



The 2004 tsunami in Ao Nang, Krabi Province, Thailand.
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Research Review . . .

Recent Trends and Topics in Literary Journalism Scholarship

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This survey of literary journalism scholarship published in print during 2018 is intended as a guide to recent trends and topics in the field rather than a comprehensive listing of all research and commentary. It focuses primarily on peer-reviewed journals. Some works may have appeared online before print publication, and some with earlier publication dates may not have appeared until 2018.

Digital Technology

The technology known as natural language generation may be on the verge of moving from basic descriptions to simple narratives based on events, raising the prospect of an eventual automation of advanced forms of journalistic writing, David Caswell and Konstantin Dörr say in *Journalistic Practice*. But economic and other limitations are likely to protect manual forms of writing when it comes to “the most complex, impactful, and valuable journalism for the foreseeable future.”¹

Three scholars writing in the *Journal of Magazine Media*, formerly the *Journal of Magazine & New Media Research*, evaluate multimedia news packages and their use of interactive elements. They found that maintaining the narrative flow was a key factor in attracting and retaining the interest of a millennial audience.²

The possibilities and the pitfalls associated with virtual reality reporting—along with its ties to literary journalism—are examined by Ben Stubbs in *Australian Journalism Review*.³ The article also looks at implications for journalism education.

Also in *Australian Journalism Review*, Jeanti St. Clair describes a new approach to place-based feature reporting: the locative audio documentary walk. Several examples are considered, and the form is proposed as a way of reaching marginalized communities and connecting audiences to locales.⁴

Ethics

An examination of the way that the technique of immersion is deployed in covering poverty is presented by Holly E. Schreiber in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. She concludes that this approach can both distract attention from systemic causes and displace the voices of those living in poverty.⁵

Six researchers, from disciplines that include medicine, psychology, and journalism, published a study in *Health Communication* warning journalists about the use of narrative, particularly when writing about rare conditions or outcomes. Narrative has the ability to influence patient behavior, overwhelming a person's individual thinking style and degree of numerical sophistication, the researchers said.⁶

Writing in the *Journal of Media Ethics*, Jeffrey C. Neely argues for the use of narrative to foster conservation ethics. His study focuses on a book by Thomas French.⁷

Historical Development

Using historical analysis, Thomas A. Mascaro argues in *American Journalism* that certain examples of long-form television documentary should be recognized as a kind of *littérature engagée*, that is, part of the literature of engagement. He argues that previous scholarship has overlooked these works because of a bias toward print over broadcast journalism.⁸

Individual Author Studies

Writing in *Assay*, Michael W. Cox explores the development of a David Foster Wallace article for *Rolling Stone* from its earliest draft. Cox argues that by focusing on early changes to individual sentences one can see Wallace transforming himself from observer to witness.⁹

The writer and diplomat João Guimarães Rosa, who is best known as a novelist and short story writer, is the focus of a study in *Brazilian Journalism Research*. Four authors analyze his use of journalistic techniques, including interviewing and verification.¹⁰

Åsne Seierstad's *The Bookseller of Kabul* is considered in the light of the British tradition of "harem literature," that is, travel writing about the domestic lives of Muslim women. Writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, Solveig Ragnhild Brandal underscores the difficulties of writing about encounters across cultures.¹¹

Also in *Literary Journalism Studies*, Matthew Ricketson traces the origin of Tom Wolfe's voice to writing for his high school and college newspapers.

The research is based on Wolfe's papers at the New York Public Library.¹²

Narrative Theory

The role of time and temporality is the focus of an essay by Christopher Wilson in *Literary Journalism Studies*. An essay by Calvin Trillin receives particular attention in this examination of the function of time in narrative.¹³

Chris Mays, writing in *College English*, argues for the use of genre theory to explore the construction of fact in creative nonfiction. He says authorial choices and genre rules play key roles in determining which facts are included and how they are developed.¹⁴

Cecilia Aare uses discourse narratology to explore narrative and rhetorical features of literary journalism. Writing in *Brazilian Journalism Research*, she highlights differences between literary journalism and realistic fiction.¹⁵

Another article in *Brazilian Journalism Research*, written by Fabiano Ormanezze, applies the techniques of discourse analysis to literary journalism. The analysis draws on the theory of language proposed by Michel Pêcheux.¹⁶

Also in *Brazilian Journalism Research*, Rogério Pereira Borges proposes a theoretical approach to biographical forms of literary journalism. Narrative and new historicist perspectives are brought to bear.¹⁷

National/Regional Studies

The role of narrative reporting in the coverage of survivors of Indonesian natural disasters such as the 2004 tsunami is explored by Budi Irawanto in *Pacific Journalism Review*. The study is focused on the magazine *Tempo* and its humanistic approach to news coverage.¹⁸

The influence of orality in the newspaper prose of Ghana's Kwesi Yankah is explored by Nathaniel Glover-Meni in *PentVars Business Journal*. He argues that techniques borrowed from the oral tradition can help to expose social tensions while elevating the quality of journalistic writing.¹⁹

Dolors Palau-Sampio and Antonio Cuartero-Naranjo compare Spanish-language literary journalism in Latin America and Europe in a study published in *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*. The authors report that topics and styles vary but that writers on both side of the Atlantic have much in common.²⁰

Pasquale Macaluso, writing in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, describes an example of reportage published in a Jaffa newspaper in 1936. Published in serial form, the work provided a positive view of rebel leaders, contrasting with the way they were depicted in the Western press.²¹

Aleksandra Katarzyna Wiktorowska, writing in *Brazilian Journalism Research*, presents a history of literary journalism in Poland.²² Her essay examines the popularity of literary journalism in that country as well as theoretical debates about the line between fact and fiction.

