of the city government called the Department of Design and Construction (DCC) gets involved. Langewiesche gains access to the site through the DDC. He remains there for five months. He decides to write his story from the point of view of the engineers, but he has other stories to tell. He has the views of the Port Authority workers, some of whom are engineers. He has the stories of the firemen, whose collective grief over their fallen brethren seems to dwarf all other concerns. He has the stories of the two men in charge of the DDC, Kenneth Holden and Michael Burton. In short, the story is populated with planes, buildings and people—including firemen, engineers, police officers and bureaucrats.

At some point, Langewiesche has to make a decision as to how to tell this deceptively simple story that suddenly becomes maddeningly complex. He divides the research into three parts. The first starts with a technical description of the buildings coming down. A few characters are introduced. The second part begins with a description of the hijacked planes from takeoff to impact, performing what the writer calls a "strange aerial ballet." (Langewiesche 2002: 76) More characters are introduced. The third section, finally, begins with people, or tribes of people actually, and focuses on the at-times open conflict between construction company personnel, firemen and police officers, especially over the perception that the firemen harbor an attitude that their fallen comrades are worth more than police officers or civilians.

Vaillant's story is equally simple—at first. A man illegally chops down a tree and many stakeholders become upset. Grant Hadwin swims across a just-above-freezing Yakoun River, in the Queen Charlotte Islands, in the middle of a January night, with a chainsaw attached to his belt. He makes strategic cuts to the base of the golden

spruce. The tree survives until a couple of days later, when a major wind gust blows it over. The former tree surveyor at one time plotted logging routes through mountains in advance of clear-cutting, but eventually concluded that what he was doing—what forestry companies were doing—was shortsighted. He underwent an epiphany deep in the woods, and became possessed by a vision that bequeathed to him a devastating critique of forestry as well as an unhinged need to blame "university trained professionals" for destroying the forests.

The golden spruce was a fifty-metre tall tree standing on the bank of the Yakoun. Its height was not unusual for old growth forest, but its colour was astonishing. The tree could not produce enough chlorophyll and its outer needles turned golden instead of green. According to Haida mythology, the tree was a boy that had been transformed into a tree. It may have been sacred to the Haida, but it had also become something of a tourist attraction. MacMillan Bloedel, which owned the logging rights to the old-growth forest around the golden spruce at the time, allowed it to remain standing as most of its fellow giants were harvested.

In Vaillant's story there are numerous themes. There is Hadwin's uneasy relationship to his profession, at which he excels. There is the Haida perspective on the golden spruce, which Hadwin had not considered before he committed his crime. There is the history of the Haida people and their warrior past—they could be as ruthless as any captain sent by the English crown with a mandate to return with riches. There is the history of logging in British Columbia, which in turn harkens back to the origins of European colonization of the New World and aggressive resource exploitation. There is the tree itself and the botany required to produce a gorgeous freak of nature. The man, the tree, the tribe and the loggers—four themes, not one.

In both stories, the main character that glues the story together is an amorphous thing. In Langewiesche's story, it is the construction sight. He explains:

> It was a difficult thing to write about because it was a construction site, for Christ's sake—especially if you don't want to wallow in the heroism thing, which might last a page or two and then you'd run out of things to say. How do you write about a place where the real story has to do with diesel equipment? It was a challenge. And writing about engineers, who are famously inarticulate. (Langewiesche 2002a)

In Vaillant's narrative, it is the forest itself. He states, "It's so counter-intuitive, because you think of the forest as this static place. There is a lot going on there, but we just see the trees standing there. That was the supreme challenge, to find the drama in the forest. I knew it was there." (Vaillant 2005a) He likened the struggle to find the story in the trees to examining a crystal from various angles, thereby exposing both its beauty and its faults. "With the tree, I 'pentagulated,' or 'octangulated'—biologically, mythologically, socially, environmental, politically, all these different aspects of it." (Vaillant 2005a)

Looking Down, Looking Through

To understand how Langewiesche and Vaillant came to decide what their stories were really about, it is necessary to look back at their training and how it informed

their methodologies. Langewiesche came to long-form writing fairly late in life, around age thirty-five, after a successful career in commercial cargo flying. He was no stranger to the sky, having taken his first solo flight at age fourteen. His father, Wolfgang Langewiesche, wrote *Stick and Rudder* (1944), a widely acknowledged classic about the mechanics of flying. The younger Langewiesche also wrote a book on flying, *Inside the Sky*, largely (but not entirely) based on a series of articles written for *The Atlantic Monthly*. At the beginning of *Inside the Sky*, he spells out exactly how a life of flying has transformed his worldview:

> The aerial view is something entirely new. We need to admit that it flattens the world and mutes it in a rush of air and engines, and it suppresses beauty. But it also strips the façades from our constructions, and by raising us above the constraints of the treeline and the highway it imposes a brutal honesty on our perceptions. It lets us see ourselves in context, as creatures struggling through life on the face of the planet, not separate from nature, but its most expressive agents. It lets us see that these patterns repeat to an extent which before we had not known, and that there is a sense to them. (Langewiesche 1999: 2)

Langewiesche's academic background plays a role, too. He casts an anthropologist's eye over his story terrain, sizing up people and their motivations quickly. He has been in war zones on assignment for the *Atlantic*, and has been surrounded by death, so wandering around in a fallen building, as he does at Ground Zero with some engineers, is not an overwhelming experience.

> The risks are largely political, but they become physical. I've certainly taken much greater risks for the magazine than doing a little diddling around underground in the World Trade Center. I've been out in Sahara Desert for the *Atlantic*, and had some very rough stuff happen to me. I've been arrested multiple times for the magazine, and detained by people who have accused me of all kinds of things. That's much scarier and lonelier than what I was doing at the World Trade Center. (Langewiesche 2002a)

The *Atlantic*'s managing editor, Cullen Murphy, telephoned Langewiesche the morning of the attacks, and the two men tried to determine the best story angle for their magazine. After initially thinking of heading to Afghanistan, they decided instead to try for Ground Zero access. They were lucky, as the man in charge of the DDC, Holden, was an avid reader of the *Atlantic*, and of Langewiesche's "crystalline prose," as Murphy has called it, in particular. Holden granted Langewiesche full, unrestricted access to the site. There was an obvious story angle—how to remove such an enormous pile of debris—of the type perfected by John McPhee, the man Boynton identifies as being one of the mentors of the New New Journalism. McPhee pioneered the "process," or how-to, piece. In this case, the process to be explained is how do you remove "200,000 tons of structural steel" (Langewiesche 2002: 204) from a densely populated urban area, while respecting the raw emotions of the bereaved?

The story had a readymade chronological narrative structure, with the attacks at the beginning and a ceremony nine months later acting as natural bookends. But still, Langewiesche needed to find the story within these generous parameters. His background in flying aircraft—the ability to survey the landscape and look at the world as if from above—helped him a great deal. He trusted his empirical instinct:

"I'm not smart enough to stare at my navel and write. I have to go out into the world." (Langewiesche 2003)

If Langewiesche refuses to look within, he is not necessarily against allowing the writer—the "I" of the story—to intrude on the narrative. He says he allows himself the luxury of using first person "freely"—freedom in the sense of choosing when he wants to, not in terms of frequency of use. "When it comes out it's a natural thing." This is one of the fundamental differences between the New Journalism and the long-form writing that is being produced now. During the era of Wolfe and Thompson the "I" was self-consciously brought into play much more often and prominently. At times, it made for much funnier stories, but its self-indulgence can seem quaint and ridiculous now. "What's going on now is a new form of clean classicism," Langewiesche observes. "It's equally as deep." (Langewiesche 2003)

Vaillant's life trajectory is not dissimilar. His educational background is in English, but after finishing his degree, instead of applying for an internship at a New York magazine as his classmates did, he wanted to engage in the physical world.

> To me, the idea of having to put on a necktie and sitting in some cubicle just sounded like premature suicide. So I hitchhiked to Alaska, where an English degree was actually a handicap. I didn't know how to do anything that was important to people there. I was twenty-two. It was a great place to learn about the mechanical, physical world, and it certainly influenced my writing. (Vaillant 2005a)

If anything, Vaillant's formative experience taught him that, in long-form writing at least, being comfortable in one's body, feeling confident as one moves through the world, and being able to handle oneself in a variety of situations—hanging out with loggers deep in the forest—counts in the drive to form a narrative.

> Loggers could take me wherever they want. "Here, put on these weird, spiked shoes you've never worn before." I'm going where you're walking along fallen trees but they're thirty feet off the ground, with boulders and scree and broken branches down below you. They're not slowing down for you. The guys said a couple of times, "Wow, you seem to move pretty comfortably in here." It's a rarefied, weird little domain. When that becomes a non-issue you have this access, in your own mind almost, because you don't have to worry about where you're going or what's going to happen to you or whether you can handle this. (Vaillant 2005a)

For Vaillant, part of long-form writing is the need to understand what motivates people, and that requires winning their trust. The kinds of stories he tells emphasize not only travel and movement through space, but also "getting low to the ground with whoever the subject is, or whatever the topic is, and meeting it where it is." (Vaillant 2005a) He also believes in gathering empirical evidence to buttress his storytelling. What is going on out there in the real world counts, not what the writer thinks is going on out there.

What The Story Is Really About

At a certain point in the immersion process, something clicks. A eureka moment occurs, and the writer understands the depth of his story. At this stage, he declares: It is really about something else. In Langewiesche's case, it happened five weeks after the twin towers fell. He began to see the unfolding drama as a positive story in the midst of so much misery.

> It was obvious to me that we were looking at much, much more. That view came from being on the inside; it was not an external view at all. We didn't reason that out. We lucked into it and then were alert enough to realize that what was going on was a radical thing. An amazing experiment was happening before our very eyes. I was telling Cullen [Murphy] on the phone, 'Jesus Christ, Cullen, this is amazing what's going on here,' and I gave him certain examples of what I meant by that—the blank slate aspect to the chaos. So he came down and we met, late night, at the Bryant Park Café, for several hours and talked through what was happening. And we began to talk about the possibility of doing something very, very long. (Langewiesche 2002a)

Langewiesche realized he had many conceptual elements with which to work—America's place in the world, New York's hothouse environment, large buildings falling down, and the exploitation of patriotism, fear and tragedy. "You've got all this debris," he says, "you've got to get it out of the most neurotic, built-up city around." (Langewiesche 2002a) The most compelling facet was that it displayed the core of who Americans were, and what America was, at that moment in history. The writer was concerned with not only the removal of debris and remains, but also how people reacted. Ultimately, the story was positive—that despite the confusion, pilfering and tribal rivalries, this group had rediscovered an exhilarating kind of freedom. Buried underneath a mountain of man-made junk was the will to create a new world. Telling this story exposed "to us (the observer, the writer, and then the reader) who we are. Everything I do is basically a metaphor anyway. They're always metaphors for something else." (Langewiesche 2002a)

A couple of years later, upon further reflection, Langewiesche modified this view. He decided he had been too absorbed in the tiny world of Ground Zero during those months of intense, on-site reporting to pay much attention to the George W. Bush administration's exploitation of patriotism and 9/11 for its own ends. "If anything, it's too much that way. I was sitting in this little nest of organic, really admirable reactions, ranging from Giuliani, the construction guys, the engineers, guys like Holden. It was unbelievable, it was courageous, it was creative, it was all kinds of things." (Langewiesche 2004a)

For Vaillant, the real story also came into focus in the field, while listening to a logger explain the brute ontological fact of his trade.

> Earl Einarson, a fifty-four-year-old tree faller, expressed the logger's conundrum as honestly as anyone. 'I love this job,' he explained, gesturing toward the wild chaos of the old-growth forest he was in the process of leveling. … 'Another reason I like falling,' he said, 'is I like walking around in old-growth forests. It's kind of an oxymoron [sic], I guess—to like something and then go out and kill it.' (2005: 219-20)

For the writer, it is difficult to anticipate when this gift will arrive. Dozens of pertinent sources might have been chased before the one that puts it together arrives. Even then, it may not become apparent immediately.

> You might say, well, I want to see some old growth getting felled—that's about as specific as it gets, so you just go and see what happens. People say some extraordinary things. The guy who's been logging for thirty years, who quit in the middle of high school, was being so frank. Here is the human dilemma right there—that's it! But I had to go into the bush to get it. To be standing there, the sawdust perfume in our nostrils and these huge carcasses lying all over the place and the saw rumbling away and that's where it happened. It was a jewel of a quote and it was so unguarded and real. That's the pivotal moment in the book—that's the point of the book. (Vaillant 2005a)

Even then Vaillant was not sure, although he did have the presence of mind to record the felling of an old growth tree and time the cut. One man can bring down a tree that is five hundred years old, two hundred feet in height and ten feet in diameter in ten minutes. Once he sat down to organize his research it became clear what was at stake—the world as we know it.

Langeweische's story is a sprawling, three-part series, each part roughly 25,000 words. But sprinkled throughout his story, the main theme is slowly, steadily reinforced. He uses the words "pioneering" and "improvising" many times. Early on, he surmises, "[T]he disaster was smothered in an exuberant and distinctly American embrace." (Langeweische 2003: 8) Three pages later, he gives the reader something close to a theme:

> Their success in the midst of chaos was an odd twist in the story of these monolithic buildings that in the final stretch of the twentieth century had stood so visibly for the totalitarian ideals of planning and control. But the buildings were not buildings anymore, and the place where they fell had become a blank slate for the United States. Among the ruins now, an unscripted experiment in American life had gotten under way. (Langeweische 2003: 11)

To reiterate the positive spin on the tragedy, six pages later he declares that the attacks and the ensuing cleanup did not lead to a "grand 'loss of innocence' proclaimed that fall in the press but … a period of creative turbulence" (Langeweische 2003: 17) In this world unto itself, everyone subscribed to a new "social contract," which had unconsciously reared itself. "All that counted about anyone was what that person could provide now." (Langeweische 2003: 113). Finally, the writer reinforces his earlier pronouncement about the country's true nature: "America does not function as a dictatorship of rationalists." (Langeweische 2003: 170)

In Vaillant's original *New Yorker* manuscript, "The Golden Bough," he concentrated on one thematic pole, Hadwin, the man who cut down the golden spruce. His three other themes—the tree, the Haida and forestry practices are submerged. Given the chance to extend his work to book length, Vaillant expands the section on the history of forestry, especially in the New World, particularly British Columbia, honing in on the Queen Charlotte Islands. He elaborates on the known scientific knowledge of the unusual tree. He enriches the story with extensive passages about the Haida—their

demeanour in their heyday (warlike, dominant), and how they competed in a cut-throat race to the bottom with English traders to harvest the otter to extinction. In this section on the history of the Haida, Vaillant's metaphor reveals itself.

> For well over a hundred years, there has been a strong tendency throughout much of the Northern Hemisphere to idealize Native Americans; this extends, in many cases, to the Natives themselves. They are often depicted as proto-environmentalists—stewards of a continental Eden who revered their prey and nurtured the land until it was laid waste by invading Europeans. … And yet, before the westward expansion, before any of these romantics was yet born, the West Coast otter trade was helping to set the tone for every extractive industry that has come after. … [D]espite its practical importance, and despite a necessarily keen sensitivity to the rhythms of the natural world, the West Coast natives pursued this creature to the brink of extinction. In doing so, they demonstrated the same kind of profit-driven shortsightedness that has wiped out dozens of other species, including the Atlantic salmon and, more recently, the Atlantic cod. It is an eccentric and uniquely human approach to resources: like plowing under your farmland to make way for more lawns, or compromising your air quality in exchange for an enormous car. (Vaillant: 2005: 72)

Vaillant's grand theme—the suspicion that there might be a self-destructive genetic tick in human beings—beyond Hadwin, beyond the golden spruce, beyond the Haida, beyond forestry itself, starts to ring loud and clear: "[O]nce the market for skins had been created, [the Natives] really had no choice but to participate.… Once aboard a juggernaut like this, it appears suicidal to jump off—even if staying on is sure to destroy you in the end." (Vaillant 2005: 77) The astonishing collective outpouring of grief from the various stakeholders over the loss of the one and only golden spruce seemed only to reinforce the disturbed Hadwin's point of contention about what he derided as the logging company's "pet": "[P]eople fail to see the forest for the tree." (Vaillant 2005: 139)

Technique And Soul

At root, *The Golden Spruce* and *American Ground* are simple stories told in rich, varied and complex ways by their respective authors. Langewiesche says it is through his storytelling that he "confronts the world." (Langewiesche 2002a) And Vaillant had not realized his stories had a common theme until someone asked him directly what he liked to write about. He answered, "That collision between human beings and their environment. Most of my stories are about people interacting with nature in these ingenious but far-out ways. There is often hubris at the end of it." (Vaillant 2005a)

The best long-form stories employ the celebrated techniques of the New Journalism—scenes, details, point of view, dialogue. They also employ the kind of immersion reporting that has been around since "literary journalism" was coined in the late nineteenth century, and since "process" writing was refined in the late twentieth century. Barbara Lounsberry and Gay Talese have told us the nonfiction writer's goal is to enhance the reader's knowledge of the world. "This desire to expand the public's understanding—to bring forward the unnoticed from the shadows

of neglect, or to offer visionary portraits of well-known persons and events—has propelled nonfiction writers throughout history." (Lounsberry and Talese 1996: 30) And Walt Harrington has declared: "Always remember: Scene, detail and narrative bring story to life, while theme and meaning imbue it with a soul." (Harrington 1997: xxi)

Exactly so, but these techniques must be placed at the service of finding out what the story is really about. And, invariably, the most memorable stories are the ones that are really about something else—something that is generated from the writer's sifting of the research. No matter what you want to call it—theme, symbolic reality, metaphor—this is what motivates long-form writers to produce their best work.

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Plunging into the underground: poverty and violent crime in contemporary Brazil

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Abstract

Exhaustive news coverage of violence and organized crime in Brazil, usually sensationalist in nature and designed for immediate impact, have contributed to banalizing the issue and stifling more in-depth reflection. However, the voices that are silenced by the mass media, find an outlet in another kind of journalism that aims to plunge into the reality of contemporary Brazil. Literary journalism has investigated this realm in minute detail, setting events in their proper context and revealing the everyday life of people who are directly affected by violent crime a world that is familiar to few outside the Brazilian slums. This article looks at the work of Brazilian journalist Caco Barcellos and analyses the literary techniques and procedures he employs in his book *Abusado*. The analysis of this book seeks to reveal another perspective on the issue of violent crime, which differentiates itself from the stigmatising view of poor people and slum-dwellers presented by the police, the State and the Brazilian elite.

One of the most pressing issues in contemporary Brazil is that of urban violent crime. This kind of crime is associated with the trafficking of drugs and arms and organised crime. The rise of violent crime is indisputable and research indicates that the homicide rate trebled in some Brazilian cities in the course of the 1990s (Dowdney, 2003; Zaluar, 1998).

This article analyses the response of one narrative journalist, Caco Barcellos, to this phenomenon and contrasts his journalistic novel,[1] *Abusado* (2004) with general reporting of crime in the Brazilian media.

Any representation of history is always drawn up by a subject who has social and political ties to a specific concrete social reality. When someone witnesses an event, they also reconstruct it according to their own particular mental apparatus and social and cultural background. When reporting on an event the observer selects, organizes and prioritises items of information, by applying his or her narrative strategies to them. It is argued here that the realistic narrative processes of literary journalism are capable, when portraying a microcosm, of laying bare a broader social reality, which is refashioned, not only by the voice of the narrator/journalist, but also by the many voices present in long-form works of journalistic non-fiction.

Urban violence in Brazil

Up to the mid-1960s it was common in Brazil to endow illegal or delinquent activities with an aura of romanticism and to idealise the outlaw. The criminal —albeit by way of an ambivalent attitude— took on an air of the transgressor as hero, who opposed the established forces of law and order. The Brazilian cultural imagination is peppered with such references, be it in cinema, literature, the visual arts, theatre, dance and music.

Criminality seen as a form of revolt was often compared with a certain revolutionary spirit. The bad guy was a wanderer, an anti-hero, who opposed the system, a bohemian who shunned formal work and was an active participant in the cultural life of the city. The visual artist, Hélio Oiticica, who frequented the *bas fond* of the city of Rio de Janeiro in the 50s and 60s, even befriended some criminals and paid homage to one of them, Cara de Cavalo, in two of his works, one of which bore the inscription: “Be a criminal, be a hero!”.

Luiz Eduardo Soares (2000) finds in this benign interpretation of the spirit of criminality a certain tendency to eulogise “adaptive creativity”, which allows the specifics of the moment and social ties to prevail over the cold detachment of the law. The dark side of this reading, lying somewhere between naivety and condescension, could be seen to be the “negation of the basic principles of justice, such as equality before the law, and lack of faith in democratic institutions” (p. 27).

From the 1980s on, there has been an ideological turnaround on the part of intellectuals and researchers, who have abandoned the ideal of the good criminal. It is no coincidence that this was also the period when the military regime came to an end and democratic institutions came to be valued in Brazil. It was also a time when violent crime associated with organised crime gangs and the trafficking of drugs and arms were on the rise in major cities in Brazil. The 1980s also saw a rise in the power

of the *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command), the emergence of new criminal factions, and the resulting turf wars for the trade in illegal drugs in the *favelas*[2] of Rio de Janeiro, along with the appearance of cocaine on the illegal drugs market.

Full understanding of urban violent crime in contemporary Brazil requires an approach that goes beyond simplistic explanations in terms of social exclusion and attempts to comprehend the phenomenon in the broader, more complex context of the social, economic, political and institutional factors associated with the emergence of hybrid cultural values:

> The image of the kid from the *favela* carrying an AR-15 or an UZI machine-gun, which he believes to be a symbol of his virility and a source of great local power, wearing a baseball cap inspired by the North American black movement, listening to funk music, snorting cocaine produced in Colombia, and anxious to acquire the latest style of Nike trainers and a brand new car, cannot be explained by rising unemployment in Brazil....On the one hand, the question of who brought him these instruments of power and pleasure; and on the other, of who inspired him and of how the values that drive him to pursue unbridled pleasure and power came to be instilled in him and perpetuated, are obviously questions that do not have much to do with the value of the local minimum wage (Zaluar, 1996: 55).

Poverty, the domination of the *favelas* by criminal gangs, the choice of drug dealing as an accepted career and the lack of access to the formal employment market are pre-existing factors, which help explain the rise of organised crime. But the sub-culture of the gangs, the access to consumer goods generated by the illegal drug market and the possibility of "social climbing" within the world of drugs and the influence of role models, such as relatives or friends who already work in the illegal drug trade, are some of the other factors that have been identified as being conducive to increasing involvement of young people in organised crime (Dowdney, 2003).

Coverage in the media

Organised crime – and its violent side – has long since ceased to be a matter of interest exclusively to the forces of justice and the police. It is an issue that is of great public concern and political import, and has come to occupy the attention of thinkers, researchers and social players from various segments of society. The media are also interested in the question. But the nature of media coverage of crime is a highly contested area. As Zaluar argues:

> If high-speed transmission of information has led to the public being better informed and has trained it to think about what is going on, it has often verged on a form of vulgarisation that distorts information and furnishes more confusion than enlightenment. News relating to violent crime has become a commodity. The more sensational it is and the greater impact it has, the better it sells (Zaluar, 1998: 247).

The spectacle of atrocities that the media reproduces, results in a standardization of opinions and emotions and allows for distortions such as the "tourism of desolation"[3], a kind of "itinerant voyeurism". The most disturbing feature of this distortion is that

it leads people to become accustomed to violence. To a greater or lesser extent, the press reproduces and divulges the stigmatizing perspective of the police, the state, the elites and the middle class with regard to poor people and favela-dwellers.

The media also ends up flattering the vanity of criminals. For a criminal, appearing in the media as a dangerous and violent character legitimates his power and extends his dominion. One sequence in the film *Cidade de Deus* [City of God], by Fernando Meirelles (Brasil, 2002), illustrates this point well: the drug dealer Zé Pequeno is proud to see his picture on the front page of a newspaper posing with a gun alongside his gang. Many figures from organised crime are regular features on the national television news: Fernandinho Beira-Mar, Elias Maluco, Flávio Negão, Marcinho VP are just some of the names that have become famous in this way.

Paulo Vaz (2006) has noted a change in the way crime was narrated between the 1980s and the 21st century. In the 1980s, crimes where the victim knew the perpetrator, such as crimes of passion, dominated the news, and the stories were narrated principally from the point of view of the offender and his or her motives, paying little attention to the victim. The effect produced by this kind of report is that of distancing the reader or the viewer from the real story being told. So long as the crime has occurred in private the readers or viewers, secure in the comfort of their own homes, do not feel vulnerable to the violence blazoned across the newspaper headlines (Vaz *et al*., 2006). The facts that have come to dominate the news now, deal with crime in public places and are no longer restricted to crimes of passion committed in the privacy of one's own home. The point of view has shifted to that of the victim and their loved ones. According to Vaz, this change of focus, that brings to light the risks to which virtually everyone is subject, encourages the reader or viewer to identify with the victim and view the criminal as a cold, dangerous and ruthless figure.

This image of the anonymous criminal is connected to the rise in drug trafficking and organised crime. Gang leaders become "celebrity criminals". However, such notoriety comes at a high price and many of the criminals who appear in the headlines end up being slain, as the media has made them more recognisable (Penna, 2004). One example of this was Marcio Amaro de Oliveira, better known as Marcinho VP, leader of a drug gang on the Dona Marta hillside *favela*, in the southern district of Rio de Janeiro, who was the main character in Caco Barcellos' journalistic novel, *Abusado – o dono do morro Dona Marta*.

Considered "small fry" within the *Comando Vermelho*, the criminal organization with which he was associated, Marcinho VP made it onto the pages of the local Rio press, when the film director, Spike Lee, decided to film a video clip for Michael Jackson in the Santa Marta *favela*, in 1996, an area that was then controlled by this drug dealer. This not only brought that *favela* to the attention of the Brazilian public, but also reinforced the power the drug dealer had in various areas which are dominated by organised crime, since the film-maker negotiated with Marcinho VP over permission to shoot the video clip on his turf. This incident undermined the authority of local officials who were left out of the negotiations and the drug dealers, although acting illegally, gained legitimacy as those in control within the *favela* (Penna, 2004).

The control exercised over territory in the *favelas* by drug traffickers has often led the media to refer to organised crime as a parallel authority, an assertion which is open to mistaken interpretations, as Luke Dowdney points out:

> The control exercised over communities by criminal gangs should be seen as being simultaneous with that of the state, not as supplanting or competing with it. There are no parts of Rio the state would be incapable of entering or occupying, if it decided to. Besides, the state does have a limited presence (admittedly only limited) in *favela* communities. Acceptance of the control exercised by criminal gangs by favela-dwellers is not due to complete negligence on the part of the state, but to the lack of legitimate alternatives to government. The state has failed to establish a social contract with favela-dwellers and this is something that the gangs can do with great efficiency. The gangs thereby take over the socio-political space that the state has not succeeded in occupying. (Dowdney, 2003: 198)

The attention that the press has given to this situation has not been without distortion. All three main Rio newspapers succeeded in getting into the *favela* to interview Marcinho VP, who agreed to speak, so long as his identity was not disclosed. Not only was his identity revealed, but his statements were twisted in such a way that he appeared to incriminate himself in the news reports. Where Marcinho had said "I don't smoke, I don't drink. I only smoke good weed[4]", *O Dia* newspaper printed: "I don't snort coke, I don't smoke and I don't drink. I only kill the right guy". In *Jornal do Brasil* the same statement appeared as: "I don't snort coke, I don't smoke, and I don't drink. My only vice is killing. I only kill the right guy"[5], thereby helping to construct the image of an unscrupulous, ruthless killer that the media, social institutions and the middle class reader want to believe in. As Penna explains:

> The media cannot step beyond the mirror of its own fabrications. It remains a hostage to a specular, imaginary logic, structured according to familiar binary opposites —the same/the other, demonization/glamorization— selling consumer images of aestheticized violent *alter egos*. The irresistible superficiality of these images, whose production and circulation is entirely subject to the logic of consumer society and the sale of "truths", is a symptom of a large-scale move towards parcelling out and privatizing public space. (Penna, 2004: 84)

The narrative of violence in Abusado

In contrast to the mass media reporting, the journalistic novel, *Abusado* (Barcellos, 2004), aims to immerse itself in the real world of the *favela* controlled by drug dealers on the Dona Marta hillside and thereby goes beyond merely making a spectacle of violence and glamorising its perpetrators. After five years of research, Barcellos sets events in their proper context and discloses much that the media distorts or omits to tell, revealing a world that is familiar to few who live outside the poor suburbs of big cities.

The Santa Marta *favela* first gained notoriety in the media in 1987, during a dispute between rival gangs for control of the trade in illegal drugs. The incident went down in the history of the community as the "1987 war" and revealed to the nation at large,

through the lens of the press, the heavy weaponry used by the drug dealers and the children wielding arms.

Abusado tells the story of the "rise and fall" of the drug dealer Juliano VP[6], how he joined the *Comando Vermelho*, his personal relations, and his relations with the community, the police and the media. Although Barcellos had initially proposed to tell the story of organised crime on the Santa Marta *favela*, the book turned into a biography of Marcinho VP. Nevertheless, the journalist carried out a painstaking study that goes far beyond mere biography, showing how the drug dealers organize themselves and the lives of local people.

> The owners of the joints where coke and pot were sold, were basically businessmen who did not pay taxes and used arms to counter their competitors and, from time to time, honest police officers. They led a sedentary, tedious, bureaucratic life. They needed to understand accounts and have ready cash to pay for the raw materials. They also had to manage the hiring and firing of salespeople. And the most important task was the daily or weekly payment of look-outs and pensions for the families of business partners who had been put in jail. They also had to keep the gang's armoury well-stocked and up to date and pay sufficiently enticing bribes to bent cops. Drug dealers also played the role of counsellor, priest, representative, judge and executioner in the everyday business of the community. (Barcellos, 2004: 77)

The journalistic novel draws on the resources of journalism, using a brisk, direct and factual narrative, but also goes beyond this. Complex intertwining literary techniques are used to produce the desired real-life effect. Extensive descriptive passages, obsessions, recollections, flashbacks detailing psychological motives, the inclusion of sub-plots in the broader narrative, and details from specific points in time and specific locations are just some of the techniques used. Such devices allow the author to scour the back-alleys and dead-ends of the *favela* and dredge up a rough-hewn portrait of its raw reality. He describes how the *favela* grew up and is organised, the poverty and injustice, which are the staple diet of its inhabitants, brought about by negligence on the part of the local authorities and an often brutal and corrupt police force, and by the growth and spread of organised crime, with its arsenal of arms and drugs, based on its own codes and laws and heavy firepower. The detailed reproduction of dialogues echoes the language of the *favelas*:

> "If you work for the government, you make money. If you work on the telly, you make money... Hotel owners make money, airlines, brewers, they all make money. So why shouldn't we? You're a cool dude. You dance samba. And you're gonna settle for nothing? Get out of that shit, man!" Juliano said, in an attempt to convince him to get involved in drugs.
>
> "It's samba, Juliano. The reward is the joy of parading for the beautiful people. I have them drooling at my feet down there!" argued Vico.
>
> "You haven't got a clue, Vico. It's the best party in the world, man. And it's our party, right? So why's the money not ours too?"
>
> Mendonça, as always, suggested a call to arms.

> "You wanna take money from the beautiful people, Juliano? You've gotta be tough, use force. That's the only law those kind of people understand! (Barcellos, 2004: 84)

Although he shows the hardships of social exclusion, Barcellos avoids dramatising it and his portrait never descends into facile and sentimental moralising. By giving a voice to those living on the margins of society, Barcellos raises troublesome social issues. He is thus able to disclose a broader social reality, which is recreated in the chorus of voices present in the text. With wry wit, he presents, in fast-paced dialogues in the language of the favela-dwellers and the argot of the drug gangs, an enlightening vision of the inhabitants of this community and the lives they live. There is also a human element: the people are portrayed as kindly and outgoing, capable of doing good and fighting back, but without idealizing them:

> The grandfather of Careca and Vico, João Bento, had been one of the migrants in the forefront of the first collective action organised by the Catholic Church. He was a builder's mate and had laid down the paved steps that replaced the slippery track up the hillside, which, when it rained, had made the lives of the locals a living hell. He'd done it on a shoestring, using broken bricks and waste material from the high-rise apartment blocks being put up in Copacabana, where he worked more than ten hours a day.
>
> On his rare days off, he filled a barrow with the waste he'd collected and wheeled it up to the *favela*. His friends who worked in the street markets chipped in with wooden boxes used to pack fruit and vegetables. (Barcellos, 2004: 65-66)

The narrative interweaves images of an apparently peaceful life in the community —voluntary workers struggling to improve living conditions on the hillside, people sitting on their doorsteps with the doors open and children playing in the street— with scenes of the brutal violence the inhabitants of Santa Marta have to endure:

> Bullet-holes riddled the walls and the big houses on Rua Marechal Esperidião Rosa. At number 25, young Ana, who had just turned twenty, was out of her wits. Some bullets had pierced the door to her house and buried themselves in her bed. But she'd been lucky. She had a bad back and, shortly before the shooting had started, had lain down on the floor to do stretching exercises to alleviate the pain. The shots missed her by less than two feet. Meanwhile, Ana's sister, Cristina Ramos, was on her way home, riding on the back of her husband's motorcycle. Antonio Carlos Ribeira had once played volleyball for the national team and was known as Badalhoca. The couple, who had stopped off to savour the cooler than usual evening over a beer in a Botafogo bar, were taken by surprise to find themselves in a war zone when they arrived home. (Barcellos, 2004: 18)

The scene – which culminates in Ana's family deciding to leave the hillside and the city – poignantly portrays the everyday life of the community and contrasts it with another episode, in which a young middle-class mother decides to go and live on the *favela* so as not to abandon her son, who has become involved in drugs. She hopes that she will be able to persuade him to relinquish his life of crime but she ends up getting involved with one of the drug dealers, watching as her son dies and her lover

is imprisoned. She is left with two grandchildren to raise. Nevertheless, she stays on in the *favela*.

