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THE RHETORIC OF NONFICTION: AN EXAMINATION OF  
SEBASTIAN JUNGER'S THE PERFECT STORM

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

---

by  
LaShawn Jon Janice Cole  
June 2008

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June 2008

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## ABSTRACT

Sebastian Junger uses aspects of both new journalism and creative nonfiction in his account titled The Perfect Storm. The text provides an account of six fishermen aboard the Andrea Gail who died in the Halloween Gale in October 1991. This thesis examines how Junger uses rhetorical and narrative devices as he blends genres and asks what makes a text an acceptable recreation of an historical event. Though there are no remaining witnesses, Junger explores the probable and the possible based on the evidence to make predictions as he interprets data and fills in gaps to present as complete an account as possible under the circumstances. The thesis begins with a brief description and analysis of various genres Junger blends in his text. What follows is a look at the challenges of interpretation in historical writing and theoretical framing of the genre distinctions regarding new journalism and nonfiction narrative. Further, the structure is outlined to show how elements of fiction rhetorically enhance the narrative. This study provides insights into the rhetorical purposes and practices of genres that mix elements of fiction and non-fiction.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the strength to complete this process. I would like to thank Dr. Holly Henry and Dr. Jackie Rhodes for their support, encouragement, and time. Thank you to my dear friends in Victors in Praise and Denise Boochee for your prayers, encouragement, and words of wisdom.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mom and dad who prayed, supported, and encouraged me throughout this process.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORETICAL FRAMING OF GENRE DISTINCTIONS

In his nonfiction narrative The Perfect Storm, Sebastian Junger recreates the experiences of the six fishermen aboard the Andrea Gail who died in the October 1991 Halloween gale, the worst storm to hit the Eastern seaboard of the U.S. in the last 100 years. Nonfiction writers such as Junger must deal with an interesting rhetorical question: how can one recreate fairly the "truth" of a situation while using imaginative means? In Junger's case, the question of authorial credibility adds an additional twist to the question, because Junger does not know the exact "truth" and the witnesses, all dead, cannot share their experiences. If reality is, in the end, whatever the teller sees and then constructs, the reader might raise the question of just how many liberties, if any, a writer may take in recreating historical events. Further, the readers' perception and acceptance of the writer's presentation of the events plays a part in the reality created by the writer. The work of the writer is thus more important because the organization and tone of the narrative influence the perception and emotions of the



reader. Strategic organization and creation of mood are needed along with other techniques to draw the reader into the narrative and influence the reader to accept the author's presentation of the events. Junger uses aspects of fiction writing, literary techniques such as dialogue, plot, scene construction to make the presentation of his nonfiction believable.

My study will draw from critical work by Truman Capote, Lee Gutkind, and Tom Wolfe, to discuss the rhetorical purposes and practices of genres that mix elements of fiction and nonfiction. The title of Junger's book is itself an interesting rhetorical choice, since the deaths of the men seem to contrast with the term "perfect." There have been countless storms over the centuries, but Junger titles his book The Perfect Storm. The title makes a definite statement, calls for attention, and begs the question, "What makes this storm 'perfect'?" Junger informs the reader early on that the title is a meteorological reference and is in no way related to the tragic events. In his preface, he explains that the term "perfect" is a meteorological term to describe "a storm that could not possibly have been worse" (xiv). In making this choice, he highlights the severity of the circumstances the men of the

Andrea Gail faced at sea. The selection of the word "perfect" and the explanation that follows frames the text in such a way that readers know early on that the journey on which they embark and the events they will read about might seem larger than life and perhaps even larger than their own imagination--yet the events are true and probable under the circumstances. To make the improbable seem possible, literary elements and new journalism techniques are combined in order to enhance the rhetorical presentation of the details and events.

Nonfiction writers use techniques such as construction of plot, theme, setting, mood, and character in the same way as fiction writers. In The Perfect Storm, Junger uses literary techniques and presents dates, times, and historical data related to the events leading up to the night of the storm. Junger describes waves of over one hundred feet, winds whipping at over two hundred miles per hour, and other seemingly impossible circumstances. Junger shows that he realizes the depth and the difficulty of his narrative task when he writes, "I've written as complete an account as possible of something that can never be fully known" (xiv).

Further, he acknowledges:

If I didn't know exactly what happened aboard the doomed boat, for example, I would interview people who have been through similar situations; and survived. Their experiences, I felt, would provide a fairly good description of what the six fishermen on the Andrea Gail had gone through, and said, and perhaps even felt. (The Perfect Storm xiii-xiv)

Junger uses accounts of previous storms to set up the probable environment the men at sea faced. He presents to the readers information regarding the storm and allows them to join him on his detective-like journey. A rhetorical analysis of Junger's narrative is useful in order to examine how the facts and elements of probability are seamlessly blended with new journalism and fiction techniques to the point that the probable appears as "truth."

Hayden White notes in Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism that the strategies available to the historiographer also include devices common in fiction writing; this shared method helps to establish the link

between historical recreation, new journalism, and creative nonfiction. He writes:

[H]istorians gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles and stories in turn are made of chronicles by an operation which I have elsewhere called 'emplotment'...[which is] simply the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures. (83)

His point about emplotment is that all nonfiction is written with elements of fiction, characters are given motive, obstacles and scenes are given moods, etc. While Junger claims that he "didn't resort to fiction to tell a story," he nevertheless uses techniques of fiction to emplot a certain type of story: a tragedy ("Interview with the Author 1"). As White has noted, "There are always more facts in the record than the historian can possibly include in his narrative representation of a given segment of the historical process" (51). Junger presents a seemingly endless amount of data in order to fill in the gaps of the incident, doing his best to avoid "asphyxiat[ing] [the

narrative] under a mass of technical detail and conjecture” (Junger xiii).

Junger skillfully uses rhetoric to persuade readers to accept his version of the events as the most probable, hence, the most “true.” An in-depth look will be taken at Hayden White’s theories on historiography, specifically the difficulties historians face when interpreting history, to determine how Junger creates a narrative that is believable.

Like a historiographer, Junger recreates an event to which there are no remaining witnesses. He rhetorically negotiates his own credibility by admitting that the events he recounts “can never be fully known” (xiv). He explores the probable and the possible based on the evidence to make predictions. Junger writes, “I resorted to a kind of journalism-by-analogy to tell what probably happened on the Andrea Gail” (“Interview with the Author”). Once again Junger reveals that he recognizes there are limitations to what he is presenting, but they do not lessen what he presents because as White contends, “The historian must ‘interpret’ his materials [historical data] by filling in the gaps in his information on inferential or speculative grounds” (51). White’s use of the verb “interpret” suggests

that he acknowledges that though there are gaps the historiographer must grapple with, this lack of knowledge does not hinder the historian's ability to present a probable or believable recreation of events.

Junger's text raises the issue of how to determine what is acceptable as a probable interpretation of events. This subject of "acceptable probability" was taken into consideration by ancient philosophers and rhetoricians known as Sophists. They "tend(ed) to see all language use as rhetorical--that is persuasive in intent" (Bizzell 5). Their movement involved a debate about whether it was possible to really know the "truth." For the most part, Sophists believed that "certainty or absolute truth is not available to humans...but probable knowledge can be refined by pitting opposing positions against one another and examining the arguments thus brought forward" (Bizzell 22). In Junger's case, The Perfect Storm can be read as the evidence and analysis he presents to support his interpretation of what probably happened to the men aboard the Andrea Gail.

Junger acknowledges that he cannot know the absolute truth. He says, "I wound up sticking strictly to the facts, but in as wide-ranging way as possible...I've written as

complete an account as possible of something that can never be fully known" (xiii-xiv). For example, when presenting Billy Tyne's reaction when the weather report indicates a storm is brewing, Junger writes,

When Billy receives the weather chart off the fax machine, he undoubtedly tells the crew that there's something very heavy on the way...Maybe he thinks nothing can sink him; or maybe the sea is every nightmare he's ever had. A good worried crew starts by dogging down every hatch, porthole, and watertight door on the boat.

(121-22)

Junger uses this type of speculative and hedging language throughout the narrative. He shows what a "good worried crew" would typically do and implies that the actions of any crew are likely the same as what the crew of the Andrea Gail would also do. The strength of Junger's text lies in his admission that he presents the "truth" as well as it can be known based on the available data, evidence, and testimonials. In a sort of modern Sophistry, Junger's journalistic account demonstrates "that only provisional or probable knowledge is available to human beings" (Bizzell 24). Since there is no way to know exactly what occurred on

the Andrea Gail, Junger's exhaustive detective like methods of piecing the narrative together represent the extent to which knowledge of the probable events that occurred during the October 1991 Halloween gale can be known.

Junger uses rhetorical and narrative devices borrowed from both new journalism and creative nonfiction in writing his text. He gathered documentation through research and interviews over several years in order to describe a series of past events. Junger's journalistic account, though not fiction, has the appearance of a novel in form and structure. He uses facts to develop a plot structure and describes the crew as a cast of characters. With the exact details unknown the question arises "What makes a nonfiction text an acceptable recreation of an historical event?" How does Junger successfully negotiate these rhetorical challenges as he mixes the aforementioned genres to produce a believable historical recreation?

