

# INTRODUCTION

## MIND THE GAPS

### On the Fuzzy Boundaries

### between the Literary and the Journalistic

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If we put aside the arrogant claims of Anglo-American English to be *the* dominant global language, our case appears even more moth-eaten: thirteen of the writers considered are Anglophone, while none of the other seven languages represented (Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic) scores more than one.

There are perhaps three reasons for this bias in representation, apart from the obvious suspicion, in the words of one of our contributors, Rupert Hildyard, that the “global tag . . . often, conceals Anglo-American interests and hegemony.”

Literary journalism may claim optimistically to be an activity whose roots, in John Hartsock’s words, “extend back at least to the classical period in the Western tradition” (Hartsock 2000: x), but its academic study is comparatively recent and problematic—for example, there remains a lively debate about whether it exists at all (Sims 1984: 4).

As a consequence, secondly, the networks on which this collection is based are more securely rooted in those regions where the academic study of journalism is comparatively better established—North America, Northern Europe and some other Anglophone countries such as Australia. These are regions which, in James Curran’s harsh but fair judgement, “combine the inward orientation of American journalism research and the spurious universality of European media and cultural theory” (Curran 2005: xiii).

Third, it is arguable that a necessary condition for the development of literary journalism is a well-established, multi-platform media with a strong press and magazine sector, reasonable diversity of ownership/control and some protection for freedom of expression. Emphatically this does not entail a press on the United States or—heaven forbid!—British model or even the milder, more socially responsible models of Scandinavia. But it is clear to us that a robust literary journalism depends on a lively press culture that is not manipulated, dominated or crushed by an over-mighty state or subject to the whims of warring despots within a weak one.

China, then, is absent, despite many individual examples of brave and lively journalism. Africa is nowhere to be seen. So is Russia, although no doubt some historical study will produce striking examples in the genre. Pakistan does not figure at all—despite its lively and embattled press. More astonishingly, the 1.2 billion souls of democratic India are only represented by one writer—despite its possession of an extraordinarily diverse and lively media, the second largest Anglophone press in the world, and newspapers and magazines, from the *Hindu* to *India Today*, of world class. All we can plead is guilty to omissions, scholarly ignorance and ineptitude that we hope to rectify in subsequent studies.

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We are keenly aware that such serious gaps may, indeed, support our argument that literary journalism itself can simply be construed as another instance of Occidentalism—Western liberals making hegemonic global claims for a particular model of journalistic activity. Michael Schudson warns US journalists against a purblind ignorance “that vibrant democracies exist that have both freedom of the press *and* substantial government support of news organizations” (Schudson 2005, our italics). In our defence, we might argue that the present

collection is an early, tentative effort to explore the phenomenon of literary journalism worldwide—following on from John S. Bak and Bill Reynolds’s ambitious collection (2011). It also aims to build up networks of colleagues who are happy to immerse themselves in a field which we find wonderfully stimulating and to promote further study of all its forms.

## **Unpicking Literary Journalism**

“We live in a culture of blur and hybrids,” observes the British critic Mark Lawson (2008). In truth, the concept of “literary journalism,” that awkward hybrid term, has a provisional quality that embodies many of the uncertainties and contradictions of the writer’s predicament at the turn of the 21st century. However, alternatives such as “literary non-fiction,” “creative non-fiction,” “narrative non-fiction,” “the literature of fact” (all cited in Hartsock op cit: 5) and various less likely combinations, such as “journalistic non-fiction,” “lyrics in prose” (ibid) have all failed to gain traction. Literary journalism has the merit of conciseness and ease on the tongue. But what does it mean?

The history of “journalism” has many strands. In many cultures it emerged in radical clothes with early “citizen journalists” promoting subversive and radical, anti-clerical, anti-authority discourses. Later on, with the emergence of bourgeois capitalism, “journalism” came to denote the routine, diurnal exercise of a professional craft, defined by its mode of production, whose purpose was the production of some form of money-making publication to diverse audiences. Indeed, Mark Kramer, in a valuable reflective essay, argues that “journalism” masks “the form’s inventiveness” (Kramer 1995: 21). Presumably this reflects the professional reality that most journalism is routinized drudgery—though a lot less arduous than manual or clerical work—and involves pushing out a limited repertoire of “stories” with little creative autonomy for the author, at the behest of varyingly enlightened or philistine and profit-hungry managements. This reality is profoundly at odds with the ideal vision of journalism embodied in movies and myth.