Women are a striking presence in the day-to-day life of the community and also in the career of the drug dealer, Marcinho/Juliano VP, both before and after he becomes "boss" of the Dona Marta hillside. He relies on the support both of his biological mother and of the woman who brought him up, as well as that of his sister and of his friend and confidante, Luz. He also provides a source of continual fascination for other women, both inside the *favela* and without, and has many lovers, some of them highly successful middle and upper middle-class Rio women. He thereby attains the status aspired to by many young men who enter a life of crime: "Loads of women, loads of money and the power of life and death over the people he controlled. Juliano was loving his first year as hillside boss." (Barcellos, 2004: 332)

However, the life of a criminal is by no means idealised. Barcellos' narrative reads as a critique of the abuse of power and the violent outbursts of the drug dealers, with their network of personal connections and systems of distribution for illegal goods and services. The violence is not glamorized and the deaths resulting from torture or police executions and the shoot-outs between police and drug dealers or between rival factions are starkly portrayed.

The relationship between the police and the drug dealers is an ambivalent one. The criminals negotiate bribes and arms deals with corrupt civil and military policemen, and police officers frequently dole out harsh treatment to ordinary citizens, invading their homes in pursuit of the dealers, abusing their authority and relying on brute force. At other times, they are portrayed with their backs against the wall, outgunned and outnumbered by the drug gangs:

> On arriving at the look-out, they could see a police van parked at the side of the street down near Leblon beach. Although it was two-way, the avenue was too narrow to do a three-point turn. Their convoy had probably already been spotted. The way to do it was to keep going straight ahead and get ready for a possible clash with the police. Player poked the muzzle of his gun out of the window. The barrel of a machine-gun also appeared out of the window of the first car – Shaggy's. Behind them was Paulista, who already had the enemy target – a blue and white Beetle – in the sights of his AR-15. Flavinho moved the Santana down a gear to get a better grip on the tarmac.
>
> The police Beetle was parked at the side of the road, on the left from the point of view of someone coming down Niemeyer. Inside, the pair of soldiers, who were watching the approach of the armed convoy, turned the engine on and reversed off, to avoid getting into a stand-off with a gang that was far better manned and armed than they were. They backed off up the road and took cover behind the gas-station near the car-wash. (Barcellos, 2004: 105)

Police action is unplanned and dictated by the public security policy whims of whatever local government has recently been elected. Barcellos also portrays the ruthlessness of organised crime gangs, with their clinical, summary system of justice for those who fail them or defy their rule. Since the 1990s, the *Comando Vermelho* has adopted the practice of roadside kangaroo courts in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, including Dona Marta. The terror such courts inspire can be seen in the description

of the habitual practices of Patrick do Vidigal, drug boss of another hillside *favela* controlled by the *Comando Vermelho*:

> Bits of human limbs were found floating near the rocky walls of Vidigal's hillside. Crime investigators also frequently found fingers, feet, hands or a severed head floating in the sea or washed up on Leblon beach, the closest point to the place where Patrick's trials took place. Sentence was carried atop the hillside at the point where the ocean lapped at the foot of the precipice. The youthful executioners, who were usually in their teens, formed a firing squad and then had to chop up the bodies of the victims with an axe and toss the parts into the sea. (Barcellos, 2004: 446)

Structure and narrative

The book is divided into three parts. The first, *Time to Live*, begins at the end of the 1990s with a failed operation on the part of Marcinho/Juliano VP's gang when it falls into a police ambush. The gang's driver is killed and the leader's head is grazed by a bullet. The story then moves back to recount Marcinho/Juliano VP's teenage years, his friends, community life on the *favela*, and the first war the inhabitants of Dona Marta hillside had to face. Marcinho/Juliano then goes into "exile" before the hillside is retaken by the *Comando Vermelho* and the drug dealer becomes leader of the gang and comes to dominate the favela.

The second part, *Time to Die*, begins with the negotiations with the producers of the Michael Jackson video clip on the *favela*. The episode, which had already attracted the attention of the media, culminates in the controversial interview which Marcio/Juliano gives to the Rio press drawing the spotlight of the media and the police onto him. A series of arrests and escapes follows, where Marcio/Juliano is helped by family-members, friends and corrupt police officers. The drug trade on Dona Marta hillside, under constant police reprisals, goes into decline leaving the gang in financial difficulties. In an attempt to raise capital, the drug dealers are forced to plan a series of robberies, all of which fail. In statements to the press in which he talked about social justice, Marcio/Juliano ended up attracting the attention of artists and intellectuals, who subsequently got in touch with him in order to understand his ideas better. One of these, the film-maker, João Moreira Salles, ended up befriending Marcinho VP and offered to pay him a study grant, should be chose to give up his life of crime[7].

The third and last part, *Farewell to Arms*, tells of the first meeting between the journalist and the drug dealer and the negotiations regarding the book, the flight to Argentina, the desire to give up the drug business, the return to Rio de Janeiro to take back control of the hillside and Marcinho's capture by the police, when he is taken to the Bangu maximum security prison.

Although it was well received by a significant portion of the general public and by shapers of public opinion, Barcellos' book also received numerous criticisms. One of these was that it turned Marcinho VP into a hero. Another, more cutting one, was that the author had published the book, knowing that its explosive content could precipitate the death of VP. This is what did in fact happen, a few months after the publication of *Abusado*. The journalist's apprehension on this count had already

been expressed in the first edition of the book, on the occasion of his first meeting with the drug dealer. In subsequent editions, Barcellos included a postface where he comments on how he felt when he received the news of the assassination of Marcio/ Juliano VP:

> Unfortunately, the death of Juliano confirmed the fears that had plagued me since the day we first talked about the book. My concern grew when he was on the run in Argentina, and invited to go and live in France, and I decided to return to Rio de Janeiro at the height of the police hunt for him.
>
> I must confess that I started to believe that they would kill him when they arrested him, even if he didn't resist. I was going by other stories of criminals who gained notoriety in the press and ended up being killed by the police. But Juliano's arrest did not conform to this rule. He was sleeping, alone and unarmed, when he was arrested, and his life was spared in accordance with the rule of law. (Barcellos, 2004: 556)

The publication of the book raised controversy among the inhabitants of the Santa Marta *favela*. Some accused Barcellos of divulging the real names of slain drug dealers and causing problems for their families. Others criticised him because he had published photos of criminals killed by the drug gang without obtaining the consent of their families. There were those who did not like his emphasis on crime in the *favela*, and would have preferred him to have portrayed the community from a different angle. Others argued that the drug dealer, Marcio Amaro de Oliveira, aka Marcinho VP, did not deserve to be remembered at all and that his days were numbered anyway, with or without the publication of the book (Netto, 2003).

But Barcellos' work has helped to shed light on an issue that, still today, is complex and shrouded in mystery and that he has told stories that the mainstream media would not dare to print. The media talks a lot about violence and organised crime, but knows little about it from the inside. The realistic narrative that we find in *Abusado* re-establishes the possibility of a dialogue with contemporary social issues. By giving pride of place to the issues of poverty and violent crime in an engaging and accessible language, it encourages empathy with those who live in the poor suburbs of big cities. Barcellos steers clear of the denunciatory tone of an informer, that predominates in mainstream media discourse on violent crime. The most evident effect of the latter is a feeling of fear and insecurity, which produces, as an immediate consequence, a certain indifference towards poverty, inequality and injustice.

However, although Barcellos shows one side of the problem, such as the drug trade, the war between organised criminal gangs, and the relationship between the criminals and corrupt police officers, the reader will be frustrated if he or she expects to find here a more in-depth story of the relations between the lucrative trade in drugs, arms and organised crime outside the *favela* through political corruption and money-laundering. By focusing his attention on the Santa Marta *favela*, the author seems to forget that most of the responsibility for the unbridled rise in urban violent crime lies outside the *favelas*.

It is no mere coincidence that the growth in urban violent crime is a phenomenon that has arisen at the same time as globalisation. As global trade steps up, social and community relations are torn apart. It is therefore possible to make an objective

assessment of the internationalization of organised crime, with its quite specific political and economic features, although the subjective side, involving a break with traditional values and the resulting breakdown in family ties and interpersonal relations, should not be overlooked.

Final Remarks

This study of the work of Caco Barcellos has highlighted the differences between literary journalism and conventional journalism. By going beyond a mere account of the facts and providing a broader vision of reality, literary journalists are able to draw on journalistic resources in order to produce in-depth treatments of lasting interest of the stories they cover.

Regarded as a hybrid genre, literary journalism has come to combine intensive investigative journalistic practices, such as interviews and fact-finding, with the narrative structures and techniques of fiction-writing. One of the most important procedures employed by literary journalists is that of immersing oneself in the subject matter or in the personality of the character, thereby allowing for more in-depth investigation of the issue the author is addressing.

Literary journalism returns to the idea that the art of good story-telling is an essential part of journalism. At a time when the print media, under pressure from the extensive changes occurring in the contemporary world, is going through a phase of exploring new approaches, a return to the grand style of literary journalism may be useful in helping to draw up new models, principally for those who believe that the future of newspapers and magazines lies in an improvement in the quality, not only of content and analysis, but also of the style of writing.

The comparative study of conventional journalism and the techniques used by literary journalists should be encouraged in university journalism courses as a way of encouraging students to be aware of, make use of and build on these alternative means of communication.

Notes

1 The term “journalistic novel” is used here to refer to Barcello’s book length non-fiction account of Marchino VP and the Dona Marta hillside.

2 I have opted not to translate the Portuguese term “favela”, as “slum” or “shanty town”, as these terms have overwhelmingly negative connotations and do not adequately convey the specific features of the Brazilian favela.

3 “Favelas tours” are a common feature in Rio de Janeiro. These are excursions where tourists visit favelas, as if on a safari.

4 By “good weed” he means marijuana. TN In Portuguese, the noun “mato” (weed) is a homonym of the first person singular of the present tense of the verb “matar” (kill).

5 For details of this episode, see Barcellos (2004: 349-360).

6 The author chose to conceal the identity of his characters, using codenames. Juliano VP thus refers to the drugs dealer, Marcio Amaro de Oliveira, known as Marcinho VP.

7 The incident made the press and precipitated the resignation of the then under-secretary for public security in the Anthony Garotinho local government, the anthropologist, Luiz Eduardo Soares, who introduced innovative proposals for combating violent crime in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

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Awakening a social conscience: the study of novels in journalism education

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Abstract

This study deals with the nonfiction novel in journalism ethics, literary journalism, media studies, newsgathering, and reporting and writing classes. We are often confronted with the mistaken notion that the novel is for entertainment while news stories are to provide information and to encourage effective civic engagement. For some journalism educators and for many in the reading public, reading fiction is something one does on airplanes; reading nonfiction, on the other hand, impacts political and social discourse. The borderland between literary and journalistic study is a problematic one, with some professors in English contending that journalism is hack writing and some professors of journalism contending that writing fiction is a harmless diversion if one has the time and the financial means to pursue it. Since Tom Wolfe wrote his landmark book *The New Journalism* and since nonfiction overtook fiction as the most popular literary form in America, the controversies around literary journalism have intensified. When I teach a nonfiction novel--from Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* to John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* to John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* to Sara Davidson's *Loose Change* to Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* to Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief*--definitions of literature and journalism are called into question. These questions are not optional: In a literature or creative writing class, the answers would be thought-provoking, indeed. But in a journalism class, the answers determine the very ways in which future journalists are taught to gather, filter, interpret, and disseminate information about daily events and the people who drive those events.

Joan Didion describes eerie music piped into a deserted mall during a catastrophic war in *Salvador.* In "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" from *Slouching Towards Bethlehem,* she relates a tale of middle-class America in which a seemingly contented woman burns her husband to death in a Volkswagen on a street called "Bella Vista."

In *The Right Stuff,* Tom Wolfe accomplishes, among other things, a compelling study of the roots and definitions of masculinity in America and of the role of recklessness in confronting our mortality.

Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* highlights the raw, cruel power of murder and its denouement and raises nearly impossible questions about a journalist's responsibility to a source.

In *Real Property,* Sara Davidson juxtaposes the hedonism of Southern California with an emphasis on family and personal sacrifice in Israel. And in *Loose Change: Three Women of the Sixties,* she develops a deeply personal and highly representative narrative about friendship and betrayal and forgiveness and despair.

In *Orchid Thief* Susan Orlean marvels at people who devote their lives to the obsessive search for a symbol—a sign of beauty and perfection—in a disappointing and imperfect world.

These and other extended nonfiction narratives by literary journalists convey humility, indecision, compassion, obsession, fear, love, and mystery. They have endured in the canon of great American literary nonfiction, largely because they diverge greatly from the fact-based rhetoric of everyday newspapers and news programs; because they rely upon sophisticated representational systems that approach allegory and myth; because they challenge readers to engage ideas and cultural constructs they might never have encountered otherwise; and because they demand a response that may be entirely cerebral or may, in fact, engage the heart and lead to activism.

Media historian Nancy Roberts (1992) describes Dorothy Day, a "gifted storyteller" (184) and activist, as someone who believed that journalism should exist "to move the heart, stir the will to action, to arouse pity, compassion, to awaken the conscience" (179). Day's commitment to "the realities of poor people's lives" resulted in a "large body of writing that transcends conventional journalism in both the gravity of its themes, which more commonly are literature's province, and in its degree of insight into human beings, who are vividly and compassionately evoked" (Roberts:184).

This study argues that the social impact of journalism, especially literary journalism, depends upon a complex symbolic system that is unapologetic about the didacticism that lies at its core. Those of us who teach novels in courses such as media ethics, newsgathering, and literary journalism address concerns that are similar to those in creative writing, history, literature, political science, sociology, women's and gender studies, and other disciplines in which the study of novels may also be essential.

When teaching and analyzing news, news-features, commentaries, editorials, and other forms of professional writing, those in journalism and media studies confront how particular genres inform public discourse and encourage citizens to draw conclusions about their society. We acknowledge with profound seriousness

that what readers and viewers gain from media outlets may propel them to action, may immobilize them, may disturb them, or may precipitate any number of other responses.

Furthermore, although journalism students often are drawn to the field because of their devotion to and their belief in the impact of the written word and of visual images, they sometimes lose their idealism in the glare of corporate-owned media empires and the compromises of everyday journalistic practice. The study of literary journalism—albeit a popular and lucrative enterprise in its own right—can be an antidote to the unexamined life—an enemy to false consciousness—if it is incorporated into an interdisciplinary curriculum.

In fact, teaching extended fiction and nonfiction is an effective way to address the intimate connection between journalism and literature and to allow for conversations about the journalists who became some of the greatest novelists and poets and short-story writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and about contemporary journalists who best exemplify the effective use of literary techniques in news coverage. Studying novels in journalism courses makes obvious the increasingly indistinct lines between fiction and nonfiction and between fact and creative narrative in contemporary media texts. Most importantly, it may encourage the awakening of a social conscience in both our students and ourselves.

Because addressing controversies in literary journalism, in contemporary media, in civil engagement, and in political process is emphatically too much for one essay, this study provides: 1) a rationale for including novels in the formal study of media, and 2) a list of a few particularly compelling texts that cross interdisciplinary boundaries and allow for spirited class discussion. Although the study must allude to the historically controversial nature of literary journalism, its primary purpose is to argue for the inclusion of fictional texts that are based on a writer's reportorial experience and to suggest the importance of the study of extended nonfiction. In classes that focus on news gathering, news writing, and a journalist's role in defining and disseminating news, it may be that a study of writers themselves—in particular, of their commitment to their sources and of their understanding of their roles as translators of experience—becomes almost as significant as a study of their literary and journalistic canon.

Literary Journalism as a Social and Political Movement

"I'm a journalist at heart; even as a novelist, I'm first of all a journalist," wrote Tom Wolfe. "I think all novels should be journalism to start, and if you can ascend from that plateau to some marvelous altitude, terrific. I really don't think it's possible to understand the individual without understanding the society" (in Angelo 1989:92). Wolfe's words about the definition and purposes of journalism, about literature as art, and about the individual as a player in the larger society are compelling reasons for relying upon literary journalism in teaching even rudimentary news writing classes. "What is your audience?" we ask our students. And, perhaps more importantly, "What can you tell your audience that might motivate them to understand, to engage with, and to improve their communities?" Here, of course, it is clear that literary journalism shares some of the goals of civic journalism and encourages personal moral development and community involvement.

When scholars discuss literary journalism, they often do so by using words and phrases that are sometimes synonymous and sometimes oppositional; furthermore, the terms are sometimes laudatory and sometimes tinged with contempt. The words and phrases are, most certainly, political. They include "intimate journalism," "immersion journalism," "nonfiction with a literary purpose," "art-journalism," "the nonfiction novel," "essay-fiction," "factual fiction," "journalit," "personal journalism," "parajournalism," "creative nonfiction," "new reportage," "literary nonfiction," "artistic nonfiction," "The New Journalism," and "witness literature."

The most essential element of literary journalism is its focus. Unlike daily journalism that has historically emphasized government institutions and institutional authorities as sources, literary journalism also explores the lives of those who are affected by those institutions and authorities. "Rather than hanging around the edges of powerful institutions," Norman Sims (1984:3) writes, "literary journalists attempt to penetrate the cultures that make institutions work".

In the postmodern universe, we need more than facts; in fact, we crave what Wallace Stevens called "the blessed rage for order" (1988:292). An informed citizenry does not long for press releases but for what John Hellman (1981) calls the "penetration of mystery." According to Hellman, "Almost by definition, new journalism is a revolt by the individual against homogenized forms of experience, against monolithic versions of truth" (8). What many perceive to be "corporate fiction" (4), as Hellman suggests, increases the distance between a reader's need for verifiable information upon which to make life-altering decisions and the desire of owners of media outlets to generate profits. For many Americans, the battle is not between objectivity and subjectivity or between fact and fiction but between a disguised perspective and an admitted one, between a corporate fiction and a personal one.

Literary journalism is at root a political and social movement. At its heart is the belief that a disclosed point of view is everything and that readers will trust a personal voice, informed commentary, and thorough research more than they will trust many of the texts produced by a mainstream media that claim "to tell the truth" (what truth?) and "to be objective" (whose objectivity?). In an essay entitled "The Other Side," Richard D. Manning writes, "Reporters keep their distance from community, and reporters think they like that. We call it objectivity. It is the myth that organizes our subculture, a naïve belief that we are better observers because we are separate" (1990:13). Stories about those who run a transportation system do not necessarily engender trust. Readers deserve stories in which reporters talk with those who ride city buses as well as those who manage the transportation system. Literary journalists rely on their belief that readers understand a personal voice and can distinguish it from an institutional one.

In popular culture, reporters and editors often are portrayed as vultures, as automatons who care only about the story, as human beings whose allegiances are primarily to the corporate media world. Films such as "Absence of Malice," "Broadcast News," "Network," and "The Paper" highlight these portrayals. One of the most important books to deal with the public perception of the reporter as "other" is Janet Malcolm's *The Journalist and the Murderer.* In it, Malcolm asks hard questions about the role of journalism and about the tendency of some reporters to manipulate their sources to get a story. One of Malcolm's most damning comments appears on the first page of her book. In it, she focuses on the source, who must

realize that the reporter's first obligation is to the story and not to the assumed relationship established between the reporter and the source during the interview:

> On reading the article or book in question, he has to face the fact that the journalist—who seemed so friendly and sympathetic, so keen to understand him fully, so remarkably attuned to his vision of things—never had the slightest intention of collaborating with him on his story but always intended to write a story of his own. (1990:3).

In "A Third Way to Tell the Story: American Literary Journalism at the Turn of the Century," Thomas B. Connery discusses a news story as a cultural artifact and says that literary journalism is not fiction (because the people are real and the facts occurred) and is not journalism (because it is interpretive and incorporates a narrative point of view). Immersion, Connery suggests, describes an intimate relationship between a reporter and a news source. Instead of watching him or her from an intellectual or ideological distance, the literary journalist builds a relationship with the subject(s) of his or her story (1990:3-20). The text, then, becomes a catalyst for change and for human connection.

Unlike the reporters who exploit their sources in order to get the story first, literary journalists immerse themselves in the worlds of those whom they cover. They build extended relationships with their sources, making it unlikely that they can avoid bias and making it even more unlikely that they want to do so. They relay dialogue and use description in a way that makes it clear that they are a part of the world they describe. Does their work contain bias? Certainly. Do they write from their own point of view and "distort" the news by being too close to the events and sources? Most assuredly. But literary journalists count on readers to understand their vantage point and to trust their narrative precisely because they confess their preconceptions and their points of view.

Since the time Wolfe sought to define the techniques of those who called themselves "New Journalists" and since the time many others distinguished themselves as practitioners of the form, a new generation of writers has taken the stage. Robert S. Boynton (2005) celebrates those whom he calls the "New New Journalists." He lists Ted Conover, William Finnegan, Jonathan Harr, Alex Kotlowitz, Jon Krakauer, William Langewiesche, Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, Michael Lewis, Susan Orlean, Richard Preston, Eric Schlosser, Lawrence Weschler, Lawrence Wright, and others.

Boynton's argument is that a new generation of writers is experimenting with the form made popular by the New Journalists of the 1960s and 1970s and that they, too, speak to social and political concerns that resemble those of nineteenth-century writers such as Stephen Crane, Jacob A. Riis, and Lincoln Steffens. "Rigorously reported, psychologically astute, sociologically sophisticated, and politically aware" (B10), these New New Journalists have capitalized on what Boynton calls "the literature of the everyday" (B10).

When a reporter does her or his job well, social and political contexts become clear and the underpinnings of the day's news are visible. In *Fame and Obscurity: Portraits,* Gay Talese writes that "the new journalism, though reading like fiction, is not fiction. It is, or should be, as reliable as the most reliable reportage, although it seeks a larger truth than is possible through the mere compilation of verifiable facts,

the use of direct quotations, and adherence to the rigid organizational style of the older form" (1970:vii). This "larger truth," of course, suggests a rich, compelling narrative that encourages cultural change and personal growth. For example, Richard Manning, angry about massive destruction of virgin forest and the media that he believes allowed it to occur, condemns conventional news coverage and challenges reporters and editors to be more than they are and to commit themselves to widespread social and political change: "It would be journalism. It would be balanced, fair and irrelevant. It would be yet another example of the bi-polar, fill-in-the-blanks, objective, alienated journalism that has fueled our homeland's controversies lo these many years" (1990:14).

And Michael Herr, who reports on Vietnam in *Dispatches,* introduces his own concerns as he challenges journalists to fulfill their responsibilities by understanding the possible contributions of their craft: "The press got all the facts (more or less), it got too many of them," he writes. "But it never found a way to report meaningfully about death, which of course was really what it was all about" (1978:215). Writing meaningfully about death and other universal issues—translating everyday events and providing context for readers and viewers—is precisely what many scholars challenge media practitioners to do. And it is the goal to which literary journalists in general have committed themselves.

The debate about the virtues of literary journalism explodes again with the publication of every successful example of the genre embraced by the public. When Truman Capote published *In Cold Blood* in 1965, he considered it the first nonfiction novel. Journalists accused him of having gambled with the integrity of news by employing literary techniques such as stream of consciousness; literary critics accused him of glorifying sensationalism and of violating the high calling of fiction. The controversy that followed *In Cold Blood* erupted again with the 1994 publication of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. In an "Author's Note," John Berendt acknowledged that he took "certain storytelling liberties" but that his book remained "faithful to the characters and to the essential drift of events as they really happened". The nonfiction novels of Capote and Berendt are catalysts for what Sims, a former United Press International reporter, calls an exploration of the "borderlands between fact and fiction" (1990:v).

Literary journalism does not gain its name or its identity from being the only lyrical or creative prose in the field of journalism. It does, however, differ significantly from everyday journalistic stories published in newspapers and magazines. It requires immersion in an event. It presumes a point of view. It also employs the techniques of literature without apology, making rich use of stream of consciousness, metaphor, symbol, description, point of view, narration, dialogue, and other techniques considered by many to lie in the province of literature.

Some literary journalists experiment with chronology and/or change the names of characters, but most adhere to rigid journalistic practices while writing an extended narrative that captures the reader's interest and builds suspense and an investment in the development of complex characters. Literary journalism also is often interdisciplinary and a combination of genres. In "The Art of Literary Journalism," Sims writes:

> The liveliness of literary journalism, which critics compare to fiction, comes from combining this personal engagement with perspectives from sociology and anthropology, memoir writing, fiction, history, and standard reporting. . . Literary journalists are boundary crossers in search of a deeper perspective on our lives and times. (1995:19)

Literary journalist Tracy Kidder also defends literary journalism against the charge that its practitioners use literary techniques (presumably thereby violating journalistic ethics) by saying:

> Some people criticize nonfiction writers for "appropriating" the techniques and devices of fiction writing. Those techniques, except for invention of character and detail, never belonged to fiction. They belong to storytelling. In nonfiction you can create a tone and a point of view. Point of view affects everything that follows. (in Sims 1990:19)

Rather than distancing themselves from the subjects of their stories and striving to maintain objectivity, literary journalists immerse themselves in the lives and the environments of their subjects and, while they strive for balance and fairness, trust the reader to realize that their stories are bounded by time, space, and human limitation. There is no place for omniscient point of view in literary journalism. John C. Hartsock (2000) is helpful in understanding these concepts, although he rightly refuses to privilege literary journalism over traditional objective journalism:

> How best can one account for the phenomenal world? In principle, objective news would seem to serve the purpose better because of its announced intention to exclude partisanship. But as several critics have noted, objective news paradoxically disempowers readers by excluding their participation in such discourse. Narrative literary journalism offers more of an opportunity for reader engagement precisely because its purpose is to narrow the distance between subjectivity and the object, not divorce them. . .
>
> Nor is this to suggest that one form of journalism is superior to the other. That has been precisely the problem in the historic privileging of the information or discursive model over the story model, and more specifically of objective news over narrative literary journalism in our own century. Rather, given that the strengths of both are also their liabilities, such a conclusion argues in favor of a diversity of journalisms in the problematic attempt to interpret the phenomenal world. (132-33).

It is the implied social contract between reporter and source and the emphasis on symbolic systems and the principles of storytelling that make the following writers particularly appropriate for inclusion in a journalism course: Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, Katherine Anne Porter, John Steinbeck, Truman Capote, Sara Davidson, and Susan Orlean. All sought to transform the world in which they lived by challenging readers to explore new ideas and values. They did so without artifice, although they employed literary techniques considered by some to be manipulative. This list, of course, is not inclusive or even broadly representative. Notable omissions include John Berendt, Stephen Crane, Joan Didion, Ernest Hemingway, John Hersey, Tracy Kidder, Norman Mailer, Frank McCourt, Lillian Ross, Hunter S. Thompson, Mark Twain, Tom Wolfe, and numerous other well-known literary journalists. In spite

of those disclaimers, however, the list of novels that follows is a significant beginning as we continue to expand the curriculum and acknowledge the rich reservoir of extended fiction and nonfiction texts that encourage social and political engagement.

Sister Carrie, An American Tragedy, and The Jungle

Some of the novels especially appropriate for study in journalism courses are classified as realism or naturalism. Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair both worked as journalists and wrote novels based on fact. Their work is evidence of their commitment to solid reporting and to the possible impact of writing on public attitudes and public policy. Although students are often aware of the role of Dreiser and Sinclair as novelists, few recognize them as effective and committed journalists.

Dreiser worked for newspapers in Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, and St. Louis. *Theodore Dreiser's "Heard in the Corridors": Articles and Related Writings,* edited by T.D. Nostwich, is an essential collection of his work as a journalist. Best known for his novels *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy,* Dreiser focused on the cracks in the American dream. Dreiser believed that human behavior often is determined by social forces, not free will. In both novels, Dreiser writes about the sweat shops at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The robbery in *Sister Carrie* is based on a feature article Dreiser wrote; the point of view relies upon his interviews with real people; the chapter titles could be headlines in a daily newspaper. (In fact, the novel reads as though it were a series of feature articles.)

Two critics are particularly astute in their commentary on Dreiser. One, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, writes: "The seeds of his finest works of fiction were gathered during the twenty years Dreiser spent trafficking in the world of fact" (1985:90). The other, Marilyn Ann Moss, provides a riveting first sentence in an essay about Dreiser: "Theodore Dreiser's journalistic writing was a configuration of factual data that ultimately coalesced into a personal mythos—a tale of how a young journalist might invent himself as a spokesman for American lives at the turn of the century" (1992:143).

Like Dreiser, Upton Sinclair was an activist and former newspaper reporter. He published 90 books, pamphlets, and letters, although he is best known for *The Jungle,* a work of fiction that is based upon the weeks he spent working in a Chicago meatpacking plant and upon the interviews he conducted with immigrants while there.

Sinclair spoke out in favor of miners, he favored women's rights, he started the California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, and he ran for governor of California in 1934 on the platform "End Poverty in California!" In 1900, there was no minimum wage, no maximum number of working hours, no employer liability, no food and drug laws, no votes for women, no education on birth control and venereal disease, few unions, no health insurance, no social security, and no unemployment compensation. Known as an ethnographer of the working poor, Sinclair challenged Americans to change the system and to address these wrongs.

Sinclair wrote *The Jungle* when he was 26, and it was serialized in *Appeal to Reason*. The story he told is so graphic and so powerful that President Theodore Roosevelt

invited Sinclair to the White House to verify his facts. Doubleday sent an attorney to confirm that conditions in the meatpacking plants were as bad as Sinclair described them, and, according to several critics, the attorney found the conditions to be worse than he described. The publication of the novel about Jurgis Rudkus, a strong Lithuanian immigrant who could not break the cycle of poverty, led to the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act, to the Meat Inspection Act, and to other social and economic reforms.

In "How Should We Teach *The Jungle?"* Christopher Phelps (2006) suggests that the novel relies upon reporting and that *The Jungle* should be taught as journalism: "It ought to be possible to consider *The Jungle* as both a transcription of social life and a work of literary imagination, as both reportage and social criticism" (B12). Arguing that *The Jungle* is "primarily a sympathetic sketch of the foreign born, those fabled 'masses yearning to breathe free' that Americans welcome in our poetry and disdain in the breach" (B10), Phelps writes:

> After all, *The Jungle* is as much reportage as literature. Sinclair's searing, graphic revelations were based on close observation. He spoke to workers and infiltrated the giant packinghouses, carrying a lunch pail in hand to make it seem he belonged there. Although a work of fiction, *The Jungle* is often classified as "muckraking," exposé journalism that blends revealed fact with moral indignation in the pursuit of social reform. (2006: B10)

Pale Horse, Pale Rider

Unlike *Sister Carrie, An American Tragedy,* and *The Jungle,* studying *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* allows instructors to discuss the role of women in journalism history, to deal with the perception of print journalists by the public, and to address the necessity for writing that adheres to grammatical and stylistic principles. Journalism students often have not considered Katherine Anne Porter as someone who drew on her experience in newspapers and struggled with the decisions her editors made and with the demands of the profession. The long hours and poor salaries she describes make for compelling discussion in journalism classes.

A literary figure who left journalism, Katherine Anne Porter did not remember fondly her days in newspapers. In fact, she said late in her career:

> I forgive [one] critic here and now, and forever, for calling me a "newspaper woman" in the public prints. I consider it an actionable libel, but, as is too often the case in these incidents, he has a small patch of solid ground under him. . .
>
> Fifty-odd years ago, for eight short months of my ever-lengthening (or shortening?) life, I did have a kind of a job on a newspaper, *The Rocky Mountain News*. (in Givner 1986:69)

In her article "Katherine Anne Porter, Journalist," biographer Joan Givner (1986) acknowledges Porter's rejection of her own work as a journalist and calls it "unfortunate" because it "deflected attention from material which is crucial to the understanding of Porter's life and art" (69).

In spite of her feelings about journalism, Porter was a dedicated newspaperwoman during the short time she spent in the field. Instinctively, she understood the importance of careful observation and utilized her skill in both her newspaper stories and her fiction. A strong journalistic influence—not an obvious part of her memoirs or the published conversations with her—emerges in an analysis of the short novel *Pale Horse, Pale Rider.*

A reporter for the *Rocky Mountain News,* Porter reviewed books, plays and concerts; interviewed celebrities; and rewrote crime stories. In *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* Miranda, who represents Porter herself, seeks assurance that she can discern truth, but that desire is consistently undercut. As a journalist familiar with the William Randolph Hearst-Joseph Pulitzer-Adolph Ochs newspaper wars of the 1880s and early 1900s, Mary Towney, the society editor, says with sarcasm, "I read it in a New York newspaper, so it's bound to be true" (Porter 1944:284).

