



Professional heavyweight boxing champion Floyd Patterson, August 21, 1957.
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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 2019 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 books and articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Some works may have appeared online before print publication, and some with earlier publication dates may not have appeared until 2019.

BOOKS

Individual Author Studies

Azade Seyhan's *Heinrich Heine and the World Literary Map: Redressing the Canon*¹ makes a case for including Heine, the nineteenth-century German writer who was despised by the twentieth-century Nazis, among those identified as important contributors to world literature. Seyhan argues that Heine's many different identities—as poet, historian, essayist, cultural critic, journalist, exile, and German Jew, among others—has kept critics from identifying his work as “world literature,” a category that is defined largely by cross-cultural and transnational texts. Along with making that argument, Seyhan devotes parts of several chapters to Heine's journalism, suggesting that its innovations, including eschewing objectivity and promoting ambiguity, show Heine to be a forerunner of the U.S. New Journalism that emerged more than a century later. Of particular interest to scholars of literary journalism is Seyhan's focus on *Conditions in France* [*Französische Zustände*], which is Heine's 1833 collected journalism describing French culture for a German audience, as well as his use of the travelogue to produce pointed political satire.²

Truman Capote and his “nonfiction novel” *In Cold Blood* continue to receive considerable attention. Adding to what has been known about how Capote constructed his best-selling, if controversial, book is Jan Whitt's *Untold Stories, Untold Voices: Truman Capote and In Cold Blood*.³ In it, Whitt describes some of the rivalries and jealousies that Capote sustained both during and after he was writing the book, which resulted in the unacknowledged assistance—notably from childhood friend Harper Lee—and sources suggested by Whitt's title.⁴

As editors Alice Mikal Craven and William E. Dow note in their introduction to *Of Latitudes Unknown: James Baldwin's Radical Imagination*,⁵ remarkably little scholarly attention has been paid to Baldwin's literary journalism. Part two of their four-part volume is an effort to address that lack. Three essays—on Baldwin's work about the Civil Rights Movement, on his adaptation of the documentary tradition to prose, and on his use of first-person narration—open up new ways to think about Baldwin's literary journalism, inviting scholars to attend more closely to this important dimension of Baldwin's oeuvre.

Jeremy Treglown explains that his *Mr. Straight Arrow: The Career of John Hersey*⁶ is a study of Hersey's career rather than a full biography, but Treglown does use Hersey's published work to flesh out much of Hersey's life, from his childhood travels with his missionary parents through his lengthy career as

a journalist, novelist, and teacher of writing. Although Hersey thought he should be most remembered for his fiction, Treglown demonstrates that it is his nonfiction that best displays Hersey's skill and most deserves continued attention. Given Hersey's distinguished career—he won a Pulitzer for his novel *A Bell for Adano*, and *Hiroshima* is credited with being a groundbreaking and widely influential example of literary journalism—it is perhaps remarkable that Treglown's is only the second book-length biographical study to have been published. But as Treglown makes clear in his preface to the book, Hersey's dedication to truth and disinclination to seek the limelight are traits that continue to make Hersey and his work relevant for our time and beyond.⁷

National/Regional Studies

Pablo Calvi, in his *Latin American Adventures in Literary Journalism*,⁸ argues that literary journalism has helped both to create national identities in Latin America and to consolidate Latin America as a *supranational identity*.⁹ Through an analysis of six historical moments between the 1840s and the 1970s, along with a comparison of the development of Latin American literary journalism with the evolution of the genre in the United States, Calvi shows how the genre has functioned as “an instrument for ideological formation”¹⁰ in Latin American countries. While doing this, he also highlights how the literary traditions of Latin America are distinguished by having grown out of the periodical press rather than individual books, creating a dynamic conversation not only between texts that would appear in a single publication but also among its readers and their varying social positions. This dynamism, Calvi argues, points to how literary journalism helped create Latin America as a political entity that could then move into the world market.

Another study that focuses on the importance of the periodical press in the evolution of literary journalism is Thomas R. Schmidt's *Rewriting the Newspaper: The Storytelling Movement in American Print Journalism*.¹¹ With a focus on three decades—the 1970s through the 1990s—Schmidt argues for rethinking how narrative journalism came to play a prominent role in daily news production. If it started as what he calls a “rebellious act”¹² in the 1960s, Schmidt suggests in the following decades storytelling became a sign of “institutional change.” To make his case, Schmidt takes an approach that he calls “cultural institutionalism,” which he describes as a combination of two theoretical modes common to media studies, institutionalism and cultural analysis. He claims that what evolved was a storytelling movement that fundamentally changed the relationship between the producers and consumers of news in the United States.¹³

Hedley Twidle's *Experiments with Truth: Narrative Non-Fiction and the Coming of Democracy in South Africa* is described as the first book to analyze the nonfiction produced by South African writers during the decades of the country's transition out of apartheid.¹⁴ In eight chapters framed by an introduction and afterword, Twidle looks at a range of narrative nonfiction forms—longform journalism, literary journalism, oral history, memoir, and essay, among others—to suggest how those forms, employing new aesthetics, engage with difficult stories of collaboration and confession and offer eyewitness accounts of the country's effort to reconstruct itself after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The book ends with a prediction regarding the future of nonfiction in South Africa.