Hayden White's idea of historicism, in narrative, offers an explanation, White notes,

A historical narrative is thus necessarily a mixture of adequate and inadequately explained events, a congeries of established and inferred facts, at once a representation that is an



interpretation and an interpretation that passes for an explanation of the whole process mirrored in the narrative. (51)

While Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe provide insights into the rhetorical purposes and practices of genres that mix elements of fiction and nonfiction, White provides a means of considering the ethical questions that writing history raises. In order to discuss the ethical implications of historical nonfiction, I will draw from Hayden White's Tropics of Discourse, in which he contends that in the recreation of history absolute certainty is not possible:

The historian...seeks to exploit a certain perspective on the world that does not pretend to exhaust description of analysis of all of the data in the entire phenomenal field but rather offers itself as one way among many of disclosing certain aspects of the field. (46)

Thus, history or accepted "truth" is a rhetorical construction; interpretation is open to argument; and, ethical representation recognizes itself as rhetorical.

Capote's discussion of the nonfiction novel, a genre also called creative nonfiction, will serve as a starting point for my analysis of Capote who describes the genre he

developed in In Cold Blood as a "nonfiction novel - a book that [. . .] read[s] exactly like a novel except that every word of it [is] absolutely true" (qtd. in Grobel 112).

Though there are claims that others have written in this style before Capote, he contends that he is the originator.

John Hollowell, author of Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and The Nonfiction Novel, says of Capote,

In Cold Blood possesses a tremendous power to involve the reader. This immediacy, this spellbinding 'you are there' effect, comes less from the sensational facts (which are underplayed) than from the 'fictive' techniques Capote employs. (69-70)

Similarly, Gufkind, editor of Creative Nonfiction, observes that creative nonfiction "allows a writer to employ the diligence of a reporter [with] the shifting voices and viewpoints of a novelist" (1).<sup>1</sup> Gutkind's comment suggests the connection between creative nonfiction and the new journalism. Tom Wolfe, a prominent new journalism writer, also notes the possibility that "it just might be possible to write journalism that would...read like a novel" (The New Journalism 8). The word "like" implies that the integrity

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.creativenonfiction.org/thejournal/whatisconf.htm>

of journalism is not lost with the addition of fiction writing's techniques.

According to Wolfe, the new journalism developed in the 1960's as part of an effort to capture the actuality of a world in crisis as evidenced by protests, war, and civil and racial unrest. The genre that resulted goes beyond the "just the facts" approach of traditional journalism and tries to evoke the feeling and emotion of an event. The static (some might say dry) "who, what, where, when, why, and how" format of traditional journalism has been made more flexible by new journalism writers. Like Wolfe, Junger avoids a traditional journalistic style and models the new journalism style at the very beginning of his text with the opening description which will be looked at in detail in Chapter Two.

As Wolfe explains, reporters of the era were "discover[ing] the devices that gave the realistic novel [a popular form of writing at the time] its unique power" (31). Realistic novels are "concerned with the actual social setting in which their personages exist. The concrete world of physical fact [and] the shapes of society are essential to the art" (Snow xi). In other words, the

Realistic novel showed a heart or sense of caring towards its subject through attention to detail.

Junger uses fiction to enhance his nonfiction narration, but not to create a realistic novel. Realistic novels use portions of real events to enhance the telling of a completely creative or fictional work made up of characters. Junger uses the attention to detail aspect as a new journalist would to draw the reader into the emotion of his narrative. Wolfe notes the following four characteristics concerning the Realistic novel: (1) scene-by scene construction; (2) recording the dialogue in full; (3) third-person point of view "giving the reader the experience of being inside the character's mind"; and (4) "[capturing] the emotional reality of the scene...and recording of everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs...and other symbolic details" (The New Journalism 31-2). Personality details are designed to create a more personal/intimate connection between the reader and the subject(s) of a journalistic account.

Junger and other journalists have the added advantage because they are dealing with real people. Though presented like characters, the people of Junger's text become life-like and real as the reader learns more and more about them

through the presentation of the intimate details of their lives.

Considering that the six men died, readers have to allow for some type of leeway and expect gaps in the account, as they evaluate Junger's journalistic presentation. The personality and back-story details of the people help fill in the narrative where facts are lacking. A question a reader might consider, for example, is the issue of the timeline. The exact events and the timing of them that Junger presents clearly come into question. However, Nicolaus Mills, author of The New Journalism: A Historical Anthology, explains that "the structure of a new journalistic story will, for example, tend to be based on a dramatic rather than a chronological narrative of events" (xiv). In order to produce the most captivating presentation of a series of events, a journalist has leeway, when there is a gap in information, in presenting the order of the events. Even more so for Junger, since he has to evaluate the data and reconstruct the possible outcomes of unknown events. Junger could be justified, according to Mills, in not sticking strictly to a timeline. To some extent, he is free to speculate on what happened to

the men based on the testimonies by others at sea regarding what was going on during the storm.

The details the journalist chooses to present not only shape a person or persons, but also the reader's perception of the person. The blending of the familiar, such as "everyday gestures" and "habits" (The New Journalism 31-2), with the more concrete elements, the facts and figures, allows the reader to enter into the mind and environment of those involved. As this familiarity is developed for the reader, a reader perhaps begins to believe that s/he knows the subject and may be able to identify with the circumstances and the emotions expressed in the nonfiction text. This move to identification is discussed in the work of rhetorician Kenneth Burke. Burke "examines the ways in which the terms used to create identification work to include the members of a group in common ideology, while at the same time excluding alternate terms, other groups, and competing ideologies" (Bizzell 1296). Burke discusses rhetoric, habitually linked to persuasion. In short, the writer or orator creates a framework in which the audience can relate in such a way as to feel like a knowledgeable, participant, and interpreter of what is being presented. This type of identification seems to create a bond between

writer, reader and the subject of the nonfiction text. Even if the reader is not familiar with the circumstances, as for example in The Perfect Storm of life at sea, Junger as the journalist becomes the voice for the narration of the events and thus sets the stage for how the situation is perceived.

In relation to Burke, Aristotle in his Rhetoric adds that "a statement is persuasive and credible either because it is directly self-evident or because it appears to be proved from other statements that are so...A probability is a thing that usually happens" (Qtd. in Bizzell 183). In other words the surrounding statements work together to support the implied point or probability. Junger presents a narrative full of evidence-based speculations that work together to support his conclusions.

The choices made by the journalist are very important. Depending on the word choice, a journalist can potentially provoke a variety of emotions in readers. In Rhetoric Aristotle discusses three means of effecting persuasion. They are as follows: (1) to reason logically; (2) to understand human character and (3) to understand the emotions - that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited" (Qtd.

in Bizzell 182). Junger presents elements in the narrative that seem designed to excite some sort of emotion in the reader. An emotional appeal is established early on in the text. The relationship between Bobby Shatford and Chris Cotter is laced throughout the narrative. Chris says, "We were in love and we were jealous and I just couldn't imagine it...I couldn't even imagine half a day (of us being apart)" (Junger 11). Junger mentions that a local says that fishermen "suffer from a lack of dreams" (11), but Bobby Shatford was different. He "did happen to have some dreams. He wanted to settle down, get his money problems behind him, and marry Chris Cotter" (11). Junger presents Bobby as someone with something to lose. This adds dimension to his character, an area where readers can possibly make an emotional connection. The connection may play a role in encouraging the reader to continue reading the narrative to discover the circumstances that destroyed their future together. Using this strategy to capture the emotional reality of an event is a useful rhetorical technique to keep readers involved with the narrative.

Techniques such as dialogue, the presentation of personal background details, and personality traits of the characters allow a journalist to rhetorically develop a



more believable, readable, and relatable presentation of the events. Typical journalism is written to inform whereas new journalism seeks not only to inform but also to effect the rationale, or logos, of the reader as well as the emotions, or pathos.

Wolfe explains that his main goal was in part to keep the attention of the reader and that he "never felt the slightest hesitation about trying any device that might conceivably grab the reader a few seconds longer" (16). Similarly, it was not the original intent of the new journalists to "create" something new or "dethrone the novel as the number one literary genre" which was a fear of some literary writers (Wolfe 3). "Old" journalism had tended to be bland, or "beige" as Wolfe says, its purpose was to inform in an as objective way as possible. He states, "Really stylish reporting was something no one knew how to deal with, since no one was used to thinking of reporting as having an esthetic dimension" (Wolfe 11). Wolfe noticed a somewhat stylish tone while reading an article by Gay Talese about champion boxer Joe Louis titled "Joe Louis: the King as a Middle-aged Man" (11). Wolfe realized "with a little reworking the whole article could have read like a short story" (11).

Wolfe writes:

What interested me was not simply the discovery that it was possible to write accurate non-fiction with techniques usually associated with novels and short stories...It was the discovery that it was possible in non-fiction, in journalism, to use any literary device, from the traditional dialogisms of the essay to stream-of-consciousness, and to use many different kinds simultaneously, or within a relatively short space...to excite the reader both intellectually and emotionally. (The New Journalism 15)

The historical narrative that admits it is susceptible to other interpretations establishes an author's ethos. If, however, there are several ways an account can be represented because "what constitutes the facts themselves is the problem that the historian...has tried to solve" (White 47), then acceptability must also be determined, in part, by the coherence and logic of the presentation. White states:

[R]eality is not only perceivable but is also coherent in its structure. A mere list of confirmable singular existential statements does

not add up to an account of reality if there is not some coherence, logical or aesthetic, connecting them to one another. (122)

The use of rhetorical strategies, thus, enables writers such as Junger to manipulate language, structure, and form through various stylistic choices in order to bring coherence to the data, the "facts", of an event.