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Journalism in the West likes to spin yarns about its own disreputable, bohemian qualities. Always an uncertain profession, chippy about its status, now, after the high summer of its Victorian industrialization, and the melting down of journalism factories, theorists of this unrespectable subject have to contemplate the large-scale admission (once again) of unqualified practitioners into the field. Two hundred years from start to finish?

A romantic account of the birth of modern journalism might go as follows.

Journalism was born in the urban face-to-face settings around the small printing houses of the 18th century as an irregular craft practiced by a variety of social misfits peddling gossip, scandal, rumor, political tidbits and nuggets of commercial information in the interests of political patrons and the rich. The invention of mass circulation newspapers in the 19th century, a generation or so after the advent of the industrial system, succeeded in marginalizing the radical, politically partisan press (Curran and Seaton 2003: 10–37). And in the process there emerged a species of factory, congruent with the rise of the professional classes, in which the “journalist” booked a disreputable third-class ticket, just above steerage, whilst sailing in a journal of record or a tabloid pirate ship.

This industrialized press system took hold in the great cities of Britain, Europe and America and spread rapidly with the production of mass circulation Sundays and larger dailies, developing to a high point in the period from 1910 to the 1960s with the second, electrical-based revolution and the full flowering of daily journalism before a slow decline and transformation into the multi-platform, increasingly web-based media of today. Colonialism and anticolonial struggles spread this system worldwide, from Lima to Lahore. We are

now in an era in the West where these factories of fact are dissolving into something else, along with the factories that made things.

## **The Conventional Claims of Literary Journalism**

“Literary” is an altogether posher term, denoting forms of expression which have received entry tickets into a cultural canon, a literature, sanctioned by an elite, whose purpose is generally defined as *wider* than some form of money-making publication to diverse audiences. Beyond the claims of art for art’s sake, these purposes might include: the creation of national (or, in some cases, class and feminist) consciousness and identity; the celebration of universal values; original, innovative expression which refreshes the springs of language; the establishment of a significant and influential bulk of cultural production; and the

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subversion and creative destruction of established and outmoded ideas and systems of thought.

The addition of “literary” to “journalism” might be seen as dignifying the latter and giving it a modicum of cultural class. Kramer—to lean on his valuable essay again—finds “the ‘literary’ part self-congratulating” (Kramer op cit: 21) but argues that, after all, the hybrid term “literary journalism” is “roughly accurate” in describing “the sort of nonfiction in which arts of style and narrative construction long associated with fiction help pierce to the quick of what’s happening—the essence of journalism” (ibid). To some extent refuge is being taken here in a metaphor—we might question whether “piercing” is appropriate for a process which may involve assembly, careful listening, the creation of empathic relationships with people and so on rather than a sudden illumination. And there is a characteristic rhetoric in discussions by journalists attempting to define journalism that partakes of the mystical. What is this essence, this “quick,” but some Platonic ghost lurking within events that maybe gives them meaning—rather than a narrative line that is created within the fertile journalistic imagination?

Kramer goes on to outline literary journalism’s “defining traits” (ibid: 22): literary journalists “immerse” themselves; create unspoken trust in readers about accuracy by not, for example, reorganizing the chronology of events or inventing quotes (ibid 23), use “informal language [and] elegant, simple expression” (ibid: 30–31). With sources they aspire to be as honest as possible about their intentions and attempt to “do no harm” (ibid 27). The concept of “voice” is central to his account as the means by which the writer represents him or herself to the reader. “The defining mark of literary journalism is the personality of the writer, the individual and intimate voice of a whole, candid person . . . speaking simply in his or her own right” (ibid: 29).

## **The Vision of a Journalism Purged of Its Grosser Commercial Aspects**

The vision here is of a journalism purged of its grosser commercial and industrial aspects, practiced by artists of integrity and passion. It is a vision that embodies a number of claims: the seriousness of journalism against the condescension of the literary elite; the status of journalism studies against literary studies; the autonomy of the craft of journalism against mass production.

This vision draws on the real strengths of the American journalistic tradition.

It is wedded to an ideal of Romantic individualism—with the journalist

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as a courageous actor confronting the forces of the state and corporate power.

It is also a democratic vision. Norman Sims observes that “literary journalism

pays respect to ordinary lives . . . the genre's classics deal with the feelings and experiences of commoners" (Sims 1995: 3). Kramer also sees something inherently democratic in its commitment to plain speaking: "something pluralistic, pro-individual, anti-cant, and anti-elite. . . . Informal style cuts through the obfuscating generalities of creeds, countries, companies, bureaucracies, and experts" (Kramer op cit: 34).