International Studies

An important contribution to the scholarship on international war reporting is *Literary Journalism and Africa's Wars: Colonial, Decolonial and Post-colonial Perspectives*,¹⁵ edited by Andrew Griffiths, Audrey Alvès, and Alice Trindade. With an introductory chapter and eight additional essays, along with related excerpts from literary journalistic texts from the 1860s to the 1990s, the volume explores how writers used the techniques of literary journalism to call into question the colonial enterprise and its legacy. The contributors look at reporting from England, France, Spain, Portugal, Poland, and the United States—including work by Henry Morton Stanley, Ramón J. Sender, Ryszard Kapuściński, Frederick Forsyth, and Kurt Vonnegut—to reveal how the reporting often reproduced even as it challenged the colonial discourse supporting pronounced power imbalances on the continent.

The degree to which literary journalism has become a regular part of the scholarly discourse about journalism is reflected in the three-volume *International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*.¹⁶ With eleven sections and more than 250 entries, the encyclopedia covers a range of topics of interest to scholars that either explicitly or implicitly engage with literary journalism, including “Activist and Radical Journalism,” “Interpretive Journalism,” “Global Muckraking,” “New Journalism and Gonzo,” “Magazine Journalism,” and even “Comics and Comic Strips.” The editors set out to reflect the new reality for journalism, documenting not only historical developments, but also the concepts, theories, and methodologies that inform today's journalism. The entries have been produced by established scholars with extensive backgrounds in their subject areas as well as by new voices.

Historical Development

In *Literary Journalism in British and American Prose: An Historical Overview*,¹⁷ Doug Underwood continues his investigations into the relationship

between journalism and literature, factual and fictional writing. In this volume, he sets out (1) to broaden readers' understanding of the work canonical literary figures in the United States and Great Britain produced in both areas of traditionally conceived "literature" and "journalism"; (2) to argue for opening up the literary canon to include more of what Underwood calls narrative and discursive writing; and (3) to show how journalism has played a vital role in creating opportunities for women, minorities, and others historically excluded from the general discourse about literature. He accomplishes this in seven chapters, plus an introduction and epilogue, and provides appendices that list the names and works of writers Underwood is arguing should be part of his expanded canon.

Digital Technology

David O. Dowling's *Immersive Longform Storytelling: Media, Technology, Audience*, reviewed in the December 2019 issue of *Literary Journalism Studies*,¹⁸ builds on his earlier work about the *New York Times's* ground-breaking, prize-winning, multimedia story "Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek," to argue that the digital age, rather than leading to less engaged and more superficial reading practices, has instead ushered in an era in which long-form narrative journalism is attracting audiences willing to invest the kind of time and attention usually associated with reading literature. As a collaboration between news and technology, digital literary journalism, Dowling explains, "operates at the nexus of cinema, radio, and print,"¹⁹ thereby offering the possibility of a deeply immersive experience. In particular, the use of drone and 360/VR technology allows journalists to bring readers/viewers into contact with people, places, and events normally not seen or easily accessed, and in that way is supporting journalism's traditional focus on public service and social justice.

ARTICLES

Digital Technology

David O. Dowling and Subin Paul, writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, make the case for how web-based literary journalism has become central to the Dalit protest movement in India. The work of Meena Kendasamy is featured.²⁰

Also in *Literary Journalism Studies*, Willa McDonald and Bunty Avieson examine the development of the Australian Colonial Narrative Journalism database. Their study considers definitional issues that arose in constructing the database as well as the potential for the database to serve as a tool to disseminate specialized content to a broad audience.²¹

Historical Development

Writing in the *Journal of American Studies*,²² Caitlin Cawley examines changes in the way U.S. soldiers are depicted in two key works from 1977 and 2010. Differences in aesthetic choices are linked to the growing distance between the military and the U.S. public.