White writes, "The provision of a plot structure, in order to endow the narrative account of 'what happened in the past' with the attributes of a comprehensible process of development resembling the articulation of a drama or a novel, is one element in the historian's interpretation of the past" (62-3). The choices Junger makes present a certain type of telling of the events. The structure of his text, the sympathetic and believable characters, and the plot and scenes have a certain effect on the telling of the journalistic account.

In Chapter Two, I will outline the plot structure of The Perfect Storm and discuss its rhetorical effects, specifically the ways form determines meaning, as well as address how the rhetorical aspects of Junger's text relate to White's concern over the challenges of interpretation in historical writing. Chapter Two will specifically take a

closer look at other techniques and strategies, Junger's choice of character details, plot structure, dialogue, inclusion of technical data, and what effect these elements might have on the work as a whole.

## CHAPTER TWO

### NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND INTERPRETATION

The Perfect Storm, Junger's non-fiction journalistic account has the elements of a typical novel: plot development, scenes, characters, conflicts, crisis, and resolution. Each element is used to, as Tom Wolfe says, "[g]ive the full objective description, plus something that readers had always had to go to novels and short stories for: namely, the subjective or emotional life of the characters" (21). Junger blends these elements of fiction with non-fiction elements to set up and establish his narrative form. The rhetorical nature of blending genres presents many challenges that Junger has to skillfully negotiate. He has to present a well-balanced non-fiction narrative with elements of fiction that is believable.

To balance fiction and nonfiction elements, Junger must deal with the difficulties, challenges, and concerns that historiographers like Hayden White discuss. White as a historiographer discusses and analyzes the challenges that historians face as they gather evidence in order to tell the story that the information collected seems to present. In historiography, it is necessary to choose the

framework, form, and structure of the writing and examine it for clarity, coherence, and plausibility. White lists possible ways that interpretation relates to historiography: "aesthetically (in the choice of a narrative strategy), epistemologically (in the choice of an explanatory paradigm)" (69-70).

An alternating pattern of first-hand accounts, background information, and historical reminiscence is the pattern laced throughout The Perfect Storm. Each chapter follows a basic epistemological "explanatory paradigm": (1) title; (2) quote (epigraph); (3) back-story (character details); (4) historical details; and (5) data/facts on the fishing industry and the people who participate in it. Elements 2-5 are in constant seamless rotation throughout the chapters. The narrative elements will be discussed later in this chapter. Each chapter begins with an epigraph. Junger uses the epigraphs to connect ideas and events of the past to the present. The connection between the past and the present establishes the likelihood that given similar circumstances, the patterns are likely to repeat.

It is necessary to understand an author's systematic framework in order to determine if the author succeeds

based on "the consistency with which [the historian] reminds his readers of the purely provisional nature of his characterizations of events, agents, and agencies found in the always incomplete historical record" (White 82).

Junger's framework relies heavily on relating the past to the present. Junger inserts additional descriptive details, what Wolfe calls "novelistic details", when the facts are sparse, but he assures the reader that "no dialogue was made up" (Junger xiv). As White says, "What should interest us in 'the fictions of factual representation' is the extent to which the discourse of the historian and that of the imaginative writer overlap, resemble, or correspond with each other" (121). Junger writes a "fiction of factual representation" as he develops the narrative and blends genres in The Perfect Storm.

In setting up the aesthetic framework and "narrative strategy", Junger's account draws upon both the facts and novelistic details used in new journalism and the vivid descriptive techniques used in fiction. For example, notice the opening line of Chapter One:

A soft rain slips down through the trees and the smell of ocean is so strong that it can almost be licked off the air...stretched out on a double bed

in room number twenty-seven with a sheet pulled over him, Bobby Shatford lies asleep...There are beer cans and food wrappers scattered around the room. (3-4)

The use of adjectives embellishes the description and makes it more realistic and relatable. The journalistic details such as the introduction of Bobby Shatford, the "who", and the room number the "where", blend in seamlessly. The novelistic details help Junger to set the scene and to avoid what Wolfe calls "speak[ing] in beige" (18). Wolfe writes, "There is no law that says the narrator has to speak in beige or even New York journalese" (14). Junger could have simply written "It was raining, and Bobby Shatford was asleep", but he chose a more elaborate description as seen in the quote above. Junger's descriptive language conjures up vivid images of locations, presented as scenes, as opposed to a bland list of facts. Wolfe says, "The standard non-fiction writer's voice was like the standard announcer's voice...a drag, a droning..." (18). Junger avoids this trap by setting the scenes using a descriptive novelistic approach as a new journalist might. The details Junger provides make the people seem like characters in a story. Moreover, the personality and back-



story descriptions give the reader insight as to why certain decisions were made during the circumstances that surrounded the The Perfect Storm.

Junger focuses on the pathos, the emotional aspects, of the narrative by using character driven subplots, such as the relationship between Bobby and Chris, and surrounding these with technical facts, first hand accounts and details of the everyday habits and gestures of other people involved. This rhetorical choice enables him to "capture the emotional reality of the scene" (Wolfe 31-2) and strengthen credibility while capturing the depth of the emotions and sentiments felt during the events. For example, Chris learns that Bobby is leaving for approximately a month. Junger writes, "Soon Chris and Bobby were spending every minute together; it was as if they'd known each other their whole lives" (10); "We were in love and we were jealous and I just couldn't imagine it, says Chris. I couldn't even imagine half a day [without Bobby]" (11). This method enables Junger to balance the logos, logic, and the pathos of his interpretation blending the objective and subjective elements while drawing the reader further into the story through Bobby and Chris's relationship.

Literary or aesthetic tools are needed to relate certain information about history. White notes that "for rhetoricians...tropes are deviations from literal, conventional or 'proper' language use...sanctioned neither by custom nor logic" (2). White asks the question "is logic [alone] adequate to capture the essence of [the] subject matter?" (4). This phrase "capture the essence" suggests the more figurative quality of an event. Essence is defined in Webster's as "the basic, real, and invariable nature of a thing" 446). In White's view logic alone would be insufficient to present the "nature of a thing". Logic is used to analyze the facts and how they work together. Thus, interpretation takes more than just logic. White states in the introduction to his collection of essays that the essays "in one way or another, examine the problem of the relationships among description, analysis, and ethics in the human sciences" (22). He writes that

[A] historical narrative...tells us in what direction to think about the events and charges our thought about the events with different emotional valences...[I]t calls to mind images of the things it indicates, in the same way that a metaphor does. (91)

Junger uses the techniques mentioned above throughout his narrative through the titles, the opening quotations, and his use of past events in order to establish a pattern for the occurrence of events during the October storm. Junger's description of scenes "calls to mind images of the things it indicates" (White 91).

An example of Junger establishing a pattern can be seen in the first two pages of The Perfect Storm. He describes a shipwreck in 1896 and the last words written by a crewmember that were found in a bottle in the ocean. The message reads as follows,

On Georges Bank with our cable gone our rudder  
gone and leaking. Two men have been swept away  
and all hands have been given up as our cable is  
gone and our rudder is gone. The one that picks  
this up let it be known. God have mercy on us.

(1)

In dramatic fashion Junger writes, "The schooner was on Georges Bank, one of the most dangerous fishing grounds in the world, and a bottle with a note in it was a dire sign indeed" (1). The tone set by Junger's words steers the reader to think that the dire circumstances faced by the men from 1896 are in some way related to 1991 and the men

aboard the Andrea Gail who would also be sailing along Georges Bank and are never heard from again. Junger's text is the message in the bottle from the Andrea Gail's crew.

The opening two pages are titled, "Georges Bank, 1896." The chapter that follows is titled, "Gloucester Mass., 1991". Junger does not directly say the events are related, but the chapter titles mirror each other in format, which suggests that the contents are also related and thus, dire signs will follow in the 1991 storm as they did in 1896. The quotations that open each chapter are an example of "[h]istorians seek[ing] to re-familiarize us with events which have been forgotten through either accident, neglect, or repression" (White 87). The introductory quotation from Chapter One is from Sir Walter Scott's The Antiquary, Chapter 11 (Junger 3): "It's no fish ye're buying, it's men's lives". The quotation tells the reader that fishing is much more than just a commercial money making business. The epigraph is a metonymy Junger employs to show that fish cost much more than the money spent. Men not only live to fish and fish to live, they are forced at times to forfeit their lives. The price paid is much higher than consumers spend. With the opening quote,

Junger highlights that the sacrifices made by the fishing industry and all its components tend to be overlooked.