This concern for the common people characteristically enlists "the human interest story as social parable" (Kerrane 1997: 17). And the vision decisively refutes the dominant US model of journalism as a neutral, fact-based, professional activity, eschewing commitment or activism in the disinterested search for truth: a model which is a myth, a Neverland to which organizations such as Rupert Murdoch's Fox Channel have decisively given the lie.

According to Michael Schudson, the lasting achievement of American journalism boils down to two linked phenomena which he terms, following the political theorist Nancy Rosenblum, and drawing on the classic authority of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), "speaking up" and "easy spontaneity": Huckleberry's virtues may also be the virtues of American journalism at its best. The practice of interviewing politicians that Americans developed and to some degree taught to journalists elsewhere in the world is a perfect institutional manifestation of easy spontaneity. Muckraking or investigative reporting is likewise an institutionalization of "speaking up" (Schudson 2005).

The American creation of the interview in the mid-19th century—the journalist's method for holding the mighty to account—and a relaxed informal style evident in voice and narration, implies an equality among *all* the players in the journalistic field, whatever their status: writers, readers and powerful subjects (ibid). US accounts of literary journalism foreground the use of different voices and a relaxed tone of narration: Kramer recommends that literary journalists adopt the tone of "a well-spoken, worldly, witty, cagey story-telling buddy" (ibid: 31).

## Literary Journalism as a Disputed Terrain

The problem here is in distinguishing a set of values that allow us to distinguish between what we think are good and bad examples of literary journalism, from a set of value-free criteria that assist us in recognizing routine examples. On a 6 introduction

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value-free level, we might argue that, rather than a stable genre or family of genres, literary journalism defines a *field* where different traditions and practices of writing intersect, a disputed terrain within which various overlapping practices of writing—among them the journalistic column, the memoir, the sketch, the essay, travel narratives, life writing, "true crime" narratives, "popular" history, cultural reflection and other modes of writing—camp uneasily, disputing their neighbors' barricades and patching up temporary alliances.

The work of the life and travel writer, the contemporary historian, the sports writer, the essayist and long-form columnist, meet here. Indeed, it is tempting to see all journalism as "literary"—worthy of attention for its "writerly" qualities as any Jane Austen or Albert Camus. As we write, even the headline on the Murdoch mass-selling, trashy "red top" tabloid, the *Sun*, approaches some kind of poetry as it screams: "NITWIT HITS TWITTER WITH WRIT." Precise boundaries become uncertain. Maybe we should simply follow John S. Bak (2011: 18) and bypass the debate over genres and "raise" literary journalism "to the level of a discipline."

## The Impulse to "Claim the Real"

But what literary journalists perhaps share, with documentary filmmakers, is the impulse to "claim the real": an assertion about truthfulness to verifiable experience, an adherence to accuracy and sincerity which practitioners assert are

the crucial features that distinguish their narratives from “fiction” (see Kramer 1995). Unless they are actively practicing bad faith, in some sense they believe that their writing is rooted in the disciplined observation/witnessing/depiction of “real” people woven into narratives of “real” events which are, in principle (though not necessarily in practice), verifiable. Sources can be checked, places revisited, but in truth the claim to authenticity can chiefly be tested by consistency of detail and the character/authority of the narrative voice and the level of confidence it inspires.

A problem here is that this demand for realism can be represented as an essentially conservative concept, aimed at repulsing the 20th-century postmodernist project in writing. As Susan Sontag argued in the 1980s, writing about Roland Barthes:

... a distinctive modern stylistics has evolved, the prototypes of which go back at least to Sterne and the German Romantics—the invention of anti-linear forms of narration: in fiction, the destruction of the “story”; in non-fiction, the abandonment of linear argument. The presumed impossibility (or irrelevance) of producing a continuous introduction 7

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systematic argument has led to a remodeling of the standard long forms—the treatise, the long book—and a recasting of the genres of fiction, autobiography, and essay (Sontag 1982: xv).

## A Refutation of the Pretensions of Modernism

In these terms, literary journalism can be presented as a throwback to the idea of a stable text and a stable reality that can be narrativized, a refutation of the pretensions of modernism in which eager journalists penetrate to “the quick of what’s happening.” But many writers would now claim, with David Shields: “Story seems to say everything happens for a reason, and I want to say, *No, it doesn’t*” (Shields 2011: 114). In this new world of journalism circa 2011, as the furniture of “newspapers of record” rolls across the deck and news organizations compete for authority with a multitude of other news sources, vainly proclaiming the magic virtues of their “brand,” “news” and the profession of journalism become problematic constructs.