In the novel, Miranda's experiences and salary certainly reflect accounts of Porter's early days as a reporter. Asked for money to support the war effort, Miranda says in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider,* "I have eighteen dollars a week and not another cent in the world. I simply cannot buy anything" (Porter 1994:273). She also describes the exhaustion and recurring deadlines of newspaper work. Porter writes:

> After working for three years on a morning newspaper she had an illusion of maturity and experience; but it was fatigue merely, she decided, from keeping what she had been brought up to believe were unnatural hours, eating casually at dirty little restaurants, drinking bad coffee all night, and smoking too much. (Porter 1994:280)

With humor and obvious first-hand knowledge, Porter describes Miranda's conflicts with irate readers and impatient editors. The descriptions of the newsroom (where people sat on her desk and where she heard the incessant "rattle of typewriters" and the "steady rumble of presses") are realistic, as are Porter's memories of rigid stylistic principles:

> They lolled away, past the Society Editor's desk, past Bill the City Editor's desk, past the long copydesk where old man Gibbons sat all night shouting at intervals, "Jarge! Jarge!" and the copyboy would come flying. "Never say *people* when you mean *persons,"* old man Gibbons had instructed Miranda, "and never say *practically,* say *virtually,* and don't for God's sake ever so long as I am at this desk use the barbarism *inasmuch* under any circumstances whatsoever. Now you're educated, you may go." (Porter 1994:274)

The Grapes of Wrath and Travels with Charley

Like Dreiser, Sinclair, and Porter, John Steinbeck based much of his fiction on actual events and experimented with several genres of nonfiction, including personal essays, travel writing, and political and social commentary. In spite of this fact, his interest in journalism often is treated as ancillary to his writing of fiction, which is regarded as his real work and true calling. Steinbeck scholars allude to journalism when discussing Steinbeck's development as a writer or when chronicling and categorizing his work, but to date they have not investigated Steinbeck's role as a literary

journalist with the same analytical zeal they bring to the study of his fiction. "The truth is that Steinbeck was really a journalist at heart," Gore Vidal said in a 1993 interview with Steinbeck biographer Jay Parini. "All of his best work was journalism in that it was inspired by daily events, by current circumstances. He didn't 'invent' things. He 'found' them" (Parini 1995:274).

It is important to remember that Steinbeck did not simply experiment with journalistic techniques; he also worked as a serious and committed journalist at several times in his career. Most notably, Steinbeck covered World War II and wrote insightfully about international politics. In a July 5, 1943, article, a *Newsweek* reporter praised Steinbeck's coverage of the war, saying that Steinbeck's "cold grey eyes didn't miss a trick, that with scarcely any note-taking he soaked up information like a sponge, wrote very fast on a portable typewriter, and became haywire if interrupted" (Parini 1995:275). Although Steinbeck did not describe himself as a journalist, he understood the complexity of journalism as a field and celebrated its influence at the same time that he warned of its dangers. Steinbeck writes:

> What can I say about journalism? It has the greatest virtue and the greatest evil. It is the first thing the dictator controls. It is the mother of literature and the perpetrator of crap. In many cases it is the only history we have and yet it is the tool of the worst men. But over a long period of time and because it is the product of so many men, it is perhaps the purest thing we have. Honesty has a way of creeping in even when it was not intended. (Parini 1995:391)

In addition to his belief that journalism is the "only history we have," Steinbeck shared with journalists a reliance upon actual events and told compelling stories that advocated social and political change. While traditional news reporters retell chronological events, quote sources directly, and allow readers to draw conclusions from the facts, Steinbeck said in a letter to one of his sources for *The Grapes of Wrath* that his purpose in writing about his experiences was "to do some good and no harm" (Parini 1995:180). His fiction and nonfiction had a purpose: He wanted to increase people's awareness and lead them to action on behalf of others while causing as little damage as possible.

Best known for *The Grapes of Wrath*—a novel that relied upon fact and won Steinbeck the 1940 Pulitzer Prize—Steinbeck was later celebrated by the public for *Travels with Charley in Search of America*. This curious four-part book remains a compelling example of Steinbeck's success with nonfiction and serves as what Parini calls an "elegy for a world he has lost" (1997:ix), but it is undeniably different from the journalism he produced earlier in his career. Accurately defined as a travel chronicle or travel monologue, *Travels with Charley* is a first-person narrative with a beginning, middle, and end; the journey undertaken by the author contributes its own structure, and as Steinbeck draws conclusions about himself and his homeland, the road trip takes on the narrative significance of a personal quest. Explaining why the pilgrimage is necessary, Steinbeck writes in *Travels with Charley*, "Thus I discovered that I did not know my own country" (1997:5).

While being immersed in the events of his time, Steinbeck met figures who were larger than life and who were easily translated into fiction. One such person was Tom Collins, who headed migrant camps in Marysville and Arvin, California, for the federal government. *The Grapes of Wrath* is partially dedicated to Collins ("To

Tom—who lived it"). In the foreword to a manuscript by Collins, Steinbeck writes of the time he met Collins: "Sitting at a littered table was Tom Collins, a little man in a damp, frayed, white suit. . . He had a small moustache, his graying, black hair stood up on his head like the quills of a frightened porcupine, and his large, dark eyes, tired beyond sleepiness, the kind of tired that won't let you sleep even if you have time and a bed" (in Parini:179).

Including Steinbeck in a journalism course allows discussion about personal voice in journalistic texts and about the role of fact-based reporting in many celebrated works that have been relegated to literature survey courses.

In Cold Blood

Like *The Grapes of Wrath, In Cold Blood* is an American classic and will be dealt with more briefly in this list because it, like *All the President's Men,* is often used in journalism classes. The author of 25 plays, two novels, 60 short stories, more than 100 poems, and an autobiography, Truman Capote is the subject of two films, *Capote* and *Infamous*, which, like the novel itself, highlight the complex relationship between an author and a source. The advantage of incorporating the films into class discussion is obvious: Students may watch one or both of them as an outside project and debate journalistic reporting techniques in the following class session.

The difficulties and potential of the relationship between Capote and his source, Perry Smith, are important for students in print media and broadcasting classes to consider. In a film review of *Capote*, John DeFore of the *Austin American Statesman* (2005) focuses on the role of interviewer and interviewee:"

> In an early scene in small-town Kansas, we see the friction between the man and his image. Interviewing a friend of one of the murder victims who is reluctant to confide in this strange creature from New York, Capote unexpectedly makes what feels like a confession, indirectly giving the girl permission to find him odd while offering her something to identify with. Within moments, the interviewee has decided to share a piece of evidence she has previously kept hidden.
>
> Is this interview a rare miracle of empathy, or an example of a journalist's genius for working his subject? That issue is the heart of the movie, as Capote meets and conducts marathon interviews with the killers, particularly the strangely magnetic Perry Smith. (1E/10E)

The murder of the Clutter family in Kansas, the fact that Capote read a story about the murder in the *New York Times* and was obsessed by it, the years he spent researching the murder, the relationship he developed with one of the murderers, and his professional demise following the book are all common knowledge. However, the book remains a staple of any journalism class in which the thin line between fiction and nonfiction and the question of reportorial ethics are debated.

Loose Change: Three Women of the Sixties

When *In Cold Blood* was published in 1965, one of those who read the nonfiction novel was a reporter and national correspondent for the *Boston Globe* (1965-1969), Sara Davidson. Since that time, Davidson has published in *The Atlantic, Esquire, Harper's, Life,* the *Los Angeles Times Magazine, McCall's, Mirabella, Ms*., the *New* York *Times Magazine, New Woman, Oprah*, *Spirituality and Health,* and other publications. She is best known for the international best seller *Loose Change: Three Women of the Sixties* (1977), a social history of the sixties told through the lives of three young women who met at Berkeley; *Real Property* (1980), a collection of her early essays; *Cowboy* (1999), a memoir of a relationship; and *Leap* (2007), a chronicle of her generation at mid-life.

Davidson's life experiences often mirror those of students in journalism classes who are committed to challenging the status quo through their prose. In *Loose Change,* Davidson employs a self-effacing authorial voice to suggest to readers that it is all right if they, too, are unsure about who they are and how they fit into the social order:

> It is the summer of '76 and I am living by the ocean in Southern California. I have fixed up my house as if I intend to stay. I've planted a cactus garden and furnished the rooms with wicker and Mexican tile. People tell me I speak like the natives. They say I look "laid back."
>
> I don't know. (1997:366)

Davidson's tone remains consistent throughout *Loose Change,* and the conclusion both summarizes and problematizes the issues raised in the nonfiction novel. The anguish of the narrator is evident when she explains the title of the book – "We had predicted that the center would not hold but it had, and now we were in pieces. 'Loose change,' I told a friend" (1997:366) – and when she admits to her own confusion about drugs, the sexual revolution, the Civil Rights movement, and other phenomena of the sixties: "I'm afraid I will be criticized for copping out. ('We want to know what you make of it all, what this period meant in terms of a society, a culture.') But the truth is, I have not found answers and I'm not sure I remember the questions" (1997:367).

The Orchid Thief

A contemporary of Davidson's is Susan Orlean, author of *The Orchid Thief*. Her articles also have appeared in *Outside, Rolling Stone, Vogue,* and *Esquire*. *The Orchid Thief,* subtitled *A True Story of Beauty and Obsession,* is appropriate for journalism classes because the nonfiction novel provides a compelling example of how writers weave character and didacticism into an extended symbolic system.

Orlean's reason for writing extended nonfiction is common to many literary journalists and is interesting for students to consider: "I didn't want to be a newspaper reporter, because I have never cared about knowing something first, and I didn't want to write only about things that were considered 'important' and newsworthy," Orlean writes. "I wanted to write about things that intrigued me, and to

write about them in a way that would surprise readers who might not have expected to find these things intriguing" (2006:ix).

Orlean makes clear that she is telling the stories of others in order to better understand herself and her own quest for passion and joy. Her explanation for her pilgrimage to Florida is other people's obsession with orchids, and in the end she will understand her own obsession with telling their stories and deconstructing their fascination with the unique flowers: "Orchids seem to drive people crazy," she writes. "Those who love them love them madly. Orchids arouse passion more than romance. They are the sexiest flowers on earth" (2006:50).

The Orchid Thief is based on a newspaper article Orlean read about John Laroche and three Seminole men who were arrested with rare orchids they had stolen from a swamp in Florida called the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve. With typical understatement, Orleans writes, "I wanted to know more about the incident" (2006:6). Knowing more became a 284-page novel. The working title of *The Orchid Thief* was *Passion,* and the novel about rare and beautiful flowers is an internal pilgrimage to discover her own reasons for being and for creating.

Conclusion

Although the classics of American literary journalism are appropriate for classes across the curriculum, they are essential for students in journalism and media studies. Those who commit themselves to the transformation of human experience into art commit themselves to making meaning, to changing individual lives, and to the evolution of social and political processes. In his essay "Journalism and the Larger Truth," media critic Roger Rosenblatt writes:

> If one asks, then, where the larger truth is to be sought, the answer is where it has always been: in history, poetry, art, nature, education, conversation; in the tunnels of one's own mind. People may have come to expect too much of journalism. . . The trouble is that people have also come to expect too much of journalism at its best, because they have invested too much power in it, and in so doing have neglected or forfeited other sources of power in their lives. Journalists appear to give answers, but essentially they ask a question: What shall we make of this? A culture that would rely on the news for truth could not answer that question because it already would have lost the qualities of mind that make the news worth knowing. (1992:133)

Rosenblatt does not suggest the supremacy of fiction over journalism; instead, he argues that fiction and nonfiction provide different kinds of truth for the reader. In "Dreaming the News," he writes:

> So much of living is made up of storytelling that one might conclude that it is what we were meant to do—to tell one another stories, fact or fiction, as a way of keeping afloat. Job's messenger, Coleridge's mariner, the reporter in California all grab us by the lapels to tell us their tale. We do the same; we cannot help ourselves. We have the story of others to tell, or of ourselves, or of the species—some monumentally elusive tale we are always trying to get right. Sometimes it seems that we are telling one another parts of the

> same immense story. Fiction and the news are joined in an endless chain. Everything is news, everything imagined. (1997:102)

Because we are storytellers, because we live in relationship with others, and because we rely on narrative for personal and collective decisions, the study of novels in journalism education becomes an imperative for those committed to the awakening of conscience and to the understanding of the complexities of our lives.

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More than a magazine, more than people: Esquire and the publishing conditions of literary journalism in the 1960s

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Abstract

Typically, research and writing on literary journalism center either on anecdotes and memoirs of individual authors and their writings or on the attempt to write a comprehensive history or theory of the form. Both have their shortcomings for approaching the field. The method of analyzing *Esquire* as a platform for literary journalism proposed by this article presents a combination of both approaches based on Alberto Melucci's network theory. Based on the understanding of the 1960's literary journalism as a movement, Melucci's approach provides the groundwork for analyzing the networks of writers and editors in their respective "field of opportunities and constraints" (1989: 26). This helps scholars investigate the comprehensive conditions out of which narrative forms develop but also benefits students and authors in providing a realistic understanding of publishing circumstances for their own work.

Introduction

Research and writing on literary journalism seem to center either on anecdotes and memoirs of individual authors or on the attempt to write a comprehensive history or theory of the form. Both these approaches have their shortcomings. The individual memoirs and anecdotes help understand the cultural setting but lack theoretical insight, whereas the comprehensive theories are often too text-centered, focusing entirely on the writing while excluding an analysis of the circumstances of production.[1] Weingarten's (2006) account of the 1960s journalism as an example of the anecdotal does not distinguish by definition between Norman Mailer's and Gay Talese's writing. However Yagoda and Kerrane's theoretical introduction to the anthology *The Art of Fact* (1995) serves as a representative example of the problematic nature of the theoretical mode. In reference to the literary journalism of the 1960s, Yagoda states in the introduction that "much of this fresh writing was, first and foremost, a direct response to the transforming events of the era" (1995: 18), but does not further elaborate on this. Instead he tries to define the term and group writers into different traditions of style. Both methods therefore also have problems accounting for the shifts and changes of popularity of literary journalism. The anecdotal histories grant changes to the influence of great personalities and their investment in the form. The comprehensive histories concentrate on textual characteristics and do not focus on the extra-textual conditions.

To illustrate the significance of publishing circumstances in the emergence of literary journalism as a popular form, this article concentrates on a comprehensive analysis of these conditions for *Esquire* magazine's network during the 1960s based on Alberto Melucci's theory of social movements.

Since neither the attempt to accredit individual writers for literary journalism's emergence nor the attempt to theorize this "profoundly fuzzy term" (Yagoda: 1997: 13) ultimately appear fruitful, this article demonstrates the social construction of the genre by examining the conditions out of which literary journalism emerged in the pages of what Weingarten refers to as "the most influential magazine of the 1960s" (2006: 40). This helps scholars investigate the conditions and settings out of which narrative forms develop or rise to prominence at particular points in time, but also benefits students and authors in providing a realistic understanding of publishing circumstances for their own work.

Theory and Method

Why Melucci?

The network approach as introduced by Melucci in his revision of social movement theory offers helpful theoretical insights for the conceptualization of the relationships within the circles of literary journalism and for the framing of the analysis of publishing conditions. Although scholars in the field do not mutually agree, the starting point for the application of Melucci's theory is that the literary journalism of the 1960s, or what has been termed "new journalism", may be understood as a cultural movement.

In his introduction, Weingarten argues that literary journalism was not a movement, but instead a circle of acquainted writers that shared the rule of not really having rules for journalism. He admits that most of the writing he covers emerged during a period of seven years and in this sense it is in fact possible to talk of a movement, but links his negation to the missing definition of the form: "How can you have a movement when no one knows what the movement represents?" (2006: 7). While Wolfe claims that it "was no 'movement'. There were no manifestos, clubs, salons, cliques; not even a saloon where the faithful gathered, since there was no faith and no creed" (1973: 37), he mentions the feeling of being part of a new development in journalism.

Despite these negating arguments, Melucci's theory on new social movements is still applicable due to his very fluid and open understanding of the term "movement". For him, movements are fragile and heterogeneous. They consist of submerged networks that are mostly invisible and only manifest themselves from time to time through visible public action. His editors Keane and Mier find this part of Melucci's work most original, arguing that these networks are "noted for their stress on individual needs, collective identity and part-time membership" (1989: 6).

Melucci's work offers itself for three additional reasons. First, because the theory, in spite of its focus on social movements, does not only concentrate on the political terrain and goals, but considers the realm of culture as a key element for understanding contemporary movements.[2] Second, because Melucci's temporal frame for the emergence of new social movement is similar to that considered in this article. Lastly, because it responds in part to a similar criticism regarding social movements as expressed here with respect to the analysis of literary journalism, namely that "neither the macro-structural models of collective action nor those based on individuals' motivation are satisfactory, for they lack an understanding of an intermediate level" (1989: 30). The macro-structural models, like the theoretical approach, are too broad to explore the level of personal influence while the anecdotal models, like those theories based on individual motivations, are too detached from theory to formulate claims to a larger context. Melucci's approach and analytical tools help to establish a middle ground, combining the insights gained from both theoretical and anecdotal sources.

Why Esquire?

The 1960s were a high point of literary journalism. Many of the texts that are now commonly thought of as literary or new journalism appeared during this decade and *Esquire* was one of the most important magazines that provided the narrative style with a platform—from Gay Talese's profiles to Michael Herr's Vietnam coverage.

Esquire is central for the approach of this article for two reasons: its content offers a great variety of literary journalism covering all the important topics of the decade and its people were at the heart of literary journalism in New York.

Accounts of 1960s literary journalism read like a catalogue of political and historical events that were shaped by and shaping the magazines and still define the 1960s for us today: the youth rebellion and counter-culture, the generation and credibility gap, the civil rights and reforms movements, the assassinations of civil rights leaders, the

radical chic, the sexual revolution, the peaceful demonstrations and violent revolts, and of course the Vietnam War. Still defining the memory, *Esquire* covered all these topics in its very special and unique way from beginning to the end of the decade

The theme issues usually appeared every July and stand as a representative sample of covered topics. Topics ranged from issues on urban life in New York (1960), "The American Woman" (1962), New York's literary scene (1963) and "sentimentality" (1964), to the coverage of teenagers (1965), "Spying, Science and Sex" (May 1966), violence (1967), coolness (1968), and college life (1969). In addition, *Esquire* writers reflected on key political developments. William Burroughs' "The Coming of the Purple Better One" (November 1968), or John Sack's "In A Pig's Eye" (November 1968) exposed the disturbing clash of civilian and police forces at the height of the peace demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Two years earlier, the front page of white letters on black ground with the line "Oh My God, We Hit A Little Girl" shocked the audience when parts of John Sack's "M" on his Vietnam experiences were published in October 1966. Not to be forgotten as well are the articles trying to make sense out of the assassinations during the 1960s. The 1964 article "Lee Oswald's Letters to his Mother (with footnotes by Mrs. Oswald)" is as unconventional an attempt as Tom Wicker's "Kennedy Without Tears" (June 1964). Anthony Howard's "The Logistics of the Funeral" (November 1968) on Robert Kennedy's funeral approaches the sensitive topics of death and remembrance in new ways.[3] Traditional reporting, the common argument went, was inadequate to cover the changes because it worked on the basis of providing order but all the times offered was chaos, so the "New Journalists" had to take over becoming "our master explainers, our town criers, even our moral conscience" (Weingarten 2006: 6-7).

Many important texts of literary journalism on 1960s culture appeared first in *Esquire* and many writers associated with the form frequently wrote for the magazine. Norman Mailer and Gay Talese are prominent examples. Norman Mailer's *Esquire* article "Superman Comes to the Supermarket" (1960) on the presidential candidate Jack Kennedy is often named as one of the first articles of the typical 1960s literary journalism. Mailer also contributed as a columnist under the heading "Big Bite" from 1962-63 filing a combination of fiction and journalism. Weingarten and Polsgrove both make the argument that Talese's profiles along with Mailer's 1960s article are an important influence on the 1960s literary journalism. From 1960 on almost all of his pieces, later published in the essay collection "Fame and Obscurity" (1970) were published in *Esquire*. Famous examples include "Joe Louis: The King as a Middle-Aged Man" (1963) or "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" (1966).

Secondary works like Polsgrove's and Weingarten's books have argued before that the *Esquire* texts were an important model of literary journalism. This article attempts to go further and claims that the relationships of writers and editors of the magazine were as important for the development of the form. As a basis for this article, *Esquire* staff and writers are considered as the central network for the movement of literary journalism during the 1960s. Even though literary journalism was published in other magazine outlets as well, most of the writers can be linked to *Esquire*. Former *Esquire* editor Clay Felker, for example, founded the city magazine *New York*, which became another flagship of literary journalism in the late 1960s.

Alberto Melucci's network theory as theoretical middle ground

Conceptualizing *Esquire* as the center of a movement, made up of a networked creative community promoting the circulation of literary journalism, provides a new theoretical framework for the analysis of the emergence and prominence of the narrative form during that time. The networks of relationships between writers, editors, and publishers as described in Arnold Gingrich's memoir, or in the books by Polsgrove and Weingarten form the textual basis for the application of Melucci's network theory — since after all, as Arnold Gingrich says, "a magazine, in a very real sense, is made of nothing but people" (1971: 4).[4]

Melucci argues that social movements continuously negotiate goals, means and the environment from which they emerge. The same process of negotiation can be applied to an analysis of literary journalism as the product of a social network. Melucci criticizes the concept of social movements as unified entities. Instead, he emphasizes the on-going construction of relationships in a personal and institutional setting: "Collective action is rather the product of purposeful orientations developed within a field of opportunities and constraints. […] Whatever unity exists should be considered the result and not the starting point, a fact rather to be explained than assumed" (1989: 26). So in Wolfe's words "for the flavor of it, come with me back to the 1960s" (2000: 249) and let me revisit the production of *Esquire's* literary journalism by combining the anecdotal with the institutional "field of opportunities and constraints". As a starting point this article sketches out this field in its broadest sense by describing opportunities and constraints regarding *Esquire*, then applies the theory to the level of individual actors within their respective fields of action to demonstrate the social construction of the form.

Esquire's field of opportunities and constraints during the 1960s

The 1960s media environment represented a marked change for *Esquire* from the postwar years, when, according to founding editor Arnold Gingrich editorial quality suffered because "you could sell everything you could print" (1971: 167). Increasing competition in the two markets of content and advertising proved more and more the most important constraint. In the advertising, *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrate*d, founded in 1954, enjoyed increasing popularity during the 1960s, and posed an immediate competitive threat in the leisure market aimed at male readers. *Holiday Gentleman's Quarterly*, *True*, and *Argosy* were in the same category catering to a male, leisure-oriented audience. Competitors for content included the city magazine *New York* and the city newspaper *Village Voice*, as well as the established literary magazine Harper'*s*, they each increased the competitive situation by publishing articles in the style of the new journalism.[5] By their category as city publications *New York* and *Village Voice* concentrated on an already defined market of urban New Yorkers interested in the happenings of their home town while *Harper's* had always been a magazine with a strong literary profile. Traditionally, *Esquire* had managed to combine service features on leisure and fashion with literary text and now tried to refocus this strategy. The constant challenge of battling literary magazines for quality content but at the same time selling service-orientation to the advertising customers led to a general rethinking of *Esquire's* positioning within the magazine market. From the thirties on, *Esquire's* image had always been that of "the magazine for men" but

aiming at a male readership alone no longer sufficed. Now there were others claiming that same title.

During the process of reshaping between 1952 and 1954 Arnold Gingrich chose to "stir up some excitement by getting talked about with provocative articles" (1971: 198) instead of becoming more service-oriented like *Holiday* or *Playboy.* Harold Hayes became the editor to realize those plans for the next decade. The makeover was more or less accomplished by the 25th anniversary in 1958, to be followed by what Arnold Gingrich calls "the coming of age" (1971: 222), a period in which Harold Hayes finally took over full editorial power in late 1962 and continued his predecessor's attempt to stay controversial.

The deliberate focus on "provocative" content as the magazine's marker of difference established an opportunity for the promotion of literary journalism, which typically presented unusual ways of telling a story. For writers and editors it provided the framework of justification against economic pressures because it marked a specific marketable "image". The "provocative" stories of the sixties did not always fit with the commercial side of the magazine, but the determined editor managed to keep the pages full of them in the light of the argument of marked difference. However, Harold Hayes had to formally present the concept of the next issue to the *Esquire* management and advertisement department from 1963 onward. Meanwhile, further opportunities for the development of this new literary form in this context were created by the tumultuous events of the 1960s. Most of the discussions on controversial pieces could not hold against the fast-paced events needing coverage right away. Compromises between editorial and advertising were constantly necessary, so Harold Hayes printed fashion spreads to please the advertisers and thereby "still left far more pages to devote to other things than most magazines would have in the years to come" (Polsgrove 1995: 72) and in so doing helped to create a platform for the literary journalists.

Esquire's issues were constantly crossing the fine line between upsetting advertising clients and pleasing the readers with explosive material, and some of *Esquire's* competitors were not as daring. The example of a story by Hunter S. Thompson demonstrates the influence advertising had on limiting the form. *Playboy*, for example, did not publish Thompson's story on the skier Jean-Claude Killy, because it was too hot a topic and too controversial in its language describing how cultural icons like Killy were used as selling machines for the big companies. *Playboy* did not want to lose an ad deal with one of its biggest clients, Chevrolet. For Harold Hayes a turn towards service features was not the answer to the economic pressures. Literary journalism, even though not always the most unproblematic form of writing, would remain a marker of the magazine attracting readership and thereby precious advertising customers.

At the same time, television added a whole new layer of economic threat for audience and advertising sales. Polsgrove mentions that there was no way to "hope to keep up with television's soaring numbers […], especially after *Esquire* abandoned the girlie market to *Playboy*" (1995: 26). From the end of WW II on, more and more stations had been licensed by the Federal Communications Commission the licenses reached an apex during this decade creating an additional motivation for increased differentiation via a concentration on an intellectual literary profile in combination with leisure and fashion features.

Esquire's part in the literary production process and the making of authors within the publishing industry of the 1960s can be viewed as another positive factor for the increasing presence of literary journalism. The publishing industry – defined as magazine and book publishers – for over 100 years jointly created authors, equally benefiting writers, publishers, and magazine content.[6] For the writers book publication offered alternative income.[7] The book publishing industry took their share by providing ideas and suggesting books in progress. For them the magazine offered the space to advertise upcoming books by publishing select chapters, drawing the attention of interested readers. Such joint efforts in the making of authors led to a stronger presence of literary journalism in *Esquire*, because literary writers would join traditional journalists in reporting instead of exclusively contributing fiction. Harold Hayes gave them the space to let their creativity and sensibility flow while covering pressing topics of the day.

The long lead-time for magazines has to be considered as another important factor in explaining the type of stories and the style of writing as part of the process of collaboration between editors and authors.[8] Since the lead-time for magazines can amount to as much as three months, topics of national importance such as President Kennedy's assassination could not be covered right away. However, in transforming this circumstance into an opportunity, Harold Hayes managed to find new angles by using the writers' individual creativity on topics that would be out-dated in the traditional press. At the same time, this long lead-time was yet another factor in attracting writers to journalism in the first place. Weingarten argues that Michael Herr intended from the start to produce work which required intensive and long-time research only possible because of the long lead-time of magazines. These two reactions to the traditional disadvantage of a long lead-time therefore joined together in the pages of *Esquire* cleverly exploited by the actors on both sides of the magazine's creative process.

An analysis of *Esquire's* opportunities and constraints would not be complete without looking at the cultural developments of the 1960s in relation to audience and topics. The opportunity to specialize in content and style instead of service orientation became more valuable in the context of catering to an audience of men whose generation had been educated under the GI bill and who were looking for a different gratification from the pages of the magazine than what they could get from TV. In his introduction to the *Esquire* anthology, Harold Hayes describes life during the 1950s as "monotonously predictable" for the average American—"a second car and a swimming pool were facts of his life, a new vacation home an immediate possibility" (1969: xviiii). The sixties implied a sudden shift from the conservative fifties, when "the challenge had been to break up the ice of fifties culture" (Polsgrove 1995: 122). The GI Bill caused part of the sudden change by offering a college education to the many men returning from war. *Esquire*'s new audience became the GI Bill crowd—"an audience that cared about rock and roll and the spiritual position of modern man, an audience that had heard of French playwrights and existentialists, an educated audience weary of television" (Polsgrove 1995: 39). It might be quite a leap from the GI Bill to existentialism but the increased interest in the humanities is expressed here through a placeholder signifying intellectual and cultural practices such as jazz, beat literature or countercultural activities. This change reflected back on the magazine's editorial coverage, because it meant a new approach to topics and style, in such a way as to appeal to an increasingly more youthful audience. Arnold

Gingrich officially stepped back from editorial business in 1961 because he saw that it was time to entrust the magazine to those more familiar with this new field. Most of the decisions were already being made with the help of a group of young editors gradually taking over the steering wheel from the late 1950s. Arnold Gingrich says that during the sixties the readership's median age "dropped a year per year, coming down to thirty-three from forty, the figure around which it had always hovered from the beginning" (1971: 211). The median age of the new staff would start to match that of the new audience.

While a lot of these arguments – expanding younger market, the creation of authors, the long lead time – apply to any magazine of the era, they are presented here to define and describe the field in which the *Esquire* network acted and reacted.

The Esquire network within the field

According to Polsgrove, the resulting new *Esquire* has to be understood as a group project with a great editor, whose talent was to bring out the best in others: "And so this is the story not only of Harold Hayes, but of all who made *Esquire* in the sixties one of the most intricate records of its time" (1995: 13). For the journalist, the editor is first and foremost the person who creates and shapes what Melucci describes as "the field of opportunities and constraints" for collective action. Harold Hayes might not have asked writers to practice literary journalism but he created an environment in which this was possible. Within the network, the editor became the central figure, creating opportunities and reducing constraints for the individual writer.

Within this part of the analysis it is interesting to look a little closer at the figure of the editor, who takes personal risks with writers despite economic pressures because he believes in their talent. *Esquire*'s editor Harold Hayes is often described as completely trustful and supportive. The publication of Michael Herr's story "Hell Sucks" on the 1967 TET offensive in Vietnam can be viewed as exemplary of this unique editor-writer relationship. Herr had used reconstruction and an almost "made-up ending" but in the end Harold Hayes took the story. Harold Hayes was taking the risk only based on his trust for Herr during a time "when the magazine's best nonfiction writers were pushing their reportage into murky territory where creative interpretation mingled with straight documentation" (Weingarten 2006: 168). Here Melucci is helpful again. In order to explain the motivation behind an individual actor, he argues for a combination of personal reasons and an understanding of resources available: Harold Hayes actions are contextualized in the magazine's economic and cultural conditions. Harold Hayes gave writers the freedom to pursue the form that questions the standards of traditional news in space, approach, time and style. Because he understood or sensed the importance of the form for the overall concept of the magazine he undertook immense efforts to support his journalists—"writing letters, making calls, clearing the way, as if the *Esquire* office were a supportive unit for soldiers in battle" (1995: 136). He fought with the management and advertisement department over stories, supported book projects and had a sense of the right match in assignments. Arnold Gingrich describes how "he seemed to have a rationale for everything he wanted to do in terms of how it related to the concept of the entire magazine" and how he also had a feeling for the general trends, "for the mood changes that were beginning to develop across the country,

and particularly among the young, in the late 1950s, and he was good at working up features that appealed" (1971: 210).

A concrete episode of *Esquire* history might illustrate what Melucci understands as collective action emerging out of a "field of opportunities and constraints" (1989: 26) leading to the creation of great literary journalism. In the context of the process of reshaping *Esquire*, Arnold Gingrich hired younger staff such as art director Henry Wolf, literary editor Rust Hills, and editors Harold Hayes, Clay Felker, and Ralph Ginzburg, with the last three in competition for the managing editor's position. Even though Arnold Gingrich recounts that for him it soon became clear that Harold Hayes would be his choice for successor, Weingarten paints the picture differently, describing constant power struggles between the three young editors.[9] Arnold Gingrich recounts that "the young Turks" gathered every Friday for editorial meetings. The joke in the office was that it gave them time until Monday to wash the blood off the walls. These editors would fiercely compete for the best ideas and form flexible alliances in supporting and opposing each other. Within this field of force "the issues of the magazine were beginning to be as lively as the meeting that engendered their content" (Gingrich 1971: 206). During this experimental period one creative, controversial, crazy idea beat the next. The structural changes brought on by targeting a younger more intellectual audience manifested themselves here as the field of force for the competition between the team of young editors. Arnold Gingrich, at this time still managing editor, was himself but one actor affected by the larger forces of increased economic competition and accelerated cultural change typical of the 1960s. Still he used these forces productively by instilling a system of competition within the magazine, which influenced the variety and creativity of its content.

This example can also be used to explain Melucci's analytical tool "collective identity," which he defines as "an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place" (1989: 34). In the given example the actors do not intentionally work on defining themselves in relation to literary journalism but by letting their creativities run free and constantly renewing their approaches toward covering the topics of the day, they were creating the phenomenon collectively. In Melucci's account the emotional and subjective accounts and investments play an important role in addition to constraints and prospects.[10] It can prove productive for researchers to pay close attention to the choice of words in trying to interpret and explain the emotional component of "collective identity". The common office joke of washing the blood off the walls thus becomes an indicator of the personal importance attached by the individual actors towards their common goal. Another example of emotional investment is evident in the way Wolfe mentions a particular feeling of belonging in his 1973 introduction. He apparently sensed an affiliation to a certain group of people who were doing things differently.[11] He points out that the new journalism was no movement, but admits having been aware of "some sort of artistic excitement in journalism" (1973: 37). He also confesses knowing "what certain writers were doing at *Esquire*" and "checking out all these people to see what new spins they had come up with" (37).