Historical narratives emerge from the facts. The facts are the "story elements" and the writer's or historian's interpretation is the "explanation or story told about the facts" (White 84,107). The word "story" should not diminish "the status of historical narratives as providing a kind of knowledge" (White 85). White shows how the story elements work together to make a plausible whole. However, White notes that there are different sorts of "wholes"; we must work, he says,

to identify the modality of the relationships that bind the discernible elements of the formless totality together in such a way as to make of it a whole of some sort. If we stress the similarities among the elements, we are working in the mode of metaphor; if we stress the differences among them, we are working in the mode of metonymy. (96)

In essence, the parts of an historical account are "mere facts" until some form, shape, and coherence is given to them. White suggests that though the elements of historical events may have meaning individually, they do not tell a

story or truly communicate their message until put together in a logical, coherent, and consistent story or plot.

In defining the difference between historical and fictional events White says:

Historians are concerned with events which can be assigned to specific time-space locations, events which are (or were) in principle observable or perceivable, whereas imaginative writers - poets, novelists, playwrights - are concerned with both these kinds of events and with imagined, hypothetical, or invented ones. (121)

Junger's narrative emerges as a combination of history and hypothesis, an aspect of science, in that he addresses concerns important to historians, but also includes hypothetical situations in an attempt to suggest what might have happened to the Andrea Gail.

In the chapter titled "The Zero Moment Point," Junger recounts everything that could have possibly happened to the Andrea Gail to cause its burial at sea. Junger's depiction builds suspense until the climax where he speculates that the men must have died:

Whether the Andrea Gail rolls, pitch-poles, or gets driven down, she winds up, one way or

another, in a position from which she cannot recover...The transition from crisis to catastrophe is fast, probably under a minute...When a boat floods, the first thing that happens is that her electrical system shorts out. The lights go off, and for a few moments the only illumination is the frenetic blue of sparks arcing down into the water. It's said that people in extreme situations perceive things in distorted, almost surreal ways, and when the waves start to crackle and bum, perhaps one of the crew thinks of fireworks of the last fourth of July, walking around Gloucester with his girlfriend and watching colors blossom over the inner harbor... Eventually the last wire has shorted out, the last bit of decking has settled under the water. Tyne, Pierre, Sullivan, Morgan, Murphy, and Shatford are dead. (177-78, 186)

Of course, Junger has no idea how these men die. For example, they could have been crushed by equipment in the boat, or electrocuted. Junger advocates that they drowned at midnight. But the facts are inconclusive. However, such

a narrative device is convenient. In fiction, bad things happen at midnight.

Junger combines many of the possibilities of what can happen to a ship at sea and applies them to his scenario for the sinking of the Andrea Gail. He concludes, "[O]ne thing is known for sure. Around midnight on October 28<sup>th</sup>—when the storm is at its height off Sable Island—something catastrophic happens aboard the Andrea Gail" (171).

As Junger fills in the gaps regarding the events of October 1991, he is in a sense presenting an inductive hypothesis based on the evidence. The historian bridges the gap between known outcomes and probable causes that led to them. Their job is to "describe [events] realistically and to analyze objectively" (White 2). As White contends:

Confronted with a chaos of "facts", the historian must "choose, sever, or carve them up" for narrative purposes....[T]he historian establishes the "framework" of his narrative, the set of facts out of which a "story" is to be fashioned in his narrative account of them. His problem, once this framework is established, is to fill in the gaps in the record by a deduction of facts that "must have occurred" from the knowledge of



those which are known to actually have occurred.

(55, 59-60)

White's acknowledgement that there are events that must have occurred is another way of saying they are probable. Probable estimates are unavoidable, and are credible as long as they appear to be logical conclusions based on the evidence presented. For example, Junger's description of Billy Tyne's powering through the storm is all an assumption, but a "probable" set of events that "must have occurred" in some order. Junger writes, "Seventy-footers are roaming around the sea state like surly giants and there's not much Billy can do but take them head-on and try to get over the top before they break..."(174). The embellishment of the description enhances the simple details that the waves were seventy feet and Tyne needed to navigate them skillfully in order to try and survive the storm. His circumstances and actions might lead to the question: Could Junger's evidence of the storm and the actions of the people of the narrative be interpreted differently? White defines the question as, "[H]ow are the facts to be described in order to sanction one mode of explaining them rather than another?" (134). In describing his mode of explaining, Junger writes,

[W]riters often don't know much about the world they're trying to describe, but they don't necessarily need to. They just need to ask a lot of questions and then they need to step back and let the story speak for itself. (299)

Junger seems to advocate for the same concept as White, who says, "Many historians continue to treat their 'facts' as though they were 'given' and refuse to recognize, unlike most scientists, that they are not so much found as constructed by the kinds of questions which the investigator asks of the phenomena before him" (43). Junger, like the historian, has to see the clues and determine how pieces of individually meaningless information fit together to form and represent the whole event.

Junger gives form and meaning to the evidence and makes its meaning known through the plot of his narrative, as in his claiming that the boat sank at midnight. White writes, "Every history must meet standards of coherence no less than those of correspondence if it is to pass as a plausible account of 'the way things really were'" (122). History depends on "intuition" as well as "analytical methods" (White 27). The accuracy of the historian's

account would tend to prevail as long as his intuition, logic, and reason relate and connect the evidence presented. Further, as with most presentations of history, the witnesses of the event are not present. Journalists must use what evidence remains to "capture the essence" of the events, which is largely what new journalists were trying to do when using literary tools "to excite the reader both intellectually and emotionally" (Wolfe 15) while recreating the reality of a scene.

It is necessary to consider the "presuppositions, structure, and adequacy" (White 10) of Junger's arrangement of the evidence. For example, in Junger's description of drowning he uses the account of a man who survived drowning to support his detailed description of what the crew might have experienced. Before Junger presents Scottish doctor James Lawson's description of nearly drowning on a steamship in 1892, he adds that "[i]t's as close as one is going to get to the last moments of the Andrea Gail" (182). Junger prefaces and justifies adding Lawson's recollection with the following statement, "He attributed the clarity of his recollection to the 'preternatural calm' of people facing death" (182). Lawson recounts, "The "gulping" efforts became less frequent, and the pressure seemed

unbearable, but gradually the pain seemed to ease up...Before losing consciousness the chest pain had completely disappeared" (183). Junger's description of the Andrea Gail's crew is as follows:

The water comes up so hard and fast that they can't even think. They're up to their waists and then their chests and then their chins and then there's no air at all. Just what's in their lungs, a minute's worth or so. The instinct not to breathe underwater is so strong that it overcomes the agony of running out of air. No matter how desperate the drowning person is, he doesn't inhale until he's on the verge of losing consciousness...Having never done it before, the body—and the mind—do not know how to die gracefully. The process is filled with desperation and awkwardness. "So this is drowning," a drowning person might think...When the first involuntary breath occurs most people are still conscious, which is unfortunate, because the only thing more unpleasant than running out of air is breathing in water.

(179-180)

Junger arranges the evidence in such a way that he leads the reader to assume that the men drowned instead of dying some other way.

Further, Junger continues to blend the technical details in with aesthetic and dramatic elements. He writes:

The crew of the Andrea Gail either have laryngospasms or completely inundated lungs. They are suspended, open-eyed and unconscious, in the flooded enclosures of the boat. The darkness is absolute and the boat may already be on her way to the bottom...They have suffered, at most, a minute or two. Their bodies, having imposed increasingly drastic measures to keep functioning, have finally started to shut down.

(184)

Junger does not use his customary hedging language when describing the drowning sequence. The description is precise and definite. The confidence of the author in his intuition and interpretation shows in this section of the narrative.

Imaginative tools, often related to fiction, used in non-fiction narrative may seem distracting because the belletristic nature of the words and the grandness of the

description may distract the reader from the content and its coherence or lack thereof. However, an element of creativity is necessary in order to describe situations that are unconventional and perhaps would defy general logic. In nonfiction texts, scientific evidence, such as Junger's presentation of longitude, latitude, boat positions and the details of drowning work together to make the narrative credible. The literary techniques add an artistic element. When the two are combined the non-fiction narrative becomes credible art. In Junger's case this form of credible art makes the presentation of the facts palatable and help to avoid the banal writing that lists of facts can create. In part, plausibility of the plot is determined by its readability and the effectiveness of consistency in the presentation.

White asks the question, "But where are we to find the criterion to determine when, on the one hand, the 'account' is adequate to the 'facts' and if, on the other, the 'style' chosen by the historian is appropriate or inappropriate to the 'account'" (45). White contends "[t]hat the form of the historian's narratives is not a matter of choice, but is required by the nature of historical materials themselves" (27). As the historian

fills in the gaps, when facts are sparse, questions naturally arise as to what events might have caused a certain phenomenon or what might be the results from it. Junger expresses a viewpoint similar to White when he says, "[Writers] just need to ask a lot of questions. And then they need to step back and let the story speak for itself" (299). A close analysis of the evidence will lead to questions and the narrative unfolds as the writer attempts to answer the questions.