Blogging, rolling news, online interactivity—so ingrained have these things become that it is hard to remember that they are all recent developments and all contribute to our sense of being inundated by information, much of which calls itself “news,” when it is in fact—and increasingly—no more than rumor, gossip, spin, speculation. The instant a newsworthy event occurs, it is misrepresented in its reporting—fictionalized, really. The line between reality and its representation has become rivetingly porous (Willis 2008).

## Orwell and the Voice of Literary Journalism

The questions raised by the passage only underscore the epistemological insecurity by which the reader of biography and autobiography (and history and journalism) is always and everywhere dogged. In a work of non-fiction we almost never know the truth of what happened. The ideal of unmediated reporting is achieved regularly only in fiction, where the writer faithfully reports on what is going on in his imagination (Malcolm 1994: 154).

Why do we believe a given text to be truthful, to be actively *truth seeking*? Some proponents of literary journalism stress accuracy as a crucial quality; indeed, Norman Sims claims, “a mandate for accuracy pervades literary journalism, according to its practitioners” (Sims op cit: 15). But what does that mean, beyond a concern for getting details right? Accuracy is a discipline which implies reliability and care and also a set of habits, involving such practices as routine

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checking. The philosopher Bernard Williams argues that it is also a virtue because it involves the writer resisting the “gross need to believe the agreeable” and the temptation to relax and not check one’s inquiries (Williams 2002: 125).



Accuracy might be seen in this light as providing a well-built, reliable floor, the embodiment of a duty of care for the reader, a basis for trusting the veracity of a story. But again this is to see it in a negative light, as simply a predisposition to avoid errors. An active sense of accuracy might include some explicit reflection in the story about the reliability of information and how the journalist arrives at his or her account. Evidence, in other words.

Accuracy can also be somehow entwined with our sense of the tone and quality of the narrative voice in a piece of journalism. The basis for confidence and trust in a narrative voice is an elusive thing. Clearly we are not disposed to rely on a hectoring, bullying or boastful voice—the accents we recognize of propaganda or systematic lying. We may be in more trouble with the accents of flattery and the smooth tones of PR. Anger is various in its impact—in the tone of Cobbett or Dickens it inspires respect—a quality in Dickens that Orwell anatomized well:

When one reads any strongly individual piece of writing, one has the impression of seeing a face somewhere behind the page. . . . What one sees is the face that the writer ought to have. Well, in the case of Dickens I see a face that is not quite the face of Dickens's photographs, though it resembles it. It is the face of a man of about forty, with a small beard and a high colour. He is laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity. It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is generously angry—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls (Orwell 1940).

“Generous” anger implies a quality of empathy, a lack of malice, a *justness* in the anger that distinguishes it from aggression and mere name-calling. A factor that disposes us to trust a particular voice is the sense that the writer is continually reaching out to other human beings, actively thinking, actively attending, using original expression—his or her own words—and always attempting to avoid stale and derivative language. Here is Orwell again, seeing a man hanged:

It was about forty yards to the gallows. I watched the bare brown back of the prisoner marching in front of me. He walked clumsily with his bound arms, but quite steadily, with that bobbing gait of the Indian who never straightens his knees. At each step his muscles slid neatly into place, the lock of hair on his scalp danced up and down,

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his feet printed themselves on the wet gravel. And once, in spite of the men who gripped him by each shoulder, he stepped slightly aside to avoid a puddle on the path. It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. All the organs of his body were working—bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming—all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned—reasoned even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone—one mind less, one world less (Orwell 1931).

