

## *Note from the Editor . . .*



Two years ago, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, at the Eleventh International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies, during one of the Q&A sessions, a somewhat free-form discussion broke out. After Jennifer Martin presented a piece of research from her dissertation, members of the audience began to talk about Aboriginal literary journalism, about North American Indigenous literary journalism, about Latin American Indian literary journalism—and, ultimately, about whether these forms existed and if they did what might be some examples. Martin triggered this discussion because, among other things, she focused on the work of Melissa Lucashenko, a feature writer who up until that point had been the only Indigenous journalist ever to win the prestigious Walkley Award, Australia’s version of the Pulitzers.

After the conference I sent a few emails around. I asked if anyone might be interested in pursuing this idea further. I did have an ulterior motive. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued ninety-four Calls to Action, one of which called for journalism schools in Canada to improve their methods of teaching students how to report on Indigenous issues. As for the call to build a panel on the subject, it turned out that Martin was interested, as were Pablo Calvi from Stony Brook and John Coward from Tulsa.

Another event happened in May 2016. The chair of the Ryerson School of Journalism, Janice Neil, invited CBC journalist and University of British Columbia journalism instructor Duncan McCue to deliver a half-day seminar in reporting on Indigenous issues. One of the fascinating aspects of McCue’s talk was his recommendations for how we teach students to report on Indigenous communities. He said a journalist cannot expect to walk up to a person in an Indigenous community, ask a few questions, get a few answers, walk away, and write it up. It just does not happen that way. The journalist has to spend time to get to know people. The people have to spend time to get to know the journalist. People living in an Indigenous community, by and large, are not going to open up and talk. There are layers of trust that must be built.

The more McCue talked, the more I realized that what he was describing was fairly close to the philosophy and strategies of literary journalism and immersion reporting, and to some degree magazine feature writing. At the break I asked McCue whether he agreed with my assessment, and he said he loved magazine feature writing and that kind of deep immersion, and, yes, in his opinion there was indeed a similarity.

My next question to McCue was: Would he happen to know of any Indigenous literary journalists who write these sorts of stories, writers I might consider including in my courses? People, say, who have written excellent, long, immersive features? I was looking to play my little part and introduce Indigenous literary journalism in my course syllabi. McCue mentioned a couple of names—one of whom, Dan David, I decided to research and write about for the Halifax conference and, subsequently, for this issue—but beyond that he said he would have to get back to me.

I approached McCue again a few months later. I asked him if he might participate in a panel on Indigenous literary journalism. He said he would. The panel of five was set, and the panel topic was accepted for the Twelfth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies, held in Halifax.

Those presentations, by Calvi, Coward, Martin, McCue, and myself, have been revised and are now presented here. I believe it is important to keep the issue of Indigenous literary journalism at the forefront of current literary journalism theory and discussion and practice. I do not think we can afford to pay lip service to this area of study and then consider our job complete. The spotlight on Indigenous literary journalism in this issue is, I hope, a small contribution toward this ongoing discussion. Perhaps it might stir some further fresh research in the area.

The three research essays in this issue are a bit different from the norm. Two are about topics that are unusual for this journal, namely the concept of imagination and the concept of belatedness. Lindsay Morton's essay, "The Role of Imagination in Literary Journalism," disentangles the many and varied notions as they pertain to literary journalism. Building on her study of philosopher Lorraine Code's work, Morton begins the process of defining a landscape where imagination plays a crucial and central role in the creation of works of literary journalism. Christopher Wilson's essay, "The Journalist Who Was Always Late: Time and Temporality in Literary Journalism," examines the inescapable role of time in reporting. Time is an all-encompassing factor in daily journalism but, although we might not automatically think so, Wilson builds a solid foundation that shows it to be an unavoidable factor of literary journalism.

Our third research essay, "Why We Fled from Grosny," by Hendrik Michael, is a pointedly political, and important, discussion of how literary journalism has responded to the European immigration crisis. Michael dissects the various responses in the German media that allow for long, involved discussions of this complicated issue.

*Bill Reynolds*

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