Moreover, White states,

We do not ask if he sees what we would see in the same general phenomenal field, but whether or not he has introduced into his representation of it anything that could be considered false information for anyone who is capable of understanding the system of notation used. (47)

Internal consistency is important to any narrative. The events described must be in line with the established framework in order to be plausible. Historians past and present dealt and deal with the same difficulties of interpretation. In his writing about past historians' notions of the craft,

White writes,

Most 19<sup>th</sup> century historians did not realize that, when it is a matter of trying to deal with past facts, the crucial consideration for him who would represent them faithfully are the notions he brings to his representation of the ways parts related to the whole which they comprise. They did not realize that the facts do not speak for themselves, but that the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is in its representation a purely discursive one. (125)

Junger as a journalist faces the same challenge of interpreting the evidence. The task is rhetorical in nature in that Junger is constantly required to persuade readers through the organization of his plot that his conclusions are more than a mere guess. He presents possible events and emphasizes their likelihood by referring to, or implying through word choice and presenting patterns of events, such as the letter in the bottle from the crew that died at sea in 1896, that his interpretation is the most plausible.



Junger writes,

When Billy receives the weather chart off the fax machine, he Undoubtedly tells the crew that there's something very heavy on the way. There are specific things you can do to survive a storm at sea and whether the crew does then, and how well they do them, depends on how jaded they all are. Billy has fished his whole life. Maybe he thinks nothing can sink him; or maybe the sea is every nightmare he's ever had. A good, worried crew starts by dogging down every hatch, porthole, and watertight door on the boat.

(121-122)

White claims it seems that the form and framework set up for any historical narrative is shaped by how the author interprets the evidence, with various interpretations being possible. The new journalism blend of presenting objective facts and subjective emotional details seems appropriate to apply to Junger's text. Junger consistently uses, as in the quote above, hedging words such as "might" and "likely". These words establish that Junger is familiar with fishermen and how they would likely react during a storm.

He uses his knowledge to speculate as to what the response of the crew of the Andrea Gail would most likely have been. In case his projections are not sufficient, Junger uses quotes from established fishermen. He quotes Tommy Barrie, captain of the Allison as saying, "He (Billy) did what ninety percent of us would've done-he battened down the hatches and hung on" (The Perfect Storm 124). Junger rarely uses quotes. His use of a quote suggests that he wants a reader to be aware that his conclusions are based on something solid.

A historian has to interpret evidence from events that occurred in real time in order to re-tell the events to the best of his or her ability based on the known facts. Junger presents the events according to date and time whenever possible. He chronicles the events of the Andrea Gail in order and slips in novelistic details as a way of blending together the back-story elements and historical data. For example Albert Johnston, captain of the Mary T, says, "I talked with Billy on the 24<sup>th</sup> (October) and he said he'd hatched his boat" (111). Further Junger notes, "At 3:15 on the afternoon of October 27<sup>th</sup>, Billy Tyne raises the Canadian Coast Guard on his single sideband to tell them he's entering Canadian waters" (118-19). He presents the

known facts whenever possible and uses them to establish his credibility as an authoritative voice on the subject. For example, his description of the storm conditions seamlessly blends facts and descriptive exposition,

Dawn creeps in with a few shreds of salmon-pink sky, and the wind starts to inch into the southeast. That's called a backing wind: it goes counterclockwise around the compass and usually means bad weather is coming. A backing wind is an ill wind; it's the first distant trough of a low pressure system going into its cyclonic spin.

Then another weather fax comes in: *HURRICANE GRACE MOVING WILL TURN NE AND ACCELERATE, DEVELOPING DANGEROUS STORM MOVING E 35 KTS WILL TURN SE AND SLOW BY 12 HOURS. FORECAST WINDS 50 TO 60 KTS AND SEAS 22 TO 32 FEET WITHIN 400 NM SEMICIRCLE.* (123)

His description of the dawn presents a very peaceful environment, but the weather report clearly shows that the current climate will soon become unmanageable. The term "ill wind" is more colloquial than scientific. The rhetorical methods employed in this passage are vital to the presentation of the narrative. The report is a

necessary part of the persuasion process if the narrative is to be received as credible and believable. The weather reports, of which there are several, provide a solid foundation to Junger's narrative. The precision of the dates, times, and weather data situates the narrative in real time and strengthens the reliability of the surrounding information.

Junger's mix of technical data, aesthetic details, and everyday language aid in the realism of his narrative. He discusses the climate and atmosphere of the fishing industry, its people, and the nature of the business to show how they may have contributed to the events that took place the night of the storm. For example, when writing about Bob Brown, the owner of the Andrea Gail, he notes, that the boat was overhauled in 1986 and "Bob Brown simply pulled her out of the water and started welding; no stability tests were performed, no marine architect was consulted. In the trade this was known as 'eyeball engineering'...The question of stability never came up" (Junger 101-2). In other words, the ship was "altered without plans" (102). As White states, "there is no value-neutral mode of emplotment, explanation, or even description of any field of events" (129).

Junger goes on to write about the inspection and alteration suggestions of the boat made by James Simonitsch, marine surveyor, again in 1990. Junger for the second time reports, "Again, there was no mention of stability tests, but the vessel was well within the law" (103). Junger does not directly say Bob Brown's choice of not having the stability of the Andrea Gail tested affected the outcome of how it performed and recovered from trouble at sea, but the repetition suggests that the lack of stability tests may have led to the boat capsizing.

Junger's implications regarding Bob Brown are a rhetorical choice. The way in which he structures the accusation enables him to not become an overt voice in the text. In his discussion of rhetoric White writes,

A rhetorical analysis of historical discourse would recognize that every history worthy of the name contains not only a certain amount of information and an explanation (or interpretation) of what this information "means", but also a more or less overt message about the attitude the reader should assume before both the data reported and their formal interpretation conform to a "framework" of preconceived ideas or

conform to a "preconceived" selective point of view. (106)

Since he does not make a direct accusation, Junger is able to appear to maintain some sort of journalistic objectivity. This allows the reader to seemingly draw his or her own conclusions and remain involved in the process of analyzing the presented data and drawing conclusions without necessarily feeling led.

Another example is the opening chapter and Junger's description of Bobby Shatford. He writes, "His life would unfold in brutally short bursts between long stretches at sea, and all he'd have to tide him over would be photos taped to a wall and maybe a letter in a seabag" (16). He does not say Bobby will be lonely, but it is implied. Junger presents data through his description of Bobby's life at sea. As a journalist, Junger does not shy away from florid figures of speech, which shows in his combination of phrases such as:

The weather is clear, the blue sky brushed with cirrus and a solid northwest wind spackling the waves with white. A long heavy swell rolls under the boat from a storm that passed far off to the south. Billy has a failing ice machine and a

1,200-mile drive ahead of him. (Junger 119)

The information about the pre-storm conditions blends data with aesthetic details. Phrases such as 'wind spackling the waves' and "a long heavy swell' are embellishing as well as descriptive and show that Junger is aware of the variety and effects of word choice.

Further, when writing about the fishing trip on October 7, the last trip of the season, Junger writes, "The sunset is a bloody rust-red on a sharp autumn horizon, and the night comes in fast with a northwest wind and a sky riveted with stars" (77). He is very exact about setting this scene. The descriptive language further shows that Junger is very aware and precise as he paints a mental image for the reader through his word choice.

As White notes,

[E]ven in the simplest prose discourse and even in one in which the object of representation is intended to be nothing but fact, the use of language itself projects a level of secondary meaning below or behind the phenomena being "described." This figurative level is produced by a constructive process, poetic in nature, which

prepares the reader of the text more or less subconsciously to receive both the description of the facts and their explanation as plausible, on the one side, and as adequate to one another, on the other. (White 110)

Word choice is important because the "[p]urpose and direction of historical representation[s] are indicated in the very language which the historian uses to characterize his data prior to any formal technique of analysis or explication" (White 104). In addition to the word choice, the typography also plays a part in Junger's narrative.

The visual structure of Junger's narrative is also an important rhetorical choice. Junger notes that his technical discussions "are based on [his] own library research and are generally not referenced" (Junger xiv). He makes a choice to not clutter the work with a barrage of quotation marks. This adds to the fiction like structure of the text in that it reads more like a narrative than a historical text or piece of journalism. Visually Junger's account looks and is packaged like a novel. Quotation marks can slow down the pacing and only serve, in journalism, to prove that what was said or written is accurate, but came from an alternate source. Junger presents his narrative in



such a way that quotation marks are not necessary. For example, Junger writes,

Hurricanes brew in the luke warm waters around the equator (127)...Hurricanes start when a slight disturbance in the trade winds, a dust storm blowing out to sea off the Sahara-develops in the upper-level air...Eventually the system starts spinning. (128)

He very rarely uses quotes. But since much of the information is scientific in nature, the reader is likely to accept what is written as fact or as reasonably accurate as possible.

The absence of many quotation marks when technical data is mentioned also steers The Perfect Storm away from the short sentences and choppy writing typical in traditional journalism, which seeks to present the facts in as precise a way as possible in order to fit into a predetermined space in a newspaper or magazine. Junger's journalistic account does not have the typical journalistic look. The words on the page look more like the pages of a novel. On the subject of typography and new journalism Wolfe says, "The typography actually looked different. ....I found that things like exclamation points, italics, and

abrupt shifts (dashes) and syncopations (dots) helped to give the illusion not only of a person talking but of a person thinking" (Wolfe 21-2). Junger often employs italics seemingly for emphasis. For example when Chris Cotter talks about when she first learns that the Andrea Gail cannot be reached and her boyfriend Bobby might not come home, "It was in the paper and on television and this is my *love*, my *friend*, my *man*, my *drinking partner*, and it just couldn't be" (214). The italics are visual cues that emphasize the words Chris emphasized when she spoke or words that Junger wanted to highlight for the reader.