What is the voice here? The rehearsal of a series of short details conveys the clenched anxiety of maintaining a front during the imperial ritual. The precision of his observation and care in qualifying each item: “bobbing gait,” “about forty yards,” “lock of hair . . . danced,” “clumsily . . . but quite steadily” builds up a measured tension before the palpable shock of the moment when the man steps aside from the puddle. Orwell seems to achieve an absolute candor in relating his reaction at the moment: “it is curious” is semi-apologetic, he surprises himself, with a cold reflection on his state of mind: “I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. . . . I saw the mystery,

the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide.” The deepening, appalled recognition of the moral crime is anchored to the tiny, mundane detail of “the puddle” and then a growing emphatic spiral: “puddle” linking to “mystery” and “tide” with an accent that feels completely honest. This precise calibration of statement to emotional intensity at each step has no sense of forcing the material for effect or stretching for gratuitous symbolism. The tension between the “full tide” of life, the victim as a little “world” connected to a universe of little “worlds” and the mundane “puddle,” perhaps emblematic of death, arises naturally from the squalid details of the process hurrying the victim to the scaffold, a mere item in the “dirty work of empire” anatomized by Orwell. But the puddle is also a puddle. Trust in the veracity of this voice (thus eliminating any doubts that Orwell actually witnessed the hanging) derives from accurate, precise observation and an emotional response which remains completely appropriate in relation to the facts of the case. Honesty—and the trust we feel for this voice—is *in* those details.

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## **Twenty-three Authors in Search of Literary Journalism in a Field Occupied by Fact, Fiction and Reportage**

Our opening section contains seven chapters which attempt to tackle the epistemological issues at the heart of this text, venturing into the disputed terrain occupied by fact, fiction and reportage. The first contribution, by David Abrahamson and Ibrahim Abusharif, confronts squarely the issue of what the necessary conditions are for the development of literary journalism. Despite the superb tradition of imaginative literature, poetry and fiction in the Arab world, the authors diagnose a relative absence of literary journalism with a number of distinguished exceptions, such as Nawal El-Saadawi and Rami Khouri and the work of some Arab-American writers such as Alaa Al-Aswany. Writing at the onset of the 2011 “Arab Spring,” they attempt to account for this lack. Possible explanations include market forces, government control of the press, draconian systems of censorship and the legacy of colonialism: artificial state boundaries, the Palestinian-Israeli struggle and frozen political structures.

No one has explored the boundaries between journalism, fiction and nonfiction with more daring and imaginative flair than Gordon Burn (1948–2009).

In the process, he took the non-fiction novel, in his own words, “to its ultimate” in his final work, *Born Yesterday: The News as a Novel*. Here John Tulloch celebrates the work of Burn, a Newcastle-born journalist, art critic and writer, strongly influenced by, and critical of, American new journalists such as Norman Mailer and Truman Capote. A writer of extraordinary originality, Burn produced a series of genre-busting books—four novels, two inside explorations of sport and classic accounts of two of the UK’s most notorious serial killers, before his early death.

Most remarkable is his final work, *Born Yesterday*, which uses rolling news from a day in 2007 to construct a world that calls into question the boundaries between “fact” and “fiction.” As Tulloch concludes: “Burn was an immensely ambitious writer who consistently transcended the boundaries and limitations of any genre he worked within.”

The celebrated journalist Joseph Mitchell (1908–1996) began his career as a newspaper reporter in New York and became a long-serving writer for the *New Yorker*, specializing in exquisitely researched long-form narratives. Thomas B. Connery argues that Mitchell transcends the reporter’s skills—observation

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and accurate recording—to reach a “visionary” capability, a quality as a “seer,” where his looking approaches a mystical intensity which makes it possible “for us to see what he sees.”

In contrast, Anna Hoyles’s study of the early work of the Swedish journalist and campaigner Moa Martinson (1890–1964) presents a fully engaged, lifelong political activist who escaped her poor, working-class background to cut through the Swedish left of the 1920s and create a multi-faceted persona as a working-class mother, wife, Bolshevik and feminist expressed in vivid, caustic newspaper columns. Here Hoyles explores the varied literary devices Martinson used in her journalism and argues that, together with her novels, it has helped inspire a new school of proletarian literature spearheaded by women.

Finland’s answer to Hunter S. Thompson was a hell-raising journalist named Veikko Ennala (1922–1991), whose work as a taboo-breaker and bad boy of Finnish journalism is examined by Maria Lassila-Merisalo. A war correspondent at the age of 20, a boozy, drug-taking, vagrant bohemian by 30,

Ennala set out to shock a society that was still largely agrarian, impoverished by war and overshadowed by the Soviet Union. Vividly written stories of drug addiction, life on the booze, in prison and—most explosively—about sexual mores, executed in a style reminiscent of the US new journalists, gave him a reputation as a scandal-monger but ensured high sales for magazines and, Lassila-Merisalo argues, played a key role in liberalizing social attitudes in Finland.