Wolfe's comment articulates an awareness of the network. New York as the epicenter of literary journalism offers perfect ground for the analysis of social networks.

The literary power chart for the *Esquire* issue on writing in the winter of 1962-63 demonstrates visually one version of literary relationships. Rust Hill had produced a chart of the city's most important agents, book reviewers, magazines, book publishers and academic critics. It would be interesting to attempt to sketch a similar chart for the network of literary journalism in New York. But no chart reveals the emotional investment or what has been going on behind the scenes. In places like *Elaine's*, a traditional gathering for literary circles, or at the many *Esquire* gatherings and parties, literary journalist, writers and editors of different magazines mingled and exchanged ideas. One can only imagine the sense of belonging to this network in which creative ideas fluctuated. This article can only be a starting point for tracing those various connections and influences as they are relayed in the memoirs, interviews and texts of the time.

Conclusion

Based on the assumption that literary journalism can be understood as a movement, this article employs Alberto Melucci's network theory of social movements as theoretical middle ground for the combination of evidence from theoretical and anecdotal sources. Literary journalism is theorized as the product of a social network within an economic and cultural "field of opportunities and constraints" (1989: 26). The analysis attempts to sketch *Esquire's* "field" for the 1960s on the level of the magazine as a whole as well as for the individual actors within it.

Melucci's theory frames the analysis of the creative *Esquire* community as a constantly created network in an everyday setting of office life, cocktail parties and friendships and highlights the emotional and anecdotal evidence available. Melucci says that traditionally collective action is only observed as "the visible face of mobilization" and therefore researchers overlook "that collective action is nourished by the daily production of alternative frameworks of meaning, on which the networks themselves are founded and live from day to day" (1989: 70-71). The same argument could be applied to the literary journalism of the 1960s as forms of cultural production. Most of the discussions in secondary sources draw on Wolfe's definition of the "New Journalism" in his 1973 anthology although looking at his career and position within the network of writers and editors during the previous ten year might be at least as insightful.

Ultimately, this paper's proposal should help teach literary journalism as something that needs to be understood in relation to its conditions of production. Literary journalism as a form that changes in social networks invites students to create the genre afresh in accord with the conditions and communities of their own time. It would also take away the grounds for the common excuse that the times are just not as provocative anymore. Polsgrove says: "The times may be what great editors make of them" (1995: 286), and as should be clear by now, not editors or writers alone.

Notes

1 The criticism of both approaches is based on a survey of selected anthologies, introductory works and memoirs in the field of literary journalism. Besides the already referred book by Kerrane and Yagoda, the attempt to write a comprehensive theory or history can be found in Hartsock's *History of American Literary Journalism* (2000), in Connery's introduction to *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism* (1992), in both Kramer and Sims' introductions to *Literary Journalism: A New Collection of Best American Nonfiction* (1995), and in Boynton's introduction to *The New New Journalism* (2005). The memoirs of Arnold Gingrich, Willie Morris as well as the books by Weingarten, Polsgrove and Kunkel are examples of the anecdotal

2 Steven M. Buechler's (1995) proposes a typology in which Alberto Melucci's approach represents the cultural version. See his article for an extended discussion on the utility of new social movement theories.

3 All the text mentioned here are taken from Harold Hayes' *Esquire* anthology of the 1960s, but are cited with the respective time of their publication in *Esquire*.

4 The textual basis for this work may be anecdotal—unfortunately other sources are hardly available—but ties in with a survey of the magazine's content and put into context of verifiable dates, facts and evidence of publishing conditions from the secondary sources.

5 *New York* started as a Sunday supplement to the Herald Tribune in 1963. When the newspaper folded due to financial trouble, editor Clay Felker and designer Milton Glaser took over the supplement and turned it into a magazine in 1968. *Rolling Stone* is not considered here, because it was only founded in the late 1960s (1968).

6 This is based on the argument of an unpublished, forthcoming article by Carol Polsgrove for the post-World War II volume of *A History of the Book in America*.

7 *Esquire*'s pay and that of similar magazines, excluding *The New Yorker*, did not compete with the compensation by national newspapers or TV, while Harold Hayes is described as demanding. In the end, the turnout in fees did not always cover the amount of work. "So *Esquire* writers were happy to turn their *Esquire* work into books, and publishers would read *Esquire* to find nascent books" (Polsgrove 1995: 168).

8 *Esquire* writer Gary Wills "thought later, that lead time had more to do than anything else with the development of what was called 'New Journalism'. The challenge of living in two levels of time—the present in which he was reporting and the future when the piece would appear—produced an intense state of mind" (Polsgrove 1995: 168).

9 Gingrich writes in his memoir: "I don't know whether he'd been there a week or a month when I came to the conclusion that he was there for good, and that whoever else came or went, this was the one guy I wanted to be sure would be there when I no longer could be" (1971: 204).

10 "Considered as a process, collective identity involves at least three fundamental dimensions which are in reality closely interwoven: first, formulating cognitive frameworks concerning the goals, means and environment of action; second, activating relationships among the actors, who communicate, negotiate, and make decisions; and third, making emotional investments, which enable individuals to recognize themselves in each other" (1989: 35).

11 "I had the feeling, rightly or wrongly, that I was doing things no one had ever done before in journalism. I had no sense of being a part of any normal journalistic or literary environment […] I'm sure that others who were experimenting with magazine articles, such as Talese, began to feel the same way" (Wolfe 1973, 34).

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Anja Zinke is a graduate student with a double major in American Studies and Communication Science studying at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, interested in all manifestations of the interactions between communication and culture. The idea for this article developed as thesis preparation with Prof. Carol Polsgrove of the journalism department during my year abroad at Indiana University, Bloomington, USA, in 2006.

Teaching narrative journalism and the APN News and Media Professional Development Program.

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Abstract

This paper extends the familiar concept of 'journalism-as-storytelling' into a description of some of its practical applications in a university and industry partnership resulting in a commercial training arrangement in early 2007. It describes the APN/USQ Professional Development Program for newspaper employees (with no formal journalism qualification) and exemplifies how print journalism courses may be adapted to teach narrative writing techniques. It demonstrates how foundation skills in journalistic practice may be incorporated into an adapted teaching model, suggesting that "the basics" of narrative writing should not be thought of as discrete components of journalism education. This argument is further supported by the description of a robust pedagogical approach informed by Mezirows' transformative learning theory for a cross-disciplinary knowledge base.

Introduction

In the project described here the authors focussed on facilitating students' awareness of how stories work in print as a way of developing the students' ability to find their own stories and make good decisions about writing. Two books applying a similar pedagogical premise to journalism education were published this year: *Good writing for journalists* (Phillips, 2007) and *The Writer's Reader: Understanding journalism and non-fiction* (Eisenuth & McDonald, 2007). The central teaching tool in both these books is a set of published feature stories, with commentary on style and/or structure pointing out writing techniques to achieve reader interest.

Similar tools have been used as a component of a multimedia-enhanced course environment, designed by the authors for a third-year print journalism course at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The success of this course created the opportunity to offer a creative solution to Australian Provincial Newspapers (APN) for training their early career and cadet journalists who had no prior formal training in journalism. This led to a commercial partnership between USQ and APN to deliver basic journalism training to APN employees, on the job.

This paper outlines the rationale and structure of the APN/USQ program and highlights how this approach differs from other forms of university based journalism training. It then places this approach to learning and teaching within a theoretical framework and provides some examples of how this was achieved in both a university based course and in the APN/USQ professional development program (PDP). In conclusion, this paper provides some recommendations for how this approach could be applied to other contexts.

The APN Professional Development Program

The University of Southern Queensland is a dual-mode institution with triple-option teaching modes (on-campus, distance education, and online) specialising in flexible delivery. It is currently the second largest distance education provider in Australia, with 75% of its students studying in this mode and with almost 90 nationalities being represented among the student body. At USQ, as with many other institutions in Australia, distance education course materials have traditionally been delivered via static print-based packages. However, advances in technology and the greater use of multimedia in education have provided an opportunity for course leaders and designers to enrich students' learning experiences by providing multimedia and online learning resources (Sankey, 2006). This change in delivery mode has made it possible to offer many more options to organisations, such as APN, who have staff spread all over the country. However, in taking this approach teaching teams have had to look closely at the pedagogy underlying this type of course delivery, considering the most appropriate use of the technologies and not just using the online environment as an information dumping ground.

Each course in the program described here provides links to story case studies from APN's stable of publications and to other newspaper sites. The technology enables the mode of learning-by-comparison and reflection. Material is scaffolded upward in terms of skill and comprehension using audio and visual links to external media providers.

Curriculum design began by using traditional course content (lectures, writing exercises, information-gathering activities) in new media formats (e.g. Breeze presentations, or PowerPoint with audio). As with the redesign of the third-year print journalism course, links were used not just to take students to sites of further enquiry, (eg. the extensive bodies of information, at The Poynter Institute and the Dart Centre) but to anchor learning activities such as formulating approaches to interviews and photographic treatment of stories. This helps focus the students' experience of journalism as a broad-based practice with ethical implications arising out of professional decision-making in daily newsroom work.

Similar to the work-integrated journalism education initiative in the Philippines (Valdez, Escaler, & Hofilena, 2004), the APN/USQ PDP was devised based on a short-course, online delivery model. The program differs from the Philippines model, however, in that the APN/USQ program has four, half-credit point courses, written and designed specifically for APN's needs. Key factors facilitating this level of responsiveness and the subsequent commercial partnership between APN and USQ were:

> Synergy between APN's "R1 Program", which emphasises reader engagement through storytelling for specifically identified reader targets, and curricular moves toward a stronger emphasis on critical thinking and writing in USQ's print journalism courses.
>
> The authors' collective experience in regional newspaper journalism, literary studies, and multimedia education design.
>
> USQ's flexibility in accrediting a specially crafted program for APN, leading to credit for two standard university journalism courses as well as to a certificate of successful completion of the training program.
>
> APN's willingness to invest in full fee-paying, work-based editorial training, for an initial 11 staff, through 2007.

The program is housed within the School of Humanities and Communication in the Faculty of Arts at USQ's Toowoomba campus. It is examined and administered by three staff (the authors and a Research Assistant) who also administer a combination of three online learning environments; a program website (http://www.usq.edu.au/apnusq/) that links to a program wiki used for student collaboration and communication, and the course materials site housing all four courses.

The program started in February 2007 with online courses for newspaper employees in regional Queensland and New South Wales.1 It provides beginning journalists with work-integrated training compacted into 44 weeks (10 weeks per course) of self-directed study suitable for non-graduates of tertiary journalism.

Why this program is different

Significant drops in newspaper circulation in some regional daily and non-daily mastheads since the early 1990s (Ewart, 2005), not isolated to APN or Australia, meant industry was compelled to find more complex causes for the drop than merely internet use and generational trends. People had not only stopped reading newspapers

but, in Western capitalist countries such as Australia and the USA, they had not actually started (Knightley, 2003; Cokley, 2005).

APN's Readers First (R1) readership development program was in part a bid to address the causes of declining readership. R1, implemented across titles and through regular in-house training of journalists, is based on "Five Principles, Eight Practices"2 that sought to change the stories told in regional newspapers. The circulation lift in some APN titles in the past few years (Ewart, 2005) seems to point to a better fit between content aimed at specific readers of each regional newspaper, and sustained reader engagement. The R1 Principles and Practices direct journalists and newspaper production staff toward development of closer relationships with the local community and, consequently, newspaper readers. The common thread through the principles and practices is "people". Story ideas are developed and evaluated by their capacity to include, and connect with, "real people". By extension, the newspaper itself applies the principle of connecting with "real people" by seeking out community input on current, local issues and being seen to take a stand on such issues. This could be seen as a bid to revive the traditional role of the regional newspaper as a local identity in itself, and to do so by extending the "basics" of newsgathering to include newspaper content that involves readers in a sustained way.

The course schedule and structure takes into account APN's wish to provide employees with knowledge of "the basics" of journalism (or, a vocational skill set) but as a foundation for, rather than the end point of their journalistic development. Readers, according to APN's R1 principles, provide both the starting rationale and the final destination for each story. This principle is emphasised so strongly that newly installed editorial software requires journalists filing stories to identify the "reader target"3 for their copy before the system will accept their work. Readers are identified by psycho-demographic tags such as "Look-at-me", "Something Better", and "Real Conservatism"4 and then distinguished further by geographical region. Editorial walls are decorated with photographs and profiles of typical reader targets. R1 emphasises the central message that so far appears to be working in successfully lifting circulation for some APN mastheads: readers know best, so know your reader.

The redesign of the USQ print journalism capstone course JRN3001 in late 2005-early 2006 explored similar media changes and the implications for its teaching and learning approach. Its emphasis on feature writing allowed for extension beyond the vocationally preferred "inverted pyramid model" of news reporting in a curriculum which adopted narrative writing as its primary assessment strategy (Little, 2006). Significantly, it was the particular emphasis on the role of contemporary Web 2.0 technology in interactive, online writing communities that facilitated this approach to the teaching of narrative writing. The strategy is illustrated further below.

What students do in this program?

The following table summarises program content and course schedule for the APN program.

All courses are organised around reflective writing practice associated with students' daily work at their newspaper, and articulated through a purpose-designed program wiki, housing students' individual blogs. The central website is a

Table 1: APN PDP Structure

Course	Content Overview	Dates
APN7001 What's the story? Finding and using information	Sources, basic interview techniques, grammar, news sense, news values, story writing and reflection.	5 February – 20 April
APN7002 Boring to best	Narrative writing, intermediate interview techniques Local government rounds coverage Readers First (R1) principles and practices. Story writing and reflection	23 April – 6 July
APN7003 Human face, news space	Court reporting, contempt, defamation, writing court-based stories.	16 July – 28 September
APN7004 Journalism tool kit	Storytelling as a blended design concept. Sub-editing – headline writing, captions – photojournalism, building an R1 page.	1 October – 14 December

content-management system, rather than a learning management system. Using open-sourced Drupal software, the system allows for sections to be set up as wikis, blogs, and traditional discussion forums. Behind the use of this technology is the pedagogical imperative of reflective learning: students write progressively and responsively in a place where other participants gather, read, and think about journalism; they generate their own narrative – the story of their story-building.

All story assignments completed as part of the assessment portfolios for each course must be publishable by the student's employing newspaper. The use of blogging as an additional component of the assessment enables students to diarise, outline, and evaluate the story-writing assignments completed as part of their daily work at the newspaper. The reason blogs were used instead of, for instance, individual emails between the examiner and student, was to emphasise the community-learning model. As journalism is itself an essentially social, team-based activity, the approach to developing students' story-telling skills sought to develop an appreciation of this aspect of the profession. The blogs enable reflection and comment from other students, input from the examiner, and review by APN editorial executives. The students' commentaries and work samples provide, in effect, an open demonstration of the step-by step processes in preparing and publishing stories. The blog activity also gives students responsibility for what appears in the online environment and thus aids the teaching and learning of ethical and communicative decision-making. What occurs is a collective kind of copy-tasting and editing, designed to engage fellow students in their work and connect their learning with the active work environment around them. Given that particular regional identities and regional readerships will influence process and content in their newspapers, it was important that students and teachers participated in this shared writing

environment as progressive, reflective learning and teaching practice. Elements such as

> a newsroom diary in APN7001,
>
> a research record and reflective posts on self-selected stories in APN7002,
>
> a court experience journal in APN7003, and
>
> a story mission statement in APN7004,

are built into an electronic portfolio-based assessment model.

According to (Looker, 2005, p.73), reflective journals can "help students to become more aware of their own learning processes, in particular, their learning processes in relation to the unfamiliar and apparently inaccessible". What remains "inaccessible" in the vocational model of journalism education is the relational, social heart of journalism as storytelling. As we suggest above, the scaffolded activities based on reflection and sharing of work online assists students with developing an ability to listen and interpret the local voices that enliven such journalism. The activities and required reflective posts, completed during and after the finding and writing of stories for the student's particular newspaper, are a way of building a deeper understanding of the parts of the craft that comprise the whole. For example, a student will expand their interviewing repertoire by identifying, in completed copy, the questions left unanswered for a reader. In building their capacity to write narrative, however, students can also identify when particular questions are better left unanswered in, for example, stories of local or legal sensitivity.

This new approach to journalism, according to the reader research undertaken by APN and according to some journalists and educators who teach narrative technique (Banaszynski, 2002; Collins, 2002; Phillips, 2007) depends on the capacity to find a voice that gives news resonance in readers' lives. This is especially important for newspapers in regional Australia where metropolitan and national news often translates into markedly different local stories.

According to Collins (Collins, 2002:21):

> Voice is one of the very first things that subconsciously readers respond to. And if it's someone you want to be with, you'll spend time with him, even if you're not sure where the point of the piece is or where the piece is going or what the subject is even about. The seductive unfolding of an article could be a very quiet way that voice works on you. But it can also show up in a bare phrase or a single word or even a sentence.

The nuanced tone of a quote or the people-centred story behind the news is difficult for beginning journalists to understand, particularly if they are confined within a purely vocational, competency testing curriculum. Students may become so focussed on avoiding the slash of the red pen that they follow formula until their news sense, as well as their writing, becomes formulaic (Abrahamson, 1991:54; Banaszynski, 2002).

Students in both the APN/USQ PDP and the USQ third-year capstone course arrive at the critically reflective online communities with little experience of writing about

their journalism. The process of constructing the individual narratives is, therefore, a multi-layered means of offering students regular writing practice as they also work with sources, evaluate information, and test out their individual applications of "the basics" on fellow writers – and readers.

This work-integrated training experience enables them to write about their work and share in their blogs the hits and misses of actually doing the job. They can also process any anxieties they may have about "doing it right" or showing initiative. The beginning journalist develops a sense of their own competence and this often leads to the confidence to try new ideas or approaches. This is the type of experience that Mezirow labels "transformative learning". He defines this as "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference" (1997:5). Thus, the risks students might perceive in challenging the frames of reference in place around writing as merely the way news is banged out in sharp and summary reports can be experienced as transformative. Mezirow continues:

> We transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based… … We do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997:7).

This approach sits comfortably with a general move by journalism educators to "focus…on teaching conceptual skills tailored to develop in students the aptitude to 'think global but act local'" (Loo, 2005:208). Indeed, some of the teaching and learning objectives behind the tools and techniques described in this paper resonate with the recommendations of a 2004 international conference discussion on print media (ibid.). What the APN and JRN3001 curricula have set out to do is utilise students' narrative writing as a conduit for articulation of the "before-and-after" stories of journalism training.

Program portfolios built on reflective writing about people, stories, and the everyday work of newsrooms builds individual and collective records. The education and training narratives constructed out of these records tell of journalists' learning: learning to think through choices of angle, interview subjects, and narrative structure; learning to empathise with human subjects of news, and developing writing technique as they defend their choices from the reader's perspective. What is new, then, in R1 and the APN PDP is not so new after all: journalism in the public interest and an artefact of record in which journalists are responsive to their communities of practice and social context.

Evaluation

Ultimately the test is whether the program is meeting the professional needs of the APN staff out in the field. The following qualitative data was gathered during an evaluation survey conducted in the second half of 2007 and provides some preliminary findings on student experiences of the APN PDP. Students (identified as APN1 to APN7) responded to a series of open-ended questions. Although the overall tone of the evaluation is positive what emerged from the data was that online course delivery could not be applied as a panacea for the challenges of distance and work-

based learners across the board. Students who are familiar and most comfortable with print environments tended to remain that way while working through the online courses.

When asked if they felt the course had catered for their employment needs or future prospects, all seven students agreed that it had. Five found that the materials had been 'very relevant and helpful' (APN1, 2, 4, 6 and 7), APN7 went as far as to say, "As a start up thing for journalism it is fantastic". Three students found them to be more relevant to future prospects than to their current work but this was regarded as good thing. In saying this there was a clear sense of APN taking some responsibility for the future welfare of their staff. For example APN6 said that it was good that "APN [was] looking for new leaders to come through…".

Five of the seven students found the online materials helpful and would like to see the same things done in other courses. They found the materials "easy to access" (APN2), "very effective" (APN4), "very good" (APN5). One student expanded on these comments:

> "Fantastic and would be good to see in lots of courses. Good to be able to go back to the website as a resource. Have gone back to first couple of subjects; readings good for ideas and inspiration." (APN6)

Another student identified one of the main advantages of using online course materials that had undergirded the course design:

> "Yes it helped me because quite often on those links it was either different viewpoints or went off in a little bit of a different fashion to the material presented, so it rounded things out." (APN7).

However two students found the online materials difficult, preferring print based materials. For one of these students it was because they "don't have a computer at home" (APN1) while the other just "found it quite difficult" (APN3).

The advantages and disadvantages mostly revolved around having the materials online verses having access to printed materials. APN4 saw that having the materials "available 24/7" online was a distinct advantage. APN6 agreed saying, the "advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Easy don't have to worry about books, everything was in a structured step by step format where you couldn't really go wrong." APN7 also saw this as an advantage saying, "Loved having it online in that you had study schedule and material was there so could work ahead if I had an easy week. Loved having the responses online because I could save them, go back to them - wiki and the end of course assessment."

APN1 and APN2 felt that having the materials online was a disadvantage feeling they would have "kept up to pace" (APN1) had they been printed materials this was also due "to having to print out wads of stuff, as I don't like reading off a computer screen" (APN2). APN3 did not say wether this was an advantage or disadvantage just that they printed the materials. APN5 would have liked to have the materials supplied to them on a CD, rather than online.

Interestingly five of the seven students found the supply of additional multimedia materials to be just nice optional extras, rather than providing essential learning

material. Those who did find them helpful said that "it's nice to hear a voice" (APN2) and because these media files had associated printable materials they where able to use these to "make sure I'd absorbed [the information] correctly" (APN4).

Reasons given for not finding the additional multimedia features helpful where, "I found printing the transcript out to read to be more my cup of tea." (APN1), APN3 took a while to work out how to use them. APN5 Found that "most content just repeated from written material" while APN6 said that they were "a person who likes to read things- other people who learn better by being told things". Finally APN7 said "when I clicked on the first few it was pretty much the material I could just read for myself. It just didn't interest me, so I did not do the rest of them".

Clearly this strategy does not suit every one and it will be important in future iterations to make it clear to students that they should be used by students wishing to gain aural reinforcement. It should be noted however that these features are added for that very reason: for students wishing to access the information in alternative ways. It should not be surprising that in a profession where reading and writing is a key emphasis, that these features are not prized as highly as in other disciplines.

Application to other contexts

The approach to teaching narrative journalism in the programs described above concentrates on reader engagement through the precise identification of a newspaper's reading public. Because of this, journalism training for the on-the-job context can be shaped and modified for the specific needs of a partner media outlet – as with APN's objective of integrating R1 into journalists' storytelling practices. If the curriculum design and delivery is flexible, and adjusted to integrate with the publication needs and styles of employers, the tertiary-based programs can act as extensions of existing work-integrated training, as well as theory-practice education that is aware of journalism's participation in an extended social and historical narrative.

The opportunities afforded by online media for multi-layered narrative writing – individual writing that builds into blogs, which build journalism communities, which in turn drive peer, and instructor assessment, that helps enhance the narrative potential of future stories – can be adapted to most undergraduate and graduate journalism courses using the portfolio-based assessment model. The portfolio model adjusts to a student's developmental level and learning context. A first-year journalism student's reflective blog posts about reading and media consumption can be maintained not only for personal comparison with later work but also as a form of collaboration portal, enabling participation by students and staff in other courses, disciplines, and campuses. In doing so, collegiality and co-operation are promoted while students and teachers in journalism are able to learn from each other in the practice of community writing itself. Traditionally, the lecturer responds on an individual basis to each student, but here the student has the opportunity to see the work, successes, and challenges of others – and learn what it is like to be part of a multiple-layered narrative that is itself journalism, as it records the learning of it.

Notes

1 A USQ Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Development Fund grant supported program and curriculum development in 2007.

2 Explained on the APN/USQ website: http://www.usq.edu.au/apnusq/

3 See R1 information under the "Information" tab at the program website.

4 Roy Morgan Values Segments http://www.roymorgan.com/products/values-segments/values-segments.cfm Accessed 26 August, 2007.

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Retelling untellable stories – ethics and the literary journalist

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Abstract

In 1950s northern Queensland, a pack of eighteen to twenty white youth drove a young black teenager to a deserted spot, and gang raped her, believing they had hidden their crime by killing her. Not only did she survive and grow up to have a prestigious academic and activist career, but she conceived a child in the attack, kept her baby and brought him up. Writer and academic Dr Roberta Sykes kept the secret of her son's conception from him for more than thirty years, finally writing him a letter about it. Psychologist Russel Sykes speaks about dealing with his mother's revelations, both the private and then the public airing in her trilogy *Snake Dreaming, Autobiography of a Black Woman*. Contextualising this narrative within the genre of literary journalism, its execution delves into theoretical discussions of empathy, first person narration and ethics when dealing with traumatic memory in subjects. It argues for an embracing of more first person use, as well as the loosening of the attendant stranglehold of detachment, teaching empathy as an effective tool within journalism education in Australia, particularly within the long form literary journalism.

Narrative: A Letter from my mother

When I ring Russel Sykes for an interview, he seems to want to chat. He is chopping up snow peas for his daughter Lauren's dinner. After introducing myself, I listen to him organise her in front of a video – *Lion King 2*. I hear him chopping as we continue to chat.

We talk for about an hour. About all sorts of things – our children, his work, my work. The time seems to sweep by. He is very quietly spoken and delivers his words slowly and methodically – he thinks about every one.

He seems a little lonely. Or maybe just alone.

He agrees to an interview – he invites me to his home in Erskineville, an inner Sydney suburb, in a fortnight. But two days before the interview, he rings me: "I don't feel happy about having a stranger in my house."

"I can completely understand that. Neither would I. How about meeting at the university?" I ask him. "Do you know the Tower at UTS?"

"Do you mean the really ugly one?"

"Yep, that's the one. How about I meet you outside the glass doors at 11am? How will I recognise you?" I ask.



Photo: Dee Geary

"Do you know what my mother looks like?"

I immediately conjure up a vision of Dr Roberta Sykes, from the inside of her third book and the cover of the *Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend*.

"Yes, I do, just from photos," I say.

"Well, you'll know me, then. Except I have a shaved head."

So I wait outside the Tower at the University of Technology, Sydney. I sit under the winter sun, watching for Sykes. Cars pour through Broadway, up and down, clogging the streets. It is semester break, so there are very few students around. Just another day. Just another normal cacophony of inner city space. I don't even realise when he arrives – if it wasn't for the shaved head comment, I would never have guessed it was him.

Russel Sykes doesn't look anything like his mother.

I say it to him as we walk towards my office. He carries a briefcase and wears a woollen skullcap. He simply shrugs. But even my seemingly harmless observation is emotionally fraught: if he doesn't look like his mother, does he resemble his father?

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Russel Sykes' father is a vicious rapist and would-be murderer. A racist. He could have been any of the eighteen to twenty white youth who raped, tortured and attempted to murder his mother just weeks after her seventeenth birthday in Brisbane, Queensland.

Four of the main assailants in the attack were subsequently charged and brought to trial, and given sentences of five, seven, ten and fourteen years.

Roberta Sykes fell pregnant to one of her attackers and kept her baby, Russel, who knew nothing about his conception for the first thirty years of his life.

It was his mother's secret. A lie she lived with and protected deeply. She writes of 'keeping the dark secret of my son's conception and birth and carrying the pain and secrecy in my heart' (Sykes 2000: 63).

It stayed a family secret until a little over a decade ago.

Russel Sykes is now more than forty years old and the father of two, Lauren and Mason. Sykes' marriage to his first wife broke up when Lauren was three. Sykes is a psychologist and we begin the interview with his asking me some questions about my job. He is interested because he has just been offered some lecturing work at the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern. I answer him, and then ask him about his.

He explains what he does and what he believes: "I counsel young people. I provide therapeutic intervention, you could say, to young Aboriginal people. I see my role as guiding people rather than helping. I assume ... I push people to sort out their own problems. But you can guide them. Some people obviously don't have a lot of skills and then they might need helping."

He has worked within Corrective Services at Mt Penang Juvenile Justice Centre on the Central Coast and Yasmar Juvenile Justice Centre in Sydney; Long Bay Jail; and privately. He has also been on the Social Security Appeals Tribunal since 1985. He has counselled young sex offenders but cannot – or refuses to – grasp the irony of this. Unknowingly, counselling young men imprisoned for sexual assault crimes similar to those perpetrated on his mother, all those years ago. Crimes eventuating in his own existence.

Sykes and his mother – black activist, academic and author Dr Roberta Sykes – have never discussed her brutal rape, his conception. He learnt through a letter she wrote him, shortly after his sister Naomi's twenty-first birthday.

Talking to him is difficult. No, talking to him is not difficult at all. Talking to him on this subject is. He sits in my office on the fifth floor of the university's Bon Marche Building. He is tall and rangy and his legs seem to take up all the spare space. He has dark brown, almost liquid brown eyes and looks me square in the face when he speaks – except when we talk about what I have asked him here to talk about.

Sykes periodically zones off, staring out my window. Opposite are the chimneys from the old Carlton Brewery, and whenever a question gets too close, he just stares at them. There are many protracted silences and I ask him several times if he wishes to continue the interview. He does. And we do. Although I wonder why he has agreed to it, in the first place.

I think the answer is a simple one. I asked.

Russel Sykes has received no thorough counselling or therapy, and has spoken to virtually no-one about the rape of his mother and his subsequent conception. And not many people broach the subject with him.

"It's not like I can ... it's not like I can have a dinnertime chat or a chat with friends about it. With some friends, I don't go there. Some friends probably know but they don't say anything," he says.

He knows he should seek professional help with it. He says formally, almost ritualistically: "It is an error not to. I know it.

"I once spoke to a colleague about it – he was just good and it was just OK. It seems a bit dark when I look at it sometimes. That's probably why I don't let my mind go there very much."

His isolation around the topic of his mother's rape is palpable. This is an undeveloped side of who he is. He claims he hasn't thought it through thoroughly – he can't and doesn't want to – and has no slick, or even articulate answers to give, seemingly and erratically dissociating at any mention of the attack on his mother. I am left wondering what right I had even to have rung him up and asked him to talk to me in the first place.

He reminds me of someone still in shock – but only around the subject of his mother's rape. He is charming and smart and entertaining when talking about his work, or his own children. Or even mine. But I keep getting flashbacks to various death-knocks I have done as a journalist, where the person simply does not know

what is going on – seemingly moving through the motions of their life on that particular day, making valiant attempts to function while processing their grief.

And it is a grief, here in my office with us. He didn't bring it with him. I conjure it up with my questions.

He eventually talks about it: "She wrote it in a letter – it was pretty bad. A lot of things fell in place. It explained a lot of things to me when I heard – our family, what sorts of things happened in it, and why I never knew my father. I knew because for some years...we weren't particularly close. It didn't feel like we were close for a long time... I didn't feel nurtured by her. She was always busy, yeah. That's a very tough thing to say but it was true. I know she probably looks back and thinks I was a good kid and that but yes, it was probably as much about her having lived the traumas she's lived – a person to survive that would know how to detach from their emotions more than others perhaps.

"I was nurtured by my grandmother. So, if I didn't have that, I'd be a pretty detached human being in a lot of ways. You need that bonding process to happen and I guess it didn't really happen with my mother."

There is a real sadness about this grown man. The little boy lost does not seem so many years ago. His sadness manifests as a sort of numbness – whether it is how almost inarticulate he is when talking about the issues around his mother and his conception; or the way he keeps avoiding talking about how he feels about the public disclosure. He is quite closed on the subject. It's not actually that he doesn't want to talk about it – I give him several opportunities to halt the interview – it is like he is unable to. The whole thing seems too shocking for him to fathom and he still, more than ten years later, has not found the words.

There is no doubt Sykes' relationship with his mother is, and has been, emotionally uneasy – how could it be any other way? Roberta Sykes was seventeen when she gave birth to her son: unmarried, Catholic, in small town Queensland – and black. And it was at this early stage in her son's life she decided to keep his conception a secret from him. She writes at the end of the first book of her trilogy: 'I saw no other option but to try, not merely to resurrect myself but to give Russel a healthy start in his own life. I was to assume the silence of the serpent as a cover for myself and my child, an umbrella to hold over both our heads for the next thirty years' (Sykes 1997: 328).

But in the telling of her story, Roberta Sykes tells her son's story, without consultation, publicly.

"Well, I looked at myself and thought: 'This is a person – you read about these people in magazines and books and things like that'. But that's me," he says almost child-like, remembering how he felt after reading the letter. As if he doesn't really believe what he is saying.

And he misses the irony of this statement, also. That he is one of "these people", now in books and newspapers and magazines, himself. The whole world can now read of his mother's secret in three books – her three volume autobiography *Snake Dreaming* – and subsequent interviews.

But Sykes has never read them.

“I don’t go there. I don’t read those books. I don’t want to. The issue is not something ... it makes me very unhappy and I don’t know... maybe it would make me angrier or something. I don’t know.”

Again, in the telling of her/his story, there are discrepancies. One of the main reasons Roberta Sykes finally disclosed to her son – that he had to be a parent himself before she could tell him – is not true.