Individual Author Studies

Cuban ethnographer Miguel Barnet and his testimonial novel *La vida real* are explored by Holly Schreiber in *Literary Journalism Studies*. She compares his work to that of Oscar Lewis to demonstrate alternative ways of presenting the poor in narrative literature.²³

Rolf Brandt, an early German literary journalist who started as a war reporter during World War I, is the subject of Troy R. E. Paddock's article in *Literary Journalism Studies*. Brandt's conservative politics are highlighted.²⁴

Lucas Thompson, writing in *Comparative Literature Studies*, traces the influence of numerous German writers in the work of David Foster Wallace. The study relies on archival research and close reading.²⁵

A study of reporter George G. Foster in antebellum New York City examines his contributions to the early development of literary journalism. The article, by Denitsa Yotova, appears in *Journalism History*.²⁶

Alok Amatya, writing in *Environmental Humanities*, reviews a 2010 travel essay by Arundhati Roy. The reviewer argues that this essay can be studied as part of a body of work dealing with conflicts over natural resources.²⁷

In the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Dominic Davies uses Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* to comment on and critique the role of literary nonfiction in the governance at work in extremely poor urban centers. Literary journalism is presented as both resisting and participating in certain colonial legacies.²⁸

Christopher P. Wilson, in *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, examines a 2014 book by Suki Kim and the author's subsequent defense of her methods. The use of immersion and its reception by critics are considered.²⁹

Writing in the *Journal of the Southwest*, Lauren Goodley describes the papers of Charles Bowden, known for his reporting from the U.S.-Mexico border, in the Witliff Collections at Texas State University, San Marcos. The article provides an overview of the archive and suggests possible areas of research.³⁰

Phillip J. Hutchison uses a case study approach to analyze the relationship between literary journalism and sports journalism, focusing on Gay Talese and his writing about Floyd Patterson, the boxer. The article, in *Journal*

of *Sports Media*, employs the concept of liminality, borrowed from anthropology, to illuminate the literary strategies used by Talese.³¹

In *Literary Journalism Studies*, James Rodgers analyzes two texts by Svetlana Alexievich to show how her work is an attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of conventional journalism. Rodgers finds that Alexievich's work fits into a Russian-specific conception of journalism as a form of literature.³²

The environmental journalism of Marilynne Robinson is the subject of a study by David O. Dowling in *Literary Journalism Studies*. He compares her work to that of Rachel Carson and shows how Robinson spent much of the twenty-five years between the publication of her first and second novels bringing the techniques of literary journalism to bear on complex and critical issues.³³

Hilde Van Belle examines work by Dutch literary journalist Joris van Casteren to show how he challenges the boundaries of the form in his use of a range of techniques. A key one is suggestion, which is combined with an absence of emotion, interpretation, and judgment to allow for the consideration of varying perspectives,³⁴ Van Belle argues in *Literary Journalism Studies*.

Narrative Theory

In *Narrative Inquiry*, Samuli Björninen proposes a method for looking at factuality in narrative as a rhetoric. The approach combines narrative theory and fictionality studies.³⁵

In the *Journal of Narrative Theory*, Katrina Quinn focuses on the work of Albert Deane Richardson, a reporter for Horace Greeley's *New-York Daily Tribune*. Quinn focuses on Richardson's dual role as protagonist and narrator in his accounts of a trip through several Southern states just before the outbreak of the Civil War.³⁶

National/Regional Studies

Katarzyna Frukacz, writing in *Literary Journalism Studies*, analyzes the distinctive nature of Polish literary reportage. Its development from the nineteenth century to contemporary times in response to sociopolitical factors is reviewed.³⁷

In *International Journal of Communication*, Subin Paul examines the use of emotionality in Nepal's English-language press. Subjective reporting and the embrace of emotions are seen as forming a distinctive way of creating journalism about Nepali workers in Qatar.³⁸

How the *crónica* of contemporary Latin American journalism fit into U.S. definitions of literary journalism is explored in *Brazilian Journalism Research* in an essay by Marcela Aguilar. The perspectives of ethnographic real-

ism and cultural phenomenology are considered.³⁹

As part of a larger study of the Spanish-language press, Udane Goikoetxea Bilbao and Txema Ramirez de la Piscina review three examples of digital magazines, two in Spain and one in Argentina. In *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, the authors conclude that the magazines are developing a new and audacious model at a time of great difficulties and uncertainties.⁴⁰

Practice

Siobhan McHugh, writing in *Nieman Reports*, argues that literary journalism is reinventing itself through podcasting. The author describes how the increasingly popular format allows for a blend of investigative reporting and opinion.⁴¹

In the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Dolores Palau-Sampio reviews the use of investigative and narrative techniques in covering Central American migration to the United States. An ethnographic and analytics approach is shown to improve coverage of complex issues.⁴²

Theophilus Tinashe Nenjerama and Nkululeko Sibanda make the case for a definition of journalism that takes in all art forms. This study, in *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory & Research*, focuses on protest theater that arose in Zimbabwe in response to repressive media laws.⁴³

Restorative narrative, a recently identified form of contextual news coverage, is analyzed by Nicole Smith Dahmen in *Newspaper Research Journal*. Textual analysis and interviews are used to situate this form in current practice.⁴⁴