Practice

Writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, Hendrik Michael examines the use of reportage, with its emphasis on personal experience, immersive research, and multiple perspectives, in the coverage of immigration to Western Europe. He argues that his approach is superior to traditional methods because of its effectiveness in dealing with complexity.²³

Also writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, Lindsay Morton argues that imagination should not be equated with invention. In her view imagination in the context of literary journalism can be seen as a tool to help bridge the distance between author and subject.²⁴

Kobie van Krieken uses the *New York Times* article “Snow Fall” to explore how New Journalism techniques are translated from print to multimedia stories. The multimedia elements are shown to contribute to an intensely immersive experience.²⁵

In *Brazilian Journalism Research*, John C. Hartsock offers his perspective as a writer and as a scholar on the choices that confront a practitioner. The essay incorporates critical theory into the experience of creating a book-length work of literary journalism.²⁶

Also in *Brazilian Journalism Research*, Beatriz Guimarães de Carvalho and Rafael de Almeida Evangelista offer a theoretical perspective on the work of literary journalists and anthropologists. The authors explore the similarities and contrasts between the two fields.²⁷

Teaching

In *Literary Journalism Studies*, four researchers described their findings about student writing ability and the potential for using literary journalism to improve skills related to writing and critical thinking. Their analysis documents a widespread concern about declining skill levels while pointing to aspects of literary journalism that may be well suited to address this problem.²⁸

David Abrahamson, in *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, makes the case for allowing students to engage in first-person writing in certain assignments. He describes specific advantages and potential outcomes.²⁹

Mitzi Lewis and John Hanc summarize their findings from surveys conducted over five years into the teaching of literary journalism. In *Brazilian Journalism Research*, the authors also point to next steps, including the possibility of creating an international research hub to continue this work.³⁰

The teaching of literary journalism through the use of an online-multimedia platform is examined by Christopher Wilson in *Literary Journalism Studies*. While potential advantages can be found to this approach, pedagogical trade-offs are also encountered.³¹

Notes

- ¹ Caswell and Dörr, “Automated Journalism 2.0,” 492.
- ² Jacobson, Marino, and Gutsche, “Should There Be an App?” 1–21.
- ³ Stubbs, “Virtual Reality Journalism,” 81–90.
- ⁴ St. Clair, “Stories That Walk with You,” 19–33.
- ⁵ Schreiber, “Passing for Poor,” 455–67.
- ⁶ Shaffer et al., “What Is the Story with Narratives?” 1151–57.
- ⁷ Neely, “*Zoo Story*,” 80–91.
- ⁸ Mascaro, “Blood of Others,” 171–95.
- ⁹ Cox, “Privileging the Sentence,” 1–29.
- ¹⁰ De Castro et al., “Literary Journalism, Transdisciplinarity and Complexity Field,” 816–39.
- ¹¹ Brandal, “Literary Journalist as Woman Traveler,” 114–37.
- ¹² Ricketson, “‘What inna namea christ is this?’” 138–61.
- ¹³ Wilson, “The Journalist Who Was Always Late,” 112–39.
- ¹⁴ Mays, “‘You Can’t Make This Stuff Up,’” 319–41.
- ¹⁵ Aare, “Narratological Investigation,” 676–99.
- ¹⁶ Ormanez, “(Dis)Encounters and (Re)Arrangements,” 701–19.
- ¹⁷ Borges, “Writing on Self,” 774–97.
- ¹⁸ Irawanto, “Narratives of Natural Disaster Survivors,” 37–51.
- ¹⁹ Glover-Meni, “Orality in Ghanaian Newspaper Narratives,” 73–82.
- ²⁰ Palau-Sampio and Cuartero-Naranjo, “Spanish and Latin American Narrative Journalism,” 961–79.
- ²¹ Macaluso, “Claiming Modernity in Mandate Palestine,” 355–85.
- ²² Wiktorowska, “Literary Journalism as a Discipline in Poland,” 628–53.
- ²³ Michael, “Why We Fled from Grosny,” 70–91.
- ²⁴ Morton, “The Role of Imagination,” 92–111.
- ²⁵ Van Krieken, “Multimedia Storytelling,” 123.
- ²⁶ Hartsock, “Exploring Literary Journalism and the Truth in Wine,” 654–75.
- ²⁷ Guimarães de Carvalho and Evangelista, “Collectors of Daily Life,” 798–815.
- ²⁸ Neely et al., “The Write Stuff,” 140–59.
- ²⁹ Abrahamson, “There Be Dragons,” 358–62.
- ³⁰ Lewis and Hanc, “Educators’ Experiences,” 740–73.
- ³¹ Wilson, “Reading in 4-D,” 174–89.

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