In an interview with Corrie Perkin in Melbourne’s *The Sunday Age* (July 30, 2000), Dr Sykes explains at length: ‘He had to have his own child to understand the love you can have for a child. That, in the end, it doesn’t matter who the mother is or who the father is. I just wanted him to have the experience of having been bewitched by a child. And he is. Whenever she’s in the room, his eyes follow her.

‘My son had to be a man’.

But Sykes shakes his head. “No, I think that some of the ... she might be struggling with some of her memories, yes. That’s to put it politely. That’s why I don’t think the memory ...I was a man, yeah. I was a significant man by the time she told me but I wasn’t a father, no.”

Russel Sykes first became a parent at the age of thirty-three, three years after his mother told him of the attack that also became his conception.

He seems to realise how his story contradicts his mother’s, which is now in print and the public domain. He gently qualifies: “In her eyes, I was probably a father figure by then but she’s just looking back and thinking that was how it was. We didn’t have a discussion about it; there was no discussion about it.

“What happened is we had a number of words over the years about different things. Then just before that, my sister in the years coming up to me being thirty, my sister turned twenty-one and had a big party. She invited her father. No. That was what happened. My sister invited him, for good reason. Then he came down and he stayed at my house. Then mum wouldn’t come to the party, she was so angry about it, that I would have him in the house.

“That’s one of the pressures of being her son; she expects me to go with her – what she believes, what her views are. That’s a source of the problem between us, because I’ve got my own views on a lot of things. The disagreements seem to have a heavier consequence than they otherwise should. We should be able, with family, to disagree and then get on with things.

“Anyway, what happened is we hadn’t spoken for some time. So she wrote me a letter. She didn’t want that and I think she knew that I would be ready to understand things. I seemed to be looking very successful career-wise in that field. My work is recognised as of a pretty good standard. I think she probably felt that I’d be able to handle it, that sort of information.

“I’m glad she did, actually. Knowing is better because it explains a lot about the family and myself. I could have gone off the rails, I guess, with that knowledge

earlier. In some ways, I feel like it's thrown me a bit off the rails anyway, just ... it's made me stumble in some way. It did make me a bit angry with the world.

"I just saw the world in a different light."

In the same Melbourne *Sunday Age* interview, Dr Sykes says it was a bonus that her son was a psychologist: 'Because then he had a framework for understanding, not just my position that I'd taken all my life, but also his own position. He knew of the pain of disclosure'.

I ponder the letter his mother wrote him and wonder how much his psychology helped him when he read it. I wonder if he still has it, this letter that blew apart and at the same time, made some little sense of his life. He does – sort of.

"The letter? I probably read it once and I put that letter ... I hid it from myself. It was like I didn't need to read it again," Sykes says.

I look at him disbelievingly and ask him if he knows where the letter is now.

"Yeah. I think so. It's hidden."

His answer is so simplistic – again, almost childlike.

"I'm pretty sure that my grandmother intended for me to never know," he adds, out of the blue.

Regardless, Russel Sykes is glad his mother told him the truth about his conception, although he does believe there are secrets that should never be told.

"I don't know if that's one of them. I don't know." He stares out my window. Silence. And then: "Yeah, I think knowing did change my life forever. I see things in a darker way now. Darker for want of a better expression. Maybe we're socialised and programmed to believe that darker things are worse than lighter. But I mean, it just took a lot of positiveness away from me, I guess. I have to search a bit harder for it now. And it's important, especially if I'm going to be a good parent, to be there for my children and, if I'm feeling darker, then I will avoid people. If I'm not feeling positive, how's it to be hanging around? Who wants to be hanging around people like that? Who wants to be in the company of people who are not happy? So I put on a front."

He has never spoken to his mother about the rape, his conception or that letter, but claims a deeper understanding of both his mother and his own upbringing. Although, by his own admission, he does not dwell on any of it for too long.

"Well, that's kind of what I do nowadays I guess. I don't put my mind to thinking about these issues too much. Sometimes my mind does get caught up but I just keep busy," he says.

"Yeah, I mean, you know, I try and juggle things in my mind. But life is a gift and I'm lucky, in a way. I'm special in a way. Well, it's easy in retrospect. You think 'well, I was different' and you now interpret things differently. Maybe everybody's experiences are somewhat unique as an individual. Maybe that's why I turned to psychology. I was searching in some ways for some meaning to my life as it was. I

know I experienced a lot of racism as a kid, a lot of negativity just because of colour. Kids can be particularly cruel, they are anyway. Whatever they can do, whatever wound they can pick, they will. So I saw people treating other people in certain ways and I knew that race was big.

"Oh, yes, I ... yes, it's like a world away but it's ... yeah, it's ... yeah, it's affected me for sure. I see the world in another way, for sure since then.

"Once I knew, I thought ... I understood her to be a damaged person from all those experiences. There was no resolving or counselling in those days and I understood why she was an angry person as a young person. I saw her as quite angry – I'd just be extra kind to her after that. Understanding, tolerant – just changed.

"I just looked at her and thought 'How did you do that? You lived through hell and you kept me'."

Coming to terms with what happened to his mother is juxtaposed with coming to terms with a biological father who could rape and torture a woman, then leave her for dead.

"The only way I'd relate to them, is to get them. I would inflict serious harm.

"That would be a time to kill, wouldn't it?" he asks.

The question hangs in the air between us, sharp and pointed. It has nowhere to go. It is the sort of question easy to discuss hypothetically. In reality, it is impossible to answer. But he is not looking for an answer. Once again, he stares past me out my window. Before I can speak, he says: "Um, um, I always thought there was a balance of good and evil in the world but yeah, evil can be pretty evil."

The interview is over and we decide to walk outside, to the fresh air, to take the photos. We wander slowly along the corridors of the university and head for the back of the Tower, where it is quieter and the light is more muted. Even though we walk slowly, I have to speed up every now and then to keep close – even at an amble, this man's stride is long.

Despite it being semester break, the Students' Union is holding a BBQ behind the Tower on the hilly and awkward patch of grass UTS students laughingly call 'The Quadrangle'. The music pumps and the smell of cooking sausages wafts across to us. We get a few inquisitive stares but not many. Anything goes here, really.

But Sykes does seem to relax more. It has been an ordeal for him. I guess he believes the questions are over and for a while as we walk, I welcome the space, too. This has been a tough interview. But there is more I need to know, before we leave each other.

The photos, too, are tough. Not that we are searching for a carefree look – that certainly wouldn't be indicative of the man or the interview – but he finds it hard, or unnatural, to relax in front of the camera. To let his guard down. He seems to have built such sturdy walls in the past ten years around the private, desolate space the 'new' knowledge about his mother engendered, that he now seems suspicious of a camera pointed at him. Perhaps he is fearful it might see right through him, and glimpse and record some of the reality that even he seems to have not yet faced.

And perhaps he is right to be suspicious, for the answers to my next questions explode around us in shock-waves.

"Yes. Forever, her life changed forever – and all of our lives, you know? All of us, the impact was immeasurable in all our lives," he says, staring at the lens.

"It's hard to balance it up with thinking that, if it didn't happen, I wouldn't be here.

"I prefer it didn't happen and that I wasn't here."

Again, his words hang all around us, in the air. Heavily and thickly, this time. I can't help myself and look quickly at the photographer to see if she also heard what I thought I just heard. She lowers the camera and just looks at him.

How can someone live with the thought of a pain so horrible and an experience so terrifying, inflicted on someone they love so much? To wipe out that pain would be to not exist.

I ask him: "Do you really mean you wish you didn't exist?"

His answer is rapid: "Yeah, no-one should have that experience. I'd just rather my mum didn't go through all that. I'd rather it didn't ... it's not something you can really think of in reality is it?"

Again, it is a question he doesn't expect a response to. We finish taking the photos. He barely smiles in any of them, but that is fine. I tell him I think he should find someone professional to talk to. He readily agrees. I tell him I think he should then talk to his mother. He almost groans and says it is impossible.

We part. I can barely think clearly after this interview. Russel Sykes and his story stay with me for weeks and weeks. And the writing of this chapter takes months.

But some people's stories have that sort of effect. Some people's stories are just like that. There really aren't the words to do them justice.



Photos: Dee Geary

Commentary: the ethics of telling

The selected narrative is one of ten interviews with subjects circling around sexuality secrets and how and when they become public property. It is part of a manuscript of literary journalism, entitled *Speaking Secrets*, the manuscript itself forming part of a non-traditional PhD, recently completed.

All ten interviews are about silencing or an inability to tell secret stories for various reasons and each narrative explores the impact of the telling, both on the subject and the audience. Each of these stories was finally disclosed in the media – the reasons are as diverse as they are personal. Sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman puts this in a broader context:

> …some experiences are extremely difficult to speak about. Political conditions constrain particular events from being narrated. The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from awareness. Survivors of political torture, war and sexual crimes silence themselves and are silenced because it is too difficult to tell and to listen (Kohler Riessman 1993: 3).

This narrative was selected because it was by far the hardest of the ten interviews undertaken, as well as the hardest story to write – not because the subject, psychologist Russel Sykes is difficult, but because his story is. Difficult and harrowing. And despite the fact the actual secret was kept not by him but by his

mother, from him, the impact of the telling of that secret has been monumental in his life.

Trauma – both his, and a vicarious trauma, because of the crimes against his mother – plays a large role in the selected narrative. The subject seemed to be in a state of shock when answering interview questions. This immediately created ethical concerns in continuing the interview, and he was asked several times if he wished to stop. He never did, and the interview continued.

I will argue that this narrative raises three broader issues that are crucial to understanding and teaching long form literary journalism. The first is the vexed question of the relationship between journalist and subject and the mutual ethical obligations that this relationship establishes. The second is the place of the writer in the narrative. And finally I argue that empathy as a theoretical construct and a professional practice deserves more attention from journalists and journalism scholars.

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An immediate relationship is formed when a journalist and subject come face to face. Even before, in negotiating agreement, time and place for an interview. Journalist and author Janet Malcolm claims that while the onus is on the journalist to conduct the interview ethically, the subject has a decisive part to play as well. Malcolm places heaviest responsibility on the journalist but also concedes subjects play a part in the dance, albeit a mostly compromised part:

> Journalistic subjects know all too well what awaits them when the days of wine and roses – the days of the interviews – are over. And still they say yes when a journalist calls, and still they are astonished when they see the flash of the knife (Malcolm 1990: 145).

Journalistic subjects are part of what is widely believed to be a clearly defined relationship. But in reality, it is not. The journalist, when sitting in front of his or her computer, ultimately has the final say, despite what has transpired throughout the interview process. American literary journalist Jon Krakauer warns: 'I explain that if they decide to talk to me it will have to be for their own reasons, and they had better be good reasons, because what I write could turn their lives inside out' (Boynton 2005: 168).

Although both Malcolm and Krakauer argue that subjects have a certain agency in their choice to become involved as interviewees, journalists must make continuous ethical judgements about the capacity of their subjects, particularly subjects talking about deeply personal, traumatic, and/or sensitive topics, to continue with the interview. The mere fact the interviewee agrees to the interview is insufficient consent. Journalists must continuously question themselves and monitor the cues of the interview.

The role of the journalist in this process is as fundamental to the telling of the subject's story as the subject is to the telling. Because of the very nature of disclosure, the journalist often treads an extremely fine line between a professional and 'personal' relationship. In order to extract the information from the subject, the journalist must create a relationship of trust. This is particularly required when

dealing with traumatic or sensitive topics. This is where the journalist's task then becomes difficult. He or she must transpose the trust from the relationship with the subject onto the page. It goes without saying that this must be done with integrity and according to the writer's own ethical and moral convictions, a balancing act, under all circumstances.

Juxtaposed against this is the notion that if a victim or survivor has elected to speak to a journalist, respect must be given to how the subject tells their story. The journalist must not be deterred by a highly emotional subject. Psychologist Frank Ochberg claims some victims and survivors may even find it patronising if a journalist attempts to stop an interview because the subject becomes emotional, or the journalist themselves is upset. Ochberg believes asking someone experiencing traumatic memory if they wish to terminate an interview could be tantamount to re-victimising that subject by not letting them talk. Instead, he suggests the journalist should come prepared, with tissues, like a psychologist (in Cote et al 2006: 108). He goes on to say:

> When survivors cry during interviews, they are not necessarily reluctant to continue. They may have difficulty communicating, but they often want to tell their stories. Interrupting them may be experienced as patronising and denying an opportunity to testify (ibid).

The subject of this narrative, Russel Sykes, indeed was distressed throughout our interview. He constantly seemed to disassociate when the topic of his conception – or his mother's vicious rape – came up. There were many long silences as he processed questions. But any re-victimisation or re-traumatising was in his recalling of memories in answering questions, not a suggestion to have a break or halt the process. This was similar with all subjects taking part in this project. When a subject is offered a chance to halt an interview and declines, then that must be given the respect it is due. Sykes was asked many times – more than any other subject in the manuscript – if he wanted to halt the process. He declined every time and just seemed to want to talk, in his own way and at his own pace.

The way journalists navigate the ethical decisions involved in this type of situation is complex and personal. It involves what Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel call the journalist's "moral compass" (Kovach et al 2001: 181). Journalists must adjust their 'moral compass' continuously and reassess the ethical ramifications of continuing with the interview if there is clear distress. However, this reliance on individual behaviour and decision-making is problematic. *The Nation's* Catharine Stimpson writes: 'It offers little consolation to writers of some integrity…such writers do what they must, but some blood will fleck the keyboards of even the wisest among them' (Stimpson 1990: 902).

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The original concept for my manuscript was to write all ten narratives in the ubiquitous journalistic third person. I was then influenced to rethink by the seminal text *Between the Lines* by Dan Wakefield. He writes of the 'shadow' component: 'If you know me at all you most likely know me as one of those shadows that lurk behind the printed word in magazines, books and newspapers…' (Wakefield 1955: 1). This 'shadow' connotation was intriguing, so I decided to rewrite in the first

person, as Wakefield did himself, more than half a century ago. He claimed that what journalists put into stories may not be nearly as interesting as what they leave out (Wakefield 1955: 2).

The journalist's role is fundamental to the telling of the subject's story and the role and positioning of the narrator is fundamental to the writing. Ronald Weber argues: "It's the deflection and refraction of the material in the filter of the self that gives a piece of writing its special edge…the distortion of the uniquely individual" (Weber 1974: 17). But many journalists believe that writing in the first person singular is antithetical to journalism. Many go so far as to assert that it is egotistical and decimates any attempt at journalistic objectivity. But when considered from the reverse perspective, there must be a query about whether the omission of 'I', particularly in the more complex literary journalism, is dishonest. In a news story, there is no room for the 'I'. But where length and time is not a constraint, as in the long-form non-fiction, the 'I', particularly with sensitive and traumatic subjects, is as equally a part of the process as the subject. Each stage of the interview is an interaction with the journalist and each question and answer constitutes a dialogue. Personal immersion in the subject's story can enrich the writing. In this regard, the story becomes as much about the journalist and their responses and emotions, as it does their subject.

So if the literary journalistic interview is a deeper relationship between the writer and the subject, then the writer must place him or herself squarely at the scene, and record not only what is observed but what is felt. American literary journalist Ted Conover, often regarded as an immersion journalist, likens this to the presence of a filmmaker's camera – the journalist's presence does make a difference. He argues that his first person narration is aimed at making it clear to the reader 'the *kind* of difference' that presence makes (Boynton 2005: 23). Dan Wakefield writes:

> We journalists are trained by custom and conventions of our craft to remain out of sight, pretending not to be there but simply to know…we are really individuals after all, not all-knowing, all-seeing 'Eyes' but separate, complex, limited, particular 'I's (Wakefield 1955: 1).

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Each of the dilemmas that I have discussed circles around the question of ethical and professional standards. Although there are various well established ethical codes for journalists these professional standards are policed differently to many other professions. Crowley-Cyr and Cokely argue that 'the important point of departure between the classic professions and journalism is that journalists' ethics are voluntary whereas in the classic professions ethics is mandatory' (Crowley-Cyr et al 2004: 55). Ian Richards cites Louis Day's argument that an ethics system without liability allows for a certain sense of autonomy without responsibility, and subsequently lacks 'moral authority' (Richards 2005: 48). Without accountability mandated by a statutory authority such as a licensing board, ethical behaviour becomes an individual choice, and a clearly subjective one. But rather than detracting from the authentication of journalism professional practice, this rather sets it up as a unique one, with distinctive and highly public responsibilities.

This also points to the crucial role of journalism education in helping young journalists develop an appropriate 'moral compass'. Working more explicitly with concepts of empathy and compassion may help position the journalist and allow him or her to make those voluntary ethical decisions about their subjects in a less detached fashion. Empathy, and its place within journalism practice and education, is discussed rarely in Australia, except in the context of reporting on trauma and disaster.

American academic Elizabeth Fakazis claims that the critical and the practical value of the notion of empathy has been seriously underestimated in journalism and says it is a failure of journalism education that empathy is not taught (Fakazis 2003: 57). She claims empathy is antithetical to the image of the objective reporter who "remains emotionally detached even in the face of the most heart-wrenching tragedy" (Fakazis 2003: 47). She defines empathy as a "deep understanding of a subject's emotional and psychological perspective" and argues that it has concrete pay offs for enhancing journalistic practice because it "can help journalists deepen their understanding, allowing them to not only observe what their subjects do but also why they do it " (Fakazis 2003: 46).

In the long form non-fiction genre, transparent empathy is an effective and valid tool of the trade. It makes for better and more thorough, less detached and more honest, journalism and is particularly pertinent in dealing with stories of people who have suffered injustice meted out through violence, trauma or prejudice.

By initially writing in the third person, then changing to the first person, my research has attempted to underline, through the experiential change in the tone and composition of each piece, the argument that when appropriate, first person narrative is a more effective means of empathetically conveying subjects' voices, particularly in longer form literary journalism. The blending of empathetic interview, dialogue, and narrative, to convey the reality of the story, underpinned by the suspense of experiencing the telling, is an attempt to bring humanness and dignity to subjects who have been victimised by silence.

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Creativity on command

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Can creativity be taught?

Can students who were required in lower-grade language arts class to flesh out sentences by larding them with parts of speech ("She *brought* her book *down heavily on* the desk *in order* to make a point *with* the noise") now be un-taught, instructed in journalism writing class to strip their words to the simplest, most graphic elements in order to advance the story? ("She slammed her geography book on the desk.")

Can students who learned in early school years that writing *creatively* meant writing fiction (the proverbial *story)* now be re-taught in journalism class that writing creatively means making non-fiction come alive for the reader by using literary devices to *recreate* the action, atmosphere, dialogue and narrative of an actual person, place or situation? And to do it without confusing fiction with non-fiction, without resorting to a composite as a crutch and without pirating the printed words of others?

Can students for whom real life is defined by web-site content, reality TV, video games, Facebook, iTunes and the thumbnails of *InStyle* be coaxed to remove their headsets, turn off streaming video and taught that real inspiration comes from within and that finding it takes time, quietude and aloneness? Should we provide students with just such a quiet time and place for thinking and analyzing a story's approach?

In the ongoing debate between nature and nurture, between biological determinism and behaviourism, behaviourists maintain that an individual has little control over inspiration and creativity and is a mere helpless recipient, waiting to be shaped and filled by positive or negative socialization. Contemporary social psychologists, on the other hand, build on genetic influences and tell us that a person's social environment can activate potential. Since family socialization is critical to development of the child's core identity, we seem to be condemning a person who fails to receive adequate love and nurturing. The truth lies somewhere in between. However, if we define "creativity" as the ability of a writer-reporter to uniquely configure a person or situation so that elements of the seemingly insignificant stand for the whole, then perhaps creativity can be cultivated by careful, thoughtful instruction and willing self-discipline.

In the early stage of human development, an individual learns through imitation, through mimicking the behavior of others in particular roles. Behaviorists would say that reward (an *A*) and punishment (a *D* or failure) actually shape performance, if not belief. Thus, journalism professors instruct their students to *act as if*—to study—*imitate?*—the writing styles of such contemporary narrative journalists as Michelle Hiskey (*Atlanta-Journal Constitution*) Anne Hull (*Washington Post*) and David Briggs (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) or perhaps to study the work of such New Journalists as the late Hunter S. Thompson ("I'm ready for anything, by God! Anything at all. 'Yeah, what are you drinkin?' I ordered a Margarita with ice, but he

wouldn't hear of it. 'Naw, naw . . . what the hell kind of drink is that for Kentucky Derby time? What's *wrong* with you boy?'" ("The Kentucky Derby Is Decadent and Depraved." *Scanlan's Monthly,* June 1970) and Joan Didion, the latter who spoke of the San Bernardino Valley as "a harsher California, haunted by the Mojave just beyond the mountains, devastated by the hot dry Santa Ana winds that comes down through the passes at 100 miles an hour and whines through the eucalyptus windbreaks and works on the nerves … It is the season of suicide and divorce and prickly dread, wherever the wind blows." (*Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Essays*. Powells. 1968) These journalistic, novelistic get-in-your-face pioneers from the 1960s and 1970s nurture today's immersion journalist.

I tell journalism students that good writing is successful communication, that it has to evolve from bad. But does it? We can teach technique, give students examples to read of polished writing, teach them form, enhance their skill levels. But this says nothing about creativity. Years ago, I enrolled in several writing courses at the New School in New York City. My teachers were successful novelists and magazine writers, and if not exactly the literati of Manhattan, at least among the very published. I can still remember some of their names: Selwyn James (*Man of Brittany,* articles published in *The Readers Digest*), juvenile book writer Mina Simon (nee Lewiton). In one class, I was instructed to write a non-fiction piece in the style of a favourite writer. I chose Ernest Hemingway. Unable to imitate his style successfully, I wrote a piece that bombed dreadfully in that class: I simply couldn't imitate. Rather than be inspired, I was cowed.

And then there was author Rhoda de Terra. I met her on a train from New York City to Washington D.C. A storyteller, this 50-something lady with a broad-brimmed, blue picture hat who had gone around the world on a tramp steamer. She invited me to visit her in Washington. The following week, I did. She gave me wine before dinner. I don't drink. But drunk, I believe to this day that I dined not on squab but on the pigeon perched on her windowsill. That is the stuff that fuels my own storytelling. I was inspired by this lady. She invited me not only to her home, but into her circle. She treated me not as a young and barely tried writer but as writing *colleague*. The fact that she had chosen to spend several months attending Congressional sessions – and found them interesting – became inspiring counterpoint to what I would have regarded in those days as merely boring and mundane. I went home, and I wrote. Thus, *how we regard* individual students may be as crucial to creativity as anything else.

I think of two former journalism professors. Buddy Davis, a Pulitzer Prize winner and for a time my colleague at the University of Florida, awarded the crown of thorns to the worst student in his advanced news writing and reporting class. As his student, I was afraid of Buddy; so were others. From Buddy, I learned technique and self-discipline. Hugh Cunningham, later to be the University of Florida's publicist, was a raconteur. He was my instructor and some years later also my colleague. Hugh told me stories. Then he encouraged me to find my own journalistic path, to see the *inobvious* in any story as well as the obvious. I can still hear him in class: "Yes, but what do you *see?* What do you *hear?"* Ernie Pyle, observer of the human condition, master of the softer, gentler, rhythmic way of telling a story, saw and felt the horrors and humanity of war: "Dead men had been coming down the mountain all evening, lashed onto the backs of mules. They came lying belly-down across the wooden

pack-saddles, their hands hanging down on the left side of the mule, their stiffened legs sticking out awkwardly from the other side, bobbing up and down as the mule walked." ("The Death of Captain Waskow" in *Reporting America at War* PBS.)

Orienting young journalists to the human condition, the rhythm of life, the world of "How do you *feel?"* requires they be encouraged to explore with their senses-- to hear, to see, to feel the rhythm of life-- and be given the freedom to execute creativity in the way they choose. *Choice* is essential to releasing trapped creativity. For an exercise on learning how to write description, one of my students unfortunately faked what she saw during an assigned trip to the county hospital—if indeed she went. She reported that from her nighttime vantage at the rear of the parking lot, she saw at hospital entrance a one-eyed security guard who limped, and a homeless, dark-skinned man who reeked of liquor and tobacco and lurched. See-sawing from the objective to the omniscient (How did you know he was homeless or, for that matter, smelled? Would a security guard limp and have only one eye?), she fabricated both individuals. Her description was poorly written, an abuse of style and poor grammar. Yet focused on one sense—sight—she created a dominant impression of hospital despair and vagrancy, a sort of creative *cinema verite*, albeit fake. On the same assignment to the same hospital, another student, unable to *show* what was happening through sensory observation, instead labeled each activity ("There was the sound of talking…..."). Filled with noun-labels and state-of-being verbs, her one-pager focused first on hospital architecture, then, without transition, on the sun glinting off a hospital courtesy-cart driver's gold tooth. We talked about it. Her rewrite was much better: She was learning how to let go of public-school *form*. She had permission: Mine.

Some social psychologists say that certain teaching practices can dull motivation and as a result, kill creativity. Group collaboration, they say, may ignite it. And as some people suggest, it's possible that by imposing certain writing assignments and the form and methods to use on them, we may be stifling the creativity of some students, particularly those who haven't tapped their potential. Yet isn't it also possible that the student who submits a creative journalism story is simply repeating a pattern that has worked well for him or her in the past--walking in the same shoes time and time again, not taking the time and seclusion to consider other approaches to the material? In effect, isn't this self-imitation with its limitations? Where is the creative and critical thought we require of journalists?

John (not his real name) is a 19-year-old writing student who comes occasionally to class. He always sits attentively in the front row. Never does he take a note, rarely does he complete an assignment and turn it in for evaluation and grading. This time, he did. With permission, I reprint part of it here exactly as he wrote it:

"I am sitting down relaxing with my eyes close and all of a sudden a smell hits my nose. Sort of like a tap on the shoulder type of thing as I make my way to the kitchen I see my mom in the there cooking up a storm as the steam from the rice hit me in the face my knee's being to buckle. The sent as if I was getting pampered by the smell as my mom was severing the family my senses was telling that this was good thing. As I being to gorge my face…." "I see my siblings wake up from there naps as the they have this confuse look on there faces. As the day is going down one by by one my family beens to vanish into night as they rest there heads…." The piece exhibits a creative sense— the class clapped when I asked his permission to use this portion

of his description—but this may be as close as he gets to immersion journalism. John has been referred to a learning centre for help.

Immersion journalism—the ability to report by climbing into the skin of the actors, to get inside their heads— requires a certain procedure of discipline and technique. No one tells a newspaper reporter to first find the storyline, then write the article. That takes time. That takes thought. An approaching deadline is built into the mass communications system, and it often forces stereotypical news writing. As students, many of us weren't taught to think critically about what we covered. But as professors, perhaps all of us should be teaching this. For example, I use the storyline technique in teaching magazine writing. It not only gives the story direction and *structure,* it informs the writer where in the situation the story can be found, which details to use in conveying facts, background and action, which details can be ignored and which to choose in order to convey a dominant impression that stands for the whole, one with which the reader can identify. Regardless of actual detail, every story makes a comment on the human condition by dealing with such themes as conflict, death, homelessness, the despair of the mentally ill. Such themes are the common threads that run throughout our writing, that define it and meet the reader's needs to be able to identify, to find himself or herself within the lines.

Using the senses to approach a news story this way requires skill in organization, else the reader drowns in words of passionate portrayal. The closer such a story approaches traditional New Journalism, the less obvious is the organization and the more organizational skill required. Rather than go overboard, however, many of today's newspaper reporters begin a news story in narrative style but then, unsure how to simultaneously report facts and sustain the narration, fall back into traditional reporting methods that fail to build reader identity.

This ability to identify with the subject, to help the reader *feel in with*, is only possible creatively if the writer can sufficiently identify with his or her subjects. The ability to reach inside and tap something *within yourself* provides the reader with a unique pair of spectacles for viewing any person or situation. As teacher and popular-magazine writer and editor for 30 years, I believe that people who aren't in touch with their feelings have the most difficulty unlocking their creative potential. They can learn the *mechanics* of writing a *good enough* story, one that will *pass*. The story will suit the purpose-- to engage readers, hold their attention and keep them informed. It won't inspire because it lacks passion. It won't ignite action because it lacks the creative spark. It's a personal approach but cut from the same pattern used time and again. I call it practicing cookie-cutter journalism.

Two former students illustrate the difference. Callie, a reserved but popular co-ed from a moneyed family, exhibits very little emotion. I would call her contained rather than restrained. She finds it hard to build reader identification because she herself has trouble identifying with others and feeling in with them. Her personal social circle is small, refined and, well, *contained*. I had to instruct her, show her a typical format, show her where and how to humanize. Callie's final stories were adequate. Acacia, on the other hand, was a somewhat free-spirited coed from the same school who had to work two jobs. Although Acacia had never heard of New Journalism or the modern-day equivalent of immersion, she knew instinctively how to do it and which senses to use in creating a dominant impression. She immersed herself in the heavy-metal band scene, got excited about it, lived it, smelled it, heard it and produced

a piece that, while rough-hewn in first draft, nonetheless conveyed a dominant impression and engaged reader interest. She built identity.

The flip side of that is creativity, a special perception that some people possess and others do not. The creative brain sees more in a situation than what is surface evident. A student described it as the ability to see both the little picture and the big picture of which it's a part, to paint with broad strokes yet choose which details to fill in. From current student Joseph Mabry: "It was a beautiful acoustic instrument, shining black in the sunlight that danced across its body. The guitar looked as if it were begging someone to play it, the strings longing to be fretted and plucked." (Joseph Mabry, Daytona Beach, FL, September 2007, unpublished).

From observation and my own practice and circumstances, I would judge creativity to be indeed that special perception--a matter of genetic degree and only a *potential*. It would be activated by certain love and nurturing and by certain structured and unstructured environmental stimuli. Instruction and learning can encourage it. My own situation informs me: In fourth grade, I wrote my first three-act play, at 20 sold my first magazine article, at 28 saw my first teleplay aired. But I waited until I was 62 to sell my first book. I believe I possessed that special perception at birth. By the time I was four, I was reading newspapers and books in the family's personal library. I would sneak into that library until I graduated from high school, reading the biographies, autobiographies, novels, history and poetry books and some forbidden books as well. There was only a literary *sense* in my family: Three of us read voraciously, but no one at the time wrote to sell although a local newspaper did publish some of my father's poetry once, just as my poetry was once published in an anthology of the same.

I asked my first- and second-year students recently if the public schools breed creativity out of the student. "Yes," said my best student, he of the rhythmic, black guitar and home-schooled. "I had the best teacher possible: My mother." Said another student: "The format for our essays at school was mandatory. We had to write five or six paragraphs, and each one had to contain at least five sentences. Near the end of my senior year," he continued, "one of my teachers told us there were other ways to write. We didn't know that before. You can't really make it flow," he said, "if all you have are a set number of paragraphs and a certain number of sentences to do it all in."

While unlimited space may not guarantee a creative piece, I believe that instructors in our profession bear a responsibility beyond the five steps of creativity—imitation, inspiration, immersion, innovation and instruction. We can and should nurture in students a sort of receptiveness –a quiet willingness to remain open to the creative forces within --in much the manner achieved through the practice of meditation, visualization and the higher-self teachings. Thoughts, after all, have creative power. Our willingness to let go of our preconceived notions of how writing ought to be and to value rather than devalue innovation can help students creatively visualize success.

Nancy M. Hamilton began her journalism career as a reporter and feature writer for the *Daytona Beach News-Journal*. In later years, she became an editor at *Audubon* Magazine in New York City and took courses in creative writing at the New School in lower Manhattan. She has taught magazine writing, editing and production, news reporting and feature writing, mass media and popular arts, women in film and novel, photojournalism, and public relations at several universities including the University of Florida, Penn State, Bowling Green State and Humboldt State University. She currently is adjunct professor at Daytona Beach College where she teaches writing and sociology. In 2007, her book on magazine writing was reissued for mass market under the title *Magazine Writing: A Step-by-Step Guide for Success* (Pearson Education).

The aerobic art of interviewing

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Michelangelo believed that a piece of marble already contained a work of art – his role was to liberate what was inherent. But the majesty, grace and beauty he saw in the stone that became David remained invisible to sculptors who had previously tackled it. In a similar way, the interview can be all or nothing to writers, journalists and oral historians. A person sits across a table, with stories to tell, ideas to impart, facts to confirm or deny, perhaps a lifetime of emotions to convey – but our ability to perceive who is before us, and to engage with what we are hearing, will critically affect what ensues.

I once interviewed a man who worked down a coalmine outside Sydney, shovelling shit – the human alternative to a Portaloo. A beefy bloke in regulation singlet and stubbies, he spoke matter-of-factly about hanging around deep underground, waiting for his mates to have a crap. I asked him what he did to pass the time. He pulled a delicate piece of white crochet out of a pocket, pointing out the intricate patterns with the enthusiasm of a mother expounding the charms of her children. I was astonished, having subconsciously written him off as Macho Man. Instead he showed me that you can transcend your circumstances. Surrounded by shit, he created beauty.

Although I have preached the need for interviewers to maintain an open mind, my own preconceptions continue to ambush me. Happily, my subliminal labelling is often subverted by the messy contradictions that are real people. The genial farmer is also an implacable racist, the bloodless lawyer reveals a passion for light opera, the ruthless media mogul retains the sadness of a wounded child. To 'profile' people, you have to be able to see their frailties as well as their more public strengths.