The origins of Ernest Hemingway’s (1899–1961) plain, adjective-spare style famously lie in the discipline of newspaper reporting. Rod Whiting highlights the impact of his early career as a journalist on the *Kansas City Star* and the *Toronto Star* and the influence of newsroom discipline and fellow journalists on his development as a writer, from a wordy high schooler’s writing style into the superb assurance of his early short fiction.

Ryszard Kapuściński (1932–2007) achieved immense international recognition as a brilliant reporter far beyond the boundaries of his native Poland.

Much less is known about the journalistic background from which he came.

Susan Greenberg places Kapuściński within the context of what she terms a “Polish School of Reportage” and explores what factors encouraged literary journalism to develop, despite the pressure of communist censorship. Greenberg identifies a new generation of journalists following on from Kapuściński and from Hanna Krall (1935–), frequently described as the “mother” of modern reportage in Poland, and highlights the work of Warsaw’s Institute of Reportage, established in 2010.

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## **The Personal, Postmodern and a Game of Reflexivity**

The problematic place of the personal in literary journalism is dissected in our second section. The British journalist and novelist John Lanchester (1962–) is distinctive for his serious interest in politics and business. Rupert Hildyard, in his anatomy of Lanchester’s book on the 2008 financial crash *Whoops! Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay*, argues that the dominant attitude of British literary journalists towards mainstream politics and economics since the 1930s has been “either disdainfully aloof or programmatically leftist”—in contrast to figures in the great tradition of literary journalism such as Dickens, Hazlitt and Orwell. Hildyard places *Whoops!* within the torrent of recent books on the crash and concludes that not only is it far superior, but that literary journalism is best equipped to make sense of this sort of phenomenon. *Whoops!* ends up a fascinating *mélange*—part



challenging tutorial on how capitalism and the globalized economy works, part postmodernist playful game of reflexivity (as, for instance, when he looks up his own credit rating).

Nick Nuttall assesses the strange career of Hunter S. Thompson (1937–2005), a writer whose significance as a literary journalist is still a matter of controversy. How much was he a prisoner of his own persona, trapped, as Tom Wolfe observed (see McKeen 2009: 361), in the role of a manic clown, or simply a sad case of a drug- and booze-addled talent, hyped-up as an “outlaw” but at most a minor stylist? Or is he redeemed by, in Paul Theroux’s words (2003), his utter contempt for power? Nuttall concludes that Thompson is best understood as being “trapped by an ego that distrusted objectivity and relied on a heightened sense of the authentic as its lodestone.” As Thompson acknowledged: “My ego comes through very heavy, even when I try to write the straightest kind of journalism” (McKeen op cit: 139).

The Norwegian journalist Åsne Seierstad (1970–) is best known for her work in war zones and for the controversy surrounding the publication of her best-selling work *The Bookseller of Kabul* (2003). Jenny McKay evaluates the ethical issues that arise from the dispute, including the relationship between journalists and the people they write about—in this case the eponymous bookseller’s family, with whom Seierstad lived for several months in a sustained exercise in “immersion” reporting. But when the book was published and became a world-wide bestseller the Rais family strongly objected to “becoming characters in someone else’s narrative,” and in the summer of 2010 a Norwegian court

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found that Seierstad had invaded the privacy of the bookseller’s second wife—a verdict against which the writer won her appeal in 2011. McKay discusses the duty of care that literary journalists owe to their subjects and in particular the disclosure of intimate details and whether, in an age of globalization, journalists should consider protecting the identity of their subjects so as not to expose individuals to dishonor.

Keeping the spotlight on the problematic “I”-witness of literary journalism, Robert Alexander’s chapter argues that its practice demands that a writer respond to the “singularity of a subject” in a way that may confound the conventions and stereotyping of “objective” reporting. Dissecting the literariness of literary journalism, Alexander’s chapter is an extended meditation on the paradoxical status of literature as both an institution which is socially conservative and a practice that must flout convention in order to survive. Literature’s power ultimately resides in its capacity “to usher what has been culturally unintelligible into view and, in so doing, to reframe that culture’s understanding in often unpredictable ways.”

What is the significance of this for literary journalism? The celebrated American journalist Joseph Mitchell (1908–1996) observed that reporters’ trying to write “literature” was a big problem for any newspaper. Alexander explores in detail Mitchell’s own problems with the *New Yorker* and two articles he wrote about the New York writer Joe Gould. He concludes that “the standard journalist-source relationship” allows little room for the sort of imbrication of selves evident in these two pioneering pieces.