Junger uses technically precise terms. There seems to be no question, for example, that the hurricane forms as he describes. Junger presents his narrative with knowledge and authority and that is how it is perceived. Junger does not have to draw his own conclusions as to how, for example, a hurricane forms. This information, though not necessarily common knowledge, is accessible enough not to come under criticism or critique. The more speculative information in the text benefits from the same authority as the factual data since the speculative information visually appears and blends in, without quotes, alongside the factual information.

Aesthetically Junger's "narrative strategy" is largely linked to the relationship between Bobby Stratford and his girlfriend Chris Cotter. The narrative hinges not only on the events that might have led to the sinking of the ship, but also follows aspects of the emotional turmoil and love between Bobby and Chris. They represent the romantic center, love story, of the narrative. The fact that they had only known each other a few months heightens the separation and loss in that the potential of their relationship will never be fully realized. Chapter Three will examine the character development and rhetorical purpose and positioning of the character details.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PLOT STRUCTURE AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Junger has a difficult challenge writing a non-fiction narrative of three hundred pages when the crew of the Andrea Gail are assumed to have died at sea on page one hundred and seventy one. Junger writes, "Whatever it is, one thing is known for sure. Around midnight on October 28<sup>th</sup> when the storm is at its height off Sable Island—something catastrophic happens aboard the Andrea Gail" (171). "A True Story of Men Against the Sea" is the sub-title of The Perfect Storm. The nonfiction narrative form is established at the forefront through the sub-title. The rhetorical choice to place the words "True Story" in the sub-title emphasizes Junger's goal to have the narrative accepted as the truth.

Before a reader begins the narrative, the ending is already known. As a result, two questions that may arise for the reader are: 1) why continue reading the narrative and 2) how does Junger encourage or entice a reader to continue? The simple answers are that the mystery lies not only in what happened, but how. In an interview Junger noted,

Journalists must develop a sort of pact with the reader. You promise that you're doing the best job you can to present the most accurate information, in addition to making it readable, compelling, and entertaining. And the reader has to believe you're not trying to mislead.

(US Naval Institute 3)

Junger uses character development and draws readers into the text through developing a connection between the characters and the reader. He develops the connection similar to the way in which he was able to become so knowledgeable about the people of Gloucester and their lives; he became a part of their lives. Junger is able to develop the narrative into a "readable, compelling, entertaining" and interesting piece of reading through character development.

While researching for writing The Perfect Storm, Junger lived and worked in Gloucester for several years. When Junger would walk into the Crow's Nest he would say, "Look, I don't know a thing about fishing...So if you don't tell me about it, I'm going to get it all wrong" (The Perfect Storm 293). Junger does the same for the reader. He is their guide to getting to know the city of Gloucester

and its people. If he does not offer them the correct information then they will not learn what Junger thinks happened.

Junger develops interest for the reader through developing a connection between reader and character, which he creates through presentations of personal accounts of those who survived the storm and minute details of the characters' lives. Junger says that,

one of the most difficult tasks in writing this book was to get to know to whatever extent this is possible the men who died at sea in the Halloween Gale. That required contacting their friends and family and reopening wounds that had only begun to heal. (300)

Junger constructs an environment for the reader that is compelling. He stirs interest by favoring the dynamic, exciting, and dramatic details rather than those that are mundane. For example, Murph experienced several life threatening situations while at sea. Junger recounts one in particular when Murph was pulled into the sea:

He's [Murph] six-foot-two, 250 pounds, covered in tattoos and, apparently, extremely hard to kill...he was laying out the longline when an

errant hook went into his palm...He was dragged off the back of the boat and down into the sea...luckily another crew member turned around a few seconds later...and hauled him in like a swordfish...With all this catastrophe in his life Murph had two choices—decide either that he was blessed or that his death was only a matter of time. He decided it was only a matter of time.

(138-9)

Murph's harrowing escapes from death are compelling. The curiosity of knowing what series of circumstances finally led to the death of someone so hard to kill encourages a reader to continue. Accounts such as this add a mysterious element to the narrative. Junger chooses details such as Murph's experiences to inspire awe and amazement.

Junger presents fishermen as a dichotomy blending their frivolous lifestyle with their need for family, love and caring. He sums up the life of a fisherman when he says,

One night a swordfisherman came into the Crow's Nest reeling drunk after a month at sea. Bills were literally falling out of his pocket. Greg, the owner of the bar, took the money—a full

paycheck—and locked it up in the safe. The next morning the fisherman came down looking a little chagrined. Jesus what a night last night, he said. And I can't believe how much money I spent.

(19)

Junger shows early on in the narrative that fishermen tend to have troubled, unstable lives and drink in order to numb the effects of life on land. He comments:

That a fisherman is capable of believing he spent a couple thousand dollars in one night says a lot about fishermen. And that a bartender put the money away for safekeeping says a lot about how fishermen choose their bars. They find places that are second homes... (19)

Junger showcases the bar more as a safe haven than a den of alcoholics. He shows fishermen as people who deal with life the best they can. Further, Junger does not often render value judgments.. He rhetorically structures the narrative to show the tragedy, frivolity, and recklessness while generating sympathy. He comments, "[A] lot of them (fishermen) don't have real homes" (19). The bar is their home. Junger balances the details he presents so that a reader will not immediately judge and think negatively



about the life fishermen live and the one they avoid living.

Bugsy Morgan, Michael, has "wild long hair and a crazy reputation and everyone in town loves him" (6). Chris describes Bugsy as being "in a real bad mood 'cause he hadn't gotten laid'" (18). He is well liked, but still alone. Bugsy and "Murph "don't have anyone to linger over and so they waste no time getting on the boat" (49). Junger continues to evoke feelings of sympathy and understanding as he presents a gamut of emotions through the characters to which readers can relate.

Billy Tyne is developed as a multifaceted character. His path into fishing was not a typical one. Unlike the majority of others, he did not need the money.

Billy grew up on Gloucester Avenue, near where Route 128 crosses the Annisquam River, and married a teenaged girl who lived a few blocks away. Billy was exceptional for downtown Gloucester in that he didn't fish and his family was relatively well-off. (60)

As Junger presents it, Tyne's life prior to fishing seemed relatively simple and without complication. The change in

his life seems to stem from the tragedy of his brother's death.

His older brother was killed at age twenty-one by a landmine in Vietnam, and perhaps Billy drew the conclusion that life was not something to be pissed away in a bar. (60)

Junger inserts a rare opinion as he speculates what caused Tyne to gravitate towards fishing. Junger uses hedging language with the word "perhaps" to insert his opinion. Further, the close of the sentence "life was not something to be pissed away in a bar" (60) suggests that Junger is making a value judgment about life spent in a bar. Junger cleverly inserts this line in such a way that it is implied that the thought comes from Billy Tyne rather than Junger.

Billy Tyne's character is further developed as Junger details his path to a fishing career.

[Tyne] enrolled in school, set his sights on being a psychologist...He was searching for something, trying out different lives...His wife, Jodi, had been urging him to give fishing a try because she had a cousin whose husband made a lot of money at it. (60)

Fishing is once again linked to money. As the Sir Walter Scott epigraph contends, "It's no fish ye're buying, it's men's lives" (3). Though Tyne has an atypical start into fishing, Junger presents an ironic circumstance in that men are fishing to survive, possibly dying as a result, but in addition, the men are sacrificing their lives somewhat willingly. Jodi Tyne suggests that there is an element of addiction to it. She says, "It was all over after that...The men don't know anything else once they do it and it takes over and that's the bottom line" (60). Undoubtedly, Billy knew of others before him whose family lives suffered as a result of the fishing industry.

He had an uncanny ability to find fish, a deep sense of where they were...Tyne was fully hooked; the strains of being at sea had split up his marriage, but he still wouldn't give it up. He moved to Florida to be closer to his ex-wife and daughters, and fished harder than ever. (60-61)

Fishing had such a hold on Tyne that he sacrificed his family life. Junger emphasizes that "he still wouldn't give it up" (61). There are several implications Junger presents through his word choice. One implied message is that what others may see as just a job, Tyne saw as a passion or

lifestyle. Junger shows that Tyne would not give up fishing to save his marriage. Tyne's moving to be near his family is Junger's way of showing that fishermen are not heartless and uncaring; Tyne did care for his family. This detail creates a similar effect as Murph buying a cart full of toys for his son. The fishermen care about family, but cannot seem to let go of fishing. For Tyne, fishing was what he did and who he was. The information Junger chooses to present about Billy Tyne and others raises an interesting question that Junger hints at, but does not fully develop an answer for: Is what draws the men the challenges of fishing itself or the money? Details of characters' lives, such as Tyne's, add drama and intrigue to the narrative, much like a soap opera. Sprinkles of personal details throughout the narrative get the reader involved in the individuals' lives.

Junger presents a scene-by-scene development of events. He does not present all of the information about a person or event all in one chapter. As seen with the character details and the details of the sinking of the Andrea Gail, details are placed throughout the text like puzzle pieces. The reader is able to follow along and assemble the plot making discoveries much like a detective,

which is what Junger claimed he was doing as he pieced the narrative together.