The acclaimed Italian oral historian, Alessandro Portelli (1997), describes an interview as 'an exchange of gazes'. You, as interviewer, may be the one asking the questions, but you are also being observed, and your demeanour, tone and line of questioning will feed back into the responses. Other factors come into play – for example the setting (in the interviewee's home or an impersonal venue, in private or before an audience) and the purpose (how was it instigated and how will it be used) – but the personalities and backgrounds of both parties shape the chemistry that can create a profound intimacy between strangers during formal interviews.

I have felt that intimacy with people far removed from me in terms of age, life experience and social and cultural background. Analysing it now, I think it comes down to simple empathy. The pain of a Cambodian woman recounting how her sons starved to death before her eyes is no different from the pain of an Aboriginal woman describing being taken from her family, or a Vietnam veteran describing the victim of a mine explosion – all incidents related to me. Likewise joy, anger, regret, pride – the feelings are universal, however different their context.

Empathy obviates the need to like or dislike someone. You can clinically record a distasteful action by your informant, without abhorring him – judgement is withheld. Instead you seek to understand his point of view. This does not mean you let him off the hook. You still ask the hard questions, but because the informant feels you can truly hear him, you're more likely to get a real answer.

A few years ago, I stumbled across what became a documentary on Aboriginal Stolen Children in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.[1] I was introduced to several women who had been forcibly removed from their families and reared by Catholic nuns, as part of the assimilation policy of the day. Their stories of separation and loss were heart breaking, but to my surprise and even irritation, they had nothing but praise for the nuns. Didn't they realise, I thought, that they were victims of cultural appropriation, at the hands of church and state?? Confused, but still clutching my righteous anger at the religious women who inculcated indigenous girls with their white Christian beliefs, I interviewed one of the nuns. Having read of grim contemporary children's homes run by sadistic overseers, I was unprepared for her description of how the nuns and their Aboriginal charges shared limited food and resources and jointly battled isolation, poverty and the sexism and rigidity of the church hierarchy. Instead of religious doctrine, Sister Pat spoke of how she loved the girls and tried to give them education - in spite of the authorities' injunction to avoid creating 'smart blacks'.

But the elephant was still on the lawn and this is how the question came out, spoken slowly and evenly, for I was trying to avoid an accusatory tone: 'did it ever occur to you to wonder why these children were being taken from their parents?' Sister Pat paused, then said with a deep sigh. 'No. I don't think it did. Religious life didn't allow for that. We didn't have access to newspapers or the wireless. We were told they were there for education. How they got there, we didn't question.' Later, she expressed deep regret for having been part of what she described as 'a terribly wrong' policy.

The program illuminated the complexity of the situation – the indigenous women lamented the loss of their families and their culture but insisted the nuns had loved them and given them a great start in life; Sister Pat, at nineteen not much older than her charges, knew in hindsight the grave implications of what had been done, but also felt the sisters had provided a stable and nurturing environment. Had I been blinded by moral outrage and dismissed Sister Pat as an Enemy of the People, how much less would I have learned about the paradoxical reality.

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Asking the Hard Question is never easy (unless you're a bully at heart, as some media interviewers seem to be), but it's particularly hard when your interviewee is scary, or famous. Harry Seidler was both. Scary not just because of his international reputation as an architect, but because of his renowned insufferance of fools and philistines – and when it came to architecture, I had zero cred. But three weeks of intense research acquainted me with the basics of the Bauhaus and, having absorbed the colourful details of his journey from Austrian refugee to Australian aesthete, I began a marathon filmed interview, commissioned by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales. Curators and other staff watched as I engaged with the testy artist,

1 *Beagle Bay – Irish Nuns and Stolen Children*, finalist, Walkley Excellence in Journalism awards, 2000. Broadcast ABC Radio National, May 2000.

his intellect still formidable at eighty-three. I had prepared thirty pages of questions and quotes, committed to memory for the day as once I crammed for exams.

The technical crew was late setting up and the great man was distinctly tetchy to start. Instinct told me to jettison chronological order. Instead I plucked a quote from Walter Gropius, his mentor, that good architecture incorporated 'firmness, commodity and delight' and asked him to nominate examples. He frowned. Gropius, he said, was merely rehashing the words of Vitruvius, from ancient Rome. My first question and I was two thousand years out! But I had honed in, however clumsily, on one of his passions and he was off, expounding on the solidity, minimalism and aesthetics of his favourite buildings.

Although we could not have been more ill matched, my research enabled me to bat the ball back and forth. More importantly, my curiosity and interest were real, and they fed his passion. By the time we broke to change tapes at the end of an hour, we were bonded, oblivious to the audience, locked in the exchange of gazes. Desperate to avoid a return to everyday banality while the crew moved about, I offered to tell him a real Irish joke (I come from Dublin). He winced, but I took the risk. This was no ordinary joke.

> A Dublin university student goes to London to work on the building sites during the holidays. The foreman looks at his weedy frame and suspiciously pale skin. 'You done this before?' he asks. 'Sure', lies the student. 'Okay then – what's the difference between a girder and a joist?' The student smiles. 'That's easy. Goethe wrote Faust and Joyce wrote Ulysses.'

Seidler exploded in what a watching curator said was the biggest laugh he'd ever seen him give. We resumed the interview on the warmest terms. The trouble was I now had to ask him about his *bete noire,* the infamous Blues Point Tower adjacent to the Sydney Harbour Bridge, whose plain modernist appearance had attracted much criticism and even been satirised as a brutal totalitarian condominium. Basking in our newfound connection, Seidler warbled happily to me about its proportions, its economy, and how much those who lived there loved it. That was my in. 'But don't you think that's a little Marie-Antoinnetteish?' I heard myself say. 'What about the rest of us, who are looking at it from the outside?' (Somehow I refrained from saying what had first come into my head, who *have to* look at it from the outside – for I was no fan of BPT.) He bristled. 'They are entitled to their opinion', he said icily. 'I *still* say it's one of my finest buildings.'

Before his hauteur could escalate into hostility, I interpolated a question about *Neue Donau*, the massive social housing project he was currently building in Vienna. As I hoped, he became animated again, enthusiastically unfolding his vision for his native city. By the fourth hour, so solid was the ground beneath us that I felt able to ask him about the delicate topic of a reputed family feud. In an emotional tribute to his late brother, he explained that the 'feud' had never happened. When we finished, I felt as if I had seen into his soul – a humbling experience that I have had more than once during an interview.

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Most of the people I've interviewed of course are 'ordinary' folk, not tall poppies. The American writer Janet Malcolm marvels at 'the careless talk' (1990:32) that

interviewees let slip to journalists, their 'childish trust and impetuosity'(1990:45). She has obviously never met a laconic Australian bushie. The most taciturn man I ever met was a retired depth sounder, whose forty years in the Public Works department had been spent swinging a lead line, the method by which river depths were gauged in the pre-digital age. His former employer was documenting the work and flew me to Jim's home up the coast to interview him.

Jim met me at the airport – with his wife Wendy. All the way home, Wendy talked non-stop at breakneck speed, while Jim drove, steadfast and silent. I knew I had to get rid of her – but how? 'As soon as your little interview is over', she prattled, 'we'll have a barbecue.' A strategy formed. 'Barbecue?' I interrupted. 'That's very kind, but I'm a vegetarian.' A pause. She was shocked, but not defeated. 'What do THEY eat?' she asked, suspiciously. I cast about wildly for something she would not have. 'Tofu', I said solemnly. 'I only eat silken tofu.'

As soon as the door shut, I sprang into action. I had maybe half an hour, I reckoned, while she trawled the hippie co-ops.

> So Jim – can you tell me about your lead lining days. Firstly, what *is* lead lining?'
>
> It's uh you know, the line goes in the water and you count how long.
>
> How long what?
>
> How long the line is.
>
> The whole line or part of it?
>
> Part.
>
> Which part?
>
> The part in the water.
>
> Why do you that?
>
> What?
>
> Count how long the part in the water is?
>
> That's lead lining.
>
> But what does it tell you?
>
> How deep the water is.
>
> How?
>
> How what?
>
> How does the length of a line in the water tell you something about the depth – I need you to explain this for people who don't know.
>
> There's a lot that don't know all right.

On and on and on, fragment by tortuous fragment, it went. I focused on easier themes – daily routine (*the usual*), eating and sleeping arrangements (*camp, you know*) accidents (*had a few*) and mates (*Paddy was a character*).

Tell me about Paddy.

Oh a right character.

What did you talk about round the campfire at night?

Jeez he could talk!

Can you remember any yarns?

The things he'd say!

I moved on, without much hope, to the rivers. She'd be back any minute.

What's your favourite river of all the ones you've navigated?

Done a lot, yeh.

You mentioned the Clarence – what's that like?

King tide is good.

What would you do waiting for the king tide?

Full moon too sometimes.

We were like motorists on different sections of the freeway, passing over and under each other but never intersecting. Forty years of living with the garrulous Wendy on weekends and the enigmatic Paddy during the week seemed to have numbed Jim's instincts for communication. I would have given up, but my plane didn't leave for hours, and having so duplicitously got Wendy out of the house, I felt honour bound to continue till her return.

As always in an interview, I had been listening super-intently to every word he said. Someone once termed it 'aerobic listening'. It's certainly exhausting in the way that listening in a conversation never is. The reason you do it is because your undivided attention is part of what causes the subject to open up. Few of us are ever really listened to in daily life. People are distracted, daydreaming, or bored, and the words are only half heard. When someone REALLY listens to you, it's like a force field. With enormous effort, I searched my mind for every crumb Jim had dropped, and rolled them all into one long desperate question.

When you were out on the Clarence river, on a king tide, under a full moon, with Paddy there beside you, swinging the lead line… did you ever think about what it was all for, the people who'd been to these places before you, and the ones who would come after…

I was struggling to make a word picture that would somehow kick-start long-dormant emotions. Before I got any further, Jim sat bolt upright in his chair, hugely agitated.

Yerr, there was this little girl, she was only eight and she died of a snakebite I read it in her father's diary, he was a surveyor and he come out this way in the 1860s and he camped right where we done Paddy always knew the best spots,

> he'd been in the army see, had to get out 'cause his nerves went after the Japs got him, but he could tell how much she'd rise in a flood just by looking at the banks further down…

On and on it went, a stream-of-consciousness soliloquy about Jim and Paddy's adventures on land and water, in bushfire, drought and floods, crossing the bar at a harbour mouth or rowing up a river tributary, diligently gathering figures for the faceless men at head office.

> These days, they get it to within two decimal points and they think they're bloody great – but we gave it forty years and we done a bloody good job.

He sat back, exhausted. I felt drained too, by his passion. We heard a key in the door – and into the scene waltzed Wendy, bearing a dripping packet of tofu. She stopped and almost sniffed. The current between Jim and me was still crackling. Eating near-mouldy tofu while they tucked into steaks seemed a small price to pay. As I left, Jim gave me a sweet childlike smile that made my heart sing.

When I told that story to my students, one, a psychologist, ventured an explanation. 'When you fed him back that word-picture, it was confirmation that you had heard him – obviously a rare thing – and it enabled him to access those buried memories. He felt validated enough to allow them out.'

I don't know if that's what happened. It sounds as plausible as anything else. But ever since then I have believed that there is passion in every one of us. It might seem unlikely on the surface, and it might take a lot of time and effort to tap into – but it's there.

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Sometimes the problem is not getting the person to talk, but understanding what you're hearing. Dissemblers will feed you misinformation, in an attempt to distract or confuse you. When I was researching the Australian cotton industry, (McHugh1996) one of my final interviews was with a spokesperson for the cotton growers' body, the Australian Cotton Foundation. For two years, I had been accumulating evidence about the use of toxic chemicals in the industry. I had heard from residents in cotton country how impenetrably scientific the spokesman's answers were. I had in another life obtained a B.Sc, so I wasn't afraid of the lingo. But the volume of data was huge, and I knew I had to retain it mentally in order to pick up instantly on any telling admissions.

I asked him first about a well-documented incident near Moree, in north-west New South Wales, in 1991. A team of chippers was hoeing weeds when a plane started spraying in an adjacent field. Soon a chipper smelt 'something like fly spray', and her eyes began to sting. The chemical from the plane was evidently being blown onto them by the wind. The foreman radioed the news to the pilot and asked him to stop, but he did not. By the next morning, most of the chippers had experienced headaches, sore eyes and throats, and coughs – symptoms consistent with having been exposed to endosulfan, the active ingredient in the spray. A government Agricultural Health Unit fortuitously in the area examined sixteen workers and filed a report. The case went to court – and despite the fact that the magistrate observed that there was no doubt that he 'deliberately sprayed pesticide' onto fields where he was

aware the chippers were working, the pilot walked away scot-free. This was because the woefully inept legislation required the workers to prove that he had not only deliberately sprayed them, but also 'wilfully' caused a risk of injury by a pesticide.

Nonetheless the case was embarrassing for the industry. The spokesman opposite me now played it down, stating that 'none of those people, until the symptoms were described to them, exhibited any symptoms.' In fact, as I knew from reading the report, the Aghealth doctor took pains to point out that the chippers were interviewed in such a way as to eliminate any form of autosuggestion.

When he added that the pesticide used was 'a cholinesterase inhibitor', my antennae moved up a notch. (Cholinesterase is an enzyme whose blood level can indicate exposure to certain chemicals.) 'When they tested the people', he said, 'there was no depression of cholinesterase… now that is a direct link of exposure. That is one of the reasons the case was dismissed.'

From my reading, I knew two things. First, the chemical in question, endosulfan, was an organochlorine – a type that did not respond to cholinesterase. So to imply that the lack of depression of cholinesterase meant there had been no exposure to endosulfan was nonsense. Cholinesterase worked on totally different pesticides, like organophosphates.

Secondly, the case had not been dismissed on those grounds, but on the interpretation of the word 'wilfully'.

When I pointed out these discrepancies, he blanched. My mild manner and heavily pregnant state had perhaps led him to underestimate my understanding of the issues – on which I grilled him for the next ninety minutes, in what was one of the most satisfying interviews of my life.. After the book came out, the laws on aerial spraying changed for the better.

Misinformation is not always deliberate. Sometimes people will, in good faith, tell you something you know to be untrue. Critics of oral history often cite these factual aberrations as proof of the unreliability of personal testimony – but in fact, these 'errors', which Alessandro Portelli (1991)has termed 'wrong narrative', can be instructive. For example, when Portelli interviewed workers in the Italian town of Terni about the killing of a factory worker called Luigi Trastulli, the informants sometimes transposed the date and manner of the killing. But these 'mistakes' were significant. The date given related to another, key, battle in the ongoing fight between the workers and the Fascists, and the manner of Trastulli's death, often described as shot against a wall, arms extended, was permeated with strong cultural motifs, from the Crucifixion to the execution of partisans in the area a few years before. Analysing the changed 'facts', Portelli (1991:45-8) surmised much about the political environment of the day, and how it had changed in the interim, causing the informants to subconsciously alter their view of what had happened.

I had a similar experience of 'wrong narrative' when gathering interviews from workers who built the tunnels of the Snowy Mountains hydroelectric scheme (McHugh 1995). Person after person mentioned that men had died while concrete lining the tunnels and their bodies had been entombed in the rock. No one could offer me the full names of the supposed victims and the locality and time of the supposed entombings varied. Yet the story persisted so strongly I felt it had to mean something.

Through the picture I built up of the dangerous nature of the concreting, the hegemony of the crew, and the key role played by migrants who were often desperate and vulnerable, I surmised that what was real was the *fear* the miners had of being told to go behind the forms and do the dangerous task of concrete lining, which could indeed be life-threatening; and that the migrants at the bottom of the pecking order were most likely to do such work – Australians I interviewed had quit the job rather than comply.

I examined 112 inquests into men who died in the construction. None described someone dying while concrete lining a tunnel - but in one horrific accident concrete lining a dam shaft, three men, all migrants, were pinned under collapsed formwork. Their workmates had only two hours in which to get them out before the concrete set. The three men could not be freed and died at the bottom of the shaft – effectively buried alive in concrete, as the 'myth' had held.

It was mostly Italians who undertook the concreting – an image that brings me back to Michelangelo. In the Accademia Gallery in Florence, where his magnificent David stands, several of his unfinished sculptures are also exhibited. These striking, semi-sculpted figures are entitled 'Prisoners' – still captive in the stone, powerful with potential. Of the act of liberation that was his sculpting, Michelangelo wrote:

> The great artist has no concept
> what a marble may have confined
> within its depths; that can be divined
> only by the hand subject to the intellect (Falletti 2002:54)

Perhaps it is not too fanciful to imagine the best interviewing as an art, whose purpose is to reveal the full humanity and depth of the person before us – depths that can be divined only be engaging the heart subject to the intellect.

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Trans-Chinese imagination: film and cross-Strait perception as a historical case study for contextual journalism education

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Abstract

It is a truism that film, like many other visual media, can stimulate and assist the social imagination of their viewing audiences. At the same time, it can also be an implement in the toolbox of the cultural journalist. Through textual analysis of *Ermo* (1994, People's Republic of China) and *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman* (1994, Taiwan, Republic of China), we explore how these two films project the concepts of modernity, gender relation and, most of all, the virtues and inflictions of being Chinese. A joint Trans-Chinese imagination emerges through these two separate films, despite the reported political and ideological differences in these two societies. As Taiwan and the mainland China (and other similar geopolitical situations around the globe) continue to negotiate their political future, we use this historical case-study to propose a cross-disciplined, contextual journalism education which includes popular culture, in this case film, as a tool for media pedagogy.

Global film and journalism pedagogy

Journalism education is a field of well-documented controversy. As Deuze (2006) observes, the binary nature of journalism education, split between "practical," skills-based training and "contextual" instruction, is still too heavily weighted on the side of the former. Some educators emphasize context as a concern of paramount importance to journalists and those who train them. Allen (1987) proposes the addition of another "W," whence, to the traditional five already associated with competent journalism. This addition recognizes "that each seemingly separate story belongs within the context of even larger stories;" and promotes "a more holistic perspective" for journalistic reporting (Allen, 1987, 21). Furthermore, Deuze, Quandt, and Wahl-Jorgensen (2006) offer that the "theoretical problem of the role and function of journalism in society does not even begin to address the complexities involved when studying, analyzing and theorizing journalism, especially if we consider the sweeping trends of commercialization, digitization, globalization (and localization), all of which have profound implications for the profession" (334). This is especially so as national boundaries and the media that operate within them collide and coalesce to an increasing degree, making the education of competent journalists an enterprise of truly global proportions.

One way of approaching such a contextual, global training for journalists is to (re) emphasize the importance of cultural texts produced under the auspices of particular national media industries. Often, situations which may seem from the outside to be easily explained are in fact much more complicated by historical, cultural, and social issues. Many of these issues, due to sensitivity or the simple recession into the collective unconscious, may be spoken only in popular forms ostensibly dealing with other issues. Such forms, including musical productions, television, and film, become increasingly pertinent as boundaries become more and more permeable and far-flung cultural contexts become the "beat" of journalists everywhere.

Film, in particular, is a medium with powerful pedagogical possibilities, both for journalists training in universities as well as those with years of professional experience. Commentators have for some time understood the potential for linking the study of literature with the training of journalistic practice (Parisi, 1992; Good, 1985). This paper proposes that film is equally capable of promoting empathy and critical thinking skills. The Global Film Initiative (GFI), based in the United States, is an example of a fledgling attempt to incorporate film products of the non-Western world into the educational matrices of Western students. In its mission statement, the GFI points out that "in recent times, no medium has been as effective at communicating the range and diversity of the world's cultures as the cinematic arts," and that sensitivity to such diversity is key to the functionality of public sphere imagined on a global level.[1] Shoemaker (1993) posits critical thinking as a key component of journalism education, and, referencing Paul (1990), points out that "a critical thinker 'is someone who is able to think well and fairmindedly not just about her own beliefs and viewpoints, but about beliefs and viewpoints that are diametrically opposed to her own.' And not just to think about them, but to explore and appreciate their adequacy, their cohesion, their very reasonableness vis-à-vis her own" (100). Engagement with cinematic texts is not only about providing information but also about providing just this kind of sympathy with a foreign

1 More information on the Global Film Initiative can be found at www.globalfilm.org ..

viewpoint, a skill, sadly, clearly lacking in many examples of Western journalism today.

The notion of film as a reflector, refractor, and commentator on national and cultural identity is well established. While some authors point out the degree to which film tends toward the reinforcement of boundaries related to culture (Norris, 2005; Keller, 2003; Tzanelli, 2003), sexuality (Shugart, 2003), or gender (Celeste Kearney, 2005; Raw, 2004), others are careful to consider those films which display breakdowns in identity or the very categories within which these identities are traditionally circumscribed, especially in the context of European integration (Daković, 2006; Doughty & Griffiths, 2006; Sundholm, 2006; Law, 2005). Authors explore the gray area between these two extremes as well (Ezra & Sanchez, 2005), a crucial example of which is Jaiyan Mi's (2005) investigation of a new "visually imagined community" in China which is effected through television programming displaying "a problematic televisual collage of both Chinese and Western images for national consumption in post-Mao Era" (327). Nayar (2004), finally, detects modes through which identification between viewer and character takes place despite a complete lack of coordination of any visible identities such as race or nationality. Engagement with films and the scholarship that critique them, then, are essential for the creation of critical thinking skills in a world that is defined by its global, mediated nature.

A politically and cinematically historical case study which helps to elucidate this need for what might be called a cross-disciplinary, contextual journalism education is that of the ongoing relationship between China and Taiwan and the emerging consciousness of one another on the part of their respective citizens. This relationship is, to a very large degree, a singular one, and we will outline the historical context in detail below. Suffice it to say that an entire generation – perhaps more – of Chinese citizens came of age largely ignorant of their counterparts across the Taiwan Strait, and that this ignorance was suddenly and steadily eroded starting in the late 1980s with the repeal of martial law in Taiwan, the opening up toward a market economy on the mainland, and the reintroduction of travel and media between the two. Part of this erosion was the increasing availability of cinematic texts, a trend which was beginning to flower around the time of Taiwan's official introduction into the "multichannel environment" (Berggreen, 1997), its resultant "transition" and "flux" (37), and the production of two key films from opposite sides of the Strait.

This transitional moment also had another aspect of historical significance. The intense speculation and discussion about the then upcoming Hong Kong handover in 1997 created much uncertainty in Taiwan and great anticipations in China. Some observers even inferred that this handover would pave the way for Taiwan-China reunification. As June 30, 2007 marked the 10-year anniversary of the handover, the relationship between Taiwan and the mainland once again enters another stage of vacillation and negotiation.

This paper, then, is partially textual and partially historical. By using examples from a particular historical moment, we seek to illustrate and engage with a problem that has nonetheless continued to fester in journalism education for the past decade, a decade in which the world needed it to do more.[2] *Ermo* (1994, directed by Xiaowen Zhou of China) and *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman* (1994, directed by Ang Lee of Taiwan)

2 For a similar example of historical film analysis in the context of Germany (albeit one that is not concerned with journalism education), see Soldovieri (2006).

are both, on the surface, little concerned with the political relationship between the mainland and Taiwan. Embedded within their respective stories, however, are countless attempts at illustrating the ambivalent nature of each culture's engagement with modernity, a concept and a force around which much of the conflict between the two parties revolves. Part of this essay will seek to uncover these nuances and to point out that the easy conflation of the Chinese mainland with Communism and austerity, and of Taiwan with Western capital, is made more difficult by an understanding of these two films, each of which would have been available to the (mainland or Taiwan) "other" around the time of their release. What we posit, looking back at these films and the news stories that were their contemporaries, is that a tentative cinematic discussion was taking place, and that the awareness of such a discussion makes one's understanding of this complex international and intercultural relationship richer. By engaging with the cross-Strait journalism published during the same year in North America, we suggest that the latter is little concerned with these complexities. What emerges from these films, in the end, is a sense not of a division between China and Taiwan, but rather a Trans-Chinese imagination that underpins all political activity in what has been called "Greater China" (Sinclair & Harrison, 2004). It should not be inferred from our argument here that nothing has changed geopolitically or domestically for these cultures since 1994; rather, this particular moment should be read as an instructive exemplar. The possibility that this case study is indicative of other geopolitical situations with which a journalist might be confronted is imperative toward understanding film as a tool for media pedagogy, and as a subject of study for more than just film critics.

Historical background: Taiwan and the mainland

Until 1949, the island of Taiwan, located about 100 miles of the south coast of mainland China, was one of the 35 provinces of the Republic of China (ROC). In 1949, the Republic's Nationalist government, known as the Kuomingtang (KMT), retreated to Taiwan and five sets of islets from mainland China after losing the civil war to the Communists. Taiwan and those islets began to be known as Taiwan, R.O.C. The KMT declared authority over the mainland and Taiwan and positioned itself as the only legitimate Chinese government. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949 and claimed the same authority over the same land as did ROC, considering Taiwan as its 23rd province. Thus, 1949 witnessed the beginning of a still unfinished chapter on "the two Chinas" in Chinese history (Wang & Lo, 2000; Yan, 2000). The two parties set to organize and engineer two societies as they saw fit. In four decades, from certain perspectives, an enormous chasm developed between the two sides.

To many observers, the most important contrasts between the two sides were "the economic growth that occurred in the ROC and the process of social-political change that was interwoven with economic growth. The absence of any matching trends in the PRC widened the gulf between the two societies" (Myers, 1996, p. xxii). To be more specific, economically, the ROC was "the envy of the developing world," while the PRC remained "backward" (ibid., p. xi). Politically, in Taiwan, the Democratic-Progressive Party (DPP) was legalized in 1989. Thus, for the first time in Chinese history, a political coalescence was institutionalized and "independent of the chain of command under the head of state" (ibid., p. xiv). In contrast, the crush of the

democracy demonstrators in Tien-an-men Square in1989 reverted the mainland "to an overtly coercive mode it had begun to leave behind after the death of Mao in 1976" (ibid., p. xiv).

However, behind those glaring contrasts, some parallels seemed to underline these two apparently diverging societies. For example, both the CCP and the KMT reinforced their control of the government with a vast and tight network of auxiliary organizations. Before 1979, both governments sought to paint pictures of the other side in the worst possible tones. No journalists were ever allowed to cross the Strait. Cultural, academic or scientific exchanges were not permitted. Any cultural products, such as books, newspapers, films, television shows from one side were banned on the other.

Moreover, no communication of any kind was permitted between the citizens of Taiwan and the mainland. There were no mail, telegraph or telephone services to bridge the Strait. As a result, parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives were forever separated and had no hope of ever seeing each other again. For citizens of both societies, information about "the other" finally became available during the 1970s and only through very limited private channels. In the 1970s, overseas Chinese "in significant numbers visited both mainland China and Taiwan and gave their friends firsthand accounts of what they had learned, but such information was not available to the general public" (Clough, 1993, p. 79).

Then, the early 1980s saw the weakening of the barriers to information flow. Pursuing a united-front policy aimed at forging people-to-people links across the Strait, China began to publish selected works by Taiwan authors. In November 1987, four months after the martial law was lifted, for the first time in nearly 40 years, Taiwan began to allow its citizens to visit relatives in mainland, which produced a breakthrough in the flow of information about the mainland to Taiwan. Nevertheless, this flow was still very limited, for only a very small percentage of people in Taiwan were able to journey back. But beginning in April 1988, after 40 years of complete silence, limited mail, telegraph and telephone service between Taiwan and the mainland finally began (Clough, 1993).

From this perspective, despite the sharp contrasts in economic, political and ideological differences, for four decades, Chinese on both sides of the Strait had the *same* ignorance of the other and in many ways of themselves. Both sides began to reach out to the other and re-search and re-define selves, and this odyssey was set against the backdrop of the 1990s and the concurrent complication of dualities like globalization and localization, modernity and tradition, and feminist and patriarchal ideology. At the same time, the once mutually exclusive rhetoric of "two Chinas" gradually shifted to a more inclusive narrative. The two Chinas were now discussed as the "Cultural China" or the "Greater China" (Sinclair & Harrison, 2004).

Clough (1998) reports no less than four major "streams of influence" over Taiwan's cultural identity: "the traditional China stream, the Japanese stream, the Republic of China stream, and the cosmopolitan stream" (10). Historically, the KMT had downplayed the island itself as a source of cultural heritage, emphasizing instead the attachment to the Chinese mainland. A greater proportion of native Taiwanese involved in government, however, and the allowance of native languages in certain circles, had effected a shift by the mid- to late 1990s whereby Taiwan's identification

with the mainland had been deemphasized in favor of a stress on Taiwan's own national character (Clough, 1998, p. 20). That this cultural balance is in flux and a source of great ambivalence between the two is perhaps an understatement. But what is also interesting in the consideration of the films under study is the degree to which this time frame – given the conditions of increasing engagement punctuated by alternating moments of diplomacy and hostility – can be understood as a high-water mark of cross-strait identity searching on the part of Chinese on both sides.

Culture, according to Tu (1998), is the linchpin of a nuanced political understanding of the island in the 1990s, a time when "cultural identity (had) become a litmus test for self-definition, ethnic consciousness, political loyalty or life-orientation" and was "the core problem defining Taiwan's 'position' in the Chinese world, East Asia, the Asia-Pacific region and the global community" (72). Key to this discussion of culture was Taiwan's relationship to the mainland, a relationship that Tu is at pains to characterize as only a part of the repertoire from which Taiwanese were choosing identities at this time, but which nonetheless acted as the most common pole against which "Taiwaneseness" was defined. Huang (2000, p.143) reports that, by 1995, 23.9 percent of Taiwan residents identified themselves as "Taiwanese," 23.9 percent identified as "Chinese," and 50 percent identified as both. But the duality here is no clean old/new, communist/capitalist one, as the once "romanticized motherland" of China had been degraded by this time in public discourse into a "disenchanted marketplace (full of) corrupt officials, desperate intellectuals, unreliable merchants and callous relatives" (ibid., p. 75).

Taiwan and China as mediated entities

A review of the themes explored in mid-1990s Western journalism concerning China and Taiwan – and the assumptions which undergird these themes – shows that little was known about the diasporic conditions of "Greater China" or "cultural China," and that journalists were rather more content to think of China and Taiwan as bounded, known entities. Some (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 1994; Rohter, 1994; Ziegler, 1994) choose simply to reify the trope of the closed, coercive Chinese state, while others, though they engage with globalization as a catalyst inside China, analyze the issue in strictly economic terms (Manning & Stern, 1994; Mickleburgh, 1994). There appears at least one op-ed urging the UN to include Taiwan as a second-seat to China in the mold of two Germanies (Metzler, 1994), as well as an interesting discussion of a particularly sensitive case in which the precedents for travel between the neighbors were tested (Schreiner, 1994). A majority of the cross-strait journalism undertaken in the year of Lee's and Zhou's films' release is concerned with the upcoming or just-completed Taiwanese elections, in which the opposition DPP took the mayorship of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, in the republic's first open elections. While there are many brief, play-by-play reports of the election (cf. Manthorpe, 1994a), those few stories which attempt a deeper understanding of the vote tend in the process to establish facile dichotomous parallels between political stance and cultural identity (Manthorpe, 1994b). Lacking in all of these pieces is any engagement with people whose identities, sympathies, and interests lie on both sides of the Strait; moreover, there is displayed little understanding of or curiosity about the mediated perceptions of the Other which inform the experiences and attitudes of mainland Chinese and those living in Taiwan (and Hong Kong, for that matter).

We contend that a familiarity with the themes explored in the two films we offer as case studies would engender questions that make journalism on globalization and "glocalization" (Robertson 1995) more specific, incisive and contextual.

"Taiwaneseness" and "Chineseness," in the mid- to late 1990s, are in the tenuous position, as identifications, of being neither mutually exclusive nor divorced from a historical and ideological sense of polarity, and much of this flux can be related to the nature of global media. The increasingly simultaneous availability of information in all corners of the globe has led theorists like Giddens (1991) to posit "time-space distanciation" – the displacement of individuals in what he terms "late" or "high" modernity. Global media, according to this argument, allow a reformulation of one's spatial and temporal "place" in the world such that each individual is confronted with, as it were, new and unfamiliar neighbors. This radical expansion of what might be termed the "known community" has led to widespread consideration of the mutability of national boundaries (Morley & Robins, 1995; Chan & Ma, 2002), which asks how "we position ourselves within the new global cultural space" and how "we reconcile our cognitive existence in hyperspace" (Morley & Robins, 1995, p. 38). Is it any longer tenable to base our "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983) on presumably national commonalities of language, geography, or, ultimately, "culture"? Is this a tenable strategy for both those "within" national contexts and those who report on them from "without"?

Ermo (1994), Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (1994), and the Trans-Chinese engagement with modernity

Synopses of the films

Ermo, the title character of Zhou's film, is the village Chief's wife and they have a son, Tiger. The Chief regards his title with an enormous sense of tragic irony, as both the changing nature of the village social structure and his ongoing problems with impotence have rendered him quite ineffectual. Ermo, meanwhile, keeps busy making twisty noodles late into the night, an avocation which barely keeps her family above water and disallows the ownership of a television. Her neighbors, a man nick-named Blindman and his wife, do however have a television, and this has caused Tiger to spend, in Ermo's opinion, inordinate time next door. The television thus becomes the object toward which Ermo moves, obsessively counting and saving money in the hope of one day making the purchase.

