

ESSE-10
(The European Society for the Study of English)
Seminar: "History and Literary Journalism"
University of Torino, Torino, Italy
24-28 August 2010

Co-sponsor: International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

SEMINAR S.07: History and Literary Journalism

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"J. M. Synge's Alternative History in the Reportage *In the Congested Districts*"

J. M. Synge's *In the Congested Districts* (1905) is a remarkable example of investigative journalism tackling issues of poverty in the West of Ireland during its struggle for independence. This paper will investigate Synge's "history-telling" techniques and will show how the "micro-histories" of *In the Congested Districts* oppose predicates of universal history. In addition, it is this connection between the present (1905) and the recent past (the Great Famine) that strengthens the collective memory and plays an important role in understanding the political and socio-economic situation in the congested West at the turn of the twentieth century.

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"Mapping the Urban Jungle: the Legacy of Early-Twentieth-Century US Muckraking Journalism"

This present paper evaluates the legacy of early practitioners of literary journalism in the US—muckraking journalists, novelists, and social reformers such as Jacob Riis, David Graham Phillips, Lincoln Steffens, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Ida Tarbell. The argument investigates the impact these writers exerted both on literary realism/naturalism and on the historical narratives devoted to the growth of urban-industrialism in the United States. It examines to what extent the muckrakers' cultural practice may be regarded as an antecedent

of the documentary work by Joan Didion, Michael Moore, Erwin Wagenhofer, and Morgan Spurlock.

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“The *Wilhelm Gustloff* in Amateur Historiography and the Print Media”

The sinking of the Nazi cruise liner turned naval barracks, *Wilhelm Gustloff*, is the deadliest maritime tragedy in recorded history, claiming the lives of more than 9,000 mostly women and children German refugees. This paper interprets the most notable depictions of the *Gustloff* in amateur historiography and the print media from the time of the sinking to the present in an attempt to locate and understand the recent interest in the *Gustloff* within the context of a nation perpetually coming to terms with its dark past.

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“Literary Journalism’s Resistance to and Attempt to Escape the Embrace of History”

John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* works under the influence of what scholar John Carey characterized as the reader’s “willed credulity” in the cognitive openness and willingness to vicariously embark on the journey of the narrative as if it were new or in the present once again. It resists the pull of history by attempting to keep the reader cognitively in the present, even if ultimately it will be co-opted by history (but by implication, too, it helps to keep history honest). Yet if history does inevitably triumph, such a conclusion is all but telling the obvious.

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“The Franco Regime through the Eyes of Literary Journalism: A Case Study of Emmet John Hughes’ *Report from Spain*”

This paper reflects on the importance role between history and literary journalism per Emmet John Hughes’s anti-Franco *Report from Spain*. The core of the paper will analyze the case study of a controversial subject of the Franco Regimes not only to show a case of Spanish domestic policy in the context of international relations as regards US but especially to show the way journalists and historians cross disciplines and share important commitments, and how this has affected each other.

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“British Civilisation and Its Discontents: History, Memory and Loss in Ian Jack’s Literary Journalism”

In his introduction to *The Country Formerly Known as Great Britain* (2009), Ian Jack appropriately stipulates that “the present always depends on the past, which makes the past a necessary subject of any reporter’s inquiry.” This paper aims to highlight the literary elements in Jack’s perceptive journalism and to address his deft suturing of the past to the present. My contribution examines some aspects of Jack’s journalism as constitutive of his idea of Britishness.

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“History as the Literary Journalist Sees It (Or Thinks He Sees It): Chicago 1968”

In August 1968, the Chicago Democratic National Convention symbolized (in perhaps its crudest form) a confrontation between the generation that won the Second World War and its offspring, the Baby Boomers. Canadian journalist David Lewis Stein covered the event for the *Toronto Star*. I propose that Stein’s account, *Living the Revolution: The Yippies in Chicago*, is actually closer to pure New Journalism than the more famous accounts. What Stein recorded is more useful historically to readers now, even as, alas, he could not entirely unshackle himself from basic newspaper journalism training to become a full-fledged New Journalist.

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“Producing an Effect: Literary Journalists and a Personal Connection to History”

This paper examines two historical works by literary journalists, Richard Rhodes’ *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (1988) and Michael and Elizabeth Norman’s *Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath* (2009). In a *The New York Times* essay, photo-documentarian Errol Morris recently posed a question about Dorothea Lange’s Depression-era photography, asking whether or not Lange should “be connected to the people that she was photographing?” My question revolves around this being “connected to the people.” Are there subtle differences between historians and literary journalists that can be attributed to an emotional attachment?