The use of archival research in creative nonfiction is examined by Jay Ludowyke in *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creating Writing*. The author's personal experience in investigating the construction of the RMS Carpathia during the excavation of Hadrian's Wall is a major focus.⁴⁵

Ezeah Gregory and Gever Verlumun Celestine describe their research into the use of literary journalism as a tool for fighting hunger in Nigeria. Writing in the Ukrainian journal *Skhid*, they argue that literary journalism can be used to promote food security.⁴⁶

Literary journalism is proposed as a way to foster interfaith dialog in an article published in *Religions* by Alba Sabaté Gauxachs, Josep Lluís Micó Sanz, and Míriam Díez Bosch. Their work is based on content analysis of seventy-five articles and interviews with thirty-eight journalists.⁴⁷

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Notes

- ¹ Seyhan, *Heinrich Heine*.
- ² Seyhan, 39–56.
- ³ Whitt, *Untold Stories, Untold Voices*.
- ⁴ For a full review of Whitt's book, see Matthew Ricketson's in *Literary Journalism Studies* 11, no. 2 (December 2019): 186–88.
- ⁵ Craven and Dow, *Of Latitudes Unknown*.
- ⁶ Treglown, *Mr. Straight Arrow*.
- ⁷ Treglown, ix–xii. See also, Susan Swanberg's review of Treglown's book in *Literary Journalism Studies* 11, no. 2 (December 2019): 174–78.
- ⁸ Calvi, *Latin American Adventures in Literary Journalism*.
- ⁹ Calvi, 9.
- ¹⁰ Calvi, 5.
- ¹¹ Schmidt, *Rewriting the Newspaper*.
- ¹² Schmidt, 3.
- ¹³ See also, Jeffrey C. Neely's review of Schmidt's book in *Literary Journalism Studies* 11, no. 2 (December 2019): 198–201.
- ¹⁴ Twidle, *Experiments with Truth*, front dust jacket flap.
- ¹⁵ Griffiths, Alvès, and Trindade, *Literary Journalism and Africa's Wars*.

- ¹⁶ Vos, et al., *International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*.
- ¹⁷ Underwood, *Literary Journalism in British and American Prose*.
- ¹⁸ Dowling, *Immersive Longform Storytelling*. See also, Robert S. Boynton's review of Dowling's book in *Literary Journalism Studies* 11, no. 2 (December 2019): 179–82.
- ¹⁹ Dowling, 2.
- ²⁰ Dowling and Paul, "Digital Literary Journalism," 86–99.
- ²¹ McDonald and Avieson, "Having Your Story and Data Too," 32–55.
- ²² Cawley, "Documenting American 'Grunts,'" 351–84.
- ²³ Schreiber, "Rewriting *La vida*," 36–59.
- ²⁴ Paddock, "Rolf Brandt," 60–85.
- ²⁵ Thompson, "Wallace's Germany," 1–30.
- ²⁶ Yotova, "Antebellum Urban Reporting," 221–31.
- ²⁷ Amatya, "Itineraries of Conflict," 52–71.
- ²⁸ Davies, "Literary Non-Fiction and the Neo-Liberal City," 94–107.
- ²⁹ Wilson, "Suki Kim, North Korea, and Immersion," 93–114.
- ³⁰ Goodley, "Charles Bowden," 176–87.
- ³¹ Hutchison, "Gay Talese and Floyd Patterson," 47–66.
- ³² Rodgers, "Making Space," 8–30.
- ³³ Dowling, "Robinson's Environmental Literary Journalism," 56–87.
- ³⁴ Van Belle, "Joris van Casteren," 88–112.
- ³⁵ Björninen, "Rhetoric of Factuality," 352–70.
- ³⁶ Quinn, "Undercover Reportage," 1–26.
- ³⁷ Frukasz, "Literary Reportage," 6–34.
- ³⁸ Paul, "Gulf Crisis," 1323–39.
- ³⁹ Aguilar, "Latin American Contemporary Chronicle," 244–65.
- ⁴⁰ Goikoetxea Bilbao and Ramírez de la Piscina, "Three Audacious Forms," 692–715.
- ⁴¹ McHugh, "Podcasting," 36–43.
- ⁴² Palau-Sampio, "Reframing Central American Migration," 93–114.
- ⁴³ Nenjerama and Sibanda, "Navigating between Protest Theatre," 18–33.
- ⁴⁴ Dahmen, "Restorative Narrative," 211–21.
- ⁴⁵ Ludowyke, "Carpathia and Hadrian's Wall," 238–50.
- ⁴⁶ Gregory and Celestine, "Global Food Crisis," 34–40.
- ⁴⁷ Sabaté Gauxachs, Micó Sanz, and Díez Bosch, "Slow Religion," 485–509.

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