Sales in the village are finite, however, and Blindman soon offers to bring Ermo into the city with him on his daily trips so that she might sell her noodles. Soon an affair develops between them and Blindman finds Ermo a job in the city. Ermo, over time, becomes ensconced in the working world and overwhelmed by the equation of an earned wage (expressed finally in her repeated sale of her blood).

In an effort to stop Ermo from such self-flagellation in pursuit of money, Blindman begins subsidizing her wages. When Ermo discovers the deception, she breaks off the relationship with Blindman. She continues to amass funds and finally purchases the largest television set in the department store. The home of the Chief is once again the focal point of the village. Tiger and his friends are no longer absent next door,

and Ermo sits in the darkness, completely exhausted, as the television shows pictures from far away places.

Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (EDMW) concerns a family of three young women headed by a widowed chef, Master Chu. As he begins to lose his sense of taste, Chu must count on a trusted assistant to confirm the quality of his restaurant preparations, and the sense of helplessness he feels at the onset of this transition is echoed in the ever-widening orbit of his daughters, all of whom face coming-of-age moments throughout the course of the film and, in turn, assert their independence.

The oldest daughter, a high-school teacher, is committed to her father's well being and has clearly imagined her role as the replacement for her mother (who passed away when she was four). The middle daughter, a rapidly escalating executive with an international corporation, harbors an incredible (but unsanctioned) passion and talent for elaborate cooking. Finally, the youngest, a 20-year-old student, works at Wendy's and inadvertently attracts the attention of a friend's love interest, Raymond.

Their neighbor, a young woman with a school-aged daughter named Shan-Shan, is going through a nasty divorce and attracts Chef Chu's sympathy. Chu also befriends Shan-Shan's grandmother, Mrs. Liang.

Each of the Sunday dinners portrayed in the film serves as an opportunity for one of the main characters to "make a little announcement." The first of these is the middle daughter's purchase of a new apartment, which later is doomed by the bankruptcy of the building's owner. The second is the youngest daughter's admission that she is pregnant and moving in with Raymond's family. The following week, the oldest daughter announces her elopement with the school's volleyball coach. Finally, now that the middle daughter has declined a promotion overseas, Master Chu makes the announcement that he is planning on selling the house and starting over with the young mother and daughter next door.

Modernity and ambivalence in Ermo and EDMW

The opening sequences of both films tell the viewer much about the ongoing Asian transition between manifestations of tradition and modernity. The terms for this duality are set in both films by the first few frames. In *Ermo*, the viewer's first stimulus is Ermo's plaintive cry, "Twisty noodles!" As the darkness lifts, the viewer is presented with Ermo's positionality on the side of the street, patiently calling out her song until she is approached by a potential buyer. Immediately apparent here is an image of displacement, whereby food is no longer solely for sustenance but also for sale, where the noodle is no longer only a staple but also a commodity, and where the craft of making the noodle is, perhaps, not as crucial as the craft of selling the noodle. The opening shot of *EDMW*, meanwhile, is of a Taipei intersection, empty just before the turning of a traffic light. The light turns, and a multitude of motorbikes, bicycles and cars is unleashed from the top of the shot to the bottom, the rush of engines breaking the relative silence which preceded it. This five- or six-second shot then gives way to Master Chu slowly and carefully preparing food in his kitchen. The first few frames are silent save for the sound of knives on cutting boards, but soon the quiet gives way to a traditional soundtrack of Chinese strings.

The juxtaposition is striking and here, as in *Ermo*, it expresses the confrontation of old and new through the symbolic medium of food.

Food

The making of food continues to fulfill key metaphorical roles. In *Ermo*, the nocturnal preparation of twisty noodles (a clever symbol for the Chief's impotence) is a clear substitution for the sexual activity she so desperately desires. The sequences in the nighttime courtyard, where Ermo heaves and sweats rhythmically kneading and pressing the noodles, are clearly the film's most erotic (Ermo and Blindman's roadside tryst notwithstanding). Ironically, the product of this activity, the noodles themselves, act as the vehicle for Ermo's increasing independence from Chief, her emergence into a capitalist economy, and her eventual purchase of the TV.

There is also great focus on the preparation of the noodles from a more technical point of view, an illustration of the process which seeks to glorify the methodical nature of Ermo's task. Her connection with the food is quite literal as she kneads the dough with her feet and hands and acts as the primary catalyst in every aspect of the preparation. This valorization of "old" ways of food preparation is confirmed when one of Ermo's co-workers has his hand cut off by the machine which presses the noodles in the city restaurant. Ermo is clearly terrified by this prospect.

This focus on method is also a key component of the presentation of food in Lee's film. From the opening shots, and throughout the film's constant reorganization around the Sunday dinner table, the care and time taken to prepare the meal is extraordinary. That the preparation of food and the cultivation of ingredients have more importance to Chu than the maintenance of his family relations becomes increasingly evident as the film progresses. As an aging patriarch ill-equipped to handle traditionally maternal roles, Chu fails repeatedly to connect with his daughters on any significant emotional level. Thus the plot device of the chef losing his sense of taste seems simultaneously tragic and just.

But perhaps the sense in which food fulfills the most congruent function in the two films is as a symbol of transition. While the television in *Ermo* is clearly the most obvious indicator of the influx of western values, changes in the preparation and enjoyment of food work in both films to cue the viewer to a more nuanced and erosive set of changes. In *EDMW*, one of the great ironies is that Chu's youngest daughter, Jia-Ning, works at an American fast food company. For her, the preparation of food is simply a job like any other, and she pays little attention to what she is doing. Placed alongside the opening sequence of the film, the indifference to culinary creation is striking. The pace of life which spawns such fast-food eateries, the Western city life, is echoed in Jia-Ning's whirlwind romance, pregnancy, and marriage. All things are out of order: the youngest daughter leaves home first and a complete meal can be ready in sixty seconds. The increasingly anachronistic nature of what has popularly, in Western circles, been called "slow food" is further illustrated by Chef Chu's loss of taste. Not until the middle daughter rejects an offer to move to Amsterdam (symbolically rejecting the West) and decides to live in her childhood home is Master Chu's gustatory sense restored. Tradition, to some degree, has been restored as well.

In *Ermo*, we have already seen the horror inflicted upon the unlucky kitchen employee by the noodle press. More subtle is Ermo's shift from a producer of sustenance and modest wages to a consumer. Living a subsistence lifestyle in the remote village, Ermo is gradually swept into the current of the market economy. Her increasingly frequent interactions with vendors, her maturation as a business woman, her purchase of the "city girl" brazier, and other moments in the film mark this progression.

Gender

Another important vehicle through which modernity is expressed in the two films is gender. The relationships between men and women in both films are expressive of a number of other key dichotomies, such as traditional and modern, East and West, and collective and individual. On both Taiwan and the mainland, the changing expectations of the female – both her own and those foisted upon her – are set off against the suddenly unresolved place of male hegemony.

Ermo as a film is a narrative conflation of two themes – sexuality and capital. Ermo's seduction by Blindman is as much related to consumerism as it is to passion. Ermo makes a sequential transition from a producer and a shrewd businesswoman to a consumer, swept up in shallow desires and the hollow promise of a television. In her desire to take advantage of the temptations of the market, Ermo then becomes a product in two senses. First, the scene displaying her first experience with blood donation is wonderfully illustrative of the stakes of her changing nature. Her pleas to the nurse to stop the transfusion process, at first urgent and then increasingly half-hearted, are evocative of many clichéd love scenes in Western films where the reluctant female is broken down by the relentless passion of the dominant male. As Ermo gives her blood away, and then begins to sell it, she becomes in every sense a product, and her powerlessness in this regard is mirrored by her decreasing power as a female. As she moves in this downward trajectory, her husband moves in a rough ascension from dependent and despondent to sensible and, finally, regnant in his newly technologized home full of visitors.

In Lee's film, much of the difficulty experienced by the predominant characters in adapting to new modes of operation in an increasingly Western milieu are expressed in terms of gender roles. The oldest daughter is a teacher of boys, and her stern demeanor is indicative of her conflictual roles as professional authority and gendered subordinate. As her interest in her suitor blossoms, her walls begin to weather, until finally, on the day she angrily addresses the school in search of her secret admirer, she sheds her conservative dress for long, flowing hair, seductive make-up, and a flashy red dress. It is only by embracing her femininity that she puts in motion the events that lead to her marriage. The middle daughter, meanwhile, is adamant about her independence, working diligently to obtain the capital necessary to leave her father's house on her own and, later, getting the promotion which will allow her to leave the East altogether. Her duping at the hands of a real estate developer not only lands her back in the family home, it also expresses the exposed condition of the woman (as a synecdoche for all citizens in an emerging international economy) at the hands of emerging forces of global capital. The youngest daughter, finally, along with her friend, finds herself struggling with the nuances of dating and appropriate gendered behavior. As Raymond, who begins the film as a suitor to Jin-Ning's friend,

is pushed away, Jia-Ning becomes the object of his affections. Only later does she discover her friend's dismay that her strategy of "playing hard to get" has backfired on her. All three players in the triangle are confused by the shifting roles of male and female in a modern courtship that no longer plays according to proscriptions and family intervention.

As things fall into place, however, a curious reversal takes place. In the end, the oldest daughter is the first to marry, the youngest begins preparing for the life of a young mother, and the middle daughter moves into the family home and takes over her father's kitchen. All three ignore the opportunities offered them by the emerging Western/modern sensibility. Chef Chu, meanwhile, subverts both expectations and tradition by passing on Mrs. Liang for her much younger daughter, and the burgeoning relationship between him and Shan-Shan is revealed as a second chance at a less stringent conception of fatherhood. Thus, although the film is ostensibly about family life, loss, love, and youth, that there is no clear cut conservatism or modernity on the part of the main characters is the key statement of the film. All is in tremendous flux, and no one seems any longer to have a terribly solid grasp on their roles or expectations.

Chef Chu and the Chief are, finally, near mirror images of one another, especially with reference to the inter-identifications related to the changing place of patriarchy in the Asian social whole. Their titles, both indicating substantial levels of respect, become ironic (especially in their own eyes) as their respective afflictions disallow what they believe to be adequate performance. Chef Chu's loss of his gustatory sense is, of course, a devastating blow for someone in his position. The Chief equates social standing to sexual prowess, or is at least acutely aware of their simultaneous decline. In this way, both characters' sensual dysfunction acts as a metaphor for the shifting hegemony of maleness in the face of encroaching embodiments of modernity. As the fast food restaurant – both by employing and empowering his young, urbane daughter and by cheapening the enjoyment of food – devalues the Chef's social status, so too does the consumer market and the cult of individuality debase the Chief's standing as patriarch. And yet this current ebbs and flows with the reactions of the characters in question, as by embracing various forms of youth or openness (such as a young wife or a giant television) the aging males find that their powers return in some form.

The Trans-Chinese Experience

As the oldest daughter in a motherless family, Lee's Jia-Jen sees it as her duty to care for her father and younger sisters. She fabricates a story of being abandoned by her boyfriend and, pretending to be broken-hearted, she vows never to love again. Thus her place is with her family, especially her father. In reality, this is a likely scenario in a Chinese society while quite improbable in other, especially Western cultures. Jia-Jen becomes bitter of this self sacrifice, however, and constantly struggles with the expected duty of a daughter from a traditional value system within an ever modernized society. Similarly, Ermo's choice of staying in an unhappy and seemingly empty marriage is another probable reality in a Chinese society. While she ventures out of her physical boundaries and emotional constraints and even discusses with Blindman her hope of divorcing the Chief, she returns to the village and the marriage in the end. No matter which side of the Strait they call home, Chinese females seem

to be caught between a strong sense of traditional expectations and the needs for self realization. While Ermo's vexing experience may not be as big a struggle in Taiwan, for divorce is much more common in Taiwan than in the mainland, female characters' various choices throughout both movies are still confined within the female gender expectations of a Chinese patriarchal society.

A disconnection between generations and between the old and the new is also a profound symbol of Chinese experience. Chef Chu and Mrs. Liang speak Mandarin with a mainlander accent while all the daughters and the grand daughter speak the same language with a Taiwanese accent. In Ermo, the older generation (Ermo and Chief) is still concerned about the maintenance and the appearance of family while the new generation (Tiger and his friends) instead focuses on material quest, in this case expressed by the television. This disconnection is reflective of the ideological differences and conflicts between the old and the new guards within both societies. The ideologies, manifested in political and social policies, of the early era are still casting a long shadow over the representatives of the new guard who are now on the watch on both sides of the Strait. The Tien-an-men setback illustrated a complex triangle of new thoughts, new guards and the old power.

Both films convey one of the virtues of cultural Chineseness, which is to be able to conform and sacrifice for the greater good of the collective – in both cases, the family. They also pinpoint the inflictions of being Chinese: the pain and frustration of a lifetime of bondage expressed in the expectation to carry on an old tradition in a postmodern era. While both movies in the end present a kind of closure to their characters' struggles, they are a poignant reminder that while the governments on both sides engage in rhetorical wars, citizens fight for inner peace away from the political battle. Yet this personal journey occurs not in a vacuum but within the rhetorical arena created between the two sides. This is an aspect not often seen in journalistic reporting on Taiwan and the mainland.

Discussion: The Trans-Chinese Imagination and a contextual journalism education

Employing believable characters, persuasive plots and understanding of heart, both films painfully yet skillfully pursue the meaning and the virtues and inflictions of being Chinese at a time of cultural, social, economic, ideological and political transition. Every metaphor in these films echoes the seemingly disparate yet ultimately similar voices rattling inside the Chinese psyche on both sides of the Strait. In both the Taiwanese and Mainland "imagined communities," it seems compromise, sacrifice and adjustment are equally necessary in order to achieve some sort of personal or social satisfaction and harmony. Viewers are left to ponder whether that satisfaction and harmony is the parsimonious choice both Chinese societies face at their respective crossroads. For example, even with the apparently active and important role of females in both societies, at the end of both stories, the gender hierarchies have not been dissolved, but rather shifted and reformatted. Just like every other symbol in both films, in this transitional process, people are dislocated from their perceived roots while new destinations of settlement are not yet in sight.

Both films' iconographies draw heavily from the collective lexicon of both societies. They engage in a vigorous way with a historically specific experience—the social, cultural, ideological and political transition and dislocation of both Chinese societies. They raise a common sigh so piteous and profound that it shatters much of the political confrontation between the two sides. From the surface, the Strait serves as a physical, cultural, ideological and political divide, but beneath that division is one single undercurrent that highlights a cultural imagination borne of the frustration and pain of dislocation, one of the defining Chinese experiences of the late twentieth-century. A historically specific Trans-Chinese imagination thus was conceived: a shared and loosely organized Chinesecentric – but not necessarily Chinese – world view that cultivates various interpretations, representations and understanding of the changing social, economic and political contours in both Chinese societies.

What we are proposing, then, is a repurposing of the analysis of film texts with reference to students approaching journalism, both in pre-professional and critical modes. While the "film class" currently enjoys a rather safe harbor in most liberal arts curricula, the degree to which that class is expressly linked to the skills and ideals of the journalistic craft probably varies to a great degree between institutions and no doubt in some is completely absent. We suggest as a starting point that journalism departments find a way to require such a course of its graduates. But having a single engagement with film and its analysis (ticking off the box, as it were) generally misses the point. Rather, a journalism education which truly values a contextual approach will find ways to incorporate the study of global film (and literature and art) texts into all of its courses and will encourage its students to use these implements each time they approach a story. In the end, the information they gain from doing so may not appear in the story, but what we are suggesting is not that the critical analysis of cultural creations necessarily generates more answers, but rather that it encourages better questions.

While one can obviously state that film is merely entertainment, it is also a cultural product which is a communion. The consummation is created by the producers and viewers in their joint imagination. One could also say the same, moreover, for literature, and yet most educators do not hesitate to suggest that the familiarity with appropriate fiction and non-fiction literature creates greater understanding of cultural contexts (e.g. post-colonial literature as an entrée into the understanding of diasporic cultures such as that of India). The Trans-Chinese imagination established from these two films is a direct contradiction of many common beliefs; the binary description of the two opposite Chinas in the popular press dissolves in the face of this Trans-Chinese imagination. Re-examining and re-configuring issues facing the Greater China does not belong exclusively to the realm of politics. As history has shown repeatedly, journalists occupy an important role in every society's social and political development. A multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach and effort must be made in order to deepen and improve reporting in a contemporary and ever-shifting cultural and political landscape. Journalists and journalism educators should be encouraged to turn to the sphere of culture, in this case film, to see how the popular image articulates its views and ideas about the social world in which they live.

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After the Tulip Revolution: Journalism Education in Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract

Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution of March 2005 was expected to spur democratization. Many journalists and media experts hoped the change in regimes would lead to improvements in a university-level journalism education system that still closely followed the Soviet model of teaching and emphasized theory rather than development of practical skills and adherence to internationally accepted professional standards. A year and a half later, however, little change was evident at universities in the national or regional capitals, raising questions about prospects for rapid change in journalism education following other revolutionary changes in regime in post-communist countries with no free press tradition.

Introduction

Since the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, each now-independent constituent republic has moved in a different direction and at a different speed toward creating and sustaining new regimes and giving at least lip service to or a veneer of democratic institutions. Kyrgyzstan started its independence and continued as the most democratic nation in Central Asia, despite pervasive corruption, economic hardships, and the increasing authoritarianism of the Askar Akayev regime that culminated in its overthrow. As the most consistently democratic—in comparative Central Asian terms—of the region's five former Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan had a reputation for relative liberalism toward the press apart from several years of backsliding in the political and press rights. Kyrgyzstan was the third former Soviet republic—after Georgia and Ukraine—and the first in Central Asia to undergo what the press and Western observers described as a post-independence "revolution" triggered by massive electoral and political corruption.

The country's quick, relatively bloodless popular uprising that ousted Akayev in March 2005 had major implications for the media and press rights. The Tulip Revolution led not only to the country's first comparatively free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections, but also to an initial blossoming of press independence in what had been an environment of increasingly tough governmental controls.

Still, more than 15 years after independence, journalism education in state-run universities continues to adhere to Soviet-style teaching methods with a heavy emphasis on theory rather than practice. Central Asia was largely in the direct sphere of Russian control and influence under the czars before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and was absorbed into the U.S.S.R. The system of journalism after independence and the Tulip Revolution of 2005 still rests solidly on that foundation.

To put the status of journalism education into a broader context, the independent, and market-supported press system that many journalists had hoped for at the time of the Tulip Revolution has largely failed to materialize. Journalists complain of continuing constraints imposed by government, threats and harassment, self-censorship, and financial dependence on foreign funders, governmental agencies, and political groups, although some report improved access to governmental officials, information, and documents (Freedman, 2007). The Institute for Public Policy's training program coordinator, a journalist herself, said, "After the Tulip Revolution we have something like freedom of the press but it's not freedom of the press how Western people understand the meaning. We have no free press. We have no free mass media at all. All mass media are made to order" (Toralieva, 2006). The editor of the independent newspaper *Res Publica* said, "It's very difficult to make any prognosis. However, I am not an optimist and my views are not optimistic. If the general economic problems of the country are not solved, there's no reason to speak of the problems of newspapers. Poor people are not interested in buying newspapers or in television or radio news"(Popova, 2006).

Recent events show there is reason for pessimism about the future of press freedom in Kyrgyzstan. For example in October 2007, the editor of an independent ethnic language weekly, who had aggressively covered human rights abuses, was murdered in Osh, one of the cities where this study took place (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2007). Later in the year, the majority of board of the state-run

National Television and Radio Company resigned after the government failed to take promised steps to convert its television branch into a public-service broadcaster (Mambetalieva, 2007).

The Soviet Model

In light of lingering Soviet traditions of journalism education, it is helpful to briefly examine the roots of that model as scholars such as Mueller (1998), Hopkins (1970), and Altschull (1995) described the development of journalism education and professionalization in the Soviet Union. In 1921, the State (or Moscow) Institute of Journalism, or GIZh, was founded as the paradigm of journalism education, accepting students from across the U.S.S.R to produce worker-peasant correspondents. The curriculum combined technical and professional education; the professional aspect stressed theoretical foundations of propaganda creation and dissemination. There was an ongoing struggle at GIZh and similar programs between accepting ideologically sound students and competent ones. Muller cites statistics showing that in 1921, 71 percent of entering students were party- or Komsomol-affiliated, a proportion that topped 90 percent two years later; meanwhile, incoming students from the intelligentsia plunged from 80 percent to 51 percent over the same years. By the end of that decade, applicants needed at least three years' experience in industry, physical labor, or agriculture.

In 1923, the curriculum was expanded to three years. The first years focused on Russian history, language, and literature, while advanced students studied the American and Western European press, especially the history of the workers' press, basic reporting and writing, and technical subjects including layout. Then as now, a major debate pitted proponents of practical training against advocates of theoretical training.

Mueller (1998) recounted a 1925 GIZh forum at which a professor asserted that reporting should be the focus of training because information is the heart of newspapers. Yet faculty members who called for sending students abroad found themselves under fire for promoting the bourgeois press as a model. One professor proposed that instructors specialize, advocated a student newspaper laboratory, and contended that information must be an essential ingredient of Soviet newspapers.

Programs elsewhere in the country also operated with the principal objective of building the party and promoting socialism. However, Altschull cautioned against assuming a totally ideological interpretation of journalism education:

> Journalism schools throughout the Soviet empire made a point of teaching "Marxist journalism." Whatever that phrase meant, the idea that "Marxist journalism" began with Marx was a central element of Soviet press doctrine. Yet this is not a valid idea; it is folklore that was politically useful in the Soviet Union just as the folklore of an adversary press is politically useful in the United States. In truth, Marx is as difficult to pin down as Jefferson, who can be found on all sides of the issue of press freedom at different periods of his life (1995, 196).

Both before and after the Tulip Revolution, the legacy of Soviet journalism education in Kyrgyzstan has been coupled with inadequate resources to acquire the technology that is crucial to contemporary journalism and to adequately train students to use that technology. Many faculty themselves learned journalism before independence, and their pedagogy includes an orientation toward lectures rather than field reporting assignments, toward rote learning of facts rather than critical thinking, and toward discouragement of students from actively questioning their instructors. Kyrgyz universities also lack independent media outlets where journalism students can practice their skills.

The editor in chief of the Jalal-Abad weekly newspaper *Akyikat*—Truth and Justice—who is a former lecturer at a local university, said:

> I want my journalists to be educated to write in accordance with international standards and know how to use computers. Take them to an event and show them how it's covered by local press, Russian press and media. I was a journalist during Soviet times and we were taught to write only about the words of authorities, and nobody asked the views of others. We still have some of this, no balance and only the views of authorities. They should ask different sides and collect different facts. Our journalists are accommodating to it very slowly (Stambekov, 2006).

Another barrier to reform is the centralized nature of higher education. The Ministry of Education is primarily responsible for standardizing education, planning, and approving curricula at state-run universities. Writing a year before the Tulip Revolution, Dukenbaev described Kyrgyz educational policy as "highly politicized" and emphasized that the ministry "plays a pivotal role" in political mobilization, nation-building, socialization, and promotion of ethnic Kyrgyz cultural values (2004, 17). Journalism education cannot be separated from larger systemic weaknesses in universities. Wolanin observed in a 2002 article, "National poverty, the introduction of market capitalism, and the legacy of Soviet centralization have produced four severe problems in Kyrgyz higher education: corruption, a lack of connection between higher education and industry and student needs, redundancy in the higher education system, and low quality" (2002). Within that system, corruption and lack of academic integrity undermine the quality of instruction. Jacobson wrote:

> Despite some recent changes meant to improve the system, corruption continues to thrive at Kyrgyz universities, with many students paying for entrance, paying for scholarships, and paying for high test grades….
> The problem is compounded because the universities are loath to fail students, whose tuition payments are vital for revenue.... The low level of state funding leaves universities short of cash, and low salaries mean that teachers often look for extra income to get by. Many professors are willing to accept bribes simply to meet basic needs. Salaries for typical public employees (teachers, doctors, police officers, government workers) rarely exceed $100 a month. Interviews with university teachers and other urban public officials indicate that they consider a range of $100 to $500 a month…necessary to lead the life of a comfortable, middle-class professional (2007).

While the scope and practical effects of the Tulip Revolution—even the question of whether it was a "revolution" or simply an unscheduled regime change that did little

to alter the system of governance—are widely debated, the event itself provides a demarcation point for examining several essential components of one country's post-communist mass media system, including journalism education.

An independent and trusted mass media system is a key indicator of a country's development of democracy and civil society. Education of students and training of practicing journalists in professional values, techniques, and ethics is an essential element in maintaining that independence and building that trust. Most Western journalists assert that there are universal professional standards to strive for, such as balance, fairness, accuracy, and ethics (Freedman, Shafer, & Rice, 2006), yet national perspectives vary widely on, for example, what constitutes conflict of interest and what obligation—if any—journalists have to bolster the development of statehood and national identity, especially in a comparatively young country such as Kyrgyzstan.

Since independence, Western governmental, multi-governmental, and non-governmental organizations and international development agencies have supported journalism education with an aim to promote "democratic journalism." Among the goals of donor-driven "democratic journalism" are liberalizing totalitarian regimes, promoting democracy and free market economics, and advocating Western—principally Anglo-American—standards and techniques of professionalism and ethics (Freedman & Shafer, 2006). In other words, foreign funders of journalism education in Kyrgyzstan seek to extend their Western ideologies and political systems, and to further their economic and strategic objectives. At the same time, questions have been raised about the suitability and reality of transplanting Western-style journalistic values and techniques to countries with sharply differing cultural, political, religious, and technological histories and systems. Among them was Brislin, who cautioned about the "futility of attempting to fit indigenous values into a procrustean bed of Western economic or political design. Multiple models of citizen-press-government relations grow legitimately out of indigenous value systems and are endurable within the forces of globalization" (2004, 130-131) Also, Freedman, Shafer, and Rice (2006) have suggested that some elements of the Soviet press model may still be beneficial to Central Asian journalists.

Previous Research

In 2000, an Open Society Institute (OSI) international policy fellow, who also was a journalism faculty member in Kyrgyzstan, examined journalism and mass communication education at three universities there, two of them state-run. She observed that journalism education needed to define and implement standards and to identify people to carry out reforms. Most of her report (Kulikova, 2000) focused on the journalism curriculum at the Western-modeled American University in Kyrgyzstan—later renamed American University of Central Asia (AUCA)—which is discussed later in this article. Reeves (2003) wrote about AUCA's journalism education program in the broader context of higher education reform in the country. Her study described the 2001 controversy over a proposed course called "Censorship and Propaganda," in which some outraged faculty members thought it would be a "how-to" class "in the same way that a class entitled 'video-production' might reasonably be expected to be a training in how to produce videos"; the proponents of the course intended it to be a "critical analysis" of propaganda and censorship.

Overall, journalism education in Central Asia since independence has attracted little Western scholarship. The few scholarly articles and papers about post-independence journalism education in Central Asia include a case study of obstacles to professionalization of the media in Uzbekistan (Shafer & Freedman, 2003); a case study of efforts to implement an environmental and science journalism course at a university in Uzbekistan (Freedman, 2004); and surveys of Kazakh journalism student attitudes toward democracy and advertising (Ketterer & Nemecek, 2001; Fullerton & Weir, 2001).

Meanwhile, researchers have paid closer attention to developments in university-level journalism education and the attitudes of journalism students elsewhere in the former Soviet Union--in Russia itself, and among ex-Warsaw Bloc nations (for example, Aumente et al., 1999; Morrison, 1997; Napoli, 2002; Litvak, Guseva & Ketterer, 2005).

In their 2001 book, Kulikova and Ibraeva wrote about the history and status of the pre-Tulip Revolution media in Kyrgyzstan, including restraints on press freedom, media economics, and relationships between state-run and privately owned news outlets. However, the authors of that book did not examine the education of prospective journalists at universities, including their own.

Research Question and Method

This study is based primarily on interviews with a sample of 34 print and broadcast journalists, full-time and part-time university journalism faculty members, and other press experts. Interview subjects were purposefully chosen to include a mix of staff and freelance journalists from private, independent, and state-owned broadcast and print domestic outlets and international media outlets, as well as academics, policy analysts, governmental press secretaries, and other media experts. They were selected in part based on the author's prior experiences with them and in part on recommendations from the former media support center staff member who served as one of the author's interpreters.

The study aims to address the following research question:

> What substantive changes, if any, occurred in university-level journalism education in Kyrgyzstan in the first year and a half after the March 2005 revolution replaced an authoritarian regime with a more democratic one?

The interviewees are professional journalists, journalism educators and trainers, press rights defenders, and governmental press secretaries. Some fit more than one category: for example a press secretary who is also a newspaper columnist or a journalist who is also an adjunct faculty member. Interviewees were asked to sign an informed consent form in English or Russian, approved by the institutional review board of the author's university. Most agreed to allow their names to be used; a few chose anonymity.

Interviews took place during a two-week period in July 2006 in the national capital, Bishkek, and three oblast capitals—Karakol, Issyk-Kul oblast; Osh, Osh oblast; and Jalal-Abad, Jalal-Abad oblast. Some interviews were in English and others in Russian with an interpreter. The cities were chosen to provide a diversity of

perspectives. Osh and Jalal-Abad are in the south, near the Uzbekistan border, where the Tulip Revolution began. Karakol is in the northeast near the Kazakh border. Bishkek is overwhelmingly urban; the three oblasts are 69.3 percent to 74.7 percent rural.

Interviews were supplemented with an informal discussion with young journalists and university journalism students at Dom Journalista (House of Journalists) in Karakol; a meeting at the Institute of the Media Commissioner of journalists working to create the framework for a new organization, the Public Committee of Media Issues, to promote media development; a press conference by the governor of Issyk-Kul oblast; and informal conversations with several journalists or representatives of Western NGOs involved in civil society development.

Findings

The vast majority of journalism students still graduate with few practical skills or experience in professional settings, a situation little changed from the Soviet era, let alone the Akayev years. Interviewees identified three major failings of journalism education that existed before the Tulip Revolution and continued a year and a half later: inadequate training of students in professional skills; unqualified faculty; and lack of financial resources.

Lack of Professional Skills

One regional newspaper editor acknowledged, "Our current students don't have any skills in terms of theory or practical skills, how to write an article or make a report. Sometimes I ask, `Are you taught to write an article?' and they say no" (anonymous editor, 2006). A European media trainer, who consults for local press organizations, said journalism students not only lack practical skills but "even the very theoretical would not fit what they need. It's out of date. Some faculties are still teaching the history of Soviet journalism" (Loersch, 2006).

Faculty Qualifications

The training program coordinator for the Institute for Public Policy, a Bishkek-based NGO, said, "The problem is our teachers are not journalists in general and are not practicing journalists. That's why many young people who want to be journalists apply to organizations such as the Institute for Public Policy and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, for an opportunity to practice" (Toralieva, 2006). A press rights activist sounded pessimistic:

> Who must change it, teachers? or who? or life? If it is life, we cannot control it. If it is up to teachers, now we have the same teachers as before. In journalism departments they are taught by philologists and historians. These people do not know how to do journalism. They have never written even a single article. Our universities don't invite the leading journalists to teach—universities don't have experts to teach. (anonymous activist, 2006).

Lack of support for reform among high-level university officials reinforces the staying power of old-guard faculty members, said an independent newspaper journalist in Osh:

> The biggest problem is that university deans consider journalism as a movement in philology, how to write stylistics, grammar, that's all. Those people were educated in the Soviet Union, and keep in mind it is was in Brezhnev and Khrushchev's time. You can imagine how conservative they are. They don't even read current newspapers. If they read them, they could move to modern standards, but they're not open to new information. If they were open, they could add new information (Ismanov, 2006).

Resource Limitations

Asked whether students who come to his Karakol television station for professional affiliations—internships—have requisite skills, the station founder replied, "Frankly speaking, no. The method of teaching in our universities leaves much to be desired…. They don't teach them how to use new technology, how to apply new technology in their work. They have very old methods of teaching and they don't have any equipment for students to use" (Saburbekov, 2006). A television journalist in Jalal-Abad discussed his experience as an adjunct faculty member for five years at a state university:

> The university was not provided with textbooks even. It was difficult to teach there. There was no basics and no textbook. It was almost impossible to conduct practical seminars—lectures only. The university was not equipped…. I know one person who is an assistant of the dean and works in the journalism department. She does her best to develop potential skills among her students but she's limited in resources because there is no will from above (Batikan, 2006).

Interviewees identified more problems, including lack of motivation among students, corruption and an absence of academic integrity, and the economics of traditional journalism careers. A former adjunct faculty member said, "There is a tradition in our universities that only two or three students visit the courses. Other students just pay money for the credits" (Stambekov, 2006). Low salaries are disincentives for prospective journalists, one created by fiscal realities—including small advertising and circulation revenue bases and high production and delivery costs. Salaries are so inadequate that many talented, high-potential, ambitious students want to leave Kyrgyzstan to work or study, or they want to work for foreign news organizations that aren't read or watched by ordinary Kyrgyz citizens, take jobs in public relations or with non-media NGOs, or abandon communication careers entirely. A Bishkek professor observed, "Most local media can't offer good job terms. The dilemma is whether they stick to their profession and poor conditions" (Satybaldieva, 2006).