Norman Sims examines both the personal connections that quality literary journalists hold to their topics and the links between literary journalism and literary history. Arguing for a special category of “historical literary journalism,” he suggests that historians share a narrative form and an audience with literary journalists and novelists and that it is a perfectly valid scholarly activity to examine the literary quality of historical works—as undertaken, for example, by John Clive on the work of Gibbon, Macaulay,

de Tocqueville and Halevy. Sims explores the work of Richard Rhodes—author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*—and Michael and Elizabeth Norman's *Tears in the Darkness*. These are journalists whose research, Sims argues, is the equal of the professional historian. Supported by extensive interviews, he reflects on the importance of the personal involvement they have with the topics they write about.

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## Literary Journalism's Contribution to the War Correspondents' Canon

Literary journalism's contribution to the reporting of conflict is chronically under-researched. Yet so often journalists decide to break away from the demands of the daily deadline in order to capture the complexities and horrors of war. Firstly, Michael Foley's chapter on the reporting of the Irish literary journalist and adventurer Edmond O'Donovan (1844–1883) concentrates on his celebrated book *The Merv Oasis: Travels and Adventures East of the Caspian During the Years 1879–80–81*. Published in 1882, this tale of O'Donovan's travels in Central Asia and his abortive attempt to report on the 2nd Afghan war for the London *Daily News* became an immediate best seller but was then largely forgotten. O'Donovan died shortly afterwards under mysterious circumstances during the British campaign against the Mahdi. Foley explores O'Donovan's predicament as an Irish nationalist (a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and a veteran of the failed Fenian uprising of 1867) in the service of the British Empire who hated England intensely and saw impartiality as a form of protection. Richard Lance Keeble evaluates the literary qualities of the war reporting by the British journalist Robert Fisk (1946–), the long-serving, Beirut-based correspondent of the *Independent*. Fisk has won many awards for his brave and insightful reporting of war, but the literary aspects of his prose are rarely considered. Beginning as a local journalist in Newcastle, Fisk reported for *The Times* on the Irish troubles in the 1970s and was appointed Middle East correspondent in 1976, shifting to the *Independent* in 1989 after Rupert Murdoch's takeover. Most journalists sanitize war, but Fisk relentlessly exposes its horrors and records it in meticulous detail: "central to Fisk's journalism is his near permanent critique of the mainstream coverage of conflict." In Fisk's hands, Keeble argues, war reportage becomes compelling literary journalism. Miles Maguire's study of Dexter Filkins (1961–), a war correspondent in Afghanistan and Iraq reporting for the *New York* and *LA Times*, is broad-ranging in scope, for it focuses on his memoir, *The Forever War*; explores the ways in which it deviates from his previously published newspaper reports; and goes on to reflect on what this tells us about the "hidden side" of the writing process, including the operation of self-censorship. Particular attention is paid to a central event in the book—Filkins's own role and responsibility in the circumstances surrounding the death of Marine Lance Corporal William L. Miller. Significantly, Maguire finds that facts were left out of Filkins's newspaper reports which later appear in his memoir.

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The Toronto-based writer, editor and fervent backer of George Bush in his post-9/11 "war on terror," Robert Fulford (1932–), is the subject of a profile by Bill Reynolds. The chapter charts in detail Fulford's career from 1950 as a news reporter, critic of art and film, magazine editor, book reviewer, columnist for the *Toronto Star*, editor of *Saturday Night* magazine and increasingly a pillar of the Canadian right. Reynolds discerns a great stylist and accomplished literary journalist within the carapace of a controversialist. His writing, he argues, "retains its robust quality—tightly structured sentences with something to say, and

columns routinely honed with a sharpening steel” but, sadly, his political views have “become fixed, defined, intransigent.”

## Partisan Prose

Our fourth section highlights the special role literary journalists have played in a range of political, anti-colonial and environmental campaigns. Firstly, Alice Donat Trindade’s pioneering, critical study of the work of Pedro Cardoso (1883–1942), a journalist who lived all his life in Cape Verde, then a Portuguese colony off the west coast of Africa, reveals how this civil servant, ardent communist and radical journalist of 30 years, with “Afro” as his *nom de plume*, used his writing to argue against the colonial power and for equality and socially progressive policies. Trindade analyses Cardoso’s texts using the four techniques of “new journalism”—scene-by-scene construction, use of dialogue, point of view and details—proposed by Tom Wolfe (see Wolfe and Johnson 1973).