The dramatic and emotional elements of the narrative are seen as Junger presents details of Chris, arguably losing the love of her life; the mother of the Crow's Nest, who helps so many others, yet loses her own son; and Murph's son's dream of losing his dad. The tensions and emotions are definitely high. The constant loss of life serves to appeal to the pathos, or emotions, of the reader. The narrative is set up so that the reader is encouraged to care about the people involved. For example, when the fate of the Andrea Gail is unknown, Chris arrives at the Crow's Nest and begins to drink. She says:

People didn't want to give me the details because I was totally out of my mind...Everybody was drunk 'cause that's what we do, but the crisis made it even worse, just drinkin' and drinkin' and cryin'...It was in the paper and on the television and this is my love, my friend, my man, my drinking partner, and it just couldn't be... What was the final moment? What was the final, final thing? (214)

In chapter one of the narrative, she and Bobby are sleeping in their room at the bar, the Crow's Nest. A pattern of behavior is developed from the beginning. She says "Everybody was drunk 'cause that's what we do" (214). Junger sets up the narrative in a way that shows patterns of behavior. A reader is able to anticipate what a character may say as patterns of behavior are revealed and recognized. Similarly, the chapter titles and epigraphs serve to establish more of a connection between the reader, text, and the overall sense of meaning behind each chapter.

The epigraphs that open each chapter seemingly have a specific purpose, challenging a reader to make connections and analyze the relationship between the title, epigraph, and chapter contents. One might skim past the quote, but Junger places subtle clues as to its meaning and connection to the whole by placing nuggets of connecting information in the chapter. For example, the introductory epigraph from Chapter One is from Sir Walter Scott's The Antiquary, Chapter 11, "It's no fish ye're buying, it's men's lives" (Junger 3). As discussed in Chapter Two, the quote suggests that the sacrifices of the fishermen are great, the greatest being their lives. They live a hard life at sea and a somewhat frivolous one on land. Junger says:

Young men from Gloucester find themselves at sea because they're broke and need money fast. The only compensation for such mind-numbing work, it would seem, is equally mind-numbing indulgence. A swordfisherman off a month at sea is a small typhoon of cash... He buys lottery tickets fifty at a time and passes them around the bar... For some, acting like the money means nothing is the only compensation for what it actually must mean.

(17)

This assessment of their lives seems to be a form of explanation for their broken homes and the recklessness by which the fishermen live. Their lives on land are lived in short bursts; then, they are back at sea. They spend money swiftly because they tend to live for the moment, attempting to distract themselves from their reality. This attitude suggests that the fishermen do not necessarily expect to come home. The mysterious element continues in that with each fisherman the implication is that it seems to be only a matter of time until death finds them. The flaws and struggles show that the people deal with real issues and are thus more relatable to readers.

Many aboard the Andrea Gail are divorced, another hazard of life at sea. For example, Billy Tyne's ex-wife, Jodi Tyne recounts, "It was like I had one life and when he came back I had another...I did it for a long time and I just got tired of it, it was never gonna change, he was never gonna quit fishin', though he said he wanted to. If he had to pick between me and the boat he picked the boat" (16). Due to the extended travel and minimal communication, for those in which the career became a lifestyle, divorce was the likely result. The physical separation led to emotional separation. Junger does not make moral judgments, but does seem to present a clear case for why the men lived as they did in order to steer readers away from moral judgments. Essentially, as Junger presents it, the men do not expect to return home. As a result, they live for the moment when they are in town. This way of life might be compelling reading due to readers' curiosity about the extent to which the men might go with the frivolous aspects of their lifestyles. The people of Gloucester are presented as relatable figures with flaws and problems.

In the chapter titled "Into the Abyss", the family and friends begin to realize that it is likely that the crew of the Andrea Gail has transcended beyond this life and gone



to a dark place from which they will not return. In "Into the Abyss", Mioli, a pararescue jumper on a mission to rescue Tomizawa, a Japanese sailor "who is in a sailboat 250 miles off the Jersey coast and starting to go down" (Junger 221), throws the life raft from the helicopter and notes that he is about to jump 'into the abyss'" (237). The title and the epigraph are connected through their expression and the implication of the unknown. The epigraph is a quote from the Bible, Samuel 22, "The Lord bowed the heavens and came down, thick darkness under his feet. The channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare" (212). The biblical quote suggests that the catastrophic circumstances of the night were caused by something other than nature. Junger does not make overtly religious connections, but the biblical reference sets a foundation for the subject of an afterlife and establishes a connection with the ending chapters that deal with dreams and premonitions.

The epigraph "Into the Abyss" is followed by Chris Cotter's dream, which represents a part of the "subjective emotional life of the character" (Wolfe 21),

I went to bed and just before dawn I had this dream. I'm on the boat it's rollin' and rockin'

and I'm screaming, BOBBY! BOBBY! The boat and go down into the fishhole and start digging....I'm hysterical and crazy and screaming for Bobby and finally I get down and there's one of his arms. I find that and grab him and I know he's gone. And then the wake-up comes. (212)

The subjective or speculative content of Junger's narrative is essentially the majority of the text. Other than the known facts, it is all subjective. The dramatic affairs of the characters' lives and chapters titled "The Dreams of the Dead" make for more interesting reading.

Though, the status of the Andrea Gail remains unknown to this day, Junger keeps the story moving using an established timeline as he inserts the dates and times of specific events. This seamless weaving of the event details with the emotional ones allows the plot to flow like a novel rather than a journalistic news report. The choice and placement of details and the first person accounts of the dreams also allow the reader to be in the moment of the scene with the character, like stream of consciousness. It is as if Junger has transported the reader back in time to October 30<sup>th</sup> and into Chris Cotter's thoughts and her room.

By using this technique, a more intimate connection between character and reader is established.

The details Junger chooses shape the characters and the reader's perception of their lives. As previously stated the blending of "everyday gestures" and "habits" with the facts and figures, gives the reader access to the mind and environment of those involved (The New Journalism 31-2). For example, Bobby has something to live for, perhaps the highest stakes, true love. Though Alfred's girlfriend could barely tear herself away, Junger does not focus much attention on their relationship; thus, it does not have as strong an impact on the story as Bobby and Chris's relationship. Junger makes Bobby and Chris a center focus of the narrative.

Bobby's life is not centered around the sea and sailing. From the beginning he is different, a standout, from the others. Fishing is a means to an end due to his circumstances, child support debt. The sea was not his life; Chris was. Junger does not allow the reader to forget about Bobby and Chris. In the last chapter titled "The Dreams of the Dead", Junger recounts another of her dreams: "Bobby appears before her, all smiles and she says to him, 'Hey, Bobby, where have you been?' He doesn't tell her, he

just keeps smiling and says, 'Remember, Christina, I'll always love you'" (275-76). Their relationship is even more compelling because they have not known each other for a long period of time and they were planning a future together. Junger says:

Chris was divorced and had three children and Bobby was separated and had two. He was bartending and fishing to pay off a child-support debt...Soon Chris and Bobby were spending every minute together; it was as if they'd known each other their whole lives. One evening...Bobby got down on his knees and asked her to marry him. Of course I will! She screamed, and then, as far as they were concerned, a life together was only a matter of time. (10)

The brevity of their relationship creates even more sympathy because the potential of their love was never realized much like a Romeo and Juliet scenario. There will forever be the possibility of what could have been.

Junger also makes use of the shroud of mystery that is associated with life at sea and the lore of men returning from the dead. The last chapter "The Dreams of the Dead" is shaped like a type of ghost story. Junger relates several

stories from people of Gloucester regarding dreams and premonitions. He says,

If the men on the Andrea Gail had simply died, and their bodies were lying in state somewhere, their loved ones could make their goodbyes and get on with their lives. But they didn't die, they disappeared off the face of the earth and, strictly speaking, it's just a matter of faith that these men will never return. Such faith takes work, it takes effort. The people of Gloucester must willfully extract these men from their lives and banish them to another world.

(273)

Junger's dilemma is the same as the people of Gloucester. Though they do not have the crews' bodies to prove they are dead, all of the evidence leads to that conclusion. Though Junger does not have the definitive answer as to how the men died, the evidence, as he presents it, leads to the events happening as he speculates.

The dreams and premonitions are not hard data, but carry weight in Junger's narrative because each one he presents seemingly comes true. Debra Murphy, Murph's ex-wife recounts, "The night before I found out about the

boat, I had this dream...[H]e says, 'I'm sorry, I'm not going to make it this time.' Then I wake up, and the phone call comes" (273). Though premonitions are not an exact science, they are interesting in the narrative due to their accuracy. Rhetorical choice is evident in that out of all the premonitions Junger could have used he presents the premonitions that ended up coming to pass.