Certainly there is overlap among these factors. As a regional reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty explained, "Journalists are educated according to the Soviet system, and the theory differs greatly from the practice." Then recalling his student experience at Osh State University, he said:

> The professors called themselves teachers and then journalists, but I didn't see any practical circumstances from them. I thought they knew a lot, but soon I learned it was not so. Thinking of international journalism standards, I learned about them only in trainings organized by international NGOs. In the university, you are educated in the history of journalism, the theory of journalism. That is not helpful (Kubanych, 2006).

Journalism Education at American University of Central Asia

Founded in 1997 as American University in Kyrgyzstan with financial support from the NGO Open Society Institute, the U.S. State Department, and the Kyrgyz government, AUCA describes itself as "unlike any other institution in Central Asia or, for that matter, in all of the CIS" as the region's sole higher education institution that followed the American model with an American-style curriculum, credit hour system, and "a commitment to democratic values," to freedom of expression and inquiry, and to academic integrity and honest." (American University in Kyrgyzstan, 2002-2003). The University's undergraduate handbook says:

> In 2000-02 the Journalism Department undertook a major curriculum reform shifting the content focus from Russian philology to modern journalism oriented to objectivity, neutrality and factuality of news reporting. This reform has turned the program into a well-balanced combination of the American and Kyrgyz educational requirements and standards applied to the structure and content of a journalism program (American University of Central Asia).

While this study found that journalism education at other institutions has changed little if at all since the Tulip Revolution, what had been the country's premier journalism program has moved from its traditional focus on print and broadcast journalism and toward public relations and advertising.

The university's 2002-2003 catalogue listed 16 required courses, among them work on the student newspaper, a month-long internship, and an independent project or thesis. Requirements were divided among practical courses on reporting, computer design and layout, photojournalism, and production, and theoretical courses such as media law and ethics, historical and contemporary issues, and mass communication theory. Electives included magazine production, international communications, documentary production, scriptwriting, online journalism, and television criticism, as well as two advertising and two public relations courses.

Then in 2003, AUCA added public relations as a third specialization. The head of the journalism program until mid-2006[1] explained the rationale:

> The main reason was print was not popular among students. We were not recruiting enough students who were interested in print, and in the end only one or two [graduates per year] would work in print, especially in Kyrgyzstan. When we started electives in public relations and advertising, students showed great interest and the market showed great interest (Satybaldieva, 2006).

1 The program director left AUCA to pursue a doctorate in the United Kingdom. Her predecessor as director had left AUCA to pursue a doctorate in the United States.

Currently, public relations is the most popular track, reflecting growing commercialization and urbanization in the country, as well as a belief among students that they are more likely to find better-paying and more prestigious jobs with businesses, governmental agencies, and international organizations than with print and broadcast outlets. The second-most popular track is broadcast, trailed by print. Those who choose print often have friends or relatives in the business, and many continue their education in the United States or Western Europe. The curriculum was also revised to include more analytical and theoretical courses such as mass media and society.

Conclusions

As Kyrgyzstan's experience in the first year and a half after its Tulip Revolution shows, improving journalism education practices will be far from an overnight endeavor. Among the challenges are the lingering legacies and practices of the Soviet higher educational system, legacies and practices that impede reforms. In addition, the placement of programs at state-run universities further impairs prospects for change due to the centralized nature of governmental controls over curricula and resources and a lack of commitment to academic independence. Universities must address systemic problems of academic dishonesty, corruption, and politicization if journalism programs are to earn public and professional respect.

On a practical level, interviewees said the failure to adequately educate students makes it difficult to find qualified young journalists. "We have a real staff problem. For example, they cannot even fill in a proper application form with a question about advantages and disadvantages of your character," said an independent television station director, pulling an application from his desk and reading a question about the advantages and disadvantages of the applicant's character. One student's answer: "'I have no disadvantages. Please trust me'—with mistakes in some words. We had the case of a girl who didn't know the alphabet when we arranged a competition. In a recent competition with about 200 participants, only two stayed. All were supposed to be well educated but only two were suitable to be our employees" (Khudaiberdiev, 2006).

Although this study is not intended to propose solutions for reforming journalism education in Kyrgyzstan, some approaches may improve some systemic and institutional weaknesses, if not improve programs themselves in light of institutional, economic, political, and cultural barriers. One approach is for NGOs to help fill the gap. When the executive director of the Osh Media Resource Center was asked about her NGO's effort to work with universities, she replied:

> We didn't manage to do it but have this issue on our agenda. It's a really painful issue. During student internships, we launched a campaign when students could participate like real journalists but didn't get the expected results because of what those students don't know, and people in those editorial officers were not so open to students. Now we're thinking over a new project that can involve the mass media and students. We want to suggest a mechanism of integration between them. We realized the idea is really interesting but the process is very difficult because editors and students are interested in the process, but we found there is a gap (Aitieva, 2006).

A second approach is to facilitate professional placements or internships to provide hands-on experience. The press secretary to the governor of Osh oblast told how, starting in Soviet days, one independent newspaper hired fourth-year students who got experience before graduation. Now only two papers do so - one has seen weekly circulation grown from 1,500 to 4,000-4,500. "This is thanks to students of the journalism department because they make the newspaper interesting. They simultaneously work on professional skills and receive some experience" (Toksonbaev, 2006).

For press outlets that find too few qualified applicants emerging from universities, post-graduate training is a partial, much-limited alternative. Some training is provided by foreign NGOs, agencies, and media support organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), the U.S.-based International Center for Journalists, and the Denmark-based NGO International Media Support. Other training comes from domestic NGOs such as the Institute for Public Policy in Bishkek, the Osh Media Resource Center, and the Jalal-Abad Media Resource Center, and from local affiliates of international NGOs such as Internews and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. Even for working professionals, short-term training cannot replace comprehensive preparation at the university level.

Self-help is another limited alternative. In Karakol, students and young journalists gather on Friday afternoons at Dom Journalista (House of Journalists) to learn from each other and from guests.

Given the lack of internal resources, it is important for democratic governments, multi-governmental organizations such as OSCE, and NGOs to actively support improved journalism education, including support for domestic and expatriate professionals and for visiting faculty from foreign academic institutions—as through the Fulbright Program—and from the profession—as from the Knight International Journalism Fellowship Program. At the same time, donors, trainers, democracy advocates, press rights activists, and other outsiders must acknowledge and work within historical, cultural, economic and political realities of higher education in Kyrgyzstan, as well as understanding the potency of institutional inertia.

One troubling implication of the failure to professionalize journalism education during the post-Tulip Revolution window of opportunity is its long-term impact on the survival of an independent press. The editor of the Bishkek newspaper *Res Publica* said bluntly,

> I'm not optimistic (about young journalists). They cannot write articles. They cannot be a journalist in the right profession. They cannot write, they cannot compose sentences. This is the main reason I cannot speak optimistically about the future of local media. I'm afraid that in ten years there will be no newspapers. The old professionals will be gone and there is no new generation to replace them (Popova, 2006).

There are monumental institutional and political impediments to reorienting journalism education away from its Soviet-era focus on theory. Most visiting Western faculty and professionals stay only a short time—a few weeks or months, one semester, perhaps a year or two—with little lasting impact on curriculum. Other faculty members who are from Kyrgyzstan but educated in the United States or

Europe have left the country. Meanwhile, programs lack essential equipment such as cameras, tape recorders, computers, editing booths, software, and even textbooks. Given the unlikelihood of imminent reforms at the university level, attention must be paid to training and retraining professionals, especially those outside the capital. Organizations like the Osh Media Resource Center and Jalalbad Media Resource Center must be key allies, given their access to local journalists and their credibility. Foreign trainers are helpful, but domestic professionals better understand and connect better with local journalists.

Nor is it realistic to expect significant pedagogical reforms moving journalism education toward Western models of independence, ethics, and a commitment to fairness, balance, and accuracy while the national environment remains hostile to press rights. Pervasive corruption, authoritarianism at the national, regional, and local levels, lack of transparency, and other impediments to democracy similarly impede development of a free press system that would entice and retain—and adequately compensate—the most talented and best-trained aspiring journalists.

Scholars might examine the type of research question this article explores—did a significant change in journalism education occur during the first year and a half after the Tulip Revolution?—in the two other post-Soviet, post-"revolution" countries and put the answers in a broader context of whether journalists in all three countries operate in a manner more consistent with professional international standards and work in a climate of stronger press rights.

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Public journalism: an agenda for future research

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Abstract

This article summarizes the empirical research literature on public journalism as a means to articulate a broad agenda for future research. After a brief overview of the theory and practice of public journalism, it proceeds to outline potentially fruitful areas of inquiry relating to three of the most significant research foci: (1) journalists' attitudes toward public journalism; (2) differences between public journalism-inspired and conventional, journalistic newswork practices; and (3) public journalism's wider impact. Following this discussion, pedagogical implications of some of the issues raised are examined. The article concludes by considering the most important questions that future research on public journalism ought to address.

The journalistic reform movement known as "public" (or "civic") journalism has inspired much scholarly research.[1] Indeed, since the mid-1990s, when the first empirical studies appeared, more than 80 studies have investigated the practice of public journalism in the United States and, although to a lesser extent, elsewhere. While much is currently known about public journalism, many important questions remain unexplored.

This article summarizes the empirical research literature on public journalism as a means to articulate a broad agenda for future research. It does so for one important reason. Public journalism is at a critical juncture. Having been the subject of much journalistic experimentation and scholarly inquiry over the past decade and a half, such attention is gradually being displaced by a focus on the more recent, so-called citizen-based forms of journalism - or what some observers refer to as a shift from "public journalism" to the "public's journalism" (see Friedland, 2003; Heinonen & Luostarinen, 2005; Witt, 2004) – like political blogs, hyper-local community web sites, and other Internet-based media projects. This is problematic given that, much popular speculation to the contrary, the empirical research literature shows that the news reporting of most of these citizen-based media projects not only runs counter to public journalism's democratic ideals, but in fact falls far behind the movement's actual accomplishments (see Haas, 2007a for a comprehensive review). Thus, to help strengthen public journalism's standing – both vis-à-vis conventional, mainstream journalism and the more recent, citizen-based forms of journalism – it is important that scholars take stock of what is already known and what more should be known to secure the future vitality and growth of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement.

After a brief overview of the theory and practice of public journalism, the article proceeds to outline potentially fruitful areas of inquiry relating to three of the most significant research foci: (1) journalists' attitudes toward public journalism; (2) differences between public journalism-inspired and conventional, journalistic newswork practices; and (3) public journalism's wider impact. Following this discussion, pedagogical implications of some of the issues raised are examined. The article concludes by considering the most important questions that future research on public journalism ought to address.

The Theory and Practice of Public Journalism

Public journalism is based upon the underlying assumption that journalism and democracy are intrinsically linked, if not mutually dependent. While public journalism advocates acknowledge that the practice of journalism depends upon certain democratic protections, most notably freedom from government intervention, they maintain that a genuine democracy depends upon a form of journalism that is committed to promoting active citizen participation in democratic processes (see, for example, Charity, 1995; Merritt, 1998; Rosen, 1999). Conventional, mainstream journalism's lack of commitment to such citizen participation, advocates argue, has contributed to widespread withdrawal by citizens from democratic processes, as manifested by declining voter participation in political elections and, more generally, by declining civic participation in local community affairs. It also has contributed to declining public interest in, and perceived relevance of, journalistically mediated political information, as evidenced by declining newspaper readership. Put differently, advocates perceive contemporary society as being riven by two

widening, but not irreversible, gaps: between citizens and government and between news organizations and their audiences. To help alleviate, or at least reduce, those gaps, advocates argue that journalists should see their primary responsibility as one of stimulating increased civic commitment to, and active citizen participation in, democratic processes. As Glasser and Lee (2002, p. 203) put it: "Public journalism rests on the simple but apparently controversial premise that the purpose of the press is to promote and indeed to promote, and not merely to report on or complain about, the quality of public or civic life." Rosen (1998, p. 54) makes a similar point, arguing that journalists should "help form as well as inform the public."

While public journalism scholars agree about the importance of stimulating increased citizen participation in democratic processes, they disagree about how far journalists should go in trying to further this ideal. Some scholars argue that journalists should be concerned with the processes, but not with the outcomes, of citizen deliberation; refrain from endorsing specific politicians, candidates for office, and political proposals; and avoid partnering with special interest groups that seek to further particular political interests. Other scholars argue that, under conditions of widespread social inequality, journalists should be concerned with whether both the processes and outcomes of citizen deliberation serve the interests of marginalized social groups; endorse politicians, candidates for office, and political proposals that would promote those interests; and partner with special interest groups that seek to further their particular interests (see Haas, 2007a).

Despite of this scholarly disagreement, the actual practice of public journalism exhibits a remarkable consistency. Without going into too much detail here (the empirical research on public journalism's newswork practices is described in more detail below), the practice of public journalism can be said to fall within three overarching categories: (1) election initiatives; (2) special reporting projects; and (3) efforts to make public journalism an integral part of routine news operations. Briefly put, some news organizations focus their election reporting on problems of concern to voters rather than on the campaign agendas of candidates for office, such as by identifying voter concerns through telephone surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions; elaborating on voters' opinions and where they differ from those of candidates; and organizing and reporting back on town hall meetings between voters and candidates. Other news organizations carry out a wide variety of special reporting projects on problems of concern to residents of particular localities, such as by reporting on those problems from the perspectives of residents rather than local government officials, experts, and other elite actors; offering residents opportunities to articulate and debate their opinions in the news pages; and organizing actual sites for resident deliberation and action in the form of roundtable discussions, community forums, and local civic organizations.

Aside from these project-based initiatives, some news organizations have made public journalism an integral part of their routine news operations. While a few news organizations have restructured their newsrooms from conventional beats revolving around institutional sources of information to include multiple geographically-based or topic-based teams focusing on particular localities or problems of concern to local residents, many more news organizations meet up with groups of residents on a regular basis to discuss which problems they would like to see covered, report on those problems, and subsequently invite residents to evaluate their coverage.

Journalists' Attitudes Toward Public Journalism

Since 1988, when the first public journalism initiative was launched by the *Ledger-Enquirer*, a local newspaper in Columbus, Georgia (Rosen, 1991), more than 600 such initiatives have been carried out in the United States and elsewhere (Friedland & Nichols, 2002; Haas, 2006). Although dozens of television and radio stations, both public and commercial, have been involved with public journalism (Dinges, 2000; Potter & Kurpius, 2000), the vast majority of initiatives have been conducted by newspapers, especially local newspapers. Indeed, Friedland and Nichols (2002) found that, among the more than 300 newspapers that have been involved with public journalism in the United States (about one-fifth of the approximately 1,500 daily newspapers), almost half (45 percent) have a circulation of 100,000 or less, with only 6 percent of a circulation of 500,000 or more.

While it is known which kinds of news media practice public journalism, little is known about why certain kinds of news media are more involved with public journalism than others. First, why do more newspapers practice public journalism than television and radio stations? Should the extensive involvement of newspapers be attributed to a comparatively stronger public service ethos than among their increasingly more commercially-oriented broadcasting counterparts? Or is it attributable to the efforts of major newspaper companies to promote public journalism among their properties? Indeed, many scholars speculate that the emergence and spread of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement owes much to the endorsement of major newspaper companies such as Cox Enterprises, Gannett, and Knight-Ridder (see, for example, Nichols, 2004; Rosen, 1999; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001).

Second, why do more local newspapers practice public journalism than their regional and national counterparts? Should the extensive involvement of local newspapers be attributed to their comparatively closer ties to their local communities? Or is the limited involvement of regional and national newspapers a manifestation of their unwillingness to risk compromising one of the major sources of their cultural capital and authority: their privileged access to elite sources of information? Indeed, one of the defining features of public journalism, as previously mentioned, is journalists' efforts to focus attention on problems of concern to citizens and to do so from their perspectives rather than those of government officials, experts, and other elite actors.

More generally, much remains to be known about how public journalism is being introduced into newsrooms and how editors and reporters, the ones ultimately responsible for designing and carrying out given public journalism initiatives, react to it. The answers to these questions could help determine what, if anything, can be done to increase news organizations' support of public journalism. After all, while more than 300 newspapers in the United States have been involved with public journalism, the vast majority have not. And among the former, only 45 percent have practiced public journalism continuously for five or more years (Friedland & Nichols, 2002). Thus, whether on the basis of philosophical principle or short-term experimentation, most newspapers in the United States remain fundamentally unchanged by public journalism.

Research shows that, although the majority of journalists approve of many of the practices associated with public journalism (see, for example, McDevitt, Gassett,

& Perez, 2000; Payne, 1999; Weaver et al., 2006), journalists are attitudinally most comfortable with the practices that differ the least from those of conventional, mainstream journalism. While most journalists agree it is their responsibility to focus their reporting on problems of concern to citizens, incorporate citizens' views on those problems in their coverage, and provide information on local civic organizations that work on those problems, few agree it is their responsibility to sponsor fora where citizens can deliberate about and formulate possible solutions to problems, try to help citizens reach consensus on how given problems should be resolved, and work directly with local civic organizations to help implement actual solutions to those problems - the latter three of which lie at the very center of public journalism (see, for example, Dickson, Brandon, & Topping, 2001; Jeffres et al., 2001; Voakes, 1999). Indeed, journalists, including those who work for news organizations practicing public journalism, continue to adhere strongly to conventional, journalistic practices, such as to investigate government claims, provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems, and get information to the public quickly (see, for example, Arant & Meyer, 1998; Bare, 1998; Gade et al., 1998); that is, practices which tap into what Weaver & Wilhoit (1996) call journalists' "interpretive/investigative" and "disseminator" role functions, respectively.

If journalists, as outlined above, are attitudinally most comfortable with the public journalism practices that differ the least from those of conventional, mainstream journalism, and continue to adhere strongly to conventional, journalistic practices, does this imply that public journalism is being forced upon reluctant, if not resistant, journalists by news media owners and managers? As previously mentioned, many scholars speculate that the emergence and spread of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement owes much to the endorsement of major US newspaper companies. Or do journalists agree to practice public journalism on their own volition? It is possible that, while public journalism is being met with resistance by journalists when first introduced into newsrooms, journalists begin to see its merits once they gain actual experience with it. Indeed, journalists' approval of public journalism's practices has been found to be higher among those who work for news organizations that have been involved as opposed to not involved in actual public journalism initiatives as well as among those who work for smaller as opposed to larger news organizations - the primary site of public journalism (see, for example, Arant & Meyer, 1998; Dickson, Brandon, & Topping, 2001; Voakes, 1999).

Nonetheless, the fact that many journalists, including those who work for news organizations practicing public journalism, adhere to public journalism-inspired and conventional, journalistic practices might suggest that journalists continue to doubt public journalism's merits, even after having gained actual experience with it. Thus, future research ought to redouble its efforts to investigate how public journalism is introduced and received in newsrooms and with what effects. The answers to these questions could help specify what, if anything, can be done to eliminate, or at least reduce, journalists' resistance toward public journalism. Indeed, a consistent research finding in both the United States and elsewhere is that the news organizations most successful at sustaining their commitment to public journalism over time are those with a high level of support on the part of news management *and* rank-and-file journalists (see, for example, Friedland, 2003; Romano, 2001; Ruusunoksa, 2006).

Public Journalism's Newswork Practices

Although (public) journalists are not fully convinced about its merits, research has found that the news reporting of news organizations practicing public journalism differ in important respects from that of mainstream news organizations more generally. Quantitative content analyses of public journalism-inspired election initiatives, special reporting projects, and daily news coverage shows that news organizations practicing public journalism: (1) carry longer, more staff-written, and more locally-oriented stories; (2) focus more attention on substantive policy issues than on isolated political events; (3) report more on possible solutions to given problems under investigation; (4) emphasize candidates' issue positions, qualifications for office, and policy records; (5) de-emphasize campaign-managed events and candidates' strategies and image-management techniques; and (6) feature less horse-race coverage and who's-ahead-and-who's-behind public opinion polls (see, for example, Evatt, 1999; Meyer & Potter, 2000; Reynolds, 1999).

Moreover, research shows that these news organizations: (1) carry more election-related mobilizing information, such as information about how to register to vote and where to go to cast one's ballot, and more information about how to become involved in local, citizen-based problem-solving efforts, such as by including contact information for local civic organizations working on given problems under investigation; and (2) display such mobilizing information more often in visual form, including through the use of prominent graphics (see, for example, Blazier & Lemert, 2000; Coleman & Wasike, 2004; McMillan et al., 1998).

Finally, research shows that news organizations practicing public journalism feature more ordinary citizens, including women and minorities, as sources of information than do mainstream news organizations more generally. Yet, when it comes to the overall sourcing pattern, the results are more mixed. While some news organizations quote more citizens than elite actors, other news organizations quote an equal amount of citizens and elite actors, or even quote more elite actors than citizens (see, for example, Kennamer & South, 2002; Massey, 1998; Moscowitz, 2002).

While much is known about public journalism's newswork practices, many important questions remain unexplored. First, little is known about whether news organizations practicing public journalism only promote local problem-solving, or whether these news organizations also promote problem-solving of a larger (e.g., regional or national) scope. Although most public journalism initiatives to date have been carried out by local news organizations, especially local newspapers, many larger-scale news organizations have been involved with public journalism, including national newspapers such as *Asahi Shimbun* (Japan), *Clarion* (Argentina), *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden), *El Tiempo* (Columbia), *Helsingin Sanomat* (Finland), and *La Nacion* (Argentina), and national broadcasting outlets such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Australia), the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (Malawi), National Public Radio (the United States), the Public Broadcasting Service (the United States), the Swaziland Broadcasting Corporation (Swaziland), and the Swaziland Broadcasting and Information System (Swaziland) (see Haas, 2006).

Second, little is known about why news organizations practicing public journalism do not consistently quote more citizens than elite actors as sources. Is this a function of public journalists' continued adherence to public journalism-inspired *and*

conventional, journalistic practices? Or should it be attributed to news media owners' and managers' economic concerns with keeping the information-gathering costs as low as possible? Certainly, it costs considerably less in terms of journalists' time and energy to solicit information from elite actors than to gather citizen input through telephone surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and other means (see Loomis, 1998; Meyer, 1998; Potter & Kurpius, 2000). Relatedly, little is known about how citizens are quoted. Do journalists highlight citizens' underlying reasons for espousing certain opinions? Or do they merely offer citizens opportunities to state their opinions on given issues but without substantiating their claims? Are citizens presented as embodied beings who speak from specific social locations? Or are they presented as disembodied beings who do not speak from any particular vantage points? Finally, do journalists offer citizens opportunities to introduce and comment on issues that traditionally have been rendered off-limits of public deliberation? Or do they only solicit citizen commentary on a limited range of pre-defined issues?

Third, little is known about whether the various differences in news reporting outlined above are also characteristic of news organizations outside the United States. Indeed, the only non-US-based, quantitative content analyses carried out to date have focused on the practice of public journalism in Australia and New Zealand (see, for example, Ewart, 2003; McGregor, Comrie, & Fountaine, 1999; McGregor, Fountaine, & Comrie, 2000).

More generally, while much is known about public journalism' newswork practices on the news pages, little is known about its off-the-news-page efforts to promote citizen-based deliberation and problem-solving. This is both surprising and unfortunate considering that more than half (58 percent) of all public journalism initiatives in the United States (Friedland & Nichols, 2002) as well as many elsewhere (Haas, 2006) feature various kinds of news-media-sponsored, deliberative fora. Thus, future research ought to investigate the structure and foci of such fora as well as the moderating roles journalists play. For example, do news organizations sponsor multiple fora in given localities where members of different social groups can deliberate about their particular concerns among themselves? Or do news organizations sponsor more encompassing fora in which members of various social groups are encouraged to jointly deliberate about problems of presumed common concern? And to the extent that the latter rather than the former is the case: Do news organizations make special efforts to promote participatory parity among members of different social groups, such as by helping to foreground the concerns of the most marginalized social groups?

Public Journalism's Impact

As is the case for public journalism's newswork practices, much is known about the wider impact of public journalism. Research shows that public journalism initiatives have various positive effects on citizens' civic knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. In terms of civic knowledge and attitudes, public journalism initiatives have been found to enhance citizens': (1) interest in, knowledge of, and concern for election-year issues and local community problems; (2) trust in others; (3) willingness and perceived ability to take part in public problem-solving efforts; and (4) positive attitudes toward participating news organizations. In terms of civic behaviors, such initiatives have been found to enhance citizens' inclination to: (1) engage in

interpersonal discussion of election-year issues and local community problems; (2) volunteer for and/or donate money to local civic organizations; (3) establish new civic organizations; (4) contact public officials about local community problems; (5) register to vote; and (6) vote in elections (see, for example, Bowers & Walker, 2003; Denton & Thorson, 1998; Meyer & Potter, 2000).

Moreover, research has uncovered a number of design features that, if incorporated into given public journalism initiatives, tend to strengthen their impact on citizens. Briefly put, public journalism initiatives are most effective when they are: (1) carried out as multiple-media partnerships between two or more news organizations than by individual news organizations working on their own, (2) focused on a single problem over a sustained period of time rather than on multiple problems for shorter periods of time, and (3) aimed at involving citizens in efforts to solve problems rather than merely to deliberate about problems (see Nichols et al., 2006; Thorson, Friedland, & Anderson, 1997; Thorson et al., 1998).

Finally, research shows that, in terms of their wider political impact, public journalism initiatives prompt government officials to make more public funds available for existing efforts to address given problems, and even to change their public policies toward those problems (see Friedland, 2000; Friedland & Nichols, 2002; Nichols et al., 2006).

While much is known about public journalism's impact, many questions remain unexplored. Most importantly, although a number of useful design features have been identified, little is known about which of public journalism's newswork behaviors (both on and off the news pages) are responsible for which outcomes. For example, should citizens' enhanced interest in, knowledge of, and concern for local community problems be attributed to the increase in locally-oriented stories? Or is it attributable to the increased use of ordinary citizens as sources? Similarly, should citizens' enhanced inclination to vote in elections be attributed to the increased emphasis on candidates' issue positions, qualifications for office, and policy records? Or is it attributable to the increased inclusion of election-related mobilizing information?

Second, and relatedly, little is known about how the effects of given public journalism initiatives are distributed within particular localities. Does public journalism reduce differences in political interest, knowledge, and participation among dominant and marginalized social groups? Or, does it stabilize, or even widen, any pre-existing differences among different social groups? Similarly, do the solutions that are eventually enacted by citizens and/or government officials benefit all social groups within a given locality? Or do those solutions favor the interests of certain dominant social groups?

Third, little is known about which of public journalism's newswork practices, both on and off the news pages, are responsible for the impact on government officials. For example, is government officials' inclination to support existing efforts to solve given problems, or even to change their public policies toward those problems, attributable to the heightened public attention to, and concern for, those problems? Or is it attributable to particular features of given public journalism initiatives, such as the hosting of news-media sponsored, deliberative fora on those problems?

Finally, little is known about what impact, if any, public journalism has on the participating news organizations themselves. While research shows that involvement in given public journalism initiatives enhances citizens' positive attitudes toward the participating news organizations, little is known about whether their internal operations also change as a result. On one hand, there is reason to believe that involvement in public journalism has only limited internal impact. Aside from the fact that journalists who work for news organizations practicing public journalism continue to doubt public journalism's merits, only a few news organizations have challenged mainstream information-gathering practices, such as by substituting the conventional beat system with multiple geographically-based or issue-based teams focusing on particular localities or problems of concern to local residents. On the other hand, many news organizations have made it a routine part of their news operations to meet up with groups of residents on a regular basis to discuss which problems they would like to see covered, report on those problems, and subsequently to encourage residents to evaluate their coverage.

Pedagogical Implications

If journalists, as previously discussed, continue to resist public journalism's more activist practices, an important question for future research is whether there is anything journalism educators can do to help ensure that future generations of journalists will embrace public journalism more fully. Certainly, the problem is not a lack of commitment to public journalism instruction on the part of journalism schools. According to the most comprehensive study to date, while 12 percent of US journalism programs have specific courses devoted to public journalism, public journalism is a topic for discussion or is taught as a journalistic practice in 84 percent of programs (Dickson, Brandon, & Topping, 2001; see the web site of the *Public Journalism Network*, www.pjnet.org, for information about the teaching of public journalism around the world).

Rather, there is reason to believe that the way in which public journalism is currently being taught does not sufficiently take into account students' need for a sense of professional identification. Research shows that students, like practicing journalists more generally, are much more favorably disposed toward public journalism's less activist practices and, more importantly, that students' resistance toward public journalism's more activist practices are highest among those who have had practical newsroom experience, such as by working for campus newspapers or interning at local news organizations (Anyaegbunam & Ryan, 2003; McDevitt, Gassaway, & Perez, 2002; Rauch, Trager, & Kim, 2003).

In a series of articles reflecting on students' attitudes toward public journalism, McDevitt (2000, 2002, 2003) speculates that students' resistance toward public journalism's more activist practices, especially among those with practical newsroom experience, could be attributed to students' developing need for a sense of professional identification; that is, a sense of identification with mainstream journalistic norms and practices. Given that these norms and practices run counter to public journalism, students, especially those with practical experience in mainstream newsrooms, are likely to resist public journalism.

Future research could put McDevitt's (2000, 2002, 2003) reasoning to the test by comparing student attitudes among those whose public journalism instruction has involved collaboration with news organizations practicing public journalism, such as through the joint design and implementation of given public journalism initiatives, and those whose public journalism instruction has been confined to the classroom. Indeed, one might speculate that the opportunity to work directly with journalists committed to public journalism, an important feature of many journalism programs in the United States and elsewhere (see Haas, 2007b), would inspire in students a stronger sense of professional identification with public journalism's practices. Similarly, future research could compare student attitudes among those whose public journalism instruction has been an integral part of their educational experience and those whose public journalism instruction has been confined to particular courses. For example, it is likely that students enrolled in the University of Alabama's master's degree program in public journalism, a program where students receive extensive instruction in public journalism-inspired news reporting methods while putting their learning to practical and repeated use at the *Anniston Star*, a local newspaper with a long history of public journalism experimentation (see Haas, 2007a for details on this and other similar programs), would be more favorably disposed toward public journalism's practices than would students whose experiences with public journalism have been limited to one or a few courses.

Conclusion

The prior discussion shows that while much is currently known about public journalism - how journalists feel about it, how its news coverage differs from that of conventional, mainstream journalism, and what its wider impact is - many important questions remain unexplored. The answers to the questions outlined in the preceding sections are significant, not merely as means to obtain a more complete picture of the practice of public journalism, but, more importantly, to help secure the future vitality and growth of public journalism as a journalistic reform movement.

First, it is important to investigate why many journalists, including journalists who work for news organizations practicing public journalism, continue to doubt public journalism's merits. While numerous news organizations in the United States and elsewhere have practiced and continue to practice public journalism, the ones most successful at sustaining their commitment to public journalism over time are those with a high level of support on the part of news media owners, managers, and journalists. Thus, future research ought to redouble its efforts to investigate what can be done to secure - and maintain - journalists' support of public journalism.

While figuring out how to strengthen journalists' support of public journalism is crucial to the movement's continuing vitality and growth, it is no less important to investigate what can be done to ensure that public journalism's newswork practices are consistently applied across participating news organizations. Although it is heartening to know, for example, that these news organizations quote more citizens as sources than do mainstream news organizations more generally, it is troubling that many of these news organizations continue to rely more heavily on elite actors for information. Thus, future research ought to identify the factors that stand in the way of news organizations relying more fully on citizens as sources.

Finally, but not least importantly, it is essential that future research more precisely determines which of public journalism's newswork practices, both on and off the news pages, are responsible for which outcomes. Such investigations would help public journalism's newsroom practitioners better aim their efforts toward particular outcomes and, hopefully, also enhance their social relevance. For example, it would be very useful to know which of public journalism's newswork practices tend to reduce pre-existing differences in political interest, knowledge, and participation among dominant and marginalized social groups.

Notes

1 While no review of the empirical research literature on public journalism can claim absolute comprehensiveness, I followed a number of procedures to obtain as complete a selection of studies as possible. First, I consulted all of the academic books on public journalism, especially those which either reported on or contained references to empirical studies (e.g., Eksterowicz & Roberts, 2000; Lambeth, Meyer, & Thorson, 1998; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001). Second, I conducted a comprehensive search of the major academic search engines, including, but not limited to, Academic Search Premier, Communication Abstracts Online, and Communication and Mass Media Complete, as well as popular search engines like Google (including Google Scholar), Lycos, and Yahoo, using the search terms "public," "civic," and "participatory" journalism. Third, I consulted the programs from the annual conventions of the major communication and journalism-related scholarly societies (from 1995-2007), including, but not limited to, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the International Communication Association, the Journalism Education Association, the International Association for Media and Communication Research, and the National Communication Association. Finally, to broaden my selection of studies of public journalism in the non-English-speaking world, I consulted a number of relevant review articles (e.g., Paulussen et al., 2007; Pauly, 1999; Mwangi, 2001), monitored closely particular journals in which such studies were likely to appear, notably the *Global Media Journal* (all editions), the *Journal of Development Communication, and Media Development,* as well as contacted all of the scholars who have written about the practice of public journalism outside the United States. Nevertheless, while public journalism has been and continues to be practiced in many non-English-speaking parts of the world, including Africa (Malawi, Senegal, Swaziland), Europe (Denmark, Finland, Sweden), and South America (Argentina, Columbia, Mexico) (see Haas, 2007a for a comprehensive overview), virtually all of the scholarly writings about these initiatives are descriptive accounts rather than empirical studies proper.

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