The Cuban journalist, poet and revolutionary José Martí (1853–1895), whose career is analyzed by Pablo Calvi, never functioned as a reporter but produced weekly *crónicas* based on summaries of events drawn from other newspapers, intensifying the narrative and adding his own distinctive interpretation.

Much of the time in exile, pursuing the cause of independence from Spain, and wary of the designs of the United States, he was so celebrated as a journalist and commentator that he became a contributor to Dana’s *New York Sun* and the prestigious Argentine paper *La Nación*. On the basis of an analysis of 400 of Martí’s *crónicas*, Calvi argues that Martí’s revolutionary politics was accompanied by distinctive innovations in style and the use of language, constituting “the most poetic, elegant and progressive forms of literature to be written in Spanish in centuries.”

Jane Chapman analyses the contribution to literary journalism of the Indian writer, journalist and political activist Arundhati Roy (1961–) by examining her polemical writing for its insights into local campaigns against

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corporate development projects. Chapman asks to what extent Roy’s polemics call into question the creative merit of her writing and attempts to place her work within an Indian tradition of activism, and a context established by Mohandas Gandhi, arguing that, to Gandhi, journalism was a vehicle for the articulation of politics.

Rachel Carson (1907–1964), the US environmental writer and campaigner, is best remembered for her book *Silent Spring* (1962), which proved to be hugely influential in establishing the modern environmental movement. But she produced journalism from 1937 to her death, for a range of publications such as the *New Yorker* and *Reader’s Digest* and created a trilogy of books on the sea (*Under the Sea Wind*, *The Sea Around Us*, *The Edge of the Sea*), which opened the way for the reception of *Silent Spring*. Alex Lockwood argues that Carson’s work, by engaging the imagination of readers with “emotionally sophisticated” literary journalism, overcame public indifference to environmental issues, and that her influence on contemporary journalists and the formation of a new form of non-fiction, nature writing—“fact with feeling”—was profound.

## Literary Journalism and the

## Transformation of Conventional Genres

Our final section examines the way in which the journalistic imagination is able to transform such conventional genres as travel writing and human interest-based features—and how web-based writing is so often drawing on the techniques of literary journalism. Indeed, in the first chapter, Giulia Bruna demonstrates the way in which literary journalism studies can bring to light a “hidden” journalistic aspect of an eminent writer. In addition to his celebrated

career as a playwright, the great Irish dramatist John Millington Synge (1871–1909) was extensively engaged in journalism over the decade from 1898. He wrote travel articles, mainly about Irish rural areas, as well as a topographical book on the Aran Islands, numerous book reviews and a range of scholarly articles on Irish mythology, literature and folklore.

Giulia Bruna describes Synge as a “reluctant” journalist who disliked tight deadlines and was more interested in the financial rewards than the artistic possibilities. Nevertheless, Bruna assesses Synge’s stylistics in his travel writing as being akin to literary journalism in its concern for presenting factual material through dialogue, conversation and the use of human-interest stories. The whole constitutes an important journalistic achievement worthy of critical attention.

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Although the Australian journalist John Pilger (1939–) is best known now as an award-winning documentary filmmaker and author, he started his British journalism career writing for the tabloid *Daily Mirror* in the 1960s. Much of Pilger’s written journalism concerns war and the impact of Western foreign policy on the third world. But Florian Zollmann, who is helping to create the John Pilger digital archive at the University of Lincoln, reveals a neglected aspect of his writing, encompassing a series of human interest-based features depicting young people doing voluntary social work around the world. On the basis of a close analysis, Zollmann argues that the “Youth in Action” series from 1966 is fully describable as a distinguished example of literary journalism.

No study of journalism today is complete without an understanding of the impact of the web on conventional routines and genres. In our final chapter, Susan Greenberg argues that a growing public appetite for “slow journalism” on the web is emerging alongside a “slow food” movement which has emerged in response to the culinary and environmental impact of “fast food.” “Slow journalism” demands more time and concentration from the consumer. In return, its production involves correspondingly more time and effort and higher standards on the part of journalists. Greenberg includes in this new category journalistic work that involves the “immersive” techniques familiar in literary journalism. She explores the potential of the web to provide a means of delivery for this enhanced journalism and the pros and cons of forms such as the blog. So the text ends on a positive note. While newspaper empires tremble (and sometimes crumble) in the West in the face of the onslaught from the web, literary journalism, we argue, will survive and prosper. Long live literary journalism (whatever it may be)!

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