The topic of premonitions is sprinkled throughout the narrative, though they are given specific focus in the latter chapters. Junger presents the idea of premonitions early on in the narrative. In chapter one "Gloucester, Mass. 1991" the reader meets Randall. He was the new crew member

[who] walked off this morning without any explanation at all. The guy's name was Adam Randall... [He] was lithe, intensely handsome thirty-year-old man with a shag of blond rock-star hair and cold blue eyes... He hadn't worked in three months. He walked back across the lot, told his father-in-law that he had a funny feeling, and the two of them drove off together to a bar. People often get premonitions when they do jobs that could get them killed. (37)

Randall's premonition is compelling because it saved his life. For example, a scene in "Into the Abyss" ends with the following:

The local news comes on, and Channel Five reports a boat named the Andrea Gail missing somewhere east of Sable Island. Randall sits up in his seat...."That's the boat I was supposed to go on....That's the boat. The Andrea Gail. (220)

Randall had a bad feeling and decided at the last minute not to sail on the Andrea Gail. He connects the news report to his premonition and realizes his "bad feeling" saved his life. The consistency and accuracy of the premonitions will likely be intriguing to the reader. Premonitions and dreams add additional mysterious elements to the narrative.

Based on television and screenplay writer Robert McKee's book Story, Junger's text might be categorized as a blend of action/adventure and historical tragedy. Robert McKee's model, though designed for screenplays, can be applied to Junger's text as a tool to identify the basic story elements Junger uses. McKee writes, "As you create your story, you create your proof; idea and structure intertwine in a rhetorical relationship" (113). Junger does not create proof of what happens to the Andrea Gail, but he

organizes evidence and develops a plot structure he believes will produce the most persuasive and effective narrative. While the crew of the Andrea Gail, their family, and friends make up a large portion of the dramatic element, the adventurous and exciting element of the narrative is continued through the presentation of the exploits of the pararescue jumpers who attempted to save crew members of other boats on the water during the Halloween Gale. Along with the dramatic situations, Junger balances the narrative with heroes and heroic tales of survival.

The detailed description of Air National Guard pararescue jumper training fuels and heightens the action and adventure element in the narrative after the Andrea Gail is assumed to have sunk. There is an edge-of-the-seat effect created with the narratives of the rescue paratroopers. The storm was such a large scale event that even expert rescue swimmers had difficulty surviving. The crew of the Andrea Gail, though expert fishermen, had an even bigger task attempting to survive a storm that presented an extreme challenge for trained expert pararescue jumpers. The odds were obviously stacked against them. The battles to survive emphasize the man versus



nature element expressed in the subtitle, "The True Story of Men Against the Sea." The pararescue jumper adventures and tragedies add to the adventure aspect of the narrative.

John Spillane is a center focus of the pararescue jumpers' presence in the narrative. Junger likely chose Spillane because of his good looks, adventurous nature, and the dramatic circumstances surrounding his home life and near death experience. Junger says;

John Spillane has the sort of handsome regular features that one might expect in a Hollywood actor playing a pararescueman—playing John Spillane, in fact. His eyes are stone-blue, without a trace of hardness or indifference, his hair is short and touched with grey. He comes across as friendly, unguarded, and completely sure of himself. He has a quick smile and an offhand way of talking that seems to progress from detail to detail, angle to angle, until there's nothing more to say on a topic. His humor is delivered casually, almost as an after thought, and seems to surprise even himself...He seems to be a man who has long since lost the need to prove things to anyone. (239)

Spillane's personality, as Junger presents him, makes him a "moviestar" hero. His positive characteristics may make him compelling and interesting to the reader. He sacrifices spending time with his wife and risks his life to help others. When he has to abandon his helicopter as it crashes in to the sea,

[He]has the time to contemplate his own death. He isn't panicked so much as saddened by the idea. His wife is five months pregnant with their first child, and he's been home very little recently...He wishes that he'd spent more time at home...It bothers him they're all going to die for lack of five hundred pounds of jet fuel. (243)

Adding to the adrenaline of the situation, Spillane does not die, but continues to fight to survive. He recalls, "What finally drove me to them (Dave Ruvola and Jim Mioli) was survival training. It emphasizes strength in numbers, and I know that if I'm with them, I'll try harder not to die. But I couldn't let them see me in pain, I told myself. I couldn't let them down" (240). Even at death's door Spillane was thinking of others and remaining strong for them. As a true hero, against all odds, he survives.

Pararescue jumpers like Spillane are presented as heroes who risk and are willing to sacrifice their lives for others because that is who they are by nature. In contrast to the fishermen, the pararescue jumpers' lives are less dramatic and more exciting. Though, their jobs are dangerous and require extended time away from family, their family lives are not presented as wrecks. Spillane regrets not spending much time with his wife, but he still has a wife, unlike Tyne for example.

The purpose of the pararescue jumpers' introduction into the narrative seems to be to generate action and adventure. The details presented promote that purpose. When the rescue jumpers receive a rescue call, sometimes the circumstances are beyond dangerous. When circumstances at sea are serious

[t]he rules governing H-60 deployments states that 'intentional flight into known or forecast severe turbulence is prohibited.' The weather report faxed by McGuire Air Force Base earlier that day called for moderate to severe turbulence, which was just enough semantic protection to allow Ruvola to launch. They were trained to save lives. (227)

Regardless of the risk to their own lives, rescue jumpers "were trained to save lives" (227). They are showcased as heroes. Spillane's life combines action and adventure and emotional elements. The narrative's entertainment factor is raised through the presentation of circumstances that combine the exciting with the dramatic.

Though he did not die, Spillane's thoughts as he prepared to die were of his wife and unborn child. He did not regret that he could not save another life. He regretted not spending more time with his family. Junger seems to insert an idea for the reader to reflect upon. He does not say that the last thoughts of the Andrea Gail's crew were of family, but a connection can be inferred. For example when Chris Cotter's dream in the chapter titled "The Dreams of the Dead." She sees Bobby and he says "Remember, Christina, I'll always love you" (276). It is implied that his thoughts were of her. Two rhetorical questions that seem to underline the narrative are; what are the men really sacrificing their lives for? and is it worth it?

Junger presents a balanced picture of the men's lives. He shows they are hardworking, frivolous, dedicated, and care about their family and friends. He shows the

sacrifices, losses, and survival. As Adam Randall says, "Everyone takes their chances, and either you drown or you don't" (282). In Junger's plot, the irony reveals itself in that the men fish to earn money to pay debts and live a life that they are not living. Essentially, they are killing time, drinking and spending money, until they die. In the case of the pararescue jumpers, they save lives, but at times lose their own.

The effects of catastrophic events leave lasting impressions that linger. Junger concludes, "Like a war or a great fire, the effects of a storm go rippling outward through webs of people for years, even generations. It breaches lives like coastlines and nothing is ever again the same" (282). With clever rhetorical slight of hand, Junger attempts to bring a sense of closure in the narrative. The closure comes on page one hundred and seventy one, "Around midnight on October 28<sup>th</sup> something catastrophic happens aboard the Andrea Gail" (171). With all of the available data, this conclusion is the best possible. The remainder of the narrative recounts survival stories and how dreams help family and friends deal with the loss of loved ones.

Junger maintains the element of mystery and the cyclical nature of things until the end. Of Chris Cotter he says,

She dates other men, she continues with her life, but she cannot accept that he is gone. They never find a body, they never find a piece of the boat, and she holds on to these things as proof that maybe the whole crew is safe on an island somewhere, drinking margaritas and watching the sun go down. (276)

He adds that, "From time to time Debra (Murph's mother) dreams that she sees him...And he won't answer, and she'll wake up in a cold sweat, remembering" (275). In a sense, the narrative creates the same effect. It conjures up memories, trying to bring a sense of understanding and closure to the events. Further, Junger at the close of the last chapter, begins a brief narrative about the Terri Lei, a ship that vanished. His closing words are, "The raft is empty. No one got off the Terri Lei alive" (289). He ends the narrative as it began, with a crew that disappears at sea. The cycle of man against the sea continues.

Through The Perfect Storm, Junger generates a plausible explanation for the circumstances that led to the men's deaths. But, Junger admits,

If the men on the Andrea Gail had simply died, and their bodies were lying in state somewhere, their loved ones could make their goodbyes and get on with their lives. But they didn't die, they disappeared off the face of the earth and, strictly speaking, it's just a matter of faith that these men will never return. (273)

Though the sub-title states the narrative is a "true story" it is partly a matter of faith, people choosing to believe and trust Junger's nonfiction narrative, based on existing evidence and the manner in which it is presented.

In order to persuade the reader to continue a narrative in which the ending is known, Junger combines the genres of new journalism, historicism and fiction to rhetorically structure a "readable, compelling, (and) entertaining" narrative (US Naval Institute 3). The evidence collected to write The Perfect Storm itself tells a story, but that same evidence could have told any number of stories. It is up to historians, journalists, and narrative writers such as Junger to interpret the evidence and

present the findings in a coherent narrative with a plot and theme.

Though the author was not directly involved in the events described in the narrative, the reliability is based on the logic, coherence, and presentation of the evidence. Educated and informed guesses are necessary and implied in journalistic and historical writing. Underlining all nonfiction and history are elements of speculation. Speculation does not undermine a nonfiction narrative. It is a natural part of the process when there are gaps in the data or a lack of eyewitnesses.

In nonfiction narrative, plot and character create drama, which in turn creates interest for the reader. Arguably, a focus of fiction is to generate interest and a focus of journalism is to present facts. New journalism combines the two to create a compelling reading of the facts. Junger employs all of these tools in order to create a nonfiction narrative of men lost at sea in 1991 in what the weather anchors called "the perfect storm."



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